

TOPS NEWS

DIVERSITY ISSUES COALITION GATHERS MOMENTUM

Parents and staff interested in TOPS' newly formed Diversity Issues Coalition met twice, in mid-November and early December, to discuss parent concerns, coalition focus, and potential action programs.

The November meeting was attended by Coalition co-facilitators Cathy Chun, Sandra Hinojosa, and Garry Owens, a dozen interested parents, Principal Gary Tubbs, Assistant Principal Clara Scott, Principal Intern Maureen Reid, and Site Council Chair Heather Worthley. Despite the blustery weather, the December meeting drew a larger crowd, counselor Jennifer Murray, 5th grade teacher Tal Troy, and Mr. Tubbs. Parents are grateful for the staff involvement in this important forum.

IDENTIFYING THE ISSUES

At the first meeting, former Diversity Committee Chair Cheryl Pappy recapped the history of the Committee, describing past events and concerns, including disproportionality in the discipline of students of color, the academic achievement "gap," self-esteem, teacher and staff hiring, and community climate.

Heather Worthley followed with a statement of Site Council's support for the Coalition's efforts. She also offered suggestions for sensitivity training options for staff, parents, and kids, drawing on her experience with city government.

Cathy Chun reviewed Site Council's stated goals related to diversity issues. These include a commitment to narrowing the achievement gap and building community. Mr. Tubbs responded with a brief update on recent staff efforts, including the staff retreat at which staff agreed to teach from a multicultural perspective.

Mr. Tubbs also reviewed WASL test results, focusing on the achievement gap. With such a small population, the numbers are not statistically significant over the short term, but they do indicate a gap, albeit a less severe gap than that of the larger District pool. Mr. Tubbs indicated that he and the staff are committed to an improved "safety net" for students who need extra help.

In addition to these formal presentations, several parents related their experiences with and concerns about racial

bias on campus, disproportionality in discipline, and a perceived lack of community. The November gathering ended with consensus on the need for another meeting to discuss these concerns and solutions.

TAKING ACTION

The December meeting focused on identifying "next steps." Drawing on the November discussion, the co-facilitators provided an extensive list of possible steps. Participants brainstormed and came up with at least a dozen more ideas of their own. Several steps were earmarked for immediate action:

- ◆ Submit regular articles to the TOPS newsletter on Coalition activities, diversity-related topics, culturally-related events in the community, and book reviews.
- ◆ Establish a network for contacting, orienting, and supporting new TOPS families, with a first step focused on drawing in families whose contact information is not included in the Family Directory, organizing car pools to school events, and activating a "diversity" phone tree.
- ◆ Actively participate in tutoring and mentoring programs, and recruit parent and family volunteers to do the same.
- ◆ Reach out to BOC students and their families to help them feel part of the TOPS community.
- ◆ Encourage parents interested in diversity issues to volunteer as guides for the upcoming tours of the Elementary and Middle School programs in order to attract families of diverse backgrounds to TOPS. These parents are also encouraged to teach TOPICS.

The December meeting also saw consensus on the value of recognizing good models of inclusion and multiculturalism in the TOPS community. Mr. Tubbs urged the Coalition to establish a system for recognizing teachers who effectively integrate diversity into their curriculum, and Garry Owens encouraged Coalition members to praise



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NEWSLETTER ONLINE

The TOPS newsletters are available online in PDF format, usually before the printed copy arrives in your mailbox! From the TOPS home page (<http://www.ssd.k12.wa.us/schools/tops>), click on Hot News Spots, then TOPS Newsletters.

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DECEMBER SITE COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

By Gretchen Chambers

ABOUT THE OUTRAGEOUS PUBLISHING SERVICE

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

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

January 13, February 10, March 9, April 6, May 11, and June 8. Don't miss it!

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

Here are notes from the December 8 Site Council meeting. Site Council meetings are held in the Library on the second Wednesday of each month—everyone is invited. Next meeting is January 12, 5-7 p.m.

DRAMA COMMITTEE

Directors Hired

Linda Downing, Drama Committee Chair, reported that directors have been hired for both plays: Shana Bestock for the Middle School play and Julie Jamieson for the Elementary School play. The Committee's goal is producing more than just two productions a year. Currently, thanks to school funding, a director is conducting a 5-week topic to produce a skit for the Martin Luther King Day assembly in January.

After-School Drama on School Violence

Linda also announced that the Drama Committee is studying the idea of an anti-harassment middle school play dealing with teasing, bullying, and hate language. She is researching funding.

Set Design Instruction

The Drama Committee also hopes to hire an experienced Artist in Residence to work with 60 students (4th through 8th grade) in set designing for 2000-2001.

Determined to Get Curtains

In response to the Site Council's reluctance at its last meeting to agree that new stage curtains should be purchased this year, Linda Downing submitted a letter supporting the purchase. The Drama Committee continues to investigate the possibility of purchasing new curtains in the next few months.

Apropos to this request, members of the Finance Committee assured Council members that the Site Council's reserve budget is ample, perhaps more than it need be, and that changing the reserve policy to make funds available for new curtains is a reasonable approach. Fund Development Chair Penny Bolton is currently preparing a Department of Neighborhoods Small and Simple Grant for \$10,000 to be matched with existing funds from Site Council. She will bring a proposal to the January Site Council meeting.

Diversity Issues Coalition continued from page 1

and support all efforts toward the realization of a more inclusive and diversity-sensitive community.

MOVING AHEAD

At the December meeting, Coalition members agreed to meet on a regular basis on the second Wednesday 7-8:30 p.m. in the Library. (January 12, February 9, March 8, April 5, May 10, June 7) and to actively recruit new members. With the Site Council budget decisions coming in early spring,

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Student Site Council Members

Mr. Tubbs reported that 7th and 8th grade representatives from the Student Leadership Council would take turns on the Site Council as the voting student member. Interested students other than the voting representative might also attend meetings. Rachel Leadon and Meiko Hall were welcomed as student representatives for this meeting.

Saream Dy, TOPS Custodial Engineer, Wins Award

Mr. Tubbs was proud to announce that TOPS janitor Saream Dy has been elected by his peers as the Logistics Department's Employee of the Quarter. Mr. Tubbs said Saream's dedication was truly exemplary. In one instance, when asked for tools by Joan and Joby, Saream not only procured the tools, but also helped the kindergartners build birdhouses.

AmeriCorps Volunteer Hired

After a long wait, TOPS finally succeeded in getting another AmeriCorps volunteer. Twenty-four year-old Neesa Sonoquie is moving up from California to join TOPS after the holiday break.

Piano Donated

Robin Miller, parent and professional pianist, persuaded Sherman Clay to donate an older but excellent studio piano. TOPS will buy a piano blanket and lock.

TOPICS Needs Parents and Others

Mr. Tubbs asked the Site Council members to help generate interest in TOPICS teaching and asked Eastlake Community representative Jules James to invite members of the community to lead TOPICS.

