

TOPS NEWS

LEADERSHIP TEAM SPENDS \$1.77 MILLION

TOPS received an allocation of \$1.77 million from the Seattle School District for the 1999-2000 school year, and the school-based Leadership Team met in March to decide how to allocate the funds. Projected enrollment is officially 588 students. The budget breaks down as follows:

Weighted Student Allocation	\$1,505,706
"Foundation" Allocation	\$231,573
Other Allocation (grants and special funds)	\$36,740
Total School-based Allocation	\$1,774,019
Per Pupil Allocation	\$3017

Schools must pay for most school-based personnel and activities with this budget. The District, however, pays for transportation, custodial services, and security.

The Leadership Team reported to the March Site Council meeting that it plans to fund all the current staff positions, but that it also hopes to add a full-time K-8 and BOC counselor. The source of this extra money will be some carry-over funds from an underspending of the budget last year. This \$90,000 amount should fund the counselor for a couple of years.

The District has posted an Internet page, which gives lots of budget information by school: <http://bb.ssd.k12.wa.us/bb/budgethome.html>

For example, the District Web site indicates the TOPS budget in 1997-98 totaled \$1.9 million, and was spent as follows:

Basic School Program	\$1,066,136	55.6%
School Administration	\$282,634	14.7%
Bilingual/BOC/instruction	\$184,983	9.6%
Elementary PCP	\$105,872	5.5%
Special Education	\$82,268	4.3%
Library	\$63,869	3.3%
Counseling	\$38,496	2.0%
Title I Instructional	\$35,285	1.8%
Other	\$58,198	—

Total 100.00%

Some interesting details: 11.5 elementary teachers cost \$437,872, seven secondary teachers cost \$259,408, and three BOC teachers cost \$120,618. Retirement, medical, workers compensation, unemployment insurance and Social Security benefits for all personnel in the building totaled \$420K. \$20,578 was spent on office and instructional supplies. Office staff totaled \$75,366, and administrative staff totaled \$131,500.

FACILITIES NEWS AND APPEAL

Gary Tubbs told the March meeting of the Site Council the District has declared May 1 the "drop dead date" for deciding whether the remodeled Seward building will be ready for occupancy in August. That is when Stevens School needs to know if it is moving to McDonald during its construction, or to another site (probably Lincoln). If it were determined on May 1 that Seward would be ready on time, and it turned out it wasn't, then TOPS would "simply" start school late.

Debrah Walker, facilities committee co-chair, announced last week that the TOPS facilities committee is about to go into full production with the completion (or not) of the building and there is a need for new volunteers on the committee. This is your chance to help with America's favorite past-time: Moving! Work parties will be organized to help faculty move their classrooms into the new building in August (hopefully). Help is also needed with the development of the Franklin Avenue project.

Call Debrah at 329-0625 or attend a facilities committee meeting on April 20 at 6:30 pm at TOPS.



6th graders clockwise top left; Nathan Weinstock, Alec Ford-Huie, Jason Boyd, Chris Kaimmer, and Kolya Ludwig, eat lunch on Mt. Constitution March 18, 1999.

McDonald School
144 NE 54th Street,
Seattle, WA 98105

729-3360

<http://sea-css.ssd.k12.wa.us/TOPS/index.html>

Principal:
Gary Tubbs

Site Council Chair:
Penny Bolton



**ABOUT THE
OUTRAGEOUS
PUBLISHING SERVICE**

This is the eighth monthly newsletter of the 1998-99 school year, edited by Amy Hagopian and Jim Wells. Robyn Ricks does the layout and design. Bruce Pulmano maintains the mailing list and gets this to you. We welcome help with writing and soliciting news from contributors. We're always looking for kids' art, photographs, committee news, faculty news, classroom news, opinions, compliments, profiles, questions, education politics, calendar items, announcements, and wholesome gossip.

Articles for upcoming issues may be submitted to Amy at 4203 5th Av. NW, 98107. Articles are preferred on computer disk, accompanied by a paper copy. Both IBM and Macintosh are accepted. Email submissions may be sent to *Amy_Hagopian@fammed.washington.edu*. Or fax to 616-4990. Deadlines for the year's issues are at 3:30 on each of these dates: April 15, May 20, and June 10. Remember: miss the boat, and you get wet.

Anyone interested in helping work on the newsletter or—even better—assuming the editorship next year, should contact Amy at 616-4989 (days).

A PRIMER ON TOPS CLASS SCHEDULING

The following is an explanation of the daily scheduling throughout TOPS. It is not for the faint of heart; needless to say, we recommend that you do not try this at home.

FIRST BELL, LAST BELL

For kindergarten through 4th grade, the first bell rings at 9:15 a.m., and the late bell rings at 9:20. Students in K-4 are with their primary teacher most of the day, but attend PE every day for 30 minutes and K-3 have music with Kent Stevenson once a week for 30 minutes. For grades 5-8, the first bell rings at 8:55 a.m. and the late bell rings at 9 a.m. The school day ends at 3:20 p.m. for all.

