



# Douglas Digest

News of the C.T. Douglas School

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Douglas Digest

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## Top 10 Lists

January brought with it the inevitable year-end top ten lists. We have an inexplicable need to rate, to evaluate, and to name the top or most popular. I eagerly await the music top ten. I look for new music that I might have missed, songs that I might add to my iPod. More often than not, I am disappointed by the list. I'm really not into Lady Gaga. I'm also disappointed annually that none of the bands that I play in are rated in any top ten lists!

I've always wanted to publish my own top ten list. David Letterman gets to do it every night, why couldn't I do it once a year? But what would I rate? I might start with the top ten school lunch items. Chicken patties would be at the top of my list—I love the spicy kind with a side of pasta salad. In fact the whole office gets excited on Chicken Patty Monday! Anything with the school's mashed potatoes would come in second on my list. They're soft, creamy and I like mine dripping with gravy. My palate does not lean toward fresh fruit, steamed broccoli, or salad. My doctor, wife, and expanding waistline cannot support continuing a top ten list of Douglas foods.

How about the top ten recess games? I loved wall ball! I also banned wall ball! Packs of students threw a tennis ball against a brick wall. As best as I could tell, when the ball hit the ground the last person who touched the ball was out unless they could run up and touch the wall before the next ball toss. I know that I would have loved playing the game as a kid. I would have thrown my body in any distorting way and smashed myself into any wall or person in order to avoid being out. Seeing this happen, as well as the huge number of eye socket injuries from tennis balls, I suggested that it be played with a larger ball. The resounding cry was "NO!" "That's not wall ball!" So I live with having banned the game. I dare not add other recess games to my list for fear of getting myself into greater trouble.

I realize now why I don't have a top ten list. They would point out some of the worst in me!

For February, a month of valentines, love notes, and cupids, I will just list the things that I love about our school. I love greeting the children in the morning as they jump off of the bus. They get off with a smile and in the winter they have wonderfully cute hats. I love the minutes after Radio Douglas. Students and their teachers are gathered on classroom rugs in morning meeting, caring for one another and touching base for the morning. I love the way that teachers nurture each student. I love the dedication and willingness that parents have to help. I love the snowmen that children build together on snowy days. I love singing "The Cat Came Back" during school sing-a-longs. I love my office staff; they are true professionals who make the school look great. I love the flexibility of our custodians who truly know what it means to be the caretaker of a school. I love the fact that I get to work in a building that helps children learn. It is a magical and awe-inspiring profession and I am fortunate to be part of it.

That's a list of *nine* things I love. It's not a top ten list! Happy Valentines Day!

*C. Whitbeck*

## February 2010 PTO News

Can you remember going on your first Kindergarten tour of the Acton Public Schools? The process is often daunting to parents as there is so much information to absorb, and the decision seems so crucial to their child's future. This year the Kindergarten tours started on January 20 and end on February 24. Many thanks to Dr. Whitbeck and Christine Phillips for leading the tours and helping the prospective families feel comfortable at Douglas and well-informed. Thanks also to Terry Martins for coordinating the much appreciated snacks and drinks for the parents. A special thank you goes out to the Douglas staff who always open their classrooms to the tours and, through their warmth and knowledge, help show why Douglas is an excellent choice.

There are many events in the cold of winter that also show why Douglas is a great school to attend. One such exciting event took place on January 24 at the annual Douglas outing to the Lowell Devils hockey game. Thank you to Candace Doncaster for organizing this family friendly afternoon.

And what could be more fun than watching a movie in your PJs with your friends in the Douglas gym? Our annual grade level movie nights will take place over the next few weeks. Watch for more information in your child's backpack about these fun, social events at Douglas organized by our PTO Social Coordinator, Jen Aufiero.

We are looking forward to the Read Aloud Day headed by Marcia Towey ([toweymarcia@yahoo.com](mailto:toweymarcia@yahoo.com)) and Kim Shamah ([knsshamah@verizon.net](mailto:knsshamah@verizon.net)) and to the March Reading Challenge coordinated by Tanaz Hashemi ([thlct1@gmail.com](mailto:thlct1@gmail.com)) and Kim Shamah. If you would like to help with either the Read Aloud Day or the March Reading Challenge, please contact one of the coordinators.

Thank you to Deanne O'Sullivan for working on ways to help new families at Douglas get to know others at the school. Deanne has organized several fun events for the Newcomers this year, and we appreciate her efforts.

