



Douglas Digest

News of the C. T. Douglas School

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Principal: Dr. Christopher Whitbeck

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Douglas Digest

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Small Moments in Time

My sister is an awful driver! I love her dearly, but there is no way that I will ever ride as a passenger in her car. Her accident record and insurance bill will back me up. But of course, since she possesses a driver's license, she did once upon a time pass her driver's test. I couldn't believe it, especially since she squealed up for the test on two wheels. Yet, for that small moment in time, as she sat with the examiner, she presented herself as a competent driver.

My family went to Florida during February break. We visited my parents and our boys were playing noisily one evening in a bedroom. I had asked them to play quietly and when I walked in on their very loud play to find the room torn apart and them wrestling on the bed, I lost it. I yelled at them, pulled them apart and sent one in tears to a separate bedroom. I felt horrible. At that moment in time, I was the model of an irrational, angry parent. I scared my youngest son and made him cry. Not a good moment.

Elected officials can often present articulate and compassionate ideas for improving everything from education to poverty. In that moment, they seem to have the right idea, to know exactly what to do. They seem perfectly suited to lead us to a better tomorrow. In reality, I've seen little change.

So I find myself wondering about the value of small moments in time. This month, our students will begin their annual MCAS assessments. This is a snapshot into their understanding, a small moment in their educational time. This year, when the state reports student performance they will begin to compare students who received the same scores last year. They will judge student performance partially on how much growth in scores students have compared to other students who had the same scores last year.

If I make this same comparison with other life snapshots I see how this is prone to fail. For instance, if I compared my sister's driving record to all of the other people who received the same score on their driver's test, it might do a great job at showing her driving difficulties. But this isn't what the state is proposing. They are taking one snapshot and comparing it to another snapshot.

On Tuesday, my sister followed all speed limits, parked without hitting another car, and was the picture of a perfect driver. I'm still not riding in her car!! I also know that I will need to yell at my children again, and if that is the moment in time that is used as my comparison, then perhaps my parenting skills have not grown. There are even moments in time when our elected officials continue to sound or even do something sensible.

These short moments should not be used to evaluate their overall performance.

I think that I've grown as a parent. I've learned one or two things over time but you have to look at my growth over eight years, making many comparisons over many different conditions. If I continually make the same mistakes then yes, maybe I haven't grown, but to take a snapshot of me one day in March and define me continues to be ridiculous!

C. Whitbeck

March 2010 PTO News

We hope that every Douglas family enjoyed themselves this past February vacation! Now that the kids are back in school, there are many exciting events going on for students, parents, and families.

Read Aloud Day took place on March 3. On this day, many special “guest readers” visited Douglas classrooms to share their love of reading with the kids. Special thanks to Marcia Towey, Kim Shamah, and Vasha Deokar for coordinating the readers and for putting together such a wonderful day for the Douglas children.

On March 4, we kicked off our annual March Reading Challenge. This year the theme for the challenge is the Olympics. Many thanks to librarians, Sasha De Mello and Sue Stewart, and Douglas parents Tanaz Hashemi and Kim Shamah for organizing an exciting and rewarding challenge to “reach for the gold” in reading! We look forward to hearing what surprises Dr. Whitbeck has in store for the students to help celebrate the end of the March Reading Challenge.

On **Tuesday, March 23**, we will join Gates School for our annual PTO Speaker Series Night hosted this year by the Gates School. We will start at 7 PM with a brief PTO meeting followed by a series of pertinent presentations. The seminar choices will be 5–6 grade Human Growth and Development movies, Building Healthy Communications with Your Child, Cyberbullying, and more.

On the social front, thank you to Jen Aufiero for organizing the entertaining Movie Night Socials. The Kindergarteners and 1st graders enjoyed “Snow Buddies” on February 5. The 2–3 graders chose to watch “Hotel for Dogs” on February 26, and the 4–6 graders will have their movie night on **March 26**.

There is also something fun for parents. The Douglas Spring Social and Auction is just around the corner on **Saturday, April 10**, at the Wedgewood Pines Country Club in Stow. This is a great opportunity to socialize with other Douglas parents while raising funds for our school. All of the funds raised at the auction go to support classroom work and to help enrich our children’s Douglas experience. A group of dedicated parents, headed up by our Auction Co-Chairs Anya Fillion and Naomi Martin, have been working hard to prepare for what will certainly be a wonderful evening. Music will be provided by the ever-popular Douglas All-Star Band, featuring Dr. Whitbeck, Mr. Broggi, and seven of our very talented Douglas parents.

