March 2009 • Volume 12, Issue 6
The monthly newsletter of TOPS, a Seattle Public K-8 alternative school

Message from the Principal

It’s hard to believe that it is March already. February zoomed by! The many celebrations of Lunar New Year are a happy memory, along with Friday ski bus. Even though it was a short month, there were many activities of all kinds at TOPS. Our boys’ and girls’ basketball teams showed great enthusiasm and developing skill as they played through February. We’re proud of our students’ efforts and we appreciate their focus and good sportsmanship. Great season! Spring will bring girls’ volleyball, track, boys’ soccer, Ultimate Frisbee Club, and even some sailing through the Center for Wooden Boats. At TOPS we are so fortunate to have staff and families who continue to provide such wonderful activities for our students.

In February, TOPS eighth graders spent three days involved in the very first “Planting the Seed” project. Our gratitude goes to Lori Eickelberg, Sheri Toussaint, and Elizabeth Dickinson for their great care for and commitment to the coordination and planning of this project. This outstanding experience for our eighth graders will be with them for the rest of their lives. The students processed their thoughts, experiences, and feelings through discussions, journaling, artwork, and debriefs. It is clear that their thinking deepened and the seeds of compassion and responsibility were indeed planted. This was definitely an all-school effort with many teachers guiding the groups. Staff who remained at school generously covered for their colleagues in many ways. “Planting the Seed” took our whole TOPS village and this is surely what makes our school great!

Auction 2009

Spring FOR TOPS!

Saturday, May 2, 2009
Asian Resource Center

By Kelly Griffin

Spring into action for the TOPS spring auction and help raise $110,000. We’ll finish the work we started with the No-Bake to fund the materials, services, and programs that none of us want our kids to do without!

Your auction packet should have already arrived and now is the time to focus on procuring auction items. We’re looking for items worth $50 or more and procuring them for the auction is easier than you’d think. All it takes is a few quick conversations with people who can donate a product or service to the auction. You’d be surprised how often people happily contribute – it’s great advertising for them! Simply follow this step-by-step guide:

STEP 1: Inventory your own resources:
• Are you a talented artisan, cook, organizer, photographer, gardener, or musician?
• Do you have friends who are noted artists, famous athletes, or have access to unique opportunities?
• Do you have vacation property you can share?
• Do you have a big pick-up truck for a day of hauling or a boat for a day of sailing?
• Can you host a TOPICS for Grown-ups

Auction 2009

Continued on page 10

Auction 2009

Continued on page 5

April TOPSNews Deadline
Monday, March 9 • Submissions to topsnewsletter@gmail.com
The Coalition for Social Justice Presents the
Tenth Annual Taste Of Tops
Our Theme Will Honor The Culture Of:

CHINA

Thursday, March 19, 2009
6:00 – 9:00 p.m.

The Taste of TOPS is an all school multicultural celebration, family potluck, and talent showcase. We will have the opportunity to share a part of us that makes us who we are through the foods we love.

Please bring a potluck dish to share reflecting your family traditions.

Potluck dinner
6:00-7:30 p.m. TOPS Cafeteria
◆ Featuring samples of Chinese cuisine

Events throughout the evening
◆ Chinese music and performance including the Lion Dance
◆ Chinese arts and crafts including calligraphy
◆ Participate in a social justice project benefiting children in China

Student Talent Showcase
7:30-9:00 p.m. TOPS Gym (Forms to sign up for the Talent Show will be available in the front office beginning March 1.)

The Taste of TOPS flyers are available in Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Somali, Tagalog, and Tigrigna in the TOPS office or by request.

To volunteer or for more information contact:
Lynne Goodrich (206) 725-6656 or goodrich_yas@msn.com
Welcoming the Year of the Ox
Learning about Chinese culture at TOPS
By Nancy Bacon

TOPS Chinese language and culture students welcomed Chinese year 4707 – the Year of the Ox – at the end of January. Students from grades K through 4 celebrated Chinese New Year with Chinese songs, crafts, and games. The importance of Chinese New Year was expressed by the teachers. “Chinese New Year is a time to forget any unhappiness that happened in the past year. It is a holiday of celebration with friends and family members,” said teacher Pollyanna Wang. Xiao Yu Jackson added, “Chinese New Year is about cleaning, togetherness, forgiveness, celebration, and new beginnings.” The people of many other Asian countries celebrate their New Year around the same time as the Chinese.

The celebration began at TOPS with a lively singing of Guan Xi, a New Year’s song that involves putting your hands together and tapping them over each shoulder. Guan Xi means connection or relationship, and Chinese people celebrate family and friends during this time of year. Ask one of the older Chinese language students to sing Guan Xi for you – they find it great fun.

TOPS Chinese teachers Pollyanna Wang and Xiao Yu Jackson organized a series of games and crafts to teach the children about the holiday. Chinese New Year culminates in the Lantern Festival, and so children made lanterns covered with symbols of prosperity. They learned about the Chinese zodiac by making bookmarks of their sign, and they practiced Chinese calligraphy by writing the character for happiness on red paper squares.

Children ate traditional Chinese New Year foods. They enjoyed dumplings, eaten because they look like the golden ingots used during the Ming Dynasty for money, and eating them brings the promise of wealth and prosperity. They ate oranges, traditional because the word for orange sounds like the word for wealth. And they tried homemade bean cake. When one student was asked about his favorite part of the celebration, he quickly exclaimed, “the food!”

The highlight for many of the children was the handing out of the red lucky money envelopes, called lei see in Chinese, which contained Chinese money and a chocolate coin. Traditionally, the oldest person in the family – in our case the oldest parent – hands out the envelopes to children and wishes them a Happy New Year.

