November 2010  •  Volume 14, Issue 3

The best way to cheer yourself is to try to cheer someone else up.
~ Mark Twain

MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Dear TOPS Families:

October was a whirlwind of activities. Routines and schedules are now established, and students are enjoying academics and after school activities. MAP testing is behind us, so please remind your teachers to share the results of those tests with you this month during parent/teacher conferences.

Band, Orchestra, and Choir have started. We thank Johnny Calcagno for his time and dedication in getting this program up and running. Middle school students have been enjoying a wide variety of after school activities from academics to sports. They have also begun their work at the Union Gospel Mission, and the first middle school dance was a smashing success. Classes are enjoying so many autumn field trips...visiting the corn mazes, Seattle Children’s Theatre, Cedar River Salmon Hatchery, and more. Our middle school students asked lots of good questions related to their Banned Books assembly that was presented by the public library.

Our ASB officers addressed our anti-bullying guidelines, and encouraged positive student behavior. They did a great job of communicating this important information in an assembly, and students

TOPS No Bake Challenge Fund: All New Gifts Matched

By Richard Silverstein

By the time you read this article, you will have received your annual No Bake fundraising letter asking you to support the diverse programs funded by Friends of TOPS. This year’s letter will highlight the drama program. Last year my son Jonah’s class did the 3rd grade Shakespeare play. They performed A Midsummer Night’s Dream. You might think it was a challenge for third graders to master the language of Shakespeare. But they did it. Not perfectly, mind you. But it was a miracle to see children who may never in their lives have heard of Shakespeare, let alone acted his 400 year old words, triumph in their roles. And that is what TOPS is all about: challenging our children to tackle things that are new and even difficult, and watching them become fun and wondrous.

I urge you, if you have not already done so, to get out your checkbook and write as generous a gift as you can on behalf of your child and all the others at TOPS. They deserve everything we can give them and more.

If you’re a web geek and do your giving online, take advantage of a new opportunity to give to TOPS through our newly relaunched website at http://www.topsk8.org. Follow the Paypal button in the sidebar to make your web donation (3% transaction fee).

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TOPS at Seward
2500 Franklin Avenue East
Seattle, WA 98102
Phone: (206) 252-3510
Fax: (206) 252-3511
Principal: Jo Lute-Ervin
Assistant Principal: Jeanne Kuban
Site Council Chair: Janis White

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

SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DECEMBER / JANUARY TOPSNEWS DEADLINE
Friday, November 12  •  Submissions to topsnewsletter@gmail.com

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

Submit your contributions by email to topsnewsletter@gmail.com or to the newsletter box in the main office. Please send photos to javabrain@msn.com. The deadline for the December-January issue is November 12. Would you like to help with our newsletter? We are looking for a new volunteer to help with layout. See the ad in this newsletter for more information. Newcomers welcome. Please contact Ann, Dori, or Doriane at topsnewsletter@gmail.com.

A CARE CHALLENGE

by Merran Kubalak

We have an anti-bullying program at TOPS called CARE, which is an acronym for Coaching All to Respect Everyone. CARE is a framework implemented by our teachers and administrative staff to incorporate nationally accredited bullying prevention programs, Second Steps™ and Steps to Respect™, into our curriculum and our culture at TOPS. Parents, teachers, and the administration are coming together this year to better understand how the overall program is working and, as needed, seek ways to improve it. We welcome and value your input.

A small group of teachers, staff, and parents met in late September to talk about our plans for 2010-2011. It was a lively discussion with lots of ideas, but a few key principles emerged:

- Integrating CARE into our whole community -- home and school -- is vital to its success.
- Simple and small efforts can be powerful.
- All of us -- teachers, staff, and parents -- need to model CARE principles.

Our CARE program has monthly themes. You may recognize them as small notices posted on our school doors and in other spots throughout the school. They may not resonate in their current form but they are strong ideas that we need to teach our children. The TOPICS and CSJ teams are going to work to make these themes part of our community language. And we are going to ask our wonderful art teachers to consider incorporating these themes into some of their lessons.

