Spring 2000 Auction A Huge Success!

It’s great when a community of people gets together to work on a project. Final expenses are still being totaled, but it looks like we’ve cleared over $46,000 from this year’s event. A great deal of work was done by a great number of people, and so there are lots of thank-you’s to go around. Thanks so much to the committee members who worked for months on the planning; to all the families who procured the more than 450 items; to the many merchants who donated their goods and services; to the parents, teachers, and our talented children, who helped create the fabulous class art projects; to the class reps who organized the theme baskets; to the volunteers who worked setting up before, during, and after the auction; and to those who attended and generously bid on the great items and adventures—not to mention the nearly $6,000 toward the diversity materials that were this year’s directed appeal.

This is also a good time to take a moment and send off a note of thanks to the people and businesses who donated items and let them know how successful the auction was—that it was attended by almost 300 people and that TOPS appreciates their donation. A drawing and short note of thanks from your child might be proudly hung in a local business, giving both the donor and TOPS some well deserved recognition and making next year’s request even easier to honor.

For Auction 2001, Dan Tobin will be taking over auction chair duties from the tireless Rhian Lombard. The TOPS community owes a debt of gratitude to Rhian for her leadership. It’s never too early to share your ideas and suggestions and to volunteer to join the Auction Committee and be in on the early planning. Several of our long-term members will be graduating next year along with their children, so we need new families to get involved. It’s a very rewarding, worthwhile project, and lots of fun!

The Greening Of Franklin Avenue.

Get your shovels and backs warmed up: We hope to be planting at the end of May. We expect it to take two weekends so there should be a variety of choices for times to volunteer. We will know exact dates once the plant bids come back from the nurseries.

We will need all kinds of help, from hole diggers to plastic pot gatherers. No experience necessary. The fourth grade classes will plant the two large raised beds on the “overlook” as a community service project. This planting will happen during the school day. We need parent volunteers for this event as well.

When we know exact dates a flier will come home. If you signed up to volunteer at the beginning of the year, we have your number and will be contacting you.

Questions? Sarah Meeker 322-1795 Cathy Chun 362-3774
ABOUT THE OUTRAGEOUS PUBLISHING SERVICE


We need your contributions—news from the classrooms, faculty, committees, and the larger community, opinions, profiles, compliments, congratulations, kids’ art, photographs, additions to the calendar, and anything else that needs to “get out there.”

Submit your contributions to the newsletter box in the Main Office or to Julie Pickering (by e-mail at jpick@halcyon.com or by snail mail at 2624 East Olive Street, Seattle 98122-3144). We prefer electronic contributions by e-mail or on disk (IBM or Macintosh, accompanied by a paper copy when possible). Shorter contributions can be faxed to 720-0916.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINES FOR 2000

May 11 and June 8.

Anyone interested in working on the newsletter should contact Julie at 720-4552.

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY
SITE COUNCIL MEETING APRIL 5

All members of the TOPS community are invited to attend Site Council meetings: second Wednesdays in the Library, 5-7 p.m. Next meeting: May 10, to be followed by a Public Budget Review Meeting, 7-8:30 p.m.

The April 5 Site Council meeting focused on money: where to spend it and how to manage it. But other things were talked about! A brief summary:

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Site Council Assistant Chair and head of the Nominating Committee Betsy Scott announced Site Council elections for several vacant seats in all three constituencies: K-2, grades 3-5, and grades 6-8. TOPS family members will receive ballots in the mail, and on-site voting will be possible at the May 4 Taste of TOPS event.

Betsy also announced the early retirement of Volunteer Coordinator and Chair of the Communications Committee Karen Dyson who is moving to San Diego. The part-time paid position ($4,000/year) is open for next year. Contact Betsy for details (784-5768). Heather Worthley, Site Council Chair, also announced her retirement. Betsy will be taking the position next year.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Treasurer Dana Carey-Twight distributed a spreadsheet outlining TOPS expenditures and income for the 1999-2000 school year, as well as a handout explaining the Capital Project Proposal for Site Council Approval created by the Ad Hoc Facilities/Finance Committee (See March 2000 newsletter). The Ad Hoc group proposed a slate of capital projects to be funded immediately out of cash reserves held by the Friends of TOPS. The group met twice over the winter to review and prioritize capital project needs. Site Council was briefed on their proposal by Finance Committee Co-Chair Phil Converse at the March meeting.

The total request comes to $56,000, of which $14,500 was approved or reserved at the March meeting. After considerable discussion about how much would be left in reserve if these funds were allocated, how much should be held in reserve for future contingencies, and what is the Site Council finance policy governing cash reserves, the Council decided to table the proposal at this time and address the issue of cash reserve policy and the Capital Project Proposal at the May meeting.

