TOPS NEWS

TOPS Q & A: FINDING ANSWERS TO SCHOOL QUESTIONS

By Heather Worthley, Site Council Chair

In a community as large as TOPS, it’s often difficult to know where to go with your questions. Who do you ask for help with a perpetually late bus? Who is responsible for the Lost and Found? What’s going on with TOPICS these days? How come my kid never has any homework?

Unfortunately, no one has all the answers all the time, and too often Mr. Tubbs finds himself inundated with questions better answered by someone else.

In most cases, your child’s teacher or class Room Rep will have the answers to your questions. The Main Office is the place to go with practical questions, like “What is the school fax number?” or “When does Winter Break begin?”

For the big picture questions of interest to the whole TOPS community, we suggest taking advantage of the TOPS newsletter. I’m happy to play “TOPS Answer Person.” Send your questions to me (in the Site Council mailbox in the Main Office, by e-mail to worthmine@premier1.net, or mail to 602 NW 52nd Street, Seattle 98107), and I will find the answers. You’ll get a personal response, and when necessary, I will let the rest of the community know through the newsletter.

TOPS Webmaster Jack Lee has already been playing informal “Answer Person” online at the TOPS website Guest Book (http://www.ssd.k12.wa.us/schools/tops/guestbook.html). He’s been answering questions from folks as faraway as Maryland and redirecting those that he doesn’t have a good response for. Jack plans to launch a newsgroup-style discussion page in the near future. Options: subscribe to an e-mail newsletter or check out the discussion online where discussions will be grouped by topic. Our thanks to Jack for this great service.

NOVEMBER SITE COUNCIL MEETING

By Gretchen Chambers

All members of the TOPS community are invited to Site Council meetings: second Wednesdays in the Library, 5-7p.m. The next meeting is December 8. A brief overview of the November 10 meeting:

INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting began with the usual introductions. Of special interest was Site Council Chair Heather Worthley’s report that a number of parents have expressed concern that the new academic standards are causing TOPS to emphasize academics at the expense of our enriched curriculum. She noted that some parents felt that placing the resident artist projects into TOPICS reflects such a trend. Mr. Tubbs responded that with some of the best scores in the district, TOPS is under no pressure from the district to focus more on academics, and that any perceived reduction in enrichment activities is not related to the new standards. He offered to meet with concerned parents.

PRINCIPAL’S REPORT

Mr. Tubbs reported that we are still looking for music and dance teachers for TOPICS, but that the Ewajo Center is expected to submit a promising proposal.

Regarding the November Teacher Conferences, Mr. Tubbs explained that parents would be given a brochure...
ABOUT THE OUTRAGEOUS PUBLISHING SERVICE

Welcome to the fourth monthly newsletter of the 1999-2000 school year, edited by Julie Pickering, Jim Wells, and Sandy Kurtz. Cindy Suzumura handles layout. Coach Don Zemke provided great photos, and Gretchen Chambers is supplying informative news. Bruce Pulmano maintains the mailing list and gets the newsletter out to you.

We welcome 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 1999-2000

December 9, January 13, February 10, March 9, April 6, May 11, and June 8.

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

continued from page 1.

describing the 1 to 4 scoring system, which reflects the new standards. These number scores now represent achievement levels relative to expectations for the end of the year. Thus, a 2 in November suggests that a student is on track for meeting end-of-the-year grade expectations and should not be cause for concern.

The TOPS BOC program is getting bigger and will be closed to new students when enrollment reaches 75. Mr. Tubbs emphasized how important it is to acknowledge the BOC students and help them feel part of the school.

Other Odds & Ends from Mr. Tubbs:

Mr. Tubbs is working with others on the After School Activities Proposal to be submitted to the District for the Middle School.

A position for a student representative to the Site Council remains open. Mr. Tubbs asked for Site Council members to attend a Student Leadership Council meeting to ask for student involvement. He also reported on progress in the Student Leadership Council, a source of great pride for student representatives and other Middle Schoolers. (See article on page 8)

The wet weather has meant several Muddy Day recesses (No Rogers Field) and delays in construction on Franklin Street. New bulletin boards are up in 17 places, but the prospects for getting new white boards to replace the “multipurpose” boards in the classrooms and larger projector/overhead screens are dim (Pardon the pun!).

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Chair Dana Carey-Twight was glad to report that several parents are interested in helping on the Finance Committee, including a CPA. She said the Finance Committee would be working on updating check-issuing procedures to make use of e-mailed and faxed approvals. Parent Representative and attorney Jennifer Shaw offered to review the new procedures to ensure the new procedures are fraud-proof. Dana said the Finance Committee also planned to develop a TOPS finance policy sheet.

Dana also reported on the No Bake Bake Sale, which, while only a week old, was already bringing in money. Last year’s No Bake brought in $28,000.

