MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

January was a very busy month! There were so many good things happening that were full of learning and positive experiences for staff and students alike. It’s hard to believe that our school tours for future parents and students have begun. We have already hosted two tours in January for numerous families. We’ll hold another elementary tour in February, along with a middle school tour. There is always so much to be proud of during these tours. It’s a pleasure to share all of the great activities that make our school a special place.

January was particularly exciting with an array of events honoring the Dream of Dr. King and the Inauguration of President Obama. TOPS students and staff assembled to acknowledge that Dr. King’s Dream is alive! We admit that there is a long way to go before we fully realize Dr. King’s Dream, but we celebrated the ways in which our society has moved forward. An example is the diversity reflected in our legislative body. There are more people of color and women involved than ever before.

The Inauguration of our country’s first African American President was a school-wide focus on January 20. The TOPS staff put our heads together to come up with a plan to ensure that all of our students participated in this historic event, especially since our time zone made it a bit more challenging to watch these important events live. We wanted all of our students, even our Kindergarten students, to remember this celebration of diversity and unity in America. We did our best to make sure that students had opportunities to witness President Obama’s Inauguration and that teachers had opportunities to capitalize on significant, related instruction.

Social Justice was the focus of TOPICS on January 16. Many thanks go to all of those involved in creating meaningful experiences for our students

Continued on page 6

SPRING FOR TOPS! ~ AUCTION 2009

By Kelly Griffin

I t may be the middle of winter but it’s never too early to spring into action for this year’s TOPS Auction to be held on May 2. Start thinking now about how you’d like to pitch in:

- **Procure items worth $50 or more** – talk to local businesses or inventory your own talents or resources. Procurement forms can be found on the TOPS website even now.
- **Organize the Class Project** – help the kids create their own unique and priceless work of art.
- **Organize the Class Basket** – pick a theme and encourage class families to contribute items to go along with the theme.
- **Buy a table** – share the evening with your friends or a teacher.
- **Buy raffle tickets** – buy tickets for a chance at a great prize.
- **Underwrite** – pitch in to help with the costs of the event by providing products (like beverages), by volunteering, or by offsetting the costs through a cash donation.

Continued on page 14

February TOPSNews Deadline

Monday, February 9 • Submissions to topsnewsletter@gmail.com
NOTES FROM THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL
News from the Building Leadership Team

By Jeanne Kaban, Assistant Principal

There has been a lot of productive work going on through the TOPS Building Leadership Team over the past months. A big thank you to everyone who contributed through the generous gifts of their time, expertise, and cooperation.

An extra thank you is in order for parents Mark Rathbun and Nam-Phuong Nguyen. Mark heard about our desire to remodel a wall in our office in order to open up the space to make it more efficient and welcoming to everyone. Before we knew it, Mark had skillfully remodeled the wall. Our office staff loves the new open feel of the office. Visitors to the office can now see everyone who works there. It is a welcome improvement that serves a variety of needs. Thank you, Mark!

Another gift to our office came from Nam-Phuong Nguyen. Her generous gift of a brand new microwave is most appreciated. Everybody enjoys a warm lunch or a hot cup of tea during the cold winter months. Thank you, Nam-Phuong, for helping our office staff be efficient, healthy, and happy!

The Teacher Excellence Fund is again providing support for meaningful professional development for teachers. Several teachers will use funds to support their National Board Certification program. The Teachers as Scholars program will also be continued this year. Another group of staff has used funds for quality training specific to their positions. It is fantastic to have these funds available for teachers and staff. Continuing education is so important to us, and these generous funds make it all possible.

In December, TOPS teachers in grades K-5 participated in Writers Workshop lab sites. Over three days, teachers observed each other teach a Writers Workshop lesson. The teachers engaged in a pre-observation dialogue as well as a debriefing after the lesson. The sharing, trust, and skill they shared are an example of the quality teachers we have at TOPS. This type of experience is some of the most effective professional development available to teachers. We hope to engage in another series of labs at least one more time during this school year. It has a positive impact on our learning as we become more familiar with Writers Workshop. Jacque Ensign, TOPS Writing Specialist, organized, coordinated, and facilitated the lab site effort. We couldn’t have done it without her!

You may have heard about Writers Workshop Celebrations happening on a regular basis. These celebrations occur at the end of every unit of study in Writers Workshop. They take many forms and are usually an uncomplicated way for students to share their work with each other, staff, and parents. The celebrations also mark a clear ending to one unit before the next one begins anew. I’ve visited several celebrations and come away impressed by the intentional writing going on in Writers Workshop classrooms. If you are ever in the TOPS hallways, you can read some of the excellent writing the students are producing. Check out the displays and you will quickly be drawn into what these young writers have to say.

Also in December, our school engaged in a review of our Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (C-SIP) with three other schools: Madrona, Broadview Thomson, and Salmon Bay. All schools are required to create a C-SIP that becomes the anchor of our instructional and cultural work. Clara Scott and Debbie Bermet, TOPS Math Specialist, presented our math focus. Our work was well-received and participating schools benefited from the feedback they provided for each other. We are so pleased to have Debbie’s expertise and skill supporting teachers and students in Everyday Math.