The TOPS Chinese program currently runs three classes: grades 1-2 and 3-5 started in October, and the Kindergarten program began in January. Thirty-five students take part in the program that teaches basic Chinese language and writing and about Chinese culture. The program is Site Council-sponsored and parent-driven. “I really enjoy studying about China,” said one first grader.

Join us at the 2nd Annual TOPS BOOK FAIR!
In partnership with Secret Garden Bookstore

**WHEN:**
- **Wednesday, MARCH 18:** 10:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
- **Thursday, MARCH 19:** 10:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.

**WHERE:** TOPS Library

**WHY:** To buy books that benefit you, TOPS and a local bookstore, The Secret Garden.

Please donate to “A BOOK FOR EVERYONE” Fund while visiting the Book Fair (this will ensure that all TOPS kids have the chance to get a book at the Fair).

Teacher Wish-List books also available for purchase!

Last year, we earned over $1,200 worth of books for teachers, the TOPS Library and to subsidize “A Book For Everyone” Fund. THANK YOU!!!

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO HELP MAKE THIS YEAR’S BOOK FAIR A SUCCESS. EMAIL susan.welch1@comcast.net**

PLEASE NOTE: The Fair will not be open before the school day starts this year.
In a very real sense, people who have read good literature have lived more than people who cannot or will not read.

~ S. I. Hayakawa

Can you believe it? The 2009 ALA Awards for children’s literature just came out and we have all but one of the Newbery Medal books this year. That rarely happens. As reported in last month’s column under new books, we have copies of Neil Gaiman’s *The Graveyard Book*. That this book won the award for “the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children” is a “no brainer.” It is a page-turner filled with characters that you come to feel close to. The Seattle Public Library has as of press time 386 holds on 80 copies. We have three copies, which are always out. One of his other books for children, *Coraline*, is now out as an animated movie. We also have the honor books, *The Underneath*, *Savvy*, and *After Tupac and D Foster*. We don’t have the Caldecott Medal winner, *The House in the Night*, by Beth Krommes, but we soon will. The illustrations look wonderful. To find out more about all the winners in each category check out www.perma-bound.com/ALA-Awards-2009.

Did you know that “once upon a time” TOPS students participated in TOPICS every week for 3 days a week? Every once in a while we would delve into a theme, but never anything as rewarding as the Social Justice TOPICS that were completed in the middle of January. Once again I was fortunate to be paired with Susan Welch, parent of Kevin in 3rd grade. This time we traveled via Metro to the “U” district where we helped prepare a meal for the “Roots Friday Feast.” Housed in the University Temple United Methodist Church, Roots (Rising out of the Shadows) is a Friday tradition that was started by a UW student in 1999. The goal is to provide a restaurant quality meal to anyone every Friday. Our job was to help prepare bread plates and a fruit salad. The students certainly gained a better appreciation of the work involved to help people in need. They are always looking for volunteers on Fridays. They also have shifts to help serve the dinner and to clean up afterwards. I know I will be going back, but not before the next adventure which is about to start. This one finds me as one of eight leaders of a group of 8th graders as we immerse ourselves in Seattle’s social service agencies over the course of three days. The 8th grade program, “Planting the Seeds,” will be reported in the next newsletter.

Thanks to “Friends of TOPS” our students are able to participate in many activities and share in many things that many other schools aren’t afforded. One such area is library book acquisition. Well this year we have some other people to thank. Many of you may have heard of the three Moms from Spokane who took it upon themselves to save their Spokane Public School libraries when the district decided to cut back on library services. Knowing the importance of quality libraries these women started a campaign to help save the services in Spokane. They didn’t stop there, but went on to the state level and asked for more funding for libraries in public schools. Their tireless work resulted in the state Library Media Grant (ESHB 2687), which gives one-time funding for library materials at each school that currently has a library staffed by a librarian. Thus our district gets a share equal to $160,877. Each of our schools gets a share. Watch for more news in later editions of this newsletter, and if you have suggestions on materials, please share them with me. See this link for the complete article. It is a positive and worthwhile read: http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA6590045.html
Volunteer for TOPS!

By Beth Eagen

Are you looking for some ways to fill your free time? Are you searching for a good time? We need you! Please join in the fun and volunteer for the auction.

Choose a committee position (it’s not as scary as it sounds) or lend a hand the night of the auction!

Among the many volunteer opportunities we are still looking for:

♦ Catering committee—no cooking experience necessary!
♦ Auction Chair Apprentice—learn from the master Janet Morrison!
♦ Topics for Grown-ups—It’s even more fun than it sounds!

You may be already enlisted and not even know!

Traditionally Kindergarten families help with the day of the auction set up and Fifth Grade families help with post auction break down and clean up. I’ll soon be contacting both grades with details (Look out all other grades I’ll find something for you next!).

Whether you are available for one hour or many there are countless ways to help with the auction. Each year the auction is a huge success because of the great volunteers who help. Volunteering is fun and is a wonderful way to get to know TOPS families and friends better.

If you are interested in volunteering please contact Beth Eagen at b_eagen@hotmail.com or 723-5149.

Spring for TOPS continued from page 1

Party – knitting lessons, flip-flop decorating, in-depth discussions on the art of the martini?

♦ Do you have any NEW (not used) items you can donate worth $50 or more?

STEP 2: Think about the businesses you frequent and the organizations you belong to:

♦ Restaurants ♦ Museums
♦ Hairdressers ♦ Clubs
♦ Mechanics ♦ Studios

STEP 3: Identify the items you want to procure. Hot procurement items include restaurant gift certificates, sports tickets, getaways, boat trips, retail gift certificates, camps, special dinners, and lessons.