Several members asked Dana to bring in a cash-flow statement to show how funds are spent over the course of the school year, because the allocation of the $56,000 total would cut into existing reserves.

FRIENDS OF TOPS ENDOWMENT PROPOSAL

Rebecca Sadinsky, representing the Fund Development Committee, presented the Committee’s proposal for the creation of a TOPS Endowment, designed to invest donated funds, which would be paid out at a rate of approximately 5 percent each year. She explained that the Committee has received guidance from The Seattle Foundation and will continue researching the idea, pending Site Council support.

The Committee envisions individual donations of $250-1,000 in the spring, with the Fund Development Committee targeting specific families, particularly those with graduating students. They asked the Site Council to consider allocating $5,000 this year, hoping to generate an additional $5,000 in donations to seed a $10,000 endowment.

The Council’s response was mixed. Dana Carey-Twight suggested that the proposal should have been submitted as a budgetary RFP and asked for “considered thought” on the idea. Several members were concerned about the introduction of a third fundraising event. Kevin Crozier urged the Fund Development Committee to avoid the term “matching funds” in reference to Site Council’s involvement and instead suggested the idea of a one-time contribution of seed money. He also noted that the concept of an “endowment” implies a permanent investment policy, not a fund-raising event.

In conclusion, the Council asked the Fund Development Committee to keep working on the idea, with these comments in mind, and to come back with a more refined proposal in May. In general, Council members welcomed the idea of a voluntary investment mechanism, including perhaps a vehicle to benefit from the donation of “appreciated securities,” which TOPS presently does not have a mechanism for.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL REPORT

Student representative Kacie Tate reported that the Council is planning to discuss inappropriate dancing at the March Middle School Dance and infractions of the guest list rule. Apparently, several registered “guests” attended without their TOPS hosts. Kacie also described a new “Three Strikes and You’re Out” disciplinary system designed to address disruptive classroom behavior. She also announced that the 4th and 7th grade has been raising money at in-school bake sales.
**PRINCIPAL’S REPORT**

2000-2001 Staff News

Mr. Tubbs announced that Middle School art teacher Luzita Roll will be working a reduced ".6" contract next year. Luzita will teach 7-8th grade art, while 5-6th grade art will be taught by a ".4" contract teacher, possibly Julie Trout.

Assistant Principal Clara Scott has committed to another year at TOPS, as has counselor Jennifer Murray, who will be joined by Mike Anderson on a full-time basis. The Leadership Team has agreed to drop the Intervention Specialist position and use those funds for a Family Support Worker, who will provide much-needed support to BOC staff and families.

Mr. Tubbs also announced that the Leadership Team, with Ms. Scott, had been reviewing RFPs submitted for funding by Site Council and had identified their priorities after much thought and discussion.

Other News

Ms. Scott announced that ITBS testing was finished and WASL tests were scheduled for the end of April. She also announced the May 25 Middle School Career Fair. The last Pizza Topics will focus on “What is your passion?” The Career Fair is designed to help students follow their passion into the working world.

**WORLD LANGUAGES COMMITTEE**

Committee member Signe Gilson explained the Committee’s RFP asking for funding for a tuition-free, zero hour (8 to 9 am) Spanish class for Middle Schoolers. A committee survey showed that 30 students were interested in participating in a “rigorous” for-credit class designed to prepare them for entrance into 2nd-year high school Spanish in the 9th grade. Transportation is a problem for some. Mr. Tubbs and the Committee are looking into transportation alternatives, including use of existing Middle School (early morning) transportation to Meany and Hamilton.

**TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE**

Kevin Crozier resubmitted a proposal from the Technical Committee asking the Site Council to purchase 22 70-inch classroom projection screens to replace the existing 4-foot screens, which are too small. The new boards will cost $1,965. Existing brackets can be used. Members tried to identify “underspent” items in the 1999-2000 budget handed out by Dana Carey-Twight, but no conclusive solution was found. Also, Lori Eickelberg reiterated her point (stated at several previous Site Council meetings) that Council financial policy does not allow for the use of Council funds for “unanticipated expenses” such as this.

The screen funding decision was tabled for a second time, with members agreeing to try to decide by the end of the school year, so new screens are installed by the fall. Mr. Tubbs announced that he would order the new screens with his supply money from 1999-2000 and hope for Site Council reimbursement.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL GRANT UPDATE**

Carolyn Law updated the Site Council on Middle School grant activities and asked for support for a “cohesive attitude” and “perpetuating formula,” so grant activities over the next five years will yield long-lasting results. The grant funds activities for three key groups: students, staff, and parents, with student activities focusing on leadership and increased responsibility. Staff have been involved in staff workshops (seven two-hour meetings so far this year), and parents have benefited from forums designed to help them understand adolescent development and realize more effective communication.