In January, K-5 teachers traveled to Madrona K-8 School to collaborate with their teachers to learn more about skillfully using Everyday Math. We are fortunate to be in a partnership with Madrona K-8. This two hour session gave teachers time to share instructional strategies, engage in problem solving, discuss differentiated instruction to meet students’ needs, and address assessment. The conversation among teachers was enthusiastic and top notch. It’s also great to visit another school and see what is happening in another building.

I look forward to sharing more with you from the Building Leadership Team in the coming months. It is an honor to work with such a dedicated and knowledgeable group.
NO-BAKE IS IN THE FINAL STRETCH

by Julie Wroble

TOPS community members have donated $70,436 towards our goal of $90,000! We are 79% of the way towards our financial goal but we’ve had only about 44% of families participate. It’s not too late! We are almost there, but we need a final push to get there. If you haven’t sent in your check yet, now is the time! Each year, TOPS families donate an average of $200 to the No-Bake Sale. Please do your best to give $250 or more this year. Some of you can give $1,000 and some of you can give $25. Please give as generously as you can – the more you give, the more we can do for TOPS students. No gift is too small. One of our most important goals this year is 100% participation. Let’s fill the poster by the office with a few more cookies!!

Families who got their donation in by December 15 were entered in a drawing for a special collection of gifts donated by Precocious Toys in Madrona. The lucky winners were Alys and E.J. Raftery. If you can’t find your No-Bake letter, you can download one from the web site. The donation form lets you pay by credit card and pay by installments, it also identifies how you want to be listed in the newsletter, and it gives you the chance to send a No-Bake request to your friends and relatives. Also, if your company matches charitable contributions, you can make your dollar go farther. Check the box on the donation form for more information about corporate matches.

Some of the items that Friends of TOPS is able to fund thanks to parent support include the following:

- Tutoring
- Writers in schools
- Visual Arts/Artist in residence
- Drama
- Literacy Block
- Music – choir program/band/strings
- Supplies for science, art, math, the library

Contact Marlies van Bergeijk at 328-3064 or marliesv@att.net with questions. If you didn’t get a No-Bake letter, please contact Maureen Germani at mwgermani@seattleschools.org or 545-1771.

Thanks to everyone who has taken the time to contribute to the No-Bake so far:

Alison & Tom Walsh
Allison & Ted Dworkin
Amy Paige & Tim Callahan
Andrea Chin & Vance Martin
Angela & John Gaever
Angela Ying & John Ruhlman
Anne Barrett
Barb Lui & Kip Tokuda
Barbara Green
Bich-Ngoc Anna Duong & James West
Bob & Mickey Angell
Bonnie & Frank Cech
Brad & Wilma Angell
Camille Sata & Jon Nishida
Can Zheng Zhao
Carroll Haymon
Catherine Duva & Paul Shannon
Charlene & Timothy Folsund
Cheryl Dunkel
Chi Hong
Chinh Tran
Christopher Drajem & Patrick Sexton
Chun M Ng
Cliff & Sandy Shettler
Clifford & Kate Trent
Connie & Bruce Gray
Conor Courtney
Cory & Bill McCay
Curtiss & Laurie Williams
Cynthia Ruggeiro & Blake Hanaford
Cynthia Steiner
Dan Hurley & Michelle Pennylegion
Dan Malone & Beth Eagen
Daniel & Miriam Swedlow
David & Susan Cotter
Davis Oldham & Julie E. Alexander
Donna Jorgensen
Doriane Nieburgs
Doug Chapman & Karol King
Duncan & Kelly Griffin
Edward & Alys Raftery
Elissa Benson
Elizabeth Jane Kavanaugh
Elizabeth Wells
Ellen & Jon Markman
Ellen C. Levi & Keith A. Weinberger
Emily Sullivan
Eric P. Liu
Essex & Cynthia Porter
Eva & Jeffrey Masumoto
Frank Fabens & Gloria Albetta
George & Clark Scott
Gerrit Kischner & Nancy Bacon
Ginger Segel & Robert H. Kubiniecz
Grace Hua & Yu Han Ma
Guo Ying Mai & Wei Chao Liu
Harold & Carolyn Simonson
Harris & Ardetta Steiner
HDR Engineering/Dave Peters
Heather Mathews & Matthew Allen
Hoa Mai & Son Nguyen
Howard Choder & Robin Freedman
Hui F. Liang
Huong Thuy Nguyen
Hyeokji & Heajin Ko
Ian A. Brown & Romany Surfa
James & Sally Lord
James Whisman & Cecilia Winbladh
Jamie Flaxman
Jana M. Swett & Paul Loovis
Jane Evans
Jay Stansell & Dori Cahn
Jeanne Kuban
Jeff & Katry Davis
Jeff & Katy Davis
Jeffrey & Mary Beth Bert
Jennifer L. Smith
Jill Lee
John & Gail Chase
John Hoyt & Lisa Fitzhugh
Jonathan & Mary Kaufman
June Hayakawa-Fung & Larry Fung
Justine Guarda & Jose F. Vazquez
Karen & Peter Olive
Karen Keely & Kevin Godbout
Karen Walker
Kathleen Pape & Alex Korahais
Ken & Tiffany Clark
Kermit F. Rosen & Louise D. Bush
Leah Schoonover & Cameron Curtis
Leigh & Louise Rabel
Lester Eastlick & Sigrun C. Denny
Liesl & Troy Langley
Linda G. Furney
Linda Korbus & Gregory Flood
Lisa Emlen & Robert Takahasi
L’Taiia Mathews
Lynn & Mark Harmann
Marc & Cheri Bloom
Marc A. Summer
Maressa & Phillip Patterson
Mark & Kimberly Hobbs
Mark & Susan Lowdermilk
Marlies van Bergeijk
Mary P. Ranahan & Keith Galloway
Maureen & Joe Germani
Maureen McCreery & Vital H.J. Imbert
Mei Qun & Xuehuan Zhou
Melissa & Bruce Leonard
Merran & John Kubalak
Merrily Wolf & Robert Escalanta
Michael & Kelly Lippman
Michael & Tracy Wrey
Michael & Vanessa Stusser
Michael Chapko & Marcia Weaver
Michael Courtney & Christine O’Leary
Michael James & Majken Ryhder
Michelle Moore
Minh Vu & Trang Nguyen
Molly & William Lapata
Munehisa & Akiko Yabuki
Nicole Titus
Paul & Karen Gruen
Paul Hasegawa
Paul Robaidek
Per & Karol Danielsson
Peter & Ann Simonson
Peter Stevens
Phillip Czosnyka & Kathryn Cox-Czosnyka
Rachael Hannah & Alan Kahn
Richard Kolpa & Julie Wroble
Richard Silverstein & Janis White
Robert Hardy & Susie McDonald
Rocio Sanchez Ojeda
Ronald A. Chew
Roxanne Dover-Robinson & David Robinson
Samia Salon & Rabitha Al-Harbi
Sara Waterman & Curtis DeGasperi
Sarah & Gershon Parent
Sharon Andrews & Peter Carter
Shelly Havercamp
Simon Farr & Dani Vinh
Stephen Page
Steven & Naoko Magasiss
Susan Welch
Techane Zebene
Tsegereda Adal
Tyrol Graham & Melissa Chow
Valeri Vassoukhin & Olga Klevovich
W. Lincoln & Edith B. Boyden
Warren Clemans & Kathryn Schmid
Wes and Renee Kutch
William & Leslie Spurr
William Patz & Erin M. Fairley
Xiao Sheng Li
Xing E. Lei
Ying Quing Yang
Yuan Ji Li & Yan Mei Liu
Yvonne & Barry Onouye

