

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: December 1.**

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

From the PTO

We're already more than a month into the school year—time flies! We hope you're adjusting to the early schedule and enjoying all that extra time in the afternoons. A few of the PTO's larger initiatives and events are already in motion. Visit www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org for more detail on these events and everything the PTO does.

Annual Giving Campaign: This fall tradition funds so many important programs, from teaching assistants to field trips to large and small improvements around the school. Whether you are able to contribute \$10 or \$500, 100% of your donation supports your child's learning. There's still time to make a donation to one of our most important fundraisers of the year. Do it now, and be entered into our remaining drawings for great prizes. Click the purple button at www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org for details. (Already donated? **We thank you!**)

Ice Cream Social: On the evening of **Friday, October 24**, come enjoy pizza and a sundae, watch the kids win cakes at the cake walk, and play games for prizes throughout the Douglas hallways. Order food tickets and game wristbands in advance to avoid lines. Bring extra quarters for the cake walk, and don't forget to donate a cake or two!

Communication Breakdown

Have you ever felt as if you were speaking a different language to someone? This sometimes happens when I am arguing with my wife. I passionately try to express my side of the argument. I listen to her side. I feel like we are saying the same thing, but I can't help her understand what I'm trying to say. Anxiety sits deep in my stomach: not anxiety that comes with disagreement or anger, but with frustration that I can't communicate what I want to say, and what I think she will agree with. It's as if I'm in Russia, I speak no Russian, and I urgently have to catch a train. I don't know where the train station is and I have one chance to ask someone who doesn't speak English. That's the level of anxiety I'm describing. Both of us feel it, but there seems to be no way clear.

It's most likely to happen when, even after 25 years of marriage, we are faced with some new decision. We each have a picture in our mind of exactly what we think should happen and why it is good or bad. If only each of us was able to see that very clear picture. Instead we have to rely on the inefficiencies of our words. That anxiety of miscommunication wells up, and our words become less and less efficient. We both know that our intentions are good; we want the best outcome; and yet we end up yelling at each other because words have failed us.

What do you do? You breathe deeply; you take some time; you say, "I'm sorry." And in a moment of peace and kindness, you finally say, clearly, what you had been trying to say. You may still disagree, but at least you feel heard.

And so went some of our communication regarding this year's new experiences for students at Douglas. In this moment of peace, I would like to say, "I'm sorry if our communication caused anxiety." I think that I can clearly and simply communicate what will be new.

This year the students and teachers at Douglas will continue the traditional methods of teaching that have served us well. As we teach students, we will be adding a component designed to increase creativity and innovation. Students will be presented with engaging real-life problems. They will apply the skills that they have learned in class—skills in reading, communication, and research—to collaborate and solve the problems. Teachers will continue to build even more academic and collaborative skills through direct teaching. Some of the work to solve the problems will require individual writing or research. Groups will also collaborate to create exhibitions of learning.

We are implementing this new approach because education experts, business leaders, and teachers we respect are telling us that students must not only have strong academic skills, but stronger creative and innovation skills. What will be lost? We will work together to replace the work that was only teacher-centered, teacher-driven, and did not build either academic or creative skills. This is part of our continuous improvement of curriculum at Douglas. Parents should be able to ask a student, why do you have this homework assignment? What are you learning to do? What problem are you trying to solve? Our ultimate hope is that students come to school more engaged and more prepared; that they understand what skills they are learning; and that they are learning to plan, research, and answer complex, multipart problems. Look for a window into the process on our website under Exhibitionary Learning. Look for the first set of results on **December 17** when we present our first all-school Exhibitions.

And once again, I apologize. I hope this helps you better understand the very clear picture that we have, but had a hard time communicating.

C. Whitbeck

Finally, our annual **Book Fair** will be held **December 10–12**. This is a great opportunity to purchase gifts for the holidays!



Our programs are possible because parents are willing to step up and volunteer. If you've ever found yourself thinking, "Maybe I could help with that," please get in touch! Go to the "Get Involved" tab of www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org for information. One great way to get started is to join us at the next PTO general meeting on **Tuesday, October 28, 7:30pm** in the cafeteria. We hope to see you there!

Karen Jarsky and Abigail Vargus, PTO Cochairs

Dates to Remember

Thursday, October 16

Douglas Parent Forum, "What to expect at conferences," 8:30-9:30am or 7-8pm

Thursday, October 16

AB School Committee, RJ Grey, 7:30pm

Friday, October 17

Douglas Post Office opens

Wednesday, October 22

Unity Day—wear orange!
EARLY DISMISSAL (elementary only)

Friday, October 24

Ice Cream Social, 6pm

Tuesday, October 28

EARLY DISMISSAL (elementary only)
General PTO Meeting, 7:30pm, Douglas cafeteria

Friday, October 31

Halloween Parade, 1pm

Sunday, November 2

Daylight Savings Time ends—Fall back!

