

**TOPS K-8**  
**Alternative School**  
Family Handbook  
2006-2007



The Option Program at Seward K-8 Alternative School  
2500 Franklin Avenue East  
Seattle, Washington 98102  
206.252.3510  
[www.TOPSk8.org](http://www.TOPSk8.org)

# Welcome to TOPS!

Dear Parents, Guardians and Students,

Welcome to a new year at TOPS! It is exciting to start the year knowing that we have a committed staff and a refined mission and vision focused on the success of every student. The supportive parents at TOPS demonstrate the importance of a close family-school partnership in building a strong learning community. We truly appreciate your support; TOPS would not be the same without you! If you have not found a way to get hooked in already, there are many opportunities for a range of interests.

As the year progresses please utilize the school website and stay informed about school happenings. If you have a question or concern, please keep the lines of communication open (on our website, you will find email addresses for all staff members). By working together, we can ensure that we are providing the best quality education for your child.

Sincerely,

Clara Scott,  
Principal

Gerrit Kischner,  
Assistant Principal

Dear Community Members,

We are glad you chose TOPS for your child, and we welcome your involvement in the Site Council and in other school activities. The Site Council serves as the school's governing board. The members are elected by our various school constituencies (faculty, classified staff, parents, community, students) in an annual election. Our role is to set policies for the school, support the school staff, assure the quality of educational programming, assure our financial stability and security, and advocate for the school's interests. We have a set of bylaws, approved by the entire school community, which guides our processes.

Site Council meetings are expected to be held the second Wednesday of each month from 5-7 pm in the Library (our first meeting is September 13th in the TOPS library). All meetings are open to any interested community members. Please join us! You can look in the Site Council notebook in the office or on the school website for minutes of our meetings, financial information, and the TOPS Transformation Plan.

All fundraising is done by Friends of TOPS, a non-profit corporation, which disburses funds to support the TOPS Transformation Plan.

Thank you for your support, we are looking forward to a great year!

Glen Tamura, Chair  
TOPS Site Council

## Mission

**We are committed to educating our students by using an anti-bias, multicultural approach in a safe and stimulating environment. We help all students to learn, to understand and honor diversity, to respect and care for themselves and others, to be responsible, and to achieve a high level of academic excellence. By eliminating the achievement gap, we include students historically underserved by the public school system and help all students to meet or exceed standards.**

## Vision

**We are creating a school that empowers students to be active participants, leaders, learners, and contributors to social justice.**

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## TOPS Important Phone Numbers

TOPS School Office	252-3510	School District Information	252-0000
TOPS Office fax	252-3511	Transportation	252-0914
Attendance	252-3518	School Board Office	252-0040
Volunteer Coordinator	252-3541	Ombudsman	252-0010
Kids' Company	709-8487	Special Ed. Information	252-0055
(on-site before and after school care)		School Security	252-0707

Seattle Public Schools and TOPS do not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, pregnancy, marital status, or disability.

# General Information

## School Hours

<b>Grades K-4</b>	<b>9:15 am - 3:20 pm</b>
<b>Grades 5-8</b>	<b>8:55 am - 3:20 pm</b>

Staff supervision of students is unavailable until 8:30. For safety, please do not drop your students off until 8:30. If you need before- or after-school care, please contact Kids' Company at 709-8487.

## Lunch

### Schedule for lunch and lunch recess:

11:40-12:40	Kindergarten
11:45-12:15	5 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> Grades
12:00-12:40	1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade & DHH
12:10-12:40	3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Grade

All students eat lunch in our cafeteria where they are supervised by staff and teachers.

Parents may send a check made out to the *Seattle Public Schools #1* if they want their child to purchase a lunch card for multiple meals or may send cash each day. A lunch card can be for 10-20 days of meals. By Seattle Public Schools policy, students are not allowed to charge meals when they do not have money in their account; students without money will be allowed to have vegetables, fruit and a milk for up to three consecutive days. Free/reduced price lunches are available if your family qualifies for the program, and this year the reduced lunch fees are being covered so that these lunches will be free as well. A completed form must be submitted to the TOPS office before meals can be provided, and a new form must be submitted every school year. You may download the form by accessing <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/nutrition-svc/FRapplication.pdf>

**New**

<b>Breakfast</b>	(K-5) \$0.75 / (6-8) \$1.00	Reduced fee breakfast (K-8): free
<b>Lunch</b>	(K-5) \$1.75 / (6-8) \$2.00	Reduced fee lunch (K-8): free

A child who has forgotten his/her lunch or money is asked to contact his/her parent to make arrangements. If a lunch or lunch money cannot be brought to school, the student may borrow from the school office.

## Phone calls and messages to students

TOPS is a busy place, and TOPS families are just as busy. Our office staff is happy to pass messages on to students and to help with arrangements of early dismissals and bus Green Cards (guest passes). At the same time, we ask families to be respectful of the time of our office staff and their desire to ensure that messages and logistics do not interfere with the educational process. Our office will be open from 8:45 to 9:15 for students to arrange early dismissals (see below) so that they can take responsibility to be waiting in the office to be picked up by their parents when the time comes. If parents need to leave a message for their child, please call before 2:00 in the afternoon. All messages will be delivered to students between 2:15 and 2:45 each day.

## Lockers

At the beginning of each school year, each middle school student receives a lock and a locker for personal belongings. The school issue lock is the only lock allowed on the locker. The lock must be returned at the end of the school year. If the student loses the lock, he/she will be charged for a replacement. Backpacks, coats and hats are to be stored in the lockers during the school day.