Are you with us?

LUNCH TIME

Kindergarten lunch is from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m., and includes 1 to 1:30 p.m. recess. Lunch for 1st and 2nd graders is from 12:05 to 12:40, and includes a short recess at the end. Lunch for 3rd through 5th graders is from 12:20 to 12:40, and includes recess between noon and 12:20. Middle schoolers have lunch from 11:45 to 12:20, with a break tossed in. As you can see, these very fast lunches are designed to accommodate many kids in a very small space.

Take a deep breath now.

SIXTH GRADE

The middle school class schedule is complicated, but has been carefully worked out over the years to accommodate varying learning styles and approaches to teaching. Sixth graders have one teacher for the first two hours of the day, 9 to 10:50 a.m., during which they are separated into Language Arts/Social Studies or Science/Math. The third period (prior to lunch) is either Math or Language Arts, and the fourth period (just after lunch) is either Science or Social Studies.

Fifth period for 6th graders is Physical Education. Sixth period is Art (with Mrs. Roll) for one semester and

Reading (with Mr. Ellis) for the other. Reading, by the way, includes classics, speed reading skills, and other fun activities. (If and when World Languages comes to 6th grade, it will take place during Reading.)

Hello? We're almost home.

SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADES

For 7th and 8th graders the schedule alternates every other day.

On "A" days, Language Arts and Social Studies come in a block from 9 to 11:50 a.m. After lunch, from 12:20 to 12:40 p.m., it's silent reading time. It's Science or Math from 12:40 to 1:30 p.m., and then Math or Science from 1:40 to 2:25 p.m. For sixth period, 2:30 to 3:20 p.m., students have either PE or Exploratory.

On "B" days, students go from one period to the next, spending 50 minutes each in Art, Science, Math, Language Arts, Social Studies, and PE or Exploratory.

Whew! You made it!

For more information, please contact Charlie Burleigh.

MIDDLE SCHOOL SCHEDULE CHANGES FOR NEXT YEAR

As we head toward the 1999-2000 school year, grades 6, 7, and 8 have begun preparing for several schedule changes. First, for 7th and 8th graders, is a shift to extended periods for Math and Language Arts rather than for Social Studies and Language Arts. This change should support greater depth in math instruction and will support the changes that have been made to the Middle School math program in general.

Another change for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders will involve the probable introduction of World Language curriculum into some sixth period classes. Middle School staff have recommended this addition be made in the Exploratory class time and that changes begin with 6th grade. The exact nature of these changes will depend on funding and curriculum-development issues.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I am writing to enthusiastically support the proposed changes to "Topics" organization at TOPS. I've had a continuing interest in Topics during the years that our children have been at TOPS, and served on the Topics Committee during this year.

I strongly support any proposal that seeks to improve the academic content and learning value of Topics. Teachers, parents and students expend a great deal of

time and energy preparing, teaching and attending Topics. The suggestion for thematic TOPICS with Spanish, music, dance, drama, as initial themes will enhance the educational value of TOPICS substantially, and justifies the effort of offering them. Supplements to classroom work in history and science, coordinated with the classroom curriculum, would also be excellent future TOPICS offerings.

Rebecca Fox
TOPS parent

SITE COUNCIL HELP WANTED FOR 1999-00 YEAR

It's that time of year again. TOPS is looking for a few good people to join next year's Site Council. It's your chance to weigh in with your point of view and help keep our school vibrant. Site Council participation requires a commitment to attend one meeting per month at school—the second Wednesday at 5-7pm. You should also plan to spend some other hours outside of meetings connecting with your constituents (the grade levels you represent) and helping with various projects.

Current K-2 representatives include Andrew Schmechel (1st), and Heather Worthley (K, 2nd), leaving one opening at the K-2 level. Grades 3-5 representatives include Pat Helgren (2nd, 5th) and Betsy Scott (2nd, 4th), leaving one opening. Penny Bolton (7th) is the only remaining middle school representative, leaving two openings. A "diversity" parent appointment needs also to be made, replacing retiring Cheryl Pappy.

Ballots will be distributed via the May newsletter. If you are interested, please call Heather Worthley at 789-6092 or email her a short paragraph about your interests at worthmine@premier1.net. We need to hear from you by April 9.

Other positions that we know are open for next year are Drama Committee chair, Newsletter editor, and committee members for Finance and Facilities. Anyone wanting more info on other openings, call Penny Bolton at 325-5074, or send her an e-mail at pennyb@halcyon.com.

MONEY MATTERS

Friends of TOPS treasurer Dana Carey-Twight reported to the Site Council in March that income this year has totaled \$50,134, while expenditures are at \$33,183. The total budget remains at \$103,100.

