On October 15th at 7 p.m., Principal Gary Tubbs spoke to a crowd of 50-some TOPS parents and staff in the lunchroom, delivering his Fall State of the School message and answering questions from the audience. Below is an edited version of his speech and a brief description of the questions and answers that followed.

There is so much good news to share—I’m not sure where to begin! We certainly are enjoying our beautiful new facility, our test scores are up, discipline referrals are down, hundreds of parents are offering to volunteer, the TOPS staff is working effectively as a team, our new families have settled in beautifully, and our girls’ soccer team is undefeated! What more could we ask for? Last spring in my State of the School Address, I emphasized the need for increased respect and civility at TOPS. Work in this area continues to be important, but I believe just by having that discussion, improvements are already evident. Maybe returning to Seward and being in our new school has helped, but I believe it has been the conversations you have had with your children and the expectations we have all agreed upon that have made the real difference.

There seem to be far more smiles, “hellos,” and “good mornings” from the students. Maybe it’s because I know more of your children now but, at least from my perspective, I believe TOPS is becoming a friendlier school. I hope this pattern continues so that even people new to the school feel the same way.

As I observe students during their free time, I notice they are getting along beautifully in spite of our temporarily limited play space. When supervising adults need to intervene, students have been responsive. More and more frequently we find students in the right place at the right time doing the right thing! There is less wandering without permission, less running in the halls, and students are even learning to clean up after themselves in our beautiful, new lunchroom!

For the relatively few students who are consistently challenged by their inability to self-manage, we are developing systems with positive and negative consequences to hold them accountable to TOPS’ core values of knowledge, responsibility and caring. The TOPS program is a wonderful balance of serious academic standards and joy in learning, within a structured, yet comfortable (and frequently even FUN) place. Our elementary TOPICS program is newly revamped and re-energized. We begin October 14 with new topics in drama, community service, Spanish, and science, along with many other options for the students. Nearly 100 parents have agreed to teach a TOPIC this year!

Our second year of the Middle School grant will build upon the successes of last year in addressing the social and emotional needs of our 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. These plans include more frequent, visible, and tangible recognition of students who excel in academics, effort, and citizenship.

On October 14th, our 8th graders will be recognized with a special “sub sandwich lunch” for doing so well on last spring’s 7th grade WASL (Washington Assessment of Student Learning) test. We’ve also launched a Student Leadership Council to give Middle Schoolers more of a voice in their school. The Council is currently busy planning a dance for the end of the month, deciding the “what” and “how” of the Middle School commons, and working on a proposal for a Middle School Yearbook to be produced almost exclusively by the students themselves.

I’m very pleased with how the TOPS staff has pulled together as a team. At our staff retreat this summer, and our professional development day on October 8, we tackled tough issues related to trust, institutionalized racism, and teaching our curriculum from diverse perspectives.

continued on page 2
Welcome to the third monthly newsletter of the 1999-2000 school year, edited by Julie Pickering, Jim Wells, and Sandy Kurtz. Robyn Ricks handled layout with Cindy Suzumura this issue. Coach Don Zemke and Amy Hagopian 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

November 12, December 9, January 13, February 10, March 9, April 6, May 11, and June 8. Don’t miss your chance! We’re unforgiving.

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

**PERFECT**

continued from page 1

perspectives. The TOPS staff works VERY hard to make each day a positive, productive, and engaging learning experience for your children. You are very fortunate. I particularly want to recognize Ms. Clara Scott, our new Assistant Principal, for her remarkable contributions to TOPS in such a short period of time! And what can I say about you parents? Your energy, your involvement, your commitment to your children is remarkable and very powerful. Certainly, you are one of the critical components to the TOPS program, a big part of what makes TOPS so unique and attractive to families throughout the city.

Earlier I mentioned the parents who have expressed interest in participating in the elementary TOPICS program. In addition, however, new volunteer badges are being requested daily for those of you who help in classrooms, the library, the lunchroom, and on the playground. Some of you have taken on huge roles in Site Council leadership, volunteer coordination, student recognition, Spanish, chess, the newsletter, technology, and as room reps. Please accept our sincere thanks for all that you do!

It takes the efforts of all of us—students, staff, families, and community supporters—to build and maintain a wonderful school for the children. And there are many ways to measure our successes. One way is with standardized tests, state performance assessments, and climate surveys. (TOPS 1998-1999 Effectiveness Profile is available in the Main Office.)