INTERNET/TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Webmaster Jack Lee reported that the committee had received ten excellent applications for computers from TOPS staff. Rather than deny some of these requests, Lee asked the Site Council to fund 3-4 additional computers this year at about $1000 each. Members agreed about the importance of providing students and teachers with up-to-date computers and Web access. Lori Eickelberg expressed special interest in targeting students who do not have access to computers at home.

Because it is unlikely that TOPS will find another AmeriCorps volunteer before the December 1 deadline, it was suggested that funds for that position ($3000) and funds earmarked for TOPICS Spanish (now taught by 2nd grade teacher Willie Jones) be redirected to the Technology Committee to purchase the extra equipment. The Council passed a motion stipulating that, contingent upon the availability of the AmeriCorps funds and the Technology Committee’s continued pursuit of technology grants, $3500 would be made available for these additional computers.

DIVERSITY ISSUES COALITION

Coalition cofounder Garry Owens reported that 51 parents had expressed an interest in participating in the coalition. Parent concerns include TOPS mission, narrowing the “performance” gap in scores and testing, and disproportionality. The first meeting is scheduled for November 18. Those interested in the Coalition and its work should contact Garry Owens (782-2565), Sandra Hinojosa (634-2353), or Cathy Chun (362-3774).

DRAMA COMMITTEE

Penny Bolton reported that last month’s leads on used stage curtains were unproductive. Given that new curtains (costing about $10,000) now seem the only option, she asked for approval of a new plan to purchase drama equipment now, so the gym will be ready for the Middle School play scheduled for February 2000. The Council asked for a more in-depth analysis of current and future Drama program needs and agreed to table the issue. This means that the Middle School, and possibly the Elementary, plays will be produced without curtains this school year.

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Penny Bolton, Lianne Sheppard, and Mr. Tubbs have been studying the idea of writing a grant proposal that would bring ten AmeriCorps volunteers to TOPS to assist with tutoring, in-class assistance, and enhancing “core values” throughout the community. Penny asked the Council to support in principle an effort to pursue an AmeriCorps Team Grant, which would require matching funds in the spring Site Council Budget cycle.

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SO WHAT ABOUT THESE NEW STANDARDS?

By Julie Pickering

There has been a lot of talk about the Standards Based Learning System, but many of us aren’t sure what it’s all about. Mr. Tubbs kindly provided me with a little background information from the District. You should also receive a brochure about the system at your Parent-Teacher Conference in November. I hope this will help.

The system originated in state legislation dating to 1992 and 1993 as the Essential Academic Learning Requirements and the Washington Assessment of Student Learning. It has since gone through iterations at the District level and with the school board.

The Standards are “statements of what students should know and be able to do during and as a result of their educational experiences.” “Benchmarks” are a way of measuring whether these Standards have been met; they’re “steps or stages in the student’s progress toward and within the standard: milestones or checkpoints.”

That makes sense. So how does it work? An example: the Standards may stipulate that a student understands and applies concepts and procedures of algebraic sense in math. The Benchmark for this Standard? At Grade 2, it means completing numbers sentences using +, –, ÷, <, and >. At Grade 5, it means a student can solve algebraic expressions with one variable. At Grade 10, the student is expected to create and solve equations and inequalities.

The Standards cover more than math, however. Four core areas are identified and addressed in the Standards: Reading, Writing, Communication, and Math.

The marks on your child’s Academic Achievement record may be confusing this year. Under these Standards, the numbers have changed a bit:

- 4 – Working beyond standards
- 3 – Meeting standards
- 2 – Progressing, on schedule to exit OR X – Not covered in this reporting period
  (for ESL/Special Education)

So, if your children have always received 4s, don’t be surprised if they get some 3s this fall. That’s good news! At this time of the year, a 2 means your child is working to the Standards and headed toward promotion to the next grade at the end of the year.

According to District materials, the benefits of this system are many:

- It raises expectations for academic success for all students.
- It encourages quality instruction in all schools.
- It encourages alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- It helps schools prioritize their use of time and resources.
- It encourages continuous progress.
- It encourages teaching for application and reasoning.
- It motivates students to be responsible.
- It encourages partnerships with parents and community.

For more information, check out the brochure you receive at your Parent-Teacher Conference or contact your child’s teacher.

AUCTION NEWS:

Mark March 18 on Your Calendar

This just in: Our annual TOPS Auction will take place on Saturday, March 18. And once again, it will be held at the Asian Resource Center.

As you might expect, many of our veteran Auction Committee members have children who will be graduating soon, so we look toward parents of the younger kids to begin taking over. Ask past and present Auction Committee members and you’ll learn that there’s no more fun or rewarding job at TOPS.