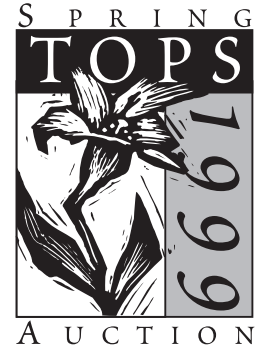
Principal Gary Tubbs reported on the Associated Student Body budget, the fund administered for TOPS by the school district. This is the budget that receives funds from parents for field trips, among other activities. Field trips in this budget have included Skate King, Henry Art Gallery, Seattle Children's Theater performances, Seattle Art Museum, Woodland Park Zoo, Children's Museum, and Burke Museum. Total ASB expenditures in the 1998-99 school year have come to \$15,317.

THE 7TH ANNUAL TOPS SPRING AUCTION WAS A SUCCESS AS USUAL!

The experienced Auction Committee headed by Rhian Lombard works like a well oiled machine to make this evening a fun party and a great money maker.

Ted Johnson, a truly experienced TOPS parent, and Frank Grief were our able auctioneers again. The initial returns show that we grossed around \$43,000, a number very close to last year. The class projects were a great success as was the bowling party with Mr. Tubbs and Mr. Burleigh.

We found out that Mr. Tubbs owns his own bowling shoes, a sign of an expert! Thank you to all who participated, as volunteers, procurers or guests.



ATTENTION TOPS PARENTS! TIME TO ADDRESS PARKING AGAIN

Once again our neighbors around TOPS have brought to our attention that parents picking up and dropping off their children are parking in driveways and blocking the street. This is not good for neighborhood relations and it is, frankly, just not good manners.

Here are some things we can all do to avoid antagonizing our neighbors:

1. Do not park in the load zone and leave your car, not even for one second.
2. Do not park in people's driveways, even if you stay in your car.
3. Do always drive west on 54th and east on 55th so everyone can have reasonable traffic flow.
4. Do not wait for your child in the load zone in front of school. It doesn't work because it only keeps other parents from safely collecting their kids. Instead, drive on by, park a block or two away (if necessary), and come back and get him or her on foot.

An early warning: When we return to Seward next fall, we will potentially have an even worse traffic problem. This year is a good time to work out carpools and work on building good neighbor relations. With just a bit of practice on everyone's part, we can work here to avoid the parking hassles there.

Thank you, everybody, for representing TOPS in the most courteous way possible.

Penny Bolton
TOPS Site Council Chair

Gary Tubbs
TOPS Principal

WORLD LANGUAGES SOLUTION PROPOSED

The TOPS faculty has been working to find a way to incorporate World Language instruction into the school day, especially for middle school students.

It was announced at the March Site Council meeting that a budget request would be submitted to Friends of TOPS to hire a Spanish language instructor for the middle school. Spanish would be taught during 6th period and

would alternate each semester with PE for 7th and 8th graders. For 6th graders, Spanish would take the place of reading instruction, alternating with Art each semester.

For elementary students, Spanish would be incorporated into the TOPICS schedule (see the related article on Topics reformatting).

What middle school students would be giving up in their 6th period exploratory class is attention to social and emotional growth and health instruction. Health would be incorporated into the science curriculum. Sixth graders would be giving up some instruction in speed reading techniques and time for silent reading.

This proposal now enters the budget process. The next opportunity to provide a "public" comment would be at the May 12 budget discussion, 7 pm, following the Site Council meeting at school. Prior to that time, please feel free to contact your Site Council representative or a member of the budget committee (chair is *Dana Carey-Twight*).



6th graders enjoy the view atop Mount Constitution on Orcas Island, March 18, 1999.

REASONS FOR INCLUDING WORLD LANGUAGES

By Michelle Anciaux

TOPS has sought to prepare its students for success in life and school beyond TOPS. The TOPS World Languages Committee believes that an important step in offering a world-class education to our students at TOPS is to make opportunities for learning a second language available as early as possible in our students' lives.

In addition to the information presented earlier to the Site Council and the faculty on the benefits of learning a second language, the March 1999 issue of *Statistics in Brief* produced by the National Center for Education Statistics, entitled "Do Gatekeeper Courses Expand Education Options?," provides additional rationales for not waiting to introduce foreign (world) language until high school. This publication reports on follow-up studies from the National Education Longitudinal Study of the Eighth Grade Class of 1988, specifically looking at the correlation of studying "gatekeeper courses" required for college entrance (algebra and foreign language) in eighth grade and the likelihood that a student will later apply to a four-year college or university. Specifically,

Percentage of students applying to a 4-year college or university:

- ◆ 78% of 12th grade students who enrolled in BOTH algebra and a foreign language in eighth grade
- ◆ 56% of 12th grade students who enrolled in EITHER algebra or a foreign language in eighth grade
- ◆ 29% of 12th grade students who enrolled in NEITHER algebra nor a foreign language in eighth grade
- ◆ Offering world language at TOPS Middle School could have the happy effect (especially in combination with offering algebra) of increasing the likelihood that TOPS graduates will see themselves as college-bound when they reach high school.