The K-5 profile indicates that the achievement gap between the different ethnic groups remains a concern, at close to a 20 point gap in most cases. We did, however, significantly close the gap on the 3rd and 5th grade ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills), to just 8 point gaps. I have also studied the WASL results by gender. For the 4th grade, 89 percent of the boys met the standard in reading compared to 88 percent of the girls. In math, there was no difference between the boys and the girls with 65 percent of boys and girls meeting the standard. For 7th grade reading, the girls outscores the boys by 2 percentage points (94 percent to 92 percent) but in math the gap widened: 50 percent of the boys met the standard in math, but only 41 percent of the girls did the same. This information certainly informs our future efforts in providing support to the students. Even though these Middle School math scores are not at the level we expect at TOPS, please know they are the best scores in the city and the 3rd best of ALL public Middle Schools in the entire Puget Sound region! In spite of all our successes, our work is not done— and, of course, it will never be. Knowing that, we must take care of each other and pace ourselves— continually prioritizing the important work we have to do. For example, we will begin 6th grade Spanish next quarter. We will make new technology purchases and become part of a wide-area network. We are also looking for an artist to lead a Children’s Choir through the TOPICS program as well as a teacher for a tuition-based, afterschool band program for the Middle School students. Of course, we look forward to the completion of the gym and the Franklin Street projects by Thanksgiving. With that, our playground and safety issues will improve. Maybe transportation issues and student drop off and pick up problems can be solved by then, too. Maybe we’ll have clocks that work consistently and phones that have voice mail, drinking fountains that don’t squirt the walls, and networked computer lines. Someday we may even find time to address the problems of small projector screens, multi-purpose “chalk” boards that don’t quite work as intended, and the parking shortage. Yes, there is a lot of work to do and plenty of projects to undertake, but we have one of the finest facilities and best schools around.

So, while we plan for the future, let us be sure to appreciate the present, because the state of the school at TOPS is, as John Stanford used to smile and say about himself, “PERFECT AND IMPROVING!”

Following his speech, Mr. Tubbs answered questions from the audience. Among the topics discussed:

**The Bilingual Orientation Center**—Mr. Tubbs explained that the BOC program, one of TOPS’ “gems,” is expanding. At present, 63 children of many different backgrounds participate in the program run by three full-time teachers. He expects at least eight new students when an overflow space and a half-time teacher are found. At present, all BOC students stay at TOPS for one-half year before they are “mainstreamed” or transferred to “transitional” Bilingual Centers where their interim needs are met by transitional instructors. Mr. Tubbs says that TOPS has requested authorization as a transitional facility, which would give some of these students a chance to be mainstreamed at TOPS, but as yet, no funds are available.

**Climate Committee**—In response to a question about progress in the formation of a Climate Committee to address issues of civility and respect at school, Mr Tubbs said that a committee of interested parents and staff has met once. One parent participant is working on “transforming” the TOPS expectation (printed in last month’s newsletter) into “lessons” for everyday use. TOPS parent David Sarju has volunteered to head up the committee.

**Diversity Issues Coalition**—Mr. Tubbs was also asked about progress in the area of diversity and disproportionality. He invited TOPS parent Garry Owens, co-facilitator of the newly formed Diversity Issues Coalition to speak to this issue (See article on page 5).
**GREETINGS TOPS FOLK!**

Whoa! The frost is on the pumpkin. Even though that elusive golden orb in the sky has not yet quit us entirely, the mercury is dropping.

As a mid-Atlantic Coast transplant, I must say it’s good to feel a real fall upon us. In our family, we’re suddenly curling up on the couch and reading more. Maybe that’s partly because of the Read to Succeed campaign, and more power to it.

Speaking of reading, TOPS students are doing well per the District Standards, as they are in language and writing and math. Please read Mr. Tubb’s State of the School address, if you weren’t able to be there. And PLEASE ask questions if you, as I did, find the four different tests, the standards, and the profiles a trifle confusing at first.

The short summary for new or bewildered parents is: the standards are new, they are NOT averages for the District, and, in fact, averages for the District are way below the standards. Schools, including TOPS, are teaching “toward the standards” as part of an overall effort to improve academic achievement for all children by raising and clarifying the bar by which achievement is measured.

We should be pretty darn pleased at the TOPS results, which becomes clearest when TOPS profile is compared to other Seattle schools. In future newsletters, look for discussion about how TOPS is balancing standards-based learning with enrichment activities (perhaps you would like to be part of such a discussion by writing a letter to our editor, or even an article!)

Also, please take a moment to read the newsletter article on the developing work of the Diversity Issues Coalition (page 5). This is important stuff. For me, it raises the question of how we treat each other on the most basic level. That includes the invisible assumptions we all make without necessarily even being conscious of it. With only two months left in this century, we could all stand to become a little more conscious.

If we expect our kids to respect each other, we need to do some soul-searching about how we manifest respect within our adult community, and be willing to make changes that might not come easily. A book I’ve found very illuminating on this subject is *Everyday Acts Against Racism: Raising Children in a Multiracial World*, edited by Maureen T. Reddy.

While you’re thinking about all the news at TOPS, remember: you help make it happen. So grab that checkbook and write your No-Bake check now, for whatever amount you can afford. (For details, see Sue Wardle’s call to arms on page 9.) Think of all the wrapping paper you’re not having to sell! And thanks for helping.

**IT’S NEVER TOO EARLY TO THINK TOPS AUCTION**

By Susan Wells

The Auction Committee is already gearing up for this school year’s event, slated for next spring. Even though the planning is in its earliest stages, it’s none too soon for the entire TOPS community to begin thinking about procuring auction items.

As always, each family will be urged to bring in three items, everything from fabulous weekend getaways to Mariners and Sonics tickets, from signed baseballs to home-cooked dinners and six months of delicious brownies delivered right to the home of the highest bidder.

The always fun Auction Committee is seeking a Volunteer Coordinator (to direct all the wonderful TOPS parents who help on the day of the auction) and a Live-Auction Coordinator (to oversee all the live-auction items and how they’re presented on stage). Please call Rhian Lombard at 325-5395 to volunteer your services to the most fun and rewarding fundraising enterprise at TOPS.

