



Glossary of Terms

The Downtown School

Welcome to The Downtown School (DTS)! Whether this is your first year--- or one of many--- we are glad to have you part of our school community. Our year-round schedule is not the only unique thing about our school; over the years we have developed an incredible culture that makes The Downtown School one-of-a-kind! Below you will find a listing of terms, phrases and overall practices at The Downtown School that may be helpful to you. If you notice other references that would be beneficial to add to this list, please do not hesitate to email the PTA at downtownschoolpta@gmail.com.

- **Adopt-a-Teacher Fund**

The PTA collects money throughout the year to support various needs our teachers have in the classroom. Dollars collected are distributed evenly and it is the best way to provide support throughout the entire school. You can donate anytime – just drop a check or an envelope of cash in the “PTA” box on the wall inside the front doors. Please make checks payable to “Downtown School PTA” and write “Adopt-a-teacher Fund” in the memo line.

- **All School Sing**

This is an even better version of a school assembly! Students at The Downtown School come together periodically to sing and celebrate learning at an All School Sing! Parents and other guests are invited and encouraged to come if available. Your attendance is not required, but students do enjoy seeing familiar faces throughout the year. All Schools Sings are held in a variety of places but most often in the Auditorium or Lower Gym of Central Campus. Be watching for dates to be shared in Mrs. Flickinger’s Falcon Files weekly email, on The Downtown School website or through communication from your child’s teacher.

- **The Auction**

Once every-other-year, the PTA hosts an auction which serves as a fundraiser and ultimately provides important supplies and support to DTS. The Auction is an adult-only event (in most cases Bright Horizons provides child care for a fee) that includes local events, trips, gift baskets, staff talents as well as an artistic rendering created by each class all being up for bid. In previous years the auction has raised as much as \$15,000 for our school and is all coordinated by volunteers with the PTA.

- **Balanced Literacy**

Our teachers use a balanced literacy framework in their classrooms. The components of balanced literacy include: read aloud, guided reading, shared reading, independent reading, interactive writing, shared writing, independent writing, and word study. A workshop format provides the structure for the framework (reading workshop and writing workshop) so the different needs of the students are being met on a daily basis.

- **Back to School Night/Family Picnic**

For years, the PTA has hosted a family picnic as a welcome back event for students and families. The event is typically held at Union Park in Des Moines complete with the PTA renting out the carousel. Families bring their own picnic (or drive thru) dinner if they wish, otherwise most students spend time chasing their friends, enjoying the carousel or riding on the rocket slide.

- **Barnes & Noble Event**

A great way to support the DTS Library - and get some holiday shopping done - is to participate in the Barnes & Noble event, coordinated by the PTA. During an identified day, customers mentioning DTS help secure a portion of the proceeds for our school AND all donations received for gift wrapping also add up to a gift card used to stock our library with the newest books for our students! Each year, approximately \$1,200 is earned for our school during this event so please consider purchasing at Barnes & Noble when you see the announcement!



Glossary of Terms

The Downtown School

- **Big Buddies**

Several classrooms at DTS have “Big Buddies”. This is when older students are paired with newer friends in an effort to acclimate them to the school and make their experience as wonderful as possible!

- **Book Character Day**

At The Downtown School students don’t dress up with a parade or classroom party for Halloween. Instead, parents and students let the creative juices flow for Book Character Day which happens every spring. Every student and member of the staff select a character from one of their favorite books and dresses up; it can be as extensive as you wish! Classes have their photos taken and there is an “All School Sing” that parents and other guests are invited to in order to see the official parade of characters.

- **Book Fair**

Around conference times, there is a Book Fair hosted in the Culminating Event room. Think “pop-up” bookstore! Volunteers staff the book fair so books can be purchased onsite. Hours are posted throughout the school and there are always times available to visit the book fair before school starts in the morning. Teachers also compile a “wish list” so as you are shopping for your child you can also choose to purchase a book for their classroom.

- **Book Swap**

Every Tuesday morning (from 7:50-8:15am), students and teachers organize a book swap. Students are invited to bring an age appropriate book they are finished with from home and swap it for a “new to them” book. Absolutely optional, it gives everyone an opportunity to find a new favorite book! Book swap is held in the lobby space between the library and the culminating event room.

- **Box Tops**

Students and families are asked to collect box tops throughout the year and bring them to school; you can put them into the labeled box sitting on the table inside the front door. For each box top collected, The Downtown School receives \$0.10 and that really adds up for our school; the funding is used to purchase supplies throughout the building including library books and recess/P.E. equipment. Start saving now for the exciting Iowa/Iowa State “Box Top Challenge” that happens at the beginning of each year.

