

## Principal Thoughts January 2006

When you were shopping for schools in Acton you probably attended the Douglas Kindergarten Tour and Kindergarten Evening. That's probably the last time that you thought about our Vision Statement.

Douglas School seeks to provide an enriching, safe and supportive environment in which we celebrate learning in a collaborative and caring community. We aspire to promote high standards for the academic and personal growth of students, staff and parents, always striving to nurture respect for our diverse individual needs and values.

I think about our vision statement all of the time. I especially think about this vision in the fall, when we start school, and in January, at the start of the New Year and the beginning of another Kindergarten Tour Season. I think about what makes Douglas different and why parents should choose Douglas for their children.

I hope that our vision of education provides one reason but I know that every school has a vision statement and they all seem to include certain ideas: improve student skills & hold high standards, create a safe environment, foster self-esteem & respect diverse needs, build collaboration, community, and life long learning. Douglas has most of these, and in comparison, our vision statement doesn't really stand out. It's probably not going to be the selling point that I had hoped.

Maybe people choose Douglas because of the building: the new lights in the gym, the new paint in the cafetorium, the new floors, carpets, and thermostats in the modulars...nah...surprisingly, it's probably something else.

Maybe it's our teachers – they are the most talented, dedicated, loving teachers that I have had the honor to work with. Oh, you've heard that when you went to all of the other four elementary schools? But at Douglas it's true! Okay, it's probably true everywhere in Acton. Well then, maybe it's our curriculum. We have a spiral curriculum that revisits concepts again and again. We do this in math, in writing, in reading. We know that it takes more than one quick introduction for a student to master a skill or a concept and we're continually revising and assessing our teaching based on the needs of our students. You've heard that too...at McCarthy Towne...Get Out!

I guess it is not simply any one of those things alone. Every school worth its while had better have a solid curriculum, excellent teachers, a clear vision of how it educates children, and a working physical plant. So what is it that makes Douglas stand apart? It is probably something different for each of you, and we LOVE that! In fact, our acceptance and celebration of diversity is at the core of the Douglas community.

But for me, Douglas stands apart because of our Seeds of Peace Walk. We have an amazing sense of social consciousness that I believe is unique to Douglas. Just look at all of the selfless community service performed by members of our community. I have never heard a student ask, "What do we get for making apple pies for the food pantry?" or "What do we get for volunteering at a daycare?" or "What do we get for collecting clothes for Boxing Day?" The list can go on and on. Douglas staff, students and the families that choose to send their children to Douglas understand that being a member of a community means being responsible for the success of

everyone. I see this on the playground, I see it in the classroom, I see it in our PTO functions, and I believe that our Seeds of Peace Walk is the cornerstone of this responsibility. We walk for peace because we know that we are responsible for peace. We each come to Douglas, students, parents, teachers, principals, assistants, and custodians because we want to participate in a collaborative, caring community. We know that we are responsible for not only our own success, we are responsible for the success of every member of our community. That's what attracted me to Douglas, What about you?

Sincerely,  
Dr. Whitbeck