

# TOPS NEWS

## UPDATE ON STUDENT ASSIGNMENT PLAN CHANGES

As reported in last month's issue of this newsletter, the Seattle Schools' "hold harmless" and "program preference" priorities in student assignment were under fire at the District level (see last month's issue for all the gory details).

Very briefly, "hold harmless" is a provision where parents are permitted to select a popular school as their first choice, even knowing their chances of getting in are small. If they don't get in, then their second choice school in effect becomes their first choice. Program preference is a provision which allows students who have been in an alternative school to have preference for getting into another alternative school, usually most valuable when moving from elementary to secondary levels.

Board member Scott Barnhart, a TOPS parent, proposed a "universal hold harmless" alternative at the November 4 board meeting. His motion passed, with only Ellen Roe

and Barbara Schaad-Lamphere voting against. Unfortunately, due to antiquated computer equipment, it will be difficult for the district to fully implement the proposal immediately. Alternative school hold harmless will be maintained for the 1999/2000 school year enrollment period, and then phased out for the "universal hold harmless" plan.

It may not have been clear that all this discussion of hold harmless applied only to secondary school enrollment. Elementary alternative school hold harmless was lost during the last enrollment cycle. However, Barnhart intends to propose that universal hold harmless apply to elementary schools, as well, which should come to a vote on December 10.

Program preference was maintained with a provision that it would be re-evaluated in three years.



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<http://seacss.ssd.k12.wa.us/TOPS/index.html>

**Principal:**  
Gary Tubbs

**Site Council Chair:**  
Penny Bolton

## TOPS LEADERSHIP TEAM REPORT *LEADERSHIP TEAM CONSIDERS HOW TO SPEND WINDFALL*

The TOPS Leadership Team, consisting of ten elected staff members and two parent representatives from the site council, met November 12 to discuss ideas for spending an unexpected budget allocation as well as student teacher policies and procedures.

An unexpected windfall of \$99,000 is coming to the school as a result of underspending in the previous two years due to positions that were unfilled for portions of the year. This is the first time salary savings as well as non-salary savings have rolled back to schools. Needless to say, the Leadership Team is very surprised—but thrilled—to have these additional dollars to focus on the students. Ideas brainstormed from the staff as a whole were considered, including personnel to support

struggling students or enrich the curriculum, technology and audio-visual equipment, and curricular materials.

The team decided there was no hurry to allocate the money, and is evaluating the pros and cons of capital versus personnel expenditures with one-time money. One full-time equivalent faculty position would cost \$54,000, including benefits. The team decided to see what a report from the site council's facilities committee might reveal about needs for the new building when the underfinanced construction project at Seward is completed.<sup>20</sup>

*continued on page 2*



**ABOUT THE  
OUTRAGEOUS  
PUBLISHING SERVICE**

This is the fourth 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@ammed.washington.edu. Or fax to 616-4990. Deadlines for the year's issues are at 3:30 on each of these dates: December 17, January 21, February 18, March 18, April 15, May 20 and June 10. Remember: being early is a virtue.

## HUMPHRIE CONSULTS ON LEADERSHIP TEAM-SITE COUNCIL RELATIONS

Seattle Public Schools Labor Relations Director John Humphrie was invited to meet with the TOPS site council at the November 10 meeting to discuss the concept of leadership teams and site councils and how the two intersect.

Leadership teams are now in their second year, and were created by the most recent contract between the Seattle School District and the Seattle Education Association (SEA, the teachers' union). In the contract, leadership teams are charged with preparing the school's academic achievement plan and the faculty professional development plan and deciding how to allocate the funds passed on to each school by the District. Leadership teams are supposed to consist of at least the principal and five staff persons.

Humphrie explained that schools with site councils have each found their own solutions about how the two entities interact. "The contract doesn't prevent parents from being involved (in leadership teams)," Humphrie emphasized, but that was not their intent. "The intent is to engage in authentic consensus decision making" between the principal and the faculty.

The lack of a leadership team in a building can be cause for a labor grievance. However, the failure of a school to have a site council is not considered a "grievable" offense.

Humphrie reported that leadership teams are variously successful across the District. In some

buildings, conflict between principals and leadership teams is being mediated by District officials. The next round of contract negotiations is intended to include language about teacher accountability for results in the academic achievement plan, which has raised the anxiety level of some SEA members.

The Board-adopted policy on site councils (C17.00, April 1996) says the District will "encourage and facilitate the formation and ongoing functioning of school governance structures, such as, but not limited to, local site councils, leadership teams, and/or school management teams. Such entities will be formed to advise and work with the building principal/program manager and building staff in facilitating continuous improvement of student achievement."