## Valuables at School

School administrators and staff cannot be responsible for valuables that students bring to school. Only send cash in if necessary. Money found on the grounds should be turned in to the office. Toys, balls, trading cards (such as Pokemon cards), skateboards, skates, scooters, stereos and headphones are not allowed at school. Students are discouraged from bringing cell phones to school. Students who do bring cell phones must keep them turned off and stored in their locker or left with their teacher. Parent will have to come to school to pick up cell phones from an administrator if they are found to be powered on during the school day.

## Lost and Found

Make sure your child's coat, backpack and lunch bag are clearly labeled. Every year we wind up with many coats in our lost and found. The Lost and Found is on the main floor hallway outside the lunchroom. Unclaimed items will be donated to charity at the end of each semester.

## Field Trips: Participation, Fees and Fundraising Policies

**New** Frequent field trips are an important part of the TOPS tradition. When a class goes on a field trip, it is the policy of the school that all students must attend and no student shall be denied the opportunity because of an inability to pay. Students and parents may not opt not to attend a given field trip because supervision cannot be provided at school for students left behind.

The school may charge fees for field trips or special supplies. Parent fund-raisers support some activities and provide financial aid for those who need it. All students have access to all educational experiences, including enrichment programs and extra-curricular activities, at TOPS. Student participation in such activities shall not be denied due to the student's inability to pay for the costs of the activity. Students shall be expected to pay as much of the cost of the activity as possible, given their financial circumstances.

As per district requirements, all students attending field trips must turn in a parent-signed permission slip. Students who have not turned in completed permission slips by the teacher-assigned due date will not be allowed to participate on the field trip. The student will remain at school and work on alternate assignments.

## Safety

### Health

Please check your children daily for signs of infections and symptoms of illness or disease. If your child is ill, please keep him or her home until he/she is well. While we want students to be at school and learning, you may be doing your children and their classmates a disservice when sending them to school ill. A School Nurse, Ann Uomoto, will be in the building on Mondays.

## Supervision

TOPS staff will supervise the playgrounds on Franklin and in Rogers's Field beginning at 8:50AM. At least two adults are on Rogers's Field and one adult on Franklin Ave. during the recess breaks. TOPS welcomes volunteer help on the playground. The playground is not supervised after school.

## School Grounds

Permission to leave the school grounds will be granted only upon written or verbal request from the student's parent or guardian. Students may not leave the school campus during school hours for any reason without the knowledge and consent of school administration. Their parent or guardian must sign them out on the clipboard kept in the office.

## Emergency Contact Information

Current emergency telephone numbers are vital if your child should suddenly become ill or injured. Please help by keeping our emergency contact information current. A call or note to our office will keep our files accurate.

## Dropping Off and Picking Up Your Children

Please use Boylston Ave. East heading south, the street parallel to the Freeway, for drop off and quick pick up (no parking) of your children if you must drive them to school. This is the only load zone for students. We will have adults to watch the kids walk around and down to the bus loading entrance on Louisa. **Louisa Street is for buses only.**

We lack parking and ask you to have your child come and go by school bus if at all possible. The school parking lot is reserved for staff from 8:15 – 4:00; please don't use it for access to the school. We are a busy school in an urban neighborhood. Please be considerate of our neighbors. Do not block driveways or park in "no parking" zones even for a minute. You may park in the lot of St. Patrick's Church to the east of the Freeway for evening meetings and activities.

## Emergency Preparedness Plan

We regularly conduct fire and earthquake drills. In order to prepare for emergencies such as snowstorms or earthquakes, TOPS staff and volunteers have developed an awareness program and contingency plans for TOPS. With the help of the community, the Safety Committee has assembled "teacher packs" with food supplies, first-aid items, and such emergency equipment as fire extinguishers, flashlights and blankets, for each classroom. These packs will need to be replenished periodically. K-5 students have individual emergency food and comfort packs provided by their parents annually.

## Snow or Bad Weather Days

In case of bad weather before the school day (7:30am or earlier) listen to the major radio stations, KIRO (100.7) or KUOW (94.9), for the status of school openings or closures. In the unlikely event that we have to close school early, we will contact the parent/guardian before we allow a student on the buses or to leave campus. Please keep your emergency contact information current. If your phone number at work changes, call the school office and have your info sheet updated.

Because we will be trying to call **all** parents/guardians, the phone lines at school will be busy. If you do come to school under these circumstances to take your child, *you must come up to the office and check them out with the staff.*

# Attendance

Regular attendance is important to your child's success at school. However, children should not be sent to school when ill. If your child has been ill during the night, he/she should have a normal temperature for 24 hours before returning to school.

Please call the school office at 252-3518 by 9:30am if your child will be absent. For safety purposes, the school attempts to reach the parent/guardian of students whose absences have not been reported. If your child is late or absent, a parent/guardian must provide them a written excuse.

Any student arriving late must sign-in in the office before going to class. Late students must have a note if the parent does not come into the office with them.

## Unexcused Absence Policy

According to Seattle School District policy, if your student is absent from school and the TOPS Attendance Office is not notified by the end of that school day, the absence must be recorded as unexcused. The absence may also be unexcused if the reason does not fall within the list of acceptable excused absences as listed below.

Attendance is included as part of your student's academic history on file with the district. The District Truancy office can and does look into attendance reporting from our school and immediately sends notification to your home of any unexcused absences. Two or more unexcused absences in any month requires a conference with the school to discuss possible intervention strategies. Ten or more unexcused absences are truancy petition-eligible, at which time the Courts step in.