At the first Auction Committee meeting, we identified several Volunteer Opportunities, some of which we list here:

- **Live Auction Coordinator** decides which items will go into the live auction, organizes and communicates with the auctioneer, and supervises the display of live auction items.
- **Class Project Coordinator** advises and coordinates with each class about their auction projects.
- **Printing Coordinator** is responsible for the pick-up and delivery of materials to the printer.
- **Mailing Coordinator** takes care of labeling, applying postage, and delivering invitations to the post office.
- **Food Coordinator** works with the caterer and organizes volunteers to help with serving. This also involves about 10 hours of work alongside the caterer, food prepping, and food shopping during the two days immediately preceding the auction.
- **Registration Coordinator** receives and tallies the RSVPs, collects money, and greets auction attendees. We need someone to train with Phil Converse this year and then take the reins next year.
- **Stage Manager** directs volunteers and has mostly “day of” responsibilities. We need someone to help out this year and take over next year.

Of course, there’s no Auction without plenty of great auction items. Detailed information about this year’s auction, including procurement forms, will be mailed home in the next few weeks. Don’t forget to think about asking for donations for the auction as you begin your holiday shopping and start mapping out your winter vacation plans. For more information, call auction coordinator Rhian Lombard at 325-5395.
TOPS Scholar-Athletes Receive Robeson Awards

On November 4, students from all over King County were honored with the Paul Robeson Scholar-Athlete Award at the Kingdome. The Paul Robeson Scholar-Athlete Award was created in 1986 by Ron Sims to honor students who excel in academics and athletics. The program recognizes students from kindergarten to 10th grade who earn a 3.0 GPA or above while participating in athletics.

The award is named after Paul Robeson (1898-1976), the internationally acclaimed actor, singer, and scholar-athlete. Robeson was a Phi Beta Kappa Scholar and valedictorian at Rutgers University. He spoke more than 20 languages and was the third African-American to graduate from Columbia School of Law.

As an athlete, Robeson was a catcher in baseball, a player and a coach in basketball, and an All-American in college football. He was one of the first African-Americans to play in professional football, and he used his fame to advance the cause of civil rights.

It is a great honor to be a recipient of the Paul Robeson Scholar-Athlete Award. The following TOPS students were recipients of the Award this year:

Rikki George, Rain Frost, Eric Moberly, Jessica Knowles, Alex Dorros, Matthew Lubov, Andrew Manos, Andrew Helgren, Molly Moore, Allison King, Lucas Chapel, Ai-Li Chiong, Devon Hale, Sophie Raider, Nicholas Bennett, Timothy Haggerty, Paul Croft, Kylin Oliphant, Andrea Carey, Marisa Morales, Kali Spurlock, Kyle Fleck, Ian McKinley, Adlai Pappy II, Jesmie Ginez, Cameron George, Zachary Porras-Foye, Eugenie Song, Quin McKinley, Kari Lombard. Erin Jones, Sylvie Kovnat, Ross Holzworth, Kelley Palmer-McCart, Max Wilbert, Claire Mocha, Camille Shuman, Mahealani Smith, Danae Moore, Julian Manos, Noah Goldberg, Julia Fehrenbach, Nick Galvin, Davis Woolworth, Alex Manning, Alice Johnson, Anne Mckeen, Emma Slaton, Marcus Morales, Calder Fong, Mathew Hamilton, Elizabeth Pepin, Kathleen Compton, Taylor Helgren, Kevin Means, Burnley D’luhosh, Daniel Heller, Sinclaire Manning, Terrence Seales, Taylor Mayes, Nathaniel Schacht, Michael Magista, Erica Webster, Kevin Weiss, Eric Nelson, Aaron Webster, Will Harris, Lillian Woolworth, Carl Shumann, Phil Landress, Rachel Keylon, Claire Simon, Joel Keylon, Catherine Means, Billy Demorest, Veronica Galvin. A special thanks to Paulette Boose from Ron Sims’ office for all her hard work in putting this list together on such short notice. And my apologies if anyone was left off the list.

WANTED!

Working Macintosh Computers and/or Monitors, LCII, IIsi, Quadra, Centris, PowerMacs, etc.

Please donate your working Macs to TOPS.

All technology components will be cleaned, upgraded, and maintained by the staff. Children at all age levels need to build their keyboarding skills, write reports, and more.

Your donations will be greatly appreciated. For more information, contact 5th grade teacher Kevin Crozier through his mailbox in the Main Office or by e-mail at kcrozier@halcyon.com.
Chess Tips

By Mark Morales

What is the best way to help your child learn to play chess? Play! Chess can be a complex strategic game and a little intimidating to the new player. But the basic moves are actually very simple, and even a beginner can have fun. The best way to learn is to play the game as often as possible.

What if you don’t know how to play chess? Learn! Your child has probably already learned most of the moves and terminology. Ask your child to teach you some basic moves. Also, I recently sent home an activity book for Chess Club 1 called “Chess Rules for Students” and for Chess Club 2, “Chess Tactics for Students,” both written by John Bain.