GOALS FOR WORLD LANGUAGE AT TOPS

1. To provide a language learning experience for students so they can develop a wider cultural outlook as well as the flexibility, creativity, and cognitive abilities that come with learning language at an early age.
2. To provide students with enough competence — knowledge and skills — in a single world language to qualify them to enter a second year class in that language in high school (if they choose to do so). Spanish is the most widely spoken language in our hemisphere.

FACILITY PRIORITIES

Staff priorities for facility improvements were tallied at a recent faculty meeting, and are as follows:

1. Books
2. Stage curtain at the Seward building
3. Sports equipment
4. Computer upgrades and more computers
5. Microscopes
6. Stage lights for the new Seward building

As reported in the last newsletter, the top Site Council priorities are science equipment, locker rooms for students at the new Seward gym, bleachers in the new Seward gym, art equipment, a stage sound system and lighting board for the new Seward building, and finishing the middle school commons.

So many priorities, so little funding for public education.

TOPS CHESS PLAYERS NOTCH BIG-TIME RESULTS AT LOCAL TOURNAMENTS

Mark Morales, Chess Club coordinator, would like once again to extend an invitation to all TOPS students, regardless of playing level, to come join the Chess Club. (We could even use a few more parents to supply snacks and help with post-meeting clean-up.) Members not only get solid instruction each Monday afternoon from renowned chess master Robert Karch and a handful of terrific parent volunteers, but our kids' education is paying off in the excitement of great results for a number them at many local tournaments. Congratulations to all Chess Club players and a special Hip-Hip-Hooray to our tournament participants!

Seattle Country Day Tournament, Feb. 6: **Cuzak Bailey, 2-5; Anna Ludwig, 2-5; Marcus Morales, 4-1 (8th Place in the K-3 division); Eric Nelson, 3.5-1.5 (5th Place for 3rd grade). (First number is wins, second number is losses)**

Moses Lake Tournament, Feb. 13: **Nicholas Morales, .5-4.5; Anna Ludwig, 2-3 (2nd Place for 2nd grade); Marcus Morales, 5-0 (1st place in the K-3 division).**

University Child Development Tournament, Feb. 20: **Alex Manning, 2-5; Cuzak Bailey, 2-3; Eric Nelson 4-1 (8th Place for 3rd grade); Marcus Morales, 4-1 (2nd place for 2nd grade).**

Spinning Tournament (Puyallup), March 6: **Alex Manning, 2-3; Marcus Morales, 3-2 (8th Place for 2nd grade).**

Seattle Chess Club Tournament, March 13: **Jordan Luke, 2-3; Marcus Morales, 3-2 (4th place for 2nd grade).**

St. Michaels Queen's Quest, March 13: **Anna Ludwig, 4-1 (1st Place for 2nd Grade); Jessica Savage, 2-3.**

Tournaments on March 20 and 27: **See results in May newsletter.**

State Tournament in Yakima, April 10: **Players qualified and slated to participate at press time were Alex Manning, Anna Ludwig, and Marcus Morales. To qualify for the state tournament, kids must win at least 3 games out of 5 in a state-ranked tournament.**



Seward brick building windows under construction, March 1999.

MIDDLE SCHOOL GRANT RENEWED

The Seattle School District has announced that all middle schools will receive the same grant allocations in the 1999-2000 school year that they received in 1998-1999. TOPS received \$30,000 last year.

Middle School Support grants come from the city's levy, and are targeted to meeting the social, emotional and developmental needs of students and helping middle schools to provide caring and encouraging environments for students and families

Funding IS NOT for direct academic improvement programming, such as teachers, aides, remedial classes, educational materials, etc. Research continues to show that the more developmental assets a student has the greater likelihood they will show positive outcomes including school success and positive behaviors.

At the end of the 1999-2000 academic year, each school receiving levy support funds will be evaluated. Because these funds are to support the District's larger middle school reform efforts, likely evaluation questions are: Is the school meeting the social/emotional /developmental needs of students? Is the school providing a safe, caring and encouraging environment for students and their families? How has levy funding helped in these efforts?

APRIL IS POETRY MONTH. SHARE A POEM WITH YOUR CHILD.

LIGHTNING JUMPSHOT

Daddy's voice thunders
he shoots a lightning
jumpshot
through a sweaty storm

The above poem is from a poetry book in our library entitled *IN DADDY'S ARMS I AM TALL: African Americans Celebrating Fathers*. Come to the library and check out some more poems.

—Steve Haines
TOPS librarian

ART AND SCIENCE JOIN IN ENVIRONMENTAL SCULPTURE CLASS

Luzita Roll and Lana Fuller will work together to integrate science and art instruction for middle schoolers in May. They will host a sculpture field trip in which groups of students will make art out of found objects in three different settings: sandy, woodland, and stone. Parents are invited to join the fun (and help out) at Golden Gardens Park on May 20 and 21. Photos will be taken of the work that will be on display during the artwalk.