Council members asked if some grant funds might be used to fund related programs, such as those addressing diversity issues. Carolyn emphasized the need to focus on the grant’s goals relating to social, emotional, and growth issues affecting Middle School students. She suggested the grant might be best used to “tweak” those activities that have worked well over the last two years of the grant, rather than introducing new, untested elements. She emphasized continuity and effectiveness for kids.

**DIVERSITY ISSUES COALITION**

(MET FROM 7 P.M.)

Coalition co-facilitator Garry Owens reported that the TOPS Auction Book Fund netted $5,900 for books supporting a multicultural curriculum. The Coalition plans to form a subcommittee of interested Coalition members, teachers, and librarian Steve Haines to decide what’s next. Members also wondered if there should be an ongoing committee advising on related library acquisitions over the years with an eye to supporting teachers’ curriculum needs and the needs of students and families.

Coalition co-facilitator Cathy Chun handed out a list of Coalition-generated budget proposals submitted to Site Council. The members discussed prioritizing projects and cutting funds from certain projects to ensure funding, but in the end decided to submit all proposals because the total amount was relatively small ($9,725) and all projects were worthy. Sally Buckley noted that the Coalition should not compromise their goals just when they were gaining valuable momentum.

Site Council Chair Heather Worthley invited Coalition representatives to attend the Public Budget Review Meeting on May 10 to advocate for their proposals.
**Sharing the Jewish Experience**

*By Susan Davis*

The co-facilitators of the Diversity Issues Coalition decided to add a new dimension to our monthly meetings by asking everyone in the group to talk about their own ethnic experiences. The rationale was that if we can better understand our peers on the committee, then we will be better role models for the school community. Somehow, I was approached to be the first presenter, and I agreed.

I began my “10 minute” discussion with an introduction and description of my task. I am the director of a progressive Jewish educational organization that supports a wide variety of Jewish cultural and religious experiences. You should also know that I grew up on the East Coast, so to squash 3,500 years of history within my allotted time limit, I took full advantage of the talking speed with which I was raised. Unfortunately, that meant eliminating a very important part of our culture—jokes and storytelling.

Here are the main points I reported. If you have questions or comments, please do not hesitate to call me or ask someone Jewish for clarification. One thing that is important to understand when learning about other cultures is that what you believe is true or correct, often times is not shared by others, even in your own culture.

Each person creates his/her own set of assumptions about life and the world. These points are “Judaism according to Susan Davis” and other people will probably have a different take on things.

- **Hidden Minority**—Jewish people have lived in other people’s countries for over 2,000 years; therefore, many of us can’t be easily distinguished from others. Just like other hidden minority groups, we have our code words or questions to find out who is Jewish, how Jewish (culturally and/or religiously), and if we have any Jewish friends in common (which tells us if we share similar Jewish experiences or identification).

- **The Cornerstone**—The three most important aspects of Jewish religious life is study of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), prayer, and responsibility for doing good deeds. Unlike Christianity, Jewishness is a religion and a culture, and these tenets can be re-interpreted in a non-religious way with an importance placed on scholarship, consideration of others, and *tikkun olam* (repairing the world).

- **Definition**—The thing that brings Jews together, the Torah and other holy writings, also divides us. Part of a standard Jewish education is to develop one’s own interpretative and scholarly skills through the holy books. As a result, there are many different interpretations of what Judaism is and, consequently, different forms of Judaism.

Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform are the three biggest movements in Judaism, but, there are many others, and Jews have the freedom to interpret and create Judaism within a certain framework. Orthodox Jews believe the Torah was written by God and therefore, should be followed exactly. Conservative Jews also believe the Torah came from God, but can be adapted to deal with modern life. Reform Jews question whether God wrote the Torah and will adapt their Judaism to modern life, as deemed necessary. There are also many secular Jews who only identify themselves as Jews culturally.

- **Diaspora**—From 70 C.E. (A.D. is a Christian concept) until 1948, Jewish people did not have an official homeland; they lived in and were exiled from many lands. (For example, Jews did not live in England during Shakespeare’s time, but were prevalent in other arts of Europe.) As a result of living in the Diaspora, Jews have adopted and adapted to the cultures around them, creating a vast and varied legacy of art and culture.

As a result of mixing with the people from different places, there is no one “Jewish” look. The four main distinct Jewish groups (in culture, art, traditions, and language) are: the Ashkenazi (Eastern European); Sephardic (Spanish descent who after the exile, 1492, settled in Asia, Europe, and North Africa; Beta Yisrael (Ethiopian Jews, because of the recent war, most are now living is Israel); and Middle Eastern Jews who never left the region.

