

# DOUGLAS DIGEST

office: 978.266.2560  
principal: Dr. Christopher Whitbeck  
school: <http://douglas.abschools.org>  
PTO: <http://www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org>

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## Douglas Digest

### Editors:

Sharon Metzger  
Jill Maxwell

### Distributors:

Michele Walsh  
Sarah Protopov  
Robin Curley

The Douglas School PTO publishes the Digest seven times each school year. **Next issue: January 11.**

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

## *There Simply Are No Shortcuts*

The attacks in Paris have me thinking again about how we talk to our children about violence, hatred, and the terrible things that people do. There is a renewed urgency to these difficult conversations and I am beginning to realize that there are no secret, easy ways to talk with our children. There simply are no shortcuts.

A friend sent me the link to the YouTube video of a very young French boy and his father talking to a reporter the day after the attacks.

The reporter asks: Do you understand why they did that?

The boy responds: Yes, they are really

mean. Bad guys are not very nice...They have guns—they can shoot us because they are really really mean.

The father comforts the boy: It's OK, they might have guns but we have flowers.

The boy: But flowers don't do anything.

Father: Of course they do, look, everyone is putting flowers [where people died]. It's to fight against guns.

The boy feels better, but I felt uneasy. I know that flowers could never bring an end to this conflict. I'm not sure what could. I know that there simply are no shortcuts.

Then I saw the powerful reaction that people had to the French bombings in Syria. Some people cheered, others cried. I thought of that child and his simple belief in flowers. There are other people that I know who believe that there are powerful people in the world who could stop this without breaking a sweat. It is easy to think that if ISIS members were identified and vaporised, the murder would end. Airstrikes can destroy bodies, but they can't destroy beliefs. There simply are no shortcuts.

As I read more about conflict and our responses, I came across the Elie Wiesel quote, "The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference." We cannot be indifferent to world conflict. But what can we do to stop it? Again, a friend's text led me to the Dalai Lama who said in an interview with German media Deutsche Welle, "Let us work for peace within our families and society, and not expect help from God, Buddha, or the governments."

And then it dawned on me. We work at school every day to end this conflict. The way to talk to children about this conflict is to teach them how to understand others, practice empathy, respond not in anger but in inquiry, and do this *every day*. If we talk to children about our hatred of a people, or an idea, or even a neighbor who has wronged us, we ultimately teach hatred—hatred that we see spill over into school regularly. I hope that the young French boy from YouTube someday works to find out why the bad guys are really, really mean. We can only end this conflict by actively working to raise a generation of adults who take the time to understand what lies beneath conflict, young adults who take the time to understand how others see the world and act with understanding, not indifference or hatred. Only then do we have a hope of ending conflicts and attacks.

There simply are no shortcuts.

*C. Whitbeck*

## *From the PTO*

December already? As Topher Korke would say, *seriously?* Another school year is flying by—and with it so many fun moments, events, and opportunities. Luckily, for us at least, it seems that time slows down a little bit more around the winter break. We get a chance to stop, pay attention, and give appreciation to all the things that make life happy—which includes (drum roll please)... DOUGLAS! Here are some ways that you can be part of the happiness at Douglas:

**Donate!** It's not too late to make your 2015 tax-deductible donation to the PTO. We're looking at a couple of lean years ahead, and every penny will help us to continue supporting assistants and conducting the programs you care about.

**Matching Gifts!** Let us know if you work for a company that matches charitable donations! Contact the PTO assistant treasurer, Amy Lowe ([amymylowe@gmail.com](mailto:amymylowe@gmail.com)).

**Book Fair!** Come volunteer this week at the book fair. Shifts are only 25 minutes long, and it's a blast! (Find the sign-up link under "Volunteers Needed" on [www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org](http://www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org).) Shop for the holidays, enjoy the Family Fun & Author Night, and, if you're feeling generous, brighten a teacher's or specialist's day with something from their "wish bag."

**Grocery Shopping!** You'll never convince us that you're not going to the grocery store this holiday season. When you do, save and turn in your Box Tops, Labels for Education, and Donelan's/Crosby's receipts. Those tiny slips turn into cash for school!

**And More Shopping!** Don't forget to do your online shopping through Amazon Smile (search for CT Douglas), and every gift does double-duty: a present for your loved one, and a percentage back to our school.

**Volunteer!** The happiness at Douglas comes, in very large part, from the amazing volunteers who make so much happen. At home, in school, and around town—there are so many ways that you can be part of it. What are you waiting for? Send a note to [cochairs@DouglasSchoolPTO.org](mailto:cochairs@DouglasSchoolPTO.org) to get started!

And, while we're on the subject, thank you to all of you who give time, energy, money, baked goods, thought, and smiles to our school. The PTO would be nowhere without you!

