



# Douglas Digest

News of the C.T. Douglas School

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Principal: Dr. Christopher Whitbeck

## April 2010

### Douglas Digest

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## Um...

In the Inuit language, Inuktitut, there is no word similar to the English “um.” Urban legend has it that there are many more words for snow in Inuktitut than English. As it turns out, the English language has a similar number of words to describe snow. We might say that a particular snow was a blizzard, a flurry, pack snow, slush, sleet, or powder. The list goes on and on. We really do have just as many words for snow in our vocabulary as the Inuit, a culture who deals with much more snow than even the average New Englander.

Similarly, we have many words that serve the same purpose as “um”: “ah,” “hmmm,” “like,” and “uh.” These are all placeholders. In studies of language, there is little evidence to suggest that anyone intentionally produces “ums.” “Um” has no meaning; it is a type of word or sound that lets others know that we have an idea and we’ll share it soon, but we need a second of uninterrupted silence and attention in order to communicate this idea. One short “um” communicates all of that. How much more efficient can you get?

If you’re an Inuit, it turns out that you can be much more efficient. Don’t say anything. “There’s no need for a placeholder, because I will wait for you and not interrupt.” Children do not start their sentences with “Um...” They’re not taught to avoid it, it is experienced—there’s no need for “um” because people wait for what everyone has to say. Even more interestingly, people don’t say much unless they have to. Silence is OK.

This morning, I listened to children talking at Douglas school.

“This is my very special lovey,” one of our youngest students explained softly in her classroom, holding a rabbit securely in front of her. “I sleep with him every night.”

“I liked reading about George Washington Carver,” a third-grade student told his class. “It was hard to figure out what he’s famous for, but I wrote a lot about peanuts.”

“I can’t believe you, you’re so gross!” A child shouted at another in the cafeteria. I won’t go into a detailed description.

I didn’t hear one “um!” I heard very few pauses. I was amazed at how articulate our students were. Adults and friends listened and everyone talked. We seem to be the opposite of the Inuit—everyone talks! Take a moment with your own child—when was that last time that you just listened? It’s great to hear them, and, um...I know that they have something interesting to say!

*C. Whitbeck*

## March 2010 PTO News

Can we safely say spring is here? Hopefully we have seen the last of the torrential rain and will experience a relatively dry spring.

Speaking of spring, this month starts off with our wonderful annual Spring Social and Auction on April 10. A huge thank you goes out to Anya Fillion, Naomi Martin, and their hard-working auction committee who are planning every detail to create a successful evening of fun and fundraising! The Douglas All-Star Band, led by Dr. Whitbeck and Mr. Broggi, will head up the entertainment for the night. Thank you to all of the teachers, staff and Douglas families for their ongoing support of the auction and for the time and effort spent working on the classroom items and other donations gifted to the auction. Thanks to the funds raised through our auction, our children continue to benefit from the wonderful programs and support achieved from PTO funds.

Douglas parents and children will be able to enjoy the many talents of our students during the annual Talent Shows. On April 8, the younger grades will display their skills in the K–3 Talent Show, and the 4–6 graders will perform on the April 15. Thank you to our music teacher Mr. Broggi and Douglas parent Terri Carotenuto for organizing the shows again this year.

With the arrival of spring, the Douglas Gardening Committee will be preparing to work on our beautiful Douglas grounds and gardens. Gardening Committee Chairs Jamie Norton and Phoebe Conant will be looking for helping hands in their effort to get the job done. We'll let you know soon when they plan to get started.

The Festival of Cultures is scheduled for Saturday night, May 15. This event is sponsored by the Douglas and Conant PTOs and is coordinated by Douglas parent Maria Albarran. Please watch for more information about the Festival of Cultures as the date nears. If you would like to help with the event or have any questions, please contact Maria at [rivero\\_albarran@yahoo.com](mailto:rivero_albarran@yahoo.com).