Tuesday, November 4

Professional Day: NO SCHOOL

Thursday, November 6

AB School Committee, RJ Grey, 7:30pm

Monday, November 10

Veterans Day Program, 9am

Tuesday, November 11

Veterans Day: NO SCHOOL

Wednesday, November 12

Photo retake day

Thursday, November 13

Douglas Spirit Day

Wednesday, November 19

Apple pie making (fundraiser, grades 5 & 6)

Thursday, November 20

AB School Committee, RJ Grey, 7:30pm

Wednesday, November 26

EARLY DISMISSAL
Faculty/Staff Thanksgiving Appreciation

November 27-28

Thanksgiving Break: NO SCHOOL

Saturday, March 21, 2015

Spring Social & Auction

Snack Cart Donations

See snack details on the PTO website.

October 16	Grades 1 and 2
October 23	Grade 6, Kindergarten
October 30	Grades 4 and 5
November 6	Grades 2 and 3
November 13	Grade 1 and all-day K (Mrs. Smith/Dr. Fitzpatrick)
November 20	Grades 5 and 6
November 27	Thanksgiving



School Committee—What's it All About?

Ever wonder who decides the first day of school? Or where you could put in a word about school start times, crowded buses, school safety, or even the school budgets? Perhaps you should drop in on a meeting of the Acton Boxborough Regional School Committee (ABRSC)!

The 11 elected members of the ABRSC meet about two times each month, usually at the RJ Grey Jr. High library, and the public is not only welcome—we're encouraged to be there. After all, the best way to know what's going on and to share your opinions is to show up. We have wonderful schools, and our amazing, involved, caring parents are a big part of that.

The next meeting is on **Thursday, October 16**. You can find an agenda for this meeting and minutes from past meetings at www.abschools.org/school-committee. You'll also find contact information for committee members (including two Douglas parents, Deanne O'Sullivan and Amy Krishnamurthy), and you can email any of them with questions. You can also watch the meetings live on cable (Comcast channel 99 or Verizon channel 41), or at ActonTV.org.

Remember! Confidential financial assistance is always available for Douglas programs and events. Contact Dr. Whitbeck or your child's teacher.

Thanks from the PTO

One of the things that makes Douglas so special is its community of dedicated and enthusiastic families. There are many, many programs that simply could not happen without the help of committed volunteers. Since the last issue of the Digest, here are some of the events that have taken place:

Photo Day: Thank you to Paige Johnson and her team of volunteers for coordinating another successful Douglas photo day!

Kindergarten Screenings: Tiffany Petranto once again made sure our kindergarteners and their grown-ups felt happy and comfortable during this annual rite of passage.

Nature Walks: Thank you to Darlene Crowley, Karen Pierce, and Nancy Stillman for coordinating dozens of volunteers to kick off this year's program with the fall walks!

Snack Cart: This weekly smorgasbord, now fully underway, funds our Cultural Enrichment program. Thank you, Janice Yee, Liz Schaller, and Heather Chase!

Post Office: Thanks to Tiffany Prunesti and Stacey Funk, who have taken over this Douglas institution that enables third graders to deliver mail throughout the school.

Lobby Calendar: Thank you, Cydney Cotter, for keeping us in the know!

Spiritwear: Sheri Palazzo and Sandy Munger—as always, you keep us in true and fabulous Douglas style.

Back-to-School Nights: Thanks to our wonderful teachers for welcoming us into their classrooms last month.

Walk for Peace: Dr. Whitbeck and Mr. Broggi put together yet another moving ceremony, and our students again raised money for Free the Children.

Eagle's Nest: Thank you so much to Joan Luciani, Janice Yee, Vidya Sampathkumar, Debbie Maffei, Carolyn Kelly, and the fourth grade teachers who are hard at work getting ready for the grand opening of our beloved school store.

Douglas by the Numbers

- 9: Types of pizza sold in the cafeteria
- 54: Number of families new to Douglas this year
- 14: Fish swimming in the lobby fish tank
- 159: Days until the Spring Social & Auction!

Scrip Gift Cards

Scrip is another word for "substitute money." Through our school's Scrip program, you can purchase gift cards, and Douglas will get anywhere from 2% to 16% cash back. There are more than 100 retailers to choose from: Amazon, Lands' End, Kmart, Staples, Starbucks, and Dunkin' Donuts, just to name a few! Visit our website, www.shopwithscrip.com. You can also find information on the PTO website. The cards you purchase will be delivered via backpack express. Look for flyers with more information the week of November 10. You may send in your orders at any time; the first distribution of cards will be November 25.

Deb Cox and Linda Gower, Scrip gift card program coordinators