A challenge for all of us is to take the October theme of Caring and the November theme of Empathy and discuss them with our children. Help them understand what the words mean. Encourage them to act in ways this month which show care and empathy. Tell them you’ll try it as well and follow through. Sit down with them and discuss what everyone tried. Keep it simple, it doesn’t need to be fancy:

Caring: How can you tell when someone cares about you? How can you show others you care about them?

Empathy: How might it feel to: Not know the language that everyone else is speaking? Not have any friends? Have everyone expect you to be perfect all the time? Get picked on every day?

Things to try: make eye contact and smile with someone you don’t know – this could be a grown up or child; say hello to teachers, parents, and administrative staff you may not know well; invite someone you don’t hang out with to sit by you or your friends at lunch; ask someone how they are; if you see someone struggling, ask if you can help or if you can get them help.

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. It will take all of us to make CARE successful. Thank you!

Photo by Don Zemke
We want to keep earning money for Escrip! Half of the families who are currently signed up for Escrip need to renew their Safeway cards to keep getting Escrip dollars. Log onto escrip.com and click on “renew your commitment to the Escrip program with Safeway.” Then, fill in your info and you’ll be good to go. We want to keep earning much needed money for Friends of TOPS! Thanks to all who contribute to TOPS via this program.

Curiosity, gratitude, humility, appreciation, awe, a little fear, optimism, and then finally: commitment.

Those are just some of the feelings I experienced while meeting with Ms. Eick and parent Elizabeth Dickinson to learn just how many moving parts there are to the Planting the Seeds endeavor. The exciting news this year is that, thanks to all of you who were able to raise your paddles at last spring’s auction, the ideas behind the 8th grade experience will flow into all grades of our school.

You will hear about the various projects from your children’s teachers in the next coming months. Perhaps you are one of the many who will apply for money to work with our Master Gardener to plant some of your own ideas in grades K-7. Regardless of what you know at this point, I can assure you everyone’s help is needed to keep this project sustainable year after year.

Last year, the official count for volunteers at Planting the Seeds were 62 parents and students, along with 15 staff members. So far, 35 people have offered their help. On behalf of all our students, I hope you will be one of the many to join those folks.

Look in future issues of the newsletter for specific ways to help. For now, be thinking which of your gifts you might offer this year.

Welcome to the CSJ Corner where you can look to find out what the Coalition for Social Justice has planned. Please mark your calendars for meetings and events!

Next meeting: Wednesday, November 17 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. in the TOPS Library. Check the Go-Home for agenda topics for the meeting. ALL are welcome – CSJ meetings are for anyone and everyone who is able to make it, and we welcome new ideas and new participants. If you are thinking about participating in CSJ, come to the meeting and check us out.

Tending the Whole Garden: We are looking for families and teachers to work together on curriculum projects aligned with Social Justice. There are resources and funds to cultivate new projects, and revitalize ones already being done.

Social Justice TOPICS: Begin thinking about TOPICS related to Social Justice that you could lead for K-5 in January. This will mark our 5th annual Social Justice Topics.

CSJ is a group of parents, staff, and administrators who work together in support of the stated mission and vision of TOPS. The purpose of our work is to educate ourselves and the school community about issues of academic equity, cultural diversity, and social justice as they affect our school and the broader community.

This year CSJ will focus its work on:

- **Inclusion**—making sure that all families in our community are fully included in a way that honors and values our differences
- **CARE (Coaching All to Respect Everyone)**-- TOPS Anti-Bullying Program
- **Tending the Whole Garden**—A New Project to initiate and support efforts that will effectively and sustainably align the TOPS curricula with our social justice vision/mission
- **Taste of TOPS**—annual gathering of TOPS community that focuses on a culture or social theme to learn together and share a potluck

CSJ is seeking more participation from members of the TOPS community to help with planning and ideas. Please consider spending your volunteer hours at TOPS with CSJ. Contact Karen Stuhldreher at kstuhldr@sccd.ctc.edu for more information and to be on the contact list.
SITE COUNCIL RETREAT
By Janis White, SC Chair

On October 6, Site Council held its retreat to decide on priorities for the year.

