

DOUGLAS DIGEST

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Douglas Digest

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The Douglas School PTO publishes the Digest every six weeks during the school year.
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We welcome article ideas and feedback. Please email Lori at lori.fassman@gmail.com.

Sidewalk Art

This beautiful summer I happened to walk outside toward the intermediate playground. Two little girls were drawing with colored chalk. The younger girl saw me coming, jumped up, and ran up to me saying: "My sister will draw your picture for a quarter." "Sure," said I. The senior sister got down on the sidewalk and went to work, glancing up from time to time, while her little sister made suggestions. More red, more hair....

"There," said the artist, standing up, "It's done." On the sidewalk was a clownish figure, wearing a big smile—and a bright red nose surrounded by lots of curly white and brown smoke, as if his head was on fire. A classic third grade image—impressionistic, lively, colorful, upbeat. But not...quite...*me*. Not even close, to be honest.

"What do you think?"

"Well...it's pretty good—I like the smile and the smoke."

The sisters held a whispered conference. The youngest said, "Sorry, but we don't think it really looks much like you, so we've decided not to charge you this time." "But

it looks the way I feel inside," I protested, "and that's worth even more than a quarter. Since I don't have any change, I'll give you a dollar."

I wandered to the boardwalk pleased with my patronage of the arts. Sitting down on a bench some distance away, I watched the little girls. They had snagged an older man. He posed. The girls made art on the blacktop. The same sisterly conference ended the session. With apparently the same result. The man smiled, opened his wallet, took out a bill, and paid. He walked away smiling. The girls laughed and scrubbed the sidewalk again.

I don't want to seem cynical, but it did occur to me that I had been scammed. The sisters must be doing the same portrait over and over. They may have not had a plan the first time they were overpaid for being artistically limited, but when it happened a second and third time they knew they were onto something. So they turned failure into success.

Whatever my doubts, some facts were clear: I had been delighted by their entrepreneurial energy. I was certainly impressed by their artistic enterprise. And I was intrigued by their astute social courage.

C. Whitbeck

Welcome Back, from the PTO

We'd like to welcome all of the new families joining the Douglas community, and welcome back our returning families! We hope everyone is rejuvenated and ready to get back to school life. We are looking forward to an exciting school year!

In August, after months of preparation and perspiration, we were excited to introduce our new PTO website, www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org. We have worked hard to make this resource as up-to-the-minute, easy-to-use, interactive, and information-rich as possible. Our (parent volunteer) webmasters are constantly updating the site; please take a few minutes to tour the site and see all it has to offer, bookmark it, and check in regularly.

The PTO enriches the school experience of the Douglas students by sponsoring dozens of activities and programs, both academic and social. Our success is due to our supportive and generous parents and staff. Thank you to everyone who filled out the Volunteer Survey when updating your emergency contact information in PowerSchool. This method of collecting data helps us fully engage our impressive range of creative and talented parents. We appreciate all the time and effort you devote to making Douglas such a rich educational environment! We will also post volunteer openings as needed on the PTO website and via our weekly email.

At the beginning of the school year, we like to make sure that parents know about and are registered to receive our popular email service, which includes our Sunday weekly emails as well as occasional timely messages. Please visit the "Communications" tab on the PTO website for more information and to find out how to register.

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Notes from the Office—

Policy and Process Quick Guide

Absent/tardy: Please call **Safe Arrival** at 978.266.2566 or use the **online form** at www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org if your child will be absent or late. Leave a message with your child's name, teacher's name, and reason for absence or tardiness.

Tardy: When children are tardy, they need to come to the office to get a **Tardy Slip** *before* going to class. In order to avoid disturbing the classroom teaching, please *do not* take your child to his/her class.

Dismissed early: If your child is being dismissed during the school day, come to the office to sign out your child; *do not* go to the classroom. Let the office know if your child will be gone for the remainder of the day or will return, and please sign your child out in the "Sign Out" log-book outside the office doorway.

Returning to school: If your child returns later in the day, they need to come to the office to obtain a **Dismissed/Returned Slip** *before* going to their classroom. Parents, please *do not* take your child directly to their classroom.

Parking: Do not park in or drive through the bus area during dismissal times. Also, please do not park in the circular area near the Dumpsters. This is for quick pick-up/drop-off *only*.

If your child's class is having a special function first thing in the morning, please park on Agawam or at the Elm St. tennis courts to leave parking spaces for staff.

When you park on Agawam, please park on the side of the road that already has cars. The Acton Police will ticket if cars are parked on both sides of the street.

Dismissal changes: If your child is taking a different bus, use a **bus pass**. (Kindergarten students are not allowed to bus pass.) If your child is not taking a bus, use a **walker pass**. Sign out your children at the Douglas office if they are using a walker pass.

Bus and walker passes are available under "Forms" on the School and PTO websites and at the school office. If you cannot print a form and need to write a note, please be sure to include *all* information requested on the form (teacher's name, student's full name, date, phone numbers, bus numbers, etc.).