The grade-wide movie night socials proved to be a hit again this year. Special thanks to Jennifer Aufiero for coordinating the movie nights and to all of the parents who volunteered to help at each movie night.

Thank you to all the parents and teachers who supported the Douglas students in our “Winter Olympics” March Reading Challenge. Special thanks to the Reading Challenge Coordinators, Tanaz Hashemi, Kim Shamah, Sasha DeMello, and Sue Stewart for their hard work putting together this event. We look forward to seeing if all of the Olympic rings get colored as well as hearing the outcome of the Haiti relief fundraising. The log forms are being tallied, and we will have to wait to see what “Olympic” feat Dr. Whitbeck will accomplish!



On March 3, community leaders participated in our Read Aloud Program. Special thanks to Marcia Towey, with help from Kim Shamah and Varsha Deokar, for putting together this wonderful day for our children.

We had a fun and informative meeting on March 23 as part of our Douglas and Gates PTO Speakers Series. Thank you to all of the parents who attended and to our guest speakers, Stephen Hizrot (ABRHS Counselor), June Monetepeluso (Gates 6th grade teacher), Stacey Waite (Douglas Nurse), Diane Spring (Gates Nurse), and Jennifer Burke (Gates Counselor) for sharing their knowledge with our parents.

Finally, Acton's Town Meeting starts Monday, April 5, 7 PM, in the AB Regional High School auditorium. Many important town and school decisions are made at Town Meeting, including approval of the town and school budgets. We encourage you to attend Town Meeting to share in this important process.

Our next PTO meeting will be held on **Tuesday, May 25**, 7:30 PM at Douglas. At this meeting, we will be presenting and voting in the nominees for the 2010–2011 PTO Board. The PTO Budget Committee will also be presenting the proposed PTO budget for the 2010–2011 school year. We look forward to seeing you there!

### *PTO Co-Chairs*

*Cheryl Witty, [ckwitty@verizon.net](mailto:ckwitty@verizon.net), 978.266.0177*  
*Kristan Smith-Park, [ksmith068@gmail.com](mailto:ksmith068@gmail.com), 978.263.3514*

## ***The 11th Annual Spring Social and Auction is Here!***

After months of preparation, we are ready and excited for the big event this **Saturday, April 10, 6:30 PM** at the Wedgewood Pines Country Club in Stow. The Douglas School community's active and generous participation promises to make this important fundraiser a success once again. Some highlights:

- ◆ 200+ items donated for our Silent Auction and Quickie Boards.
- ◆ Many raffle tickets purchased for a chance to win over 20 raffle prizes.
- ◆ 21 beautiful classroom projects up for bid in the Silent Auction.
- ◆ Generous donations from our Douglas teachers and staff.
- ◆ Wild Card Raffle for a 1 in 52 chance to win Red Sox tickets.
- ◆ A lucky winner will go home with ½ of the proceeds of the popular 50/50 Raffle.
- ◆ Pledges are growing for grade-wide events including a kindergarten skating event and a bingo night for grades 1–2.
- ◆ Enjoy a dinner and dessert buffet and music by the Douglas All-Star Band.

### **Important information:**

- ◆ Tickets can be purchased until Wednesday, April 7!
- ◆ Dress is business casual.
- ◆ This is an adults-only event—make sure your babysitter is booked!
- ◆ Preview auction items at [douglasauction.webs.com](http://douglasauction.webs.com) so you can plan your bidding strategy.
- ◆ Remember that *we cannot accept credit cards* and that there will be several cash raffles and a cash bar.
- ◆ Hard tickets are not required! The check-in staff will have a list of people who have RSVPed and will provide attendees with booklets and bidding paddle numbers.
- ◆ For those who can not attend, proxy bidding for the Silent Auction and Quickie Boards is available. Go to <http://douglasauction.webs.com> for a proxy form.