These books are plainly written and easy to follow. Read along with your child. Try some of the exercises. After a few games, you will have a basic understanding, and your child will be excited to have his or her own chess partner.

Here is a little known secret: three years ago I could barely play chess! I began involved with chess because of my son Marcus. My daughter Marisa started attending Chess Club when she was in kindergarten. When Marcus started going to TOPS, Marisa introduced him to chess. When Marcus was in first grade, Steve Ludwig, the TOPS chess coach, told me that Marcus was interested in going to a chess tournament. He went to his first tournament in 1997, and he has played almost 100 tournament games since.

To keep up with Marcus, I had to learn the game. I knew the basics, but I never played at Marcus’ level. So I bought some books, volunteered to help at Chess Club, sat in on some of his private lessons and played chess with him—a lot.

I know that in our overly busy lives, it isn’t always easy to find time to play chess with our kids. With three kids at home, my wife and I feel like we barely have time to breathe, let alone play. But the reward of learning this game along with your child is well worth making the extra time.

If your child wants to play more than you are able to accommodate, try a computer chess program. “Lego Chess” is great for younger children. With its good graphics and colors, your child will be excited to keep playing. Another program that can be used at all levels is “Power Chess” by Sierra. This program teaches basic skills but can also be used as a challenge for the more advanced player. At the end of the game, the “Queen” analyzes your game and offers suggestions for improvement.

Your local library has other resources for learning chess. And, of course, the weekly Chess Club meeting will give your child a chance to play with and learn from some experienced players. I encourage all parents to learn the game and start playing with their children. And if you want to spend some really quality time with your child, come join us on Mondays at 3:30 p.m. for Chess Club. You can have fun with your child and pick up a few tips yourself.

1999-2000 TOPS Calendar

NOVEMBER
23-24 Early dismissal for parent conferences
24 (W) One hour early dismissal for Thanksgiving
25-26 Thanksgiving vacation
30 (Tu) Teen Speak workshop (I) 6:30 p.m.-9 p.m. (6th grade families)

DECEMBER
3 (F) End of 1st trimester
7 (Tu) Teen Speak workshop (II) 6:30 p.m.-9 p.m. (6th grade families)
8 (W) Site Council Meeting 5-7 p.m.
9 (Th) 7th Grade potluck, 6:30 p.m., Luzita’s room
10 (F) K-5 1st trimester report cards come out
15 (W) Time Again in OZ, SCT, K-3, 10:30 a.m.
20 (F) Winter break begins (December 20-31)

JANUARY 2000
3 (M) School starts again
11 (T) Middle School Parent Forum (7th Grade) 7-9:15 (Library)
12 (W) Site Council Meeting 5-7 p.m.

FEBRUARY
1-2 (T-W) CHOICES Education Program for 8th Graders (By Central Area Youth Association)
9 (W) Site Council Meeting 5-7 p.m.
11 (F) Apple to Grandma, SCT, K-3, 10:15 a.m.
11-12 (F-S) Middle School play—The Good Times Are Killing Me
21 (M) Presidents Day. No school
22-25 (T-F) Mid-winter break. No school

MARCH
6-31 ITBS testing (4 weeks)
8 (W) Site Council Meeting 5-7 p.m.
10 (F) Teacher workshops. No school
17 (F) End of 2nd trimester (K-5)
18 (Sa) TOPS Auction, Asian Resource Center

APRIL
5 (W) Site Council Meeting 5-7 p.m.
7 (F) End of 3rd quarter (Middle School)
10-14 (M-F) Spring break
24-May 12 WASL testing

MAY
2 (Tu) Class picture day
10 (W) Site Council Meeting 5-7 p.m.
10 (W) When I Grow Up, SCT, Grades 2-6, 10:30 p.m.
12 (F) Teacher workshops. No school
29 (M) Memorial Day. No school

JUNE
2 (F) Art Walk
2-3 (F-S) Elementary school play—James and the Giant Peach
7 (W) Site Council Meeting 5-7 p.m.
11 (Su) Site Council Retreat
16 (F) Last student day
19 (M) Last teacher day
MEET THE TEACHERS

Jim Wells continues our series with 3rd grade teachers Tracy Seefeld and Katie Waters.

TRACY SEEFELD

TOPS NEWSLETTER:
How did you become a teacher?

TRACY SEEFELD: My journey to teaching and TOPS began right here in Seattle. I went to Gatewood Elementary, Madison Middle School, and West Seattle High School. The home I grew up in was often filled with a lot of children, including my sister, brother, and many foster children—and when I was in the first grade my mom started a daycare center at our house. So as I was growing up, there always seemed to be kids around, and I really enjoyed that.