Children's Choir

An artist has committed to teach a children's choir during TOPICS beginning in January. This same teacher may be able to teach choir in the Middle School After School program as well beginning in February.

Coalition members will consider proposals for diversity-related programs, which require Site Council funding, at the January meeting. The Coalition also hopes to focus attention on diversity-related programs at the March 18 Auction.

All members of the TOPS community are invited to attend upcoming Diversity Issues Coalition meetings. For more information, contact co-facilitators Cathy Chun (362-3774; CChun@sccd.ctc.edu), Sandra Hinojosa (634-2353), and Garry Owens (782-2565; gomojo@earthlink.net).

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Check-Writing

Committee Chair Dana Carey-Twight reported that insurance requirements might make it impossible to simplify check-writing procedures, but that streamlining is still being investigated. In the meantime, recipients *are* being paid on a timely basis.

TOPS Reserve Budget

Parent Sue Wardle gave some background on the reserve budget and why it is relatively large (\$92,000 in a money market fund). According to Sue, the reserve budget was created about nine years ago as a buffer against fundraising failures. The policy governing its size and use was also shaped with expectations of needing money for outfitting a new, permanent building, which we now have. TOPS fundraising has proved very reliable; only once did an emergency require use of the reserve budget. Sue concluded that, for these reasons, Site Council should not be afraid to modify the reserve budget policy.

Immediate Assistance Budget

Intervention Specialist Lynette Jackson-Tate requested more money to help TOPS families in need with holiday dinners. Mr. Tubbs added that, with 76 BOC kids, the need is greater this year. Lynette had an immediate need for \$200, but a motion was passed to increase the Immediate Assistance Budget by \$500 to \$1000.

FACILITIES COMMITTEE

Play Equipment for Grade School Students

Committee Chair Debrah Walker showed some photos of suitable play equipment that could be installed in the small space available on Franklin Green Street. Climbing ropes and walls were the preferred choices. Debrah suggested that slides did not seem worthwhile since the space could accommodate only four-foot-high models. Any selection must be reviewed by District Risk Managers.

Eastlake Playground Committee

Debrah said this community committee is very interested in procuring play equipment for Rogers Field. They are in the process of getting a Short and Simple grant of \$10,000 to hire a landscape architect to design two sets of equipment, one for toddlers and the other for older children. They plan to raise funds for equipment to be installed by fall 2001. Debrah was pleased to announce that TOPS parents Craig Dawson and Rebecca Sadinsky have agreed to work with this committee.

Bike Racks

Responding to a question about bike racks, Mr. Tubbs said he would ask the school's landscape architect to supply them.

Facilities Priorities

Responding to a question as to whether the Facilities Committee had long-range plans, Debrah said that the committee has lists of projects but no formal priorities for

the long term. She will bring the lists to the January meeting.

Gym Floor Rejected

Because the gym floor was sanded improperly, it will be stripped, resanded and resealed (at the expense of the contractor) over the holiday break.

FUND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

AmeriCorps Team Grant Submitted

Committee Chair Penny Bolton showed a copy of the request for funding for 10 AmeriCorps personnel for next year. Penny and Mr. Tubbs submitted the plan in person in Olympia in mid-December. The plan would provide AmeriCorps staff for a variety of activities, including tutoring; parent and family services; and diversity/cultural awareness development.

No Bake

The No Bake Sale is doing well with 147 families contributing. To date, \$16,570 has been raised.

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Gas-Wise Wednesdays

Committee Chair Andrew Schmechel suggested that TOPS institute Gas-Wise Wednesdays to encourage use of the school buses and relieve congestion and hazards. According to staff, most problems arise during pickup and that some parents are setting bad examples by walking in front of the buses. Boylston should be used for drop-offs and pickups.

Garry Owens welcomed the suggestion reminding members that, with a one-third reduction in bus service thanks to the passage of I-695, traffic to and from school will be worse than ever.

Creative Thinking on Staff Parking

Karen Wong related parking problems for staff who must share 22 parking places. The four-hour limit on the surrounding streets forces teachers to move their cars during the middle of the day. Several have been ticketed. Jules James of the Eastlake Community Council said he would use the Eastlake community newsletter to ask residents if they would lease their driveways or garages to teachers during the day for a nominal fee.

MIDDLE SITE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

More Dances Wanted

Student representatives Meiko Hall and Rachel Leadon related Middle School students' interest in having an evening dance to which they could invite outside guests. They also hope to have more than two dances a year. Staff representatives assured them that the success of last month's dance means both ideas will be pursued.

DIVERSITY COALITION

Coalition co-facilitator Garry Owens recounted issues from the November 15th meeting, including history, test score gaps, and hospitality.

CALLING ALL TOUR GUIDES

Tours of TOPS Elementary and Middle School programs begin in January, and parent volunteer guides are needed. Leading tours is a great way to promote TOPS and to get to know our school better. You'd be surprised at what people ask! Tours begin at 9:30 every Tuesday through February. Call the Main Office and sign up for as many tours as you have time for.

BOC ENRICHES TOPS

By Julie Pickering

The Bilingual Orientation Center (BOC) came to TOPS in 1990, and nearly ten years later, it is a vibrant, and growing, program. This year the BOC is packed (literally!) with 75-plus children who speak more than a dozen languages between them.

The program has several new teachers this year: Linda Orantes, Loren Smith, and Linda Jordan-Todd join



Lining up for P.E.

veteran TOPS teacher Karen Wong and instructional assistants Sorayya Aly, Mercedes Sandoval, and TOPS newcomers Dalmar Ali and Bethany Plett.

Karen Wong has worked in bilingual education for 19 years; she has been at TOPS BOC since the beginning. This year she is working with the primary students, grades 1-2. There are plenty of students

this age; Karen now teaches 20, with Linda Jordan-Todd taking the "overflow"—12, with two more expected any day. Linda is a long-term sub who came on board in October. She's finishing her Master's and conducted her research for her degree at TOPS' BOC last year.

Linda Orantes teaches the 2nd-4th graders. Linda comes to TOPS after five years at the Maple Elementary BOC and another 15 years in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs and mainstream classes.

Loren teaches the 3rd-5th grade group, some of whom have a bit more English. Loren taught in the ESL program at Bryant Elementary for four years.

Mr. Ali is a newcomer to the United States as well as to TOPS. He moved here four months ago from Somalia and works with Somali students as well as others who need extra help. Sorayya speaks Vietnamese, an important language in Seattle's BOC programs. Mercedes spends much of her time working with the many children whose native language is Spanish. Bethany is our second Spanish-speaking instructional assistant, who is working on getting her Master's in TESOL. She started the year at Stevens, but we're happy to have her at TOPS!

