



## Supporting Math Education at Bailey Gatzert

We don't often hear math and social justice in the same sentence. However, it is well recognized that mathematics achievement serves as a gatekeeper to higher education and to future economic opportunities. Civil rights activist and creator of the Algebra Project, Robert Moses, suggests that math literacy is not only the key to 21st century citizenship, it is essential, "To function in the society, have economic viability, be in a position to meaningfully participate, and have some say-so in the decision making that affects our lives" (Moses, 2001). When children fail to master the basics in elementary school, it can snowball: they struggle with math in middle school math, and then miss getting into the college-preparatory track in high school. Far too often our

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Math Referee Tia Orian with "Pittsburgh Panther" and "UCLA Bruin" during a MATH MADNESS session at Gatzert.

## CLP Update

### Letter from Director Sally Haber

Bittersweet. That's how I would describe the 2008–2009 school year thus far.

"Sweet" first. During the fall, we trained and placed a record number of volunteers in our eight partner schools. One hundred seventy-eight tutors provided 3,126 hours of academic assistance to youth in the community. Sixty-eight of these fall tutors came from service learning courses, a number three times the norm. Work study also became a permanent feature of the CLP. With the support of Student Financial Services, we hired a team of 15 core tutors to work with children in our partner schools. This addition has enabled us to provide more hours of high-quality tutorial assistance with greater consistency, a bonus above and beyond our regular volunteer program.

Our literature circle program also took off in the fall and continued this winter (see

article, page 4). We've also made math education a priority at Bailey Gatzert (see above) Finally, the Treehouse Tutoring Corps, now in its second year, has grown significantly stronger, providing improved support and academic assistance for youth in foster care (see article, page 5).

So why "bitter?" In January, we received the devastating news that two of our partner schools, TT Minor and Meany Middle School, will be closed at the end of this school year. Since the announcement, many people have asked what will be the impact of closures on the CLP? Our answer: we will adjust and continue to serve youth in our community. It may mean that our volunteers will have to travel a bit further from campus. But there is no shortage of children in need of the special kind of academic assistance that our volunteers provide. Our main concern now is how TT Minor kids and Meany Middle schoolers will adapt to the closures. Yes, kids are resilient, but these kids are losing a precious community. For many of our kids, school is the one place that they feel safe and secure. They depend

on the structure and routines. Building new trusting relationships will take time, and they will need these relationships to maintain academic progress. So, we sincerely hope that when the TT Minor students and Meany Middle schoolers arrive at their new schools in the fall of 2009, they will be given the support they need to handle the transition, a promise made by school district administrators. And it is our pledge, that wherever possible, Children's Literacy Project volunteers will reconnect with TT Minor and Meany students and continue to be a positive presence in their lives.

As we come to the end of this bittersweet year, I would like to once again thank you all for your continued support of our program, especially our volunteers who unfalteringly give their time, energy and love to the youth in our community.



*Math at Gatzert*, continued from Page 1

often our tutors share stories about their 8th grade students who don't know how to multiply, and therefore can't do basic algebra. Sadly, we hear "I hate math!" from too many of our kids.

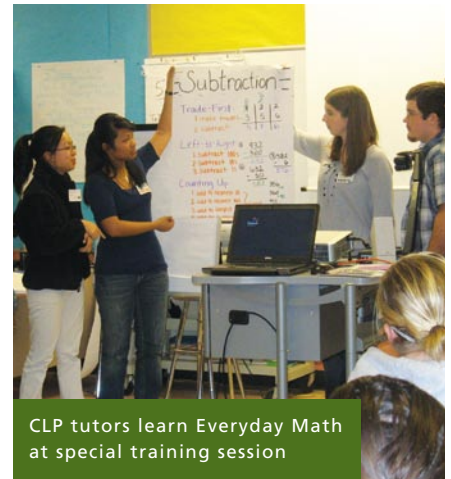
Recognizing the importance of math achievement, the CLP began to intentionally support math at Bailey Gatzert through two initiatives.