**THANKS TO CATALYST MARKETING!**

The TOPS community thanks Stacy Ringo and the folks down at Catalyst Marketing (329-3602) at the corner of Louisa and Eastlake for donating a Macintosh LaserWriter II and a box of software to the school. And thanks to TOPS 5th grade teacher Kevin Crozier for the heads-up on this generous contribution.

**MATH HOMEWORK HOTLINE UP & RUNNING**

The Seattle School District Math Homework Hotline is taking calls at 729-3333, as of October 5. The Hotline will be open 6-8 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings.

**APPRECIATE OUR STAFF!**

The Staff Appreciation Committee has been busy catering a staff Latte day and providing lunch on the October Waiver Day. This is a great committee to be on because you get to do fun things for the staff at TOPS. If you would like to help, please call Janet Moore at 283-7284.
SITE COUNCIL MEETING OCTOBER 13

By Gretchen Chambers

INTRODUCTIONS AND BURNING ISSUES
As usual, Site Council Chair Heather Worthley opened the meeting by asking the attendees to present their “burning issues” as they did their regular around-the-table introductions.

Marlies van Bergeijk, K-2 Parent Rep, reported that some parents of highly capable students in the early grades are concerned that their children’s academic needs aren’t being met. They look to Site Council for answers. Mr. Tubbs responded that parents should discuss their children’s needs directly with their teachers.

Maureen Reid, Principle Intern, alerted the Site Council that parent volunteers for playground supervisors are still needed. The Council then approved minutes from the September 13 Meeting.

PRINCIPAL’S REPORT
Mr. Tubbs summarized items that he would address in more detail in his State of the School Address, and then introduced Gary Owens who presented plans for the new Diversity Issues Coalition. (See articles on page 1 and 5.)

COMMITTEE REPORTS
Climate—Mr. Tubbs reported that TOPS’ climate has noticeably improved since it became a Site Council concern last year. He cited the new building as one reason for the improvement and also noted the effect of talking about civility with individual students and classes. The Climate Committee will meet in the future with Parent David Sarju as its Chair.

Drama—A motion was passed permitting Fund Development Chair Penny Bolton to purchase curtains suitable for the gym stage with money originally earmarked for a sound system, which no longer needs funding. Penny has several leads on “secondhand” curtains and drama gear.

Executive—Mr. Tubbs suggested that many miscellaneous parent concerns would be better served if channeled to appropriate staff, rather than being submitted to the Site Council through the Executive Committee. The members agreed that communication channels should be clarified.

Internet—Chair Jack Lee reported that the Technology Committee has reevaluated its purchasing plans and now would like to buy two printers and six computers, instead of eight computers alone, as originally budgeted. The committee has determined that TOPS needs a high quality color printer to be placed in the fifth grade classrooms and a high capacity network black and white printer for the Main Office. The Site Council moved to allow the purchase of the printers and the smaller number of computers.

The new computers and existing computers will be distributed according to greatest need as determined by teacher requests. Lori Eickelberg, Middle School faculty representative, expressed concern about access to computers for her 120-some students.

Kevin Crozier, fifth grade teacher and member of Technology Committee, also reported that he is applying for additional funds through technology grants. Garry Owens, Diversity Issues Coalition co-facilitator, noted that some Department of Neighborhood grants are available to schools that open their technology facilities to neighborhoods. Chair Jack Lee also said that he expects the school’s computers to be hooked up to a network by the end of the month.

Fund Development—Chair Penny Bolton reported that the No Bake Bake Sale would soon begin. She is also investigating the possibility of holding the auction at TOPS this year. Liquor licenses are the main stumbling block to an at-home auction.

Facilities—Chair Debra Walker reviewed items being explored: bike racks, a functioning piano, and play equipment. The small flat area just north of the main stairs to Franklin Green Street is the only appropriate spot for play equipment for older children. The committee is investigating the feasibility of an approved climbing wall and chinning bars for that area.

As for the long-term development of Rogers Field, a few parents have come forward to participate on TOPS’ behalf, but more are welcome. The kindergarten classes were given approval to put in a small garden plot along the walkway just north of the kindergarten rooms. Artists-in-residence are in need of an uncarpeted large space for projects.

Communications—Karen Dyson is compiling parent volunteer tasks from the take-home packet. Some 100 parents have offered to teach Topics!

Middle School—Co-chair Melora Battisti reported on Middle School activities, including the 7th graders’ Rope Course in early October, the Parent Forum on Adolescent Development October 14, and the upcoming Teen Speak gatherings (See the October newsletter and website).

Transportation—Chair Andrew Schmechel encourages carpooling and reminded members to be thoughtful in their neighborhood parking. Site Council members asked that Metro Bus schedules be displayed at school. They also asked about traffic light intervals around the neighborhood. Jules James of the Eastlake Community Council said the local community is trying to get the local traffic light cycle shortened on Eastlake, so school buses can get out of the area more quickly. Stay tuned.
Building Community: TOPS Diversity Issues Coalition

At the October Site Council meeting and State of the School gathering on Wednesday, October 13, TOPS parent Garry Owens announced the formation of a Diversity Issues Coalition to replace the existing Diversity Committee. The Coalition is dedicated to creating a campus that works for everyone by advocating for the diverse spectrum of TOPS families. It will promote multiple avenues for participation by and support for TOPS families of all backgrounds, so that everyone at TOPS feels welcome, respected, and supported.