Our next **PTO General Meeting** will be on **March 23** in conjunction with our Joint Speaker Series with Gates Elementary, which will be held at Gates this year. The night will begin at 7 PM with each school's respective PTO meetings, followed by presentations of interest to elementary school parents. More information will be sent home about this fun and informative event.

Please let us know if you have any questions or comments. Thank you!

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### Green Tip of the Month

Last May, Douglas students (practically the whole 4th grade volunteered!) benchmarked the content of a small sample of post-lunch trash bags. In the interest of reducing the trash load at school—maybe even enough to lower our trash hauling fees—I'd like to share the results of the sort with you so you may talk with your child about how we can all do our part to lighten the load.

Roughly half of the students bring their lunch to school each day. Depending on how those lunches are packed, it may be possible to have a significant impact on the school trash stream. As you can imagine, purchasing a school lunch adds a good bit of trash to the waste stream as well since all of the serving containers are disposable. But we are trying to capture and compost the veggie waste from all lunches whenever possible. Now that Douglas has a co-mingled recycling bin for plastic, cardboard and paper, we can easily recycle yogurt cups and plastic bottles. Please remind your children to recycle these items instead of throwing them in the trash.

My hope is that if we repeat this exercise in the Spring, we will find zero plastic bottles, yogurt cups and paper. Thank you for your consideration!

Douglas School Trash Sort Results (3 bags of post-lunch trash)

Items found	Total
Empty paper drink cartons	103
Styrofoam lunch trays	62
Recyclable plastic	46
Straws	33
Empty plastic juice cups	27
Compostable food (lbs)	19
Plastic bottles	18
Juice boxes	15
Foil (pieces)	9
Paper (lbs)	8
Styrofoam cups	8
Yogurt cups	4
Full drink cartons (unopened)	3

Do you have a "green tip" that you'd like to share with the Douglas Community? If so, please submit it to [susan.cudmore@gmail.com](mailto:susan.cudmore@gmail.com) for Digest consideration.

## **Emergency Dismissal**

If the Douglas School needs to dismiss school early, due to snow or an emergency condition, we will make every effort to contact you through the ConnectEd System. If you see a call from Douglas, please check your messages. Please **do not call** the school. Also, please try to keep your online emergency card information updated at all times. Please note that your child will be dismissed based on the Emergency Dismissal information you provided in September on the pink Emergency Dismissal Form. The options include sending your child:

1. **Home on their bus.** Please have a plan and review it with your child in case no one is there when your child arrives home. You may plan to be at home, but may be delayed yourself due to weather conditions. The best plan for your child is to go to a neighbor's house.
2. **Regularly scheduled daycare.** Please do not assume that your daycare will remain open. You should confirm that they will stay open during inclement weather.
3. **Douglas Work & Play Program.** Douglas at Dawn/Dusk enrichment classes will be cancelled, but Work & Play will remain open until 6:00 PM.

If you do not remember the arrangements that you made, or have changes, please call the office as soon as possible. We will gladly provide the information. Please do not wait until an early release day to call.

Also, please note that **all bus passes and walker passes will be cancelled.**

Remember, we may not be able to call parents via ConnectEd in the event of an emergency dismissal. Please keep in mind that our response during these unusual situations is often limited by time, access to telephones, and the number of students needing attention.

*Dr. Chris Whitbeck, Sharon Armistead, and Sharen Crooks*

## **2010 Douglas Spring Social and Auction Update**

The 2010 Spring Social and Auction committee is in full gear preparing for our biggest annual fundraising event. Invitations and RSVP forms went out via kids' folders during January, we have started soliciting businesses to contribute auction items, and we are in the process of acquiring some great raffle prizes.

We're hoping for a lot of parent participation this year, starting right now. Whether you plan to attend or not there are many ways to be involved, at all levels, including:

**RSVP now** if you plan to attend. Last year the event was sold out, so secure your spot early!

**Consider donating** an auction item. Some examples: a theme basket, an unused gift card, a dinner party or food-of-the month offering, a hand-made craft, or lessons in your area of expertise. When it comes to auction items, creativity—not cost—is the key to success.

Look for **raffle tickets** in your child's backpack in the next couple of weeks, and help us sell tickets to friends and family.