- **Central Campus**

DTS is located on Central Campus of the Des Moines Public Schools. This complex is home to Scavo High School, Des Moines Alternative, Central Academy, ROTC, and other technical programs offered through Central Campus.

- **Culminating Event**

As a project-based school students focus on topics and do “deep-dives” that relate to all aspects of learning. As a way to share all that was learned, students participate in a culminating event where they each present aspects of the topic. Even first-year students will quickly learn presentation skills! Parents and other loved ones are invited and strongly encouraged to attend culminating events throughout the year so please be sure to block your calendar if possible as soon as your child’s teacher shares dates. (You may even want to bring the camera!) The Culminating Event Room at DTS is located in the main hall, on the right hand-side in room 1303. Most of the time, students will invite guests back to the classroom to see examples of projects and other work done as part of the project. If the culminating event falls immediately prior to lunch, many parents will take their child off campus for lunch.



Glossary of Terms

The Downtown School

- **The Downtown School (DTS)**

Other than being the greatest school in the universe, DTS is also unique to the Des Moines Public School District. DTS, in collaboration with parents and the business community, provides a diverse, experience-based learning environment where children learn- unencumbered by desks, grade levels or the limited information between the covers of a textbook. We are an open-enrollment school and have small class sizes, integrated curriculum, multi-age classes, experience-based, active learning, an extended school year and extensive parent involvement. Many teachers use the term “friends” instead of students so don’t be surprised!

- **The Downtown School Song**

We have an official school song and if you attend an All School Sing you will soon have it stuck in your head!

We work hard on our math, we work hard on projects- here at the Downtown School.

We read books, we have pets, we have many good friends- here at the Downtown School.

Moms and dads can come and visit us, business friends visit, too. We take trips out on the skywalk- at the Downtown School.

- **Drop-Off and Pick-Up Procedure:**

Our 9/10 year olds and their siblings should be dropped off and picked up in the back of the school. All other students should be dropped off and picked up in the front of the school in the circle drive. Typically younger sibling are dropped off with their older siblings. The pick-up and drop-off process flows smoothly when we all work together. Please have your child exit on the passenger side of the vehicle for safety.

- **Downtown School T-shirts**

Each fall DTS shirts will be for sale in a variety of colors/styles. Information will be sent home and through email announcements. As an official “Welcome to DTS,” the PTA provides one new shirt to every new student.

- **DMPS Mobile App**

The Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS) mobile app is designed to provide up-to-date and helpful information about the school district and DTS. You can receive news updates, announcements, a calendar of events, , breakfast/lunch menus and more. Many features allow you to “subscribe” to schools and receive announcements right on your device. To download, search Des Moines Public Schools in the App Store or on Google Play.

- **DMPS School Volunteer**

DTS is a school that thrives because of our dedicated parent (and loved-ones) volunteers! The Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS) has a policy that every individual volunteering with a school must be an approved DMPS volunteer. To find out more about this call Deb, our Office Manager at 515-242-8422 and she will direct you.

- **Falcon Files**

The Downtown School Principal, Mrs. Stephanie Flickinger, puts together the Falcon Files which will be emailed to parents every Friday (approximately). It provides a quick way to touch base with families so you know about upcoming events as well as major issues or happenings from the previous week. They are all archived on The Downtown School website. <http://downtownschool.dmschools.org/parents/downtown-school-dispatch/>

- **First-year, second-year**

Even though technically your child may be in kindergarten most people affiliated with The Downtown School will reference them as a “first-year” student. And, because they also are in shared classrooms you will hear “the 5/6 classroom” to signify what you would have traditionally called a “kindergarten/first grade” class. This practice extends through all grade levels.