MWgermani@seattleschools.org
marliesv@att.net
marliesvanb@att.net

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Thanks to everyone who has taken the time to contribute to the No-Bake so far:
CSJ Corner

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

**Coalition for Social Justice** is a group of parents, staff, and administrators who work together in support of the stated mission and vision of TOPS. The purpose of the events that CSJ sponsors is to promote dialogue and 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. Please plan on being part of the conversation this year!

**Mark your calendar for the following events!**

**Friday February 27, 6:00-9:00 p.m.**

**TOPS Movie Night presents Sentenced Home**—

We at TOPS have an extraordinary opportunity to see this [Emmy Award nominated film](#) and to hear about its making, and both the legal and personal stories behind it from TOPS parents, Dori Cahn and Jay Stansell. *Sentenced Home* puts a human face on immigration policies that have resulted in the deportation of many refugees. The film follows three Cambodian immigrants who in the early ’80’s were children among the multitude of Cambodians who escaped the genocidal Khmer Rouge. They found a home as “permanent residents” in Seattle’s housing projects. As adults, mistakes made in their tough teen years resulted in permanent deportation, which for some has meant being separated from families, jobs, and the only home they have ever known. Filmed over the course of three years, filmmakers Nicole Newnham and David Grabias capture intimate moments in the families and lives of these men, and help us to understand the impact of the laws that have affected so many families here in Seattle and throughout the U.S. There are many immigrant families in our TOPS community and this film and discussion with Assistant Federal Public Defender Jay Stansell and writer and educator Dori Cahn will enable us to have a fuller understanding of the laws, the realities they bring to bear, and how we might respond. Don't miss this exceptional chance to gain insight into this important issue of social justice.

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

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

**March 19: TASTE OF TOPS at 5:30-8:30 p.m.**

This year’s theme will honor the culture of China. There will be a potluck in the cafeteria and a number of events to educate and entertain will be presented throughout the school. The Annual TOPS Talent Showcase will begin at 7:00 p.m. in the Gym. Look in the Go-Home for when forms to sign up for the talent show will be available and due. You won’t want to miss this very special annual TOPS event!

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*Sentenced Home* Productions presents a film by David Grabias and Nicole Newnham

**Sentenced Home**

Born in the killing fields of Cambodia. Raised on the streets of America. Now, twenty years later, we’re sending them back.
**Site Council Report**

*Taken from minutes by Betsy Wells, of the November 12, 2008 Site Council meeting*

**ASB Report**

Magnus Giaver reported on a very successful fall dance and plans for winter dances. He explained ASB to Site Council members.

**Friends of TOPS**

Young Playwrights did not request enough money for this year. There are 13 instead of 12 participants, so the budget was amended from $1000 to $1250.

**Treasurer’s Report**

Cliff Shettler explained the Finance Committee Process for new members of the Site Council. The Finance Committee is composed of 6-8 members, and the FC creates an RFP that goes out to the school community. Proposals are reviewed and additional information sought. The FC sends a proposal to the Friends of TOPS, and, at a Friends of TOPS meeting, the project managers describe significant proposals or changes. The final budget is presented for approval at the last Friends of TOPS/Site Council meeting of the school year. Marlies indicated that the FC had previously discussed starting the process earlier in the year, i.e., in December.

