

# DOUGLAS DIGEST

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PTO: <http://www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org>

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## Douglas Digest

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The Douglas School PTO publishes the Digest seven times each school year.

**Next issue: October 13.**

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

with helpful announcements and timely messages) by emailing [technology.secretary@DouglasSchoolPTO.org](mailto:technology.secretary@DouglasSchoolPTO.org) or by visiting [www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org](http://www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org) and clicking on the "Communications" tab.

To make this year the best it can be, we hope that you will find a way to be involved at 21 Elm Street. There are dozens of activities and programs, both academic and social, that benefit from the generosity of parents and grandparents as well as the continued support of Douglas staff. The PTO's goal is to enhance the school experiences of all our students and families, and we can only do that with your help!

Believe it or not, it takes approximately four volunteer hours per child to make all the Douglas School and PTO programs run. Thank you to all of you who have taken a first step toward helping us with those hours by filling out the volunteer survey when you updated your emergency contact info on PowerSchool. If you haven't yet, please do so by September 16. We use your answers, the PTO website, and our Eagle Eye Weekly emails to help us fill roles and keep our creative and talented families engaged. Thank you so much for doing what you can. We truly appreciate all the time and effort that goes into making Douglas such a wonderful place for our children to learn and grow!

We also hope that you'll come to our PTO meetings. Our first general meeting is **Monday, September 21, 7:30pm**. Superintendent Glenn Brand is tentatively scheduled to introduce himself to the Douglas community, so don't miss it! You can also find a full schedule of PTO meetings on the [DouglasSchoolPTO.org](http://DouglasSchoolPTO.org) site under "About Us." Our meetings are casual, and everyone is always welcome!

But, most of all, please don't hesitate to contact us, the co-chairs, with any questions, ideas, or suggestions. We're excited to spend the year with you!

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2015-2016 PTO Cochairs

## From the PTO

Welcome back! If your summer was anything like ours, it flew by—full of fun, sunshine, and maybe not quite enough days. Lucky for us we have a school as amazing as Douglas to return to this fall, or else September would've been really rough!

First things first: Please remember to sign up for the PTO's Eagle Eye Weekly (our Sunday email, which is filled

## Way of Being

On my summer trip to South Africa I learned that the religion of the Zulu people is a combination of Christianity and Polytheism. The Zulu would only say about this that all things have spirit and must be respected. They don't think about it much because it is so deeply woven into a Way of Being in the World.

All around the South African bush communities are woven baskets containing arrangements of rocks and flowers—small, beautiful works of art that are left as reminders of the spirit surrounding the community. During the day, people walk over the baskets; chickens and antelope and dogs eat the contents. By day's end, the art is scattered, littering the paths and roads. So much care and thought and beauty gone to waste. But a Zulu woman laughed when I expressed my concern. "Ah, you have such a Western mind," she said. "The finished basket is not important—it goes back into the compost of the world. What's important is the state of mind one has while making the basket. We Zulu think of this as our Way of Being in the World—a way of engaging life."

In a way, the Way of Being at Douglas School is the most important and least tangible thing that we teach. It is as if each piece of schoolwork that a child creates is one Zulu basket. Every morning our students go "shopping." They sort through odds and ends of math facts. From the scraps of the barrels of essays they write, they find phrases and thoughts. From the playgrounds they collect bits of speech. Every day they lay out a collection of skills and content to construct academic sculptures.

The true test of this student art is not whether it can be admired, sold, or collected for a portfolio. That's the way the Western art world usually operates. The real student art was the state of mind required to see possibilities in the odds and ends around them, to find a way to make art out of them, and to have, at the end, the working memory of the skills and creative imagination to use the next time they make art.

Wealth lies not in the stuff you make. It's in doing simple things as well as possible. It is in our Way of Being.

*C. Whitbeck*

## Special Thanks

Oh, there's nothing so shiny as the Douglas hallways two days before school starts. From floor to ceiling, it's a sparkling wonder, courtesy of the amazing Aaron Foley, Stylianos Kounalakis, and Frank DeSilvio. They turned the Douglas of June 25 into the gleaming campus of September 2. We're so lucky to have them—summer, fall, winter, and spring!



[www.facebook.com/groups/CTDouglasActonMA/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/CTDouglasActonMA/)

## Notes from the Office—

### Policy and Process Quick Guide

**Absent/tardy:** If your child will be absent or late, please use the online form at [Safe.DouglasSchoolPTO.org](http://Safe.DouglasSchoolPTO.org). You may also call Safe Arrival at 978.266.2566. (Please use the online form or the Safe Arrival line—telling your child’s teacher is not sufficient.)

**Tardy:** When children are tardy, they need to come to the office to get a Tardy Slip before going to class. This allows the office to know the child is in school (and to remove their name from the “absent” list). It also shows the teacher that the student has checked in with the office. In order to avoid disturbing the classroom activities, please do not take your child to his/her class.