Our first priority will be to take a leading role in the School District’s review of alternative schools. The District is still designing this review, but it will include a self-assessment component. Thus, we discussed the need to review the TOPS vision and mission, to identify the alternative elements of our program we want to keep and expand, and to design other innovative programs we’d like to implement at TOPS.

This is exciting work, so we also talked about the need for an active plan of inclusion to ensure that all members of the TOPS community have an opportunity to participate. We explored the need to build trust between the different constituencies of the school – teachers, parents, students, and administrators – and ensure that our governing bodies reflect the diversity of the community.

We decided to spend time this year addressing enrichment – what programs does Friends of TOPS support that are really core to our children’s educational experience, and what programs are additional enrichment?

We want to continue to refine our model of shared governance, making sure that decisions are made with appropriate community input. Site Council plans to spend time reviewing the Friends of TOPS budget process to provide the Finance Committee more direction next spring.

Finally, we hope to address how we can become a more collaborative community in which the majority of families volunteer for the school in some capacity. We need to ensure that our valued parent-led programs are sustainable – even after families move on because their children have graduated.

Are these priorities important to you? Please let us know – email jwhite717@comcast.net with your comments and questions.

PENNY HARVEST KICKS-OFF OCTOBER 25
by Melissa Leonard

Last year, the school districts of Seattle, Bellevue, Tukwila, Bethel, Kent, Federal Way, and Highline collected $78,836.45 in pennies! That is 14 TONS of pennies!

I am proud to say TOPS has a long history of participation in this youth philanthropy and service learning project. Over 17,316 students have participated in roundtable groups to distribute 149 community grants to 94 grantees, all through the collection of pennies! TOPS met the “25 bag challenge” that was set forth, and I’m hopeful we can do it again.

By the time you read this, your child has hopefully brought home a bag to collect pennies and change from not only the sofa and chair cushions in your home, but also from grandparents, neighbors, friends, and any other person you can find. Anybody can donate pennies! And they add up to so much. In fact, if every student at TOPS collected just $3.00 in pennies, we’d have met our 25 bag goal easily. More importantly, we will then have student roundtables to discuss which community organizations should receive our donations. Any child can be part of the roundtable. We’ll meet during six lunch hours starting in February-March to define where the kids have found the greatest need in our community. I am proud to be a Penny Harvest “coach,” but make no mistake: the children make all the decisions and define the parameters of the giving.

This program is the first exposure many of our young people have to what philanthropy and service learning is all about. I hope to have children from every grade participate in the roundtable. If your child is interested, have him/her tell their teacher to submit their name for the Penny Harvest Roundtable. Last year we gave two $500 grants – one to the Seattle Parks Foundation and one to ROOTS, a teen homeless shelter. We had 1st graders to 6th graders on the roundtable, and those were their choices for the monies collected. How fun it was to see them interview people in the community and assess the needs of our neighborhood and city; to see them research non-profit organizations and talk to their staff about what kind of services they provide. We have such thoughtful and bright students at TOPS with very big hearts!

So fill up the bags with pennies (and any coins you come across) multiple times and send them in to school. The class that collects the most pennies will receive an ice cream party. The collection will run up to Thanksgiving break, so turn over those couch cushions, look under the seat in your car, and grab the change off the dresser.

And to see how much you REALLY know about the penny, see if you know the answers below:

1. How much is one pound of pennies worth?
2. Whose picture is on the front of the penny?
3. What building is pictured on the back of the penny?

Find the answers on one of the following pages!
PHYSICAL EDUCATION AT TOPS
By Philip Clem, Grade 8

Every day after a long day of academic classes, I get to go to P.E. It is the time of day when kids get a chance to loosen up, and get fresh air and exercise.

We start out the period by sitting on our designated spots while roll is taken. This gives us a few minutes to socialize before we warm up, stretch, and find out what the activities for the day are.