The TOPS Site Council wants to know how you think the school is doing. Please answer the following survey questions and return this questionnaire to the main office by May 3, 1999. Results will be presented at the State of the School meeting on June 9. Your responses will guide the site council's strategic planning process for next year! (Please note: this is not the same survey as the one that is being mailed to you by the School District. Please respond to that survey, as well.)

SURVEY

The following are characteristics of the TOPS program we are striving to achieve. How are we doing?

- 1. *A small, K-8 school available on a completely voluntary basis to Seattle families*
 Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know
- 2. *Close proximity to the central city, encouraging the use and enjoyment of the urban environment as an extension of the classroom*
 Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know
- 3. *Strong, academically challenging program where the core curriculum and basic learning skills are consistent with and exceed the minimum requirements of each grade level, with a goal of maximizing each individual student's potential*
 Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know
- 4. *Opportunities for student decision making by involving them in a variety of settings including small groups, independent investigations, and elective 'choice' classes in which they study courses of interest to them*
 Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know
- 5. *Regular cross-age groups in a range of activities which include instructional, tutorial, and special events*
 Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know
- 6. *Programs for the personal, social and emotional growth of students, including skills of conflict resolution, social and personal responsibility, values and self-esteem*
 Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know
- 7. *Innovation and risk-taking on the part of the entire school community*
 Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know

8. *A diverse population, strengthened by an instructional program which fosters awareness, knowledge and appreciation of the contributions of our multi-cultural and pluralistic urban society*

- Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know

9. *An overall school environment which is engaging, active, positive, and supportive, seeking a balance between structure and nurtured independence*

- Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know

10. *Our community of students, their families, and school staff are seen as partners in the development and implementation of the program.*

- Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know

PLEASE EVALUATE THE FOLLOWING PARTICULAR ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY'S PERFORMANCE.

11. *Does the site council have regular, productive meetings; work between meetings; work through conflict constructively?*

- Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know

12. *Does the site council work on the right issues, and does it make the right decisions?*

- Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know

13. *Does the principal display leadership by encouraging participation of faculty, staff and parents in decision making?*

- Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know

14. *Does the principal carefully select staff with skills and commitment to the school's mission, and does he support and nurture that staff?*

- Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know

15. *Does the faculty communicate openly, express their views and concerns, and influence school policy?*

- Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know

16. *Do the faculty have a shared vision of TOPS as an alternative school, and do they implement that vision effectively?*

- Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know

17. *Do the parents generously contribute their time, energy and funds to further the mission of the school?*

- Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know

18. *Do parents effectively support faculty efforts in the classroom without meddling?*

- Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know

19. Is the Eastlake community effectively involved with TOPS?

- Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know

20. Does the strategic plan adopted by the site council effectively further the mission of the school?

- Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know

21. How well does the newsletter meet your needs for information about school issues?

- Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH EACH OF THESE ASPECTS OF THE TOPS PROGRAM?

22. Your student's academic achievement

- Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know

23. Extracurricular programs (sports, chess, drama, etc.)

- Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know

24. Student assessment

- Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know

25. Emotional & social development of kids

- Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know

26. Field Trips

- Excellent Good Fair Poor Don't Know

27. Leadership and performance of:

Your child's teacher

- Excellent Good Fair Poor

Faculty in general

Principal

- Excellent Good Fair Poor

Site council

- Excellent Good Fair Poor

Site council chair

- Excellent Good Fair Poor

Site council committees

- Excellent Good Fair Poor

School district

- Excellent Good Fair Poor

28. Please rate the following methods of communication:

Newsletter

- Excellent Good Fair Poor

Wednesday take-homes

- Excellent Good Fair Poor

Phone tree

- Excellent Good Fair Poor

School Connections

- Excellent Good Fair Poor

Personal communication with teacher(s)

- Excellent Good Fair Poor

Please tell us the following information so we can see if there are patterns of satisfaction and dissatisfaction which can guide our focus. Thank you.

29. I have children at TOPS in the following grades (1996/97): (Circle all that apply)

- K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 I am a staff member

30. I live in this zip code: _____

31. My children have this racial or ethnic identity (Circle):

- African-American Asian White American Indian Hispanic/Latino

32. We have been at TOPS ___ years.

33. Our family has contributed about ___ volunteer hours of work to TOPS this year.

SEND IN TODAY!

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR CHILD IS TURNED OFF TO READING

It happens to the best of parents: you suddenly realize that your child is far more interested in television, superheroes and the pursuit of new toys than in reading a book.

Fortunately, there's a lot of research on what parents can do to turn their children into more enthusiastic readers. In particular, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, based in Portland, offers some tips on getting kids who are turned off to reading back into books:

- ◆ If your child doesn't want to read, find reading materials that are tuned into his or her interest, whether it's dolphins, fairy tales or trucks. In addition, books on tape and reading aloud, even if your children already know how to read, can increase vocabulary and language skills.