**Dismissed early:** If your child is being dismissed during the school day, come to the office to sign out your child; do not go to the classroom. Let the office know if your child will be gone for the remainder of the day or will return, and please sign your child out in the “Sign Out” log-book, outside the office doorway.

**Returning to school:** If your child returns later in the day, they need to come to the office to obtain a Dismissed/Returned Slip before going to their classroom. Please do not take your child directly to the classroom. (If your child is out of school, he or she is considered absent while gone. If we don’t know your child has returned to school, your child will be listed as out from the time they left.)

**Parking:** Do not park in or drive through the bus area during arrival or dismissal times. Also, please do not park in the circular area near the dumpsters. This is for quick pick-up/drop-off only. If your child’s class is having a special function first thing in the morning, please park on Agawam or at the Elm Street tennis courts to leave parking spaces for staff. When you park on Agawam, please park on one side only, and after both No Parking signs. The Acton Police will ticket if cars are parked on both sides of the street.

**Dismissal changes:** If your child is taking a different bus, use a bus pass. Please refer to the updated bus pass policies at [www.ABSchools.org](http://www.ABSchools.org). Kindergarten students are not allowed to use a bus pass. If your child is not taking a bus, use a walker pass. Sign out your children at the Douglas office if they are using a walker pass. Bus and walker passes are on the PTO site (under Forms) and the Douglas site (the Forms page is under Families)

**CORI forms:** If you will come into contact with children as a volunteer at school or school events, you must have a valid CORI form on file with the district office. We are in the first year of our three-year cycle. If you have not filled out a CORI in 2015, please stop by the office to fill out a form and show a photo ID before you want to volunteer. (You must turn in your form in person. CORIs can take two weeks or more to process.) Please visit the “Get Involved” tab on the PTO website, and click on “Resources” for more information. Please call the office (978.266.2560) to ask any questions about these procedures.

**No more app:** The Douglas app is no longer supported. Please do not use the app for passes, absences, or other information.

### Food Service Tidbits

Lunch (entree, milk, fruit, and vegetable) costs \$2.75; milk alone costs 50¢. Gluten-free lunches are available with advance notice. Menus are sent home monthly in backpacks and are available online. See detailed food service news at [www.abschools.org/departments/food-services](http://www.abschools.org/departments/food-services).

Acton schools use a prepayment system for school lunch purchases. All students have their own lunch account; they enter the number at the register to purchase food or milk. If you don’t know your child’s lunch ID, log into PowerSchool, where the lunch ID appears on the My Class Schedule page. (Younger students will receive help in the beginning, but we encourage students to know their lunch ID to expedite the process.) To prepay money to your child’s lunch account, you can send cash or check to the cafeteria manager or log into ParentOnline and use a credit card. Forms and links are available at the Douglas PTO website. You can also apply online or via paper for free or reduced-price lunch: [www.abschools.org/departments/food-services/free-reduced-lunch](http://www.abschools.org/departments/food-services/free-reduced-lunch).

### PTO and School Email Announcements

The PTO and Douglas School communicate through the following methods:

- Email: The Eagle Eye Weekly and the Blackboard Connect system
- Websites: PTO ([www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org](http://www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org)) and Douglas School ([douglas.abschools.org](http://douglas.abschools.org))
- Paper: backpack flyers and the Douglas Digest

Please make sure you are receiving each kind of email, so that you don’t miss important and useful information.

**EAGLE EYE WEEKLY:** The PTO technology team sends weekly emails on Sundays. Each message includes important information about what is happening that week at school. New items appear at the top of the email, with reminders following. These weekly email messages, with other midweek messages on a minimal as-needed basis, are the PTO’s primary communication channel.

**Are you getting it?** We do not automatically use email addresses from the PowerSchool emergency contact database or any other source. Thus, it is important for Douglas families to alert the technology team to join the PTO email list if you are new to Douglas or to change an email address. If you need an old email address removed from the list, email the technology team at [technology.secretary@douglasschoolpto.org](mailto:technology.secretary@douglasschoolpto.org) with your new address and your children’s grade levels. If at any time you would prefer not to receive the weekly emails, you may use the “Safe Unsubscribe” choice at the bottom of the messages.

**BLACKBOARD CONNECT** (not from PTO): Dr. Whitbeck occasionally sends email with news of special interest. These email messages arrive in your inbox from Douglas Elementary School via Blackboard Connect. They are related to the school or community. These communications are meant to help families feel connected and informed.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact us.

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## Spotlight: Douglas School PTO Mythbusters!

I'm a scaredy-cat when it comes to social occasions. I know I'm not the only one who has looked at the calendar for months, skipping PTO meetings because I wasn't sure how I'd feel there. Well, here's something I can guarantee: No matter who you are, you'll fit right in!