To reduce contact time by the Truancy office, it is important that the TOPS Attendance Office hear from you as soon as possible after the absence. A 24-hour voice mail is set up for attendance messages (252-3518) and written notification is also accepted. Please do not make our teachers responsible for notifying the office if your child is absent.

Following are Seattle School District definitions of excused and unexcused absences:

### Excused Absences

Unplanned absences are excused when your child's personal illness or injury, or the illness or injury of a family member, prevents your child from attending school.

Planned absences are excused when you submit a request to the principal at least three school days before the start of the planned absence, usually for a family trip of a short duration, or a special one-time event. Absences for longer than twenty consecutive school

days may result in your child being dropped from the school enrollment. (See Long-Term Absence Policy, below.)

Absences due to short-term discipline (suspension) of your child are excused.

## **Unexcused Absences**

All other absences are considered unexcused, including absences caused by the student or parent oversleeping, student missing the bus, transportation problems, child needing babysitting, student job requirements, etc.

A parent request to “excuse my child’s absence” without a stated reason or with a reason that does not meet the above criteria for excused absences will result in the child’s absence remaining unexcused.

## **Long-Term Absence Policy**

***Please note: this may affect your vacation plans.***

Each year, TOPS receives many letters from parents asking permission for their student(s) to be absent from school for an extended period of time. TOPS must align with the district policy on long-term absences. This policy reads in part: “Planned absences are excused when you submit a request to the principal at least three school days before the start of the planned absence. Long-term absences or a succession of long-term absences may affect whether your child will be promoted. Absences for longer than twenty consecutive days may result in your child being dropped from [TOPS] school enrollment.”

Particular attention should be given to the policy on absences longer than twenty days. We want every student’s placement at TOPS to remain secure.

## **Tardies**

Students have a much better chance for success when they are at school on time, prepared to learn. Late arrivals may also disrupt the class and/or take the teacher’s attention away from the rest of the class. Please help your child and his/her class be successful by ensuring that your child arrives to school on time.

## **Early Dismissals**

In the event it is necessary for you to pick up your child during school hours, please send a note with your child in the morning. The office will be open for all students to bring early dismissal notes between 8:45 and 9:15. Your child will receive an early dismissal slip, and it will be his/her responsibility to notify his/her teacher and to report to the main office at the dismissal time. Do not go to the classroom to pick up your child.

# Encouraging Student Success

## Visiting Your Child at School

TOPS encourages you to visit your children in school during the year. Follow these suggestions to make your visit beneficial for you and your child:

- To ensure our children's safety, we must require you to sign in at the office when you arrive at school.
- If possible, make advance arrangements with your child's teacher, especially if you want to see a particular kind of activity.
- When visiting, quietly open the door and walk into the room. Please remember that the teacher is busy with the class and would be happy to schedule a separate meeting with you to discuss questions or concerns.

### Friends and Other Visitors at School

Student visitors from other schools may not visit TOPS classrooms during the instructional day. Potential TOPS students may visit with their parents during the Orientation/Visitation days in January through March; please call the office for times. If your child brings a friend to school, we will call you to come and pick him or her up.

### Curriculum Nights

Curriculum night is an important opportunity for parents and guardians. You will learn about the specific requirements, expectations, and curriculum for your child's class, as well as how you can be most effective in helping your child be successful.

In order for parents to attend curriculum night presentations for their children in different grades, TOPS will have curriculum night activities on three nights:

- **September 26<sup>th</sup>**: Kindergarten (6:00 pm)
- **September 28<sup>th</sup>**: 5<sup>th</sup> Grade, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade (6:00 pm) & 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> Grade (7:15)
- **October 3<sup>rd</sup>**: D/H-H (5:00 pm), 1<sup>st</sup> Grade & 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade (6:15 pm), 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> (7:15 pm)

### Report Cards and Parent-Teacher Conferences (November 13-21, 2006)

It is essential that parents know how their children are doing in school. Teachers take a great deal of care preparing for these meetings with you. Students in grades K-5 will receive a progress report (report card) following the end of each 12-week trimester. Students in grades 6-8 will receive progress reports following every nine-week quarter and mid-quarter progress reports are issued as well. In addition, parents are encouraged to log on to The Source, on which student progress and upcoming assignments are posted regularly by teachers. Middle school teachers are already up and running on The Source, and elementary teachers are expected to be on-line later in the 2006-07 school year.

Parent-Teacher conferences will be held in November according to the district's two-hour elementary early release schedule (release time is 1:10). Parents of middle school students will meet with their students' five teachers in a round-robin and group process. Parents may sign up for conferences with their student's teacher at Curriculum Night. After that time, parents of elementary students may contact their student's teacher directly to schedule a conference, and middle school parents may call the main office for scheduling.

A parent/guardian may request a conference with their child's teacher, the principal, assistant principal or counselor at any time during the school year. If you feel your child is having problems with his or her school experience, please speak to the teacher right away. If more help is needed, make an appointment with an administrator or the counselor.

# Curriculum and Unique Features of the TOPS Program

## Essential Skills and Academic Achievement

Recognizing that reading, writing and math are fundamental skills, TOPS emphasizes development and achievement in these areas and we are proud of the cohesive K-8 continuum we have developed. The successful approaches used include integrated language arts (integrating reading and writing), cooperative learning within the classroom and between different age groups, and the use of thematic units to integrate the curriculum. Our integrated math program is coupled by a commitment to building a mastery of number sense and “math facts.” Teachers encourage concept development, visual thinking, problem solving skills, and higher level thinking skills in all subject areas. The strategies used include using estimating, making predictions, recognizing relationships between concrete and abstract concepts, and making connections between classroom learning and its application to the real world.

