



THE ULTIMATE (AND UNOFFICIAL) GUIDE

DURHAM FAMILIES

Updated 2024



Durham Dalmatian Family Summer Checklist

GET READY

- Confirm your student if fully registered for school:
<https://www.houstonisd.org/enroll>
- Purchase school supplies at durhampta.org/supplies
- Review the uniform guidelines and purchase uniforms
- Review the "What to Expect" posts in ParentSquare
- Attend a Summer Play Date
- Attend one of the school sponsored events leading up to school

GET CONNECTED

- Download the **ParentSquare** app and join the New to Durham group (email new@durhampta.org to join)
- Follow **Durham Elementary School PTA** on Facebook
- Follow **@durhamespta** on Instagram
- Check out our website at durhampta.org
- Email us when you need something at pta@durhampta.org

HELP OUR STUDENTS THRIVE!

Volunteer your time, talent or treasure

- **Sign up** to volunteer or donate your skills (no PTA membership required!) at durhampta.org/volunteer
- **Join** the Durham PTA in order to vote on spending, officers, and more at monthly meetings at durhampta.org/join
- **Sponsor** as a family or local business to support Durham in a big way at durhampta.org/sponsor.
- **Corporate** match information can be emailed to sponsorships@durhampta.org to double your contribution.

MAKE YOUR EVERYDAY PURCHASES COUNT

- Link your Kroger card to Durham Elementary School PTA
- Download the Box Tops for Education app and submit receipts
- Present Durham Elementary's school ID (70097774) when you shop at Office Depot



About the Durham Elementary PTA

The Durham Elementary PTA is a joint body of families and teachers working together to promote safe, diverse, and enriching lives for all students.

WHAT DOES THE PTA DO?

The PTA does a lot! But the activities can be summarized into 2 categories:

FUNDRAISING

The PTA raises over \$100,000 each year to support the school, including enrichment programs, school events, staff appreciation, technology upgrades and campus improvements. Because our teachers are the single most important part of our students' education, we set aside over \$10,000 in grants every year to reimburse their classroom out-of-pocket expenses, and another \$6,000 for teacher appreciation. From iFest to new smart boards, Hispanic Heritage night to the Durham Garden, our fundraising provides many of the 'extras' that you see on campus.

ENGAGEMENT & VOLUNTEERING

The PTA spearheads coordination of many extracurricular activities that enrich the lives of our students, teachers and staff. Spotty Olympics, campus beautification, book fairs, International Festival, and movie night activities are all populated by volunteers coordinated by the PTA. In the Durham Garden, students can bite into fresh produce they helped to grow. During STEAM week, volunteers coordinate school assemblies of scientists and artists that inspire everyone who attend. All made possible by our amazing body of volunteers!

WHAT HAPPENS AT PTA MEETINGS?

The format of our PTA meetings can be surprising to new members. We are a member of the Texas Parent Teacher Association, which means we follow strict bylaws as a non-profit organization. Monthly general PTA meetings have specific agendas, including reading the previous meeting's minutes, approving new budget items, and hearing reports from committee leads. **Many decisions and almost all of the work for the PTA happen outside of general PTA meetings**, usually at committee meetings. PTA meetings are great opportunities to meet other members, hear about upcoming events, and learn about opportunities to get involved.

HOW DO I GET INVOLVED IN A PTA COMMITTEE?

The best way to get involved is to contact us! We are always seeking new volunteers to help - and you don't even have to be a PTA member to contribute your time or talent. Email us, attend a PTA meeting, or look for PTA tables the first week of school to sign up.

Information will always be published in ParentSquare.



Welcome!

Congratulations on making the decision to join Durham Elementary! Let us be among the first to welcome you to the thriving and diverse community of families, teachers and students who work to make every child's potential a reality. This is truly a special community and we are thrilled to have you as part of it.

The Durham Parent Teacher Association (PTA) put together this guide to help introduce you to the school and to ensure you and your family have a great start at Durham. We know the transition to "real" school for our youngest students can be scary at times -- we're here to help.

Inside this guide, you will find lots of information. Please don't get overwhelmed! This is intended as a reference guide, so when you have questions, you can turn to this packet for answers. You can also find a digital copy on our website at durhampta.org.

Guide Contents

- Families' summer checklist
- About the Durham PTA
- Durham PTA frequently asked questions (FAQ)
- Durham PTA calendar of events
- HISD Calendar
- Durham uniform policy
- How to sign up to volunteer on campus (VIPS)

We can't wait to meet you at an upcoming campus event, at our annual adults-only fundraiser, or in the Durham Garden during one of our campus beautification days! Deep and diverse community engagement is one of the things that make our school special - so we welcome every adult to give of their time, talent or treasure to help our students thrive.

Welcome to Dalmatian Nation!

The Durham Elementary PTA

Don't know where to get started? Go to durhampta.org/volunteer to let us know and we'll connect you with a committee lead ASAP!

WHO CAN I CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION?