I graduated from Seattle Pacific University twice. I received my undergraduate degree in Special Education in 1986, and I completed a Master’s Degree in Language Arts in 1992. My first teaching job was at Stevens Elementary, and at that time Stevens shared the campus with TOPS. Before coming to TOPS, I taught at Cooper and Martin Luther King Jr. elementary schools. For the past eight years I have had the opportunity to teach three different grades at TOPS: Kindergarten, second grade, and now third grade for the first time this year.

TN: What can parents do to help out in your classroom?

TS: In a very real way for me, parent help begins at home—TOPS parents give their kids lots of support before they even get to my class.

At school, parents can help in my class in a number of ways. They can work with individual kids or small groups of children, they can drive and join us on field trips, and they can help decorate the class or join us for class celebrations. The children always look forward to seeing their parents help out at TOPS, and it lets them know that they are interested in how they’re doing in school.

TN: What do you do when you’re not here teaching?

TS: My latest interest is my two-month-old niece, Morgan. She was born on September 21, and my sister Mary (Morgan’s mom) called from the hospital during class to share the news with my students and me.

I also like to read. I often find myself reading children’s books but also like to keep up on my magazine subscriptions. I enjoy the Arts Community in Seattle, the Pacific Northwest Ballet, plays at the various local theatres, and outdoor music concerts. I live near Alki Beach, and I like to walk near the water whenever I have the chance. And I am a member of University Presbyterian Church, where I often see some of our TOPS families.

KATIE WATERS

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

KW: I grew up in a family where education was very important. When I graduated from college the first time I had a Bachelor of Science in Speech and Hearing Sciences. I needed to get a Masters Degree to go farther in the field, but I was tired of going to school. So I worked in the business world but found that I didn’t feel like I was helping people with real-world problems. I longed for a job that I hoped would make a real impact in the world.

I took some time off, and then it occurred to me that I would like to go into education. Thinking that the hours would be convenient for raising a family, I started out working for the school district and then decided to become a teacher. During my second year at TOPS, I went back to school to get my teaching certificate. The next fall I was lucky enough to start teaching third grade at TOPS. Most of the sixth, seventh, and eight graders knew me as the playground teacher that invented the alligator game. I have been at TOPS for seven years now and consider it my second home.

TN: Why do you like teaching little kids?

KW: I really like teaching third graders because they are still like sponges—really interested in learning new things. They are also more capable but not so grown up that they don’t like to have fun, and they haven’t yet reached an age where they’re driven by hormones.

TN: What do you think about our brand new TOPS?

KW: To start with, I am enjoying being able to put things away in cupboards. I also enjoy having a sink for

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY FOR CHILDREN!

From Linda Downing

Here’s a terrific opportunity for two children accompanied by an adult to see performances at the Northwest Puppet Center for free! Simply volunteer to work in the gift shop for one hour before and 15 minutes after the performance. I am looking for someone on February 5 and March 25 (Saturdays at 12:00 noon) to substitute for me. This two-performance opportunity can be turned into an “entire season” opportunity next year, if desired. Please contact Linda Downing in the TOPS Main Office.
clean-up. The common area outside my classroom is great for presenting to another class and using as a break-out area for TOPICs and small groups.

TN: Any changes you’ve seen in kids over the last few years?

KW: Students over the last few years have become technologically more savvy. I think we have the Internet and the proliferation of PC’s to thank for that. I also think children have to learn how to juggle their time at an earlier age. So many students do so much during their week that they hardly have time to play with their friends. They certainly have a lot more issues to deal with than when I was young.

TN: How can parents help out in your classroom?

KW: I don’t have a great long answer for this, but I can tell you that first and foremost parents can do an awful lot just by helping their children at home with their homework. I invite parents of my students to come in and share unique talents or just help out when they can.

TN: Can you tell us about your philosophy and goals?

KW: First of all, I believe that a child’s first job is being a good student. I think that education is really important, obviously the whole key to a brighter future. I believe that in this fast-moving information age that children can no longer just be taught facts. They have to learn how to find information through research, so they can continue to learn all of their life. I would like to be able to fit keyboarding skills into my already packed curriculum.

A professional goal I have is to go back to school and get my Masters Degree.

Personally I have always wanted to be writer (fiction, definitely), so someday I hope to pursue that on a more serious level. My dad was born in Estonia, so I would like to learn to speak Estonian. I would like to learn to play the flute and the autoharp.

TN: What outside interests can you tell us about?

KW: When I am not at school, I love to bake, garden, read, and do fun things with my own children. I also love music, sleeping in, camping, sailing, traveling, attending cultural events like the ballet and opera, walking on the beach, eating popcorn—with butter!—and chocolate—especially See’s—and cuddling with my own children in front of a movie. I love a clean house, but I don’t like housework per se. My latest travel goals are someday to take my own children to Disneyland and to take a Caribbean cruise (without my children) just because I think it would be fun.