We have awesome teachers for P.E., Eric and Don. They clearly explain what we have to do and help us if we get hurt or feel uncomfortable.

We also have care meetings every week, a class meeting where we talk about the right and wrong ways to treat people at school. We talk about the ideas of respect, kindness, empathy, inclusion, and many other things involving school life. We discuss what these ideas not only look like in P.E., but throughout our whole school and the world!

Overall, P.E. is a great class that gives kids a chance to have fun while earning a good grade by being respectful, showing some effort, and participating in all the great activities.

Photo by Don Zemke

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Photo by Don Zemke

KIDS CO. HOMEWORK CLUB
By Aaron Norikane

The Kids Co. HOMEWORK CLUB is off and running! Kids Co. Homework Club (KCHC) has started off with a bang for children from 7-12 years old who need a couple hours (2:30-4:30p.m.) after school of supervised homework time (along with some social and educational game time). There are two trained staff available to assist with homework and to help maintain a quiet setting for academics in the TOPS library. There are several options for enrollment: Monday through Thursday, Monday & Wednesday, or Tuesday & Thursday. Tuition rates are approximately $600 for all four days OR $360 for two days per week for an 11 week session. SPACES still available! Contact Aaron Norikane at (206) 709-8487 or email tops@kidscompany.org

No Bake continued from page 1
In recent years, the amounts we’ve raised have declined due to the economy and other issues. To offset this, several generous TOPS parents/donors have created a pot of $10,000 to match all new gifts. So if you are a new donor, your dollars will be doubled.

While we ask you to give all that you can, the size of your gift is less important than having the participation of every school parent at whatever level they can afford, whether it is $25 or $2,500.

Please write your check now and return it in the envelope that you received in the mail or bring your gift to the School office. Make your check out to Friends of TOPS. All gifts are tax-deductible.

Thank you in advance!
The TOPS Middle School girls’ soccer team has gotten off to a strong start! This year, TOPS is playing in the “Sound Division” and so far, we have won our games against Aki Kurose, McClure, and Jane Addams (exhibition game). We have scored 18 goals and even more exciting, these goals have been scored by representatives of all three grades! We started out the season with 20 girls on the team and as the season has gone on, six additional players have joined the team. We are hoping to continue our undefeated streak. We hope you’ll come cheer us on at some of our games or at the Championships at Memorial Stadium in November!

GO FALCONS!

Photos by Don Zemke
On Saturday, October 3, the TOPS Frisbee team played the Whitman Wildcats. TOPS won 8 to 3. The Wildcats gave a good game and showed very good sportsmanship. TOPS is doing well. We couldn't win without our four 6th grade girls: Bella, Coco, Maggie, and Zara. We all played a good game.
November
4 (Th) .......... Middle school – Taproot play, 1:30 p.m., gym
5 (F) .......... End of first quarter
9 (T) .......... Grade 2 to SCT
10 (W) ........ Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
11 (Th) ........ Veteran’s Day; no school
22-24 (M-W) .. Elementary Parent-Teacher Conferences; no school
25-26 (Th-F) ... Thanksgiving Holiday; no school

December
7 (T) .......... Grades K-3 and 5 to SCT
8 (W) .......... DHH to SCT
8 (W) .......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
14 (T) .......... Katie’s 3rd grade Shakespeare play, 1:15 and 7 p.m.
17 (F) .......... 1-hour early dismissal
20-31 .......... Winter Break; no school

January
3 (M) .......... School resumes
12 (W) .......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
14 (F) .......... Martin Luther King Assembly, 1:30 p.m.