Responsibility, respect and cooperation are taught and form the basis of classroom discipline. Through high expectations, TOPS strives to foster confidence, excitement and the development of independent learners.

## Reading Block

Primary teachers and support staff have worked hard to develop a first and second grade reading block that meets for an hour a day, four days per week, beginning in early October. The small literacy groups of 6-15 students will be taught by qualified reading instructors so that all children’s reading skill development will be accelerated. Children at the same stage in reading will be grouped together so that all of the instruction will meet their specific needs. Ongoing assessments will inform the instruction and let instructors know when students should be moved to other groups.

## Multiculturalism, Cultural Competency and Social Justice

TOPS staff members are committed to helping all students understand and honor diversity, as well as empowering students to be active participants, leaders, learners, and contributors to social justice. Staff members have been participating in study and discussion groups that help them understand the needs and perspectives of diverse learners. Teachers also weave multicultural concepts through the curriculum and help students view material from different perspectives. Students and classes may also complete service projects, write letters to companies and government officials, and explore ways in which they can contribute to social justice in their daily lives. The Committee on Social Justice (CSJ) is a group of TOPS staff and parents who meet monthly to address issues of access and equity in the building.

## **Middle School Organization and Study Skills Program**

Staying on top of one's work is the key to success in middle school, and our Student In Good Standing program is designed to provide an ongoing structure for students to work by. Middle school teachers and support staff have developed a program to ensure that our middle school students acquire the necessary skills of notebook organization, note taking, scheduling and keeping track of assignments. Teachers are coordinating information about the work that each student has completed. Students in sixth and seventh grade will be provided homework planners that will be maintained every day in the classroom. The more the use of these planners can become a habit for students, the more prepared they will be organizationally for high school.

### **TOPICS (Grades 1-5) & All-day TOPICS**

At least one Thursday and Friday afternoon each month, small mixed-aged groups of students gather together to learn about topics of special interest. This is a long-standing TOPS tradition. Parents, teachers, middle school students and community resource people teach TOPICS. Older students may also be trained to present a TOPIC, which allows them to gain skills in planning, organization and leadership. In order to continue this unique and fun program we need parents to teach. Parents may also team teach with your child or other parents. At the middle school level, staff lead all-day field trips around the Seattle area to explore a single topic, also in small mixed-age groups.

### **City School**

City School, an ongoing exploration of the urban environment's richness and diversity, has long been a special focus of the TOPS program. Every year our students go on many field trips throughout the City, many times using the Metro bus system or walking. The purpose of City School is to encourage students to be active participants in the urban environment. Their study of the City is integrated into all their subjects.

### **Learning Resource Center (Library)**

The LRC— staffed by our full-time librarian, Steve Haines – emphasizes learning through the use of a wide variety of resources that reach children's different learning styles. The library serves as a technology resource center where students can develop research, publishing and multimedia authoring skills on the many computers and peripherals available. On most days, the library is open to students for quiet work after school until 4:30. Students will not be allowed to stay in the library beyond closing time.

### **Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing Program (D/HH)**

The Deaf/Hard of Hearing program at TOPS is an elementary program for deaf students and students with moderate to severe hearing loss, including those who have received cochlear implants. While one classroom (taught by Cindy Beck) emphasizes the use of American Sign Language (ASL) and other classroom (taught by Adrienne Yoshihara and Liz

Hayden) is a “voice-on” program using Signing Exact English (SEE), both programs are designed around addressing the “total communication” needs of their students, who come with a range of skills in sign and oral language. The program prepares these students for success in both the deaf and hearing communities. D/HH students attend their own class for most of the day, but will also have opportunities to interact with students in other classes as appropriate.

### **Special Education**

TOPS maintains a variety of programs designed to meet the needs of students with a variety of learning challenges. “Resource Room” and in-class support for students as appropriate at all grade levels. A self-contained classroom meets the needs of students in grades 6 through 8. In addition, a speech/language pathologist, occupational therapist, and audiologist are staff in our building to support students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

### **Bullying Prevention**

With the 2005-06 school year, TOPS began implementing the Olweus Bullying Prevention Framework. As we do so, it’s critical that we all know what bullying is in the first place. The working definition that we are using is that bullying is intentional harm-doing that happens over time and involves a relationship in which there is an imbalance of power. Bully behavior can be both physical and emotional.

As a school, we will follow four clear rules regarding bullying:

- We will not bully;
- We will help students who are bullied;
- We will include students who are easily left out;
- When we know someone is being bullied, we will tell an adult at school AND an adult at home.

What this means is that we’re making a commitment as a school community to get involved in behavior that appears harmful to kids. It means that staff members, volunteer playground monitors, and students themselves will be encouraged to respond consistently whenever they witness behavior which looks like bullying. We may not always know the full story and we won’t pass judgment, but students can count on the fact that we will identify any behavior the “looks like bullying.”

# Parent and Family Involvement at TOPS

Parents, teachers, principal and staff work closely together on all aspects of the TOPS program. In addition to providing classroom and tutoring assistance to teachers and students, parents help with curriculum support, communications, financial planning and fundraising through the Site Council and the Friends of TOPS foundation. It is the strong partnership of the staff and parents that make TOPS so successful for its students.

All Families are welcomed at TOPS as partners in their children's education. When schools and families work closely together, we create a caring community for our children to enable student success and extend the curriculum at home and at school. Family involvement contributes to the uniqueness and excellence of a TOPS education.

