



# The Stonegate Splash .....Riding the Waves of Success

THE PRINCIPAL'S NEWSLETTER FOR STONEGATE FAMILIES

STONEGATE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
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## A Message from Ms. Fladung

One marking period down.....and we are busier than ever here at Stonegate. Teachers are busy preparing for second quarter and our students are busy completing projects, doing homework, attending after-school activities, participating in class, and showing evidence of real learning and living together at school. As your children commit themselves to academic and social success, please check your child's book bag on a regular basis. Teachers are consistently sending home completed work with feedback and are submitting data notebooks for your review and input. The data notebooks provide a snapshot into your child's learning and their progress over time. Students regularly review this progress and set personal goals. This kind of goal setting and data collection is just one part of the Baldrige system for excellence. Baldrige is a way of focusing our efforts to help all students become independent learners, make good decisions, solve problems and take responsibility for their learning. It requires that we:

- involve the school community, including students, staff and parents
- have measurable goals and plans for achieving the goals
- make sure goals and plans are communicated and understood
- monitor our progress and make changes to improve results

To learn more about Baldrige and how it works in classrooms and schools, check out the following website: <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/info/baldrige/parents/>.

Friday, October 30, 2009

Audra Fladung, Principal  
Keena Howell, Assistant Principal

Lucille Ellis, Acting AP

### Special Points of Interest:

- **Monday, November 2nd is a Professional Day for Staff. NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS!**
- **There will be a PTA meeting on Tuesday, November 3rd at 7:00 pm. We will discuss the 7 Keys for College Readiness.**
- **Parent Conferences are scheduled for Wednesday, November 11 and Thursday, November 12. BOTH DAYS ARE HALF DAYS FOR STUDENTS. STUDENTS WILL DISMISSED AT 12:35.**
- **Family Fun Night and the Silent Auction will be held on November 14th at Blake High School from 5:00-8:30 pm.**





## Code Blue and Red Drills

We are committed to providing a safe and secure learning environment for our students and staff. We recently practiced our safety efforts by conducting a Code Blue and Code Red drill. Code Blue is a term used to alert staff that an emergency/crisis exists at or near an MCPS facility. When the administrator announces a Code Blue, all students are accounted for in an instructional area.

While students and staff await further directions, classroom instruction continues. During a Code Blue, lockdown does NOT occur. Code Red is a term used to alert staff and students that an emergency or crisis exists ON or AT an MCPS facility. Following the announcement, rooms are made to appear empty as lights are turned off, doors are locked, windows are covered, and stu-

dents are moved away from doors and windows. Students are asked to remain silent during a Code Red. Please encourage your children to follow all directions during these drills and to discuss their feelings with you as they practice emergency procedures.

## Peace Day Success



Students continue to work together to “keep the peace”, as we recently celebrated reaching another “peace day” goal! We have had 25 days of peace, where ALL of our students have followed our core values of responsibility, respect, collaboration, and commitment. Working as a team, the goal is for students to avoid being referred to the office due to inappropriate or unsafe behavior. As a result of reaching this important goal, students enjoyed free seating with their friends during lunch. Our next goal is 50! We are so proud of our children and their efforts!!!

## Parent Conferences: Check Your Calendars!

Parent conferences are scheduled for Wednesday, November 11, and Thursday, November 12. Parent conferences will provide an opportunity for you to learn more about your child’s successes and areas of need, both academically and behaviorally. Therefore, it is important that you attend. If you have not scheduled an appointment, please contact your child’s teacher in order

to find a mutually convenient time to meet. Conferences are scheduled for approximately 15-20 minutes; therefore, please plan to arrive on time and to be considerate of the parent following your appointment time. As the conference date draws near, remember the meeting is an opportunity for you and the teacher to collaborate. Remember that you’re the expert about your child,

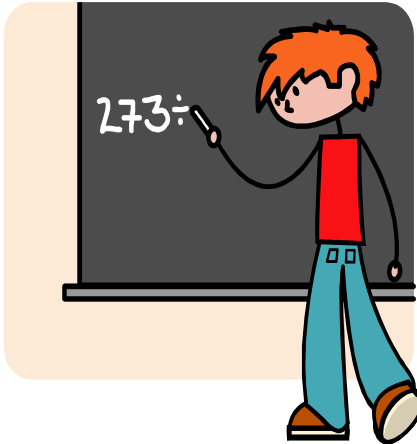
while the teacher is the expert on teaching and supporting children at his/her grade level. You’ll both come to the table with ideas and opinions. Remember, too, that collaboration sometimes requires compromise; striking a balance of ideas is often in the best interest of your child.