- President: pta@durhampta.org
- New to Durham Family Liaison: new@durhampta.org

Durham Elementary PTA FAQ

These are our **unofficial** answers to the questions PTA members get most often from new families!*

**this information was updated in July 2024 - details are subject to change. Please check ParentSquare or contact the school directly for the latest, most accurate information.*

1. What is the daily schedule?

7:05a Gates open

7:25a Gates close (students arriving after this time need to be checked in at the front office)

7:30a Instruction begins and student is tardy (breakfast provided in classroom)

9:30a Attendance is taken

3:00p Dismissal

Students can expect the following activities in their daily schedule:

- Recess
- Enrichment/Specials (such as music, PE, art)
- Rest Time (PK only)

Your teacher will share a breakdown of the detailed daily schedule after school starts.

2. When are students considered tardy? What is the absent policy?

The gates will close promptly at 7:25a. After this time you will need to park and walk your child to the front office to check-in.

Students arriving after 7:30 am are considered tardy for the day.

Attendance is taken daily by 9:30am. Students must be in attendance at 9:30am to be considered present for the day. We recommend making doctor appointments after attendance is taken to ensure the school does not lose funding associated with classroom attendance.

Did you know? Funding is taken from the school for EVERY student that is absent every day.

Durham loses over \$124,000 annually due to student absences.

While some absences are unavoidable, we strongly encourage you to make every effort to have your student present for school. It not only makes a significant impact on your student's education, but also on our school's overall funding and budget.

3. Where do I drop off and pick up my student for school?

Prior to the start of the year, you will select the way your child will **most commonly** be picked up from campus - either car rider, walker, After3 or bus (for after school care) - and you will be given an ID tag with this designation*

These tags are very important! Take a picture of them for safe keeping and do not lose them. They help keep our students safe and assist teachers with dismissal procedures. **ID tags are required at pick up for both car riders and walkers every day, all year long. If you do not have your tag, you must go into the front office and show your ID to pick up your student.**

- **Car riders:** Lines form for pick up and drop off - refer to location maps provided by the school* Please be a good Durham citizen and ensure you do not to block our neighbors' driveways!
 - **Drop off:** ID tags are not needed for drop off. Expect to line up by 7:00 am for drop off in the mornings to ensure your student is not tardy.
 - **Please be aware of pedestrians!** Obey orders from the crossing guards to be safe.
 - **Pick up:** Lines begin to form approximately 15 minutes before school lets out. Ensure your ID tag is visibly displayed from the rear-view mirror or passenger side window.
- **Walkers:** You may park in the neighborhood and walk your student to their entrance - refer to location maps provided by the school* Bikes are encouraged! Bike racks are available and will be locked safely behind the gate during school hours.
 - **Drop Off:** Tags are not needed for drop off.
 - **Please be aware of neighbors' driveways and heavy traffic.** Use crosswalks and obey the crossing guards to be safe. Vehicles will be ticketed for parking violations!
 - **Pick Up:** Form a line beginning at the walker gate. Ensure you bring your ID tag with you and show it to the staff monitoring the gate.
- **After3:** For students attending an After3 program, the child is walked from their classroom to After3. We encourage you to explain this process to your student ahead of time so they are prepared to stay in the classroom and wait to go to their group. They must be picked up by the end of the After3 program. If you are running late, call the After3 coordinator.

Please note, transportation procedures come directly from the school, and they can change slightly from year to year. Durham staff will provide more details, such as drop off and pick up locations, when they are finalized prior to the start of the school year.

4. Can I pick up my child early?

Yes. Early pick-ups must happen before 2pm. After 2pm, the school begins dismissal procedures which can't be changed to release a given student.

5. Can I walk my child to their classroom on the first day?

Yes! This is an exciting time for both students and parents! Parents and caregivers have been able to walk their students to their classroom on the first day of school.

6. What school supplies do I need to buy for my child?

The PTA makes this process simple. Simply purchase the “package” from the PTA store. The PTA coordinates purchase and delivery of school supplies at bulk prices. These supplies are delivered directly to each classroom for each student.

Purchase supplies here: <http://www.durhampta.org/supplies>.

Buying in bulk helps us:

- Decrease the cost of supplies for our families
- Ensure classrooms are fully ready on the first day of school
- Give our teachers the exact number and style of each supply they need

We buy over 6,000 pencils, 1,800 composition books, 500 sets of markers, 500 boxes of tissues, and more!

PK only: Vinyl, foldable, nap mats are needed for rest time. No pillows, blankets, towels or other fabrics are allowed. Nap mats are not coordinated by the PTA, but may be provided - details regarding nap mats will be shared prior to beginning of school.

7. How do meals work?

HISD offers free breakfast and lunch to all students at Durham. The district ensures students eat healthy meals so they can stay focused on learning throughout the school day.

