

# DOUGLAS DIGEST

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## Douglas Digest

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The Douglas School PTO publishes the Digest every six weeks during the school year. **Next issue: September—have a great summer!**

We welcome article ideas and feedback. Please email Sharon at [sharon.metzger@gmail.com](mailto:sharon.metzger@gmail.com).

## From the PTO

Everyone's heard the old adage, "Time flies when you're having fun." As we find ourselves at the end of yet another school year, that sure seems to apply at Douglas. It's hard to believe that in a few short weeks our children will suddenly be a whole grade "older." We would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to every member of our community who has generously contributed time, effort, and support over the last 10 months. We couldn't have gotten through the year without you! Please enjoy a relaxing and safe summer!

Before we part ways, there are still a couple of chances to enjoy a little Douglas spirit outside of 21 Elm Street:

- We look forward to seeing many of you at Douglas School night at the Lowell Spinners game, **Saturday, June 14, 5 PM**. Thank you to Mary Lavene and Barbara Green for coordinating!
- Celebrate summer with your Douglas friends! **Thursday, June 19**, is Douglas Day at Canobie Lake Park in Salem, NH. The rate that day is \$25 per person. (No need to go to the group window.) The park is open 9 AM–4 PM. Thank you to Rachel Meehan for organizing!

Please also check our Summertime column on page 3 and the Dates to Remember on page 4. And don't forget to keep an eye on the Douglas Facebook page for any summer happenings.

*Eileen Matarese and Karen Jarsky*  
PTO Co-Chairs, 2013–2014

## What I've Learned This Year

I've learned a lot this year about how children learn. A lot of that I've learned teaching classes in third and fifth grade, and on a trip that teachers and I took to High Tech High and Elementary schools in San Diego. (For more information on that trip, visit our blog at [firstattemptstinlearning.wordpress.com](http://firstattemptstinlearning.wordpress.com).) This learning can be distilled into three dualities.

1. **Teaching/Learning:** Teachers doing the explaining and children doing the listening does not guarantee learning. Students doing the explaining and adults doing the listening does guarantee learning—often for both student and teacher! The quality of our teaching should be judged on the quality of student work. Has the work been done by the students—not their parents or teacher? Is the work sophisticated, well done, well displayed? Has it been worth doing, does it show original thought and complex understanding? If so, there has been successful teaching and learning.
2. **Production/Consumption:** The purpose of school needs to be less about consumption of knowledge and more about the production of knowledge. Let's assume in today's world that students can access most content readily. Now, the job of the student becomes transforming and acting upon content. We must also present them with genuinely perplexing problems. Perplexity precedes engagement and engagement precedes learning. Students must feel perplexed and then engaged in inventing, shaping, making, building, and doing things. Kids need to be in a school where they are transforming content into new ideas and making new things.
3. **Why/How:** Showing someone how to do something without explaining why is the peril of motivation. There can be no interest without knowing why. If children know why they have to solve genuinely perplexing problems, then they will want to learn things to help them solve the problems. They'll also want to share this with others, to have public exhibitions that fill the school because our children will invite people to see the wonderful and amazing work that they are proud and amazed to have done. This looks like a school where children publish books, build hovercraft, find missing cigar factories, and maybe even pull patents someday.

I have learned that I want to work in a school where children feel joy, feel valued, feel brave, are full of wonder, and have a deep sense of pride. I have learned that I want to work in a school where we make the invisible visible and create the future. I have learned that all of this leads to increased rigor and learning. I have learned that this is uncomfortably exciting and that I am completely excited about beginning the school year in September. I can't wait for you to join us!

*C. Whitbeck*

## Thank You...Merci...Gracias! ಧನ್ಯವಾದಗಳು 谢谢

There is a dizzying array of ways to get involved at Douglas School. Our parents stay busy organizing, gardening, scheduling, overseeing, selling, clipping, popping, purchasing, recruiting, delivering, baking, welcoming, printing, calling, guiding, encouraging, teaching, scrubbing, inflating, sweet-talking, feeding, decorating, filing, taping, cooking, serving, painting, scouting, photographing, playing, announcing, scooping, translating, typing, copying, reshelving, eating, driving, computing, filming, accounting, arranging, transcribing, designing, listening, reading, and simply caring. Thank you to each and every one of you for your time, your energy, your enthusiasm. We hope it has been as rewarding to you as it was to Douglas School. We did want to thank a few people for some recent events and programs:

- **Peter Broggi** for once again leading our Memorial Day celebration. Our guest speaker, **Dr. John Andrade**, our student presenters, and the 5th and 6th grade band came together beautifully to remind us why we celebrate this holiday.
- **Kathy McCullen** and **Sarah Wilfert** for organizing the Douglas Day spectacular all-school performance, "Bubbleology," as well as a year full of incredible events that broadened our children's horizons in remarkable ways.
- **Lisa Jensen Fellows**, **Katherine Lee**, and **Parindar Miller** together with our wonderful gym teacher, **Nicole Emby**, for organizing Douglas Day. We hope you were able to make it to watch, participate, and picnic with your kids!
- **Candace Doncaster** and **Bridget Steinkrauss** for organizing the Staff Appreciation Luncheon. Thank you to all of the parents who volunteered to serve the delicious lunch, and to **Mira Greenland** and the Baking Committee for the always-scrumptious desserts.
- **Debbie Cox**, **Linda Gower**, and **Debby Lee** for managing the Scrip program. They have helped us raise nearly \$1,000 for Douglas School just by enabling us to shop!
- **Maria Parodos**, **Katherine Lee**, and **SoYoung Chang** for coordinating the Donelan's, Box Tops, and Campbell's Labels programs, and to every one of you who snipped and clipped and dropped the fruits of your labor off in the lobby.
- **Cydney Cotter** and all of the Safe Arrival volunteers for making sure that our tardy and absent children are all safe and accounted for.
- **Karen Pierce** and **Martha Papalia** for the incredible hospitality at various Douglas meetings and events.
- **Paulette Stout**, **Sandy Munger**, and **Sheri Palazzo** for making sure we dazzle in our Douglas Spiritwear.
- **Sharon Metzger**, **Lori Fassman**, **Kara Letourneau**, **Joe Walsh**, and **Melanie Liu** for every bit of technological, editorial, and organizational expertise. Your behind-the-scenes work truly makes Douglas run.
- **Beth Poulton** for years of service as the PTO Secretary. Thank you for making us sound so articulate and concise year after year!
- **Laura Fay** and **Darlene Crowley** for getting our kids into the great outdoors on their Nature Walks.

### Thanks to School Staff and PTO Board

Thank you to all of the Douglas teachers, assistants, specialists, SPED teachers, and staff for the support you give to the PTO. You remind us every day why we chose to be at Douglas. Thank you to **Chris Whitbeck** and **Jenna Larrenea** for making Douglas the warm, welcoming, energized place that it is, and to **Sharon Armistead**, **Sharen Crooks**, and **Laurie Maylander** for the behind the scenes magic that happens day after day.

**Kathy Clifford** and the kitchen staff deserve a huge thank you for serving hot, delicious meals to our hungry children all year long. **Aaron Foley** and **Stylianous Kounalakis** polish and shine, always with a smile. Our nurses, **Diann Oster** and **Tory Reierson**, are always there when our kids need them most. And **Sasha DeMello** and **Sue Stewart** teach our children to love books and reading—a priceless gift, indeed. A big Douglas *thank you* to all of you!

And, finally, the PTO has to say good-bye to a few of this year's beloved Board members, as they graduate from Douglas. Through our tears we bid farewell to:

- **Jen Aufiero**, our dynamic number-crunching Assistant Treasurer, Veterans Day Chair, and Ice Cream Social Pizza Room Coordinator, and past Movie Night, Box Tops, and Back-To-School Luncheon Chair.
- **Laura Fay**, our trusted Book Fair Chair and dedicated Nature Walk Liaison.
- **Martha Papalia**, energetic Hospitality Co-Chair, Interschool Council Representative, and Directory Ad Sales Chair, and of course indefatigable PTO Co-Chair.
- **Lori Fassman**, our pillar of technological and organizational genius! It would take the entire Digest to list her many hats, but here are a few: She helped to build the PTO website and create many of Douglas' communications channels, ran the Baking Committee, handled Publicity, created the Yearbook, and was our Volunteer Coordinator. Lori—and all of our volunteers—will always be a part of Douglas.

And finally, a personal note from Karen: I have bittersweet feelings about letting go of the woman who has been my partner in crime for the last 12 months. I expected to learn the ropes from you, Eileen, and I did. You have been a tireless leader and mentor, and Douglas School is all the better for it. At the same time, I have been privileged to witness your grace and compassion on countless occasions, and I am all the better for it. Thank you for the opportunity, and thank you for your friendship. Now, as we let Eileen return to some level of normalcy in her life, I am thrilled to welcome our incoming co-chair, Abigail Vargus, who brings equally wonderful gifts and talents. I was lucky coming into this role, and it would appear my luck continues. See you in the fall!