- **History**—There were good times and bad, but there is one period worth noting. In the 19th century, many changes happened to the Jews living in Poland and Russia, as a result of oppression occurring in the area. Some Jews created a mystical branch of Judaism called Hasidism (now considered “fundamentalist” Jews). Other Jews moved to Germany in the pursuit of a more secular life. And, later in the century, Zionist Jews, also from Poland, journeyed to Palestine to make a new, socialist Jewish society.

- **Israel**—Most North American Jews support the idea of Israel and a Jewish state, though they would not consider living there. My guess is that probably half of us have visited or would consider doing so. Just as with politics in the U.S., Jews around the world have political viewpoints, for or against, issues in Israel. I personally believe peace is possible, but I realize it is a very complex issue.

- **Holocaust**—It is still part of our lives and many of us were touched by it.

- **Calendar and Holidays**—Jewish holidays are not recognized by the mainstream calendar and, therefore, we need to excuse ourselves from regularly scheduled activities to observe them. This is no different from any other minority religion/culture. It is frustrating when events get scheduled on our holidays, and we have to be the ones to ask about re-scheduling meetings or events.

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**Two Classes Win an Ice Cream Party**

*By Karin Berghöfer-Krumm*

Mary’s 4th grade class and Willie’s 2nd grade class won an ice cream party for collecting the most food items at Christoph Krumm’s (5th grade) food drive. Mary’s class collected over 80 items, and Willy’s class came very close, so Christoph decided to give both classes an ice cream party.

The total of 261 food items (234 pounds, which is equivalent to $409.50) was donated to the University District Food Bank.

Thanks to everyone for making this food drive such a success!
Our “High Holidays” happen in early fall. Just as school starts and children’s activities begin, we also busy preparing for these holidays. Observant people have four holidays during the fall. (Chanukah is not considered a major holiday.) There is a holiday for trees in the winter and two big ones in the spring, including Passover. In the summer, there are three. And, every Friday night and Saturday is our Sabbath. All Jewish holidays begin at nightfall. Our calendar is based on a lunar system.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah—When a child turns 13, he or she is considered a Jewish adult. Many children participate in a ceremony called bar (for boys) or bat (for girls) mitzvah. Just to participate in the ceremony takes four or five years of learning, besides regular Sunday school classes. Seventh grade teachers should be especially aware of the additional pressures on their Jewish students who are going through this process.

Christmas—I concluded my presentation with a question I raised at an earlier Coalition meeting about celebrating Christmas in a secular space, like a school. (Especially with a district that does not have its spring break during either Easter or Passover.) I do not have answers, but only more questions/observations. There are plenty of ways to learn about other cultures (besides teaching about the all the festivals of light in the winter). Themes of agriculture, beginnings, food, or rites of passage are just a few other ways that all cultures share more or less equally.

Jewish Experience continued

As a Jew, I consider it religious and private. For me, singing songs in December is a way to celebrate Christmas, no matter what the songs. Singing all year round about the seasons can accommodate a lot more people (even gentiles who don’t celebrate Christmas).

The problem, as I see it, is about interpretation. For many Jews, separation of Church and State means no religious holidays in public places. Most Jewish holidays are celebrated in our homes, synagogues, or communities.

So, my questions: Is Christmas a national holiday or a religious holiday? Is it a public holiday or private (kept within its community)?

My talk ended up taking me 20 minutes to complete (I’ve added and deleted some information for this article). A lively discussion followed, I think, because we are starting the process of letting our voices be heard. Someone came up to me after the meeting and said she learned a lot about Jewish people from the talk, and realized that just living in a Jewish neighborhood wasn’t enough. I’m looking forward to learning from my peers about the other ethnic groups represented on the committee, including those I think I already know.

(Susan Davis is the director of Kadima and has a son in the first grade.)
“THE PARENT TRAP”

By Carolyn Law

Confused about what to say to that TOPS student while chaperoning on the Ski Bus or at the camp??

Wonder how to tell that student to stop monkeying around at that Children’s Theater performance??

Struggling to set limits??

At the March 30 7th grade parent forum, sponsored by the Middle School Support Grant, our facilitator Victor Larson shared the ideas of William Damon, an adolescent developmentalist at Stanford University, from an article he had recently read entitled “The Parent Trap.”

Victor highlighted two of Damon’s main ideas. One concerned a middle ground approach to parenting that Damon refers to as “authoritative” parenting as opposed to authoritarian or permissive parenting. The other was the notion of a “youth charter,” where a community of adults comes together to establish a set of shared standards for youth behavior grounded in a set of core values that a diverse community learns that it shares. Both concepts generated a buzz of interest, but it was the youth charter concept that seemed to strike a particular chord for the TOPS parents present.

In the article, Damon suggests that given all the contradictions present in contemporary culture, rearing children can be particularly hard these days. In fact, it is easy to fall into surviving your children as opposed to raising them. Sometimes we need to be reminded that parenting is a long-term process. Sometimes we need to think about supporting our children as a community of adults who are able and willing to step forward to teach and respond to behaviors that are going against the grain of shared values.