Check out the website for more background and information at [www.douglasauction.webs.com](http://www.douglasauction.webs.com). Thank you for supporting Douglas!

*Anya Fillion and Naomi Martin, Auction Co-Chairs*

### **Emergency Info Confirm/Update**

Please remember to go into your child's emergency card online and update any information that has changed since the fall. For the safety and wellbeing of your child, what is available to us on these information cards needs to be the most current information you have.

Access your information via  
PowerSchool:

<https://absis.ab.mec.edu/public>

Log in with the username and password that was sent home in a letter from Dr. Whitbeck in June. Contact the school office if you need help finding this information or if you don't have access to a computer to review your information.

### **Lost and Found—Claim Items Now!**

Please have your children check Lost and Found for any items they may have misplaced since school started in September.

The Lost and Found for K–2 is downstairs in front of Room 5 in two blue containers. The Lost and Found for 3–6 is in the cafeteria to the right of the entrance into the gym in two white cabinets. Any articles still **un-claimed before the February break will be donated** to Big Brothers Big Sisters.

### **Festival of Cultures**

The Festival of Cultures is approaching! On Saturday, May 15, we will celebrate our rich ethnic and cultural diversity. We are looking for families to be “ambassadors” and represent cultures and countries from all areas of the globe. Ambassadors set up booths where children and adults can visit and learn from different countries. The booths typically have items of clothing, books, music, photographs, artwork, and games from the country being represented.

Additionally, the evening includes a program featuring children performing music and dance from around the world. The performance spots go early so please sign up as soon as possible by contacting me at the below phone number or email address.

To make this event happen, we need help from all of you! If you are willing to help out before, during, and/or after the event, please let me know. Thanks to all who have already signed up to volunteer!

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

### **Snack Cart—Supplies are Low!**

We’ve been running low on supplies for the last few weeks. If you’ve accidentally missed a donation, we (and the kids) would really appreciate a makeup donation. If each student buys 2 snacks, we need 1000 snacks plus a few hundred extra for variety each week in order to serve the whole school. When it’s your turn, please send 24 snacks and instruct your child to drop them off in the lobby. Snack donation suggestions can be found here: <http://douglas.ab.mec.edu/snackcartguidelines.pdf>

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

*Snack Cart Chairs*

*Stephanie Margolien, Karen Dudziak, Susan Cudmore*

### **New! February Vacation Program**

Sign up **now** for our first ever February Vacation Program! Our April Vacation Program has been such a success that we are expanding! Our week of fun will include snow sculptures, hot chocolate with marshmallows, cooking activities, theater workshops, and more! You can pick and choose the day(s) your child(ren) will participate. For more information, please contact Chris Borgman ([cborgman@mail.ab.mec.edu](mailto:cborgman@mail.ab.mec.edu)) for more information.

**Work and Play Update:** The February Work and Play Monthly Events Calendar is now available on the Douglas School website. Pick up a drop-in form at the Douglas office or on the website to join in the fun!

### **PIP Event: 5th Grade Market Math Mania**

Tuesday, February 9, 4:30–7:30 PM, at Roche Bros (Acton)

5th Grade Market Math Mania is a fun-filled, hands-on, math focused evening featuring activity stations for you and your child to explore together. Come try your hand at “M&M Math” or “Grocery Scanning”!

This event features an extravaganza of hands-on “super” market activities, complimented by samples, give-a-ways, and tons of fun. During the event, children and accompanying adults visit activity stations set up throughout Roche Bros. Market Math Mania helps children better understand how classroom math concepts apply to the “real world.” All activities are based on the Acton Public Schools’ mathematics curriculum.

5th Grade Market Math Mania is an annual event sponsored by Roche Bros. and Acton-Boxborough PIP, a volunteer group of parents, educators and community partners enriching Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education for grades K–12. For Acton-Boxborough PIP info and meeting dates (new volunteers are always welcome!) or to preview some market math activities, visit [www.actonpip.org](http://www.actonpip.org) or contact John Petersen (978.263.6144).

### ***This month's recipe from Kraft Foods Healthy Recipes for Kids: Fruit and Cheese Bites***

Prep time: 5 minutes

Total time: 5 minutes

Makes: 9 servings, 2 topped crackers each

What you need:

18 crackers

1 package (6 oz) sharp cheddar cheese

3 fresh strawberries, each cut into 3 slices

1 kiwi, peeled, cut into 9 slices

Make it!