The District's procedures relating to implementing the site council policy say principals will be held accountable for creating school governance structures. The District is supposed to provide assistance and training to site councils. Site councils, according to the policy, can advise, consult, communicate, implement, monitor and evaluate the school budget, curriculum, safety issues, operations, staffing, planning and self evaluation, and some other items. Where principals or the superintendent delegate authority, site councils can even make final decisions in any of those areas.

The broad overlap between leadership team responsibilities and site councils is not reconciled either in school district policy or in the SEA contract.

## LANGSTON TABOR WILL BE MISSED BY ALL

The TOPS community mourns the recent, unexpected death of Langston Tabor, father of Biko, and coach to many of our kids. Our condolences go out to Biko and the rest of the Tabor family.

*TOPS Leadership  
continued from page 1*

Recommendations were taken to the site council for further discussion and will be presented to the staff as a whole, which will participate in the final decision making process.

The Leadership Team also decided that student teachers (interns) would in most cases be limited to one per classroom per year, and only after careful screening of the candidates. Some classrooms may have more than one intern when the classroom teacher and intern develop a "team teaching" model that actually serves to reduce class size. When the intern does his or her "solo" teaching weeks, the classroom teacher continues to carefully monitor the progress of the students and provides individual and/or small group instruction with students who are experiencing difficulties.

# HOMEWORK PRACTICES AT TOPS

## *Editor's Note:*

Part of Gary Tubbs' article in last month's issue was lost. We are reprinting his article in its entirety, along with two additional parent commentaries. Please feel free to contribute your letter for next month's issue!

## **DEAR TOPS PARENTS:**

As the principal of TOPS, it doesn't surprise me that homework is a topic of interest and discussion. Actually, such a discussion is not unique to TOPS. Having been the principal of three other schools, I can assure you that homework is one of those "no win" practices that frequently gets attention, e.g., too little, too much, too easy, too hard, different from grade to grade, teacher to teacher, school to school.

Since I'm new to TOPS I first wanted more information about present practices in comparison to district guidelines. Below is a summary of my findings:

### **DISTRICT GUIDELINES**

**Grades K-2:** 5-10 minutes

**Grades 3-4:** 10-20 minutes

**Grades 5-6:** 20-40 minutes

### **Grades 7-8:**

1-2 hours Science: 15 minutes Math: 30-45 minutes LA: 60 minutes Social Studies: 20-30 minutes TOTAL: 2-2.5 hours

Obviously, TOPS requires homework significantly beyond district guidelines. This is keeping within district policy, however, as the policy also states, "With the approval of the appropriate administrative supervisor, schools may exceed the maximum minutes for homework."

TOPS is a highly effective and very popular school. One of the reasons for this is the high academic standards established by the staff. Only so much can be accomplished in the school day and homework beyond the district guidelines is essential to maintain these standards.

Nevertheless, it's important we remain open to the perspectives of parents and consider them as we move forward. That's why I welcome an open discussion on this topic and encourage parents to voice their opinions via the TOPS newsletter. Your input provides us with current information on which to base future decisions.

Respectfully,

Gary Tubbs

Principal

### **TOPS PRACTICES**

**K:** Homework is not paper and pencil work. Parents are encouraged to engage children in daily responsibilities around the house, e.g., helping with tasks, listening to bedtime stories, discussions about learning, etc.

**1st grade:** 10-20 minutes, including reading time

**2nd grade:** 20-30 minutes, plus reading time

**Grade 3:** 20 minutes plus reading time

**Grade 4:** 20-30 minutes plus reading time

**Grade 5:** 45-60 minutes

**Grade 6:** 30-50 minutes

## **LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

I would like to thank Patty Compton on her thoughtful and insightful letter regarding homework overload, particularly in the younger grades of K - 5. (November TOPS Newsletter). I have at times been shocked at the magnitude of some of the writing assignments my child has come home with, including extensive research projects, which my child seemingly had no clue of how to do. Unless I'm mistaken, the "outside world" still puts great emphasis on the basic writing conventions and while I am very happy for my child to learn creative writing skills I can't help feeling that this is "putting the cart before the horse," so to speak. I fully respect the high academic standards set by TOPS staff and will do my best to support their methods. However, if the low scores achieved by TOPS students in math and writing in the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) test are any indicator, then something, including TOPS requirement of homework significantly beyond District guidelines, is NOT working. This was the first year the WASL test was given at TOPS and has proved to be very enlightening.<sup>20</sup>

I am not a professional educator and am only offering an opinion when I say that I strongly believe that the crux of the problem is class size. In a class of 36, how can a teacher possibly give each student the attention and/or direction they need? No wonder volumes of homework are coming home and as Principal Tubbs says in the Wednesday, November 18th "GO-HOME" Bulletin, "only so much can be accomplished in the school day."