CORI forms: If you will come into contact with children at school events, you must have a valid CORI form on file with the district office. Forms submitted before January 1 have now expired; forms filed now will be valid at all schools in the district until June 30, 2015. Please stop by the office to fill out a form and show a photo ID *before* you want to volunteer. (CORIs can take a week or more to process.) Please visit the "Get Involved" tab on the PTO website, and click on "Resources" for more information.

Please call the office (978.266.2560) to ask any questions about these procedures.

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Another great way to stay on top of Douglas developments and updates from Acton schools is to come to the PTO meetings. Our first general meeting is **Tuesday, September 18, 7:30 PM**, in the Douglas cafetorium. Our new gym teacher Ms. Emby has agreed to be the featured speaker. After a brief general meeting, she will talk with parents about her program, philosophy, and some of the fresh PE activities and concepts she'll introduce. A full schedule for this year's PTO meetings is on the PTO website in the "About Us" tab. We hope to see you there!

Please feel free to contact us with any questions or comments.

Martha Papalia, mpapalia@comcast.net
Eileen Matarese, mrsematta@verizon.net
2012-2013 PTO Co-Chairs

Food Service News

Lunch costs \$2.50 (15¢ increase); milk alone costs 50¢. Gluten-free lunches are available with advance notice.

The Acton schools use a pre-payment system for school lunch purchases. All students have their own lunch account and enter the number at the register to purchase food or milk. If you don't know your child's lunch ID, log into PowerSchool, where the lunch ID appears on the My Class Schedule page. (Younger students will receive help in the beginning, but we encourage students to know their lunch ID to expedite the process.)

To prepay money to your child's lunch account, you can send cash or check to the cafeteria manager or log into ParentOnline and use a credit card. Forms and links are available at the Douglas PTO website.

More details about all food service news at <http://ab.mec.edu/departments/food/food.shtml>

You must verify emergency contact info for *each of your children* in PowerSchool, even if everything is the same as last year: <https://absis.ab.mec.edu/public/>. Refer to your student letter for each student's unique username and family password. A link to the **Douglas Volunteer Survey** and your family ID are available when you log into PowerSchool. Complete the Volunteer Survey *once per family, not per child*. If you have questions about this process, contact Lori Fassman at lori.fassman@gmail.com or 978.264.9710.

**Urgent
Reminder**



Tangible Gifts from the PTO to Douglas

Each year, the PTO works hard to raise funds to enrich the academic experience of our children, with the majority of money raised going toward teaching assistants and curriculum-related enhancements, such as Cultural Enrichment and support for performing arts. Beyond this, a small portion of PTO spending goes toward gifts for the school, selected and approved by the Douglas Community.

As the Douglas campus transformed this week from the uncharacteristic quiet of summer to the bustling excitement of a new school year, we hope everyone noticed some of the latest school enhancements, courtesy of the PTO. Next time you're at Douglas, here are some things to look for:

- ◆ Three new maple trees and a new recycled picnic table flanking the primary playground. As these already-mature trees grow, this new shaded area will provide cool respite for the little ones (and their adult supervisors) on hot days. More exciting additions will be made to this playground in the coming weeks—stay tuned.
- ◆ The repainted gymnasium walls, from dark and rundown brown paneling to cheerful pale yellows and greens, featuring silhouettes of children at play by Douglas parent Debbie Calderon. This facelift has given new life to the gym that we hope enhances the fun of PE class and the workspace of our new full-time gym teacher!
- ◆ A new 8'x8' cedar playground shed behind the school near the library modular that will make playground equipment storage safer, more secure, and more accessible—no more lugging equipment to and from the boiler room!

The PTO also kicked off the school year with some less obvious but equally important gifts, including:

- ◆ A stack of hygiene supplies (including tissues and sterile wipes) for each classroom, to help teachers and students fend off germs. The PTO has budgeted enough to hopefully keep classrooms stocked for the year.
- ◆ A modest Staples gift card for each teacher and lead specialist, so they can purchase the materials of their choice for their unique classroom projects.
- ◆ A donation (\$100 per classroom) toward the purchase of educational magazines (such as *Time for Kids*) that our teachers subscribe to for the students each year, reducing the amount parents are asked to pay.

Thank you to the Douglas Community for all of your support of the PTO's fundraising initiatives, and for your input on how we should best invest these funds for the benefit of our kids. We always welcome your feedback!

FROM THE HEALTH OFFICE: Guidelines for Keeping Sick Children Home from School

Each day many parents are faced with a decision: should they keep their sick children at home or send them off to school? Often the way a child looks and acts can make the decision an obvious one. Please consider the following guidelines when deciding:

Fever. The child should remain at home with a fever greater than 100°. The child can return to school after he/she has been fever free for 24 hours (without fever-reducing medicine such as Tylenol or Motrin).

Diarrhea/Vomiting. A child with diarrhea and/or vomiting should stay at home and return to school only after being symptom-free for 12 hours.

Conjunctivitis. Following a diagnosis of conjunctivitis, the child may return to school 24 hours after the first dose of prescribed medication.

Colds. Consider keeping your child at home if he/she is experiencing discomfort from cold symptoms, such as nasal congestion and cough. A continuous green discharge from the nose may be a sign of infection. Consider having the child seen by your health care provider.