TOPS BOC is the only BOC program serving students from north of the Ship Canal. It also draws students from the Rainier District and downtown. In most cases, students stay in the program for one semester before they are "mainstreamed" to other schools. Students are integrated into the mainstream on the basis of an evaluation by their BOC teacher.



Karen Wong

At present, TOPS has no ESL program, so BOC "graduates" who need additional help must move on to other schools where ESL help is available. Mr. Tubbs is currently working with the District to provide ESL service at TOPS so we can retain BOC "graduates," enriching our student body and offering these students continuity and a great educational experience. To

generate a half-time teacher position to cover ESL needs, TOPS must set aside 35 seats, school-wide.

HOW DO THEY DO IT?

Just one semester of instruction before entering the mainstream? That's not much time to learn the basics for

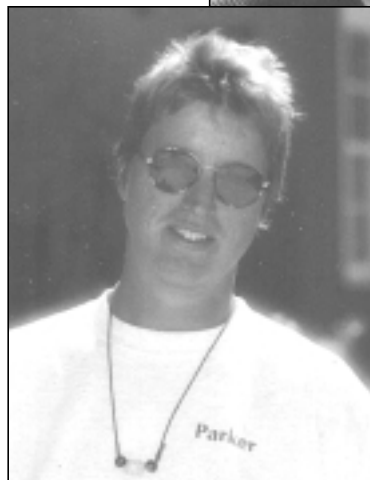
survival, and achievement, but the BOC staff works hard to provide these students with the skills they'll need. Teachers focus on the essentials—following directions, listening, and learning numbers, colors, seasons, and American customs and culture.

Interactions with other TOPS students help BOC kids learn about American culture and customs. This fall BOC students have gone on

walks with the 6th graders and worked together on fall poems. They are also sharing their holiday traditions: the 6th graders teach the BOC students about American



Linda Orantes



Loren Smith

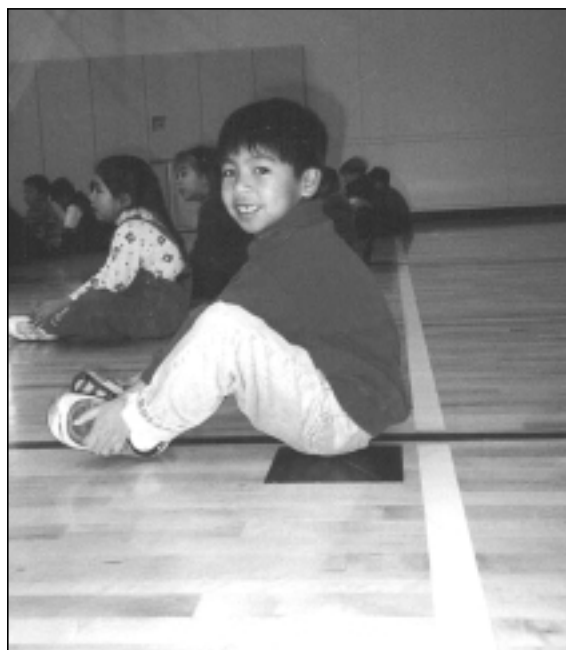
customs, and BOC students teach the 6th graders about holiday customs in their countries. Come January, the same BOC children will tell their immigration stories to their 6th grade buddies who will then present the stories to their Social Studies class taught by Julie Trout.

In September, the BOC classes were entertained by a master Chinese puppeteer. November brought the taste of traditional America cooking: Students and teachers, with the help of Anna Finkelstein's mom, Nora, cooked two turkeys and all the trimmings for a Thanksgiving feast shared with the 6th graders.

For the last few years, Karen's class has had some welcome visitors: children from Louise's 2nd grade class come to read with them everyday after lunch, and they have "Choice Time" with the kindergarten once a week. During Choice Time, both kindergarten classes and Karen's BOC students get together for one hour on Wednesday afternoons to do hands-on activities, like art projects, big



Starting the day in the BOC.



P.E. in the new gym.

blocks, painting, imaginary play, and more. It's a great time for the BOC students to get to know the other TOPS kids. Loren's class meets with Joe Drummond's 4th graders once a week to work on their reading, too.

FIELD TRIPS ADD TO THE EXPERIENCE

The BOC students have also taken some great field trips. In October, they took an exciting ride in the country to a Monroe pumpkin farm. In early December, they spent a full day on the road: starting out with *The Velveteen Rabbit* at the Seattle Children's Theater, then taking a ride on the Monorail to Westlake Center where they rode the

escalators—a new experience for some. Next came the electric trains in the Bon Window and the holiday gingerbread houses at the Sheraton. They even took a ride on the Carousel.

Such trips take a lot of time and energy to coordinate. The BOC staff and Linda Downing also work hard to help students in need. BOC students come from many different backgrounds. A few are the children of students or visiting scholars at the University of Washington; others come from immigrant families where parents speak no English and may even be illiterate in their native language. Despite these challenges, BOC teachers report a remarkable 100 percent record for Parent Conferences this fall. To help parents without transportation participate, the teachers went to the South End, with translators, to make sure every family had a conference. These conferences and many interactions with families often cover more than the student's academic record. Teachers offer advice and contacts for essential social services and explain everyday tasks, such as how to get a library card.

YOU CAN HELP

How can mainstream TOPS students and parents help with this important work? We can offer BOC families transportation to school events or to medical and dental appointments, volunteer to help with field trips, volunteer to serve as Room Rep to handle BOC needs, and encourage our kids to take an interest in this exciting program that adds so much to our school.



THANKS, AND A FAVOR TO ASK, FROM THE BOC!

Many thanks to those who donated food for TOPS Families in Need and kitchen utensils for BOC and TOPICS.

We have another favor to ask! Many of our BOC families have lots of children who would appreciate new or used educational toys, building toys, such as Legos, games, or working televisions. Please mark your donations "BOC" and bring them to the Main Office. If you have larger items, please contact Linda Downing in the office. Thank you from everyone at the BOC.

MEET YOUR TEACHERS

Each month during the 1999-2000 school year, the TOPS Newsletter will shine a light on the people most directly involved in your child's education. In this issue, Jim Wells continues our series with 4th grade teachers Mary Chao and Joe Drummond.

MARY CHAO

TOPS NEWSLETTER: What drew you to teaching?

MARY CHAO: My sister, Lydia, died during my second year at TOPS, and she will always be my heroine. She was born mentally retarded and always had that engaging smile that would catch a person's heart. I taught her how to count to 100. It was the most painful and joyful thing that I can remember—having her repeat her numbers till she got all 100 correctly. If she missed a number, she would start all over. It was a wonderful when she became able to recite her numbers, tell you her phone number, her address, and her name. At the University of Puget Sound, I had the opportunity to tutor other mentally retarded children and decided to complete my major in Pre-dentistry/Biology. I later discovered that I prefer looking down at smiling children to looking down at people's teeth, so I entered



the University of Washington certification program. And now I have taught here at TOPS for 11 years, all in 4th grade.