Music Teacher Peter Broggi and Douglas parent Terri Carotenuto will be running the Douglas Talent Show again this year. The shows will be on **April 8** for kindergarten–3rd grade and **April 15** for grades 4–6. Peter and Terri do a great job of putting together a wonderful event where children are able to showcase their talents. If you are able to help with either talent show, please contact Terri at jtcarotenuto@verizon.net.

As always, please contact us if you have any questions or comments. Thanks!

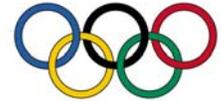
Cheryl Witty, ckwitty@verizon.net, 978.266.0177

Kristan Smith-Park, ksmith068@gmail.com, 978.263.3514

The March Reading Challenge is Here!

The annual Douglas reading challenge will have its opening ceremony during the all school community meeting on March 4. The theme this year is “The Winter Olympics.” The Challenge lasts from March 1–31 and each student will be reading to meet the goals of his or her grade to reach the gold.

There will be large Olympic rings in the lobby, and as each grade reaches their goal each week, we will color in the rings to let everyone know about our progress. To find out what Dr. Whitbeck will do if we achieve our goal, just come to the closing ceremonies in April and be ready for a big surprise.



The Challenge will continue its emphasis on reading towards a personal and school-wide goal of helping others outside the Douglas community. This year we will be collecting funds for helping the earthquake victims in Haiti. So get ready to read—for fun, for Douglas, and for others!

*Sasha DeMello and Sue Stewart
(Library Staff)*

Tanaz Hashemi

(March Reading Challenge Coordinator)

*Kristan Smith-Park and Cheryl Witty
(PTO chairs)*

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, 978.274.2558*

2010 Douglas Spring Auction Update and Special Request

The Spring Social and Auction committee continues to make great progress as we prepare for the big **April 10** event. Check out dozens of auction items that have been donated so far at www.douglasauktion.webs.com/auctionitems.htm. In the coming weeks before the auction, we'll continue to post new donations, including photos of the creative items prepared by each classroom, which are always so popular at the event.

Our biggest push right now is for the sale of raffle tickets. A few weeks ago, each Douglas family received a packet of raffle tickets via your child's folder, showcasing exciting prizes



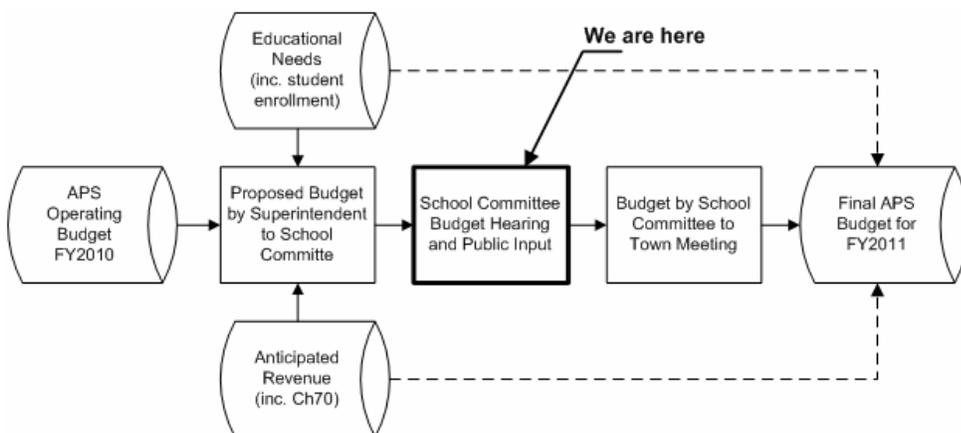
such as a Bose Wave Radio, an iPod, and a generous gift certificate for dinner at The Capital Grille. This is a great opportunity for families to help raise money for the auction, by selling a few tickets to friends and family. Remember, you don't have to be at the event to win a prize. If you've already sold tickets, please send them in, as directed on your packet. If you haven't sold any yet, there's still time! Contact Jennifer Aufiero, Cassie Stewart, or Jacqui Burak with raffle-related questions.

Finally, have you RSVPed to attend yet? RSVPs have been rolling in, so make sure you reserve your spot. Last year we sold out! RSVP forms, along with lots of other information about this year's auction, can be found at www.douglasauktion.webs.com.

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

Report from Acton Public School Committee

During the last two months, the school committee and administration have been busy preparing FY2011 budgets for Acton town meeting approval in April. The flowchart below outlines the budget processes for Acton Public Schools.