Garry Owens is joined in this effort by co-facilitators and TOPS parents Cathy Chun and Sandra Hinojosa. Together they hope to work with people throughout the TOPS community to pursue five central initiatives, which Garry outlined in his presentation:

1. Create and support an information and social network, especially among families of color, in an effort to solicit their support on issues, concerns, challenges, and opportunities related to TOPS. The key activity would be Parent Involvement Night(s) with special outreach efforts, such as holding gatherings in local communities closer to the homes of some TOPS families. Garry expects the first of these gatherings to take place in early November.

2. Establish a Multicultural Curriculum Enhancement Study Group to initiate research on how to begin and sustain a qualitative enhancement of the current curriculum and identify needed resources. This initiative requires a committed person or two to step forward and lead the effort.

3. Offset disproportionate academic achievement among struggling students of color by mobilizing helping resources within the school environment. This means organizing parents, family members, and staff to serve as tutors/mentors in a Tutoring Support Group.

4. Challenge the reality and impact of bias (racial, cultural, religious, class, gender, sexual orientation) among students, staff, and parents at TOPS. The co-facilitators suggest establishing a study circle process to help establish a “proactive” approach to understanding and eliminating bias.

5. Engage in an ongoing dialogue with administration and staff on key issues, such as student discipline and the recruitment of teachers of color and families of color. This would involve periodic meetings and updates with the school administration and staff.

Following Garry’s presentation to the Site Council, Mr. Tubbs briefly explained how the TOPS administration and staff are presently addressing diversity issues.

In response to a question about District policy, Mr. Tubbs explained that the District does not have a specific policy on multicultural curriculum. However, he assured the Site Council that the TOPS staff is committed to such a curriculum and has the autonomy to pursue it. He described recent staff work on the topic, including the staff retreat at which they agreed to teach from a multicultural perspective and participated in discussions of Gary R. Howard’s We Can’t Teach What We Don’t Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools.

Mr. Tubbs also announced that Middle School Social Studies teachers David Wilhelm and Julie Trout will be using multicultural curriculum materials purchased from the Respecting Ethnic and Cultural Heritage (REACH) Center. The REACH Center is a nonprofit organization based in Seattle. It provides curriculum and staff development programs focusing on multicultural and global education (http://www.reachctr.org/).

For more information about the Diversity Issues Coalition, contact Garry Owens (782-2565; gomojo@earthlink.net).

Seasons Change, So Does P.E.

By Don Zemke and Eric Herndon

Summer’s over, the rain has set in, our classroom (Rogers Field) has turned to mud, but it hasn’t snowed yet . . . Stay tuned.

Since the last newsletter, we’ve played lacrosse, learned some American football technique, begun playing and learning about tennis, and some of us (the 4th grade) have made friends with students from the bilingual Orientation Center. We’ve also had a chance to brush up on our juggling skills, some unicycling, rhythm sticks, Double Dutch, yo-yo, and cup-stacking.

New for TOPS students is the opportunity to learn about and participate in the Seattle Marathon. Students who register to participate will be training and running 25 miles between now and November 15. During the November 28 Marathon, everyone who has completed their 25-mile training gets to run the last mile of the course and finish in Memorial Stadium alongside world-class athletes. This event promises to be a unique, fun event, sure to motivate kids to run!

On Saturday, November 13, the Green Lake Rowing Club is hosting a regatta at Green Lake. The regatta is a great opportunity to learn about crew and see how fun it is. For more information on the regatta and Seattle Parks and Recreation rowing programs, call the Green Lake Small Craft Center (684-4074) and the Mount Baker Rowing and Sailing Center (386-1913).

Thanks to those of you who have donated tennis racquets. We could use a few more, as well as some used soccer balls from all those soccer camps.
By Jules James, Eastlake Community Representative

The evening of October 12 marked Eastlake’s first formal opportunity to examine and use the renovated TOPS/Seward School. Early in the evening was a facilities tour, followed by a City Council Candidates Forum held in the Learning Resource Center.

“I'm going to have to find myself a husband and have some kids so they can go to this school,” quipped one impressed visitor.

Sarah Thibadeau, a Seward student of the early 1970s, was disoriented as she led a tour group through the 1917 building. In her schooldays, the Boylston side was too noisy to be used for classrooms. Like all the touring groups, her party gathered in hushed awe at the quadruple-paned windows in the Middle School art and sciences rooms.

Sarah’s mother, State Senator Pat Thibadeau, casually reminisced about the 1970s fights to keep Seward open. Another tour party comprised veterans of the 1980s Save Seward campaign. The two groups briefly joined for howling good laughs about old times. The Thibadeau party’s overall appraisal of the renovations: “Sensitive, sensible, and inviting.”

At least ten parties of assorted sizes, totaling somewhere between 40 and 60 neighbors, toured the facilities. One student from the 1960s recalled attics filled with treasures, occasionally and surreptitiously explored by students. A parent from the 1970s told of storing garden tools under the 1893 building, next to piles of ashes from decades-old woodstove fires.