TOPS students show off new books ordered with funds from the Stanford Book Fund. Front row, L-R: Quin McKinley (3rd), Andrea Carey (3rd), Shannon Tobin (1st); back row, L-R: Charquella Gardner (K), Sofia Hannaford (1st), Maria Young (K), Cameron Pitre (K), Lindsay Pickering (K).

THANK YOU, SEATTLE, FOR ALL OUR NEW BOOKS!

The library books that were ordered through the Alliance for Education's Stanford Book Fund arrived in the library earlier this month. The funds were intended to supplement the library collections of all 100 Seattle Public School libraries. TOPS used the funds to replace missing books, order books to supplement class needs, and to add current popular books to our collection. We were able to order 356 new books for a total of \$5,600. We also had families that donated books to the library in John Stanford's name. Thanks to all for helping the reading cause.

- ◆ Look closely at how time is being used in your home. Children need to spend time reading outside of school, and not just in the classroom, to make progress in their literacy skills. The problem may be too much TV. Keep in mind that researchers advise no more than two hours a day.
- ◆ Have your child prepare simple dishes using recipes or look up a number you need in the telephone book. Kids get more interested in the printed word when they see its useful and practical benefits.
- ◆ Make sure to keep a variety of reading materials in your home and show your children reading is important by doing it yourself.
- ◆ Follow up reading with questions and discussion. Listening and talking, combined with reading and writing, are the four cornerstones of language proficiency.
- ◆ Link reading materials to movies that interest your child. So, for example, the book series on young Indiana Jones might be a hit if your child loved the film.

Remember that your efforts are worthwhile, despite your child's complaints. All children are now being expected to meet tougher academic standards in school, so making sure they are strong readers is more important than ever.

This information was prepared by Partnership for Learning, a non-profit coalition of business and community leaders to support higher academic standards. You can learn more by contacting the Partnership at 1-800-550-5437 or www.partnership-wa.org. The suggestions above were taken from "Tips for Parents About Reading." For a free copy, contact the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory at 101 SW Main, Suite 500, Portland, OR 97204 or (503) 275-9500.

HELPING OLDER CHILDREN DEVELOP GOOD READING HABITS

Reading is a habit that most of us enjoy with young children. We're all too happy to pull a three-year-old onto our lap, turning each colorful page with delight as we bask in the youngster's awe and excitement. But as children get older, it's easy to let reading rituals fall by the wayside.

The problem is that children can only advance their reading skills if they read on their own time and not just in school. By the time your child reaches sixth grade, for example, he or she should be a fluent, independent reader, one who regularly picks up books and magazines for entertainment, information, and to learn.

Remember that your efforts are worthwhile, despite your child's complaints. All children are now being expected

to meet tougher academic standards in school, so making sure they are strong readers is more important than ever.

To encourage your older child to read outside school, consider the following suggestions developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Library in Portland:

- Use incentives. **Allow a child a later bedtime or excuse him or her from a chore like washing dishes if reading.**
- Play board games like **Scrabble, Spill and Spell, Scattergories, and Balderdash, which are fun and reinforce reading skills.**
- Limit television viewing to **10-14 hours a week.**
- Go to the library **and encourage children to check out all kinds of books, including travel, cooking, sports, fashion, or whatever suits his or her interests.**
- Encourage older kids to read to younger siblings or cousins.
- Let children know you think homework is a priority **and set up a regular time and place for it to get done.**

WHAT TO EXPECT OF OLDER READERS:

Sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders who are reading regularly should be strengthening their analytical skills and using reading materials to gain information they seek. Middle school students should be able to:

- ◆ read more complex young adult literature, such as stories focused on teenagers;
- ◆ recognize bias and an author's purpose;
- ◆ make judgments and comparisons about what they read;
- ◆ read magazines in their interest area;
- ◆ evaluate, interpret and analyze literary elements (like plot, character, or setting);
- ◆ use tables of contents, indexes, glossaries and captions; and
- ◆ follow detailed directions and instructions.

LEARNING TO READ: WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW

All children are now being expected to meet tougher standards in school. That's good news for both parents and students, since it means all children will be challenged to work hard and apply themselves. To help your child succeed at meeting these higher expectations, start by ensuring your child becomes a strong reader.

What should parents look for in a young child's reading development? One key milestone is "phonemic awareness," that is, the ability to dissolve a word into its individual sounds (called *phonemes*).

Individual letters on a page need to be linked to specific sounds, blended together, and pronounced as words – which is what leads to meaning. If, for example, your four-year-old can rhyme words like cat or boy, he or she is well on the way to developing phonemic awareness. Songs, rhyming games, and nursery rhymes are excellent ways to spark your child's awareness of language and sounds.