STEP 4: Check the TOPS auction website to see which businesses have already donated items or services to make sure there isn’t too much overlap.

STEP 5: Approach the businesses you’ve identified. Visiting in person always helps:

♦ Ask for the owner or manager.
♦ Introduce yourself as a family of TOPS and provide them with a copy of the procurement letter you received in your auction packet. More procurement letters are available in the TOPS office.
♦ Tell them that TOPS school needs their support and ask them “Can your business support our school through a donation to our spring auction?” Remind them that all donations are tax deductible. Let them know that 350 people attend our auction and that their business will be listed in our catalog. It’s a great opportunity for exposure!
♦ Fill out the donation form completely, giving the business their copy.
♦ Thank the owner/manager warmly!

STEP 6: Turn in donation forms to the TOPS office by April 6. Be sure that the donation forms are completely filled out! If possible, turn in the donated item with the form. Otherwise items can be delivered to the office as late as April 24. Perishable, large or otherwise fragile items can be delivered to the auction site by 10:30 a.m. on May 2 – the day of the auction.

Questions? Check out the auction web site at http://www.topsk8.org/helping/auction/ or contact members of the Auction Committee.

Chair
Janet Morrison janetm@blarg.net 634-2203

Volunteer Coordinator
Beth Eagen b_eagen@hotmail.com 723-5149

Procurement
Pam Copeland jmpamandsophia@comcast.net 323-4278

Silent Auction
Janet Morrison janetm@blarg.net 634-2203
Ellen Levi elevi@comcast.net 282-5596
Romany Surla rsurla@metalmetrics.com

Live Auction
Cam Sata clsata@hotmail.com 525-0938
Barb Lui bjlui@aol.com 725-3204

Class Projects
Cam Sata clsata@hotmail.com 525-0938
Barb Lui bjlui@aol.com 725-3204

Registration
Jamie Flaxman jamieandsam@earthlink.net 286-1295
No-Bake is Declared a Success
By Julie Wroble

Thank you to everyone who helped make this year’s No-Bake fall fundraiser a success! Although we came up a bit short of our $90,000 and 100% participation goals, we are thrilled to have raised at least $77,683 contributed by 53% of families for programs that support TOPS students! There may be a few more donations trickling in and we’ve had a few problems reconciling donations that were made at the workplace. Please be assured that we are working hard to work out the bugs and we hope to have better systems in place for tracking these donations next year. In the meantime, let’s look forward to more fundraising success at our auction.

We would love to have your feedback on this year’s No-Bake. What types of events or notices would encourage you to donate? What did you think of the involvement of the ASB students? If you have any comments or input you’d like to share, please contact Marlies van Bergeijk at paul-marlies@att.net.

Thanks to everyone who has made a contribution to the No Bake. Please let us know if you have not been recognized!

Thank You Friends of TOPS
By Kristina Stoneberg, 1st Grade Teacher

Last April, at the auction thousands of dollars were raised to help teachers “complete a classroom.” Two teachers report on how their classrooms have improved.

Marianne is a middle school teacher. She is thankful for the new bookshelves in her classroom. They have made it much easier to organize the supplementary texts she uses for social studies units as well as other curriculum materials. “Bookshelves may seem like a small thing, but they are a huge help to me. Thank you, Friends of TOPS.”

First grade teacher, Sarah says, “I am grateful for my mounted projector (it’s up on the ceiling out of harm’s way). My new screen is also large enough for me to project the entire picture on. Both of these items I use multiple times a day and could not imagine teaching without them! Many Thanks, Friends of TOPS!”

Thanks to all of you who donated last year to help “Complete a Classroom.”

First Graders showed their spirit on TOPS Twin Day during spirit week!

photos by Pam Copeland
Thanks to everyone who has made a contribution to the No-Bake!

Please let us know if you have not been recognized!