The constructive criticism department collected these concerns:

- Exterior handrail ends seem unsafe.
- The structural design of the Learning Resource Center might have been a little more architecturally pleasing.
- A preschool parent explained at length why the TOPS-Eastlake playscape without slides is inherently frustrating for preschooler play.
- All agreed that the playscape area needs at least one bench for sitting.

At the Candidates Forum, City Councilperson and former Seward 4th grader Peter Steinbrueck was impressed by the quality of work that went into the restoration of the original buildings. And candidate for City Council Dawn Mason commented: “My daughter, a high school senior now, went to TOPS. I’m going to have to go home and tell her she should have been born five years later.”

Structural marvels and personal memories, followed by a gathering in real chairs that don’t fold or squeak, in a room where voices were unchallenged by freeway traffic or rattle-trap kitchen equipment—it all made October 12th at TOPS/Seward one of the proudest days in the memory of the Eastlake Community.

LEADERSHIP TEAM ELECTED

October saw the election of representatives to the Building Leadership Team, composed of faculty and staff. According to the Seattle Education Association (SEA), the Building Leadership Team is designed to promote and facilitate school-based decision making with a high level of staff participation. The Building Leadership Team consists of the principal and at least five staff members “selected by a process that is supported by a general consensus of staff at the school.” (SEA Website, http://www.wa.nea.org/INFO/ORGNZTN/SEAHompage/CONTRACT/saeII.htm)

TOPS 1999-2000 Representatives include:

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<td>Joan O’Connor</td>
<td>Lori Eickelberg</td>
<td>Dana Carey-Twight</td>
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<td>Steve Haines</td>
<td>Willie Jones</td>
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<td>Marlies van Bergeijk</td>
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Navigating the TOPS Finance and Budget Process

TOPS is a bustling place, but all does not run on student, staff, or parent power. Occasionally money is involved. Some of this money is raised by parents and administered by Friends of TOPS and the Site Council. We need to account for all monies coming in and going out. To do this, it is necessary to follow the check request and deposit processes outlined here.

Site Council Treasurer and Finance and Budget Committee Chair Dana Carey-Twight keeps check request forms in the Finance Committee mailbox in the Main Office. If you have a request, grab a form, follow the instructions for filling it out, and return it to the mailbox.

As Treasurer, Dana must receive and approve these requests before funds are distributed or reimbursements are processed. Dana reminds everyone to keep a copy of their request for future reference (in case of loss by treasurer, postal service, Acts of God, etc.)

Those who have deposits to make, such as Auction or drama receipts, should give them to Phil Converse (323-8123; pconverse@mailcity.com), the spreadsheet guru responsible for preparing worksheets each month to show payments from and income into the Friends of TOPS budget. Phil gets the checks first for posting purposes, and then he forwards them to Lisa Stokell, the TOPS parent in charge of depositing to our accounts at Bank of America. To ensure prudent bookkeeping, do not give checks for deposit to the treasurer, or anyone else who is a signer on TOPS bank accounts. Also, remember to keep copies of any deposits, just in case.

Finance and Budget Committee members include:
- Phil Converse (in charge of spreadsheets, 323-8123; pconverse@mailcity.com)
- Lisa Stokell (in charge of deposits, 329-1895; Kids Company mailbox in Main Office)
- Sue Wardle (in charge of the Fall Fundraiser, the “No-Bake Sale” at 547-6097; jaywardle@prodigy.net)
- Randy L. Joseph (CPA, former IRS auditor, and TOPS parent who donates her time to TOPS, 524-6672)

The Committee needs two more members—one to serve as a “shadow deputy” to Phil, spreadsheet guy, and another to serve at-large. For more information, contact Dana Carey-Twight, (325-5185; danac-t@msn.com).

Girls Soccer Going Strong

The TOPS girls soccer team has started out the season with a strong 2-1 record, every Saturday in the sun. Their first game was on the Astroturf at Memorial Stadium for a 2-0 win against Denny, with both goals from 7th grader Tessa Bernstein.

The following weekend the girls ventured south to grassy Rainier Beach field where they dispatched Summit 5-0. Tessa knocked in two goals and was joined on the scoreboard by 8th graders Kathleen Compton, Julia Fehrenbach, and Sydney Townes-Witzel. TOPS goalkeepers were lonely that day, but the team as a whole showed they were in shape and ready to run.

The October 16 game pitted the Falcons against the tough Washington Middle School team at Memorial Stadium. TOPS closed the first half with a last-minute goal from Tessa Bernstein and spirited goal keeping by 8th grader Rose Long-O’Donnell. Washington revved up for the second half, stunning TOPS with three handsome goals, but goalkeeper, 8th grader Rachel Leadon, made two fantastic saves to close the exciting game a respectable 1-3.

The team is working hard and has high hopes for the league play-offs scheduled for November 11 (Tuesday) at 3 and 4 p.m. and all-day Saturday, November 20. Check the school calendar for game times and come down to Memorial Stadium to cheer your team on!
Thanks to the Middle School Grant, a series of Middle School Parent Forums is planned for 1999-2000. The first was held October 14. Facilitated by Pamela Hillard, program manager for Health Education at the Seattle School District, the forum provided an introduction to adolescent development.

The turn-out was good and participating parents agree that they learned a lot about what their kids are feeling and experiencing, communication, and the range of developmental changes.