*Karen Jarsky, Eileen Matarese, and Abigail Vargus*

### The PTO Takes It on the Road

Each year, the PTO typically uses some of the funds we have raised to give a gift to the school. This year we tried a bold experiment, and we think it's working. Thanks to your generosity, we were able to fund or subsidize every field trip. Museum of Science? *Funded*. Pequot Museum? *Funded*. Old School Day? *Funded*. Concord Museum? *Funded*. Discovery Museum? *Funded*. Drumlin Farm? *Funded*. You get the idea. And because of your generosity this year, we'll be able to continue subsidizing most field trips next year, too. Your ongoing support of the Annual Giving campaign will help ensure that we can take this program much further into the future.

The Annual Giving program only works because of you (and it's never too late to make a donation!). Years ago, the PTO made a decision to cut back on fundraisers; rather than asking you to help your child sell wrapping paper or coupon books or popcorn or candles, we simply ask that you give what you can to Annual Giving in the fall, and consider bidding on a few items at our Spring Social and Auction. And you know what? That works out pretty well for us. Thank you all for another year marked by generosity and kindness.

## Summertime!

Summer hasn't even started yet, and already we're telling you what to think about for fall? Yup, it's true. But this is great information, so please read on! (Most of these links are not active yet, but will be highlighted on the PTO website when they are.)

- Moving within Acton? New email address or cell number? Update emergency contact info in PowerSchool (<https://absis.ab.mec.edu/>).
- Complete the online Volunteer Survey when it is open in late August (the link will be available via email and PowerSchool, as well as on the PTO site).
- Mark your calendar! On **Thursday, August 21**, at 12 noon, your child's class placement will be available online via PowerSchool. Note that you need to create an account if you haven't already. After you complete the emergency forms and PTO survey, class placement should appear. Class lists will be available at noon on Thursday, August 28.
- Check the PTO website for the "Back to School Checklist" that will help you keep track of "parent homework" at the start of the school year.

**Keep in touch:** If you aren't receiving weekly email announcements from the PTO, join the list (or update your email address) by sending email to [technology.secretary@DouglasSchoolPTO.org](mailto:technology.secretary@DouglasSchoolPTO.org). (The email won't be weekly over the summer, but there may be timely news.) These emails are a great way to keep up with what's going on at school all year long. They include reminders of when report cards are available, when school picture day is scheduled, which current activities need volunteers, and much more.

You can also join our Facebook page, which is a neat way to hear stories and see photos of what's going on at Douglas.

Have a wonderful summer vacation!

## Energy Detectives

For the last two years, Mrs. Savage has engaged her second graders in energy conservation work at Douglas. Kate Crosby (Energy Advisor) demonstrated to the students the differences in the three types of light bulbs. The students created this chart for your reference. We hope this easy-to-read chart "lights" up the need for LED.

FYI, the Acton and Boxborough public libraries have free, easy-to-use kilowatt meters to lend. Check one out and have fun being an energy detective at home.

Type of bulb	Incandescent	CFL: Compact Fluorescent	LED: Light Emitting Diode
Energy use	Uses a lot of energy: 60 watts	16 watts	14 watts
Mercury content	Puts a lot of mercury into environment: "Mercury Villain"	Has a small amount of mercury in it: Recycle	"Mercury Hero"
Heat	Hot	No	No
Lifespan	Short life...Breakable	800 hours...Breakable	25,000 hours...Durable

**Save the Date!**

The Spring Social and Auction will be held March 21, 2015. See you there!

## A Truly Fond Farewell, Sharon Armistead

Sometime in the early 1980s, a wonderful thing happened to Douglas School: **Sharon Armistead** took a job in the Main Office. Like so many of us, the Armisteads came to Acton for the schools. Sharon and her husband Glenn bought their house in Indian Village in 1975 and chose Douglas for their two daughters. She volunteered at the school, and the principal at the time (Bill Sparks) knew a good thing when he saw it—he offered her a part-time job. In time she accepted a full-time job and the rest, as they say, is history.

As you may have heard, Mrs. Armistead will be retiring at the end of this school year. Selfishly, we are incredibly sad to say good-bye. But she has wonderful plans, including travel (Arizona! California! Europe! Take us with you!) and time with her family, including her four grandchildren. She is also looking forward to taking on the role of family archivist as she organizes family photos, including some that go back more than a few generations. She has no immediate plans to leave Acton permanently, so perhaps we can entice her back to next year's Ice Cream Social—one of her very favorite Douglas events.