TOPS WELCOMES
LETTIE PICKETT,
6TH GRADE SPANISH TEACHER

By Sandra Welsh

Lettie Pickett comes to TOPS with 14 years and a wealth of teaching experience. She is a certified teacher, originally for secondary, now for K-12, and has taught at high schools (Blanchet, Seattle Prep, Roosevelt, University Prep), and most recently at St. Alphonsus, K-6. Lettie is also working with TOPS students in our before/after-school program.

Lettie will approach the Spanish language with our sixth graders through culture. The students will explore differences and similarities in different cultures as they learn to speak Spanish.

Language learning can sometimes be intimidating for students. Lettie says, “I want my kids to realize they fear what they don’t understand. But when they understand something, they don’t have to be afraid.”

Lettie is the mother of two sons, 17 and 19. Her grandparents are from Mexico. She enjoys cooking and traveling. We will probably find her cooking with the students sometime this year. And traveling, maybe?

We feel fortunate to have Lettie as our Spanish teacher!

HELP THE LIBRARY GROW:
BIRTHDAY BOOKS PROGRAM

By Gloria Albetta

TOPS is starting a new program called “Birthday Books,” designed to help the library build its collection. In this program, students donate books to the library in honor of their birthdays. The young donor is recognized on specially designed bookplates placed in the front of each donated book. The donor also works alongside Steve, the librarian, to catalogue the book in the library’s collection.

The birthday book process works like this:

You and your child decide on the book that you would like to donate to the library. If you are uncertain about what to donate or want some suggestions, feel free to talk with Steve. New books of all price ranges, e.g., hard covers or Scholastic books, are welcome.

Once you have the book, contact Steve to schedule a time for you and your child to come to the library, fill out the bookplate, and learn how to catalogue the book.

We are hoping Birthday Books will become an annual tradition for TOPS families. The bookplates have been designed so they can also be used for other occasions, such as holidays, to acknowledge your child’s accomplishments, or as end-of-the-year gifts. We see the program as a way to increase the number of books in the library’s collection, to help students leave a thank-you to TOPS and pass something on to other students, and to make reading and books an even bigger focus at TOPS.

If you have any questions or need book suggestions, feel free to contact Steve Haines, TOPS librarian.
Calm Prevails During “Lock Down”

The TOPS community scored high marks for its calm during the “lock down” following the unfortunate shooting incident at North Lake Marina on November 3. Students stayed inside for recesses, and all doors were locked, with staff or a parent volunteer standing near all entrances and exits. The school was in contact with the district security office and transportation department throughout the day.

Mr. Tubbs offers his thanks to the staff and parents who helped out during the difficult time. In a note sent home after the incident, he singled out the older students with special thanks for not upsetting the younger kids.

TOPS parent and former Volunteer Coordinator Joni Marts also got special attention in Susan Paynter’s column in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer (November 5, 1999). Paynter praised Marts for her cool, fighting off “the lioness instinct to rush to school . . . and snatch her ‘cubs’ to safety.”

During the lock down, some schools were inundated with frantic parents eager to rescue their children, but Marts and her fellow TOPS parents remained calm, trusting our able staff to keep the kids safe.

At the November Site Council meeting, Mr. Tubbs applauded the TOPS response, but added that we should learn from this experience and be even more prepared in the future. A good plan—let’s take a minute to talk to our kids about what we should all do in an emergency, and let’s remember to resist the urge to rush to school—or rush over there—in a emergency. Perhaps it’s time for us to review, and update, the school’s Emergency Preparedness Plan, outlined in the TOPS Handbook.

Student Leadership Council for the Middle School

By Julie Pickering

TOPS Middle School has a new Student Leadership Council (SLC). It is made up of two elected representatives and one alternate from each homeroom, and six at-large members appointed by Mr. Tubbs on the basis of essays explaining what they had to contribute to the Council.

The SLC meets every other Wednesday in the Main Office conference room. The focus of SLC activities so far has been on planning activities, such as October’s Spirit Week, the very successful Middle School Dance, and the Middle School yearbook. Representatives have also talked about how best to use the Middle School Commons. So far they have agreed on a ping pong table and a special mural area for 8th graders to express themselves.

Following each SLC meeting, representatives report back to their classrooms and ask for their classmates’ opinions and suggested issues for the next meeting. Mr. Tubbs, Assistant Principal Ms. Scott, Compensatory Education and Counselor Intern Mike Anderson, Principal Intern Ms. Reid, and Intervention Specialist Ms. Tate have been attending the meetings to watch democracy in action. They note a growing sense of pride among representatives and among Middle Schoolers who feel they have more of a say about how the school is run.

On the agenda for future meetings: planning for the next dance (a Winter Ball?), decorating and furnishing the Commons, and deciding if and when to do another Spirit Week.