Last year, Seattle School Board member Scott Barnhart proposed suing Washington State for full funding to ensure that the needs of Seattle public school students are being met. Why not? Obviously, the time to act is now. Along the same vein, TOPS parent Lianne Sheppard wrote a very informative article last year (October 1997 TOPS newsletter) entitled "TOPS Should Lead the Way on Class Size Reduction." Hey, she's right. Less is more.

*Respectfully, Pamela O'Gorman*

## **LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

I send my child to TOPS, and one of the reasons is because of the academic excellence found at the school. There are probably plenty of schools to choose from if you do not want to challenge your children too much. However, there seem to be fewer schools that have high expectations of the students and I would hate to see TOPS change something that makes it stand out in the crowd. I realize it is a sacrifice for all parents to make sure your children have enough time to do their homework, when there are so many other activities available. I also believe that hard work and sacrifice can be rewarding in the long run.

*Carolyn Hughes*

## BUDGET

Site Council and Friends of TOPS Treasurer Dana Carey-Twight reported that expenditures are within budget for the month of October 1998. The year-to-date expenditure totals \$6,100, and new income totals \$2,500. The total budget is \$102,775.

## NAME TAGS

Volunteers are urged to stop by the office and pick up their official green nametags while in the building during school hours. This will help everyone to be aware that you are indeed a bona fide volunteer as well as assist school personnel in recognizing you. While you're in the office, you can sign in for your volunteer hours, too, which helps the school with its hours total and ensures you will have insurance coverage for your activities while "on duty." Please help make this policy work!

# TOPS 1998-99 CALENDAR

## DECEMBER

- 1 Middle School Parent Forum 7-9 pm
- 1 After school tutoring starts, Tu's & Th's
- 4 End of First Trimester
- 4 K-5 parents: Get your emergency kits in by today
- 9 Site Council meeting, 5-7 pm
- 10 School Board Meeting
- 11 Report Cards
- 11-12 Middle School Play
- 17 Young Authors Conference, K-8  
Newsletter deadline  
Adopt-A-Family
- 18 Deadline for getting in ski program application
- 21-1/1 Winter Break

## JANUARY

- 8 Ski night
- 13 Site council meeting, 5-7 pm
- 15 Ski night
- 18 Martin Luther King Day (no school)
- 21 Newsletter deadline
- 22 Ski night
- 22 Martin Luther King Celebration  
K-8 TOPS / BOC Event
- 29 Last Day of Semester
- 29 Ski night

## FEBRUARY

- 5 Ski night
- 7 Ski night
- 10 Site council meeting, 5-7 pm
- 15 President's Day
- 16-19 Mid Winter Break  
Jump Rope for Heart  
Black History Event  
Debate (7th grade)  
Direct Writing Assessment (grades 3, 5, and 8)
- 18 Newsletter deadline

## MARCH

- 5 Waiver Day (no school)
- 10 Site council meeting, 5-7 pm
- 12 Responses to budget request for proposals due
- 12, 13 Elementary School Play
- 18 Newsletter deadline
- 19 End of Second Trimester  
State ITBS Test (grades 3 and 8)  
District ITBS Test (grades 5 and 6)
- 29 TOPS public budget consideration meeting

## APRIL

- 7 Site council meeting, 5-7 pm
- 9 End of 3rd Quarter
- 12-16 Spring Break  
Speech Tournament  
Primary Speech Festival  
State WASL Tests (grades 4 and 7)  
State 2nd Grade Reading Tests
- 15 Newsletter deadline

## MAY

- 12 Site council meeting, 5-7 pm
- 13 Cultural Fair / Achievement Fair / Art Walk
- 14 Waiver Day
- 15? 2nd TOPS budget consideration meeting
- 20 Newsletter deadline
- 31 Memorial Day  
Camps (grades 6, 7, and 8)

## JUNE

- ?? Camp Long  
K-8 TOPS / BOC Event  
Awards Assembly  
8th Grade Passage  
Wild Waves
- 9 Site council meeting, 5-7 pm  
1999/2000 Budget approved by Friends of TOPS  
State of the school meeting  
Newsletter deadline
- 10 Newsletter deadline
- 12 Annual site council retreat
- 18 Last Student Day
- 21 Last Teacher Day
- 30 Site council fiscal year ends

## AMERICA READS VOLUNTEERS WELCOMED TO TOPS

TOPS is fortunate to have three America Reads volunteers in the school this year, completely paid for by a federal program. The three University of Washington students are Hoang Nguyen, Colleen O'Reilly, and Joanna Matthews, and they are doing a great job. Altogether they work approximately 20 hours per week directly with students—in the classrooms, out in the halls, and in the library. Josh Leggett, our AmeriCorps volunteer, sets them up with the teachers and students to whom they are assigned, and organizes their schedules. The teachers supervise their work. Beginning in December, Hoang and Colleen will be working with our AmeriCorps volunteers in the after-school tutoring program. Hoang works with 3rd-5th graders, Colleen with kindergartners and 3rd-4th graders, and Joanna with Mr. Burleigh's 6th graders.