First, though, some information on the idea of “authoritative” parenting. Damon believes that all parents share certain common values. “I’ve worked with every background of people,” he explains, “and nobody wants their kids to steal or lie or cheat. The important forefront issues of development are the issues of common decency and civility, and nobody disagrees with that.” He believes that people have the inherent capacity to live morally correct lives, and parents have the opportunity and the responsibility to turn that capacity into a commitment. They begin to do so by practicing what he calls “authoritative” parenting.

Damon explains that as the adult/parent “you are in the position of authority, that you deserve to be there and that you have certain things you’re going to go to the mat on. You’re not going to give up on the idea that your child should not be staying up all night eating donuts, taking drugs when they’re older, or stealing, or bullying, etc. You know more than your child and it’s your job to teach him or her how to be civil.”

He suggests a process of “responsible engagement” in which you can set up an activity or intellectual lesson where the child is encouraged to express their views; the parent listens and tries to understand why the kid might see things differently. This can also happen in response to one of the many issues that arise in the course of the day! This may sound like a free-for-all, but Damon says “you will stand your ground one way or the other on what’s right. You’re not going to forget that, and you’re not going to act as if that’s up for grabs, as if the kid has just as good an insight on that as you do. You’ve got your moral position and you’re going to stick with it.” That’s the hard-line part.

Then there’s the respectful part. During the same conversation, “you’ll listen to the child and you’ll engage with them. The kid is not doing this in order to wheedle you out of a position; and in fact, part of the art and science of parenting is remembering the length and determination of the kid’s argument in not going to affect whether you give in.” By “respectfully engaging,” the process of mutual understanding takes place and that allows your child to develop the ability to be reflective. What’s more, not equivocating on what is right and wrong allows the child to develop good habits. Together, these two things—habit and reflection—allow our children to later take their place in the community as a fully developed moral person.

This leads to the idea of a “youth charter,” which is an expansion of the preceding notions of parenting to the scale of a community of adults. Adults who are willing to act with a sense of solidarity to teach the community’s children a set of strong values framed by a shared notion of what is right and wrong. This community of adults is willing to guide kids toward the “fundamental standards of honesty, civility, decency, respect and the pursuit of excellence, courage, skill and a sense of purpose in work.” Doing this is predicated on the community spending the time to determine what are its shared values and learning how to teach the children, respectfully, those values.

Imagine at TOPS, a community of parents watching out for all of our kids and stepping forward confidently when we see inappropriate behavior and calmly saying, “We don’t do that at TOPS. Time to stop.”

At the forum, all of this was definitely food for thought, especially as the 7th grade parents were preparing to chaperone the class camping trip to Mt. St. Helen. Parents were concerned about how to act the role of chaperone effectively and comfortably—in synch with fellow chaperones and staff. They’re planning on meeting to discuss shared expectations. That’s a beginning.
**Calling All 6-8 Middle School Parents**

*PLEASE COME TO OUR YEAREND 6-8 PARENT FORUM*

Your participation is “mandatory” for the health of our student and parent community!

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 24, 7-9 p.m.**
**IN THE LIBRARY**
**FACILITATED BY PAMELA HILLARD AND VICTOR LARSON**

**AGENDA**

- Review our goal of focusing on learning about adolescent development and parenting issues:
  - How did we do this year and what about next year’s program?
- Share parent perspectives on the shifts in our students’ behavior and lives as they move from grade 6 to 7 to 8 at TOPS and in our families.
- Pick the brains of our 8th grade parents to see what recommendations they might have to make our experience better.

**Middle School Team Places 2nd in Math Olympiad**

TOPS Middle School team placed second overall in the District’s Math Olympiad held at Seattle University in March. Congratulations on a great performance! The team included:

**6th Grade (2nd for 6th Grade)**
- Kaley Wilson
- Nikolai Olson
- Katrina Nelson
- Karlin Castor-Peck
- Michael Magista
- Alyssa Erickson-Wayman

**7th Grade (2nd for 7th Grade)**
- Lani Smith
- Lillie Cohn
- Devon Hale
- Madeleine Bolton
- Noah Goldberg
- Chriss Kaimmer

**8th Grade**
- Deva Crouch
- Seyeon Malott
- Katy Barnhart
- Daniel Morgan
- Kevin Means
- Jennifer LaCoste

**Million Mom March, May 13**

*From Julie Pickering*

Every day, a dozen children die from gunshot wounds. Some are crime victims; some are wrong-place, wrong-time victims. Some are victims of guns unlocked and loaded in the house; others are suicides, made easier by access to a gun. Recently, as we all know, several children have been killed right in their own schools.