Here are some facts about the PTO that prove just how diverse we are!

**Myth #1: Moms only.** Seriously? We've got three dads on the board alone! Volunteering and social occasions are great places to meet other dads and grandparents, too.

**Myth #2: Stay-at-homers only, please.** I mean, puh-lease. All four PTO officers have jobs outside the home (most full time, even). The PTO is a supplement, not our sole purpose.

**Myth #3: If we don't know you, we don't want you.** Nothing could be further from the truth. One of the best parts of the PTO is that it gives all of us a chance to meet new people, make new friends, and make a difference to the school in the process. Every year, dozens of new volunteers join us, spanning every grade.

**Myth #4: Thousands upon thousands of hours per volunteer.** No way. The reason why the Douglas School PTO can support the school so successfully is because so many people do what they can, in increments as small as a half-hour.

**Myth #5: Physical presence required.** We have volunteers whose work is done entirely from home (think computer, baking, and organization skills). Just because the benefit goes to 21 Elm St, it doesn't mean *you* have to go there!

**Myth #6: Toddlers get in the way.** Wait—those are future Douglas grads you're talking about! From Safe Arrivals to Snack Cart, library to book fair, younger sibs can often be seen "volunteering" and getting to know the halls of our school. Visit the PTO website for a sortable list of volunteer roles that you can fill with sibs in tow.

After all that, there is one universal truth about the PTO volunteers at Douglas School: They are awesome. The cochairs, committee chairs, teachers, staff, and administration really do appreciate the many ways that you come forward and make things happen! If you haven't had a chance to be part of this awesome community, please email our volunteer coordinator Anna McHargue (annackahn@hotmail.com) and join in.

*Abigail Vargus, PTO Co-chair*

## Staffing Changes

The new school year brings some exciting changes to Douglas faculty and staff. **Mrs. Kim Shamah** will take **Mrs. Anne Corkery's** place in half-day kindergarten. But you won't have to look far to find Mrs. Corkery, who is taking over the fifth-grade classroom of **Mrs. Jennifer Rand**, who retired this summer. In sixth grade, **Mrs. Melissa Hubbell** has returned from maternity leave (welcome back!).

A new gym teacher, **Mrs. Kathleen Ammendolia**, has taken over for **Ms. Nicole Emby**. **Mrs. Carmen Calderon-Lopez** is our new school psychologist, replacing **Dr. Evelyn Harriot**, and **Mr. Roberto Soto-Garcia** is our new ELL teacher, in place of **Mrs. Natalia Kaghshvili**. We're also lucky enough to add a new member to the special education team, **Mrs. Betsy Johnston**.

**Mrs. Heather Lammey** has joined our ranks of assistant teachers, along with **Mrs. Gail Dow**, back from leave, and we have two new SPED assistants, **Ms. Carolyn Douglas** and **Mr. Christopher Moroney**.

Two familiar faces have new names, too: Room 3 now looks to **Mrs. Amy (Browne) Maciel**, and the library is graced with the presence of **Ms. Sasha Opel**.

Welcome to all of our new professional staff and new assistants who are joining our community. We look forward to a wonderful year!

## From the Health Office: Guidelines for Keeping Sick Children Home from School

Each day many parents are faced with a decision: Should they keep their sick children at home or send them off to school? Often the way a child looks and acts can make the decision an obvious one. Please consider the following guidelines when deciding:

**Fever.** Fevers are generally a sign of illness/infection. Your child should stay home if his/her temperature is 100° F or above. A student should not return to school until their temperature has been normal (97–99° F) for at least 24 hours.

**Cold, Cough, Sore Throat.** Most children can attend school with cold symptoms as long as they do not have a fever. If your child has a cold with a fever over 100° F, he/she should be kept at home and your healthcare provider should be consulted. Your child should also stay home if they have greenish nasal discharge or cough production. A sore throat with a fever, swollen glands, headache, stomachache, or rash may indicate strep. You should consult your child's doctor for evaluation. If strep is confirmed, your child may return to school after 24 hours of antibiotics, if they feel better.

**Stomachache, Vomiting, Diarrhea.** A child with vomiting and/or diarrhea should be kept at home until symptoms have resolved for at least 12 hours. Your child also needs to be able to eat and drink normally before returning. Consult your doctor if you suspect dehydration.

**Red Eyes.** Your child should stay home if he/she has red eyes that itch and/or have a crusty discharge. Consult your doctor for evaluation of possible conjunctivitis. Your child may return to school after 24 hours of antibiotic treatment.

**Pain.** *Earache:* Consult your doctor if your child complains of ear pain. *Toothache:* Consult your dentist. *Headache:* If headaches are frequent, you should consult your doctor. Dehydration, stress, and fatigue can cause a headache.

