

DOUGLAS DIGEST

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

September 9, 2016

Douglas Digest

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The Douglas School PTO publishes the Digest seven times each school year. **Next issue: October 17.**

We welcome ideas and feedback at jillhmaxwell@gmail.com.

email, which is filled with helpful announcements and timely messages) by emailing technology.secretary@DouglasSchoolPTO.org or by visiting www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org and clicking on the "Communications" tab. We have also subscribed you if you have indicated that you wish to receive PTO emails when you updated your PowerSchool preferences in August.

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 12. 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 Tuesday, September 20, at 7:30pm. You can also find a full schedule of PTO meetings at DouglasSchoolPTO.org 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!

Annie Hamill, ptoannie@gmail.com
Tracey Zachary, traceyzpto@gmail.com
2016-2017 PTO Co-chairs

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

I Don't Like Math

There, I've said it. "My name is Chris Whitbeck and I'm math phobic." I'm not alone. Currently three-fifths of U.S. students fail mathematics. There is also a clear racial and social economic divide in math¹. I learned this summer that it is probably not just that we math phobes have brains that don't do math, it is that we teachers have been teaching mathematics the wrong way.

Most of us see math as a performance subject. Learn the rules, apply them to solve the problem and move on. We don't think we are in math classrooms to appreciate the beauty of mathematics. We were never taught to look for connections—we're taught the rules to answer the questions correctly. However, research has recently shown that when students make a mistake in math, their brain grows, synapses fire, and connections are made. When they do the work correctly, there is no brain growth.² Brain growth comes from the experience of struggle; being outside our comfort zone is extremely important. Getting a problem wrong and thinking about it, struggling, making connections, and turning it over and over are very important.

When students spend all their time in math class answering discrete questions to which the answers are either right or wrong they will not develop the brain connections that allow them to grasp high-level ideas.³ Boaler⁴ gives a great example:

"When teachers ask students to find the area of a rectangle with sides of 12 feet and 2 feet, for example, students are being asked to perform a single calculation correctly. When teachers ask students to find a rectangle with an area of 24 square feet, students are being asked to use their imagination, to think; they need to consider various rectangles and think about the relationship between length and width.... In the first example students are answering a question on area; in the second they are learning about rectangles, dimensions, and area. If a mathematics question or task does not have space within it to think, learn, and discuss, its potential as a learning task is limited."

Instead of worksheets filled with short questions students get right or wrong, math classes need to be filled with open-ended tasks that include space for learning as well as space for struggle and growth. This is true in kindergarten through high school. It is true for multiplication facts and calculus. Other changes need to happen as well. Mathematics teachers need to stop frequent, timed testing; replace grades with diagnostic feedback; remove repetitive worksheets;^{3,5} and de-emphasize speed, so that the students who think slowly and deeply are not led to believe they are not capable. In fact, these students who are slower and less likely to apply rote rules are more likely to successfully continue in math given the correct teaching. This means there is hope for all of us math phobes.

This is what we will be thinking about as we pilot new math programs at Douglas this year. Changing our attitudes, beliefs, and skills as math teachers and learners is a lot to take on, but if we are thoughtful, and heed the advice of math teaching experts, we might just avoid producing the next generation of math phobes!

C. Whitbeck

1. Kozol, J. 2012. *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*. New York: HarperPerennial.

2. Moser, J., H. S. Schroder, C. Heeter, T. P. Moran & Y. H. Lee. 2011. "Mind Your Errors: Evidence for a Neural Mechanism Linking Growth Mindset to Adaptive Post Error Adjustments." *Psychological Science* 22: 1484-9.

3. Boaler, J. & D. Foster. 2014. "Raising Expectations and Achievement: The Impact of Wide Scale Mathematics Reform Giving All Students Access to High Quality Mathematics," <http://www.youcubed.org>.

4. Boaler, J. 2014. "Research Suggests That Timed Tests Cause Math Anxiety." *Teaching Children Mathematics* 86(4): 025-74.

5. Black, P., C. Harrison, C. Lee, B. Marshall & D. Wiliam. 2002. *Working Inside the Black Box: Assessment for Learning in the Classroom*. London: Dept of Education & Professional Studies, King's College.

Notes from the Office—

Policy and Process Quick Guide

Absent/tardy: Please use the online form at DouglasSchoolPTO.org if your child will be absent or late. 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 or 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 that 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. 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. (Kindergarten and first-grade students are not allowed to use a bus pass.) If your child is not taking a bus, use a walker pass. Sign out your child(ren) at the Douglas office if they are using a walker pass. Bus and walker passes are available at the school office, under “Forms” on the school and PTO websites.

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 second year of our three-year cycle. If you have not filled out a CORI in the current cycle, or are unsure about your CORI status, 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.

Food Service Tidbits

Lunchtime! The Acton schools use a prepayment system for school lunch purchases. All students have their own lunch account and 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 SchoolCafé 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: <http://www.abschools.org/departments/food-services/free-reduced-lunch>.

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. Detailed food service news at <http://www.abschools.org/departments/food-services>.

PTO and School Email Announcements

The PTO and Douglas School communicate through the following methods:

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

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 mid-week messages on a minimal as-needed basis, are the PTO’s primary communication channel.

Are you getting it? We will only subscribe an email address from the PowerSchool emergency contact database if you have indicated that you wish to receive PTO emails. If you have not done so, or if you would like to subscribe a different email address, it is important for Douglas families to alert the technology team at 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 sends email occasionally with news of special interest related to the school or community. These email messages, which come from Douglas Elementary School via Blackboard Connect, are meant to help families feel connected and informed.