The evening ended with a brief presentation by Victor Larson, Pamela’s successor at future forums. Victor explained that the second group of grade-specific forums will bring parents and kids together. Following these joint forums, a third forum will bring parents and staff together in the spring. Check the calendar for the sessions targeting your grade. All forums are held in the Lunch Room.

Forum organizers, and the parents at the first forum, encourage everyone to attend. Please call friends from your grade and invite them to join you. In this busy time, a personal invitation will go a long way. For more information, contact Middle School parent Carolyn Law at 782-1294.

THE ARTIST LECTURE PROGRAM AT TOPS MIDDLE SCHOOL

By Lillie Cohn & Claire Gallagher, 7th grade

We’re starting a new lecture series for the Middle Schoolers. Students will call Seattle artists and invite them to come and give two lectures each.

Lillie Cohn has called the first artist whose name is Heather Dew Oakesen. She is a videographer. She will be showing a project called GULF: The Prison Project. It is made up of video portraits of ten young men incarcerated in a Maximum Correctional Facility and follows them for four years after their release. The presentation will be October 20th.

Claire Gallagher called our second artist, Stuart Keeler. You may have seen some of his work at Safeco Field (the big baseball chandelier) and on Eastlake. He is coming some time in early December; the exact date is unknown.

For each artist, one student will design a poster to announce and welcome the artist. Brady Nailen will be our first student artist/designer.

These artists will show slides of their art and talk about different aspects of the artist’s world. Four more artists will be invited. The series is scheduled to run through the spring. Parent volunteer Rachel Brumer is coordinating this new project. If you have ideas for artists to invite, please call her at 328-7007. We are all very excited about this and hope you are, too.
THE TOPS NO BAKE BAKE SALE IS COMING!

By Sue Wardle

Did you attend a school requiring hundreds of volunteer hours selling unwanted wrapping paper or baking bad pizzas only to find the school received one third to one half the profits? Well-done as these types of fundraisers may be, few net over $5000.

At TOPS, we spend as little time on fundraisers as possible. Last year’s No Bake Bake Sale raised $28,300. No time to bake for a bake sale? Spend 50 seconds writing a check and 98 percent of your money goes to TOPS, instead of 50 hours fundraising. (That 2 percent is for postage and costs of the mailing)

What is the money used for? The Friends of TOPS is the nonprofit fundraising arm of the Site Council. The money raised is used for enhancements to our school program. These enhancements have included hiring an art teacher for elementary classes, upgrading our computers, supporting the all school drama program, classroom supplies for all the teachers and annual stipends for the AmeriCorps Volunteer and Volunteer Coordinator who assist our teachers with a variety of tasks so they can concentrate on teaching.

We would like 100 percent participation. No gift is too small. How can you stretch your budget to give to TOPS? Keep in mind that giving up one dinner out per month for the school year amounts to $90-$2000 per year depending on where you go: McDonalds or Canlis.

Check your mail for the donation forms in early November. Please try to return them to school by December 17. This year we are enclosing an extra envelope for your convenience to give to friends or relatives who may wish to contribute to our fundraiser. We knead your support! Thank you for supporting your child’s school!

Stretch your dollars further by including a matching gift from your employer. Many companies, such as Boeing and Microsoft, match funds given to educational institutions. 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.

THE 6TH GRADERS’ IMMIGRATION

By Katrina Nelson, 6th Grade

On Friday, September 24, all the 6th graders traveled back in time to the late 1800’s on Ellis Island.

The two classes reenacted immigrating to the United States at different times in the day, but they did have lunch together in Julie’s classroom. The kids were assigned to be either old or new immigrants; the old immigrants already worked at Ellis Island, and the new immigrants were just coming in.

The new immigrants went through all the procedures to be allowed into America, including background checks, the health station, and the loyalty oath station.

I think that I speak for all 6th graders when I say that we all really felt like we were becoming Americans.

MIDDLE SCHOOL MATH LOOKING UP

By Paul Mocha

A new formula pervades the TOPS Middle School math program these days, but you won’t find it in the textbooks. Raise the bar for achievement, and higher performance will result.

Recent performance by the TOPS Middle Schoolers in the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) suggests that their school’s math program is headed in the right direction. Last year TOPS 7th graders (currently in Grade 8) emerged as the top 7th Grade class in the Seattle School District, in terms of the percentage of students who performed at the “meeting standards” level or higher (53.2 percent).

According to Mark Ellis, TOPS math teacher in Grades 7 and 8, preparation has made the difference. Only half of the WASL is multiple choice; the test requires a high degree of extended response, detailed writing, and interpretation—elements with which his students become very familiar before taking the test.

The WASL isn’t TOPS Middle Schoolers’ only math challenge these days: within the context of the regular math program, the achievement bar has been raised. Now every student has the opportunity to qualify for math at the honors level in high school after graduating from TOPS.

Mark Ellis is the self-described “instigator” of this bar-raising change in the Middle School math program, which took place roughly two years ago. Other changes he has engineered include a switch from three textbooks (one per year) to two, which span three years of Middle School. The second textbook prepares students for honors math in high school. In addition, Ellis has emphasized learning new material and is relying less on repetition.

Those Middle Schoolers who meet the challenge and take honors-level math in 9th Grade will find themselves busy. Their high school program will include advanced concepts in Algebra, Trigonometry, and Calculus.