Families and schools can become partners in five areas that improve the educational experience for their children<sup>1</sup>:

- ◆ Communicating
- ◆ Volunteering
- ◆ Supporting learning at home
- ◆ Site-based decision-making
- ◆ Collaborating with the community

Information to facilitate involvement in each of these areas is provided below.

## Communication

Effective communication can be the most challenging aspect of collaboration. When people work together effectively, everyone feels respected, valued, and heard. TOPS school offers guidance in communication in the following areas:

- Advice on communicating with teachers (page 13)
- Suggested mechanisms for home to school communications (on page 14)
- Mechanisms in place for school-to-home communications (on page 15)
- TOPS "Code of Conduct" developed by staff (on page 18)
- Email Etiquette adopted by Site Council (on page 19)
- TOPS K-8 School Organizational Structure (on page 20)

## Parent-to-Teacher Communication

Suggestions for parents:

- Connect early - Build relationships from the beginning of the school year and appreciate what works.
- Consider the best timing – Request a convenient time and remember that no important conversation is quick (e.g.: 9:08 a.m. and 3:20 p.m. don't work!)
- Share feelings – Express your hopes and fears.
- Appreciate perspectives - Recognize that teachers see your child in a different context that can enhance your understanding of any issues your child may face in school.
- Be willing to accept no; every teacher must consider suggestions within the larger context of the class and his or her overall curriculum.
- Clearly state your request.

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<sup>1</sup> These five areas were adapted from a rubric of family involvement developed by Joyce Epstein of the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University, and adopted by Seattle Public Schools' Family Partnership Project.

- Intent - Be clear about your purpose and motivation when speaking with teachers and administrators. Ask yourself, whether you intend . . .
  - To share a unique perspective
  - To explore different options
  - To gain a different perspective
  - To seek professional advice
  - To reach a common understanding
  - To explain what you believe is best for your child to succeed
  - To guard your child from hurt, rejection or failure
- When using email, follow the TOPS E-Mail Etiquette (on page 19).

### **Teacher-to-Parent Communication**

- Standardized syllabus covering:
  - a. Overview of curriculum
  - b. Goals/rationale
  - c. Class volunteer opportunities
  - d. The most effective means of communication for reaching this teacher
  - e. How to raise concerns
  - f. How to be involved with homework
- Annual personal meeting at the parent-teacher conference
- Report cards and assessment

### **Home-to-school communication . . .**

#### **If you are a PARENT and you have questions or concerns about...**

Classroom matters (field trips, curriculum, homework policies, etc.)

Contact: Teacher, Administrator

How your child is doing or to convey relevant information about home life/events

Contact: Teacher (refer to syllabus), Counselor, Administrator

Discipline

Contact: Teacher, Administrator

Educational vision/school direction/Transformation Plan; School budget, School Climate

Contact: Administrator, Site Council rep

Personnel matters

Contact: The staff involved, Administrator

Friends of TOPS budget

Contact: Site Council Rep.

Volunteer involvement

Contact: Volunteer coordinator, teacher/classroom rep, teacher

#### **If you are a STUDENT and you have questions or concerns about**

Any matter

Contact: Administrator, teacher, counselor or parent, All Student Body (ASB) representative

#### **If you are a PARENT and you have questions or concerns about**

Issue not yet resolved after following protocol outlined above

Contact: SPS Customer Service – Parent/Student Advocate (Alma Clark), 252-0010  
SPS Supervisor -- Education Director (Ruth Medsker) 252-0103

## School-to-home Communication

### Family Handbook & Student Expectations Handbook

Schedule: Received in September, part of fall packet brought home by student.  
Content: Expectations of families, staff, and students; policies & procedures regarding family involvement and communication  
Contact: TOPS Administration

### Curriculum Night and Syllabus

Schedule: Held at TOPS in October (Interpreters available.)  
Content: Syllabus is distributed by teachers. Every syllabus will include standardized content  
Contact: Classroom teacher

### Parent-teacher conferences

Schedule: Scheduled in November of each school year, parents attend in-person. (Interpreters available)  
Content: How your child is doing; progress and concerns for the year to date  
Contact: Classroom Teacher, TOPS Administration

### Report cards

Schedule: Three times a year; elementary students bring home report cards and middle-school student's progress and report cards are mailed home.  
Content: How your child is doing in school  
Contact: Classroom Teacher; Administrator

### Teachers' letters

Schedule: Distributed: Student brings home, mailed or emailed.  
Content: Information regarding curriculum, field trips, homework, classroom climate.  
Contact: Classroom Teacher

### Communications Committee (Teacher/Room Reps)

Schedule: Class email or phone tree  
Content: Classroom news and volunteer opportunities  
Contact: Classroom/teacher rep, volunteer coordinator: Randi Niemer (raniemer@seattleschools.org)

### TOPS Website:

Site: [www.topsk8.org](http://www.topsk8.org)  
Content: About TOPS, News, Staff, Policies, Academics, Arts, PE, Extracurricular, Site Council, Helping TOPS and Community.  
Contact: TOPS webmaster Jack Lee [lee@oz.net](mailto:lee@oz.net)

### Go-Home (Every other Wednesday)

Schedule: Distributed every other Wednesday, brought home by students.  
Content: Calendar of events and time-sensitive notices. Deadline Monday at noon of publication week  
Contact: Randi Niemer, [raniemer@seattleschools.org](mailto:raniemier@seattleschools.org)

### State of the School

Schedule: Scheduled in October and held at TOPS school.  
Content: Update on educational vision, community climate, values, and achievement.  
Contact: Administration