Tsegreda Adal
Andrea Akiti & Walter Zisette
Rabiba Al-Harazi & Samia Salon
Michael Allmon
Kari Anderson & Jory Oppenheimer
Sheila Anderson
Sharone Andrews & Peter Carter
Bob & Mickey Angell
Brad & Wilma Angell
Anne Barrett
Thomas Beiler & Edith Burpee
Elissa Benson
Peter Benson & Patricia Worden
Heidi & Craig Berryssmith
Jeffrey & Mary Beth Bert
Marc & Cheri Bloom
Edith B. Boyden & W. Lincoln
Ian A. Brown & Romany Surla
Sarah Busie
Johnny Calagno & Karen Stuhlreder
Susan & Boyd Carter
Cristina & Miguel Castro
Bonnie & Frank Cech
Renee & William Ceriale
Michael Chapko & Marcia Weaver
Doug Chapman & Karol King
John & Gail Chase
Ronald A. Chew
Andrea Chin & Vance Martin
Howard Choder & Robin Freedman
Ken & Tiffany Clark
John Clem & Ellen Geverdale
Warren Clemans & Kathryn Schmid
Brennan & Karen Connor
James & Pamela Copeland
David & Susan Cotter
Conor Courteney
Michael Courteney & Christine O'Leary
Jennifer Crowe & David Quasha
Bruce Curry & Sayuri Doi
Kathryn Cox-Czosnyka & Phillip Czosnyka
Per & Carol Danieshion
Jeff & Kat Davis
Caroline Dodge
Christopher Draem & Patrick Sexton
Samuel Duncan & Pamela van Dalsen
Cheryl Dunkel
Bich-Ngoc Anna Duong & James West
Catherine Duva & Paul Shannon
Allison & Ted Dworkin
Lester Eastlick & Sigrun C. Denny
Arthur & Charlene Emlen
Lisa Emlen & Robert Takahasi
Liz & Al Espiritu
Jane Evans
Frank Fabens & Gloria Albita
Simon Farr & Dani Vinh
Jamie Flaxman
Charlene & Timothy Forslund
Celia Fragale
Linda G. Furney
Jorge Garcia & Barbara Schinzinger
Maureen & Joe Germani
Angela & John Gaeber
Sheila & Colin Gilligan
Tyril Graham & Melissa Chow
Connie & Bruce Gray
Barbara Green
Duncan & Kelly Griffin
Paul & Karen Gruen
Justine Guarda & Jose F. Vazquez
Thury Gudmundsdottir
Angela Hamilton
Rachael Hannah & Alan Kahn
Robert Hardy & Susie McDonald
Lynn & Mark Harmann
Paul Hasegawa
Shelly Haverkamp
June Hayakawa-Fung & Larry Fung
Carroll Haymon
George Heynern & Michelle Buetow
Mark & Kimberly Hobbs
Nancy Hom John Dickson
Chi Hsiong
Laura Hopkins & Brett Baba
Lee & Ted Howard
John Hoyt & Lisa Fitzhugh
Grace Hua & Yu Han Ma
Dian Huang & Michelle Pennielegion
Bruce Jackson & Xia-Yu L Jackson
Kira Jackson
Jules James
Michael James & Majken Ryherd
Jason & Heather Jarvis
Kristin & Alex Johnston
Robert Morrison
Janet & Robert Morrison
Valerie Muller & Jim Sorenson
Chun M Ng
Huay Thu Nguyen
Nam-Phuong & John Nguyen
Vien-Thao Nguyen & Kieu H. Bui
Doraine Nieburgs
Mack Nishida
David & Karen Obermeyer
Michael & Moira O'Brien
Suzanne Oelke & Mustapha Haddouch
Rocio Sanchez Ojeda
Datis Oldham & Julie E. Alexander
Karen & Peter Olive
Yvonne & Barry Onouye
Stephen Page
Amy Paige & Tim Callahan
Kathleen Pape & Alex Korahais
Sarah & Gershon Parent
Mareosa & Phillip Patterson
William Patz & Erin M. Fairley
Juan & Sally Perla
HDR Engineering/Dave Peters
Essex & Cynthia Porter
Leigh & Louise Rabel
Edward & Alya Raftery
Mary P. Ranahan & Keith Galloway
Kevin & Lisa Reynolds
Paul Robaidek
Roxanne Dover-Robinson & David Robinson
Barbara & Brian Rockey
Linda & Paul Rockey
Sheila Rogers
Kermit F. Rosen & Louise D. Bush
Cynthia Ruggerio & Blake Hannaford
Camille Sata & Jon Nishida
Leah Schoonover & Cameron Curtis
Barry & Myrna Schwartz
George & Clara Scott
Elizabeth & David Scott
Ginger Segel & Robert H. Kubiniec
Cliff & Sandy Shetler
Richard Silverstein & Janis White
Peter & Ann Simonson
Harold & Carolyn Simonson
Jennifer L. Smith
Lisa Soldano & Kent Hamilton
William & Leslie Spurr
Jay Stansell & Dori Cahn
Catherine Staunton & Jairam Lingappa
Harris & Ardetta Steiner
Cynthia Steiner
Peter Stevens
Helen Stusser
Isabel & Herb Stusser
Michael & Vanessa Stusser
Laure Stusser-McNeil
Emily Sullivan
Marc A. Summer
Cho & Cindy Suzumura
Daniel & Miriam Swedlow
Jana M. Swift & Paul Loovis
Glen Tamura & Ken Comstock
Sinclair & Cynthia Temple
Grebesselie Tensaw
Nicole Titus
Chinh Tran
Clifford & Kate Trent
John & Wendy Trieger
Marlies van Bergeijk
Valeri Vasioukhin & Olga Klezovitch
Minh Vo & Trang Nguyen
Mavis von Torne
Karen Walker
Allison & Tom Walsh
Sara Waterman & Curtis DeGasperi
Teresa & William Weatherspoon
Susan Welch
Elizabeth Wells
Sarah Westervelt & Tim Walsh
Dan Wheatman & Melinda Deane
James Whisman & Cecilia Winblad
Casey & Ron White
Curtiss & Lawrie Williams
Merrily Wolf & Robert Escalanta
Michael & Tracy Wrey
Keith Wright
Julie Wroble & Richard Kolpa
Munehisa & Akiko Yabuki
Ying Qing Yang
Angela Ying & John Ruhland
Techane Zebene
Can Zheng Zhao
Mei Qun & Xuehuan Zhou
Ski Bus!

By Tessa LaPatra and Margot Maraghe, Grade 6

Ski bus was a great experience. We got to chill with friends and do some great runs. The skiing was only half the fun. The ride there was so fun because we got to sit and laugh with our friends and blast some awesome tunes through portable speakers. When you get off the bus, you have about an hour of free ski/snowboard time, and then head to your lesson if you have one. After you hook up with your friends, you can do anything: have some more runs, hit the terrain park, have a snowball fight or go butt-boarding down little hills. The last ski bus was so fun for us and everyone. On ski bus, there is something for everyone. Can’t wait till next season!

Photos by Don Zemke
Message from the Principal continued from page 1

We all enjoyed The Tempest performed by Leslie Nilan’s third graders. The Commons upstairs was delightfully transformed into a theater. How wonderful to see our students exhibit so much self-control, presentation skill, poise, and talent. I know that families and friends of third graders enjoyed the memorable event. We’re looking forward to many more performances from these talented students.

March will be a busy month too. Don’t forget the Taste of TOPS on March 19. Please join us as we honor and celebrate Chinese culture. Fantastic plans are in the works, thanks to our many terrific parents who come forth to put on the fun event.