**Principal’s Report**

Ms. Scott reported that the 6th grade Ultimate Frisbee team won the first TOPS championship. Writing celebrations are going on throughout the building, and samples are posted outside classrooms. Chinese classes are up and running, and Spanish will start later this month. There is a ski program meeting tonight (11/12/08). Two activity buses have been started for after school activities. One bus goes South and one goes North; students are needed to use the North bus. Sixth graders had a rainy camp. Parent tour dates are set and on the web. The annual TOPS food drive is coming up, and the Winter Wishes tree will be up soon. TOPS will have families affected by loss of jobs. The parent conference schedule is different this year with students attending until 3:20 during the week of November 17-21 and staying home the week of November 24-28 to allow three full days for conferences.

At a District administrators meeting, pending school closures were discussed. Principals were given the general guidelines for closure. Closure plans will be announced Tuesday, November 25; December 15, 16 and 17 there will be public hearings on the closures at the affected buildings. Ms. Scott called upon the Site Council to stay calm until the closure list is announced. She does not believe TOPS is at risk.

**Site Council Discussion of School Closures and Assignment Plan:**

Parents talked about the need to be proactively prepared in case the school is affected by the closure plan. The main focus will be on keeping informed. The cost of transporting TOPS students from around the city, and the generally low enrollment in the Central Cluster were raised as issues that might make TOPS vulnerable. With regard to the assignment plan, parents raised the concern that TOPS is not consistently viewed as an alternative school. Thus, assignment plan changes may have the biggest impact on TOPS because of our wide draw. This plan will come later, after the school closure issue is taken care of. The consensus seemed to be that we will continually monitor the situation and try to find a TOPS parent (or parents) willing to consistently attend School Board meetings.

**No Bake Committee**

Marlies van Bergeijk reported that the No-Bake proceeds are over $25,000 at this point. This year’s goal is $90,000. The committee’s plan is to send one letter per month until a household has donated. There is also a special letter that people can send to relatives, and the committee will be calling families of recent alumni. The No-Bake officially ends December 31 but usually extends longer; last year we went through January. People can pledge and pay in three installments.

Discussion item: It would be useful for Site Council to discuss at some time the history of why we have two main fundraisers. Do we need to put all our energy into fundraising or into getting more out of our state budget? This discussion was tabled to a later meeting.

**Coalition for Social Justice Report**

Karen Stuhldreher reported that there will be a Friday evening meeting on December 5 to brainstorm and plan the Social Justice TOPICS which will be January 16. Friday, January 30, CSJ will show the film, Kids on the Ave. They are hoping to get middle school parents to come while waiting to pick up kids on ski bus. February movie night will be the 27th.

**Workgroup Reports**

Special Education workgroup: Dan Hurley has put together a document looking at three ideas: inclusion, communication, and program definition. For each of these three things, the document addresses how TOPS currently addresses the item, what are some ideas people have come up with, and what the Site Council role is. By the next Site Council meeting, Dan will have gotten feedback from sub-committee members. Laurie Williams will be attending Special Education PTSA December 18 where there will be a panel on inclusion. She will send information to Maureen for the Go-Home.

Communication workgroup: Tamara Kincaid and Barbara Rockey reported a name for the group, TOPS Active Communications Team (TACT), was decided. It is composed of Tamara, Barbara, Mark Rathbun, and Maureen Germani. They are planning a Newsletter article titled “What is the Site Council and Why Should I Care?” They will be working on better use of communication channels in place, e.g., Site Council grade band reps should reach out to the room reps. The group is looking at the Site Council part of the website with the aim of making it current, relevant, and useful. By the next meeting they will have

*Continued on next page*
TOPS Book Fair Coming Soon!

By Susan Welch

It's almost time for Taste of Tops and the Second Annual TOPS Book Fair! Ballard's Secret Garden Bookshop will once again be setting us up with all of the latest best sellers and classics in children's literature -- from d'Aulaire's Greek Mythology to Rick Riordan's The Lightning Thief. The kids' excitement for last year's book fair was over the TOP -- and we expect that enthusiasm to be just as strong this year.

Here are a few things you can do to ensure that this year's event is as successful as last year's:

1. Be aware of the dates of the book fair: March 17 – 19, ending with Taste of Tops.
2. Talk to your child about what he/she can or cannot buy.
3. VOLUNTEER!! We need lots of help during the book fair and Taste of Tops to assist with purchases – 2 hour time shifts (contact Susan at susan.welch1@comcast.net).
4. Please donate to the 'Books for Everyone' fund -- we will have a purple donation box set up at the Book Fair. This fund ensures that all TOPS kids have the opportunity to get a book of their choosing.
5. Make time if you can to visit the library during school hours. It's really fun to see the kids' enthusiasm for getting and sharing their favorite books.
6. Place special orders with us during the book fair for kid or adult titles. All books purchased during book fair will bring a credit for free books for the TOPS library.

Last year's book fair raised over $1000 in books for TOPS classrooms and the library.

Message from the Principal continued from page 1

that will enhance their lives into adulthood. Additionally, the Coalition for Social Justice coordinated a movie night on January 30. Kids on the Ave, a film about homeless youth in Seattle, was viewed with a lively discussion afterward. We are so grateful to the parents and families who volunteer their time and efforts to help us all expand our awareness about these realities.