Top crackers with cheese. Place strawberry slices on half of the crackers and kiwi slices on the remaining crackers.



### ***Notes from the Health Office***

Just a reminder: if your child has been diagnosed with the flu, strep throat, impetigo, conjunctivitis, or pneumonia please inform the Health Office either by note or message.

Also, we are slowly dwindling down on our extra clothes supply. If you have any clothes that your children have outgrown and would like to donate, it would be greatly appreciated.

Selected facts about Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)(summarized by APS/AB school nurses)

**Description:** Staph are bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. About 25–30% of the US population carries staph on their bodies at any time. MRSA is a rare type of staph that is resistant to some antibiotics. Severe infections with MRSA are rare and are more commonly seen in health care settings, not schools.

**Transmission:** Staph, including MRSA, are spread by direct skin-to-skin contact. It can also be spread by contact with items that have been touched or used by people with staph such as shared towels, razors, and athletic equipment. Most people who have staph or MRSA on their skin do not have infections or illness. Staph infections including MRSA start when staph enter a cut or break in the skin.

**Symptoms:** Minor staph infections may cause ordinary boils, pimples, and rashes, such as impetigo. Severe staph infections are uncommon in healthy children. A sign of more serious infection could include high fever, headache, fatigue, heat, and pain around a wound. The symptoms of MRSA are the same as other staph infections.

**Treatment:** See your doctor if the infection is large, painful, swollen, red and does not heal by itself. Your doctor will determine if you need antibiotics. Students with a MRSA infection can attend school as long as the wound is covered and they are receiving proper treatment.

**Reducing risk:** Practicing good hygiene is the best way to prevent getting and spreading MRSA infections. Keep hands clean by washing them frequently with soap and warm water. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer gel when soap and water are not available. Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.

For more information about MRSA, visit the MDPH website at [www.mass.gov/dph](http://www.mass.gov/dph)

### ***March Reading Challenge***

We are excited to announce the 9th annual Douglas Reading Challenge which will kick off during the All School Community Meeting on Thursday, March 4. The theme for this year's Reading Challenge is "The Winter Olympics." Encourage your children to read towards their grade level's reading goal, have fun, and raise funds for charity all at the same time. What will Dr. Whitbeck do this year to honor those who participate in the challenge? Kiss a pig? No, done that. Fly in a hot air balloon? Last year! Stay tuned to see what athletic prowess our beloved and game principal will display.

### ***Read Aloud Day***

We are looking forward to Read Aloud Day on Wednesday, March 3, coordinated by Marcia Towey. The program's goal is to get our students excited about reading by having members of the Acton community read to them: policemen, firemen, selectmen, authors, etc. It is also a great way to kick off Douglas' March Reading Challenge and to celebrate Dr. Seuss' birthday on March 2. Marcia is hoping to have many of last year's special guest readers return. If you know of a great reader for a class or would like to volunteer to help make it happen, please contact Marcia ([toweymarcia@yahoo.com](mailto:toweymarcia@yahoo.com)).

### **Dates to Remember**

February 2, 8, 24	Kindergarten Tours
Tuesday, February 2	Douglas Parent Information Night (for students entering kindergarten in Fall 2010), 7 PM
Tuesday, February 9	Fifth Grace Market Math event at Roche Bros.
February 15–19	Winter Recess—No School
Thursday, February 25	Acton Public School Committee Meeting, RJ Grey Library, 7:30 PM
Wednesday, March 3	Read Aloud Day
Thursday, March 4	March Reading Challenge Begins
Thursday, March 18	School Committee Meeting at Douglas
Tuesday, March 23	PTO General Meeting and Douglas/Gates Speaker, 7 PM at Gates

### **Snack Cart Donations**

February 4	<b>Pretzel Day</b>
February 11	Mrs. Ingraham, Mrs. Cherkerzian, Mrs. Claffie, Mrs. Ritter
February 18	No School—Vacation
February 25	Mrs. Hubbell, Mrs. Bethel, Ms. Savage, Mrs. Smith (PM Fall/AM Spring K class)
March 4	<b>Pretzel Day</b>

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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: March 22, 23, and 24

May 10, 11, and 12

Grade 4: March 22, 23, 24, and 26

May 10, 11, and 12

Grade 5: March 22, 23, and 24

May 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, and 21

Grade 6: March 22, 23, and 24

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