—Abigail Vargus and Annie Hamill, PTO Cochairs

## Dates to Remember

**December 1–4**  
Book Fair

**Thursday, December 3**  
Family Fun & Author Night, 6:30pm

**Thursday, December 3**  
School Committee Meeting, 7pm

**Thursday, December 17**  
School Committee Meeting, 7pm

**December 24–January 3**  
Winter Recess

**Tuesday, January 12**  
School Council Meeting, 4pm

**Thursday, January 14**  
School Committee Meeting, 7pm

**Monday, January 18**  
MLK Day, No School

## Save These Dates

**Tuesday, January 26, 7pm**  
PTO General Meeting and Speaker Event

One of our main goals as parents is to teach our children how to be good citizens of the world. In the Hamill house, we even have a family motto: "Work hard and be kind." It sounds so simple, but kids need more than words to know what this means. Please join us, along with Nadine Briggs from How to Make and Keep Friends, who will speak with us—and give us tricks and techniques to show our kids that Kindness Counts and Manners Matter!

**Saturday, April 2**  
Spring Social & Auction in Maynard!

## Snack Cart Donations

See snack details on the PTO website.

December 3	Popcorn and Grade 1
December 10	Grades K and 6
December 17	Popcorn and Grade 5
December 24	No School
December 31	No School
January 7	Popcorn and Grade 4
January 14	Grades 2 and 3



## Eagle Eye Weekly

The PTO's primary communication channel is our weekly email, which contains important information about what is happening at school. You must **opt in** to get it; we do not automatically use email addresses from PowerSchool or any other source. Please contact the technology team at [technology.secretary@douglaschoolpto.org](mailto:technology.secretary@douglaschoolpto.org) if you are not getting these emails or would like to change your address!



## Spotlight: The Giving Spirit at Douglas

Our kids are lucky. They are in a community filled with spirit--not just the spirit they modeled at Spirit Day a few weeks ago (although that *was* pretty awesome), but with the spirit of giving. Even in the upper grades, they are excited when their dad gets to chaperone a field trip, and they smile when they see their mom in the library. Maybe that's why they're so quick to be part of the giving spirit too!

This year at Douglas, our students have already done a lot to make a difference for those around them. Here are just a few of the great examples of what has happened at our school.

The We Scare Hunger Drive ended with a lobby absolutely crowded with staples for the local food pantry. According to a United Way needs assessment, more than 20 percent of families in our community don't have the means to provide healthy meals at home, and the Acton Community Supper and Food Pantry is always short on supplies. They were thrilled to see the truck filled with 2,237 pounds of food for their clients.

That's not the only food Douglas students donated. This year, the fifth- and sixth-graders made 105 apple pies. The proceeds went to purchase gifts for underprivileged families, which is pretty fantastic. Not only that, they were able to donate 75 pies to the people at Hogan Regional Center, a home for disabled adults.

Just before Thanksgiving, the Gates School PTO held a coat drive to provide warm winter clothing for local families, with the help of the town social worker. Douglas was lucky enough to partner with them, bringing in more than 400 coats, mittens, and other warm necessities for the people who need it most.

Thank you to everyone who inspires giving at Douglas, and may your holiday season be filled with small acts of kindness.

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

Thanksgiving came and went, and we have so much for which to say thank you! The PTO has been fast and furious this fall, with many thanks for:

**Douglas Directory:** Sharon Metzger, Amy Austin, and Adriano Sabatelli—we've been told that we have the best directory around, and that's thanks to you!

**Gardening:** Thank you, Tom Reynolds, for noticing our campus needed a little tidying up and spending a Sunday afternoon blowing leaves. What a treat!

**Ice Cream Social:** Tiffany Prunesti, Karen Pierce, Eileen Matarese, Laurel Ghose, and Stacey Funk, along with nearly 100 volunteers, put on yet another smashing successful social.

**School Store:** Thank you to Judith Andrade, Kara Letourneau, Deanne O'Sullivan, and Christina West for getting the Eagle's Nest up and running—bringing joy and money skills to our fourth graders and the whole school every Tuesday and Friday.

**Snack Cart:** Thursday wouldn't be half as fun without the hard work of our Snack Cart

coordinators, Liz Schaller, Christina West, and Janice Yee, and their popcorn-poppin', treat-slingin', quarter-tradin' team.

**Thanksgiving Baking:** Thank you to our baking coordinator, Melissa Callaghan, and the many volunteers who lined the teacher's lounge with delectable treats for Douglas's 100 staff members to share with their families on Thanksgiving.

**Veterans Day Program:** A big salute to Jill Maxwell and Peter Broggi for this moving program, and to Idylwilde and Donelan's for donating treats for our honored guests.

We are grateful to so many people for making our school such a special place!

—Abigail and Annie

**Make Douglas part of your holiday giving!**  
**Scan this QR code to give now. Thanks!**