### Special letters from the Principal

Schedule: As needed; brought home by student or mailed.  
Content: Time-sensitive information not included in 'Go Home'  
Contact: Contact Administrator

### Newsletter, TOPSnews

Schedule: Once a month, mailed home.  
Content: Articles by the principal, volunteer coordinator, faculty, parents, Site Council report, Friends of TOPS report, all TOPS printed materials. Deadlines list in newsletter  
Contact: Newsletter editors Jamie Flaxman & Ann Simonson: [topsnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:topsnewsletter@gmail.com)

### E-mail discussion groups

Content: Site Council, Coalition for Social Justice, 7/8<sup>th</sup> grade parents  
Schedule: Messages e-mailed as needed to subscribers  
Contact: [seattleschools.org/schools/tops](http://seattleschools.org/schools/tops)

## Volunteering

It is the tradition of TOPS to strongly encourage all families to contribute of their time and energy to the TOPS community. As a guideline, we suggest single-parent families contribute 15 hours per school year, and two-parent families contribute 30 hours. Families are not required to contribute, of course, since this is a public school.

There are many opportunities to provide service in support of our children's education, including in-classroom support, fundraising, library, sports coaching, facilities improvements, after-school programs such as drama and chess, TOPICS and more. Home-based volunteer hours can be contributed by phone calling and assisting teachers in special projects. Driving children to theater performances and on field trips is also a contribution. For a complete list, check the TOPS website, the notebooks in the office, or the volunteer form that comes home in the fall. Parents are encouraged to talk with teachers, the librarian, room representatives, and committee chairs to find the right opportunity for them.

Parents should sign the volunteer sheet at the main office when they are in the school working, and to add up their evening and weekend hours and record them there as well. Recording the volunteer hours in this way allows us to use those hours as matching effort in grant applications, it guarantees the volunteer insurance coverage in case of accident or mishap, and it helps us measure the success of our efforts to encourage volunteer activity.

Active participation at TOPS is encouraged and is broadly beneficial to the entire TOPS community. As vital as volunteers are to a school like TOPS, it is also important to understand that schools also spend a lot to ensure that volunteer time is useful and well-used. Please try to help in ways that don't add extra demands on limited staff and school resources.

### Helpful Qualities to Bring With Us When We Volunteer

#### **Respect for the teachers we work with:**

*Our hopes for what might happen in a classroom or how we can be involved may not match a teacher's goals, priorities, or teaching style. We can acknowledge the significant professional skill, experience, and dedication our teachers bring to the classroom. We can:*

- *Recognize that enrichment and involving parents take extra time.*
- *Trust teachers' efforts to meet the needs of all children, and work within the parameters they set up.*
- *Fill out and return forms/permission slips on time.*
- *Follow through on commitments for field trips and other responsibilities*

#### **Discretion:**

*While volunteering, we learn a lot about the students in the classroom, including their academic performance and social behavior. Keeping this information to ourselves assures that all students and families retain privacy and dignity in an area where we all feel vulnerable—the welfare of our children.*

#### **Respect for students:**

*As a volunteer, please remember that you are there to serve all students. Physical and verbal affection that is important within your family can make other children feel uncomfortable. Hugging your child, sitting with your child on your lap, giving special attention to your child all are actions that are inappropriate in any classroom. When volunteering, please be careful to work equally with all students as per the teacher's directions.*

#### **Regarding discipline:**

*We expect all students to respect and follow directions from all staff and volunteers in the building (students are told that volunteers must be wearing a volunteer badge). Please confer with school staff about appropriate methods for intervening with challenging behavior that violates a student's rights to emotional or physical safety.*

### **Steps to getting connected with volunteer needs:**

- A list of volunteer opportunities and contacts will be published in September in the newsletter, Go-Home, and/or website. In addition, a volunteer form will be sent home for you to fill out at the beginning of the year. The Volunteer Coordinator will provide your name to members of the TOPS community active in your area of interest. Please take the initiative to contact the contact person for a committee or event in which you are interested.
- Classroom representatives usually coordinate help requested by teachers, often on Curriculum Night. The specific needs, wishes, and expectations of each teacher for volunteer help will be spelled out in the syllabus and should be clarified with the teacher and/or room reps.

### **Supporting Learning at Home**

- One of the most helpful ways to participate in your student's education is to support learning at home. You can:
  - Help your child manage his/her time, prioritize work, ask for help, and talk with their teacher about problems they may encounter.
  - Monitor homework.
  - Extend and reinforce the relevance of school curriculum by relating it to your family and community.
  - Monitor your child's progress; don't always assume that no news is good news. If you need more information, contact your child's teacher.
- Teachers' expectations about your involvement at home, particularly monitoring homework, can be found in the syllabus. Curriculum Night is a good time to get more information and ask questions.
- Look for workshops on "homework support" (math workshop dates: )
- The Middle School Forums, offered monthly, provide information and discussion on issues relevant to families of middle school students.
- Parents can help teachers by sharing important cultural and life-event information about their family that may affect how their child participates in school.
- Recognize that field trips are an integral part of the curriculum. Students are expected to participate