Mrs. Armistead told us she will especially miss our children, the Douglas staff, and the families that make our school so special. She'll miss, as she put it, "making people feel welcome and comfortable"—something she does so well. She told us, "It has been my privilege and a sheer joy to work with the staff and help the kids and families for this many years." Mrs. Armistead, it has been our privilege and a sheer joy. We wish you all the best in the years to come. You will always be a part of Douglas School.

## Best Wishes, Maura Sharp "Born to Teach"

Join us in wishing Mrs. Sharp well as she prepares to retire after 15 years teaching at Douglas. (In fact, she has been at all five Acton elementary schools as an assistant, teacher, or parent!) We will long remember the rich traditions of her "Sharpies" (her affectionate name for her 5th grade students) including the detailed autobiographies, her scrumptious Good Luck Cookies she would bake before tests, her hot chocolate treat on the first snowfall, and her generous collections and deliveries of non-perishable items for the Acton Food Pantry. Mrs. Sharp also shared her musical talents of singing and guitar playing by serenading each student on their birthday. Thank you for being an inspiration to the staff, children, and families of Douglas—you will be missed. May your next chapter include traveling, music, and the joy of your family and friends.

## Only 290 Days Until the Next Spring Social and Auction!

**March 21, 2015**, might seem like a long way away, but it will be here before we know it. We'll be hosting a preliminary planning meeting over the summer to brainstorm ideas and get the ball rolling. If you'd like to join the fun (there might be ice cream involved, is all we're saying), send Karen Jarsky an email ([ptokaren@gmail.com](mailto:ptokaren@gmail.com)) and we'll add you to the list.

## Newcomers' Welcome, Thursday, August 28

This event is a wonderful Douglas tradition where current parents and students introduce our newest community members to a little Douglas hospitality. If you would like to help out with this important event—especially if you were once a newcomer yourself!—please contact Karen Jarsky ([ptokaren@gmail.com](mailto:ptokaren@gmail.com)). (Note that this event is for families with children in grades 1–6. The kindergarten orientation takes place separately.)

## **Dates to Remember**

### **Thursday, June 5**

Spring band concert (Douglas and Gates), ABRHS auditorium, 7 PM

School Committee meeting,  
RJ Grey library, 7 PM

### **Friday, June 6**

Last day to return library books

### **Friday, June 13**

Last day to check lost and found

### **Saturday, June 14**

Lowell Spinners, 5 PM

### **Wednesday, June 18**

Grade 6 Graduation, 9:45 AM

Followed by reception

Last day of school!

Thursday dismissal schedule

### **Thursday, June 19**

Douglas Day at Canobie Lake Park

### **Tuesdays, beginning July 8**

Douglas free concert series, 6–8 PM

### **Thursday, August 21**

Class placement available online  
after 12 PM at PowerSchool  
(<https://absis.ab.mec.edu>).

### **Monday–Friday, August 25–29**

Douglas vacation camp

### **Thursday, August 28**

New family orientation

### **Tuesday, September 2**

Back to school staff luncheon

Kindergarten orientation

### **Wednesday, September 3**

First day of school! (early schedule)

### **Tuesday, September 9**

Back-to-School Night

- 6–6:45 PM: Grades 3–4
- 7–7:45 PM: Grades 5–6

### **Monday, September 15**

Photo Day

### **Tuesday, September 16**

Back-to-School Night

- 6–6:45 PM: Kindergarten
- 7–7:45 PM: Grades 1–2

### **Saturday, March 21, 2015**

Spring Social and Auction



Join the **Douglas Elementary School** group!

## **Douglas PTO Board 2014–2015**

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Abigail Vargus

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## **Farewell and Fond Memories**

As we prepare for another school year to end, we want to bid a fond farewell to the 38 families who will be departing the Douglas community once their children graduate this month. On behalf of the PTO, we would like to thank you for all of your support and participation over the many seasons we've shared together. The entire Douglas family will miss you.

Jennifer/Jeff Aufiero  
Lisa/William Brandon  
Maryanne/Gary Chase  
Nicole/Andrew Chi  
Lori Fassman/David Cohen  
Laura/David Fay  
Inna/Alexei Frisman  
Hazel/Richard Gardner  
Sarah Peng/Donald Gearey  
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Soo Lee-Martone/Dino Martone  
Martha/Jim Papalia  
Tahmineh Kaviani/Behnam Parsaei  
Myra/Reginald Pinpin  
Tamara/Sal Ricciardone  
Elaine/Brian Rowles  
Lynn/John Schalago  
Paulette/Markus Stout  
Isabelle/Arnaud Thourot  
Marcia/Sean Towey  
Alyssa Bozian/Domenic Urdi  
Krithika Venkitasubramony/Venkita  
Varadaraja  
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