

STONEGATE ELEMENTARY PTA

*14811 Notley Road
Silver Spring, MD 20905*

January 16, 2008

Board Of Education
Montgomery County Public Schools
Carver Educational Services Center
850 Hungerford Drive, Room 123
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear School Board Members,

I am taking this opportunity to reiterate and provide background information to the Stonegate Elementary School Operating Budget request that is being submitted by the MCCPTA Northeast Consortium Cluster Representative. I believe that you have also received emails from many of our parents dealing with these issues. Thank you for your consideration of our requests.

Stonegate Elementary requests:

- Additional Classroom Teacher for Class of 2012 (current 1st grade)
- Full-Time Primary Grades Math Content Coach

Background/Basis for these requests:

Additional Classroom Teacher

Explicit promises have been made in the past but not kept – an additional 1st grade teacher was hired for 2007-2008, only to be reallocated in late-August. The current 1st grade students have been overcrowded (classes of 27, 27 and 26 this year) since Kindergarten (25, 25, and 24) and are being poorly served by even the highest caliber of teachers.

Several families have left the school because of class size concerns. Other families - some of which are in the audience tonight or have emailed letters directly to the Board report that their patience is being stretched and they are very frustrated.

Full-Time Math Content Coach

The Kindergarten (23, 24, 21) and second grade (23, 22, 22) classes are also large in size. The advanced level math classes for both 1st and 2nd grade each have over 30 students. There are not enough desks for this many students and a section of the 1st grade class meets in a hallway. The physical limitations do not begin to address the inability of staff to effectively challenge such a large number of students. Can anyone imagine successfully teaching basic math concepts to 32 six-year-olds in one group? Parents firmly believe that individualized attention in primary grade level math is critical to long-term interest in the subject. If a child loses his enthusiasm for a subject in the primary grades, it is likely gone forever. We want our children to love math and be aggressively challenged, which we believe is not possible in such a large group.

As the schools are being urged to differentiate and accelerate student math abilities on our “Path to Achievement,” parents believe that a primary grade Math Content Coach is integral to Stonegate’s success. Similar to our Reading Initiative staff members, this position will allow for reduced class sizes in all primary grade math classes and provide students with more individualized attention and enhanced learning opportunities.

Closing Concerns:

Enrollment at Stonegate is currently over-capacity and MCPS projections used in the Superintendent’s Recommended FY2009 Capital Budget show that enrollment will continue to rise. Stonegate parents ask that the board keep in mind that if the present situation continues then the current test performance scores we are all so proud of will likely fall in the shorter and longer term. In the shorter term this may occur as these frustrated parents of our better performers seek alternative schools. In the longer term this may occur as the insidious effect of these under-served K and 1st Grade students reach the higher grades where testing occurs - remember, there is no substitute for good and motivating primary grade education.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Debbie Mettam, President
Stonegate Elementary PTA