



TOPS 2010 Site Council Elections

Candidate Statements

K-2 Grade Band -----

Alex Korahais

I want to continue my work on Site Council of increasing and enhancing our communication- communication between the school and the parents, between parents and staff, between TOPS and the District. TOPS faces several challenges right now, and to meet them we are going to need to communicate clearly with one another and make our voice heard in the larger community. I want Site Council to be the conduit through which parents are informed about what's going on at school, through which we continue to make clear to building and District administration that parents have a voice and will be heard, and through which we tell TOPS's story and make our wants and needs heard throughout the city and community. I also want Site Council to be the venue where conversation happens among us and between us and the District so we can move from conversation to collaboration to meet these challenges. Since taking my seat representing K-2 halfway through this school year, I have been working on communications issues. There is still much to be done and I want the chance to follow through on the work I've helped to start.
Thank you.

Duncan Griffin

I am Connor and Clare's father, and it seems that we have been contending together for our future from our first day, with threatened closures and moves that we have successfully overcome as a community. TOPS is extremely important to us all, and I have tried to help in our struggle. I would like to continue to work for our community from a seat on the Site Council, focusing on infrastructural issues, ranging from working on Transportation (with Tom Bishop at Seattle Public Schools) to helping with improvements to our facility which will allow it to better serve our students' needs. I am an architect, lucky enough to work within walking distance from TOPS, and look forward to helping our school in a way that supports our Alternative Education model. Ultimately our school exists because every parent, each of us, chose to send our children to a special place, a place committed to a vision of social equity in a community of diversity. I would be honored to serve this community.

Third – Fifth Grade Band-----

Theresa Smith

My son Harper Smith Strange is graduating this year after two years at TOPS and my son Carson Smith Strange is entering the 4th grade after his first year at TOPS. I was the President of the Site Council at Daniel Bagley Elementary for a couple years and was pivotal in securing a two-year grant of \$50,000 from the Washington Women's Foundation for our expanding public Montessori program. I am the Deputy Director at the Children's Institute for Learning Differences (CHILD) where I am responsible for the effective and efficient stewardship of resources and evaluation of organizational impact for an agency with an annual operating budget of \$3 million+ and a staff of 50+ employees. I bring more than 20 years experience as an organizational and resource development consultant to my efforts supporting nonprofits to achieve strategic alignment and sustainability. I have specific expertise in fund raising, community relations, organizational development and start-up launches. I am passionate about education, children and families, and contributing to my community.

Merran Kubalak

Thank you for considering me as a Site Council representative. Our family joined TOPS in 2008 when our son, Duncan, was in 2nd grade and our daughter, Fiona, joined as a Kindergartner. We were at a great private school and diligently kept applying to public schools in the hopes that we would be accepted to a public school that aligned with our values and one where John and I felt our passion for creating a great public education system would be welcomed and utilized. We felt like we won the lottery when we were accepted to TOPS! Since joining John and I have tried to dive in and understand where we could provide most help – as a regular member of the Site Council “peanut gallery” (or regular meeting attendee) I have come to appreciate the challenges of our unique parent partnership with the administration and teaching staff at TOPS. We have an excellent opportunity to influence change, support our teachers and communicate more frequently and clearly to our parent community. With so much opportunity for improvement at TOPS it will be important for Site Council to prioritize what we take on – and as a site council representative I feel it would be critical to reach out and make sure that I represent not just my opinions but that of you and your children. Thanks so much for considering me for this role!

Middle School (6-8) Grade Band -----

Wayne Duncan

A TOPS parent since 2000, I am running for Site Council to continue the work I have been doing this past year as an appointed middle school representative, replacing a parent who resigned. I want to continue our work preparing for the alternative schools audit—now being called a “program evaluation”—by the district and to complete the construction of planned seating for the TOPS Memorial area (adjacent to the Japanese maple we have planted) and the expansion of the kindergarten playground area. We are currently meeting with city and school district staff to obtain the necessary approvals to proceed with this work, approved by the Friends of TOPS and the Site Council. I also hope to continue to work at the district level to garner support for TOPS and other alternative programs in the district. I want to finish the work I have been involved with over this past year!

Liz Espiritu

Liz Espiritu is a parent of three TOPS kids, Alex (6th), Adam (4th) and Emily (1st). She has been a TOPS parent since 2003 and has been involved consistently in the classrooms. She has a great deal of experience as an Administrative Contracting Officer, with 21 years in federal and DOD contracting and procurement. She is a warranted Administrative Contracting Officer, and a warranted Administrative Grants Officer. Liz is interested in filling the Site Council position as 6-8 grade band representative and Treasurer. She has experience in contract solicitation, contract formation, and award. And had responsibility for general management and oversight of all DOD contracts awarded within our assigned region. Worked to foster integrated business management practices and principles related to contract business operations.

Building Leadership Team Parent Representative -----

Nancy Cohen

My son, Daniel Page, is finishing 3rd grade and my daughter, Lia Page, is finishing Kindergarten. I've enjoyed helping out weekly in their classrooms and with school-wide events. Since we transferred to TOPS a few years ago from our neighborhood school, we've greatly appreciated how TOPS fosters learning in a diverse and nurturing environment. I'm a psychologist and have spent my professional life in various jobs helping kids thrive, which I think provide useful background for serving on the Building Leadership Committee. As a therapist I listen closely and build consensus among kids, parents, and teachers. As a researcher, I evaluated what makes programs effective for kids. As a manager, I managed budgets and supported personnel. It would be a privilege to serve on the Building Leadership Team, helping to make TOPS work well for all our kids.