Major revenue sources to fund Acton Schools (including junior and high schools) and municipal services include:

- ◆ Local Revenues (property tax and fees) which account for about 80% of total revenue
- ◆ State Aid (primarily chapter 70 fund) [about 15%]
- ◆ One-time Revenue (reserve and federal stimulus money) [about 5%]

For FY2010 (July 1, 2009–June 30, 2010), Acton and Acton-Boxborough School Districts received about \$11.8M in Chapter 70 state aid. Projections for FY2011 Chapter 70 range widely from \$10.7M to \$12.8M with the most recent “whisper” number being \$12.4M. In consultation with other town officials, School Committees and administration are vigilant in updating our budget assumptions with various state budget proposals from the Governor and Legislators.

The School Committee has discussed and you may have heard the proposals to reduce services at APS. Under the most pessimistic assumption for Chapter 70 state aid, many APS service cuts have been considered. However, we may be able to protect some services if Chapter 70 state aid is higher than \$10.7 million. Superintendent Mills has proposed and the School Committee supports the following priority list of service to *protect*:

1. Classroom Assistants (\$46,000) [Highest Priority]
2. Technology Support Specialists (\$30,000)
3. Curriculum Specialist (\$134,000)
4. SPED Assistants (\$70,000)
5. Technology Equipment Budget (\$20,000) [Lower Priority]

You may send your comments to the school committee at apsc@acton-ma.gov. We hope you will attend Town Meeting in April to vote on our budget proposal.

Xuan Kong, School Committee Chair

Douglas Around the World—Festival of Cultures

Get your passports ready to travel around the world! We will visit several countries in one evening! All Douglas families are invited to attend the Festival of Cultures on **Saturday, May 15**, 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, Ghana, Korea, Mexico, and Peru. 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

What's New with the Boardwalk? Board-a-Palooza!

In winter, the Boardwalk is covered in snow and ice and it gets less usage than at any other time of the year. Even now, the Boardwalk Committee is continuing to work on finding a solution for the deteriorating structure. The West Acton Boardwalk Committee is excited to announce a new event to help raise funds for the rebuilding of the Boardwalk. On **Saturday, June 12** (rain or shine), we will be hosting Board-A-Palooza, an all-day music and arts festival, on the grounds of Gates and Douglas. This will be a family fun day, with lots of great musicians performing, crafters showing their wares, food galore, and activities for the kids. Please mark your calendars—come support the Boardwalk and hang out with friends and family. Douglas parent Lori Fassman is chairing this event, with Douglas parent Paulette Stout coordinating craft vendors. We are looking for volunteers to help with organization up to the event, and volunteers for the day of the event. If you can help in any way, please contact Lori Fassman (lori@fassman.com or 978.264.9710).

The Boardwalk Committee is also proud that we recently received a pledge from the Acton Lions Club for the Boardwalk project. If you know a Lions Club member, please thank them for their support!

If you donated to the Boardwalk project during the 2009 tax year, you should have received a donation letter for your tax records. If you have not yet received a letter and you think you should have, please contact Christine Phillips (hylandphillips@verizon.net).

Thank you for your continued support of the Boardwalk project!

Christine Phillips, West Acton Boardwalk Committee Representative

Snack Cart Seeking new Coordinators and Feedback

There will be a Snack Cart meeting in the Douglas Cafetorium, **Monday, March 15**, 10 AM for anyone interested in helping to coordinate the Snack Cart program next year. We will also be discussing feedback about how the program worked this year. We are particularly interested in your opinion of the soft pretzels, the popcorn, and the frequency of donations.

Snack Cart profits support all of the wonderful cultural enrichment programs that our children have the opportunity to see at school each year. If you are interested in helping coordinate the Snack Cart program or if you would like to give feedback, please join us on the 15th. If you can't make this meeting time, but are interested in helping coordinate the program or would like to offer feedback, please contact the PTO or Snack Cart Chairs.

*Snack Cart Chairs
Stephanie Margolien,
smargolien@hotmail.com
Karen Dudziak,
karendudziak@yahoo.com
Susan Cudmore,
susan.cudmore@gmail.com*

Spiritwear—AB Bottles

AB Stainless Steel bottles on sale for \$14 each. Get ready for the spring sports season! We ordered more bottles because the demand of these bottles got larger than our supply! These bottles are a great way to show your Acton-Boxborough spirit while still keeping the kids cool!

To order, contact:
*Deanne O'Sullivan
deannewos@comcast.net*

This month's recipe from Family Fun Magazine: Dessert Tortillas

This Mexican style treat swaps jalapenos for the sweetness of fresh strawberries. Set out the ingredients buffet style for kids to serve up their own after-dinner treat.