Because of the shocking number of gun-related deaths and injuries of children, mothers across the country have planned marches in 40 cities for Mother’s Day weekend. These “Million Mom Marches” are being held to demand “cooling off” periods and background checks, licensing of handgun owners and registration of handguns, child-proof guns, a limit of one handgun purchase per month, and no-nonsense enforcement of gun laws.

The National PTA, the Washington State Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the National Education Association are just a few of the organizations who have endorsed the Million Mom March. Here in Seattle, there will be a family-friendly rally at the Seattle Center House on May 13, from 1-3 p.m., followed by a march to Westlake Center. Mothers, children, fathers, grandparents, and anyone who wants to send a strong message to Congress that it is time to pass sensible gun laws are encouraged to attend. For more information, visit the website at www.millionmommarch.com, or call 1-888-989-MOMS.
MEET YOUR TEACHERS

Each month during the 1999-2000 school year, the TOPS Newsletter is meeting the people most directly involved in your child’s education. In this issue, Jim Wells continues our series with Middle School Art teacher Luzita Roll.

LUZITA ROLL

TOPS NEWSLETTER: What drew you to TOPS or to teaching in general?

LUZITA ROLL: From the onset of my art teaching career in Montreal, I have been working on creating a program that truly integrates the seemingly disparate “pieces” of the student’s learning experience. Helping students make connections and see relationships is fundamental to “deeper” learning. Art is a perfect vehicle for this. In 1987, I started my own art school, Art 4 Kids, to have the freedom to set curriculum and develop this approach. Once in the Seattle School District, I became aware of TOPS’ interest in integrated learning, so here I am! This year our Middle School Art Integration Program has linked hands-on art curriculum with subject matter covered in language arts, social studies, math, and science. This work will be on display at the TOPS ARTWALK—June 2nd from 5:30 to 8 p.m. The show will be on display until June 12th.

TN: Why do you like teaching art to kids?

LR: Teaching art to kids allows me to facilitate “thinking outside of the box,” encouraging the creative, unique, and sometimes quirky voice of each student. This, coupled with the parameters of the discipline of art, can produce great and sometimes surprising results, which I love witnessing and coaxing along.

TN: How are you taking advantage of the new space this year?

LR: If you haven’t visited our art studio yet, please do. We can now offer ceramics, fused glass, local artist presentations—and kids can work LARGE! Now we just need somewhere to store it all.

TN: Any ideas about promoting diversity at TOPS?

LR: For starters, all students are encouraged to explore their own artistic expression in art. This allows us to see how diverse we are as individuals. Also, middle schoolers seem to change from day to day as they explore the big “who am I” questions—so they are experiencing internal “diversity” on a daily basis. Through cultural/traditional art projects, students learn about both the similarities and uniqueness of people worldwide. This promotes respect for one another.

TN: To what extent do parents have a place in your classroom?

LR: Parents are welcome to visit and assist in my classroom. Coordinating times can be a challenge with our Middle School “A-B day” schedule, but it does happen. Parents are indispensable in preparing throughout the year for our June celebration of student art—the TOPS ARTWALK.

TN: What are your professional and personal philosophy and goals?

LR: I hope to make individual creativity not just an experience, but a habit for my students. Risk-taking, problem-solving, and exploring a whim—all while juggling the elements of art—lead to success both in the art studio and in the world. During the summer, I refuel and try new ideas while teaching small groups of children ages 6-17 at my art camp, Art 4 Kids.

TN: How about your outside interests?

LR: I have a 17-year-old daughter and five cats. When time allows, I make art, read, and enjoy theatre, music, dance, travel, gardening, and hiking.

ART WALK IS COMING!

Mark your calendars—June 2, any time from 5:30 to 8 p.m.—for the TOPS Art Walk. Enjoy the work of our resident artists and join the Eastlake Community in dedication of Franklin Green Street, as well as the Elementary school play.

Volunteer “curators” are needed. Please contact Art Walk volunteer coordinator Carmen Cook for more information (527-4089).
LOOKING AT FUND DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

By Penny Bolton

The Fund Development Committee met twice in March to discuss future directions for fund development at our school. Our dilemma? TOPS has relatively few “needy” students, according to the District’s weighted formula, so we receive fewer District dollars per student. District funding for TOPS has dropped since 1992, and as a result, Friends of TOPS fundraising activities have become more important. Donations from parents through the No Bake Bake Sale and the Auction pays for infrastructure needs, such as the Family Roster, the newsletter, and Volunteer Coordinator as well as curriculum enhancement, such as art in the K-4 grades, AmeriCorps volunteers to help with recess, office tasks, and tutoring. But with the District is funding less, not more, we need to look closely at our fundraising approach and decide what we need and where we can get it.

