

DOUGLAS DIGEST

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Douglas Digest

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The Douglas School PTO publishes the Digest seven times each school year.
Next issue: May 4.

We welcome ideas and feedback. Please email Sharon at sharon.metzger@gmail.com.

From the PTO

This winter has been one for the record books, but nothing stops Douglas families from our usual course of bustling activities! On January 29, Karim Nagi treated Douglas students to an incredible performance of Arabic music, dance, and culture; on February 27, our ever-popular Read-Aloud Day kicked off the March Reading Challenge. And there are even more exciting events on the horizon.

In less than two short weeks, on the evening of March 21, we will head **Back to the 80s** at the annual

Spring Social & Fundraiser. Socialize with other Douglas families, dance to the musical stylings of the Acton Music Project, and maybe even enjoy a little bidding fun, all while you support our classroom assistants! See page 2 for more information.

Our annual **talent shows** begin this month: March 26 (grades 5–6), April 30 (grades 3–4), and May 28 (grades K–2). Bring your cameras and your smiles. You won't believe the variety of entertainment within the walls of our school.

Interested in mouth-watering delicacies? Fascinating conversations about different cultures? Impressive performances reflecting customs from around the world? If you said yes to any of these questions, the **Festival of Cultures** is for you! Douglas and Conant will co-host this inspiring evening event on April 11 at the Junior High. Please see our Spotlight feature on the next page for details.

Tomorrow evening, on March 10 at 7pm, we will hold our next **General PTO Meeting** in the Douglas cafeteria. We are pleased to welcome **Glenn Brand**, superintendent of the Acton Boxborough Regional School District. He will join us in a conversation about the district in general and the proposed school budget for next year. This is a great opportunity to learn more about what's going on in the schools and to be informed before April's Town Meeting. We hope you'll join us!

Finally, this is an exciting time of planning as the PTO makes recommendations for new activities and expenditures and revisits existing priorities. At our General PTO Meeting on April 28, we will present the budget for next year, as well as our nominees for next year's PTO Board of Directors. Please come and share your thoughts—your opinion matters! And if you are interested in getting more involved with the PTO, contact us now; we just may have a role for next year that matches your skills and interests. Hope to see you at the meeting!

Karen Jarsky & Abigail Vargus
PTO Cochairs

Scrip Gift Cards

You should receive a Scrip flyer soon, if you haven't already. For easy ordering visit www.shopwithscrip.com or send in the order form to school along with payment. (You can find a larger list of retailers on the website.) All orders are due no later than Wednesday, March 11. Cards will be delivered via backpack the week of March 16. Thank you for all those that participate and have made our scrip drives a success!

Outside the Lines

When I was teaching 7th and 8th grade science, a kindergarten colleague told me about a girl who would not color inside the lines. A picture of children and butterflies and dogs was available one day. The little girl's colors obeyed no lines or borders. One color blended into another, children melted into dogs, and dogs into butterflies. The sky was shades of green fading into turquoise fields. The girl smiled sweetly when asked why she didn't follow the directions. The parents and teachers chose not to interfere with the little girl's style of art. They decided to wait and see, and so it went—all through elementary school. She continued to color widely and smile sweetly. No one can say how she privately thought about herself and the world. Her inner solitude was a safe refuge from the tyranny of lines.

I met this girl when she entered her senior year. I hadn't thought much about her coloring in the years between. She came to my room one morning with a question. She said that she had always loved science; she wanted to know more about the work and life of some famous scientists and how they came about their discoveries. She did not want to write any papers or labs because she thought most of what was written about science was meaningless. She wanted to have conversations and she wanted me to give her independent course credit based on the quality of her thinking as expressed in our conversations. She realized she was asking for special consideration, but she was willing to do the work, and I could be the judge of the quality and merit of what she did. I agreed. I was willing to give her proposal a try... and she proved brilliant. I learned a great deal from her and I hope, she from me. She left after that semester and I never saw her again.

I always imagined that she took responsibility for her own learning all her life. A formal college degree? I doubted it. But was she well educated? No question. I tell you this story because I recently read that this former student won eight documentary film prizes. She is now filming *Doctors Without Borders* in Sierra Leone in the fight against Ebola. I guess she still uses all the colors in the box. And some of her colors are not in the box. They are in her mind—in her imagination. She's still coloring outside the lines. Her sky, like her life, is still shades of green. I find great happiness in having been a part of her world.