# COMPREHENSIVE PE REPORT

## *THE TRAVAILS OF A GYM TEACHER*

TOPS Physical Education has just wrapped up a two-week unit on table tennis (gee, it sure is tough being a PE teacher). A lot of skill development took place followed by tournaments for grades 4 through 8. Mr. Tubbs made an appearance and demonstrated the fact that he's got game!

## *SMARTER THAN ECKSTEIN*

The Alliance for Education invited the TOPS PE department to compete in the "Jigsaw Jam" against Eckstein Middle School at halftime of the Seattle Reign opening night game. Charlie Winter, the parent of 3rd grader Mikaila Winter, was convinced that he should compete (since he has a background in engineering and college wrestling). He promptly figured out the giant puzzle and won the contest earning \$225.00 for the TOPS PE program. Thanks Charlie!

## *JUMPING ROPE*

TOPS Double Dutch is off to a great start with 40 to 50 eager participants. The two-rope jumping skills are quickly being mastered! Thanks to all of you parents who have helped provide snacks for all of the jumpers.

## *LIFTING SOUP*

Thanks to all of you who have provided cans of food for the TOPS PE soup-can workout and food drive. The students actually think that they are having fun as they work out with their cans of food! (Don't tell them that it's hard work.)

## *INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENTS*

Congratulations to Will Harris for being the first person to master the "interknot," and Katrina Nelson and Anna Compton for being the first two people to pass the advanced unicycling test by rocking in place for over a minute!

## *REBUTTAL*

On page 6 of the November newsletter, Mr. Cam Bell made a serious error. Mr. Bell stated that it was the students who would win the students vs. staff basketball game when in reality it will be the staff who blow away the students! I predict the students will even have to insert P.E. teacher extraordinaire Eric Herndon into their line up just to keep the blowout from getting to far out of hand! So, with the addition of Mr. Drummond into our line up this year, the students don't stand a chance!

-Don Zemke



Charlie Winter

## TOPS NO-BAKE BAKE SALE UPDATE

The Friends of TOPS wishes to thank all you generous folks who have contributed during the No-Bake Bake Sale. The committee has so far received about one-fourth of their projected contributions, so all those envelopes you've been handing out to friends and relatives are really paying off.

But our annual fundraising campaign is from over, and The Friends of TOPS still needs plenty of help. If you're wondering how you can participate in the No-Bake Bake Sale, it's easy. Simply fill out the blue portion of the appeal form and mail it back with a check made payable to The Friends of TOPS. The envelope is stamped for your convenience. This year the committee anticipates 100% participation from TOPS parents. No contribution is too small. Installment payments are also fine.

What is the money used for? The Friends of TOPS is part

of the Site Council and the money is used for curriculum enhancement—operating funds, if you will. Items include the elementary poet-in-residence program, artist-in-residence program this spring, elementary music for grades 1-3, all-school drama, classroom supplies for all the teachers, and a portion of the annual stipends for the AmeriCorps volunteers, who assist our teachers with a variety of tasks so they can concentrate on teaching.

Your dollars will go even farther if you include a matching gift from your employer. Many companies, such as Boeing and Microsoft, will match funds given to educational institutions. Ask your employer's benefits office for a form, and enclose it with your donation. Because The Friends of TOPS is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization under IRS rules, gifts to the No-Bake Bake Sale are fully tax-deductible.

### KID TIPS

*Here's a fun thing to do with your kid(s): take a class together. There must be something both you and s/he would like to learn together. My son and I took first aid and basketmaking together, and it was a blast. Try sailing, cooking, knitting, Discovery Park tours, yoga, Burke Museum classes, computers, hiking, bike repair, drawing, Audubon bird watching, sculpture, chocolate making, web page design, anything you can think of. Join a mother/son book group. You can find these opportunities in Seattle's Child, at craft stores, at museums. Make it a Christmas present.*



*Julied Trout and Gary Tubbs enjoys the Halloween Dance.*

# INTERNET COMMITTEE MAKES RECOMMENDATIONS

Jack Lee, chair of the site council's Internet committee, reported in November that his team has evaluated the computers in the building and finds that many of them are coming to the end of their useful lives. Some are so old it's not practical to connect them to the Internet.

