

TOPS NEWS

October 2007 ♦ Volume 11, Issue 2

The monthly newsletter of TOPS, a Seattle Public K-8 alternative school

MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

It has been wonderful seeing all of the students and parents as we start the 2007-08 school year. Many of the students have shared with me their summer vacation travels, camps, visits from grandparents and other relatives, the many play dates with friends, and other exciting events of summer. This is why I love this job! I get to see them grow and develop socially, emotionally, and academically. It is awesome to play a small part in that development.

WELCOME to new staff, students, and families. We have added 50 new kindergarteners and more than 30 new students in grades 1-8 to the community! We welcome Eva Masumoto, ELL teacher; Jenny Gamache, Elementary Resource Teacher; Karen Marlowe-Fleet, Occupational Therapist; Jackie Edward, Interpreter; and Daphne Jones, Family Support Worker.

I would like to express a special thank you to Maureen Germani and her crew of volunteers for the excellent job getting the student packets out the first week of school! Parents, remember to return the packets as soon as possible so that we will have updated health and emergency information.

We have had a rough start with **transportation** because of changes to the system and a shortage of personnel.

We apologize that this has been such an inconvenience to our parents and our students. Things are improving as routes get readjusted, etc. Hopefully, we will have fewer problems with transportation soon.

We had a **C.A.R.E. Assembly** (Our Anti-bullying program) on Tuesday, September 18 at 10 a.m. in the Gym. A number of our students participated in the program.

PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

We have a Professional Development Day on Friday, October 12—No school for students.

We will have an all-school Open House on Tuesday, October 2, from 6-8 p.m. This will be a change from the Curriculum Nights of past years. Please plan to visit your child (children's) classroom(s) and learn about the curriculum your child will be studying this year.

There are many ways to stay connected and informed at TOPS. Many of our teachers have already set up e-mail

Continued on page 7



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NEWSLETTER ONLINE
The TOPS newsletters are available online in PDF format before the printed copy arrives in your mailbox! From the TOPS home page, <http://www.topsk8.org>, click on *Latest Newsletter* in the *Quick Links* section.



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NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY AND BEYOND

By Steve Haines, Librarian

"Tis the good reader that makes the good book."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Speaking of good readers the Seattle Public Schools has a new program entitled "Balanced Literacy," with its goal being: "to ensure that all pre-K to 12th grade students become proficient and critical readers and writers motivated to read and write throughout their lives." To

this end they have embarked on a new project starting with all the K-2nd grade classrooms in the district. These classrooms are receiving an assortment of hundreds of new independent "Just Right" reading books, which will be placed in their rooms in baskets by either genre or reading level. Students will then be able to successfully read at their appropriate reading level during their independent reading time. Teachers were given strategies to help organize their libraries and to lead their students in using these books to increase their reading skills. Carla Fetterley, our Reading Specialist, has been busy organizing this for the teachers. Next year it will be the 3rd-5th grades'

Continued on page 3

NOVEMBER TOPS NEWS DEADLINE:

Friday, October 12. Submissions to topsnewsletter@gmail.com

CSJ CORNER

This is where you will want to look each month to find out what the Coalition for Social Justice has planned.

CSJ is a group of parents, staff, and administrators who work together in support of the stated mission and vision of TOPS. The purpose of our work is to educate ourselves and the school community about issues of academic equity, cultural diversity, and social justice as they affect our school and the broader community. You can learn more about CSJ, its history, and current themes and activities by picking up a flyer in the front office or at the information table during the TOPS Open House on October 2nd.

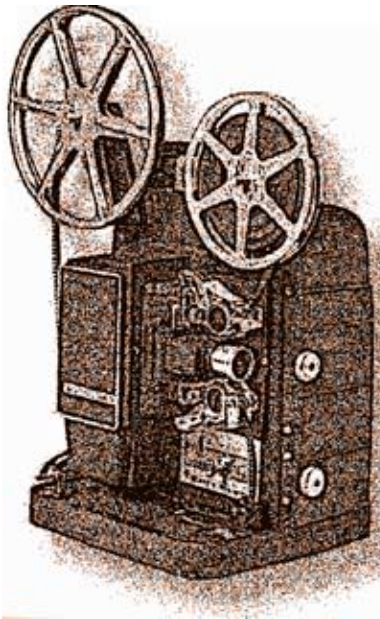
ABOUT THE OUTRAGEOUS PUBLISHING SERVICE

Welcome to the second newsletter of the 2007-08 school year. Jamie Flaxman and Ann Simonson edit, Paul Loovis handles photos, design, and layout, and Jane Summerfield, Peggy Maraghe, and Roxanne Robinson get it mailed off to you. Don Zemke provides many of our photos. G & H Printing prints the newsletter.