*A huge thank-you to the Douglas Community—hope to see you there!*

*If you have any questions, please contact auction co-chairs Naomi Martin at [neasullivan@aol.com](mailto:neasullivan@aol.com) or Anya Fillion at [anyawfillion@yahoo.com](mailto:anyawfillion@yahoo.com)*

## ***Report from Acton Public School Committee***

**School Budget/Town Meeting:** I am pleased to report that the Acton Public School Committee has approved the budget for academic year 2010–2011 and our budget has won unanimous support from the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee. The school budget needs your final approval at Town Meeting. Please come to the annual Town Meeting on **Monday, April 5**, to vote for our school budget.

The school budget has protected all critical services identified by the Superintendent and School Principals. The budget maintains the staffing level of our schools and continues funding classroom assistant hours (44 hours per week for each school). The School Committee recognizes and appreciates the dedication of parent volunteers whose efforts raise more than \$300K each year to fund additional classroom assistant hours and other enrichment programs for our students.

**Kindergarten:** Currently we have 309 kindergarteners registered for Fall 2010. The recommended 16 sections will lead to fewer than 20 students per class even with some late registrations. The School Committee also discussed its early acceptance policy for kindergarten. The administration recommended that the policy be changed so that a child must be 5 years old by September 1 to be eligible for kindergarten registration. Current policy allows parents to apply for early admission if a child will be 5 years old between September 1 and December 31.

**Director of Finance:** The Superintendent recommended and the School Committee approved the appointment of Mr. Donald Aicardi as Director of Finance for Acton Public Schools and Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools. Mr. Aicardi will bring to our schools his years of experience as the Budget Director and Assistant Business Manager for Worcester Public Schools. Our community has greatly benefitted from Tess Summer's service as Director of Finance for the past ten years. We are thankful for her efforts and wish her a fulfilling retirement.

**School Committee Meeting:** Our next meeting will be at Conant School on May 20. We look forward to your participation or you may send your comments to the School Committee at [apsc@acton-ma.gov](mailto:apsc@acton-ma.gov). Please remember to attend Town Meeting.

*Xuan Kong, School Committee Chair*

## ***Douglas is All Around the World: Festival of Cultures***

Get your passports ready to travel around the world! In just seven weeks we will visit several countries in one evening! All Douglas families are invited to attend the Festival of Cultures on **Saturday, May 15**, 5:30–8:30 PM, at RJ Grey Junior High.

The Festival of Cultures celebrates our student population's rich ethnic and cultural diversity. Our ambassadors, who are volunteer parents, set up booths that children can visit and learn from. The booths typically have items of clothing, books, music, photographs, artwork, and games from the country being represented. This year we already have ambassadors representing Belgium, China, England, Ghana, India, Ireland, Korea, Mexico, Peru, and Russia. We hope to recruit even more ambassadors from other areas and cultures of the globe.

We also have a program featuring children performing music and dance from around the world. The program for this year is quickly filling up, so please contact us if you know of a student or group of students who would like to perform.

As this event has become more popular every year for its cultural flair, **we need many more volunteers** to help with planning, set up, clean up, etc. Please consider helping so we can all enjoy this great evening!

Please contact Maria Albarran to sign up as an ambassador, performer, or volunteer. Thanks to all of you who have already contacted me!

*Maria Albarran, 978.263.6807, rivero\_albarran@yahoo.com*

## ***Save the Date: Board-a-Palooza!***

Friends of the West Acton Boardwalk, along with Douglas and Gates Elementary Schools, present Board-A-Palooza—a music festival and craft fair on **Saturday, June 12** (rain or shine), 10 AM–8 PM. This event will raise money to rebuild the aging boardwalk that runs between Douglas and Gates. There will be diverse musical acts on two stages and many local artisans offering unique handmade arts, crafts, and jewelry. There will also be food, hands-on craft activities for children, face painting, a bouncy house and more! We will end the event with an outdoor movie at 8 PM (weather permitting...otherwise we'll show the movie indoors).