Glossary of Terms

The Downtown School

- **Field Day**
Each June, students participate in Field Day. This is most often held at Brody Middle School and gives students the opportunity to participate in various outdoor activities. It's a fun time and parents are to join in the fun too! Be sure to send your child to school with sunscreen on and watch for details on lunch options as well.
- **Infinite Campus**
Des Moines Public Schools uses an online platform called Infinite Campus. This online portal is where you register your child and update important information for the school district.
<https://sis.dmps.k12.ia.us/campus/portal/desmoines.jsp>
- **Intercession**
Since The Downtown School is a year-round school there are various, approximately week long breaks that are called "intercessions." If you need care for your student during these times be sure to speak to Bright Horizons so you can coordinate well in advance.
- **Lunch at DTS**
There are three important things to know about lunchtime at DTS. First, hot lunch is served at DTS through DMPS and each day students most often have two lunch options to choose from. If planning to eat hot lunch, they will be asked by their classroom teacher to indicate their preference for lunch Choice A or B. Second, DTS does not have a cafeteria on site. Instead, there is a lunch area in the middle of the main hall and students eat in their classrooms. Parents and other loved ones are encouraged to stop in and eat lunch with students. Lastly, the lunch/recess period at DTS is one hour and that is purposeful. Parent engagement is a critical component to our school and that includes the opportunity for parents to take their children out to eat for lunch as well or join them in the classroom. Just be sure to use the student sign-out system located on the table by the front door!
- **Math at DTS**
The foundation of math education at The Downtown School is conceptually based. Students are engaged daily in mathematical reasoning and problem solving opportunities. Rather than initially teaching a set of procedures (algorithms) that we expect students to memorize, students are encouraged to find solutions using strategies that make sense to them. In addition, the students are expected to explain and justify their solutions. The teacher's role is to continually diagnose children's thinking and reasoning, which in turn guides students' mathematical growth. Through student sharing and teacher questioning, the goal is for each child to develop more efficient and sophisticated strategies as well as develop greater mathematical reasoning.
- **Movie Night**
The PTA hosts on occasion a Movie Night for DTS students and families. Most often held in the Auditorium, an age-friendly movie will play and food will be for sale. It's a great time to get to know other DTS families while having a relaxing night of fun with friends!
- **Original Art Works**
Every year, you will have the opportunity to see your child's artwork on mugs, t-shirts, calendars, phone cases and more. These customized items are great gift ideas and arrive just in time for holiday gift-giving. Watch for ordering information via email and backpack notes.



Glossary of Terms

The Downtown School

- **Parent Teacher Association**

DTS has a Parent Teacher Association referenced as the PTA. We invite and encourage all families to join in and support our efforts- annual dues are \$10 per family and the PTA also collects an activity fee for each student of \$15. Through the volunteers involved with the PTA, we provide our students with necessary equipment and engaging activities throughout the year- both inside and outside of the classroom. You can remain involved and updated through one of the following channels: the PTA emails (let us know if you need to be added (downtownschoolpta@gmail.com) or by attending PTA meetings held bi-monthly. Check the PTA website for specific dates: <http://downtownschool.dmschools.org/parents/pta/>

- **Parent Volunteer Coordinators**

Every classroom has at least one- sometimes two- Parent Volunteer Coordinators. Some seasoned DTS families call them PVCs. These volunteers help teachers coordinate additional volunteers, secure supplies, and communicate messages with other classroom parents. It's a good way to stay connected and help connect others!

- **Picture Day**

Each fall, the PTA coordinates Picture Day where every student is photographed for the yearbook! Be watching for order information; purchasing individual photos is optional.

- **Recess Volunteers & Lunch Monitoring**

DTS relies on parents to volunteer their time throughout the year and two specific options are as extra support for recess and lunch times. The PTA coordinates the sign-up process. Be watching the Falcon Files for updates or feel free to contact the school directly to volunteer your time!

- **School Fundraisers**

At DTS, students are not asked to raise money via endless catalog sales (selling magazines, pizzas, cookie dough, wrapping paper, etc.). Instead, we ask that families give generously during our few fundraising events through the year. Please help support The Downtown School with your donations. We have several options throughout the year that will be announced through Falcon Files, your child's teacher and through the PTA.

- **Snack time**

Depending on lunch schedules and classroom teacher preferences, many students at DTS have a snack time each day. Please remember to send healthy snacks adhering to peanut allergy restrictions for the classroom!

- **Student-led Conferences (Three-way Conferences)**

At The Downtown School, students lead the conferences, not the teachers. If you remember having your parents attend conferences and coming home to tell you about them think again! At DTS, conferences happen only if your student is present so be sure to bring the whole family along. It's a great opportunity for your child to share what they have learned, what they need additional support with and what their successes have been. Be watching for announcements from your child's teacher so you can sign up for a specific conference time. During conference time, parents also come together to provide snacks and meals for teachers. Be watching for opportunities to sign up to bring food- or money- to keep teachers well fed and hydrated during this busy time!

- **Twitter @dtwnfalcons**

Teachers and staff at DTS will tweet throughout the day about special events, learning opportunities and student collaboration in learning groups. Parents are encouraged to follow DTS to remain "in the know" and prepared for dinner time conversations!