SLC representatives have also had opportunities to participate in citywide events, such as the Youth Forum on Race, held in late October and Middle School Youth Involvement Day sponsored by the City of Seattle on November 16 at the Seattle Center. The latter involves workshops on community organizing, planning for the new downtown library, and more.

Teen Speak Gets Families Talking

In October and November, 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students and their parents gathered for Teen Speak, a Planned Parenthood workshop, focusing on family values, concerns, and communication strategies. The 6th grade group met on October 2 for a five-hour daytime session. The 7th and 8th grade group met on two consecutive Thursdays in late October and early November.

The program consisted of activities for the students and parents separately, as well as joint activities and discussions. Planned Parenthood facilitators included Judith McKoy, Milly Mullarky, Jewel Perkins, and Lisa Love. Each workshop began with a discussion of goals, then parents and kids talked separately about adolescent development, expectations, and realities. Parents and kids were asked to look ahead five years: How would their attitudes and behaviors change? What role would parents play in their lives? What basic principles operate in their homes now and how will these be carried out in the future?

Of the many Teen Speak activities, the “Timeline” was probably the most effective at getting kids and parents talking. The adults and teens met separately and were asked to identify the ideal time for certain behaviors. For example, when is the ideal age for a first kiss? What about a discussion of birth control? Kids and parents were asked to place behavior “cards” at the appropriate age along the timeline, then the two groups switched places and looked at what the other group had come up with. It was a fun—and educational—exercise that spurred lots of discussion in the lunchroom, and on the drive home.

Teen Speak ended with an exercise in “refusal skills”—learning how to say “no” while affirming friendships. Some clever role-playing followed, rounding out an informative and thought-provoking program.

Sixth grade families have one more chance to participate in Teen Speak: Tuesday, November 30 and December 7, 6:30-9:00pm.

A minimum of ten families—and a maximum of 15—must register for the event. To register, contact Melora Battisti (324-8187; hhiller@u.washington.edu).
LUNCHROOM QUAKES WITH FIRST MIDDLE SCHOOL DANCE

By Eugenie Song, 7th grade

On October 29, the Middle School dance was held at 7-9:30 p.m. in the TOPS lunchroom. With tons of wild Halloween costumes, the students danced the night away! They were joined by a spooky Dracula, a.k.a. Mr. Tubbs.

A highlight of the dance was when the KUBE 93 DJ played “Stop, in the Name of Love!” while the Supremes—8th graders Seyeon Malott, Kathleen Compton, and Rose Long-O’Donnell—sang and danced along.

Tons of students took pictures at PE teacher Don Zemke’s photo “booth.” For three dollars a shot, students rounded up their friends to take some great costume pictures.

The lunchroom looked fab in the Halloween streamers and fall leaf cutouts—courtesy of student volunteers—the next dance will probably be held in the brand new gym. The Student Leadership Council is thinking about making the next dance a formal Winter Ball. We hope to be able to invite friends from other schools next time, since the first dance went so well.

Hey, the fire alarm went off because of the DJ’s fog machine, but we still had a great time!

Thank you to all the chaperones and teachers who helped out!
By Claire Mocha, 7th grade

SCHOOL VISITS MIDDLE SCHOOL VIDEO ARTIST

By Claire Mocha, 7th grade

On October 22, videographer Heather Dew Oaksen visited our 7th and 8th grade classes, to show us her work. Heather is a local artist, a founding member of 911 Media Arts Center, and Assistant Professor of Video Art at her alma mater, Cornish College for the Arts.

Despite Oaksen’s long title (or perhaps because of it), her work is moving and inspiring, and above all, captivating. Her video, GLUL: The Prison Project, consists of individual segments about ten teenagers serving time at a maximum-security juvenile correction center. She follows them for four years after their release: some become married parents with careers; others are struggling to do the right thing and make the right choices; and still others are back where they started: the MSU at Green Hill School in Chehalis, Washington. Throughout the years the movie covers, the teenagers talk about their mistakes, problems, motivations, and dreams.

The two sixth grade classes will alternate one week of 1:30-2:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. All sixth grade students are being taught by our wonderful new Spanish teacher, Lettie Pickett (see related story). Classes began November 9 and will be offered 1:30-2:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. The two sixth grade classes will alternate one week of Spanish and one week of PE.

 classes will cover Spanish Language and Culture. We in the TOPS community consider learning another language a critical life skill in the 21st century, and we are committed to giving our children the best preparation possible for success in learning work and life.

Look for more information about the Spanish program and an opportunity to come see the wonderful learning materials (textbooks, CD ROMs, Internet sites, videos, audio tapes, and much more) that TOPS has received free from the Seattle School District in support of our program. Questions? Call Kathleen Nelson at 325-8484.