### **Site-based decision-making and governing bodies**

- Site Council (SC) is composed of staff and parent representatives, for input or information, contact your SC parent representatives (listed on the TOPS website and on the back page of the TOPS Directory). Everyone is welcome to attend the Site Council meetings
- Friends of TOPS (FOT) is the parent-run foundation (501(c)(3)) that supports the work of the Site Council. Every year, FOT conducts two major fundraisers, the No-Bake Bake Sale in the fall and the Spring Auction. The money raised by FOT is used to pay for such integral programs as music, elementary art, plays, our full-time counselor, volunteer coordinator and much more. The Site Council conducts a budget process to review teacher and community requests for funding every spring.
- The Building Leadership Team (BLT) makes decisions regarding staff development, the Transformation Plan, and the building budget. For input or information, contact your BLT parent representatives—one representative from the elementary school, one representative from the middle school and one representative from the Site Council Executive Committee. They are listed on the TOPS website and the back page of the TOPS Directory. For more information, see the TOPS K-8 School Organizational Structure (pg. 9)

### **Collaborating with the Community**

TOPS is a school that values its connection with the world, Seattle, and the local Eastlake community. TOPS school emphasizes Topics, field trips, multicultural assemblies, end-of-the-year camping, and service learning. Parent volunteers are essential for the success of these activities and are encouraged to participate in the committees at TOPS

- Site Council: Contact Glen Tamura
- TOPICS: Contact Tracy Seefeld
- Service learning: Contact Gerrit Kischner
- Multicultural assemblies: Contact Katie Waters
- Music: Contact Johnnie Calcagno
- Drama: Contact Linda Korbus
- Art: Contact Gloria Albetta
- Volunteering and Communications: Contact Randi Niemer
- Newsletter: Contact Jamie Flaxman and Ann Simonson
- Archives: Contact Toby Harris
- Fund development: Contact TBA
- No-Bake: Contact Randi Niemer
- Auction: Contact: Tammy Luthy
- Coalition for Social Justice: Contact Bonnie Cech
- Taste of TOPS: Contact Bonnie Cech
- Stewardship: Contact Laurie Stusser-McNeil
- PEAK: Cam Sata

### **TOPS Code of Conduct**

In order for our school community to work together in an open, healthy and positive way, we have adopted this code of conduct to guide our interactions at TOPS.

- Respect the opinions of others even if we disagree. Be willing to disagree without labeling the other point of view.
- Strive for honest, respectful, and complete communication.
- Assume positive intent.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Speak directly to the person with whom you have a concern, even if you process respectfully first with someone else.
- Respect everyone's airtime and processing time. Honor silence.
- Use "I" messages. ("I feel uncomfortable, I am concerned, I believe...")
- Listen fully to the message and the feeling behind the words. Seek to understand. Ask questions.
- Withhold judgments until you get sufficient information to see the whole picture. Stop and reflect.
- Strive for consensus in group decisions, but whatever the outcome, honor and support group decisions.
- Hold ourselves accountable. Follow through on commitments.
- Forgive. Remember, we are human.

## TOPS E-Mail Etiquette

TOPS is a community that works closely together and thrives on the energy and investment that all of us put into the work. Because we are working on behalf of our children, we all feel passionate about the work we do. At times, this passion has caused difficult communication between members of our community, and these difficulties have been exacerbated by the impersonal nature of email communication. Most members of the TOPS community have come to use email as a regular and central form of communication, and for this reason we offer the following guidelines for email messages about any issues related to our school. By adhering to these guidelines, we can help model **respectful** communication for our children.

### Purpose

- We encourage person-to-person or face-to-face communication whenever possible and suggest that email be used primarily for informational purposes such as disseminating information, scheduling meetings or soliciting feedback.

### Audience

- Email messages should be sent to as few individuals as necessary, and direct responses to one individual should not be sent to multiple recipients; BCC (blind carbon copy) should never be used to conceal recipients. Personal responses to an individual should not be sent to an entire email discussion group (be careful when you hit ‘reply’).
- BCC is best used to keep private the email addresses of recipients of large broadcast emails, in which case we suggest that you list no address publicly. The opposite is also true in order to maintain trust, send to no recipients through BCC when any recipients are publicly listed.
- Do not forward personal email to listserves or other groups without the author’s permission.