How many TOPS students will be taking honors math in high school? And will those who don’t meet this mark have master Middle School math, nonetheless? What becomes of those who struggle with math, the “other” 46.8 percent from TOPS who didn’t perform at the “meeting standards” level in the WASL?

This year’s 8th Graders may have the answers to those questions. They are the first TOPS graduates who have been on board with the revised math program throughout their Middle School years.
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 PEAK teacher Hiromi Pingry and second grade teachers Louise Chacartegui and Willie Jones.

HIROMI PINGRY, PEAK TEACHER

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

Hiromi: My father was a high school English teacher and I was always interested in teaching. TOPS caught my attention while I was researching elementary schools for my older son. I grew up in a very traditional education system in Japan and was drawn to a program where individual differences are appreciated.

N: Why do you like teaching the younger children?

HP: When I volunteered at my son’s kindergarten class (not TOPS) I was deeply moved by the children’s attitude toward learning; their genuine desire to learn empowered me. And then my younger son was enrolled at TOPS kindergarten, and I met three great teachers who create an environment where children can learn without any threat and at their own pace. I saw my son and his classmates’ desire for learning nurtured. I love to see children’s eyes shine with knowledge. That is why I like to work with children.

N: Any special interests you like to use to enhance the curriculum?

HP: My mother used to say, “You can’t cook without math and chemistry.” We should never be intimidated by math or science, because they are everywhere. I would like to make math and science meaningful to children’s lives.

N: How can parents help out in your classroom?

HP: I enjoyed being around the kindergarten program last year. By volunteering, I got to know teachers, the children, and other parents who make up this learning community. Parents can be involved in the program in many ways. Just come on in. The important thing is to make a strong learning community to nurture all the children.

N: Your philosophy? Goals?

HP: I grew up in Japan, lived in Kenya, and traveled to many countries. I have been in the United States for 10 years. I found differences in the cultures I encountered, but I am amazed with the similarity we share at the core as human beings. I believe in our power of understanding the differences among us. I hope children learn to love who they are and become open to unknown things.

N: How will you be working with Joan and Joby?

HP: I admire Joan and Joby very much. This is my very first year, just like kindergartners. I will listen to their words carefully and learn from them. Joby and Joan make a remarkable team, and I would like to do my best as the PEAK teacher to support their program.

N: Can you tell us about your outside interests?

HP: I love to travel, visit new places, and meet people. I would like to learn Yoga. I went to a Yoga class two years ago and found my mental health improved—as well as my physical health. I also would like to be able to rollerblade better, so that I can keep up with my husband and boys.

LOUISE CHACARTEGUI

2ND GRADE TEACHER

N: I understand you’ve been at TOPS since the beginning. How has TOPS changed since you first started here?

LC: Yes, I’ve been here from the start. If I tell you when that was, that’ll tell you how old I am! [laughs] We started with four teachers in the portables at Stevens, and clearly things have changed over the years. There’s so much to mention. Many great teachers and staff have come and gone, and some of my “little” second graders are now adults. A big change was being here at Seward for many years and then having to take a couple of years away at MacDonald during reconstruction. The result of that, of course, is one of the best changes of all: our brand new building this year.

N: So what do you think of it?

LC: It’s wonderful, of course! My classroom looks right out over the playground and right on down to Lake Union. What could be nicer? Children certainly deserve a clean, bright environment in which to work and learn. And so do teachers, for that matter.

N: In what ways do you stray from the standard curriculum?

LC: I have always felt fortunate that as a teacher at TOPS I could incorporate my personal interests in the curriculum, such as art, cooking, gardening, and much, much more. I feel that it is important to address current events and social issues in the classroom. We have always been willing to take a risk. Like the time we ate lunch at Lakeview Cemetery as part of learning about “The Days of the Dead”—complete with press coverage. Even though the school has grown tremendously and
the interests of our staff have lost some of the original focus of TOPS, such as City School, I feel I can still continue these activities with my class.

N: How can parents contribute in your classroom?

LC: I have included parents in my classroom in a number of ways: as tutors, facilitators of small groups, presenters of interesting subject matter, field-trip drivers, and homework checkers. It really helps when parents can come in and help with those time-consuming projects, like cutting, copying, printing, distributing papers, and cleaning up.

N: What do you do like about teaching second grade?

LC: Second graders are ready to explore and learn about where they live. It is such a great age. They have great curiosity and are ready to use the skills they have learned in kindergarten and first grade.

N: What’s your life like outside of TOPS?

LC: I’ve certainly got plenty to do. I enjoy going to the theatre, movies, cooking, gardening, and reading.

WILLIE JONES
SECOND GRADE
TEACHER

N: How did you get into teaching?

WJ: I’ve always enjoyed working with students. My experience includes recreation park playground supervisor, day care, and I even worked in the Lake Washington school district for 19 years. Teaching kids from more diverse backgrounds and working in the community where I live are important to me. So far, I’ve really enjoyed TOPS. Everyone has been friendly, kind, and helpful.

N: What is it about second grade that you like?