C. Whitbeck

Dates to Remember

Tuesday, March 10

PTO General Meeting, 7:00pm

Thursday, March 19

School Committee Meeting, RJ Grey Jr. High School Library

Saturday, March 21

Douglas Spring Social & Fundraiser, 6:00pm

March 23, 24, and 25

MCAS testing, Grades 3, 5, 6

March 23, 24, 25, and 27

MCAS testing, Grade 4

Thursday, March 26

School Committee, Jr. High Library
Spirit Day
Grade 5–6 Talent Show, 1:30pm

Wednesday, April 1

P.E. Night, 6pm

Thursday, April 2

Report cards available after 3pm

Friday, April 3

No School (Good Friday)

Saturday, April 11

Festival of Cultures, 5–8:30pm

April 20–24

No School (Spring Break)

Tuesday, April 28

PTO General Meeting, 7:30pm

Thursday, April 30

Grade 3–4 Talent Show, 1:30pm

Snack Cart Donations

See snack details on the PTO website.

March 12 Grades 2 & 3

March 19 Grades K & 1 (Popcorn day)

March 26 Grades 5 & 6

April 2 Grades 3 & 4

April 9 Grades 1 & 2

April 16 Grades K & 6 (Popcorn day)

April 23 No School

April 30 Grades 4 & 5

Save These Dates

May 4–6: MCAS, Grades 3, 4, 6

May 4–6, 11–12: MCAS, Grade 5

Thursday, May 28: Grade K–2 Talent Show, 8:50am

Tuesday, June 2: Douglas Day!

Saturday, June 27: Lowell Spinners game, 5pm



Spotlight: Festival of Cultures

Come celebrate our cultural diversity at the annual Festival of Cultures. Douglas and Conant cosponsor this one-of-a-kind event to bring you a fantastic international experience. You'll travel to different countries as you view artwork, books, music, photographs, toys, games, and hands-on activities and chat with our ambassadors. You will taste flavorful food at the international potluck (each family brings a dish to feed 6–8 people). This is a great opportunity to try something new! The evening ends with performances of traditional music, songs, and dances reflecting customs from around the world—all done by students with the participation of music teachers and principals.

The Festival of Cultures will be held on **Saturday, April 11, 5–8:30pm**, at RJ Grey Junior High. This event has become more popular every year; we need a lot of volunteers! If you are interested in being an ambassador, performer, or volunteer, please contact Maria Albarran at mayiyoalbarran@gmail.com.



Douglas Classroom Assistants: The Secret Ingredient

"Absolutely essential. Crucial." That's how third-grade teacher Mrs. Someone describes the teaching assistants at Douglas. She's not alone. "Indescribably irreplaceable," are first-grade teacher Mrs. Browne's words.

Kindergartners have the luxury of a full-time assistant across the district. After that, Douglas is second to only Merriam in the number of assistant hours: 12 hours a week in every classroom. Plus, "the vast majority of assistant time is spent with kids, not clerically," Dr. Whitbeck explains. This means more small group time and more individual attention for every student—from K to 6.

Every assistant cares about Douglas students and puts that into action. "She is working every minute from the second she gets here," Mrs. Someone says of her assistant, Ms. Patenaude. "They are all brilliant, caring women," Dr. Whitbeck adds.

It's no wonder, then, that you hear so much about our Spring Social & Fundraiser right now. It's our number-one source for funds to keep these valuable professionals in our children's classrooms. But don't take our word for it. Ask the kids. Our inside source, AJ Korka, says, "I love Mrs. Patenaude. And Mrs. Heinlein. Oh, and Mrs. Pharo...! I wish I could have them all at once."

Douglas Spring Social & Fundraiser—Coming Soon!

The Spring Social & Fundraiser is not only the biggest Douglas fundraiser of the year; it's also the biggest social event of the year! Here are some highlights and important dates:

- The big event, where we head **Back to the 80s!** on **Saturday, March 21, 6–10:30pm**. Buy tickets online at www.DouglasSchoolAuction.com, or via the paper RSVP that was sent home in your child's backpack. The deadline for purchasing tickets is **this Friday, March 13**. (\$35/guest)
- Register your children for **Movie Night**, the onsite kids' social event of the year, and save the trouble of finding a sitter. Send an email to movienight@DouglasSchoolPTO.org or send in the paper form. (\$20/child)
- Sell those **raffle tickets!** Ticket stubs and money are due to the Douglas office by **Friday morning, March 20** (by **Wednesday, March 18** to be entered into the student prize drawing). Attendance at event not required to win.
- **Volunteer** for the day of the event, for set up, check in, raffle ticket sales, balloon raffle sales, or clean-up. Send an email to auction@douglaschoolpto.org.

Gracias! Danke schoen! ありがとう! Merci! תודה Grazie! Thank you!

To all of our volunteers who have made so many things possible—from kindergarten tours and nature walks to Read Aloud Day, the March Reading Challenge, and the Spring Social & Fundraiser—we say thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

Keep Douglas Awesome

Reading this, do you think about all the amazing volunteers who helped make things happen at Douglas? Why not become one of them? The PTO is starting to look for volunteers for next year's positions. Large, small, and everything in between: If you'd like to help keep Douglas special, send a note to cochairs@douglaschoolpto.org.