If weather permits, the event will be held outdoors on the fields around Douglas; otherwise we'll move inside both Douglas and Gates. Visit the festival website at <http://boardwalk.westacton.net/festival2010.html> for more information including details about performers and craft vendors.

**Craft vendor spaces available!** We are offering craft vendor spaces at Board-A-Palooza to Douglas and Gates parents first, before opening it up to the public! Two different sized spaces are available for craft vendors: 4'x6' for \$40, or 8'x10' for \$60. The application must be submitted along with the fee by April 16 to hold a space, and the fee is not refundable. Vendors are expected to bring their own table and chairs, and canopy (optional) if outdoors. There will not be electricity or running water at the vendor area, whether we're indoors or out.

*For information about the festival, or to help before or on the day of the event, please contact Lori Fassman at [lori@fassman.com](mailto:lori@fassman.com) or 978.264.9710.*

*For information about reserving a craft vendor space, contact Paulette Stout at [paulettestout@verizon.net](mailto:paulettestout@verizon.net).*

## ***Save the Date—PIP Events***

**Third Grade Market Math Mania:** Wednesday, April 7, open house 4:30–7:30 PM at Roche Bros of Acton. Calling all AB 3rd graders and parents! Join us for “hands on” grocery math including M&M Math, grocery scanning and estimation, thermometry and more. It takes approximately an hour to enjoy all six stations. Fun, learning, samples, and giveaways!

**May–June Summerskills Workbooks Fund-raiser:** Help your student keep math and reading skills fresh all summer long! The program features engaging and fun critical thinking activities reviewing material your child just completed, so he or she is ready for new skills in September. Look for order forms in April.

**AB PIP's Solar Cooker Demo at the AB Farmer's Market:** Spring Market Day, Sunday, May 23, 10–2 PM. Solar cooking is tasty and fun—come and sample our cuisine!

*Volunteers are always welcome and needed.*

Check out Acton Boxborough PIP's website at [www.actonpip.org](http://www.actonpip.org) for more information about these and other PIP events.

## ***Douglas Playdate***

**Thursday, April 15**, 1:15 PM, join the Newcomer team at the Douglas School Playground! Have a picnic lunch, let the kids play, and let the parents meet! We will provide some soccer balls and some entertainment! It will be a great way to begin *spring* at Douglas!

All Douglas families are invited. We especially hope to see our new families from kindergarten and grades 1–6!

Let's hope for some nice weather! See you there.

*Deanne O'Sullivan, Newcomer Coordinator, [deannewos@comcast.net](mailto:deannewos@comcast.net), 978.274.2558*

***This month's recipe from Family Fun Magazine:  
Homemade Granola Bars***

These sweet, wholesome treats are sure to be a favorite with your family. Wrap each one in foil for an easy on-the-go breakfast, lunch box addition, or midday snack .

**Ingredients:**

1/2 cup butter or margarine  
1/3 cup sugar  
1/3 cup honey  
1/4 cup flour  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract  
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon  
2 cups crisp rice cereal  
2 cups rolled oats  
1 cup dried fruit bits  
1/2 cup sliced almonds



**Instructions:**

Heat the oven to 350° F. Coat a 9x13-inch pan with nonstick cooking spray and set aside.

Melt the butter or margarine in a large pot over low heat. Remove the pot from the heat and whisk in the sugar, honey, flour, vanilla extract, and cinnamon. Add the remaining ingredients and mix well.

Transfer the mixture to the baking pan. Using a sheet or waxed paper and the palms of your hands, press the granola firmly into the pan, packing it to a flat and even thickness.

Bake for 20 minutes, until golden brown. Allow the granola to cool 1 hour in the pan, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely before cutting into bars. Makes 16 to 24 rectangular bars.

***Sign Up Now for the April Vacation Program!***

Back by popular demand, it's the Douglas School April Vacation Program offered April 20–23. Our week of fun will include surprise guests, field day events, art instruction, music and movement, nature crafts, a field trip on foot, story time, fun foods, and much more! You choose the day(s) your child(ren) will attend. **Please sign up by April 1!** Looking forward to fun in the sun!