The District's technology levy will begin to be spent in May of 1999, but the priorities for spending focus on wiring and telephone lines rather than new computer hardware. In 1999, the District wants to develop its wide area network, installing connections among the schools which won't have to rely on U.S. West's expensive integrated services digital network (ISDN) lines. The following year, the priority will be installing phones and intercoms. There won't be new computers in the buildings funded by the District for years. Even then, the "new" computers may be used ones.

The TOPS Internet committee is seeking to develop a sustainable plan for keeping our computers up to date. We have about 35 computers in the school for student use, and should be replacing at least six or seven per year. (There are 16 in the library, 5 in middle school language arts, 4 in middle school math, and 10 in elementary classrooms.)<sup>20</sup>

Over the next few weeks the committee is going to be preparing a plan to propose to the site council for ongoing upgrading of our computers. Part of the plan will probably be to switch from our current Macintosh systems to cheaper Windows-based PCs. In addition, the plan will require approximately \$2000-3000 from the school's operating budget plus \$4000-5000 from the site council budget for computer replacement.

For more information, contact *Jack Lee* at 524-6346 or [lee@math.washington.edu](mailto:lee@math.washington.edu).



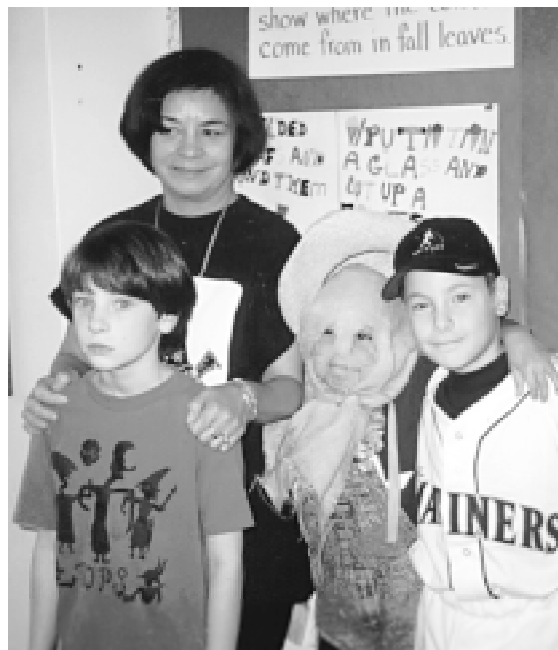
*First grade Halloween party*



*Seward School. November 1998*

## CHESS CLUB ADDS NEW COACH AND MEMBERS

The TOPS Chess Club is doing great, and is attracting lots of beginners. We were lucky enough to add a new volunteer chess coach, Kwami Turner (Daniel Bash's uncle). Mr. Turner comes to us with a lot of chess teaching experience. He also teaches chess at Martin Luther King School. A special thanks to Mr. Turner as well as to Jo Marie Cunningham for helping us acquire Mr. Turner's expertise. The Chess Club is open to all students at TOPS at any time. For more information, pick up an enrollment form at the office or stop by David's class (across from the office) after school on Mondays from 3:30 to 4:30.



*Louise Chacartegui with first graders on Halloween.*

## TEN WORD POEMS

Tracy Seefeld's second grade class has been creating "ten-word poems." The rules are that you choose ten words that go with a theme, then create sentences which each end with one of the ten words. Drop by room three and see all the successful poetry!

### THE SECRET SUNRISE

I have a secret  
I get up early  
While the house is still asleep  
I see my secret sunrise  
I see the dew on the spider webs  
The trees and the rocks  
Turn, their face to the sun  
My clothes are wet  
My worm friend is coming  
My clothes are dry now  
So I go back home

—by *Marcus*

### ANIMALS

I see a dog  
now a cat  
chasing a mouse  
I see a fish  
and a parrot  
now I see a horse  
I see a deer  
now a bird  
I see a hamster  
Last a cow

—by *Elisa*

## FIELD TRIPS

You'll recall the mission of our alternative school is to provide a balance between structure and nurtured independence for our children. While offering a strong, academically challenging program, we also enhance the personal, social and emotional growth of students by building skills of conflict resolution, social and personal responsibility, values, and self-esteem. TOPS students have regular and important opportunities for decision making, innovation, and risk-taking.<sup>20</sup>

One of the ways we do all this is by providing field trips for kids wherein they can experience the ways in which academics and the "real world" come together. Last month, our kids went to the North Transfer Station (dump), Lakeview Cemetery, Henry Art Gallery, Seattle City Library, Burke Museum, Carkeek Park, Seattle Children's Theater, Cedar River, and Pier 48 for BookFest and Kidspeak.<sup>20</sup>

# MIDDLE SCHOOL NEWS

BY MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

## DANCE REPORT

By Arlene Rodriguez, Geneva Griswold, Allie Roe, Josh Hill

The first Autumn Dance was held Friday, October 30. Things were running slow because the DJ came late and he had to rush because the dance was about to start. Once the music started playing, people started to enjoy the dance. Sixth, 7th, and 8th graders attended the dance. We all agree that this is one of the best dances we've had.