TN: What is it you like about teaching young kids?

MC: There is an eagerness to learn that I treasure in children. When they "get it," their eyes light up. Life is more interesting if you come from a place of curiosity. I used to work with children who have been lost in the system, in foster care, runaways, suspended and expelled, paroled and on

probation, and children needing long-term therapeutic care. I felt I could make a greater difference with younger children and switched fields 11 years ago.

TN: Tell us what most influences the way you teach.

MC: There are certain areas that I consider my passions. First, I want to increase children's awareness of the issues of discrimination and about different ethnic groups. Assignments often involve parents having to take time to share their points of view with their children. This helps children clarify their values. Many of the assignments are open-ended, allowing each child to succeed and reach his or her highest potential. Another thing I really like is teaching the history of Seattle as a part of City School here at TOPS. I find myself just as curious as the children and just as eager to learn.

JOE DRUMMOND

TOPS NEWSLETTER: How did you decide to become a teacher?

JOE DRUMMOND: I began teaching swim lessons when I was 14, and I was involved with instructing and coaching throughout high school and college. But the idea of being a teacher was planted when I was about 17. I taught quite a few children of my teachers, many of whom commented on my skills and suggested I go into a career of teaching. The combination of a passion for teaching and social justice, wanting a meaningful career, and the idea that I had a unique talent for it are what drew me to teaching.



TN: Why do you like teaching little kids?

JD: They are as real as you can get. Plus their innocence and naivete make them ready and eager learners. They are fun. And being a part of children's intellectual development is a very satisfying and fascinating experience.

TN: What do you think of the new TOPS and how are you taking advantage of the new space?

JD: I love the new space. I was talking to Joan O'Connor awhile back. We agreed that the physical space has a tremendous impact on the atmosphere of the classroom. The breakout room, which is right outside our classroom, is wonderful. It's perfect for group projects and teaming up with other classes.

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

JD: I would first have to agree with Katy and Tracy, who pointed out in their interviews how important it is for parents to help their children at home. There is a noticeable difference if my students are getting that extra support at home. The parents of my students are great. What I've observed at TOPS, compared to other schools, is that the more help we get in the classroom and out, the more enriching and meaningful I can make the curriculum. We have already done projects this year that in my past teaching experiences weren't possible with 32 children.

TN: What experiences have you had that now influence how you teach?

JD: My passion for learning took hold in about my sophomore year in college, when I experienced an integrated college curriculum, which finally led me to understand that all the disciplines are connected. I believe an integrated project approach to the curriculum is much more meaningful, especially to learners who don't have a strong passion for being front-loaded with content.

TN: Can you share your educational philosophy?

JD: I believe that it is important as a teacher to realize that we all have an agenda and that no social act is neutral. Every act in front of the classroom is either beneficial or detrimental to positive social change and specifically to the social and emotional development of my students. This knowledge makes every minute in the classroom count and keeps me passionate about my job.

NEW AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENTS HELPLINE

The Black Child Development Institute's Seattle Affiliate has recently launched an African American Parents Helpline for those with questions or concerns about:

- ♦ academic achievement and grades
- ♦ parent conferences and progress reports
- ♦ attendance
- ♦ suspensions and expulsions
- ♦ special education placement
- ♦ school assignments.

You can reach the 24-hour Helpline at (206) 365-BCDI (2234).

TUTOR TRAINING AVAILABLE

Interested in honing your tutoring skills to work with TOPS after school tutoring/mentoring program or at other tutoring programs in our community?

The Seattle Tutoring Coalition provides free tutor training to volunteers. Tutor trainings are scheduled for Saturday, February 5, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., and Thursday, March 2, 6-9 p.m. at Mercer Middle School (1600 Columbia Way South). To pre-register by voicemail, call 206-298-READ, or register by e-mail at debbieghol@aol.com. Please include your name, mailing address, daytime phone, and the name of the program you are working with, if any.

HIGH SCHOOL CHOICE TIME

It's time for 8th graders and their families to take a closer look at high schools. Here's a schedule for high school tours and gatherings.

BALLARD CHOICE NIGHT: Thursday, February 10, 7-9 p.m. in the Auditorium. For tours, make an appointment with Mrs. Ono, 298-7730.

CLEVELAND PARENT ORIENTATION: Monday, February 7, 6:30-9 p.m. in the Auditorium. For tours, call Larry Moore, Head Counselor, at 768-3670, extension 8.

FRANKLIN CHOICE NIGHT: Thursday, February 10, 7-9 p.m. in the Auditorium. Tours: Wednesdays, February 2 and 16, and March 1, 9-10:30 a.m. For more information, call 760-4600.

GARFIELD TOURS: Tuesdays, February 1, 8, and 15, 9-10:40 a.m. beginning at the Auditorium. Those who can't make the morning sessions should come to the Main Office at 2:15 p.m. for a tour. For more information, call 298-7770.

INGRAHAM OPEN HOUSE: Wednesday, January 19, 7:00 p.m. in the cafeteria. Tours: Thursdays, February 10 and 17, and March 2, 9, and 16, 8-9:30 a.m. For more information, call 366-7870.

NATHAN HALE ORIENTATIONS: Thursdays, January 13, 20, and 27, 9:45-11:45 beginning in the Library. An evening orientation, Nathan Hale Live, is scheduled for February 17, 7-9 p.m. Call 366-7800 for more information.

NOVA: Visit any time between 9-3. Check in at the Office first. For more information, call 726-6730.

RAINIER BEACH: Call 760-4700.

ROOSEVELT ORIENTATION: Thursday, February 3, 7 p.m. in the Auditorium. Tours are held Thursdays 9-10:30 a.m., February 10 and 17, and March 2 and 9. For more information, call 729-3200.

CHIEF SEALTH CHOICE NIGHT: Thursday, February 3, 7 p.m. in the Auditorium. Arrange tours through Activities Director Joann Fukuma at 933-5300.

WEST SEATTLE ORIENTATION: Wednesday, February 9, 7 p.m. in the Auditorium. Additional orientations and tours: Thursdays at 8 a.m., starting February 17. For more information, call 933-5330.

Families looking at schools can also consult the "School Guide" published by the *Seattle Times* each year. It is available at most Bartell Drugstores and on the Internet at <http://www.seattletimes.com/schoolguide/>.

ERIC MESSERSCHMIDT RAISES FUNDS FOR HOMELESS AND SICK YOUTH

By Madelaine Bolton, 7th grade

This fall 7th grader Eric Messerschmidt did a fundraising project for Medrest. Medrest is an organization that provides sick and/or homeless youth with minor medical care, warm meals, and a bed to sleep in. It is located near University Village. Medrest opened on October 1 this year and is the first of its kind in the country.