Planning for “Planting the Seeds” produced a terrific set of activities for the 8th grade’s experience with homelessness in Seattle. Thank you, Lori Eickelberg, for spearheading this endeavor and planning it so carefully. We are thrilled to have so much parent and staff support for this project. We'll report the students’ experiences and responses during this project in the next newsletter.

In January, TOPS K-5 teachers participated in a collaborative math professional development session with the K-5 teachers from Madrona K-8 School. During this two hour session, teachers shared instructional strategies, engaged in problem solving, discussed differentiated instruction to meet students’ needs, and addressed assessment. This is time well-spent for teachers. It is the most powerful kind of professional development and we are lucky to be in partnership with Madrona.

Our after school activities are in full swing, from language classes and chess club to study tables and basketball. A large number of our students benefit from these extra-curricular classes and programs. Please remember that it is very important to pick up your children on time. Instructors and staff frequently have family responsibilities at the end of the day and need to leave to fulfill them. Our school office closes at 4:30 on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. On Tuesday and Thursday, the office closes at 5pm. All students need to be out of the building by these times. If your child is in basketball, coaches have made arrangements to stay with students beyond school office closure times. It is important for your child’s safety that he/she is picked up from school on time. Your cooperation is most appreciated!

We have one more request to help our students stay focused on learning throughout the day. Please review our school guidelines for cell phone/electronics usage during school hours. We really don’t want to take away cell phones because of texting, calling, listening to messages, or any of the other functions cell phones do, during school hours. Cell phones are to be turned off during school hours. Please know that if you call or text your children during school hours, they should not have cell phones turned on until school is over for the day. Thanks again for helping us stay focused on learning.

Cheers!

~ Clara
TOPS Winter Wishes Food Drive Event
By Sheri Toussaint, TOPS Activity Coordinator

“...That’s what I consider true generosity. You give your all, and yet you always feel as if it costs you nothing.”
- Simone De Beauvoir

There were a few obstacles to overcome this year. We started the school year without a family support worker, our country in an economic crisis, and a record snowfall canceling three days of school just prior to Winter break and the holiday season. Even with this in our midst, the TOPS community rose to the occasion. Thanks to the generous donations from TOPS faculty, students, and their families, the TOPS Winter Wishes Food Drive event was a resounding success. There were more items collected this year than in years past, and the office conference room was overflowing with 1,720 food items and a bounty of Christmas gifts. The holidays were a lot cheerier for twelve TOPS families who received Christmas gifts, a basket, and a box full of dried food goods along with a Safeway gift card.

It really does take a village to make this all happen. August Choder, a kindergarten student in Joby’s class, collected 65 items. He took his wagon and went door to door asking neighbors to donate to the food drive. The 8th grade class collected 450 items and the 5th grade class collected 350 items. Even though there was a prize for the class that collected the most items, every student was impressed and proud when they saw all that was collected for those in need. In addition to providing TOPS families with food items, we were also able to make a contribution of 27 boxes of food to Food Lifeline, Washington’s largest hunger relief agency. That donation will provide nearly 1,000 meals to hungry families in Western Washington.

A special thanks to Jennifer Murray and Sheri Toussaint for organizing the event, Alicia Jessie (our former family support worker) for providing information needed to launch the Winter Wishes Food Drive event, 8th and 5th grade students for sorting, counting, and stacking all of the donated food items, Marlies van Bergeijk for packing food baskets, and to Mrs. Scott, George Scott, Mrs. Kuban, Sabrina Scott, Mr. Smith, and Jennifer MacColl for trudging through the snow to deliver food and gifts.

Immeasurable thanks to all!

Looking for fun activities for your child after school? Check out Kids Co.!!!

The Kids Co. program at TOPS has openings in our before school program (7:00-9:00 a.m.) and our after school program (3:20-6:00 p.m.). We run a high quality program with fun and enriching activities. Please call Aaron at 709-8487 to register your child!
The Penny Harvest Service Learning Event was a huge triumph. All of the students at TOPS school supported the event by collecting and donating over a thousand pounds of coins. Classes from kindergarten through 8th grade collected pennies and as a school we exceeded our goal by filling 30 canvas sacks and collecting $262 dollars in cash!

Our 2008 classroom representatives, Stephen Shettler, Ella Cotter, Jonah Silverstein, Ada Rosen, Ethan Winstead, Kathryn Porter, Nathan Armstead, Unica Le, Harland Ontiveros-Meza, Marius Toussaint, Zoe Gluck, and Kylin Sandstrom, met every Monday during the event to brainstorm ideas and report on how things were going in their classes. Soon we will begin the process of choosing non-profit organizations to donate $1,000 to. Please stay tuned for the report from the Scholarship Philanthropy Roundtable group who will tell us who the money will benefit.

www.PennyHarvest.org

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**2008 - 2009 TOPS Calendar**

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

**February**

- 4 (W)...........Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal
- 5 (Th)...........Middle school tour; 9:30 a.m.
- 10 (T)..........Elementary school tour; 9:30 a.m.
- 11 (W)...........Site Council meeting; 5:30 p.m., TOPS Library
- 13 (F)..........100 Day Celebration
- 15 (F)..........2nd Friday of the Month Club, 4:30 p.m.
- 16 (M)..........Presidents Day; no school
- 17-20 (T-F)....Mid-winter break; no school
- 27 (F)..........TOPS Movie Night, 6-9 p.m.