You can preview the daily menu on the School Cafe website: www.schoolcafe.com/HISD

If bringing lunch from home, students should be able to carry and open up their own bags, lunch boxes, juice boxes and snack bags. Kids can get it with a little practice before the first day of school. Of course, staff will help kids with lunch when needed! Make sure your student knows to raise their hand to notify a staff member if they require assistance during lunch.

8. What time is my child’s lunch and can I join them?

Every grade level is assigned a lunch break window. At the beginning of the school year, your child’s teacher should share their designated lunch time. You are welcome to join your student for lunch during their birthday month, as well as other special days during the school year. More details will be shared on ParentSquare when the school year starts.

9. Can I volunteer at Durham and in my child’s classroom?

Absolutely! Our teachers and staff always appreciate your time. You can support the classroom parents and reach out to your child’s teacher to find out how. To volunteer on any HISD campus and go on field trips, HISD requests volunteers to sign-up via the Volunteers In Public Schools (VIPS) website every year to process background checks.

Visit www.houstonisd.org/VIPS for more info.

10. What is the Durham dress code?

Red, navy, and light blue top (polo or shirt) and khaki, navy, or denim bottoms. Additionally, Durham spirit shirts (logo or country) are permitted as part of the uniform. College shirts may be worn on FRIDAYS ONLY. Otherwise students are expected to be in uniform.

Closed toed shoes appropriate for physical activity. Crocs in "sport mode" are permitted. No flip flops. It's recommended to have your student wear socks with their shoes.

Students have the opportunity to earn Free Dress passes via our school auction and other school wide engagement events. Students not wearing the school uniform will be asked to change and caregivers will be called and asked to bring a change of clothing to school. Especially for our littlest scholars, we recommend sending extra clothes in your child's backpack as accidents can happen.

11. What should my student bring on the first day of school?

Students will need one backpack - there are no "mesh" or "see-through" requirements at this time. We recommend the following items on the first day:

- Refillable water bottle
- Snack
- Lunch box if bringing lunch
- Change of clothes (PK and Kinder)
- Students do not need to bring a nap mat as one will be provided (PK)
- Note: School supplies are not needed as they will be purchased in bulk by the PTA and delivered to each classroom ahead of time. Make sure to pay your supply fee at durhampta.org/supplies

12. Is after school care provided?

Yes. After school care is provided by After3 - a third party vendor that manages the onsite, after school program at Durham and several other elementary schools in the area. Durham hosts After 3 on campus from 2:50 to 6:30 everyday during the school year.

For more information or to register, visit: www.after3asp.com/durham

13. Where can I learn more information?

First and foremost, please be sure you join ParentSquare. We utilize ParentSquare to communicate between teachers and staff, as well as share updates on events and happenings at the school. Once school starts, this will be your primary source of communication between administration and your student's teacher.

Other helpful websites:

- School Communications: www.parentsquare.com
- PTA: www.durhampta.org
- Lunch menu: schoolcafe.com/HOUSTONISD
- HISD website: www.houstonisd.org/domain/12141
- Tuition- Based Pre-K: www.houstonisd.org/Page/126419
- School supplies, PTA memberships and more: www.durhampta.org

Get Ready for a Fun School Year!

Durham and the PTA host a wide variety of events throughout the year. Here's an example of the types of events you can expect at Durham*

More details and exact dates and information will be shared on ParentSquare.

Fall Events

- Boohoo/Yahoo breakfast

The first day of school is an emotional time for all families. Join other adults in the cafeteria to dry your tears of sadness/joy with coffee and donuts.

- New PTA member mixer

Join the board and other PTA members for an informal mixer. A great opportunity to meet new people.

- Campus beautification workday

Durham is a school built and maintained with a lot of love and sweat equity. A crew of willing and able adults, teachers and students donate their time and muscle to various outdoor projects.

- Hispanic Heritage Festival

Celebrate Hispanic food, culture and music at this fun event that supports our students' IB education.

- Character Day

On campus parade where students dress as their favorite book character

- Durham Auction and Gala, an adults-only fundraiser

A digital auction, running over the course of one week, that includes items from local businesses, vacation rentals, naming rights for the Durham Circle Drive, and more. Ends with an adults-only gala with auction item viewing and pick up.

Spring Events

- Spotty Olympics

Our student fundraiser. Students can be sponsored by parents, extended family, friends, neighbors etc. and raise money by completing laps. Part pep-rally, part fun run. The kids love this event.

- STEAM Week

A mix of presentations and hands-on activities throughout the week focused on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math

- Durham's Got Talent Show

Students perform and submit videos to a panel of judges. Winners are chosen and move on to a live performance competition

- International Fest / iFest

Each grade level is transformed into an exotic location. Students and their families are invited to visit each country to learn a new culture and try a new cuisine.

- Staff Appreciation Week

Week dedicated to faculty and staff to celebrate all of their hard work throughout the year. Lunches, gifts, cards, decorations, restocking the teacher's lounge, etc.

- Volunteer Appreciation

End of year celebrations for all those who gave their support during the year.

**Exact events and dates are subject to change based on the school calendar.*