For his fundraiser, Eric wrote a brochure, which he gave out to whomever wanted one during Parent-Teacher conference time. TOPS families contributed \$330 to the

cause. Eric also collected unclaimed clothes from the TOPS lost and found, washed them, and donated them to Medrest. In his brochure, Eric said:

Imagine being a youth who is homeless and living under a freeway. Imagine being a youth who is homeless, living under a freeway and has the flu.

Eric organized the fundraiser because he imagined how he would feel if he were sick and homeless. He had help from classmates Anika Steig, Eugenie Song, Molly McKeon, and Evan Pickering.

MIDDLE SCHOOL SKI UPDATE

The seventh and eighth grade buses are full!!!! There is a MANDATORY MEETING for all skiers and their parents Tuesday, January 4th at 7:00 p.m. in the lunchroom. We look forward to a wonderful season.

VISITING ARTIST STIRS TEMPEST AT SAFECO FIELD

By Eugenie Song, 7th grade

On December 7, TOPS 6th and 7th grade art classes had a special guest—the second artist in the Artists in Residence project in which Seattle artists give a presentation on their work.

Sculptor Stuart Keeler brought his friend and collaborator, Linda Beaumont, who helps him create some of his wonderful sculptures. The two artists worked as a team to make the amazing “Tempest,” a candelabra sculpture, which looks like a huge storm of ghostly baseball bats at the southwest entrance of Seattle’s new Safeco Field.

The 1,500 bats are made of resin and hang in an enormous rotunda.

In his sculptures, Mr. Keeler uses fabricated steel, fiberglass resin, plywood, wire, and nails. According to the artists, Mr. Keeler’s sculptures are usually metaphorical, while Ms. Beaumont’s are more scientific.

You can see more of Ms. Beaumont’s work at the Bailey-Boushay House on East Madison Street. The two artists also collaborated on the bus stop with the kayak and paddles sheltering passengers right below Rogers Field. The artists call these boat structures “Dreamboats.”

THOUGHTS ON YOUTH INVOLVEMENT DAY

By Kacie Tate, 8th Grader & Student Leadership Council Representative

Youth Involvement Day was held recently at the Seattle Center. This event is held to get youth involved in the future. There were many discussions and workshops, such as Diversity in Schools, Building Greater Libraries, and even Volunteering in the Community.

There was also a community fair. This was not your ordinary fair. It let youth know how much they really matter. Lots of organizations participated, making us aware of the benefits of involvement, as well as helping us get more involved in our community.

I feel this event was worthwhile because it taught me a lot about diversity in schools, as well as how much my help is needed in my community. My favorite part was the community fair because it gave me a lot of information to benefit myself and others. I truly believe all youth got something out of this fun but educational occasion. I would recommend other youth attend this event in the future.

CHOICES PROGRAM FOR 8TH GRADERS

The Central Area Youth Association (CAYA) is sponsoring an interactive turnkey classroom seminar designed to give 8th graders a chance to see into the future and recognize the importance of the personal and academic decisions they make today. The CHOICES education program will benefit every 8th grader in the district and is coming to TOPS with two one-hour sessions on February 1-2, 2000.

In the program, students consider life choices and explore time and money management techniques. They’re asked to look at future career options and the impact of their personal choices on others and the world around them.

CHOICES is presented by CAYA-trained volunteers from local businesses at no cost to the students or the Seattle Public Schools. Watch for detailed information soon. For more information, call Yvonne Betts, Program Manager at CAYA, 322-6640.



Coach Eric Herndon huddles with the team.

GIRLS' B-BALL TAKES OFF

By Sydney Townes-Witzel, 8th Grade

The girls' basketball team has lost a game and won a game. In our last game on December 9, we played Summit, winning 35 to 20 on our home court. Bo Second and Deva Crouch were the high scorers.

The TOPS home crowd boosted the team's spirits and supported the team immensely. It was a nice win after a disappointing loss of 17 to 42 to Blaine in the first game of the season. The next game is scheduled for December 16 against Hamilton on their home court.

ROUGH START FOR BOYS' B-BALL

By Biko Tabor, 8th Grade

The boys' basketball season hasn't quite started off as we had hoped. We fought hard during our loss to Blaine in the first game, but their 3-pointers were too much for our defense.

Our next game against Summit proved just as fruitless, ending with a 48-66 score. Their top scorer, Michael, crushed our defense with 31 points!

Biko Tabor led the TOPS hoopsters with 18 points. We hope lots of supporters come to our game at the Wallingford Boys and Girls Club on December 16 to see TOPS play Hamilton.



Number 10 controls the first jumpball in the new TOPS gym.

FIELD TRIP TO YOUTH INVOLVEMENT DAY

By Joseph Jessie & Tim Haggerty, 7th Graders & Student Leadership Council Representatives

The TOPS Student Leadership Council went on a field trip to the Seattle Center to attend Youth Involvement Day. We weren't the only school to attend. Other schools, such as Washington, Meany, Asa Mercer, and Denny, just to name a few, were also there.

We went to learn about things we can use later in our teenage lives. In Joe's workshop, he learned about volunteer work and things he could use if he applied for a volunteer job. He learned to say: Do you need a volunteer? Where is the job located? What will I be doing?

Tim's workshop was about how to change school rules. Students came up with ideas for things that could be changed at their schools. Among their ideas: different teachers, better lunches, and wanting the teachers to hear them and listen to them.

This is just a small sample of what you can learn and receive from a Youth Involvement Day field trip. You learn a lot; you have fun; and you get to interact with other schools. Overall, we both felt that this was a great field trip and a great experience for everyone who went that day. We think that anyone, and everyone, should go on one of these field trips.

COUNSELING AT TOPS

By Jennifer Murray, Counselor

What a busy few months this has been! I want to take some time to let you know how I've been developing the counseling program here at TOPS (besides trying to remember everyone's name!).



Jennifer Murray

Currently I am going to the K-2 classrooms and Tracy's third grade class once a week. My goal in these sessions is to help the children establish a caring community where everyone feels like they belong. We talk about many different things, from practicing basic listening skills, developing a "feelings" vocabulary, learning the importance of being friendly, fair, and respectful to everyone, and sharing about all the different types of families we come from.

In some of the classrooms, I have taught the students the "Stop, Think, Go" method of solving fights or disagreements. It goes like this: STOP and calm yourself; THINK of two or three solutions to the problem; GO with the one you think will work.

Middle School students are making appointments with me to discuss a variety of issues. I am seeing some elementary and Middle School students individually or in small groups in scheduled weekly sessions. I obtain parent permission before I see students on a regular basis.

Please call (729-3360) or stop by to talk (B-306, Middle School building) if you think your child might benefit from individual or small group counseling. I believe that counseling services are an integral part of your child's education. I want to work with you to support your child's social and emotional development!

UPDATE: FRANKLIN GREEN STREET PLANTING

By Cathy Chun

Progress on the Franklin Green Street project—between TOPS and Rogers Field—is visible, but slow. As construction on the site continues, the artist-designed furnishings (benches, kiosks, and game table) are being fabricated off-site. The planting phase of project—originally scheduled for November—has been postponed due to construction delays and the arrival of the rainy season. Planting should take place in February-March.