**March**

- 4 (W)...........Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal
- 11 (W)..........Site Council meeting; 5:30 p.m., TOPS Library
- 13 (F)..........TOPICS 1-3 p.m.
- 13 (F)..........2nd Friday of the Month Club, 4:30 p.m.
- 17-19 (T-Th)....TOPS Book Fair
- 19 (Th).........Taste of TOPS, 5:30 p.m.
- 20 (F)..........Professional development day; no school
- 25 (M)..........Grades 1-2 to SCT

**April**

- 1-3 (W-F).....Spring Break; no school
- 8 (W)..........Site Council meeting; 5:30 p.m., TOPS Library
- 10 (F)..........End of third quarter
- 13-30.........WASL testing
- 24 (F)..........TOPICS, Cultures of the World theme, 1-3 p.m.

**May**

- 1 (F)..........WASL testing
- 2 (S)..........TOPS Auction; 5 p.m.
- 6 (W)..........Grade 1 and DHH to SCT
- 8 (F)..........TOPICS, Earth Day theme; 1-3 p.m.
- 8 (F)..........2nd Friday of the Month Club, 4:30 p.m.
- 8 (F)..........5th grade Science Fair; 9 a.m., Library
- 13-15 (W-F)....7th grade Camp, Mt. St. Helens
- 13 (W).........Site Council meeting; 5-7 p.m., TOPS Library
- 15 (F)..........Art Fest; 6 p.m.
- 15-16 (F-S)....Elementary school play
- 20 (W).........Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal
- 25 (M)..........Memorial Day; no school
- 27 (W).........Grades 1-2 to SCT

**June**

- 2-5 (T-F)......8th grade Camp, Deception Pass
- 2-5 (T-F)......ASB Elections
- 4-5 (Th-F).....3rd and 4th grades to Camp Arnold
- 12 (F)..........8th grade Passage, 7 p.m.
- 15 (M).........Elementary school Field Day
- 15 (M).........Middle school to Wild Waves
- 19 (F).........Last student day, 2:20 p.m. dismissal
If you haven’t tried this TOPS tradition before, try it in February! The latter part of our mid-winter break leaves the Mission Ridge slopes with plenty of dry snow, bright sun, and a smashing view of the Columbia River. It’s easy to caravan or carpool with other families. Bring a student friend or two. Some families arrive as early as Wednesday, some not until Friday or Saturday. Mission Ridge is a great family mountain with gentle terrain for the young skier, steeper drops and bowls for the thrill seeker, and even an airplane wing monument to a bomber plane wreck that occurred half a century ago. And the amazing thing is there aren’t any lines!! This ski adventure is open to all TOPS families, K through 8th grade.

The Mission Ridge ski area, only twelve miles from Wenatchee, offers a wide range of terrain to satisfy all types of skiers. Cross-country skiing is nearby. Non-skiers have also found snowshoeing is great fun on trails alongside ski slopes. Go to http://www.missionridge.com for more information.

A block of (27) rooms at The Cedars Inn has been set aside for TOPS families at the rate of $85.95 + tax (per night) for a room with two (2) queen beds (discounted off of their published rates of $99.95/per night). The Cedars Inn is in East Wenatchee at 80 9th St NE, just 20 minutes from the ski area and across the road from the Columbia River trail. They offer a continental breakfast with a waffle maker, cereal, an indoor pool, and an outdoor hot tub.

Reservations are available toll free: 800-358-2074 or via 509-886-8000. Just be sure to mention that you are with the TOPS Ski Group. The deadline for reservations is February 5, 2009. This is a first come/first serve reservation for this block of rooms. The group rate will be held through this date, as will the allocation of rooms available for the TOPS Ski Group. After this date, if all of the rooms have not been reserved, they will be released to the general public, and this rate will no longer be available.

Traditionally we have the family potluck event on Friday night (6:00 pm) in a banquet room at the Cedars Inn. Plan to bring a dish for 6 – 8 people and a beverage to share. There is a small $50 fee that is required to reserve this room through 10 pm. All families will share in helping to cover this fee (cash collected on site).

There are several ways to keep the cost down:

- Groups of 15 or more adults can buy daily tickets for a discount as well. But you’ll need to pay together and in advance. If someone would like to organize a group purchase, find details on the Mission Ridge website, and let me know that you would like to lead this group purchase effort.

- If you’re a complete beginner, you can arrange for three days of lift tickets, three group lessons, and three days of equipment rental for a very sizable discount.

- In some past years, some gas stations have offered a 2 for 1 coupon that were valid on Thursday or Friday. If you hear about this (or any other good discounts), pass the word around.

Any questions, contact Ron White at therwhitehouse@comcast.net. Updates on all details will be coming soon via the TOPS website and the Go-Home. This is a parent-sponsored event that has been ongoing for approximately 20 years now!
TOPS Middle School Drama Presents

Our Town

Photos by Paul Loewis
News from the Library and Beyond

By Steve Haines, Librarian

“Research is the process of going up alleys to see if they are blind.”

- Marston Bates

Did you know that the Pike Place Market is over 100 hundred years old, and that it was almost demolished in the name of “urban renewal,” or that the all aluminum ferry Kalakala carried over 100 million people before it went to Alaska to become a fish processing boat? Well, the 4th graders didn’t know these historical facts before starting on their Seattle History Project.