We need your submissions: calendar additions, classroom news and news from the larger community, faculty notes, committee reports, opinions, profiles, compliments, congratulations, children's art, photos, and anything else significant to the TOPS community.

Submit your contributions by email to topsnewsletter@gmail.com or to the newsletter box in the main office. Please send photos to javabrain@msn.com. The deadline for the October issue is October 12. Would you like to edit or otherwise help with our newsletter? Newcomers welcome. Please contact Jamie and Ann at: topsnewsletter@gmail.com.

Mark your calendar for the following event!



TOPS MOVIE NIGHT

Friday October 5th 6:00-9:00 p.m.—We will kick off this year's series with two short, entertaining and informative films about family diversity, *That's A Family* and *It's Elementary*.

It's Elementary is an award winning film showing school activities, faculty meetings, and classroom discussions that address gay and lesbian families. Carolyn B. Sheldon, a President of the American School Counselor Association said, "*It's Elementary* is an extremely moving portrait of how schools can appropriately address what, for many, is a sensitive issue." She calls the film "essential viewing for parents and educators concerned about preventing violence and prejudice."

The evening will open with a movie made for children by Academy Award winning filmmaker, Deborah Chasnoff. *That's a Family* is a highly entertaining half hour documentary that breaks new ground in helping kids see and understand the many different shapes that families take today. Created especially for elementary school children, *That's a Family* "will stretch your mind and touch your heart, no matter what your age." As the children in the film take you on a tour of their lives and unique family experiences, you will hear them explain in their words concepts like "birth mom," "mixed race," "guardian," "gay and lesbian," and "step dad." Robin Williams says, *That's A Family* is "an extraordinary film that teaches a poignant lesson about love and family."

Showing the two films together will build on the family history and diversity curriculum at TOPS by providing another catalyst for children and their families and teachers to talk about the many differences among families in our community.

Doors open at 6:00 p.m. and the films will show at 6:30. There will be time for discussion following the films. The evening will end by 9:00. Come when you can.

A light dinner of sandwiches, snacks, and drinks will be provided. Childcare is available and pizza, snacks, age appropriate movies, and games will be provided for children at Kids Co. Call 252-3510 to make a reservation.

Don't miss this opportunity to enjoy a free night out for dinner and the movies, engaging conversation and childcare included.

turn to receive a treasure trove of books.

This is the time of year to ease into school routines, and for “snuggling” into a year of learning new skills and exploring new ideas. The district has made this process easier with a great website, www.library.seattleschools.org. Each year the “Online Student Resources” page adds valuable information. For example you can now link directly to the Source where you can keep up with your student’s progress. One can also access our library’s book catalog as well as SPL’s catalog. My favorite link is the TumbleBook eLibrary. You can listen to and read along to many favorite books. For general research the World Book Encyclopedia and CultureGrams are excellent resources. If accessing these links away from school, the username is W001CSEATL and the password is WELCOME. Another excellent web site out there is www.refdesk.com, which bills itself as “the single best source for facts.” It is easy to use and seems to have everything one would need to aid in general reference.



Kindergarten students enjoy selecting books during their first library visit. — Photo by Steve Haines

Several new books have come to my attention in recent weeks. One is by Jack Gantos and is the 4th in the Joey Pigza saga. *I Am Not Joey Pigza* continues with Joey, a child diagnosed with ADHD, interacting with his estranged father and his stressed out mother as they hatch a new plan to make their lives better. I have enjoyed the first three books because Joey, although having a slew of personal problems, is a sensitive and caring young person.

In another book, Christopher Paul Curtis (*Bud Not Buddy, The Watson's Go to Birmingham*) has crafted a historical fiction book entitled *Elijah of Buxton*. This tells the story of Elijah who was the first person born into freedom in Buxton, Ontario, Canada. Buxton was a settlement of “runaway slaves” across the border from Detroit. So much is written about the Underground Railroad in the U.S. This is a good look at what happened as African Americans arrived in Canada.

One upcoming event of note happens on October 24 at the UW when well known author Walter Dean Myers gives the annual Spencer G. Shaw lecture entitled

“Books and Boys: Making it Work.” This event is sponsored by the UW Alumni Association and is open to the public (\$5 general admission). Registration is required by calling 206-543-0540 or at www.uwalum.com.

2007 TOPS CALENDAR

Send your events and dates to our webmaster, Jack Lee, at webmaster@topsk8.org. Please check Go-Homes and the web site for updates.