Thanks to all who volunteered to help get plants in the ground this fall. You'll be contacted again once planting dates are determined. For updates on the project, call Sarah Meeker at 322-1795 or Cathy Chun at 362-3774.

KIDS CO. BUSTLING

By Lisa Stokell

As fall winds to a close and the holiday season approaches, Kids Company has been busy! The Little Stars program (K-2nd grade) has been exploring the theme of Home. They have shared stories about their family homes, drawn pictures of their dream homes, and have begun to explore structure and variation in different types of homes.

The Big Kids Program (3rd-6th grade) has been bitten by the entrepreneurial bug. They have been active in Kids Company jobs and have begun opening their own small businesses inside Kids Company. Trading Kids Company money for services and products and balancing their own personal budget have been challenges for the Big Kids.

We at Kids Company would like to wish TOPS families the happiest and healthiest of holidays! See you next millennium!

AREA GAY LESBIAN PTSA WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

The Puget Sound region's first Gay Lesbian PTSA invites families to support and advocate for gay, lesbian, and transgendered members of local school communities and their families. The group works to bring parents, school staff, students, and the larger community together to provide a safe learning environment for all children. Memberships run from \$7 for students, seniors, or limited income to \$15 for couples. Additional donations are welcome. For more information, call (425) 468-9345.

AUCTION TIME IS COMING—MARCH 18TH!

Mark the date on your brand new Year 2000 calendar. And once again, the Auction will be held at the Asian Resource Center in the International District. The annual TOPS Auction has a rich tradition of raising a substantial amount of cash for our TOPS kids and providing an event that everyone can enjoy and participate in.

For the Auction to succeed, there are many jobs to be done—starting right now, today. We have a number of parents who've been very involved in this project over the years and who will be graduating from TOPS along with their kids in the near future. So we need to train new people for these important jobs starting this year. Some jobs involve long-range planning and being an active participant in the Auction Committee, and others may not even begin until the "day of," when you can come to the Auction site and help set up. Another job may be working with your child's classmates and teacher to create a piece of art to be auctioned off.

An especially critical job to be filled for this year's Auction is a Live Auction Coordinator. This person decides which items will go into the live auction, organizes and communicates with the auctioneers, and supervises the display of live auction items.

Here's another important job for everybody: Each family is asked to procure three items to be auctioned. We've

seen almost everything—dinners at famous Seattle restaurants, Mariners and Sonics tickets, music lessons, monthly brownie deliveries, boat excursions, haircuts, home-cooked (and -hosted) dinners, software, clothing, toys, many forms of chocolate, coffee, wine, theatre tickets, radio station tours, professional consultations, jewelry, signed baseballs, airline tickets, and much, much more. Last year some lucky (?) bidders even managed to score a bowling party with Mr. Tubbs.

While you're at the Auction, there's plenty of time for a glass of wine or beer as you check out the silent auction tables. Then comes dinner, and after that the wackiest part—the dessert auction. It's amazing what people will give up for a piece of chocolate decadence! This dessert frenzy is part of an often hilarious, banter-filled live auction hosted by auctioneers Frank Greif and TOPS parent Ted Johnson. The evening is always a lot of fun and of course raises a lot of much-needed money for programs and materials for our TOPS kids.

Procurement information, ideas, and forms were mailed in November, so if you haven't received yours please call Laurie Black at 285-7079, or chairperson Rhian Lombard at 325-5395. Additional forms are available in the office.

2000 TOPS CALENDAR

JANUARY

3 (M) School starts again
 4 (T) Mandatory ski meeting, 7 p.m.,
 lunchroom
 11 (T) Middle School Parent Forum
 (7th Grade), 6:30 p.m. (Library)
 12 (W) Site Council Meeting, 5-7 p.m.
 12 (W) Diversity Issues Coalition Meeting,
 7-8:30 p.m.
 17 (M) Martin Luther King Day.
 No school
 28 (F) End of semester (Middle School)
 31 (M) Learning Improvement Day
 (teacher workshops). No school

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.
 9 (W) Diversity Issues Coalition Meeting,
 7-8:30 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.
 8 (W) Diversity Issues Coalition Meeting,
 7-8:30 p.m.
 10 (F) Teacher workshops. No school
 17 (F) End of 2nd trimester (K-5)
 18 (Sa) TOPS Auction, Asian Resource
 Center

22 (W) *The Midwife's Apprentice*, SCT ,
 Grades 2-6, 10:30 p.m.

24 (F) K-5 2nd trimester report cards
 come out

APRIL

5 (W) Site Council Meeting 5-7 p.m.
 5 (W) Diversity Issues Coalition Meeting,
 7-8:30 p.m.
 7 (F) End of 3rd quarter (Middle School)

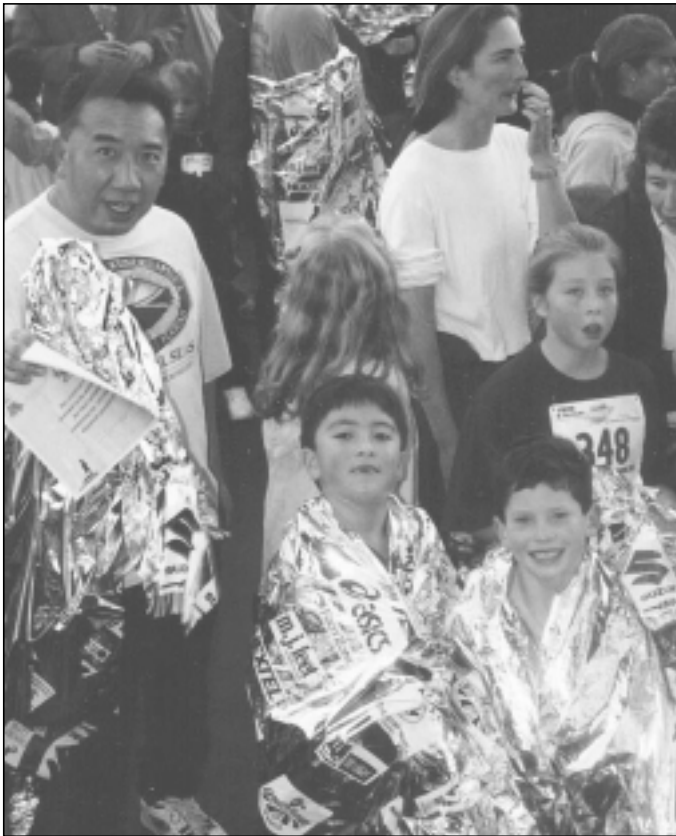
10-14 (M-F) .. Spring break
 24-May 12.. WASL testing

MAY

2 (Tu) Class picture day
 10 (W) Site Council Meeting 5-7 p.m.
 10 (W) Diversity Issues Coalition Meeting,
 7-8:30 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.
 7 (W) Diversity Issues Coalition Meeting,
 7-8:30 p.m.
 11 (Su) Site Council Retreat
 16 (F) Last student day
 19 (M) Last teacher day



Proud TOPS finishers.