One of the highlights in our dance was our principal, Mr. Tubbs. He came as a teenager wearing baggy clothes, pierced nose, and silver paint on his face. As usual, the 6th and 7th graders didn't dance, but the 8th graders did. The most entertaining thing that everyone liked at the dance was the Macarena, the limbo, and the prizes.

Thanks to Josh Hill and Jahon Brown for selling snacks and beverages at the dance. We also give thanks to the rest of the people who helped set up the dance. We enjoyed it.

## SOCCKER REPORT

By Caitlin Hughes Chapman

The TOPS girls soccer team has done very well so far. Many of the girls have never played before and are improving greatly. With a record of four wins and three losses, we are very proud of their achievements.

The soccer team is a good way to enjoy a talent that I share with a group of other girls about my age. I find myself making friends with people I never really knew very well before. We are having a good season and each time I play, I realize even more how fun the game can be.

The last soccer game was November 21. Nancy Knox and Josh Leggett, the coaches, have done a wonderful job. They have helped everyone to improve their skills a lot and we are all thankful for their participation.

## KEYBOARDING REPORT

By Scott Seamster and Devon Carlson

Keyboarding is boring, but we might need typing skills in life. The only thing I like about typing is that we get snacks right before typing. Mr. Burleigh gives us snacks, but one time he was late. We were so unhappy. Every Tuesday and Thursday we go to typing at about 3:40 p.m. I get so bored at typing. Good thing it doesn't last one year. It ends in February or so. Our teacher, Ms. York, is okay. She gives us candy after typing. I wish we could get pop for snacks instead of Capri Suns.

We have been learning the home keys and other new keys. We learn two new keys every week. There are about 15 people in our keyboarding class. We have been typing out of the book and we make up sentences and the teacher tells us what to type and we type it without looking at the keys. I can type a lot faster now, so I've learned a lot.

There are also other after school activities, like school band, girls' soccer, study table, and math club. These activities are funded by a city levy.

## WANTING TO GO BACK TO SEWARD

By Kamilah Taylor, Jahon Brown, and Erica Webster

Construction at TOPS at Seward is going slowly. Every day students go by the school and see that progress is slow.

The 8th graders feel it isn't fair to not be able to benefit from the new school. But instead we have to spend our prime year in an old musty school.

TOPS at Seward was better because the middle school was separated from the younger kids. There was more room in classes. And the 7th and 8th graders were away from everyone else.

TOPS at McDonald is too crowded. Lockers are broken down. Bottom lockers are too low for the kids. Hallways are always crowded and people push and shove. 6th, 7th, and 8th graders have no room. At TOPS at Seward we had a lounge and better access to lockers.

Overall, students think TOPS at Seward was much better. It's too bad that the 8th grade won't be able to benefit from going back.

## PE REPORT

By Maia Williams

If you walked into PE at 2 p.m. on November 9th, what would immediately catch your attention is the ping pong tables. They are set up all around the gym. The reason is the second of our ping pong tournaments was underway. Everybody in grade 6, 7, or 8 can play.

To become one of the two finalists, you must play and beat three people (Don and Eric match you with someone else). Then you play the other finalist, and whoever wins two games wins the tournament.

We have also worked on other neat things, such as lacrosse and football. When asked, Don said the next skill on our schedule is flower sticks (juggling one stick with two others).

## DECEMBER HAPPENINGS WITH THE MIDDLE SCHOOL SUPPORT GRANT

Having completed its first round of Middle School Support Grant activities in October, the TOPS middle school is entering the month of December with another round of activities for students, teachers, and parents.

Pizza Topics will resume on Thursday, December 3, for the 8th graders and continue on the following two Thursdays for the 7th graders and the two Thursdays after that for the 6th graders.

On Tuesday, December 1, the second Parent Forum will meet in the TOPS lunchroom from 7 to 9 p.m. In this session, facilitated by Pamela Hillard, with guest speaker Judith McCoy from Planned Parenthood, parents will learn about and discuss adolescent development in a very practical and meaningful way. This session may help parents to make sense of their own children's behavior in the context of their adolescent development. This forum parallels the teacher forum to be held at the end of October on the same topic.

Teachers will continue their discussion on adolescent development and begin to move into other areas of concern at the next Teacher Forum scheduled for December 8.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL SKI PROGRAM SLIDES IN

Middle School students are invited to participate in TOPS' seventh year with the Friday Night Ski Program at Snoqualmie Pass. Parent organizers seek to provide kids an opportunity to have healthy outdoor-recreational activity with their peers. It's a great opportunity for kids to learn new skills, independence, and responsibility in a fun and supervised atmosphere.