Report cards will be coming home for K-5th grade students in March. By then our school year will be two-thirds of the way behind us. There is still a lot of learning to do as we head into spring. Thanks for helping us create such a great environment for our boys and girls.

Cheers!
~ Clara

News from the Building Leadership Team

By Jeanne Kaban, Assistant Principal

There are so many quality instructional events and sessions occurring at TOPS! Our instructional staff works hard to bring the best to our students every day. Learning along the way is a part of every teacher’s life, and our teachers are consistently engaged in their own learning. Most recently, our K-5 teachers spent 2 hours with the K-5 teachers from Madrona School to discuss implementing Every Day Math. Much of the instructional dialogue centered on High Leverage Teaching Moves. High Leverage Teaching Moves are specific instructional practices that have been extensively researched in classrooms for effectiveness and increased student learning. We know that we already do many of these things. But as we reflect on our practice, we find that there are always ways to improve, enhance, adjust, and differentiate our instruction to better meet the needs of all of our students. High Leverage Teaching Moves include:

- the use of one, clear teaching point for every lesson
- extensive teacher modeling of what the students are to learn
- broad use of vocabulary of all kinds
- looking for justification and reasoning
- promoting rich and engaging discourse; student-to-student, teacher-student
- creating public records of student thinking, references, resources for student use
- daily use of notebooks for practice and chronicling thinking
- ongoing formative assessment to inform the teacher’s instruction on a regular basis

TOPS and Madrona teachers shared strategies and successes, discussed questions and challenges they had, and talked about the best choices for their future professional development.

On another math note, Debbie Bermet, TOPS Math Specialist, held a series of Family Math Events. Debbie familiarized parents with the elements of an Every Day Math lesson. A teaching point was the learning of one new algorithm. Math games were also introduced and played by participants. It comes as no surprise that the parents really enjoyed the games! It’s such a good way to learn and practice math. We are grateful for Debbie’s planning and expertise. I know that there are more parents able to converse about Every Day Math in a more confident way.

Literacy learning was also a highlight. Primary teachers spent the early dismissal afternoon learning about the instructional ways to use Word Walls. Simply put, Word Walls are alphabetical listings of high frequency words common to our writing that we all need to know how to spell. Teacher discussion centered on location, size, number of words, sources of words, and instructional strategies for teaching kids to use the Word Wall. As we strive to grow independent writers and readers, effective interaction with a classroom Word Wall can provide spelling and writing support for students, freeing the teacher for more conferring time with individuals.

Writers Workshop teachers and TOPS Writing Specialist, Jacque Ensign, have initiated weekly “touch base” meetings after school. The purpose of these collaborative sessions is to have focused dialogue and idea sharing for effective implementation of Writers Workshop. The teachers take something away from these sessions that can be immediately used in their classrooms.

This high level of learning on the part of TOPS teachers trickles down to their students on a daily basis. How special it is to be in a learning environment that is so effective for children and adults.

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!
Parents We Need Your Help!

We need your help in these areas that directly affect your student’s safety and in sustaining an effective learning environment: student drop off/pick up and cell phones.

Before School Drop Off: Please do not drop off your children before 8:30 a.m. There is no planned supervision of students before 8:30 a.m. Staff are in the building, but they need this time to prepare for the day’s work. Kids Co. is available for younger student care.

After School Pick Up: Increasing numbers of students miss after school buses, activity buses, or wait for long periods of time for their rides after school. This is an unsafe situation for everyone involved. Students are wandering the buildings and we have no way to keep track of them.

- School staff need to leave the building at a predictable time to take care of their families, attend classes and meetings, and/or take care of other business. Staff cannot leave until all students are gone. Students waiting to be picked up must have their rides arrive by 4:30 daily or 4:45 on Tuesdays and Thursdays if they participate in activities.
- All students need to be out of the building and picked up by 4:30.
- On Tuesdays and Thursdays, parents need to be at school by 4:45 to pick up students after activities. (The activity buses leave promptly at 5 p.m.)
- The library closes promptly at 4:30 and is a “homework only” environment.

Cell Phones: Increasing problems with cell phone usage by students during the school day, especially in classrooms, is a growing issue. It is important for you to know our cell phone policy. On many occasions, students are receiving calls or text messages from parents.

- Student cell phones are to be TURNED OFF during school hours, regardless of where in the building the students might be.
- If a student is using a cell phone during school hours, the phone will be taken away and will be locked in either Mrs. Scott’s or Ms. Kuban’s office.
- Parents must come to school to retrieve the phone. It will not be given directly to the student.

Thank you for helping us with these concerns. Please know that we have your student’s learning and safety in focus as we make these requests.

Clara Scott and Jeanne Kuban

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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.