SEATTLE KIDS MARATHON

By Don Zemke

On November 28, over 1,000 young runners participated in the second annual Seattle Kids Marathon. Students from TOPS accumulated 25 miles in P.E. and on their own, and then ran the last 1.2 miles on part of the actual marathon course, together with world class athletes finishing inside Memorial Stadium at the Seattle Center.

As the kids finished, they were given space blankets to wrap up in, snacks, and a T-shirt. The event was an outstanding opportunity for kids to see what a marathon is really like, and it was a great motivator for a lot of our outstanding distance runners. Congratulations to all the TOPS students who met their running challenge and ran in this event.

Now that we know what the marathon is like and how to promote it, we hope to field an even larger group of TOPS runners next year!



Relaxing after the race.



After completing the marathon.

RUNNING THE MARATHON

By Christoph Krumm, 5th grade

This marathon was very fun. We got our bin numbers and went to the starting line. Finally the race started, and we ran around the Seattle Center and into Memorial Stadium. After that, we got all kinds of treats, like a T-shirt, water, oranges, and soup. It was very fun, and I intend to go back next year.

RANDOM THOUGHTS ON GYMS, OLD AND NEW

. . . the point of P.E. is to get PHYSICAL! How physical can you get in a lunchroom? With all the tables in the way, the only thing you can do is play games, watch physical videos, or do homework, which is the last thing most of us want to do with our only hour of physical time!

~Harry Jamieson, 6th grade

I look back now, and I can't imagine how we ever got along with such a small gym for such a long time.

~Katrina Nelson, 6th grade

Well, it was worth the wait because our gym is absolutely gorgeous!

~Jennifer LaCoste, 8th grade

The new gym is way bigger, and now the basketball teams can have home games!

~Chelsea Luke, 8th grade

Everything is so new and different, even the smell is different, brand new.

~Kaley Wilson, 6th grade

We have the latest in everything—a full court, big speakers for dances, a stage, bathrooms, even a cool office for Eric and Don.

~Meiko Hall, 8th grade

Having locker rooms and bathrooms is very helpful because we don't have to go up two floors in another building to go to the bathroom.

~Roisin Whalen, 8th grade

From kindergarten through third grade, TOPS had a crummy gym, with varnish peeling off the floor like the skin on a sunburn and a closet-sized storage room . . . Now . . . life is good.

~Calder Fong, 6th grade

I think that both gyms were good, but the new one is better. All it needs is a pool. Now *that* would be cool.

~Nathan Weinstock, 7th grade



Let us in!

ODE TO THE NEW GYM

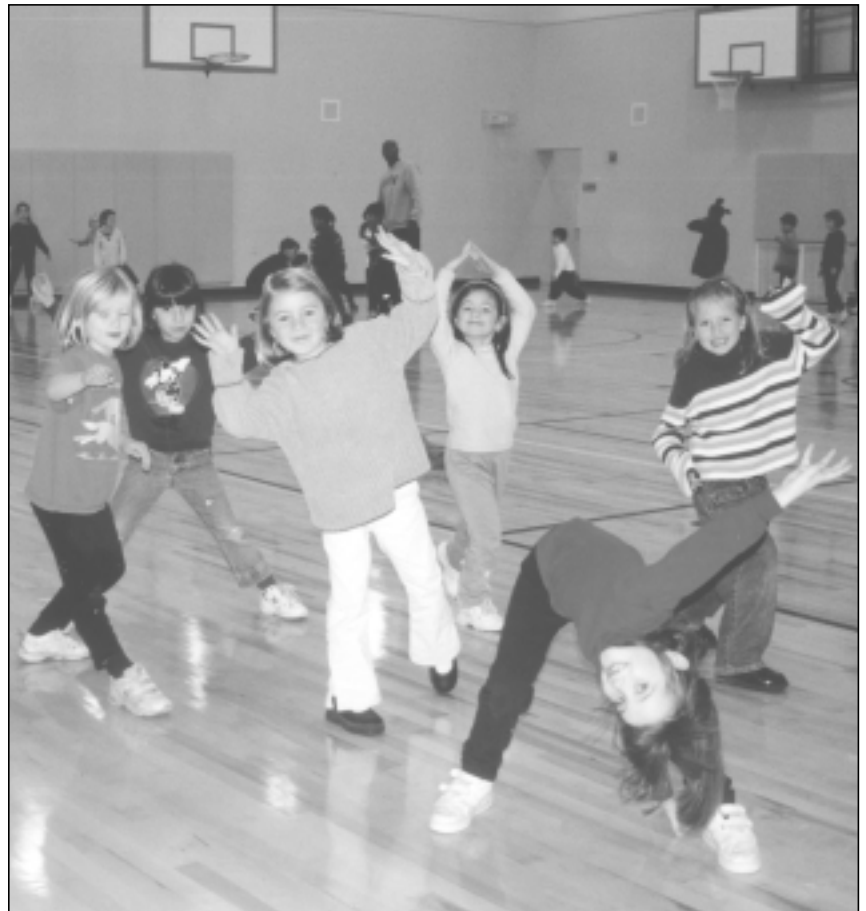
By Ian McKay, 6th grade

Unfortunately, I still have a recollection of times when I huddled against the wall of a gym that offered scant protection from nature's inevitable, a cold, concrete structure where the only way to keep oneself warm was to run around, and no one wanted to do that.

I also remember last year's gym, a small improvement, but an improvement none the less on its predecessor. In great contrast, this new gym had four entire walls, a delight to many a classmate. We stayed in this gym, rather contented as we had never know anything better until it came time to move to the newly renovated TOPS building, the splendor of which, as time has told us, we underestimated greatly.

But time had not chosen to show us the new gym, and at least for the time being we were reduced to the level we started at—worse, in fact, because we had not even the pretense of shelter. But it was bearable, if boring, at least for the time, to play outside with nothing above our heads but the slowly rolling clouds.

When the day came for the new gym to be unveiled, my imagination, which had been festering me for some time now, was not in the least disappointed. As I walked into the newly made gym, its floor glistening, my first thought was how sad everyone would be when someone made the poor decision to destroy it. Then I thought, or I realized, that no one would do that, because this gym has something more, this gym has respect.



First graders spread out and enjoy themselves.

CURTAIN OPENS ON DRAMA TOPICS

By Linda Downing, Drama Committee

"Okay, what do you need if you are walking your chicken to get a haircut?"

"A chicken leash!"