OCTOBER

- 2 (T) Open House, 6-8 p.m.
- 2 (T) 8TH Grade to SCT
- 5 (F)..... TOPICS, 12:50-3:20 p.m.
- 5 (F)..... CSJ movie night, 6-9 p.m.
- 9 (T) Eastlake Community Council, School Board/City Council Forum 7-9 p.m.
- 12 (F)..... Professional development day; no school
- 26 (F)..... Middle school dance, 6:30-9 p.m.
- 31 (W)..... Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal

NOVEMBER

- 6 (T) End of first quarter
- 12 (M)..... Veteran’s Day; no school
- 13-20 Elementary Parent-Teacher Conferences; 2-hour early dismissal
- 22-23 (Th-F) Thanksgiving Holiday; no school

DECEMBER

- 24-31 Winter Break; no school

JANUARY

- 1-4 Winter Break; no school
- 7 (M) School resumes
- 21 (M) Martin Luther King Day holiday; no school
- 25 (F)..... Last day of semester
- 28 (M) Day between semesters; no school

FEBRUARY

- 6 (W)..... Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal
- 18 (M) Presidents Day; no school
- 19-22 (T-F)..... Mid-winter break; no school

MARCH

- 5 (W)..... Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal

- 21 (F)..... Professional development day; no school
- 31(M)..... Spring Break; no school

APRIL

- 1-4 (T-F)..... Spring Break; no school
- 11 (F)..... End of third quarter
- 14-30 WASL testing

MAY

- 1-2 WASL Testing
- 3 (S)..... TOPS Auction
- 21 (W)..... Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal
- 26 (M)..... Memorial Day; no school

JUNE

- 17 (T) Last student day

WELCOME BACK!





Photos by Don Zenke

IT'S ESPAÑOL TIME AGAIN! THE SPANISH PROGRAM AT TOPS

By Sharon Mentyka

The TOPS Spanish Language program is a before/after school program open to grades 1–8. Students attend a 45-minute Spanish class twice weekly for 20 weeks. This year, we will be starting the program earlier in the school year so that our wonderful instructor, Maestra Rebecca Rabbitt, can involve the children in the important Spanish *Día de los Muertos* celebration in early November.

Since 1997, TOPS parents, staff, and faculty have been exploring opportunities for foreign language learning for TOPS students while not overburdening our teachers, or threatening current curriculum and enrichment programs. The level of support among TOPS families for a Spanish language program remains high.

TOPS is fortunate to have an excellent Spanish Language and Culture teacher with a long-term commitment to our children. Last year, Maestra Rabbitt's contribution to TOPS extended well beyond her classes and included two all-day TOPICS for middle school students, and TOPICS for the elementary school students, including much donated time to contribute to other school activities including the Taste of TOPS.

This year we are planning two new activities.

- ❖ A Saturday market tour with the advanced students and families.
- ❖ A Día de Reyes afterschool activity or potluck with all the families as well as native Spanish-speaking families. (In Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries, children receive gifts not from Santa, but from *los reyes magos* - the three

wise men. This trio drops off treasures during the night of January 5 to be discovered on *El Día de Los Reyes*.)

For 2007-08, we hope to offer three classes, depending on enrollment:

Beginning: grades 1–3

Monday and Friday: 3:30 – 4:15 p.m.

Continuing Spanish: grades 3–5

Tuesday and Thursday: 3:30 – 4:15 p.m.

Advanced Spanish/Reading & Writing: grades 5–8

Tuesday and Thursday: 8:00 – 8:45 a.m.

Please note: at this time, we cannot accommodate beginning Spanish students in the upper grades (5-8).

The Spanish Language and Culture program is parent-funded. Parents currently pay approximately \$275.00 per student for 40 classes of instruction (45 minutes twice a week for 20 weeks). This funding primarily covers the cost of instruction. Dependant on available funding, partial scholarships may be available. Any additional donations to the program are welcome to build up a reserve fund for language books, materials, and to ensure future scholarship funding.

For more information, please contact Spanish Committee parent coordinator Sharon Mentyka at 223-0681 or email sharon@pidseattle.com or Rebecca Rabbit at rabbiththutch@hotmail.com.

Registration forms are available on the TOPS website and in the TOPS Go-Home.

TOPS CHINESE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE CLASS

By Nancy Bacon

The TOPS Chinese Language and Culture program provides after-school Chinese language instruction that is fun and developmentally-appropriate. Pollyanna Wang will be teaching the grade 1-2 and 3-5 classes. Xiao Yu Jackson will continue teaching the Kindergarten class, which starts in January.

Registration is taking place now on a first come first serve basis. Grade 1-5 class sizes are limited to 15; Kindergarten to 12. Registration materials will be coming home with a go-home and are available online at www.topsk8.org. Registration forms and checks should be dropped off at the office.

