

# DOUGLAS DIGEST

office: 978.266.2560  
principal: Dr. Christopher Whitbeck  
school: <http://douglas.ab.mec.edu>  
PTO: <http://www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org>

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## Douglas Digest

Editors:  
Sharon Metzger  
Lori Fassman  
Distributors:  
Jill Maxwell  
Michele Walsh

The Douglas School PTO publishes the Digest every six weeks during the school year.  
**Next issue: May 6.**

We welcome article ideas and feedback. Please email Lori at [lori@fassman.com](mailto:lori@fassman.com).

## From the PTO

Spring is finally in the air, after a dramatic season of storms and cancellations. Despite the weather, we packed a lot of PTO activity into the past few weeks, narrowly avoiding weather interruptions.

Our most recent events included our ever-popular **Read Aloud Day** on March 1, to help kick off the **March Reading Challenge**; the **Spring Social and Auction** on March 9, once again a resounding success;

our compelling **March Speaker Series** on March 12, which featured a panel of distinguished speakers and drew a large parent audience; and our high-energy **Spirit Day** and classroom competition on March 14.

On April 6, we will hold the annual **Festival of Cultures** at the Junior High, in collaboration with Conant School. This family event celebrates the diversity within our schools and is packed with international food and entertainment. Please see our spotlight feature on the next page for more insight.

The annual **talent shows**, organized by music teacher Peter Broggi and Douglas parent Mira Greenland, will take place on April 25 for grades 4–6, and on May 2 for grades K–3. As always, they will feature an entertaining display of Douglas students' talents.

There is more to come. On May 23, our Cultural Enrichment team will host an all-school performance called "Poetry in Motion," during which talented performer David Zucker will make poetry come alive for the students.

Behind the scenes, the PTO is planning our budget for the 2013–2014 school year. We are reviewing how PTO funds were raised and spent this year, and adjusting for next year. The process includes making recommendations for new activities and expenditures, such as the PTO gift to the school, and for eliminating events and spending that no longer make sense. It also includes speaking with every board member and activity chairperson to see if they want to continue running their events next year, and filling open positions.

We encourage the community to get involved—your opinions count. At our next **PTO General Meeting on April 30**, we will present the budget for next year, and our nominees for next year's Board of Directors. If you are interested in getting involved with the PTO, now is a great time to contact us; we just may have a role that matches your skills and interests. Hope to see you at the meeting!

Martha Papalia and Eileen Matarese

## A Very Happy Un-Birthday to You!

This is blasphemy in elementary school but, I propose that there is nothing special about a birthday! This came to me after talking with a staff member who simply doesn't like to be the center of attention. As I thought about it, I realized, you get a birthday again and again every year you continue to exist—for free. All you have to do is to *be*.

If we were a little more rational about birthdays, we would celebrate the mother of the person who did nine months hard work to bring a child into being. At least some flowers and a thank-you card. Even fathers wouldn't mind a small gesture of gratitude at the same time.

In the past, on my birthday, I have written to thank important figures in my life who were there for me in troubled times and helped me get my wheels back on the track of my ongoing life. I'm grateful, and I wanted them to know it.

My attitude toward my own birthday is ambivalence. I have friends, on the other hand, who are so opposed to having any attention on their birthdays that it's almost as if they are in denial about being born at all. Then, there are those whose birthday is well known and they make it clear that presents are expected and the presents darn well better be good ones.

My favorite attitude toward birthdays comes from the magic mind of Lewis Carroll, as described in his book, *Through the Looking Glass*. It's the idea of an *un-birthday*. The celebration of someone when it's not their birthday.

At an *un-birthday*, no rules or expectations apply.

As long as you are affirming somebody, anything goes.

Serious or comic, short or long, with presents or not.

An *un-birthday* can be a complete surprise.

In fact, it's best that way. You can fully respect anyone's issues, and at the same time simply say you like them or love them or care about them and want to celebrate that.

Birthdays do carry a lot of problematic baggage.

I'll give you that.

But *un-birthdays*, a day to celebrate someone just to make them feel good, have great promise and possibility.

I offer you that.



## Dates to Remember

### Thursday, March 28

APS/AB School Committee meeting,  
RJ Grey Library, 7 PM

### Friday, March 29

Good Friday, No School

### Sunday, March 31

Last day to save Donelan's receipts

### Monday, April 1

Town Meeting begins

### Wednesday, April 3

PIP Market Math, Grade 3, Roche Bros,  
4:30–7:30 PM  
([www.actonpip.org](http://www.actonpip.org))

### Saturday, April 6

Festival of Cultures, RJ Grey, 5:30 PM

### Friday, April 12

Scrip orders due

### April 15–19

School vacation

### April 22–24

Nature's Classroom, Grade 6

### Thursday, April 25

Talent Show, Grades 4–6, 9 AM

### Tuesday, April 30

PTO General Meeting, Cafetorium, 7:30 PM

### Thursday, May 2

Talent Show, Grades K–3, 9 AM

## Snack Cart Donations

See snack details on the PTO website.