When arriving for conferences, please park on the street. Thank you!





## Wow! Math Night Was Awesome!



We hosted our 4th annual school-sponsored Math Night on Thursday, October 23rd and had a wonderful turn-out! Over two hundred Stonegate students came out to explore math concepts and skills in a fun environment. Our Math Committee, chaired by Mrs. Nguyen and Mrs. Dantzler, planned a night of exciting math games and hands-on activities! Children made wonderful crafts,

explored shapes, made holiday treats, and learned math! They also participated in online games in the Computer Lab. A great time was had by all!

We thank all of our participating staff members for their preparation and help!

## Help to Prevent the Flu

You can help us to prevent the flu. Talk with your children about the importance of good hygiene. Please encourage your children to do the following:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Cover your mouth and nose with

tissue when you cough or sneeze

- Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve if you don't have a tissue
- Put used tissues into a waste basket right away
- Clean your hands after coughing or sneezing. Use soap and water or hand sanitizer.

If you or a family member does get

the flu, please:

- Stay home from work or school if you have flu-like symptoms (fever of 100 degrees or greater with a cough or sore throat)
- Children should be fever-free (without medicine) for 24 hours before returning to school
- Follow your doctor's orders and get plenty of rest.

## Operation Warm Up

We are working in conjunction with Brownie Troop 2691 and Linkages to Learning to warm the hearts of deserving kids by donating new and gently used children's coats. Linkages to Learning provides school-based mental health, health, and social services for children and families in 27 elementary and middle schools.

Just drop off CLEAN coats in our collection box in the main entrance of the school from now until November 25th. Children's and teens' sizes needed!

Questions? Want to help? Call Haifa Krakaur at 301.924.0149 or email her at:

[Haifa.Peter@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:Haifa.Peter@montgomerycountymd.gov)





**Core Values**

- Respect
- Responsibility
- Collaboration
- Commitment

**Mission Statement**

Stonegate's mission as a caring community is to foster the growth of life-long learners by communicating high expectations and standards through respect, flexibility, and collaboration.

**Vision Statement**

The Stonegate Community will be committed to a multicultural learning environment that motivates and supports all learners to achieve their greatest potential. We will collaborate respectfully to develop a standard of excellence that promotes high expectations for all learners.

## Parent Power

There are many ways you can support your child's learning and the school. Here are a few ideas:

- Spend a few minutes every evening looking over handouts your child brings home. Fill out forms to return the next day.
- Tell your child's teacher if you can help them out at school or home.
- Make sure teachers know you appreciate their efforts. From time to time, send a thank you note or an email. These small gestures are GREATLY appreciated.

## Homework Help Live!

Homework Hotline Live! is back for its 24th season on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 5:00 to 6:00pm. The ITV flagship program provides K-12 students one-on-one homework help when they call the hotline number at 301-279-3234 (Voice/TTY).

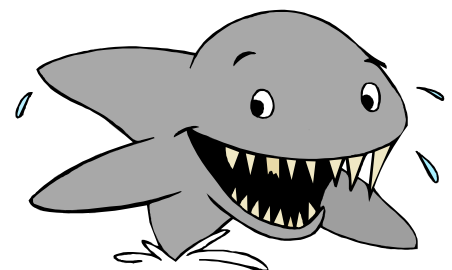
Homework Hotline Live! (HHL) is a service of MCPS Instructional TV and is broadcast from the Carver Educational Services Center studio in Rockville. During the program, MCPS teachers take calls from students live on-the-air and assist them with homework problems, while ad-

ditional teachers answer calls in the phone room. Students serve as part of the technical crew and are trained by Instructional TV staff.