**Rash.** A rash is usually a sign of a viral illness. It also may be a reaction to medication, plants, or chemicals such as soaps or detergents. If your child has an unusual rash or it is associated with a fever, contact your doctor.

A sick child cannot learn effectively and is unable to participate in classes in a meaningful way. Keeping a sick child home prevents the spread of illness in the school community and allows the child opportunity to rest and recover. For more information about the AB health policies, including forms (medication permission forms, asthma and Epiplan plans, etc.), click on the "Health Office" link at Douglas.ABSchools.org's Families menu.

**Please remember, a sick child belongs at home.**

## Dates to Remember

The calendar on the Douglas website is regularly updated with important events, times, deadlines, and other details.

### Tuesday, September 8

Open House/Back to School Night  
6–6:45pm: Grades 3–4  
7–7:45pm: Grades 5–6

### Friday, September 11

Summer Reading Logs due

### Monday, September 14

NO SCHOOL

### Tuesday, September 15

Open House/Back to School Night  
6–6:45pm: Kindergarten  
7–7:45pm: Grades 1–2

### Thursday, September 17

Acton Boxborough Regional School Committee Meeting, 7pm  
RJ Grey Jr High Library

### Friday, September 18

Deadline to submit info and order a directory

### Monday, September 21

Walk for Peace

### Monday, September 21

General PTO Meeting, 7:30pm, Douglas cafeteria  
(See the full schedule of PTO meetings on the PTO website)

### Wednesday, September 23

NO SCHOOL

### Friday, September 25

Photo Day (rain date Friday, October 16)

### Thursday, October 1

First day of Snack Cart  
Acton Boxborough Regional School Committee Meeting, 7pm  
RJ Grey Jr High Library

### Monday, October 12

NO SCHOOL

### Friday, October 23

Ice Cream Social

SAVE THE DATE!  
**Saturday, April 2**  
Douglas Spring  
Social & Auction

## Confidential Financial Assistance Available

The PTO has funds set aside to ensure that no child or family ever feels unable to participate in a Douglas activity because of a financial barrier. This applies to everything from participating in fun events like the Ice Cream Social to purchasing required school supplies. To arrange for confidential financial assistance, you can contact a PTO cochair, a teacher, the counseling staff, or Dr. Whitbeck. You can remain anonymous outside the one person you choose to contact.

## Thanks from the PTO

No such thing as a quiet summer for Douglas! Our amazing families kept busy, and we have lots of thanks as a result.

**Sixth-Grade Graduation**—Amy Krishnamurthy and Karen Jarsky put together a beautiful and fun reception for all our graduates and their proud families.

**Canobie Lake**—Thank you, Rachel Meehan, for organizing another day of coasters, flumes, games, and fun!

**Lowell Spinners**—Mary Lavene and Barbara Green made it possible for Douglas to cheer the Spinners on a gorgeous evening at LeLacheur Park.

**PTO Website**—Thanks to Sharon Metzger, the PTO website is now up to date and full of timely and useful back-to-school information.

**Volunteer Survey**—Jason Fitzgerald got our annual volunteer survey up and running to help us find out how you would like to pitch in at Douglas throughout the year.

**Campus Cleanup**—We are so grateful to Hayley Reynolds, our fearless gardening leader, who single-handedly took on Campus Cleanup Day and made the grounds weed-free and beautiful for the first day.

**Newcomer Orientation**—Thank you to Christina West for making sure that all the new families transferring to Douglas were welcomed warmly!

**Back-to-School Luncheon**—Michele Walsh and Lisa Jensen-Fellows coordinated a delicious potluck lunch for Douglas staff and faculty to welcome them back to work the day before school opens.

*Abigail Vargus and Annie Hamill*  
PTO Cochairs

## Verify Your Emergency Info

You must verify emergency contact information for each of your children in PowerSchool, even if everything is the same as last year: <https://absis.ab.mec.edu/public/>. Please make sure the info is correct on *each child's tab*. If you have trouble logging into PowerSchool, contact the Douglas office.

**Urgent  
Reminder**

## Volunteer Survey

A link to the Douglas volunteer survey is available when you log into PowerSchool, along with the 5-digit family ID you need to enter into the survey. (The link to the survey is also available on the PTO website.) Complete the volunteer survey once per family, not per child. If you have questions about this process, contact Jason Fitzgerald (fitz1j@gmail.com).

## Snack Cart News

Snack Cart will continue to run every Thursday (early release and full day), beginning Thursday, October 1. Snacks cost 25 cents, popcorn 50 cents. In an effort to increase healthy options and lessen donation requests, popcorn will now be offered every first and third Thursday. Please keep an eye on backpacks for a flyer later this month with the Snack Cart schedule and other helpful info.