First, we launched .....  
**MATH MAD-NESS: A Final Four Math Tournament**, modeled after the Division 1 college basketball tournament, March Madness. The objectives of this contest are to: 1) improve students' mathematical skills through the use of the Everyday Math Curriculum supplemental games and activities; and, 2) provide motivation for students to engage in math during the after school program. To facilitate the contest, we trained six Seattle

*I feel more prepared to help students with their homework because I understand what is going on," commented one of our volunteers.*

University students to staff Everyday Math game stations on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons. Then we assigned Gatzert students to a final four team, and gave them opportunities to earn points for their team by playing math games or practicing their math facts at a designated station. The seven week long contest is set to end in March. To celebrate the Gatzert students' efforts to build their math skills, Seattle University Men's Basketball players Shaun Burl and Austen Powers (also CLP volunteers), their teammates and members from the SU cheer squad, will host an awards ceremony at Gatzert.

The CLP is also supporting math education by ensuring that our tutors know and understand the math curriculum. In January, we held two Everyday Math (EDM) training sessions for all of our 41 volunteers who tutor at Bailey Gatzert. This training, led by Gatzert math coach Peter Donovan, gave volunteers an overview of the Everyday Math Curriculum and provided opportunities to learn and practice the EDM algorithms. We made EDM training a priority because many of our tutors are confused by its methods (partial sum or lattice multipli-



CLP tutors learn Everyday Math at special training session

cation for example), because they tend to be different than the traditional methods learned by most of our volunteers. To our delight, training feedback was very positive. "It was so helpful to learn about the Everyday Math program because I now understand what the students are doing when I help tutor them. I feel more prepared to help students with their homework because I understand what is going on," commented lead CLP tutor Jenna Tozi.

## CEE—*Bigger Than The CLP*

The Coalition for Educational Equality (CEE) is dedicated to bringing awareness to the Seattle University campus community about issues regarding educational inequities and to empower students to engage in action that promotes equal education for all. Made up of students, faculty, and staff, the CEE supports direct service and advocacy beyond required coursework.

Children's Literacy Project staff, and volunteers and students from the Bachelor of Arts in Humanities for Teaching (BAHT) are naturally drawn to the CEE. But the CEE appeals to a much broader constituency than current tutors and future teachers. Anyone who cares about education and issues of social justice may get involved. Students, staff, and faculty from various disciplines—political science, nursing, theology, business, and others—may all participate in CEE-sponsored events and programs. The truth is, people are busy, and many of us don't have the time to make club meetings or to commit to an education-focused ser-



CEE's Leadership team from left: Wifred Padua, Anna Stevens, Mary Hamilton and Sean McCreight.

vice program such as the CLP. Fortunately the CEE is a flexible and open organization.

This inclusive spirit was evident at this year's Achievement Gap Awareness Week events, Feb 17–20. Students from all majors, took part in an interactive exercise that demonstrated academic advantages that many of us have taken for granted. On Wednesday, a crowd filled Wyckoff auditorium to see the documentary called *Katrina's Children*. The audience included local high school students from a non-profit called Shirts Across America, as well as SU stu-

dents and faculty. On Thursday, the CEE hosted a lunch panel and lively discussion, titled "Where's The 'Public' In Seattle Public Schools? Community Activism And School Closures." And on Friday, a group of CEE members and BAHT students traveled to Olympia to meet with education policy makers. This trip was followed by an improv show on campus which raised money for Seattle U alum Nick Acosta's classroom in the Bronx. So for those of you who have a passion for educational justice, be on the lookout for more CEE events this spring.

# Working *with* Children *in* Poverty

By Merica Whitehall

Working with the Children’s Literacy Project means working with children in poverty. A high poverty school is a school where 50% or more of its students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Given the recent announcement of Seattle Public School closures, the community has been reminded of the correlation that some have found between socio-economic status and academic achievement. In fact, five out of eight CLP partner schools serve a high poverty population: Madrona K–8 (69.7%); Thurgood Marshall (81.5%); Meany (64.4%); Bailey Gatzert (91%); and, T. T. Minor (77%). Two of these schools have been slated for closure.

At the CLP we’re asking, what can we do to make a difference? This article looks to Donna Beegle, author of “See Poverty... Be the Difference,” and “Overcoming The Silence of Generational Poverty,” for insightful advice about successfully teaching children who live in poverty in light of their special needs and challenges.