By calling, a student will be connected to a teacher who can provide assistance in most academic subjects from kindergarten through 12th grade. Mathematics questions are the most frequent, and there will typically be a certified math instructor on staff during each show. Cable TV viewers will be able to watch the program live as they work with on-air teachers who help them formulate answers. Students and families

can use this service even if they do not subscribe to cable television.

In addition to direct instruction, each program includes various learning experiences such as current events summaries and video clips. The show also features fun trivia and prizes for answering challenging "brainteaser" questions given by MCPS students.





## PTA Curricular Workshop: Homework and Data Notebooks

We had a wonderful turn-out at our first PTA Curricular Workshop, hosted on Tuesday, October 6th! The purpose of this new, joint effort between the PTA and our school is to share information regarding programs and policies in place at Stonegate. While we are not entertaining questions during the information session due to time and format, questions will be collected at the end for follow up responses. Information on our homework policy and school-wide data notebooks was shared at the most recent meeting. The following questions were posed at the end of the session. A few additional questions will be answered in the October 30th issue of the Splash.

- **I have never heard of the basic math facts practice mentioned before or seen it written in the planner. What are they suppose to do and why hasn't that been discussed?**

*Stonegate's Homework Policy was updated for the 2009-2010 school year. It was sent home at the beginning of the school year for review and is available online. The policy added basic math fact practice as a part of the normal homework routine. Previously, teachers encouraged such practice and hoped that it was occurring on a regular basis. However, it was not consistently being practiced and students struggled to master facts with automaticity. Such practice can include the use of flash cards, random calling of facts in the car or at the dinner table, website programs, or independently-created practice sheets. Check out the following websites for additional ideas:*

*<http://www.mathfactcafe.com/#>*

*<http://www.math-drills.com/#>*

*<http://www.lizardpoint.com/math/mathsheet.html>*

*<http://www.kidzone.ws/Math/index.htm>*

- **When a student is absent for 3-5 days for illness, may a parent or sibling get the assignments the day it is assigned?**

*Yes. However, please note that the instruction that accompanies such homework would have been missed by the student. Therefore, the assignments sent home may be more "maintenance-type" materials, rather than newly taught concepts or skills.*

- **Homework that counts for a grade, does this include projects, monthly reading responses, etc.?**

*It could include projects and monthly reading responses. The policy states "when stated in advance, homework can be used to assess students' learning after they have had ample practice and feedback on identified skills or concepts. In these cases, homework may be used in determining both learning skills and academic grades." Projects could certainly qualify as they usually are an extension or enrichment to in-class learning. They are also often accompanied by a rubric or scoring checklist. Therefore, students are informed in advance and are provided with grading criteria.*

- **What can be done when my child's teacher says that math homework is having the skill taught that day to the parent? I would like to have an actual assignment that allows my child to practice the skill.**

*Some homework assignments are given to preview upcoming skills, some to practice skill development, and some to apply learning. Not every homework assignment will be in the form of a worksheet. By teaching a concept or skill to another, children have the opportunity to apply their learning, review procedures, use math language, and create problems of their own. Should you desire additional activities, contact your child's teacher requesting extra practice. He/she can provide worksheets and/or direct you to various websites to support your child's learning needs.*



## PTA Curricular Workshop: Homework and Data Notebooks (con't)

- **Is there a way to handle kids not doing their homework other than having them flip their cards?**

*The card system is a tool to reinforce Stonegate's four core values: respect, responsibility, collaboration, and commitment. When a child flips his/her card for not turning in homework, it is a responsibility reminder. Some teams send home a "missing assignment sheet", which is another way to remind students and inform parents. If there is a particular reason why homework could not be completed, we encourage parents to write a note to the teacher.*

- **Is it recommended to check your child's homework for correct spelling and grammar?**

*It is certainly appropriate to have those conversations and to identify areas for improvement. However, if it is a spelling or grammar assignment, it may give the teacher more information to see the errors. The information can be used for re-teaching and for instructional programming.*

- **Does the Data Notebook follow your child through the different grades?**

*You may see similar documents in Data Notebooks from year to year. However, students receive new inserts to put into their Data Notebook as they go from grade to grade.*

- **How often are the Data Notebooks updated?**

*Data Notebooks are updated at different times depending on the grade level. You should see new data inputted each month that you receive the Data Notebook.*