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

*Annie Hamill and Tracey Zachary, PTO Co-chairs,
cochairs@douglasschoolpto.org*



Spotlight: Eagle Shopping Rewards!

You can easily raise funds for Douglas just by shopping. Here are all the details!

Tyson A+: Wherever you see the Project A+ chalkboard on your Tyson's bag/box, cut out the entire area and send it in. We

can earn 24 cents per label!

Box Tops for Education: Boxtops are found on various products, including General Mills, Kleenex, Land O'Lakes, and Progresso soups. Each is worth 10 cents to Douglas. Last year we earned over \$2,300, and we hope to surpass that amount this year.

Labels for Education: These labels are found on various products, including Campbell's and Pepperidge Farm, ranging in value from 1 to 100 points.

Receipts for Education / Donelan's and Crosby's Marketplace: This program has benefited Douglas greatly. We simply collect register tapes over a specific period of time, and then we receive points based on the totals on our receipts, which can be used to shop for items in their catalog. We have obtained iPads, cameras, school supplies, gym equipment, and more. Collection begins September 1!

So grab your scissors, save your receipts, and send in what you collect. Ask grandparents, friends, and neighbors to help collect labels, too! Everything can be sent via Backpack Express; they will find their way into our cubby outside the front office.

But wait—there's MORE!

Register your **Stop & Shop card** at www.stopandshop.com/aplus with the Douglas code (06713) to benefit the school each time you shop for groceries.

For those of you who prefer to shop online, don't forget about

Amazon Smile. When you shop on Amazon, be sure to use the smile.amazon.com link and select "CT Douglas School PTO" as the organization to support. Be sure to double-check your selection, as there is more than one Douglas elementary school out there!

Finally, be on the lookout in the spring for our **Willow Books** event.

Visit the "Shopping" tab at www.DouglasSchoolPTO.org for more information on all of these programs! If you have any questions, contact EagleRewards@DouglasSchoolPTO.org. Many thanks for all of your support!

Staffing Changes

The new school year brings some exciting changes to Douglas faculty and staff. **Mrs. Kim Shamah** has moved from kindergarten to first grade, **Mrs. Jamie Rickenbach** has moved from first grade to second grade, **Mrs. Anne Littlefield** has moved from second grade to fourth grade, and **Mr. Rip Cail** has moved from fourth to fifth grade.

We are happy to have **Mrs. Beth Warner** as our full-time art teacher. **Mrs. Harvest Stevenson** has joined Douglas as a full-time ELL teacher and **Mrs. Christine Fox** has joined us as a new SPED assistant. Mrs. Shamah has a new face in her classroom, as she's joined by **Mrs. Christine Barilone** as her classroom assistant. Our lunchroom will be in excellent hands with the addition of **Mrs. Stephanie Geraneo** in the cafeteria. In addition, **Ms. Kimber O'Connell** has joined Douglas, as well as the other elementary schools in the district, as the Behavior Specialist.

Welcome to all of our new members of our teaching community. We look forward to having 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 Epipen plans, etc.), click on the "Health Office" link at Douglas.ABSchools.org's Families menu, or go directly to the site at <https://sites.google.com/a/abschools.org/health-nursing-services/>.

Please remember, a sick child belongs at home.

Dates to Remember

Dates to Remember

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

Tuesday, September 6

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

Friday, September 9

Summer Reading Logs due

Tuesday, September 13

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

Thursday, September 15

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

Friday, September 16

Deadline to submit info and order a directory

Monday, September 19

Photo Day (rain date Friday, October 14)

Tuesday, September 20

Walk for Peace, 9am (Rain Date: Thursday, September 22)
General PTO Meeting, 7:30pm, Douglas cafeteria (See the full schedule of PTO meetings on the PTO website)

Monday, October 3

NO SCHOOL

Thursday, October 6

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

Monday, October 10-Wednesday, October 12

NO SCHOOL

Wednesday, October 19

National Unity Day—wear orange

Thursday, October 20

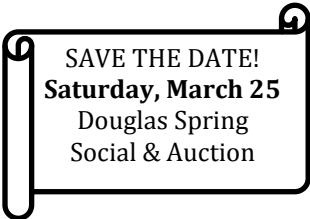
Acton Boxborough Regional School Committee Meeting, 7pm
RJ Grey Jr High Library

Friday, October 28

Ice Cream Social

Monday, October 31

Halloween Parade, 1:30pm



SAVE THE DATE!
Saturday, March 25
Douglas Spring
Social & Auction

Snack Cart News

Snack Cart will continue to run every Thursday (early release and full day), beginning on Thursday, October 6. Snacks will still cost 25 cents, popcorn is 50 cents. Continuing our effort to increase healthy options and lessen donation requests, popcorn will 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.

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—Karen Jarsky and Karen Pierce 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 Holly Fitzgerald and Jakki Eckmann, 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 took on Campus Cleanup Day and made the grounds weed-free and beautiful for the first day.

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

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

School Supplies - Many thanks to Stephanie Krantz for ensuring that many Douglas families could rest assured that all the supplies their students needed would be waiting for them on the first day of school.

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, please contact Dr. Whitbeck or Hilary Bonnell.

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/>. A link to the Douglas volunteer survey is available when you log into PowerSchool, along with the five-digit family ID you need to enter into the survey. Complete the volunteer survey once per family, not per child. If you have questions about the volunteer survey, contact Jason Fitzgerald (fitz1j@gmail.com).



Urgent
Reminder

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 David Kinzmaier. While we whiled away the summer hours, they turned the Douglas of June 22 into the gleaming campus of August 31. We're so lucky to have them—summer, fall, winter, and spring!