Eli Khamarov wrote, “Poverty is like punishment for a crime you didn’t commit.” Most tutors and teachers live outside of poverty. Sometimes unknowingly, we punish children that we aspire to help. Beegle’s thoughts of her early educational experiences as a child living in generational poverty “evoke memories of violence, humiliation, and fear.” And after intensive research, she has shown that her experience with teachers

and schools was not an isolated incident. So then, how do tutors and teachers living outside of poverty nurture a determination to succeed in school for kids living in poverty’s relentless grip? See the child for the answer.

Children living in poverty are either invisible or seen as “have nots.” However, Asset theory reminds us that all people and communities possess “hidden treasures” waiting to be discovered. The Search Institute’s 40

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**Recognizing strengths within our students is perhaps the single most important way we can be effective tutors.**  
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Developmental Assets offers guidance for tutors and teachers who want to activate their assets to offer supportive and caring environments and relationships to children. Empowering children with opportunities to be heard and to contribute as valued community members is extremely important. Children also need constructive, enriching opportunities for growth within clear boundaries for expectations and behavior.

Also relevant to our work is Resiliency theory, which promotes the ability to bounce

back, develop, and grow stronger even amid the debilitating oppression and isolation of poverty. It takes people willing to embrace, engage, and empower children to help them move beyond life in poverty. Tutors, teachers, and schools committed to this goal must increase the protective factors children experience. Make a child feel special or unique. Recognize and value the strengths of a child’s family and friends. Help a child see the opportunities that they have.

Finally, I want to stress what children in poverty have in abundance—strength. Recognizing strengths within our students is perhaps the single most important way we can be effective tutors. In “The Strengths Perspective in Social Work Practice,” Saleeby highlights five principles to guide those who work with children living in poverty. First, it is possible to identify strengths in everyone if you listen. Second, the challenges children face while in poverty should be recognized, but reinforce the strength survivors develop and direct that strength toward getting ahead. Third, let kids dream big without confining their hopes. Fourth, be an empowering collaborator, encourage, and respect the contributions and insights that children bring to the school community. Finally, don’t assume that children, families, and communities characterized by poverty have nothing to contribute to helping themselves and others.

## Test your Poverty I. Q.

### True or False:

- The United States has the highest childhood poverty rate among the twenty-five richest industrialized nations. **TRUE: 22% of American children live in poverty. (UNICEF 2005)**
- Poor children in France, Germany, and the Nordic countries are six times more likely to escape poverty than American children. **TRUE: (“The Poverty Quagmire” by Timothy M. Smeeding, 2003.)**
- Poverty is foremost a minority issue. **FALSE: In total numbers, the majority (close to 47 percent) of people in poverty in the United States are White, with a total number of almost 17 million in 2004. (Beegle, 2007)**
- Social mobility is a real possibility for all those with a strong work ethic. The American labor market rewards people that work hard. **FALSE: Low-income single mothers in the United States work more hours than do single mothers in any other wealthy nation,**

- and have higher poverty rates than women in other wealthy nations. (“The Poverty Quagmire” by Timothy M. Smeeding, 2003.)**
- One needs only to follow a few simple rules to avoid poverty: Graduate from high school, don’t commit a crime, don’t get married as a teenager and don’t have a baby before marriage. **FALSE: Each socioeconomic class has hidden rules that are part of the culture of each class and dictate behavior. In generational poverty, survival, relationships, and entertainment are the forces that determine decisions. These decisions in turn result in outcomes that make poverty difficult to escape. If an individual is trying to move out of poverty, it is imperative for him or her to have a clear understanding of the hidden rules in order to make a successful transition. The hidden rules must be learned; they do not come by default. (Beegle, 2007)**

## Understanding Purpose: *My Life in the TTC*

By Trevor Lane

It is 7:15 a.m. and my alarm clock is getting louder by the second. My first thought is "No! It's not time to wake up, nothing is important enough to get me out of bed right now!" Before I fall back asleep I see the face of Garrett, Robel, Jason, Lawrence, and David\*, and...I know it's time to wake up, there is something beautiful waiting for me at Washington Middle School. Each morning as I ride my bike to school I say a prayer, "Thank you Father for this honor, protect these children, help me to love them and see them as you do."

While working with children in Ireland the summer before I started tutoring at Treehouse, a friend gave me a piece of paper with a verse written on it. "Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. Isaiah 1:17." This scripture has defined my purpose since that moment.

