

DOUGLAS DIGEST

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PTO: <http://www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org>

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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.

honestly answer, "Perfect." And it was. As each of our days are. We start each day anew and life happens perfectly—exactly how it does. It is how we respond to the good, the bad, or the ugliness of life that determines the perfection level of each day.

So what made my summer perfect? My children grew this summer—both physically and emotionally. I exercised—a lot! I ended each day saying goodnight to the ones I love the most (sometimes by FaceTime). Not everything was happy or went the way that I had planned. But, I was able to collect my share of joy and paste it in my mental scrapbook so I don't forget a fundamental truth of this life: That no matter the odds against it, sometimes things work out just as they should. Wonderfully so. And sometimes I was there when they did and will be when it happens again... Here's looking forward to a perfect year!



Staffing Changes

A special thank you to **Mrs. Jayne Carter**, who retired at the end of last year. She made a difference in the lives of innumerable children. While she will no longer be in her own classroom, we are very pleased that she will be continuing as a classroom assistant in second grade. **Mrs.**

Beth Warner, our primary art teacher, will be on a leave of absence this year and **Miss Allison Nutting** will take her place. **Mrs. Becky Hadfield**, our half-day kindergarten teacher is on maternity leave with her new son for half of the year, and her long term sub will be her sister, **Miss Melissa Colcord**. **Mrs. Nancy Ferraro**, our school psychologist, is moving to Conant and Gates, and **Dr. Evelyn Harriott** will be at Douglas two days a week. Evelyn has recently moved to Massachusetts from New Hampshire and brings wonderful experience to our pupil services team. Of course we cannot forget the addition of a new position to Douglas—**Mrs. Jenna Larrenaga** joins us as Assistant Principal. Jenna was a fourth grade teacher in Bedford and has already been hard at work at Douglas, settling into her cozy new office in the main office. See page 3 for a message from Mrs. Larrenaga.

Welcome to all of our new professional staff and the many new assistants who are joining our teaching community. We look forward to having a wonderful year!

Perfection

Welcome back to school! Summer is such a great time to recharge and reflect. It is often seen as a time to collect memories. If you're like me, you organized some wonderful experiences for your family, snapped a load of photos, and may have even thought to yourself, "I will remember this moment for a long time."

When people ask me how my summer was, I can

Welcome Back from the PTO

Whether you are new to Douglas or returning for a final year here at 21 Elm—we welcome you all back to school! Though summer seemed short, we hope you had an opportunity for rest, relaxation, and some family fun. Now it's time to jump back into the swing of things. So let's go!

Our PTO enhances the school experiences of Douglas students by sponsoring dozens of activities and programs, both academic and social. Our success is directly linked to the generosity of parents and the continued support of our school's staff. Thank you to everyone who filled out the Volunteer Survey when you updated your emergency contact information in PowerSchool. (If you haven't filled it out, it's not too late! Please do so before **September 16.**) We use this data to find ways to fully engage our impressive collection of creative and talented parents. Based on your answers, you may hear from one of our Committee Chairs soon. We will also post volunteer openings as needed on the PTO website (www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org) and via our weekly email. We appreciate all the time and effort you devote to making Douglas such a rich environment for our children to learn and grow!

To best serve you, we invite you to register for our popular email service, which includes Sunday weekly emails as well as occasional timely messages. To find out more information and to register, please visit the "Communications" tab on the PTO website (www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org) or email technology.secretary@DouglasSchoolPTO.org.

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 24, 7:30 PM**, in the Douglas cafeteria. A full schedule for this year's PTO meetings is on the PTO website under the "About Us" tab. All are welcome!

As always, please feel free to contact us with any questions or comments.

Eileen Matarese, mrsematta@verizon.net

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2013-2014 PTO Co-Chairs

Notes from the Office—

Policy and Process Quick Guide

Absent/tardy: Please use the **online form** at www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org or call **Safe Arrival** at **978.266.2566** 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. (Please use the online form or call the Safe Arrival line—telling your child's teacher is not sufficient.)

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" logbook 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. (If your child is out of school, he or she is considered absent while gone. If we don't know your child has returned to school, your child will be listed as out from the time they left.)