**March**

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<tr>
<td>4 (W)</td>
<td>Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 (W)</td>
<td>Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m., TOPS library</td>
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<td>13 (F)</td>
<td>TOPICS 1-3 p.m.</td>
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<td>13 (F)</td>
<td>2nd Friday of the Month Club, 4:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>13 (F)</td>
<td>Middle school dance, 6:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>18-19 (W-Th)</td>
<td>TOPS Book Fair</td>
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<td>19 (Th)</td>
<td>Taste of TOPS 6-9 p.m.</td>
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<td>20 (F)</td>
<td>Professional development day; no school</td>
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<td>22 (Su)</td>
<td>The Big Climb</td>
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<td>25 (W)</td>
<td>Young Author’s Celebration, 2:10 p.m.</td>
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**April**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26 (Th)</td>
<td>Grades 6-8, SPED to SCT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 (F)</td>
<td>Kindergarten ABC party, 1 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 (F)</td>
<td>TOPICS 1-3 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-31 (M-T)</td>
<td>Spring Break; no school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 (W-F)</td>
<td>Spring Break; no school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 (W)</td>
<td>Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m., TOPS library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 (F)</td>
<td>End of third quarter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 (F)</td>
<td>2nd Friday of the Month Club, 4:30 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-30 (M-T)</td>
<td>WASL testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 (Sa)</td>
<td>Landscaping Work Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 (F)</td>
<td>TOPICS, Cultures of the World theme, 1-3 p.m.</td>
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**May**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (F)</td>
<td>WASL testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (S)</td>
<td>TOPS Auction, 5 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 (W)</td>
<td>Grade 1 and DH to SCT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 (F)</td>
<td>TOPICS, Earth Day theme, 1-3 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 (F)</td>
<td>2nd Friday of the Month Club, 4:30 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 (F)</td>
<td>5th grade Science Fair, 9 a.m., Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-15 (W-F)</td>
<td>7th grade Camp, Mt. St. Helens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 (W)</td>
<td>Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m., TOPS library</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 (F)</td>
<td>Art Fest, 6 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15-16 (F-S)</td>
<td>Elementary school play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 (W)</td>
<td>Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal</td>
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**June**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 (M)</td>
<td>Memorial Day; no school</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 (W)</td>
<td>Grades 1-2 to SCT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 (W)</td>
<td>TOPS Concert, 2 and 7 p.m., Gym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 (F)</td>
<td>Middle school dance, 6:30 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5 (T-F)</td>
<td>8th grade Camp, Deception Pass</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-5 (Th-F)</td>
<td>3rd and 4th grades to Camp Arnold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 (F)</td>
<td>8th grade Passage; 7 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 (M)</td>
<td>Elementary school Field Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 (M)</td>
<td>Middle school to Wild Waves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 (F)</td>
<td>Last student day, 2:20 p.m. dismissal</td>
</tr>
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For the second year TOPS’ Coalition for Social Justice organized a series of TOPICS on the theme of Social Justice. On January 16, 16 parents and the TOPS staff led students in grades K-5 in learning about homelessness, international human rights, propaganda and logos, poverty and economic disparity, and civil rights. Students learned by singing, sewing, cooking, drawing, brainstorming, talking, watching slide shows and films, and eating. Here are the reflections of the parent leaders of these topics on social justice. So much learning happened in so little time that Friday afternoon at TOPS. Ask your child which TOPIC they were involved in and what they learned! Perhaps you can share these reflections on the different TOPICS together and continue the conversations about social justice at home.

What if you lived in a tent?, led by parents Elizabeth Dickinson and Patricia Bitner – Our topic was “What if you lived in a tent?” inspired by the homeless encampments Tent City and Nickelsville. We put up two tents, climbed inside, and talked about being homeless—where would you go if your family lost their home? What would you choose to take? Who would care for your other things? What and where would you eat? Where would you wash your clothes and shower? Could you bring your pets? Could your parents vote? What would you do for fun? How would you see your friends? The students had many thoughtful, creative responses. It was good to learn that our parents could vote, and not so good to learn that it is hard to keep your pet when you’re staying in shelters. But you can have pets in encampments.

We then offered several activities: filling toiletry bags for the 8th graders to take on their “Planting the Seeds” immersion experience (Patricia had 18 toiletry bags from airlines!), writing letters about homelessness to our elected officials, and making pillowcases and the beginning of a quilt for homeless families. Everyone got to use a sewing machine! It felt like we were in a whirlwind for two hours, but I think everyone enjoyed the opportunities to reach out to others who don’t have homes right now.

Homeless and Hungry in Seattle’s University District—Let’s give a helping hand, led by parent Susan Welch and librarian Steve Haines – Steve Haines and I took a group of six girls from third – fifth grade to ROOTS Friday Feast Homeless Meal Kitchen in the basement of the University Temple United Methodist Church in the U. District. It was fantastic! We took the Metro bus there and back (less than 10 minutes each way), which presented a wonderful opportunity to talk about the expectations and then debrief on the way back. We were able to visit and work in the kitchen for nearly two hours—plenty of time to get our hands into the process and make a difference for the Friday Feast Team!

The girls thoroughly embraced the experience from the moment we left TOPS. They chatted about other service work they’d done while awaiting the bus, and studied the homeless shelter map I’d provided them, to see which places were closest to their homes. Once we arrived, Colin Ledbetter (Friday Feast director) gave us a quick tour, then put us all to work arranging bread and pastry baskets for each table and preparing a gigantic fruit salad that would be served to over 100 evening homeless guests. The girls were impressed with the yummy quality of both the baked goods, which are regularly donated by a first class Seattle bakery, and the fresh fruit, which came from Metropolitan Market on Queen Anne. The basket arrangers worked together to cut bread, fill baskets, wrap them tight and put them on the rolling cart. The fruit salad team washed, cut, and managed the mess around oranges, grapes, raspberries, and apples. They worked side by side with many other regular volunteers—some of whom are homeless themselves.

I heard that upon returning to their classrooms, the fifth grade girls were so enthusiastic that the entire class is convinced that it would be a good thing for them (or groups of them) to do this monthly on Friday afternoons.

Songs of Freedom, led by parent and Peak teacher Michael Adams – In Songs of Freedom, we learned about the history of some struggle songs, then sang them together.

We began with a discussion of the TOPS vision statement that begins: “We are creating a school,” not “we will” or “we have” but “we are creating,” suggesting a continual and participatory notion of “school.” I proposed to the students that every school day, when we (students, teachers, parents) come to this building, we actually transform it into a School, that on the weekends or the middle of the night when no one is there, TOPS turns back into merely a big pretty building, not a school at all. There was a lot of discussion around this proposal as well as some lively attempts to define social justice. We ended this portion with a choral reading of the Vision Statement.