This original dialogue was overheard in the loft of the Library last month. That is where the students who signed up for Drama for their TOPICS class have been hanging out. Thanks to funding from the Site Council, we have hired Jim Nixon and Susan Wynstra from Broadway Bound Children's Theater to teach four 5-week sessions of TOPICS this year.

During the first session, students read the book "White Socks Only" by Evelyn Coleman, the story of a young girl's trip alone to town back when Mississippi was segregated. They then had a chance to e-mail their questions about the story to Ms. Coleman. Among the questions: "How did you figure out the idea for the story?" and "Why were there different water fountains for different colored people?" Ms. Coleman responded, and the students began writing a script based on their interpretation of her story.

Parts were cast, rehearsals began, and the characters were brought to life! You can see these students perform their collaborative work at the Martin Luther King Assembly this month.

When asked what they learned about drama, Jesse Bengtsson quickly responded with "You have to pay absolute attention to the director!" Jon-Erik Jardine conquered stage fright, saying, "When doing drama, you don't have to be as worried as you think." Genna White's reply was, "I learned acting can be very fun." And Emma Slaton summed it up with "It's cool!"

If you think your children would be interested in a drama experience that is engaging, challenging, and fun, suggest they sign up for Drama TOPICS. The "actors" from the first session give it a thumbs-up and recommended it with a resounding "Yes!" when asked if they would take this TOPICS class again.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ARTIST JOSIE BALDNER

Third grader Josie Baldner won the Grocery Bag Art Contest at the 15th Avenue East QFC. Her prize?—a \$50 gift certificate for Thinker Toys and a big congratulations from the TOPS community!



Director Jim Nixon offers pointers to Drama TOPICS students.

CHESS TOURNAMENTS!

By Mark Morales

We had a wonderful time at the Bryant Fall Classic on Saturday, December 4. TOPS had 14 students in this tournament, which attracted more than 450 chess players from throughout the state. We had a great showing: our K-3 team came in seventh out of more than 40 teams.

Many of our club members have expressed an interest in attending a tournament or two. I encourage you to have your children get involved if they are interested in playing competitive chess. Actually, "competitive" is a bit strong. All the participants have a great time and are very friendly with one another. But be warned that these tournaments last all day. They usually start around 9:00 a.m. and end around 5:00, although I have been to some that have lasted longer.

Some upcoming tournaments:

January 15 Zion Prep K-6

January 22 Northwest Grade Championships K-12

January 29 St. Michael's Open (Olympia) K-8

February 5 University Child Development Open K-6

February 12 Seattle Country Day Open K-6

March 4 Spinning regional (Puyallup) K-6

March 4 St. Michael's Queen's Quest (Olympia) K-8 (Girls only)

April 8 Washington State Elementary Championship (Olympia) (must qualify)

May 12-14 National Elementary Championship (Dallas, Texas)

If you are interested in participating in any of these events, please call me as soon as possible, so we can get you registered. Many of these tournaments are limited and can fill to maximum capacity very quickly. Contact Mark Morales (325-4079; memoral@msn.com).



A student gets into Drama TOPICS.

APPRECIATING ALL STAFF MEMBERS

By Janet Moore

The Staff Appreciation Committee hosted a holiday snack day for TOPS staff. Several parents made homemade goodies. Special thanks to Betsy Scott, Amy Hagopian, Jody Liddicoat, Ann Johnson, Laurie Black, and Andrew Schmechel. I really appreciate their efforts, and I got feedback from several teachers who enjoyed the event.

Recently someone asked me why we have a Staff

Appreciation Committee when the room reps do things for the teachers? My answer? There are a number of staff who do not get recognized in any way—for example, the BOC staff, AmeriCorps volunteers, custodial personnel, office staff, counselors, the school nurse, and more. Yes, the room reps do a great job for the teachers, but we have many more staff who do a wonderful job making our school special. Thanks to all of them!

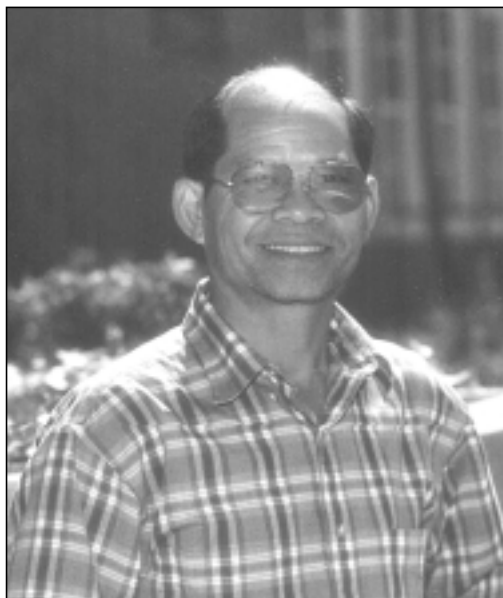


Thank you, staff!

SAREAM DY HONORED BY DISTRICT

Hearty congratulations to TOPS' Custodian Engineer for being honored as Logistic Department Employee of the Quarter for the entire Seattle School Districts. Saream was formally recognized at the December 9 meeting of the Seattle Schools Board of Directors where he received a framed certificate and a bonus check!

Saream has faced many challenges with the move to the new building, but he does a wonderful job with kindness and generosity. We're proud of Saream and all he does for our school.



Saream Dy, TOPS Custodian Engineer.

FAREWELL TO MAUREEN REID, PRINCIPAL INTERN

Principal Intern Maureen Reid has completed her work at TOPS and now heads off to finish the yearlong Danforth program. Ms. Reid has been a remarkable presence this fall—attending countless meetings, listening carefully, offering fresh ideas, and ably rounding up volunteers for playground duty! Her enthusiasm and efficiency will be missed at TOPS, but we know that Ms. Reid will be a welcome leader wherever she goes. Best of luck and many thanks!

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DON'T FORGET THE DOUGH

The No Bake Bake Sale is cooking—\$16,750 from 147 families as of December 8, but we can always use more dough to help make TOPS the best school in town. If you haven't had a chance to send in your contribution, please take a moment now. We would like 100 percent participation by the end of January. No gift is too small.

And if possible, stretch your dollars further by including a matching gift from your employer. Ask your benefits office at work for the form and enclose it with your donation. Gifts to the TOPS No Bake Bake Sale are fully tax deductible as the Friends of TOPS is a 501 (c) (3) charitable organization under IRS rules. The Friends of TOPS tax ID number is 94-3142402.

Call Sue Wardle at 547-6097 (jaywardle@prodigy.net) if you have questions.

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VOLUNTEER HOURS = MATCHING FUNDS

PLEASE REPORT YOUR HOURS!

With a note in the Volunteer Coordinator mailbox, on the Volunteer Hours clipboard in the Main Office, or with a monthly e-mail to kdyson8227@aol.com.

***WE'VE VOLUNTEERED MORE THAN 2,500 TOTAL HOURS
JULY-NOVEMBER '99!!***

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