With the guidance of our wonderful 4th grade teachers, Leslie Hazelwood-Spurr and Joe Drummond/Susan Mamlock (Joe’s sub), the students, in pairs, researched all aspects of Seattle history from the Denny Party to Pioneer Square to Hooverville and the Depression. Their learning took them through the research and writing processes. They organized their notes and the end project culminated in a presentation before the class. The students’ work will be displayed in the third-fourth grade commons area and in the library. One excellent web site is worth a view, www.HistoryLink.org, that proclaims itself as the Free Encyclopedia of Washington State history. It is an excellent resource.

Speech Tournament on Sabbatical

The TOPS speech tournament that has been with us since the early 1980’s is due for a revision. This was the consensus arrived at by the staff at a recent meeting. The past several years has seen increasing instructional time given to the math and writing programs. Coupled with all of the other curricular needs, interest in the speech tournament has dwindled. We know that learning how to give speeches is a valuable skill and now it is up to us to see how we can make it more “user friendly.” If any one would like to help in that endeavor please let me know.

New Books

Three new books really grabbed my attention this past vacation. A debut novel by Kathi Appelt, The Underneath, tells three intertwined stories of an abused hound dog, a pregnant calico cat, and a shape-shifting water snake. The setting is a southern bayou, the mood is captured in her writing, and she really had me caring about the fates of the main characters. I felt like I was right there with them. This would be of interest to those older readers who enjoy animal tales.

As soon as I put that down it was on to Neil Gaiman’s new book, The Graveyard Book. The main character, Nobody Owens, has escaped certain death as a baby, and manages to make it to a graveyard where an interesting assortment of ghosts from different historical periods care for him like family as he grows up. The story turns suspenseful as we learn that someone is after him. This story would interest middle grade readers, especially those that have read Gaiman’s Coraline.

Another book for middle grade readers is Susanne Collins’ The Hunger Games. She is the author of the ever-popular Gregor the Overlander series. In this new series set in a future dystopia, there is an annual televised competition that pits young people from each of 12 districts against each other. The most mentally fit and physically strong survives. This is a “page turner.” These books are in our library and ready to entertain and amaze you.

Mad About School Closures? Let Your Voice Be Heard!

By Susan Welch, Site Council Chair

Did you know that 70% of our District’s budget comes from the State, and that Washington ranks 44th in the nation in per student funding? The nationwide average of $8973 is nearly 20% higher than our state per student funding of $7432. This seems outrageous – and it’s something that each of us can do something about.

The attached flyer was created by a group of concerned Seattle parents – please read it and educate yourself in whatever way you can about current statewide funding and the legislature’s Basic Education Finance Task Force (BEF TF). Then contact your legislators and let them know that sub-standard funding has hazardous consequences that impact our kids. The flyer has a list of contact addresses, and other steps you can take to let your voice be heard.

By the way – as you get out your checkbook for the first bills of the New Year, please remember that to be a part of TOPS is an option that we all have been given the opportunity to select. Yet without our Friends of Tops budget, our treasured programs would go the way of the mastodon.

Please contribute to the No-Bake Sale - be part of our goal for 100% participation.
DID YOU KNOW--

- Seventy percent of our District’s budget comes from the State. Washington ranks 44th in the nation in per student funding ($7432 per student).

- If our state provided even the average state allocation ($8973 per student), Seattle Public Schools would get $70 million dollars more each year. Our $24 million budget gap would become a $46 million surplus. Would we be closing schools right now?

- The School Board can’t fix this problem. That can only happen in Olympia.

- There is good news! The Legislature’s Basic Education Finance Task Force (BEF TF,) has a plan to restructure school funding and bring in well-thought out changes--Equity, Quality, Financial and Academic Accountability and True Transparency—to our schools state wide.

YES, it’s a terrible year for the State budget – we are looking at painful cuts everywhere

But we MUST raise our voices to tell our Legislators & the Governor to protect education. Let’s prevent deep cuts to education funding and make our elected officials understand that we demand positive change for our schools NOW.

WE NEED TO TELL THEM, pass the BEF TF recommendations, even if additional funds are not available this year. These will help our schools now as well as pave the way for better funding in the future.

CALL YOUR LEGISLATOR:

TELL THEM pathetic school funding has real consequences! Tell them how the budget crisis is affecting your child, your school, your community.

TELL THEM we need them to be leaders on this issue!

TELL THEM what they can do to help! We need them to enact the BEF TF’s plan. They may not have more money for schools right now, but they can make the crucial structural changes so education funding is transparent, flexible, and accountable.
**Teacher Excellence Fund – Teachers as Scholars**

By Marianne Clarke, 6th Grade LA/SS Teacher

Did you know that the Teacher Excellence Fund has made time travel possible? I never dreamed that I could experience it a couple of years ago when Joby, Ms. Eick, and I got up on the stage at the auction and encouraged you to contribute to sponsor professional development for TOPS teachers.

In November it was my great pleasure to attend classes on one of my favorite authors. I was in very good company. Nicole Titus and Lori Eickelberg were among the educators from all over Puget Sound who chose to study our selection from the menu of classes offered by the Teachers as Scholars program, “Sherman Alexie on Page and Screen,” under the auspices of Seattle Arts and Lectures.