Continued next page
Next we saw most of a documentary from PBS, narrated by Harry Belafonte called “We Shall Overcome” - available through Seattle Public Library (highly recommended if you haven’t seen it). It’s mostly about the history of that song - from its roots in the church, to its use in the labor movement, to its adoption by the Civil Rights movement, and finally by struggles all over the world. We heard Russian, Korean, South African, and Lebanese versions of the song.

Then we sang a number of struggle songs – “We Shall Overcome,” “This Little Light of Mine,” “Down by the Riverside,” “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around,” and “Blowin in the Wind,” often improvising verses to reflect or capture social justice issues for kids at TOPS. Nora Germani suggested we sing a song that the 5th graders learned last year for the MLK assembly, and though I didn’t know it, enough children did that the rest of us could learn it and sing along.

We ended the day with a final solemn and rousing version of “We Shall Overcome,” in a circle with the classic arm over arm hand grasp popularized by the civil rights crusaders.

**What is Heifer International? A Way to Create a Positive Change in the World,** led by parents Ellen Levi and Laura Stusser-McNeil – Ellen Levi and I did a session around Heifer International, exploring the idea of sustainable giving to bring about lasting change. We broke the kids into two teams to rehearse and perform skits: Team 1’s story involved a group of hungry villagers and a generous donor who brought them a bunch of fish to eat. A month later, they were hungry again. Team 2’s donor brought them a fishing pole and trained them how to use it. A month later, they were still catching fish. We talked about how it’s hard to do anything when immediate emergency needs aren’t being met and thank goodness there are organizations out there in the world dealing with food, safety, and housing. But Heifer’s mission is different.

Then we explained how Heifer operates around the world with gifts of livestock and the training and follow up that goes along with it. We broke into teams of two; each team received a card with an animal on it and they were to come up with all of the ways this animal might be useful. Heifer, bees, chicks, water buffalo, rabbits, etc. Then they reported back to the group where we brainstormed even more. The resources from the animals were sometimes a surprise (Poop as fertilizer! Eating bugs saves gardens!). This was great interactive time. We spoke briefly at the end about fundraising, what each student could do at home or with friends to support Heifer (future birthday present donations, lemonade stands, etc.). We distributed a fundraising idea sheet from the organization for young people.

**The Universal Declaration of Human Rights,** led by parent Suzanne Olke – I showed an animated film put out by Amnesty International on human rights. Afterward, each kid picked a human right to create a poster about. Half of the kids chose the “right to rest and leisure” which I got a kick out of. While they were making the posters, I made up scenarios and they had to say whether they thought human rights were being violated or not. We also talked about responsibilities that go with rights, and before they left, each person had to name two human rights (besides rest and leisure).

**Poverty in Brazil,** led by parent Nancy Bacon – In my group, we discussed poverty in Brazil through slides and my sharing of stories. We discussed the intersection of race, class, and poverty and discussed how one organization, Bahia Street, is helping to break cycles of poverty for impoverished African-Brazilian girls living in the shantytowns of Salvador. We discussed how Bahia Street was founded by two activists who decided to address the problems that they saw all around them. I invited the kids to think about an issue that they care about and be an activist for change. They created a brochure for their imagined organization and shared them with the group.

I appreciated this chance to talk with kids about real issues that they notice but rarely get to talk about. Having a mix of Caucasian, Asian-American, and African-American students (and others) contributes to an interesting and frank conversation about race, particularly since we are talking about a place far away that no kids to date have known anything about. I appreciate the feminist girls who speak up about unequal wages and discrimination that they have experienced, and boys who question “why girls?” given that boys make up half the population. In a perfect world the kids would come to these sessions with a little bit more knowledge about the world – we spent the first part of the gathering finding Brazil on the map – but at least they are learning about these places this way.

As a parent, I appreciated Michael Adams’ session on songs, my daughter Aria is still singing songs from that session, and it has been fun for our family to re-learn the words together.

**Celebrating the Lunar New Year,** led by parents Ron Chew and Roseanne Lorenzana – Ron Chew and I along with Ron’s friend, Maxine Chan, hosted a TOPICS session to highlight the history of Chinese-Americans and the discrimination they suffered. The presentation was organized around the theme of the special foods of Lunar New Year, including a tasty sampling of numerous kinds of hot and cold dishes. Maxine explained the special meaning of the foods while telling stories about Chinese immigrants and how they were treated. It seemed that most of the kids chose this TOPIC because they already knew about Lunar New Year (I don’t think there was any kid that did not know about it). All of the food was gobbled up, and hopefully the kids will remember some of the fascinating stories.

**The Stuff Kids have in the U.S. and around the World**, led by parent Catherine Staunton – Teaching about international social justices for TOPICS was fun and seemed to be worthwhile. The main resource I used was a book I love by David Smith entitled *If the World Were a Village*. I also used a great book of amazing photos called *Material World*. I also used some online resources to look at population growth and carbon emissions. The kids made a bunch of different graphs around issues comparing food, clean water, education, etc. in different parts of the world. And we played some games, etc. I think every kid there was truly impressed by the disparities world wide.