WJ: I began my career teaching fifth graders, and I’ve gone in order to fourth, third, second/third multi-age, and now second grade. Moving down like that has given me a unique perspective on the skills that my students will need as they move up to the next grade. Younger students seem to be more willing to see the world from multiple points of view because they’re still forming their opinions. For instance, I play classical music when they enter the room each morning, which gives them a chance to like classical music before outside pressures try to persuade them not to like it.

N: This is your first time at TOPS, so what do you think of the new space?

WJ: I love this new building and especially my large, square classroom, which allows the kids to move around easier and lets me be closer to them while I’m teaching. It has also been great for holding our classroom plays. It’s also great for displaying my Mickey Mouse collection. By the way, people should know that all of my Mickey Mouse items are gifts—I haven’t purchased one Mickey Mouse thing since the collection began at Pacific Lutheran University in 1978.

N: What interests do you bring to TOPS to enhance the curriculum?

WJ: First of all, I teach Spanish to my students twice a week. Besides learning a new language, they learn to appreciate diversity in others. I try to lead by example when it comes to helping those less fortunate than ourselves—especially children. For example, I’ve volunteered for the past three summers at First Place School (a Seattle school for homeless and/or abused children). And I like to have my students to do something a little different for the holiday season. Rather than give me a gift, I ask them to go out and perform a “random act of kindness” for a child in need. So their gift to me would be a card telling me about their random act of kindness.

N: How will you use parent volunteers in your classroom?

WJ: Parents are important in the learning process because, among other things, they can help minimize the time a student may spend waiting. I bring parents in for writing workshop so they can help the kids come up with ideas, edit stories, bind books, and listen to students read their stories. It’s also great to have parents come in and teach a special interest they might have.

N: What philosophy do you bring to education?

WJ: I want my students to be life-long learners, to know that they can learn important and valuable lessons from others—not just from their teachers. I love to see a child’s face light up when I say, “I didn’t know that! Thanks for teaching me something new!” The education of each child is a partnership between child, parent, and teacher. The academic and social aspects of learning should be stressed equally, the ideal result being an academically sound child who can also get along well with others.

N: What do you do when you’re not at TOPS?

WJ: I try to spend as much time as possible with my family in Tacoma. My mom raised all five us to be very close, and to this day I feel very fortunate to be able to call my family members my best friends for life. We also get together one Sunday a month at our mom’s house for “Soul Food Sunday.”

Besides my work at First Place, I also enjoy reading, listening to all types of music, going to the ballet, backpacking, and working out at the gym.

Kyle’s Cozy Book Corner

By Kyle Fleck, 6th Grade

Snow season is coming, and you’re going to need a good book to keep you warm at night.

Hello! Welcome to another edition of Kyle’s Cozy Book Corner. I’ve got just the remedy for your book needs.

This brings me to my Book Recommendation of the Day®. I suggest you try The Dragonlance Chronicles: Dragons of Autumn Twilight. It is chockfull of really spiffy action scenes and some seriously creepy monsters. It starts off sort of slow, but by page 50, it is a page-turner.

In conclusion, if you’re an action or fantasy fan, I suggest you go pick this book up.
1999-2000 TOPS CALENDAR

NOVEMBER
9 (Th) ...... Middle School Parent Forum, 7-9:15 (Library)
10 (W) ...... Site Council Meeting 5-7 p.m.
11 (Th) ...... Veterans Day. No school
13 (Sa) ..... MS Girls Soccer vs. Madison 5:00 @ Memorial Stadium
23-23 ...... Early dismissal for parent conferences
16 (Tu) ..... MS Girls Soccer Playoff Games 3 & 4:00 p.m. @ Memorial Stadium
18 (Th) ..... The Velveteen Rabbit, Seattle Children’s Theatre (SCT), K only
19 (F) ...... The Velveteen Rabbit, SCT, Grades 1-4
20 (Sa) ..... MS Girls Soccer Playoff Games 8 a.m.-5:00 p.m. @ Memorial Stadium
20 (Sa) ..... Teen Speak workshop 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.
24 (W) ...... One hour early dismissal for Thanksgiving
25-26 (Th-F) Thanksgiving vacation
30 (Tu) ..... Teen Speak workshop (I) 6:30 p.m.-9 p.m.

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

JANUARY 2000
3 (M) ..... School starts again
9 (Th) ..... Middle School Parent Forum, 7-9:15 (Library)
12 (W) ..... Site Council Meeting 5-7 p.m.
17 (M) ..... Martin Luther King Day. No school
28 (F) ...... End of semester (Middle School)
31 (M) ..... 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.
11(F) ...... Apple to Grandma, SCT, K-3
11-12 (F-S) Middle School play
21 (M) ...... Presidents Day. No school
22-25 (T-F) Mid-winter break. No school

MARCH
6-31 ...... ITBS testing
8 (W) ...... Site Council Meeting 5-7 p.m.
10 (F) ...... Teacher workshops. No school
17 (F) ...... End of 2nd trimester (K-5)
22 (W) ..... The Midwife’s Apprentice, SCT, Grades 2-6
24 (F) ...... K-5 2nd trimester report cards come out

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
12 (F) ...... Teacher workshops. No school
29 (M) ..... Memorial Day. No school

JUNE
2-3 (F-S) .. Elementary school play
7 (W) ...... Site Council Meeting 5-7 p.m.
11 (Su) ...... Site Council Retreat
16 (F) ...... Last student day
19 (M) ...... Last teacher day

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