### Content

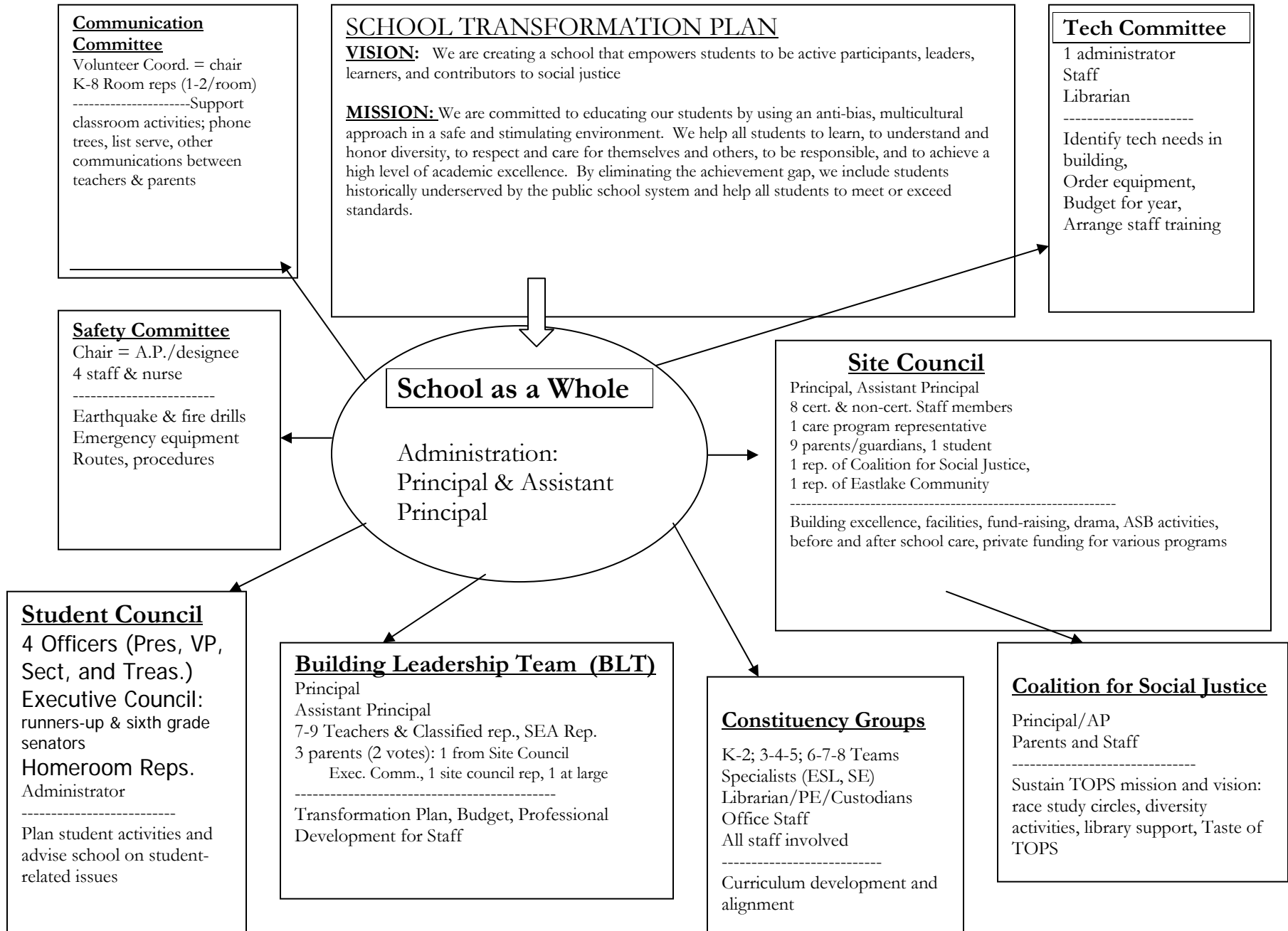
- Be concise with email messages; avoid irrelevancies and multiple subjects.
- Avoid “flaming,” the expression of extreme emotion or opinions in an email message. Never insult or criticize third parties.
- Keep in mind that all email messages can be forwarded to others, and are public and permanent.
- The best way to end an email dialogue that makes you feel uncomfortable is to pick up the phone or seek out the individual in person.

### Organization

- Stick to the subject listed in the header of the email; if a series of responses has developed and changed subject, change the subject listed in the header. Use descriptive subjects that help guide recipients to the action expected (i.e. include “FYI” or “Please respond today” as part of the subject).
- Fill in the recipient addresses for your message only when you have finished writing the message; this way, you will avoid sending your message before you are confident you are saying what you intend to say.

**Source:** Many of these guidelines are based on Yale University Library training materials, <http://www.library.yale.edu/training/netiquette>

## TOPS K-8 Organizational Structure (Rev. 9/03)



**Communication Committee**  
 Volunteer Coord. = chair  
 K-8 Room reps (1-2/room)  
 -----Support classroom activities; phone trees, list serve, other communications between teachers & parents

**SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION PLAN**

**VISION:** We are creating a school that empowers students to be active participants, leaders, learners, and contributors to social justice

**MISSION:** We are committed to educating our students by using an anti-bias, multicultural approach in a safe and stimulating environment. We help all students to learn, to understand and honor diversity, to respect and care for themselves and others, to be responsible, and to achieve a high level of academic excellence. By eliminating the achievement gap, we include students historically underserved by the public school system and help all students to meet or exceed standards.

**Tech Committee**  
 1 administrator  
 Staff  
 Librarian  
 -----  
 Identify tech needs in building,  
 Order equipment,  
 Budget for year,  
 Arrange staff training

**Safety Committee**  
 Chair = A.P./designee  
 4 staff & nurse  
 -----  
 Earthquake & fire drills  
 Emergency equipment  
 Routes, procedures

**School as a Whole**

Administration:  
 Principal & Assistant  
 Principal

**Site Council**  
 Principal, Assistant Principal  
 8 cert. & non-cert. Staff members  
 1 care program representative  
 9 parents/guardians, 1 student  
 1 rep. of Coalition for Social Justice,  
 1 rep. of Eastlake Community  
 -----  
 Building excellence, facilities, fund-raising, drama, ASB activities,  
 before and after school care, private funding for various programs

**Student Council**  
 4 Officers (Pres, VP, Sect, and Treas.)  
 Executive Council: runners-up & sixth grade senators  
 Homeroom Reps.  
 Administrator  
 -----  
 Plan student activities and advise school on student-related issues

**Building Leadership Team (BLT)**  
 Principal  
 Assistant Principal  
 7-9 Teachers & Classified rep., SEA Rep.  
 3 parents (2 votes): 1 from Site Council  
 Exec. Comm., 1 site council rep, 1 at large  
 -----  
 Transformation Plan, Budget, Professional Development for Staff

**Constituency Groups**  
 K-2; 3-4-5; 6-7-8 Teams  
 Specialists (ESL, SE)  
 Librarian/PE/Custodians  
 Office Staff  
 All staff involved  
 -----  
 Curriculum development and alignment

**Coalition for Social Justice**  
 Principal/AP  
 Parents and Staff  
 -----  
 Sustain TOPS mission and vision:  
 race study circles, diversity activities, library support, Taste of TOPS