Look for a blue three-page information packet, which already went home with your child (or ask for another copy). Applications will be available beginning November 23 from Ms. Eickelberg or Mr. Burleigh, and are due back on December 18. Ski dates will be January 8, 15, 22, and 29, and February 5 and 7.

Questions? Call *Katie McKeon* at 282-0352 or *Janet Moore* at 283-7284.

## TEEN SPEAK SCHEDULING CHOICES

Teen Speak is a wonderful opportunity for middle schoolers and their parents to improve communication skills and understand each other better. As part of the Middle School Grant (provided by the Families and Education Levy), 20 families will get a chance to join this unique workshop, consisting of two 2-hour sessions (see exception, choice #6), where students and parents meet separately (session 1) and then together (session 2). Please consider the following options and call Joni Marts at 298-7444 ext. 4673. Give your name, child's name and first choice for times. Input from parents will determine times offered for the workshops. You will receive written registration materials in January. If you have any questions about this workshop series, or any other Middle School Grant activities, please contact assistant principal *Jo Shapiro* at 729-3360.

- Choice #1 Tuesday and Thursday of same week
- Choice #2 Two consecutive Tuesdays
- Choice #3 Two consecutive Thursdays
- Choice #4 Two consecutive Saturdays
- Choice #5 One Tuesday, one Saturday of same week
- Choice #6 One Saturday (6 hours)

## BUY A TREE FROM A PTA

Green Lake School's annual holiday tree sale is held December 4-20 this year. Run by the PTA, the sale is the primary annual fund raiser. Support public education when you buy your tree this year! For information, call *Carol Deckelbaum* at 633-3816 or [godlbaum@halcyon.com](mailto:godlbaum@halcyon.com).

## MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENT FORUM RESULTS SUMMARIZED

Pam Hillard, director of Health Education for the Seattle Public Schools, sent a letter to middle school parents following the October parent forum reporting the results of our worksheets. They show TOPS parents would like to work on:

- ◆ Involving middle school students in school and community service
- ◆ Giving increased responsibilities and opportunities for involvement and planning to middle school students
- ◆ Increasing opportunities for cross-age activities
- ◆ Working on social issues (friendship, behavior, race relations, civility, respect, safety)
- ◆ Increasing school spirit and a sense of connectedness to the school community
- ◆ Reducing teacher turnover and supporting teacher expectations for students
- ◆ Improving health education, including drug/alcohol education

The full compilation of worksheets is available in the TOPS office. The next parent forum will be **December 1, 7-9 p.m.**

# MISCELLANEOUS

## ***KINDERGARTNERS GARDEN***

TOPS Kindergarten students tilled up the flowerbeds at the southwest corner of the building during October, and planted fall crops. Thanks to Joby, Kathy, and Joan for starting off kids on service learning opportunities early!

## ***ZONE CREW CRUISES THROUGH McDONALD***

The District's maintenance zone crew swept through TOPS in November to repair a variety of broken and malfunctioning things in the building, from doorknobs to lockers to light fixtures. Thanks, zone crew!

## ***CURRICULUM ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS***

The Friends of TOPS budget contains about \$2,200 for small "general project proposals" generated by faculty and/or parents. It was decided at the last site council meeting to give Gary Tubbs the authority to make allocations from this account as projects are proposed which meet curriculum enhancement goals and the mission of TOPS. See Gary if you have a proposal you would like funded.

## ***DID YOU EVER NOTICE HOW EXPENSIVE THOSE KIDS ARE?***

Gary Tubbs led an exercise at the November site council meeting to identify all the out-of-pocket expenses parents face for their kids' education at TOPS. Parents are asked to pay for camp, class auction projects, art supplies, teacher gifts, field trip fees, Seattle Children's Theater tickets, TOPS play tickets, driving and parking for field trip chaperones, yearbooks, dances, general school supplies, snacks for kids in younger grades, book orders, Topics supplies, pictures, emergency kits, scholarship funds, No-Bake Bake Sale contributions, 8th grade passage expenses, and enrollment fees for band, chess and ski clubs, keyboarding, and the half-day extended kindergarten. Not to mention the cost of volunteer time. If we've missed any, please jot them down and pass them on to Gary, who is keeping track. The purpose of the exercise was to begin to get a handle on the amount and frequency of these expenditures to evaluate equity and total cost issues.

## ***SEATTLE TIMES TEACHER HOTLINES***

TOPS middle school teachers currently participating in the School Connection phone hotline service are Charlie Burleigh (4462), Lori Eickelberg (4451), and Mark Ellis (4461). Call 464-1700, and then dial the four-digit extension for the teacher. The TOPS site council hotline extension is 4471. Other middle school teachers plan to come "on board" with the hotline soon—stay tuned.