February
2 (W) .......... Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal
9 (W) .......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
15-18 (W-F) ... Planting the Seeds, 8th grade
18 (F) .......... Kindergarten 100 Day Celebration
21 (M) .......... Presidents Day; no school
22-25 (T-F) ... Mid-winter break; no school

March
2 (W) .......... Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal
9 (W) .......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
17 (Th) .......... Taste of TOPS
18 (F) .......... Professional development day; no school

April
8 (F) .......... End of third quarter
9 (S) .......... TOPS Auction, 5 p.m.
11-13 (M-W) .. 6th grade Camp
12 (T) .......... Poetry Festival, 2nd grade
13 (W) .......... Poetry Festival, 1st grade
13 (W) .......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
15 (F) .......... Middle school 3rd quarter ends
15 (F) .......... Kindergarten ABC Celebration
18-22 (M-F) ... Spring Break; no school

May
11 (W) .......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
16-20 (M-F) .. MSP Testing
18 (W) .......... Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal
25 (W) .......... DHH to SCT
30 (M) .......... Memorial Day; no school
31 (T) .......... Grades 2-8 and S.E. to SCT

June
1-3 (W-F) .... 5th grade Camp
1-3 (W-F) .... 7th grade Camp
8 (W) .......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
9-10 (Th-F) ... 3rd and 4th grades, Camp Arnold
15 (W) .......... 2nd grade State Museum
16 (Th) .......... Kindergarten Puppet Show
17 (F) .......... 8th grade Passage
20 (M) .......... Middle school to Wild Waves
20 (M) .......... Field Day, elementary school
21 (T) .......... Last student day, 1-hour early dismissal

Penny Harvest Quiz Answers!
1. Approximately $1.67
2. Abraham Lincoln
3. The Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC

Tops Drama
Calling all friends of TOPS Drama! There are two opportunities to get involved in theater at school: the Middle School play (set for December 10-11) and the Elementary Musical (in May). If you have a special talent, and even if you don’t and just want to be part of the action, please step up and join the fun!

Middle School Play Support: we need folks to sign up now to help with costumes, sets, lighting, concession sales, and baking.

Interested? Please contact parent play coordinator Laurie Stusser-McNeil ljstusser@comcast.net.

Photo by Laurie Stusser-McNeil
TOPSNews needs you!

We are still seeking a special volunteer (or volunteers) to be our next layout artist. This is a great opportunity to serve the community while developing valuable desktop publishing skills. We can provide you with training, as well as all the files, fonts, and images you’ll need. Prior experience with Adobe InDesign and Photoshop would be extremely helpful.

Time commitment is approximately 8-10 hours/month, generally the 3rd week of the month. With more than one volunteer, it’s possible to share the workload or alternate months during the school year.

Please email Paul at javabrain@msn.com if you are interested in learning more!

Whatever shall we do without our TOPSNews?

Message from the Principal continued from page 1

had fun at the same time.

Our teachers have been busy with professional development, using data to inform their instruction, teaching strategies for more socially just instruction, and individualizing and differentiating based on student needs.

Thank you for joining us for the State of the School. Thank you to our Site Council and the Coalition for Social Justice for their support in making this a success.

One last reminder: please make sure that you check into the office and sign in to receive a visitor’s badge before going into a teacher’s classroom, even if you are well known around the school. For the safety of all of our students, everyone needs to be identified when in the building. This process also keeps you safe in case of an emergency. Thank you for all of your interest and cooperation. Enjoy your conferences, and above all, enjoy your family during the holidays.

Sincerely,

Jo Lute-Ervin
The Seattle School District is an Equal Employment Opportunity, Affirmative Action employer and employs individuals without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, age, sex, marital status, handicap/disability or sexual orientation. The Seattle School District provides Equal Education Opportunity without regard to race, creed color, nation origin, sex, mental states, handicap/disability or sexual orientation. The District complies with all applicable State and Federal laws and regulations, including but not limited to Titles VI, VII, and IX of the Civil Rights Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), RCW 49.60, Law Against Discrimination, and RCW 28A.640 “Sex Equality.” and covers, but is not limited to, all District programs, courses activities (including) extracurricular activities, service, access to facilities, etc. The Title IX officer and 504 coordinator with overall responsibility for monitoring and ensuring compliance is: Rick Takeuchi, Manager, Affirmative Action Office, W/MBE, 815 4th Ave. N., Seattle 98109. Phone (206)298-7175.

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.