As many of you know, I was a lit major in college. In an intimate seminar setting, I felt like I had traveled back to my university days. Everybody loved the stories we read and movies we watched as much as I did. Our professor gently probed our understanding with insightful questions and deepened our appreciation with astute observations. The level of discourse was impressive, bordering on intimidating.

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to be a student again. I loved it!

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**Volunteer – choose a committee position or step into the frenzy of activity on auction night. New positions are open to help with the raffle, dessert, and food committees!**

Keep an eye out for your auction packet in the next few weeks. In the meantime, you can check out last year’s auction site at [http://www.topsk8.org/helping/auction/](http://www.topsk8.org/helping/auction/) for a preview of the fun to come or contact members of the Auction Committee -

**Chair** .................................................. Janet Morrison

  janetm@blarg.net

  634-2203

**Volunteer Coord** .......................... Beth Eagen

  b_eagen@hotmail.com

  723-5149

**Procurement** .......................... Pam Copeland

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  264-1850

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**A Day in the Life of Gym**

By Evan Hobbs, Grade 6

The class swiftly and quietly walks in the gym doors and immediately heads to their assigned spot. We all stretch the way we have learned in the past from Don and Eric. After, Don and Eric will lecture us quickly and then have us run a certain period or distance. Then, we are given choices including air hockey, foosball, football, soccer, badminton, wave boards, unicycles, ping pong, Chinese yo-yo, juggling, and Ultimate Frisbee (we call it Ultimate because the printer messed up on our team shirts), and many more. On some days, we even get to play spot, pinsocum, line soccer, line Ultimate Frisbee, drills, and much more. Don and Eric make TOPS an awesome place! They are funny, crack jokes, and do pranks all day. Don and Eric also do the CARE meeting and they always take care of problems so everyone ends up with a good fair agreement in the end. They are always talking mainly about football but sports in general. Most of all they are cool, friendly, and fantastic teachers!
The 6th grade enjoyed another great visit to Olympic Park Institute in November. OPI is located on Lake Crescent, in Olympic National Park, truly a spectacular location.

The OPI instructors did a fantastic job with TOPS students by tailoring all of the field work to follow the laboratory template students will use throughout middle school here at TOPS. Students spent five to six hours each day in the field studying topics such as the water clarity of Lake Crescent, lake plankton identification, air temperature variations between the lake and Marymere Falls, mushroom growth patterns, and identifying different scat.

My overarching goal for camp is for students to gain an appreciation for our National Park system. I want them to not just see the park, but feel it, smell it, and hear it. It is my hope that the camp experience helps foster within each student the importance of stewardship for the Earth and all of the magical, wild places it holds.

Camp Olympic Park Institute

By Zaelin Johnson, Grade 6

Camp OPI was a wonderful experience for me, it really changed my whole thought of going camping in the woods because of how beautiful it was, seeing snow on the peaks of the mountain was awesome. At OPI we did lots of day activities with the OPI instructors. My instructor was Nathan. He was really great. The activities we did were canoeing, hiking up Storm King Mountain, going to the waterfall, and a skin and bones lab inside the classroom. We took data on deer poop (which goes by the name of scat). That is not all. Through the whole three days and two nights we visited OPI we had morning meetings and night meetings and played lots of fun games. OPI's food was terrific. We had burritos on the first day of camp for dinner. We had eggs, sausage, and biscuits the next morning for breakfast. We had sandwiches for lunch. Through all the rain and the cold our sixth grade class from TOPS school managed to have an awesome time at Camp OPI.
The TOPS ski bus started as an icy expedition. Puffy children in snow gear file out of the bus, swaggering under the weight of their clothes. The walk up the slope is tiring and the ride up the lift is anxious but it’s worth it for the feeling of powder under your feet.

Some go on the jumps, some hit the moguls, and some the bunny slope. There is a place for everyone. As the cold nips at our toes, hands, and noses we settle in for dinner. We gather at the tables and discuss where we have been skiing and riding. Then, we go back out and ski into the dark of night.

Although the skiing is fun, the bus on the ride home is where the real party is. We listen to music, sing and hold hands with our boyfriends. Laughs cover any conversation the adults try to have. Water drips from the overhead bins off our jackets and boots onto our faces.

As the city comes into sight, tired kids call their parents and ask permission for sleep-overs and hope for a yes. As the night comes to a close we eagerly wait for next week.
I'm enjoying my thirteenth year as the TOPS' girls basketball coach. This year we have a young group of kids; we lost a lot of 8th graders last year and have no 8th graders this year. So far I've been very impressed with how hard the kids are working, having fun, and improving even though the game scores have not been in our favor!

The boys team has undergone a coaching change this year since long time coach Thomas Walker is not able to coach this year. We really appreciate all he did for our students and school. We have two excellent replacement coaches, Raft and Quan, and a large group of players showing a lot of talent. The kids are having a good time, playing well, and winning some games!
Upcoming Dates of Note

February 4 .........................Early Dismissal
February 16 – 20 ..................No School
March 4 ..............................Early Dismissal
March 17-19 ..........................Book Fair
March 19 ..............................Taste of TOPS
March 20 ..............................No School
March 30 – April 3 ...............No School
May 2 .................................TOPS Auction
May 15 ..............................Art Fest
May 15-16 ............................Elementary School Play

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