## ***FACULTY APPRECIATION***

Cookies were served to staff on November 12, just to celebrate a Thursday. The staff appreciation committee is looking for more volunteers. The great thing about this committee is that there are no meetings, and you get to do nice things for the staff at TOPS. Call *Janet Moore* at 283-7284.20

## ***AFTER-SCHOOL TUTORING STARTS DECEMBER 1***

Beginning December 1, elementary students will be able to receive tutoring after school on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:30 to 4:30 in Mr. Burleigh's room. Middle School students have been selected for the paid tutoring positions, and AmeriCorps volunteer Josh Leggett is coordinating the program. The stipends for middle school students are supported by The Friends of TOPS from parent donations. Contact *Josh Leggett* at 729-3360 at school or 517-5720 at home or e-mail him at [joshie@u.washington.edu](mailto:joshie@u.washington.edu).

## ***PARENT INVOLVEMENT SUMMIT***

The Washington State PTA is sponsoring its 3rd annual Parent Involvement Summit on Tuesday, December 1, from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the SeaTac DoubleTree Hotel. Cost per person is \$69. Call 253-565-2153 or e-mail [wapta@wastatepta.org](mailto:wapta@wastatepta.org).

## ***EMERGENCY COMFORT KITS***

The Safety Committee has provided information to each K-5 family on how to prepare a Comfort Kit for their child. This kit would be used in the event of an emergency requiring an extended stay at school. Please return your Comfort Kit to school in the zip-lock bag provided, no later than Friday, December 4.

## ***TOPS NOVEMBER FOOD DRIVE***

Thank you to everyone who donated in the orange boxes in the hall for the November Food Drive. Especially successful and appreciated were the extra efforts from TOPS PE teachers Don Zemke and Eric Herndon, who incorporated "weight training with cans" into their curriculum; the 8<sup>th</sup> graders, who exchanged canned food for student ID's; and David Wilhelm's 3<sup>rd</sup> graders' "mountain of food." A special thank you to 4<sup>th</sup> grader Christoph Krumm for helping with organizing the food.

Baskets of food were then delivered on November 24 by staff members Dan Bloedel, Charlie Burleigh, and Mercedes Sandoval to TOPS families in need.

## **KIDSPEAK STAGE WAS FUN**

On Saturday, October 24, 16 former and present TOPS students participated on the Kidspeak State at the Northwest Bookfest. These students treated parents, friends, and others to almost an hour of presentations, sharing everything from student-written stories and poems to Shakespeare. Several children actually composed stories at available computer workstations located in the Kids Room at Bookfest. They then bound their writing in book form before reading the stories aloud on the Kidspeak Stage.



*Dr. Terry Bergeson, Superintendent of Public Instruction, holds the microphone for Julia Shure, 5th grader, as Julia recites her poems at Kidspeak Stage.*

## **SONICS READ-TO-SUCCEED CHALLENGE GENERATES LOTS OF INTEREST**

Starting October, the Read-to-Succeed Challenge Sheets started to "roll into the library." Students kept them rolling and rolling in to the tune of 130 sheets by the end of the month, about three times the number of sheets turned in last October. This Sonics-sponsored reading incentive program has the students reading outside of school for at least minutes a day, days a month. Once the sheet is filled in and signed by a "reading coach," the student deposits it into a box in the library. The student is then eligible for a drawing for Sonics merchandise at the end of the month. Terrence Seales won a Sonics backpack this month. Jessica Savage received a poster, and Arielle Paulson was our "reader leader." Most important, the children practiced their reading, and will continue to do so. READ ON TOPS!

—Steve Haines  
TOPS librarian

## **TOPS AUCTION 1999: CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS!**

With the Auction slated for March 20, 1999, the clock is already tick-tick-ticking away. We need parents RIGHT NOW who can step in and volunteer to make the 1999 version TOPS' greatest fundraiser ever.

We are looking for:

- ◆ an Auction Co-chair, someone to learn the ropes from Rhian Lombard this year and then to take over next year's Auction Committee chairmanship
- ◆ a Decorations Guru with a designer's vision to brighten up the festivities
- ◆ a Printing Coordinator to handle the Auction's printed materials
- ◆ a Lighting Assistant, experience preferred, to help our talented Lighting Wizard, Charlie Pickel
- ◆ a Volunteer Coordinator to bring our great worker bees together

**AND WHILE YOU'RE AT IT, SAVE MARCH 20, 1999, ON YOUR CALENDAR. START MAKING CHILDCARE ARRANGEMENTS TODAY!**

Contact Rhian Lombard at 325-5395.



*Seward under construction. November 1998*

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See the new LRC at Seward School? November 1998