

# Washington Middle School

# Tutor Whisperer



## State of the Tutoring Program: Busy Growing!

February 2008

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Like everyone else at Washington Middle School, I am amazed that the academic year is halfway over. Though we have lost a few tutors due to changing college schedules or job demands, we are adding more new people every week as well. The number of students being tutored continues to climb, and more importantly, rapport between students and tutors is growing.

At this writing, the total number of parent volunteers in the tutoring program stands at 18. College students number 19. Currently, 61 middle schoolers are engaged in one-on-one tutoring; in addition, tutors are present in some classrooms several days a week to assist teachers and students.

The newest program to join our effort is "Tutors to Teachers" from Seattle Central Community College. Directed by Lance Watkins, this service learning program places college students who are considering teaching careers. We are fortunate to have Roberta Ettel, a science major, here at Washington every day of the week! She is assisting in

three different science classrooms, and also working with three individual students. Roberta, who once enjoyed working in a veterinarian's office, was pleasantly surprised to discover that the eighth grader who we assigned to her has thought about becoming a veterinarian!



Roberta Ettel, a new familiar face around Washington Middle School

### Happening This Quarter:

- All City Tutor Training  
February 9 at  
Aki Kurose MS
- Seattle Tutoring  
Coalition: How Does  
Poverty Impact  
Learning?  
February 14 at  
Treehouse
- Happy Valentines Day—  
We Love our Tutor  
Volunteers!
- Mid Winter Break  
February 18-22
- Spring Fling Auction  
March 14

### Inside this issue:

State of the Tutoring Program	1
Interview with our Tutor: Aryan	1
What They're Saying	2
Superintendent's Message	2
The Contract: Setting the Bar	2
ALL CITY TUTOR TRAINING COMING SOON!	2



## The Contract: Setting the Bar

A new feature of the tutoring program this fall is a contract between the student and the tutor, usually created a couple of weeks after they have first met. Together they identify challenges the student faces, some strategies that might be useful, and goals that are measurable and attainable.

Challenges range from problems with multiplication tables to lack of organizational or study skills. Strategies have included leaving the TV off when the student arrives home, or showing the parent one's planner every day.

Some goals we have seen: being able to play after-school sports, getting straight A's or testing into the APP.

### Superintendent Supports Tutoring Programs

In December, I attended the Seattle Tutoring Coalition's monthly meeting, along with representatives from many other groups committed to working with youth in and outside our public schools. At that meeting, we had the privilege of meeting Dr. Maria Goodloe-Johnson, who discussed her vision for Seattle Public Schools. In her talk, Dr. Goodloe-Johnson mentioned having "a dream ... of a coalition of community partners aligned with curriculum, providing extended learning time."

When I wrote to thank the Superintendent for speaking to our group, I requested permission to quote her in the *Tutor Whisperer* so our staff, parents and guardians would be aware that she shares and supports the kind of program that Washington Middle School has begun. I also told her how glad I am to have the job of managing the wonderful resources available in our community, and how vital I believe it is to have people in my position at all schools to facilitate and encourage the kind of participation we are witnessing at Washington Middle School.

Susan Huntley, Editor

In the contract, the tutor can put contact information for teachers so they can stay in touch. The student brings home the completed contract for a signature from parent or guardian, and keeps the original as a reminder of what goals have been set.

**WRITING IT DOWN MAKES YOUR GOAL MORE REAL!**

## What They're Saying

"He and I had a great conversation while he was filling in the... *Tutor-Student Contract* this morning. When I asked if the weekly sessions seemed helpful he responded with "Yes, now when I finish my homework I get my book out instead of turning on the TV... I've noticed his reading fluency has improved a lot and now he stops at a new word ... because he knows I'm going to ask him about it." (Parent Volunteer)

"It was an opportunity to remember back to your childhood and remember that you too needed help in certain things and the opportunity to give that help was irreplaceable."

"While listening to a student read out loud, I realized her skills had improved dramatically since last year. It also didn't take her as long to sit down and

start reading...she appeared more motivated, which was very exciting!"

"Before I started to work with my student she had a D in the class. I just found out that now she has an A in the class and is actually enjoying math."

(Above quotes from Seattle University students)

"(Student) had an E when I referred him for tutoring in October. He was uninvolved during class and seemed to feel hopeless about the class. With the help of his tutor, he was able to pull his grade up to a C by the end of the first quarter. He was involved during class, and although he is shy, his group members learned to look to him for help when they didn't understand the classwork. We're already half-way

through the second quarter, and he has maintained that A - in fact, he has the highest grade in the class - a 98%! If only we could get a tutor for every struggling student." (Math Teacher)

**NEXT ALL CITY TUTOR  
TRAINING—FREE!!**

**SATURDAY FEB 9**

**9 AM—1 PM**

**AKI KUROSE MIDDLE  
SCHOOL**

**RSVP 206-622-0998**