The Fund Development Committee has looked over the current Fund Development Policy and decided that it works. It calls for TOPS to limit its fundraising efforts to two main efforts—the No Bake and the Spring Auction. However, the Committee recognizes the need for additional funding.

FUNDING OPTIONS

One way would be to pursue outside grants to provide funding for programs that fit our school’s goals. The Committee decided to identify as many grant possibilities as possible and make a calendar for when the applications are due. We will go to staff and see who was interested in the potential grants; then the committee will work with staff to write grant proposals. The goal is to have the school’s actual needs drive grant-writing efforts.

We also decided that the many affinity or “dot.com” programs (e.g., shop online and a percentage of your purchase goes to TOPS) that we are being asked to look at would require us to endorse the notion that TOPS families use shopping or consuming in a particular venue to support the school. We would rather have folks give to the school directly. This item will probably go to the Site Council for more feedback.

We decided to have further discussions on directed giving in the No Bake in an effort to boost the money raised in that fundraiser. If we had “directed” giving, it would probably be limited so that the overall budget would not get too skewed by special interests.

In addition, Lianne Sheppard and Rebecca Sadinsky volunteered to do the paperwork to get Friends of TOPS on the matching fund lists for the United Way, state employees, and city employees. This will probably take place next year.

TOPS ENDOWMENT?

The Committee has also been talking about the idea of a TOPS’ endowment. Rebecca Sadinsky presented the concept to the April Site Council meeting. The proposed endowment would be able to accept securities and larger donations that would go into an investment pool. This investment would pay out 5 percent every year to projects the Site Council designates. We are hoping for further discussion of this idea at upcoming Site Council meetings.

If anyone is interested in joining the Fund Development Committee to help in this important work, please call Penny Bolton at 325-5074 or e-mail at pennyb@halcyon.com. We meet once a month in the evening.

CHESS CLUB NEWS

By Mark Morales

As we wind down this year, our thoughts are focusing on the next school year. The Site Council is currently reviewing our proposal to help fund a chess class. We hope to offer a curriculum-based chess class starting next year on Monday or Tuesday mornings before school.

This class will be taught by Dr. Leo Stefurak. For those of you who don’t know Dr. Stefurak, he is the finest junior chess coach in the state. Leo is an Advanced Life Master, United States Chess Federation Rated Master, and a member of the International Chess Federation. He has played in countless competitions, including international competitions, and teaches at schools throughout the Puget Sound Area. Best of all, the children love his style of teaching. We are very lucky to have Leo teaching this class at TOPS.

Classes will be limited to 30 intermediate to advanced students beginning in September and continuing through May. Chess Club’s after-school program will still be available for all students. Registration will start in September.

If you would like more information, please contact Mark Morales (325-4079 or memoral@msn.com).
FALLING INTO GREENLAKE

By Kayode Stephens-Terry, 8th Grade

There is this really cool one-person kayak that I’ve always wanted to paddle. I told Wes, the guy who was in it, that I get my turn next week, so that was that.

Today was my turn. But this other guy named Austin didn’t know about Wes and my little agreement, and he went over to the shed to take it out with Don Zemke.

The next minute, after I got my paddle, I saw the kayak sitting out without Austin around, so I rushed over to tell Don that I said it would be my turn this week. He told me to go ahead and take it. We lifted the kayak and set it in. Then I lost my balance and the whole thing completely flipped!

Right before that happened, as I was getting in, I heard Don say that I was going to have to switch off with Austin in 15 minutes . . . and then I flipped.

Next thing I knew, I was in the water grabbing onto Don’s hand, trying to crawl back onto shore. I was completely drenched. Everyone started laughing, along with me. It was pretty funny. It wasn’t all that scary because I was only in a foot of water and the life jacket helped me float (ha, ha!).

WHY I LIKE ROWING

By Dominique Warrick, 8th Grade

I think rowing is a good experience for me because I’m out in the open having a fun time feeling the cool breeze. It is exciting for me because I don’t know many people who row.

I think that I learned quickly from just a couple times at Greenlake. At first, I was very scared of the water since I didn’t know how to swim and I thought that I was going to fall in.

This program is a great idea. It gives students the opportunity to do something that most people don’t know how to do. I think that a lot of schools need to have this kind of program because it is something different.

MARTIN MUELLER—BIRD EXPERT

By Kristin Braziunas, 8th Grade

Before crew started, our class heard that we were “only” going to learn about birds the first day. Many of my friends decided not to go that day because they thought that it would be boring, but I went to crew anyway.

When we arrived at Greenlake, Maureen, the crew instructor, was waiting for us. I expected that we were just going to get a boring lecture about ducks at Greenlake, so I was surprised when she led us to a spot where Martin Mueller, a bird expert, had set up his telescope.