When I first began tutoring youth in foster care every moment spent with a student was precious. I paid close attention to each student, I wanted to understand each of them, I wanted to see and care for them the



way God did. I devoted myself to encouraging the students to realize their potential to rise from the circumstances they faced and live a life of hope and beauty.

The more time I spent with each student the more they began to trust me and reveal to me the reality of their lives. After spending months praying for these children and working hard to help them overcome their challenges, I became discouraged. I began to believe my efforts were futile and lost hope.

This was the first time I, an upper-middle class white male with a loving family and a happy childhood, saw the world for what it really was. I began to ask these questions: "How could a loving God who created us all allow such hatred and cruelty to happen to his children? How could he just sit back and not lift them out of their pain and frustration?"

As I struggled in my faith and became emotionally exhausted I remembered something

I once read by Oswald Chambers. He wrote, "Unless we can look the darkest, blackest fact full in the face without damaging God's character; we do not yet know Him." This challenged me greatly; to be able to worship God while innocent children are held down by some of our world's greatest evils.

With time I regained confidence in my faith. Then, I began to see something in my students that I had never noticed before. They smile and laugh... a lot. I couldn't handle living the lives they live and yet there they are, waking up everyday, coming to school, and laughing with their friends. They are the most courageous and inspiring people I have met. Now I can see that it is God's love living inside of them that allows this miracle to happen everyday.

I am often commended for waking up early and investing my time as a tutor. At first I believed the compliments and was motivated by words. The truth is, something much more extraordinary is happening everyday. Hundreds of children wake up to the darkest realities and still go to school, eat lunch with their friends, play dodge ball during P.E., and cleverly try to persuade me to play Uno instead of doing a math assignment. As a tutor, I experience the love God has for his children.

*\*not their real names*

## Global Reading Challenge Literature Circles

By Tia Orian

As a senior in college on the brink of graduation, I would like to consider myself mature, intellectual, and far too old for heroes, fairy tales, and children's books.

That was, until Peter Lundstrom, a spirited bunch of fifth graders at Bailey Gatzert Elementary, and the Global Reading Challenge danced their way into my life.

For those who are not familiar with Peter Lundstrom, he is the young leader of a group of brave Norwegian children. They all risk life and limb to smuggle out the country's gold and save their town and those they love from Nazi troops. I should also mention that Peter Lundstrom is the hero and main character in the children's novel, *Snow Treasure*.

The Global Reading Challenge brings Peter and other heroes like him to the doorsteps of schools citywide. Hosted by the Seattle Public

Schools and Seattle Public Library, the Global Reading Challenge encourages 4th and 5th grade students to read ten books throughout the fall and winter. The challenge culminates in a Quiz Bowl, where students are able to showcase their knowledge on the novels when they are asked a number of trivia questions. To support the young readers and the love of literature, the Children's Literacy Project is hosting weekly literature circles at Bailey Gatzert Elementary School.

Students are acting and drawing, reading and talking all about the wonderful worlds of books. And they aren't the only one learning. The CLP literature circle leaders (11 SU students) are not only experiencing the wondrous world of teaching, but also experiencing the delicate and inquisitive insights of a fifth grader. Here are some of the things the 5th grade students have reported:

*"I can't wait to discuss my book. I always want to read ahead to see what comes next. I wish we could talk about what was happening every day."*

*"Sometimes I don't understand what is happening, but when we get to meet in our groups,*

*my friends and my teacher help me.*

*I can understand what is happening and that makes me like the book."*

Perhaps one of the best responses that I have heard was this: "I wish I could be in the book. It would be so cool to be like Peter. It might be cold in Norway, but nothing would stop me from delivering that gold!"

The imagination will not only entice us to read a book, it will keep us coming back forever. As children, we were surrounded by imagination and adventure every day, yet as we grow older, it becomes more and more difficult to escape life's realities. It is my hope, and the hope of all the CLP volunteers, that the children not only enjoy reading, but make it a lifelong habit, regardless of what reality may throw their way. I add, as a last tidbit, that I should have known that no one is too old for a hero.