A sick child cannot learn effectively and is unable to participate in classes in a meaningful way. Keeping a sick child home prevents the spread of illness in the school community and allows the child opportunity to rest and recover.

For more information about the Acton Public Schools' health policies, including forms (medication permission forms, asthma and EpiPen plans, etc.), click on the "Health" link at the Douglas website.

What's on the Web?

There are so many great new features available via the new PTO website (www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org), it's hard to choose just a few for this section. In each Digest, we'll continue to highlight parts of the site that are well worth visiting. In the meantime, we encourage you to take a tour and see all it has to offer!

Featured item slideshow: Watch the brief, featured slideshow on the home page for the most important or time-sensitive information.

Announcements: Scroll down the home page to see the latest News, Calendar, and Volunteers Needed links, updated frequently.

Safe Arrival: For informing the school of student absences, we now offer an easy online form in addition to the Safe Arrival phone line.

Douglas Calendar: Featuring Douglas events, activities, and no school days for the 2012–2013 school year.

Dates to Remember

The Calendar on the Douglas website is regularly updated with important events, times, deadlines, and other details

September–October

Kindergarten Screening, *no regular kindergarten classes the day of your screening*

- ◆ Wednesday, September 5: Mrs. Smith's class
- ◆ Wednesday, September 19: Dr. Fitzpatrick's class
- ◆ Wednesday, October 10: Ms. Hadfield's class

Monday, September 10

Library classes start;
summer reading logs due by Friday, September 14

Wednesday, September 12

Back to School Night

- ◆ 6–6:45 PM: Grades 3–4
- ◆ 7–7:45 PM: Grades 5–6

Friday, September 14

School Picture Day (rain date Friday, October 21)

Monday, September 17

Rosh Hashanah: NO SCHOOL

Tuesday, September 18

General PTO Meeting, 7:30 PM, Douglas library
See the full schedule of PTO general meetings on the PTO website.

Wednesday, September 19

Back to School Night

- ◆ 6–6:45 PM: Kindergarten
- ◆ 7–7:45 PM: Grades 1–2

Thursday, September 20

Walk for Peace, 9 AM

Thursday, September 20

Acton Public School Committee Meeting, 7 PM
RJ Grey Jr High Library

Wednesday, September 26

Yom Kippur: NO SCHOOL

Monday, October 8

Columbus Day: NO SCHOOL

Snack Cart Donations

Please send midday snacks with your child each day. Before snack cart starts on September 27, don't forget to send in a snack with your child on Thursdays, as well.

See snack cart ideas and details on the PTO website.

September 27 First donation day: Grades 5 and 6

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|------------|-------------------------------------|
| October 4 | Pretzel Day |
| October 11 | Grades 3 and 4 |
| October 18 | Popcorn Day; Grade 1 and Mrs. Smith |

Thanks from the PTO

While Douglas' campus was quiet over the summer, PTO volunteers kept very busy, and as a result, we owe thanks to dozens of people to start the new year! We are excited to introduce the "Many Thanks" section of the new PTO website (www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org), which will be refreshed often, and provides us the opportunity (and space!) to properly thank everyone who contributes to PTO activities and events. You will find the Many Thanks tab if you click on the "Get Involved" tab. Please check in often.

Here are the developments and events that are currently featured in Many Thanks, and the names of the people who ran those events. Douglas is lucky to have such an active and involved community!

- ◆ **Canobie Lake outing**, featuring discounted tickets for Douglas Families—**Rachel Meehan**
- ◆ **Lowell Spinners outing**, a fun night out at the game for Douglas Families—**Deanne O'Sullivan, Barbara Green, and Paula Seaburg**
- ◆ **Gym painting and mural**, bringing new life and brightness to the gym—**Debbie Calderon and Eileen Matarese**
- ◆ **PTO website development**, giving parents instant access to Douglas information—**Sharon Metzger, Lori Fassman, Deanne O'Sullivan, and Sheri Palazzo**
- ◆ **Volunteer survey**, our annual gathering of input from Douglas parents on volunteer opportunities—**Lori Fassman**
- ◆ **Douglas campus cleanup**, sprucing up the grounds before the first day of school—**Hayley Reynolds**
- ◆ **Newcomer Orientation**, a fun event welcoming new families to Douglas—**Kristine Kidder**
- ◆ **Faculty/Staff Back-to-School Luncheon**, a lovely luncheon to welcome the teachers and staff back to work on the day before school starts—**Jen Aufiero**
- ◆ **Ordering and installing playground shed**, providing safe and secure storage for playground equipment—**Stacey Smith**
- ◆ **Coordinating purchase and installation of new playground shaded area**, a picnic table, and 3 mature trees—**Eileen Matarese**

Martha Papalia and Eileen Matarese

Special Thanks

A sincere thank you to Todd Brown of Lincoln Tree (a long time Douglas parent) for installing three beautiful red maple trees by the primary playground. The new shade area is taking shape beautifully and will hopefully be a great legacy for our school!



Douglas Elementary School