Grades 1-2

Thursdays: 3:30-4:15 p.m. in C104 (Sarah's room)
From November 1- May 8
22 weeks
Cost: \$130

Grades 3-5

Tuesdays: 3:30-4:15 p.m. in C103 (Mrs. Stoneberg's room)
From October 30- May 6
22 weeks
Cost: \$130

Kindergarten

Thursdays: 3:30-4:00 p.m. in C105 (Joan's room)
From January 10 to May 8
16 weeks
Cost: \$55

Please direct any questions to one of the three parent coordinators: Deborah Ferguson (homeferguson@yahoo.com), Ann Simonson (paesimo@comcast.net), or Nancy Bacon (nancy@bahiastreet.org). We welcome parent involvement—let us know if you would like to volunteer with the TOPS Chinese program.



TOPICS!

By Sarah Marks, 1st grade teacher

Me: TOPICS coordinator, desperately seeking parent volunteers

You: Must be willing to sign up for an afternoon of FUN! Looking for excited, motivated, and eager parents to share their knowledge with a small group of multi-aged children.

Topics will be held 12 times (see list below) throughout the school year and will all be only one afternoon long (12:50-3:20). I encourage/beg parents to give TOPICS a try. You can teach anything you like (and I have loads of ideas if you need help getting those wheels in motion). Also, a perk to teaching a TOPIC is that YOU get to decide how many children and from which grades you will allow to be in your TOPIC.

Are you nervous about signing up for TOPICS when you still have so many unanswered questions and concerns? Well, we have just the cure for you. Informative (and entertaining) hour long TOPICS educational sessions will be led by Kristina Stoneberg and Sarah Marks. The first session was Wednesday, September 19 from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. If you were unable to attend, no worries, we will have one more informative meeting on Tuesday, January 8 from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. You are also more than welcome to join me during a TOPICS time to be an observer/helper to see how the flow of a TOPICS session goes.

TOPICS Dates 2007-2008

(Additional Theme day TOPICS
To Be Announced Soon!)

Friday, Oct. 5

Wednesday, Oct. 24

Wednesday, Nov. 7

Friday, Dec. 7

*Tuesday, Jan. 8 5:00-6:00 p.m.... How to teach a TOPIC....Room C103

Wednesday, Jan. 9 (Theme....SOCIAL JUSTICE) Please contact Bonnie Cech, bcech@cechsystems.com or Karen Stuhldreher, kstuhldr@sccd.ctc.edu if interested in teaching

Wednesday, Feb 13

Friday, March 7 (Theme...MATH)

Wednesday, March 19

Wednesday, April 9

Wednesday, May 7

Wednesday, May 28

Wednesday, June 4

*If you are interested in attending 'How to teach a TOPIC'
Please RSVP to slmarks@seattleschools.org.

Please email me (Sarah) at slmarks@seattleschools.org (or stick a note in my mailbox in the office) with any questions/concerns/available dates to teach a TOPIC.

P.S. Even though TOPICS is only offered to first through fifth grade students, the teaching of a TOPICS is open to Kindergarten through eighth grade parents!

MIDDLE SCHOOL PLAY: TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

Auditions for the middle school play *To Kill a Mockingbird* are around the corner. This year's director is Brit Boyd, a woman highly recommended by the staff at the Seattle Children's Theatre. She is very excited about this project, as is Miss Eick, who will be teaching the book to some of her students. Auditions will be mid October!



Message from the Principal continued from page 1

groups for their classrooms. Please make sure the teacher(s) have a current e-mail for you. In addition, Maureen Germani, our Volunteer Coordinator, will set up a Room Rep Parent Group to help keep parents informed of important events at school. Many classroom teachers send out a weekly newsletter or classroom updates to parents.

This monthly newsletter, provided by the parents, is mailed to your home around the first of the month, and is also posted on the website. A bi-weekly newsletter done by our Volunteer Coordinator will be posted on the website and sent home with students. It is called the "Thursday Go-Home."

PARKING AND SAFETY:

Parking and safety continue to be our biggest challenges here at TOPS so we really need your help. Please use the bus zone for drop off but move your vehicle down as far as possible by the Kindergarten playground so that you are NOT blocking the bus load zone. Please respect our neighbors and do NOT park in their driveways. Do NOT allow students to cross between cars from the wrong side of Louisa. Thank you so much for adhering to this request! We look forward to a good year.

Cheers!


~Clara



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TOPS No-Bake 2007
ANNUAL FUND DRIVE TO SUPPORT TOPS SCHOOL

OUR GOAL IS \$85,000
October 2nd - December 31st, 2007
DON'T BAKE - DONATE!

Your good old fashioned donation to Friends of TOPS will help to sustain our outstanding programs. Each and every family is called upon to help!!

Mail your donations to TOPS School No-Bake Fund Drive • 2500 Franklin Ave East • Seattle, WA 98102

Be on the lookout for your NO-BAKE KICK-OFF PACKET COMING IN THE MAIL SOON.

THANKS TO G & H PRINTING, 2370 EASTLAKE E. 329-9888

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