***The Children's Literacy Project is looking for new volunteers to facilitate literature circles during the spring quarter. If you are interested, please contact the CLP office.***

# Treehouse Tutoring Corps *Update*

By Merica Whitehall

It's just year-two of the Children's Literacy Project's (CLP) participation in the Treehouse partnership and already the Treehouse Tutoring Corps (TTC) has put down roots and begun to bear fruit. In the 2007/08 school year, the TTC provided over 3,500 hours of tutoring to 60 Treehouse youth. To our delight, 11 dedicated tutors returned to the Corps this year to continue in their second year of work with students in foster care. Returning Corps members were able to pick up right where

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they left off because kids trust Corps members. The kids in Treehouse have learned that the TTC cares and is equipped with excellent skills. We were equally fortunate to have hired 12 new tutors who share a passion for social justice, children, and education. Drawing from diverse fields of study, places of origin, languages, and cultures, the TTC has deepened its roots in the Seattle University student body to build a team that reflects the diversity of the community we serve. Currently, 23 TTC members provide an average of 138 hours of service per week to 60 Treehouse youth at Bailey Gatzert Elementary, Meany Middle School, Washington Middle School and Madrona K-8. From the great lessons learned in our flagship year, the TTC is now more determined than ever to nurture meaningful changes for the students we serve.

It is very clear that the Treehouse partnership, which was created by a generous gift from the Schultz Family Foundation, has planted seeds of mutual growth between youth in foster care and SU students. Some tutees have now spent close to two full years developing supportive relationships with their tutors. They have visited the SU campus and been hosted by their tutors. Tutors have taken it upon themselves to go to end-of-year graduations, academic competitions, and art presentations to support "their kids."



The CLP's 2008 College Preview Days focused on creating two memorable days for middle school students in foster care from Meany Middle School, Washington Middle School, Madrona K-8 School, Aki Kurose, and Girl Scouts Fostering Futures program. With the support of faculty and staff, the TTC, the Fostering Scholars, the Coalition for Educational Equality, and over 50 SU volunteers, College Preview Days was a success!

Because of Treehouse Fellows, cultivating educational achievement and positive relationships doesn't stop when the academic year ends. When the school doors close in June, three Treehouse Fellows keep the SU connection alive by supporting kids at the Treehouse Summer Academy. In 2008, two students passed the GED, four students

retrieved high school credits for graduation, and over 40 elementary and middle school students benefited from educational enrichment. "For the first time ever," Treehouse staff observed the highest level of bonding between youth attending the academy and the support staff. Youth stood up for one another; hung out together; and, struck up lively football games with the Treehouse Fellows.

TTC is meeting the challenge of providing youth in foster care with consistent educational support and positive relationships. With each deepening connection the potential to inspire hope and determination to achieve a better life germinates and sprouts in the spirit of a child.



2008–09 Treehouse Tutoring Corps.  
See page 5 for program update.

### Children's Literacy Project

(206) 296-6411  
clp@seattleu.edu  
www.seattleu.edu/coe/clp

#### Staff

Sally Haber, DIRECTOR  
Merica Whitehall, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR  
Jasmine Magaña, PROGRAM ASSISTANT  
Sala Sataraka, PROGRAM ASSISTANT

*The Children's Literacy Project is an outreach program of Seattle University's College of Education. Our goal is to improve the academic skills, self-esteem, and motivation to learn of kindergarten through 8th grade students in our partnering Seattle schools.*

*Printing generously donated by CK Graphics*

## Get Involved! Visit us at [seattleu.edu/coe/clp/](http://seattleu.edu/coe/clp/)

Visit our new website to find out how to become a volunteer, learn about employment opportunities, or donate to the Children's Literacy Project.

**VOLUNTEER:** The Children's Literacy Project is looking for volunteers to provide academic support to elementary and middle school students in our partner schools. Opportunities are available 7:45 am to 4:30 pm.

**EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES:** The Children's Literacy Project offers a number of employment options for undergraduate and MIT students including work study, Treehouse Tutoring Corps, and Treehouse Summer Fellows.

**DONATE:** If you wish to make a donation to the CLP, visit <http://alumniweb.seattleu.edu/NetCommunity/coegiving>, and select "Children's Literacy Project" in the designation pull down menu, or contact our office at 206.296.6411.



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### The Children's Literacy Project

College of Education

PO Box 222000

Seattle, WA 98122-1090

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