*Chris Borgman, cborgman@mail.ab.mec.edu*

***Get Ready for Douglas Day!***

Mark your calendars for Douglas Day, which will be held on **Monday, June 7**, with a rain date of June 9. As always, we are planning a wide variety of field events, a barbecue, and other fun activities—including the return of the dunk tank! More information and volunteer forms will be sent home in April. We will be looking for many parents to help run the events and a few brave souls to sit in the dunk tank. I'll see you on the field!

*Erika Cormier, Douglas Day Chair, erika.cormier@comcast.net*

***Dave Granlund, Editorial  
Cartoonist***

On March 17, the 5th graders experienced a fascinating program with guest Dave Granlund, an editorial cartoonist. Dave did a special program for the students about what it's like to draw political cartoons. This included how to draw basic cartoons, using Uncle Sam as an example. He also shared his recently published cartoons, and explained where the ideas came from to draw them. Complementing the Douglas 5th grade curriculum, Dave showed some cartoons from the 1700s and the Civil War. A highlight of the program was when Dave discussed his early years as a Massachusetts public school student, and passed around samples of his own 5th grade artwork and cartoons!

Dave Granlund has been an editorial cartoonist, published in daily newspapers, since 1977. He became syndicated in 1978, with his work appearing in over 700 newspapers, including the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*, as well as *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *Time for Kids* magazines. His cartoons also appear nationally on MSNBC, HBO, PBS, CNN, and NBC's "The Today Show." Dave has received newspaper honors from UPI, the Associated Press, and the New England Press. He also has been nominated numerous times for the Pulitzer Prize.

To learn more about the 5th Grade program, visit Dave's website to view more of his editorial cartoons at [davegranlund.com](http://davegranlund.com)

We are able to offer special Cultural Enrichment programs for all grades and all of the school, through Douglas PTO's Thursday Snack Cart. Thanks for your support!

*Linda Skolnik and Terry Martins,  
Cultural Enrichment Co-Chairs*

***Dates to Remember***

Friday, April 2	Good Friday—No School
Wednesday, April 7	PIP 3rd Grade Market Math at Roche Bros.
Thursday, April 8	Talent Show for Grades K–3
Saturday, April 10	Spring Social and Auction, Wedgewood Pines Country Club
Thursday, April 15	Talent Show for Grades 4–6
Thursday, April 15	Newcomers Playdate, 1:15 PM, Douglas primary grades’ playground
April 19–25	Spring Recess—No School
April 26–28	6th Grade Nature’s Classroom
Saturday, May 15	Festival of Cultures, 5:30–8:30 PM, RJ Grey Junior High
Tuesday, May 25	PTO General Meeting at Douglas, 7:30 PM

***Snack Cart Donations***

April 1	<b>Pretzel Day</b>
April 8	Mrs. Ingraham, Mrs. Cherkerzian, Mrs. Claffie, Mrs. Ritter
April 15	Mrs. Hubbell, Mrs. Bethel, Mrs. Savage, Mrs. Smith (PM Fall/AM Spring K class)
April 22	<b>No School—Vacation</b>
April 29	Mrs. Rand, Mrs. Simeone, Ms. Hunt, Ms. Fitzpatrick
May 6	<b>Pretzel Day</b>
May 13	Mrs. Christensen, Mrs. Breslin, Mrs. Littlefield, Mrs. Tajima

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***MCAS Dates—2010***

Dear Parents of 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students:

Your children will be taking the MCAS tests on the following dates:

Grade 3: May 10, 11, and 12

Grade 4: May 10, 11, and 12

Grade 5: May 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, and 21

Grade 6: May 10, 11, and 12

Please make every effort to have your children attend school on these dates and arrive promptly by 9:15 AM; tests will begin shortly after the start of school.

Your support is appreciated.

Dr. Christopher Whitbeck