Looking through the telescope, I saw a bald eagle just finishing a fish. Mr. Mueller proceeded to show us the eagle’s nest and to tell us a little about eagles living in the area.

After his little speech about eagles, he told us about the four types of birds that live and swim in Greenlake and gave us some questions to try to answer as we rowed or paddled around the lake: “How does this or that bird feed?” “How does this bird differ from that bird?” and “What does this bird’s feet look like?”

To tell you the truth, I didn’t find the answers to many of his questions, but I did learn an awful lot about birds in the Greenlake area by listening to Mr. Mueller’s interesting speech.
**LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

Can Spanish find a home at TOPS? The TOPS World Languages Committee and many other TOPS families hope so. Three years ago, then Principal Kodama surveyed all TOPS families on the question of whether our students should have the opportunity to learn a foreign language. The resounding “yes!” led to the formation of the K-5 before- and after-school, tuition-based Spanish language program.

In the last two years, Mr. Tubbs has used his creative abilities to meet the demand for Spanish language learning opportunities while not overburdening our teachers, or squeezing the existing curriculum, or threatening enrichment opportunities. It’s a tough job, but I feel that Mr. Tubbs’ mid-term grade is an “A,” with extra credit warranted for the difficulty of the dance.

We are a small school with limited resources, but we definitely have the “will,” and Mr. Tubbs has proposed a “way.” This year, second grade teacher Willy Jones is teaching Spanish in his class and in TOPICS; we held four, 20-week before/after school Spanish language classes; and Julie and Lana helped launched a Spanish language pilot program for our sixth graders.

The level of support among TOPS families for a Spanish language program remains high. In January, the overwhelming majority of the sixth grade parents signed a letter stating their wish to continue a TOPS Middle School Spanish program. TOPS is one of the few Middle Schools in the Seattle School District that does not provide a full course of foreign language instruction.

Many of us who have students in the tuition-based before- and after-school Spanish program believe that providing a foreign language learning experience for K-5 students helps them develop a wider cultural outlook. There is also evidence that learning a foreign language at a young age helps develop important cognitive abilities. Approximately 30 of the current fifth and sixth grade families have stated their intent to participate in the proposed program.

The goal of the TOPS Middle School Spanish language program is to:

- Establish a strong Middle School language program that enhances and expands the educational opportunities and multi-cultural understanding of our middle school students.

- Provide TOPS Middle School students with enough competence, knowledge, and skills in a world language to qualify them to enter an advanced (2nd year) high school language class.

Let us truly be a “world class” school in a “world class” school district and give our students the advantages, opportunities, and cultural awareness, understanding, and appreciation that can come from learning one of our world’s major languages.

— Signe Gilson  
World Languages Committee

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For next year, the World Languages Committee has requested funding to cover scholarships for the K-5 program and funding for a Middle School Spanish language teacher. Mr. Tubbs, TOPS Middle School staff, and the World Languages Committee have proposed a “zero” period (8:00 am to 9:00 am), graded, academically rigorous 2-year Middle School Spanish language course. Approximately 30 of the current fifth and sixth grade families have stated their intent to participate in the proposed program.

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— Signe Gilson  
World Languages Committee

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**GIRLS VOLLEYBALL COACH**

**MANDY MATZKE**

TOPS’ new girls’ volleyball team is competing against middle schools throughout the District. The girls are led by Mandy Matzke, a senior at Seattle University where she majors in Ecological Studies and Biology.

Mandy plays basketball and volleyball at Seattle U, and was active in both sports throughout high school. She’s had lots of coaching experience over the years, for summer camps and club teams. Mandy says, “I believe coaching at the middle school level must teach the right way to play volleyball. Teaching fundamental skills and game rules will promote improvement and prepare players for competition at the high school level. My highest priorities are to have fun and promote teamwork while learning and playing.”
TOPS DRAMA PRESENTS

JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH

An adaptation from Roald Dahl’s book

Directed by Julie Jamieson

Starring TOPS Elementary School Students

Featuring original songs by TOPS parent David Crandall and accompanied by TOPS parents Penny Bolton and Todd Jamieson

June 2, Friday at 7 p.m., and Saturday June 3 at 2 and 7 p.m. TOPS Gym, 2500 Franklin Avenue East

Join us for the first elementary production in the new “TOPS Theater”!

On Friday, supplement your dramatic experience with a stroll through the Art Walk, open from 5:30 to 8 p.m. and some mingling with Eastlake Community residents as we all celebrate the opening of Franklin Green Street. Good things are happening!

For more information on the play, call Julie at (206) 328-5189

General Admission $5

Eastlake neighbors $4

Seniors (over 65) and children (under 12) $2

Support TOPS drama: advertise in the play program! For info, call Julie at (206) 328-5189.

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