The TOPS World Language Committee would like to acknowledge the Site Council for budgeting the money to support this program, the TOPS community for its generous donations, Principal Gary Tubbs for his leadership and flexibility in working to make this program possible, and the TOPS teachers, who have partnered with us to bring a totally new and innovative experience to our school!
MIDDLE SCHOOL SKI PROGRAM SET FOR JANUARY

By Janet Moore

TOPS Middle School ski program is entering its eighth year with weekly trips to Snoqualmie Pass. Program announcements went out in early November with applications available from Ms. Eick and Ms. Fuller on November 15. If you haven’t picked up an application, do it soon!

The program runs January 7 through February 4 on Friday nights. An additional day of skiing is set for Saturday, March 4. For the Friday sessions, kids bring their gear to school in the morning. They board buses to the Pass at 2:30, enjoy several hours of skiing, with lessons if you choose, and return to TOPS, tired but happy, at 11 p.m.

The ski program is a great opportunity for kids to learn new skills, independence, and responsibility in a fun, supervised atmosphere. Program organizers recommend that each student take lessons. Lessons are a great way to improve skills at minimum expense. They last two hours from 5:15, leaving plenty of time for independent skiing later in the evening.

The ski buses are chaperoned by TOPS parents volunteers (who else?!) who also supervise students in the lodge and offer pointers on the slopes. All school rules are strictly enforced, although this program is not an official school-sponsored activity.

A variety of program packages are offered. Scholarships are also available. For more information, contact Katie McKeon at 282-0532.

All skiers and parents must attend an informational meeting on January 4 at 7 p.m. in the lunchroom. At that time, program details, together with the specific schedule, the Code of Conduct Contract, and Emergency Information details will be discussed. Happy skiing!

By Janet Moore

TOPS Students Appear In “The Homework Conspiracy” At Hamilton Middle School

If “The dog ate it” no longer suffices as an excuse, come see what ’90s TOPS kids Graham Downing, Brendan Griffin, and Ben Ury do to combat the age-old problem of homework as Broadway Bound Children’s Theatre presents “The Homework Conspiracy.”

Performances are scheduled for December 16, 17, and 18 at 7:00 p.m. in the auditorium of Hamilton Middle School, 1610 North 41st St. in Wallingford.

Written by Dave Cockley and Louis Innenberg, the musical takes a humorous look at how today’s high-tech kids handle homework.

“The Homework Conspiracy” kicks off the fourth season Fremont’s Broadway Bound Children’s Theatre, directed by Jim and Cheryl Nixon. Children in the year-round troupe range from 1st through 8th grade and attend Pacific Crest Montessori, B.F. Day, Greenlake, Laurelhurst, TOPS, St. Benedict’s, and Whittier Elementary Schools as well as NOMS, Eckstein, and Hamilton Middle Schools.

Tickets for “The Homework Conspiracy” are $5 and will be available at the door. For information about Broadway Bound, call (206) 679-3561.

FAMILY DIRECTORY UPDATES IN JANUARY

By Sue Wardle

Every household should have received a Family Directory by mail in late October. If your family’s listing is incorrect, please write out the correction and send it to me, Sue Wardle, at 1023 N. 48th, Seattle 98103 or by e-mail to jaywardle@prodigy.net. We’ll update the Family Directory in late January.

If your student is listed by name only and has no personal information, that means we did not receive your first-week-of-school packet by September 24th. In that packet was a pink Family Directory release form. Please complete that and all other forms from the packet and return them to school, or your room rep, as soon as possible. If you have lost the forms, contact the Main Office immediately.

DRAMATIC NEWS

By Linda Downing, Drama Committee Chair

Auditions for the Middle School Play, Lynda Barry’s The Good Times are Killing Me, were held in November. The students are excited about this play, the story of a friendship between two girls, one black and one white, in the 1960’s. The play has funny and poignant moments, infused with music from the period.

Any parents still hanging on to their Beatle boots? Apparel from the 60’s is needed. The play will be staged February 11 and 12, 2000 in the new TOPS theater (otherwise known as the gym).

And get ready for the Elementary student play! James and the Giant Peach, directed by TOPS parent Julie Jamieson, is set for June 2 and 3, 2000. Auditions will be held in April. The TOPS Art Walk is scheduled for June 2 as well—so mark your calendar for a blockbuster evening of art and drama!

Thanks to all parents who have volunteered to help out with Drama this year. We will contact you soon.

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MS GIRLS SOCCER MAKES FINAL FOUR

The Middle School girls soccer team had a great season, showing they could brave the elements and some tough competition. They rounded out their winning season with tournament play at Memorial Stadium on November 16 and 20.

Three cheers for the team and their able coaches, Josh Anderson and Tracy Seefeld! Great work!

At right, the team with Middle School math teacher Mark Ellis, Mr. Tubbs and coach Josh Anderson.

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