March 28	Grades 4 and 5
April 4	Pretzel Day
April 11	Grades 2 and 3
April 18	No school
April 25	Popcorn Day; Grade 1
May 2	Pretzel Day

## Save These Dates

### Week of May 6

MCAS testing (Grades 3–6)

### Tuesday, June 4

PTO General Meeting, Cafetorium, 7:30 PM

## Thanks from the PTO

It has been a busy season for the Douglas community, with many people to thank for their time and generosity. As always, this brief article only highlights leaders for each activity. Please go to the "Many Thanks" section of the PTO web site to learn about everyone who contributed to each success.

The Spring Social and Auction, Douglas' largest annual fundraiser, was a huge success! Thanks to **Heather Lammey**,



## Festival of Cultures

Please join us as we celebrate 15 years of culture, diversity, and community. When we say that Douglas is All Around the World, we mean it! You can travel to faraway places in different countries in only one night. The Festival of Cultures has grown from a small Cultural Evening back in 1988 to a magnificent family night where people from many countries join to celebrate our colorful, diverse, and beautiful world. Together, Douglas and Conant schools sponsor this one-of-a-kind event to bring you a fantastic traveling experience.

Enjoy learning from our ambassadors about their countries, people, culture, traditions, arts, and fun and interesting facts. Our tables display authentic items such as artwork, books, music, photographs, toys, and games. Every country provides our visitors a unique activity: in past years we've had henna drawing, calligraphy lessons, learning how to wear a sari, potato stamping, tortilla making, flag coloring, etc. This year, you can visit Argentina, Belgium, China, England, India, Japan, Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, Portugal, and Russia!

Try the most delicious, authentic, and flavorful food at the international potluck in the cafeteria. We ask each family attending the event to bring a dish that feeds 6–8 people. Local restaurants and grocery stores donate meals and drinks. This is a great opportunity to try new foods! In past years we've had American, Chinese, East African, Indian, Irish, Italian, Mexican, Peruvian, and Puerto Rican food, and many other cuisines!

To close the evening we invite you to attend a first class performance. A traditional Chinese Lion Dance leads all guests to the auditorium for this magnificent show. The performances spotlight music, songs, and dances from around the world. This year our program is full of surprises from Russia, West Africa, Japan, Ireland, China, India, Philippines, and sing-alongs. The quality of performances is amazing—all done by Douglas and Conant students and their friends with the participation of music teachers and principals from both schools!

This year the Festival of Cultures will be held April 6, 5–8:30pm, at RJ Grey Junior High. As this event has become more popular every year for its cultural flair and wonderful food, we need a *lot* of volunteers to help set up, decorate, serve food, clean up, etc. Please consider helping so we can all enjoy this great evening! Sign up online at VolunteerSpot: <http://tinyurl.com/festivalofcultures2013>

If you are interested in being an ambassador, it's not too late! Please contact Maria at [rivero\\_albarra@yahoo.com](mailto:rivero_albarra@yahoo.com).

**Kate Bones**, and their team, who worked tirelessly to create an event that was thoroughly enjoyed by the 190 attendees. With guidance from last year's chairs **Megan Pesce** and **Jen Patenaude**, Kate and Heather surpassed fundraising goals and introduced procedural improvements that will benefit future auctions. Thanks to the **Acton Music Project** for providing fantastic entertainment as usual!

On March 1, Read Aloud Day featured a long list of distinguished Acton citizens, including our superintendent, police officers, librarians, and others, who came in to read to the students. Thank you to **Jennifer Standley** for organizing this popular event. Read Aloud Day helped kick off the March Reading Challenge; thank you to Douglas librarians **Sasha DeMello** and **Sue Stewart** for orchestrating this year's "Read to the Moon" challenge, reinforcing to Douglas kids that reading is fun.

The March Speaker Series was an all-around success, with more than 70 Douglas and Gates parents attending.

Thank you to PTO co-chair **Eileen Matarese** for organizing the event, and to our distinguished speakers, including superintendent **Dr. Mills** with a district update; panelists **Sarah Reiff-Hekking** (psychologist), **Alix Callen** (ABRHS principal), and **Todd Chicks** (ABRHS counseling chair); and panel moderators **Dr. Whitbeck** and Gates Principal **Lynne Newman**.

Since the last Digest, the PTO has replenished many important supplies. Thank you to **Stacey Smith**, Playground Committee chair, for stocking Douglas' playground equipment—jump ropes, balls, sidewalk chalk, and more. These new toys, replaced a couple times per year, make recess even more enjoyable for our kids. Also in the past month, the PTO replenished the school's stock of hygiene supplies, helping classrooms have all the tissues, wipes, and antibacterial lotion they need during cold and flu season.

*Martha Papalia and Eileen Matarese*