But for many children, the actual process of learning how to read takes place in school. That's why it's important for your child's school to have a good reading program, one that cultivates a love for reading and teaches kids the skills that will allow them to pursue their reading interests.

Good reading instruction should help children master the mechanics of reading – phonemic awareness, the alphabet, and blending sounds to make words. But good programs also help children develop comprehension and fluency. That means children learn to understand what is being read and can read words accurately and quickly enough, so that reading is enjoyable and not difficult.

Parents should not be misled by the debates pitting "whole language" reading instruction against "phonics." Phonics involves learning the sounds of letters to understand how they come together as a word. Whole language, meanwhile, is a philosophy about learning language that seeks to turn kids on to reading through exciting, interesting books. Good teachers often use both approaches, avoiding over-reliance on either.

What parents need to look for are reading programs – regardless of what they are called – that help students learn the three important reading skills: mechanics, comprehension, and fluency. Children struggle with reading when they are missing one or more of these skills.

How do you know if your child's school is running a sound reading program?

- ◆ Ask if there is a consistent approach across the grades in a school and that the teachers in later grades know what the teachers before them have done.
- ◆ Look for a commitment to helping teachers learn about reading research and effective teaching practices.
- ◆ See if the school uses good assessments that provide useful, regular information on students' reading skills.
- ◆ Make sure schools identify and intervene with problem readers early on.

One first step is to ask your child's teacher about what's going on in the classroom and then to monitor progress to gauge results.

This information was prepared by Partnership for Learning, a non-profit coalition of business and community leaders to support higher academic standards. You can learn more by contacting the Partnership at 1-800-550-5437 or www.partnership-wa.org.

TOPICS NEWS

Comments or questions can be directed to the following teachers: Louise, Tracy, Susan, Katie or Mary.

To sign up, call one of the teachers above or use the Resource Book. Thanks!

The TOPICS program has been a part of TOPS since its founding in 1976. Though it has evolved over the years, its goals and purpose have remained the same: cross-age mixing, smaller learning groups, student choice, variety of learning experiences with different adults, learning and leadership opportunity for children to teach.

All parents are urged to think up a two-hour activity or subject to share with a group of kids. The more volunteers, the smaller the groups can be! Requirements to teach a TOPIC are interest in being with the children, knowledge or familiarity of a subject matter, willingness to gather materials and resources, and availability on Thursday and/or Friday from 2-3 pm. TOPICS can be co-taught or shared if you're not available both Thursday and Friday. Find another parent and have fun planning a TOPIC together. Come in and check out the TOPICS Resource Book.

Look for the TOPICS Resource Book on the table outside of the office. It contains goals, guidelines and ideas. It also contains the current schedule of dates for TOPICS and a place to sign up.

The Ideas section of the book has lists and "lesson plans" about TOPICS taught regularly or in the past. Reading through a few of these forms will give you an idea of the different ways TOPICS are put together. The lists can help you come up with specific ideas. We would like to collect information on every TOPIC taught so that someone else may teach it more easily in the future.

TOPICS TO BE REFORMATTED

Principal Gary Tubbs worked with the faculty and some Site Council parents to propose a new configuration for TOPICS in the coming school year. The proposal was enthusiastically received at the March Site Council meeting.

Essentially, the new configuration would allow some multi-week TOPICS, along with a complement of two-day TOPICS sessions as we now know them. See the accompanying chart for a visual portrayal of the scheduling.

TOPICS is currently scheduled Thursdays and Fridays, 2 pm to 3 pm, and provides an open choice time for students in grades 1-4 to learn from one another, parent volunteers, and other teachers. The goals of TOPICS include:

- ◆ Providing opportunities for student choice
- ◆ Encouraging parent involvement
- ◆ Providing cross-age learning opportunities
- ◆ Providing opportunities for small group instruction in non-traditional subjects
- ◆ Offering a wide variety of arts, science, language, social development, and other curriculum choices
- ◆ Making school fun while reinforcing academics

One of the driving motivations behind this change is to provide a way to incorporate World Language instruction for elementary students. This configuration would allow all students to have ten weeks of language instruction at a time. Visiting artists could come for some of the two-week spots. There might be 15 students in the World Language and other multi-week TOPICS sessions, but only six to seven in the one-week slots. If all goes as planned, only half the teachers would be offering one-week TOPICS at a time, while the others were assisting the World Language or other visiting artist-instructors.

Mr. Tubbs is particularly enthusiastic about offering a TOPIC on "How to Teach Topics" for parents, students, and volunteers.

The newsletter hastens to point out that TOPS parent *Melora Battisti* has contributed vital leadership, creativity, and "sweat equity" in this critical process of rethinking how we do TOPICS.