Parking: Do not park in or drive through the bus area during arrival or 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 one side only. 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 use a 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 at the school office and under "Forms" on the School and PTO websites. 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 number, etc.).

CORI forms: If you will come into contact with children at school or school events, you must have a valid CORI form on file with the district office. We are in the second year of our three-year cycle. If you did not fill out a CORI in 2012 or 2013, please stop by the office to fill out a form and show a photo ID *before* you want to volunteer. (You must turn in your form in person. 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.

PTO and School Email Announcements

The PTO and school communicate through the following methods:

- Paper: backpack flyers and the Douglas Digest
- Electronic: Douglas website (douglas.ab.mec.edu), PTO website (www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org), PTO weekly email, and the Blackboard Connect system

Please make sure you are receiving each kind of email, so that you don't miss important and useful information.

WEEKLY EMAIL: The PTO Technology Secretary Team typically sends this on Sundays and includes important information about what is happening that week at school. (These email messages are from "Douglas PTO Technology Secretary" via Constant Contact.) New items appear at the top of the email, with reminders following. When possible, we include a link to the PTO website for more details. This weekly email message is the PTO's primary communication channel.

Are you getting it? Please check your Spam/Bulk folder and computer settings to make sure the weekly emails aren't being blocked for delivery to your inbox, as occasionally happens.

You have to opt *into* receiving emails from the PTO; we do not automatically use email addresses from the PowerSchool Emergency Contact database or any other source. Thus, it is important for Douglas families to alert the Technology Secretary:

- To join the PTO email list if you are new to Douglas.
- To change an email address.

Contact the Technology Secretary Team at technology.secretary@douglasschoolpto.org.

Please let them know if you need an old email address removed from the list, and provide your new address and your children's grades so that you may receive grade-specific announcements. If at any time you would prefer not to receive the weekly emails, you may use the "opt out" choice at the bottom of the messages.

BLACKBOARD CONNECT (not from PTO): Dr. Whitbeck sends email occasionally with news of special interest. (These email messages are from "DOUGLAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL" via Blackboard Connect.) These messages are related to the school or community.

We hope that these communications help our parents to feel connected with and informed about the Douglas Community. If you have any questions or comments, please contact us.

*Eileen Matarese and Karen Jarsky, PTO Co-Chairs
Sharon Metzger and Lori Fassman,
PTO Technology Secretary Team,
technology.secretary@douglasschoolpto.org*



Douglas Elementary School



Greetings from Assistant Principal Jenna Larrenaga

The turn of the seasons has begun. Recently, I was in New Hampshire below Mt. Washington for a family celebration. The trees had already started to change color, the air was cool in the evening, and the sun had the nerve to go down before eight o'clock. This has always been a reflective time of year for me. I consider the challenges and successes of the year before and contemplate the year ahead.

For the past fifteen autumns, give or take a few maternity leaves, I have returned to school each fall. I spend the last two weeks of summer preparing for a successful academic year with my students. The tail end of this summer is no different, except that I am delighted to begin a new adventure as the Assistant Principal of the Douglas School. (And on a personal note, I am excited that the youngest of my three children will finally be on a school bus with his brothers, too!)

Since May, I have been busy learning as much as possible about the school. I am impressed with the strong sense of community that exists at Douglas. I know I have much to look forward to this coming year, as there are so many unique events that make Douglas special. The families and faculty are completely invested in the education of the children and are involved in the school at so many levels. This is wonderful and I am thrilled to be part of it.

Please know that I am available and happy to help in any way. I look forward to meeting you all, especially the children.

Jenna Larrenaga, Assistant Principal



What can I do on the PTO website?

Want to know what's happening this week?

Check the front page of the PTO website (www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org). Upcoming events are in the Calendar column; highlights are featured in the slideshow. If you want longer-term information, see the "Douglas Calendar" link on the right.

Interested in helping out at Douglas? Check the "Get Involved" tab for a comprehensive, sortable list of short- and long-term opportunities.