Ingredients:

3 6-inch tortillas
cooking spray
1 ½ tablespoons sugar
1 ½ cups fresh strawberries, cleaned and hulled
1 tablespoon orange juice
8 ounces vanilla yogurt
1 cup chopped strawberries
½ cup shredded coconut or white chocolate shavings



Instructions:

To make tortilla chips, heat oven to 350 degrees. Cut the tortillas into triangles. Lay them on a baking sheet and spritz them with cooking spray. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon of sugar over tops of tortillas and bake for 12 minutes or until crisp.

For homemade strawberry sauce, combine strawberries, orange juice, and remaining ½ tablespoon of sugar in a blender. Puree ingredients until smooth.

Once the chips have cooled, set them on a plate. To complete the buffet, set out separate bowls containing the strawberry sauce, yogurt, chopped strawberries, and coconut or chocolate shavings. Serves 4 to 6.

February Vacation Program a Resounding Success!

The First Annual Douglas School February Vacation Program was a smashing success! The kids were thrilled to have fresh snow for sledding and making snow “people” followed by hot chocolate with marshmallows. Special surprise guests had the kids climbing the rock wall, making creative crafts, singing, and making music. If you ask the kids, they will say the highlights of camp were cup-stacking contests, making volcanoes, and ice cream sundaes. The flexibility of the program appealed to the parents. Some kids attended all four days, others for a day or two.

We look forward to our April Vacation Program which will be offered Tuesday, April 20–Friday, April 23 from 8:30 AM–3:30 PM, with extended hours 7:30–8:30 AM and 3:30–6 PM. Plan on it!

Chris Borgman, cborgman@mail.ab.mec.edu
Sasha DeMello, sdemello@mail.ab.mec.edu

Immunization Requirements: Important Notice for Parents/Guardians of Sixth Graders

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has the following requirements for all students entering Grade 7 in September 2010:

- ◆ **MMR:** 2 doses or 2 doses of measles and one dose of mumps and rubella
- ◆ **Varicella:** A physician-certified history of chicken pox disease or one dose of vaccine for students under 13 years old or two doses of vaccine for students over 13 years old.
- ◆ **Hepatitis B:** 3 doses
- ◆ **Td/Tdap:** one booster dose of Td (tetanus/diphtheria and acellular pertussis) if it has been more than 5 years since the last dose
- ◆ A copy of an up-to-date physical examination will also be required for all students before entering Grade 7.

Many of these vaccines may have been administered during elementary school. Please check with your healthcare provider to be certain that your child's immunizations are up-to-date and documented in his/her record. Send a copy of the exam and updated information record to the Douglas health office and the information will be included in your child's health record when it is transferred to the Junior High in June. If you do not have the necessary paperwork completed before the end of school, send it to the school nurse at the Junior High by August 27.

Read Aloud Day

Read Aloud Day took place on Wednesday, March 3. Readers from the Acton community came in to read their favorite children's books to students and were greeted with great enthusiasm. This year's readers included Paulina Knibbe, Chairwoman, Board of Selectman; Becki Harrington-Davis, reporter for the Beacon; and Alixe Callen, Principal of Acton-Boxborough Regional High School, to name a few. Marcia Towey served as Coordinator, ably assisted by Kim Shamah and Varsha Deokar—plus our wonderful admin staff!

Read Aloud Day is designed to motivate children to read by bringing together community members and kids. Studies have shown that children who are read to, develop a greater love of reading and learning. What better way to kick off Douglas' March Reading Challenge!

(Did you see the great profile of Marcia and Read Aloud Day in the Beacon on February 25?)

Dates to Remember

- Wednesday, March 3 Read Aloud Day
- Thursday, March 4 March Reading Challenge Begins
- Thursday, March 18 School Committee Meeting at Douglas
- Monday, March 22 MCAS starts
- Tuesday, March 23 PTO General Meeting and Douglas/Gates Speaker, 7 PM at Gates
- Friday, March 26 Movie Night for Grades 4–6
- 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

Snack Cart Donations

- March 4 **Pretzel Day**
- March 11 Mrs. Rand, Mrs. Simeone, Ms. Hunt, Ms. Fitzpatrick
- March 18 Mrs. Christensen, Mrs. Breslin, Mrs. Littlefield, Mrs. Tajima
- March 25 Mrs. Sharp, Mr. Cail, Mrs. Oxnard, Mrs. Kay
- April 1 **Pretzel Day**
- April 8 Mrs. Ingraham, Mrs. Cherkerzian, Mrs. Claffie, Mrs. Ritter

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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