*Continued next page*
Propaganda, Marketing and Culture Jamming led by parents David Quasha, Carsten Stinn, and Linda Furney – This was the second year for this TOPIC prepared by us. We began with a conversation about what propaganda is: messages that try to influence opinions or behavior of people. We then talked with the 3rd-5th graders about why we should think about propaganda: because information is all around us and helps us form our opinions. Some of this information is propaganda - it’s used by politicians, advertisers, journalists, radio personalities, artists, and lots and lots of people who are interested in influencing our behavior. Then we presented a slide show of advertising, political campaigns, marketing, and street art graffiti. This is a fast-paced full-on interactive part, where the children shout out images and brands they instantly recognize. Then we talked about culture jamming: taking mass media or other propaganda and changing it to make a different statement. Then the kids made their own poster and presented it to the group. The students were totally engaged and it was totally fun! We look forward to doing this again next year.

Tell Scholastic: Put the Book Back in Book Clubs

By Suzanne Oelke

Are you tired of seeing the commercial "creep" that is taking over Scholastic Book catalogues, the increasing non-book items being offered such as trinkets, toys, and electronic media? Do you wonder what in the world these items have to do with education and why they are being sold at school? Maybe you’re a little put off by the pernicious psychology being employed meant to “educate” students about what more there is to buy. Do you think billion dollar corporations such as Viacom, Cartoon Network, Disney, Game Boy, Nintendo, etc. ought to be getting free advertising in the order forms while our schools are cash strapped and these same corporations have an interest in keeping them that way?

Well now there is something you can do about it. The Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood is circulating a petition on the Internet asking Scholastic to end the practice of selling non-book items in their book catalogues. CCFC has been successful in many similar endeavors such as getting Scholastic to discontinue the Bratz line, debunking Disney’s so called “Baby Einstein” which falsely advertised that it would make babies smarter, and ending the practice by McDonalds of incentivizing good grades with a “Happy Meal.” If you’re fed up with the persuasion bombardment aimed at exploiting kids and their sensitivities for profit, please go to http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/621/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=26599 and let Scholastic know it’s time to return to selling books - and only books - through their in-school book clubs.

PE

By Kiseri Tensaew, Grade 7

P.E. is the greatest class at school! Although Math, Science, English, History, Art, etc. might be fun and cool at times, it can also be very stressful and tiring because of the assignments and high expectations.

P.E. here at TOPS is a stress-free zone where you have fun while being active and fit. Some days we have a variety of choices and other days are more fitness intensive or academic since this year we have to take the new statewide P.E. and health test! I can’t wait for that…

Usually P.E. is a combination of all the above, and lots of fun!
WASHINGTON BASIC FOOD PROGRAM – BASIC FOOD

What is the Basic Food Program?
Basic Food is a food and nutrition program for individuals and families who meet income guidelines. Also known as the Food Stamp Program, Basic Food helps people to afford a nutritious diet by providing eligible households an electronic benefits card and monthly benefits to buy food at participating grocery stores.

The Rules Have Changed!
Beginning October 1, 2008, Basic Food will be available to more people in Washington. The gross income limits will increase to 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. Net income limits and asset limits are also waived under this expansion.

Many people who had too much income for the program will be eligible with the higher income limits. Everyone who applies for benefits in September 2008 will also be looked at for eligibility in October under the higher income limits.

How much income can my household have and be eligible for Basic Food?
You may be eligible for Basic Food if your household’s income (before taxes or other deductions) is not more than the amounts listed below based on the number of people in your household:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Size</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Twice Monthly</th>
<th>Every-Other Week</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
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<td>$800.31</td>
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What is the average monthly benefit families received in 2007 was $181.18

The highest monthly benefits beginning in October 2008 are:
- $176 for a one-person household;
- $323 for a two-person household; and
- $463 for a three-person household.

There Are Additional Benefits When You Receive Basic Food!
Besides monthly benefits to buy food, receiving Basic Food:
- Automatically enrolls school-age children in the free school meal program;
- Qualifies you for low-cost local phone service through the Washington Telephone Assistance Program (WTAP); and
- Shows that your family meets the Women Infants and Children (WIC) income test.

How to apply:
- Submit an application in person at the local DSHS Community Services Office (CSO), by mail, or online at www.onlinesco.dshs.wa.gov
- Have an interview for benefits. We can arrange a phone interview if an in-office interview is inconvenient;
- Provide your social security number, proof of your identity, and proof of the income and living expenses for people you are applying for. We can help you get this proof if needed.

When Do Benefits Start?
- On average, we approve applications for eligible households in less than nine days.
- More than half of all applications approved in less than six days.

When we approve an application for Basic Food, benefits go back to the date of the application.

Do Assets Like a Home, Car, or Money In the Bank Impact Eligibility For Basic Food?
No. There is no asset test for Basic Food. You can own a home, have a reliable car, and have money in checking, savings, or a retirement plan and still be eligible for Basic Food.

Are Basic Food Benefits Limited to U.S. Citizens?
No! The federal Food Stamp Program is limited to U.S. citizens and immigrants that meet specific program rules. The state pays for Basic Food benefits to legal immigrants who do not meet the citizen rules for the federal program.

Additionally, non-citizens who receive Basic Food are not considered a “public charge”. Getting Basic Food benefits will not impact someone’s immigration status with the US Citizenship and Immigration Service.

Undocumented immigrants and non-citizens who are tourists or other non-immigrants cannot receive Basic Food.

How do I get more information about Basic Food?
- Call us toll free at 877-514-FOOD (3663)
- Learn more online at www.onlinesco.dshs.wa.gov. If you don’t have the internet or a computer, you can use the computer at many public libraries.
The Coalition for Social Justice Presents the
Tenth Annual Taste Of Tops
Our Theme Will Honor The Culture Of:

CHINA

Thursday, March 19, 2009
6:00 – 9:00 p.m.

See page 2 for more information!

Thanks to G & H Printing, 2370 Eastlake E. 329-9888

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Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against in any of the District's employment or educational activities can file an internal discrimination complaint with the District's Affirmative Action Office.