- **Does the Data Notebook affect placement in reading and math?**

*The Data Notebook does not directly affect the placement of students in reading and math. Rather, it is a resource tool filled with information about various reading and math data points, among other things. While it is a reflection of how your child is performing in class, it is **not** a comprehensive collection of their performance as a whole. It is a **sampling** of data.*

- **As a parent of a kindergartner, this is new to me. How do I best organize what I need to work on for the Data Notebook? It feels a bit overwhelming, or is it just me?**

*Your kindergarten teacher is your best resource to help you understand the Data Notebook. Take special note of the goal sheets that are included and make a note of the goals that you decide to work on for the month. In addition, take note of the Letter ID section and of the math goals; this will give you a snapshot of how your child is performing.*

- **If I have written a question in my child's Data Notebook, how soon can I expect to get a response?**

*This depends on the individual teacher. You may get a quicker response if you use a post-it note to tag the page on which a response is needed or somehow identify on the front of the binder that a response is needed. Our teachers make every effort to respond to all communication from the parents.*

- **Do students complete T1s or T2s before they are taught a concept, or after they are taught a concept?**

*T1s and T2s are sometimes included as evidence of mastery in the Data Notebooks. The 'T' stands for 'Try.' They are given once a concept has been taught; the T1 is given as a formative assessment to help the teacher determine if a student needs more teaching. The T2 is usually given as a summary assessment to see if mastery was attained.*



## PTA Curricular Workshop: Homework and Data Notebooks (con't)

- **There is no method or recording mechanism for parents to retain goals at home. Out of sight, out of mind.**

*We encourage you to jot down the goal(s) that you and your child decide to work upon for the upcoming month. That way, you can touch base with your child as the month progresses.*

- **What happens if the parents ignore the Data Notebooks?**

*It is our hope that parents do not ignore the Data Notebook as it is a valuable resource filled with grade level information and data specific to your child. Our teachers use this resource as a communication tool between home and school. The more you know about how your child is performing, the better informed you will be.*

- **Are Data Notebooks mandated for every elementary school throughout Montgomery County and, if not, is Stonegate open to discussion on their value to parents? What is the process to open this discussion?**

*Data Notebooks are required at Stonegate Elementary School. Most schools in Montgomery County Public Schools use Data Notebooks as a communication tool and resource between the home and the school. Keeping a Data Notebook is a component and recommendation of the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence, a framework that was implemented in MCPS within the past 10 years for understanding and improving school performance. More information about the Baldrige System for parents can be found at:  
<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/info/baldrige/parents/yourchild.shtm>*

- **In your presentation, you talked about the Data Notebook components. But, it still doesn't help us interpret those components. How can we decipher the information provided in language we can understand?**

*If anything is unclear in the Data Notebook, we hope that you will contact the classroom teacher for further clarification. We also encourage you to see if your child can explain something in the Data Notebook. Our Staff Development Teacher, Anita Elaraj, is also available to answer any questions or give further clarification:  
[Anita\\_M\\_Elaraj@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Anita_M_Elaraj@mcpsmd.org)*

- **There is rarely a due date telling us when the Data Notebooks are expected back at school. Is one week a typical amount of time we can assume so we can at least have the weekend to review?**

*This varies according to the teacher and/or grade level, so please contact your child's teacher. We do need the Data Notebooks back as soon as possible so that new data can be inputted in a timely manner.*

- **Is there a measure that you use over the years to show how Data Notebooks have increased achievement or other life skills for students?**

*While there is no specific data kept revolving around Data Notebooks, as the years go by, students have become more comfortable with using the Baldrige Quality Tools for improvement and with using the goal setting process. Since these processes are implemented across curricular and content areas and in art, music, and PE, students are hearing a consistent message and internalizing these processes. We have contacted the coordinator of the Baldrige Academy in MCPS with this question and will post a response as we get it.*

- **How do Data Notebooks differ from a Student Portfolio?**

*A Student Portfolio typically contains writing rough drafts and final drafts of work. They are similar in that both the Data Notebook and the Student Portfolio contain on-going information about your child's progress. Not all teachers keep Student Portfolios, but all teachers do keep Data Notebooks for each student.*