Need to let the office know your child will be out of school? Click the "Safe Arrival" link for a handy online form that you can use instead of the Safe Arrival phone line. You can use the online form until 9:25 AM on the day of absence; after 9:25 AM, please call the school office to notify them of an absence that day. Starting at noon, you can use the form to notify the school of future absences.

Want to see what your friends have been up to? Check the "Many Thanks" page for our most recent notes of gratitude for the treasured PTO volunteers. Or read through the list of Committee Chairs on the "About Us" tab to see who to get in touch with about which activities.

Wondering what the PTO does? Click "About Us" to read about the PTO officers and board members, to learn how PTO funds are spent, and to read about what happens at a typical PTO meeting.

Need a Douglas T-shirt? Going out to dinner? Buying groceries? Click on the "Shopping" link to order Spiritwear and also Scrip gift cards. A percentage of each purchase gets donated back to the PTO.

Food Service News

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.

Lunch costs \$2.75 (25¢ increase); milk alone costs 50¢.

Gluten-free lunches are available with advance notice.

Menus are sent home monthly in backpacks, and are available online.

Detailed food service news at <http://ab.mec.edu/departments/food/food.shtml>

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 & Nursing" link at the Douglas website, Families menu.

Dates to Remember

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

Thursday, September 5

Rosh Hashanah: NO SCHOOL

Friday, September 6

Summer Reading Logs due

Monday, September 9

Library classes start

September

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

- Wednesday, September 11: Mrs. Smith's class
- Wednesday, September 18: Dr. Fitzpatrick's class
- Wednesday, September 25: Miss Colcord's class

Tuesday, September 10

Open House/Back to School Night

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

Monday, September 16

Deadline to submit info and order a Directory

Tuesday, September 17

Open House/Back to School Night

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

Thursday, September 19

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

Tuesday, September 24

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

Thursday, September 26

Walk for Peace, 10 AM (rain date Thursday, October 3)

Friday, September 27

School Picture Day (rain date Friday, October 18)

October 7-10

Nature's Classroom (Grade 6)

Monday, October 14

Columbus Day: NO SCHOOL

Friday, October 25

Ice Cream Social

Snack Cart Donations

Please send midday snacks with your child each day. Before snack cart starts on September 26, 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 26 First donation day: Grades 5 and 6

October 3 Pretzel Day

October 10 Grades 3 and 4

October 17 Popcorn Day; Grade 1 and Mrs. Smith

Thanks from the PTO

While Douglas' campus seemed quiet over the summer, PTO volunteers kept busy, and as a result, we owe thanks to dozens of people to start the new school year! Please check out the "Many Thanks" pages of the PTO website (www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org). We refresh this page often, as it provides us the opportunity (and space!) to properly thank everyone who contributes to PTO activities and events. Find the "Many Thanks" tab under the "Get Involved" tab or from the home page under "Volunteers Needed." 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 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—**Mary Lavene** and **Barbara Green**
- **PTO website updates** in time for back-to-school, giving parents instant access to Douglas information—**Sharon Metzger** and **Lori Fassman**
- **Volunteer survey**, our annual gathering of input from Douglas parents on volunteer opportunities—**Lori Fassman** and **Christine Fox**
- **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 warm tradition of welcoming the Douglas staff back to work with a luncheon the day before school opens—**Jen Aufiero**
- Ordering and sorting the **school supplies**, so kids have markers, crayons, glue, and scissors—**Tamara** and **Sal Ricciardone**
- Coordinating **Scrip gift card purchases**—so the teachers can get some extra supplies from Staples for their classrooms—**Sheryl Fox**

Eileen Matarese and Karen Jarsky

Special Thanks

We'd especially like to thank **Aaron Foley**, **Stylianos Kounalakis**, and **Jacob Morin** for their long, late hours this summer. They built bathrooms and offices, purged ancient gym equipment, scotch-guarded the lobby seating, and assembled 175 desks and chairs. Douglas looks better than ever!

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 is available when you log into PowerSchool, along with the 5-digit family ID you need to enter into the survey. Complete the Volunteer Survey *once per family, not per child*. If you have questions about this process, contact Christine Fox, cmfox1@gmail.com, 978.263.5242.

**Urgent
Reminder**