TOPICS/Curriculum Enrichment Program																				
	Oct./Nov. 5 Wks					Dec./Jan/ 5wks					Feb./Mar. 5wks					Apr./May 5wks				
Drama 5 wk sessions																				
Dance 5 week sessions																				
Art 5 wk sessions																				
Spanish 10 wk sessions																				
	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 5	Wk 6	Wk 7	Wk 8	Wk 9	Wk 10	Wk 11	Wk 12	Wk 13	Wk 14	Wk 15	Wk 16	Wk 17	Wk 18	Wk 19	Wk 20
Teacher #1																				
Teacher #2																				
Teacher #3																				
Teacher #4																				
Adult																				
Adult																				
Adult																				
Student																				
Student																				
Student																				

COMING THIS SPRING TO A HIGH SCHOOL NEAR YOU:

TESTING FOR PERFORMANCE

High school parents – thinking about their child’s future and wondering whether their child is getting the best preparation needed for college or “the real world” – will see signs of an important school improvement initiative this spring.

Across the state, schools have begun expecting students to reach for higher academic standards and take new, tougher tests measuring their progress. Until now, much of this activity has been concentrated on the earlier grades. That changes in April, when tenth-graders across Washington will take a test measuring how well they meet important academic standards in reading, writing, mathematics, and listening.

When tenth graders take up their number two pencils to show what they know, they will join fourth and seventh graders who have taken these tests before. These tests – the Washington Assessment of Student Learning – are an integral part of the state’s school improvement effort.

This effort has three primary components:

- ◆ clear, high standards for what students should know and be able to do;
- ◆ new tests that measure student progress toward these standards; and
- ◆ accountability measures for both students and schools to improve.

Tenth grade students who “meet the standard” on the test in all four subject areas will have demonstrated a high level of skills and knowledge. Not only will these students know how to read, write and calculate, they will be able to read for information, write for different purposes and audiences, and analyze data and interpret statistical charts. And this is just at the end of their

sophomore year. Imagine what they will know after two more years of school!

Eventually, meeting the standard on the high school test will become a graduation requirement, ensuring that all students leaving Washington’s schools have the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in today’s world. For students who meet this requirement during the tenth grade, schools will offer a variety of options – like advanced academic classes for college-bound students and vocational courses for those intending to go directly into the work field. These options will allow students to specialize, and the new standards and tests will ensure that they have the foundation to succeed in whatever field they choose.

The standards are high and the tests are tough, but with focus and hard work, many schools have already begun showing incredible progress at helping more student learn. Over the next few years, we should expect to see the same from our high schools.

TESTING... TESTING... TESTING...

“These tests make kids think,” said Terry Bergeson, state Superintendent of Public Instruction. “One boy asked me, ‘Is this about my future job and college opportunities or is this about learning?’ I said, ‘I hope it’s about both.’ What we’re trying to do is make it so learning and your future are tied together.”

More details about the state’s new tests are available from Partnership for Learning, a business coalition working to build understanding about the statewide school improvement effort. Contact the Partnership at 206-625-9655 or www.partnership-wa.org.



TOPS Gym at Seward under construction. March, 1999.

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TOPS 98-99 CALENDAR

March

- 25 Budget meeting to review requests for funding, 5 pm, TOPS library
- 30 6th grade Science Fair

April

- 2 Speech tournament, grades 5/6 impromptu
- 8 Speech tournament, grade 6 editorial commentary
- 9 Class/staff pictures day
- 9, 10 Elementary School Play
- 7 Site Council meeting, 5-7 pm
- Committees make funding recommendations by today and forward them to the budget and executive committees
- 9 End of 3rd Quarter
- 9 Deadline to announce intention to run for Site Council
- 12-16 Spring Break
- 15 Newsletter deadline
- 18-24 Volunteer Appreciation Week
- 20 Facilities Committee meeting, 6:30 (new people invited!)

May

- 7 Site Council's finance & budget and executive committees draft a proposed budget
- 12 Site Council meeting, 5-7 pm
- 7 pm TOPS public meeting on the budget
- 13 Cultural Fair / Achievement Fair
- 14 Waiver Day

- 20 Newsletter deadline
- 20,21 Environmental Sculpture field days for Luzita's art class
- 24 Instrumental music concert, 6:30 pm
- 31 Memorial Day
- 26-28 7th grade at Mt. St. Helens

June

- 2-4 5th grade at Camp Kirby on Samish Island
- 3 Site Council executive committee produces a final proposed FOT budget
- 4 Art Walk, 5:30 to 8:30 pm
- 9 Site Council meeting, 5-7 pm
- 1999/2000 Budget approved by Friends of TOPS
- State of the School meeting
- 9-11 8th grade to Deception Pass
- 10 Newsletter deadline
- 12 Annual Site Council retreat
- 16 8th Grade Passage
- 17 Wild Waves
- 18 Last Student Day
- 21 Last Teacher Day
- 30 Site Council fiscal year ends
- ?? Camp Long
- K-8 TOPS / BOC Event
- Awards Assembly

September '99

- 7 First Day of School

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