

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program***

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [ ] Title I [ ] Charter [ ] Magnet [ ] Choice

Name of Principal Dr. Kimberly Williams Cascio  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Stone Mill Elementary School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 14323 Stonebridge View Drive  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City North Potomac State MD Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 20878-4811

County Montgomery County

Telephone (240) 740-5450 Fax (240) 740-5458

Web site/URL

<https://www2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/stonemilles/>

E-mail Kimberly\_A\_Williams@mcpsmd.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Superintendent\* Dr. Monifa McKnight E-mail monifa\_b\_mcknight@mcpsmd.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Montgomery County Public Schools Tel. (240) 740-3000

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Ms. Karla Silvestre  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, leave blank.*

## PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2023 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

**The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.**

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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**Data should be provided for the current school year (2022-2023) unless otherwise stated.**

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 136 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 40 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 26 High schools
  - 8 K-12 schools
  
  - 210 TOTAL

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for the district.**)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- ☐ Urban (city or town)  
☒ Suburban  
☐ Rural

3. Number of students in the school as of October 1, 2022 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Students
PreK	75
K	63
1	80
2	78
3	72
4	91
5	99
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	558

\*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0.1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 47.4 % Asian
  - 13.7 % Black or African American
  - 9.8 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 21.6 % White
  - 7.4 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2021 - 2022 school year: 9%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	27
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	25
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	52
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	558
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.09
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	9

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Persian, Amharic, Spanish, Chinese, Pashto, Oromo, Hindi, French, Korean, Bengali, Farsi, Urdu, Nepali, Portuguese, Arabic, German, Russian, Shona, Uwe, Kinyarwanda, Manipuri

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 20 %  
110 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 15 %  
 Total number students who qualify: 85

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 20 %  
Total number of students served 112

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services with an IEP should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>10</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>6</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>78</u> Developmental Delay	<u>10</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>7</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>1</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 1 %  
Total number of students served: 8

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 22

11. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	26
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	19
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	17
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	11

12. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 22:1

13. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	93%	97%	96%	96%	95%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

14. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2022.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

15. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

16. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

Stone Mill is all about inclusion, celebrating our vast diversity, and achieving personal best.

17. Provide a URL link to the school's nondiscrimination policy.

<https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/info/nondiscrimination/>

18. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

## PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

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Stone Mill Elementary is currently celebrating our 35th year of partnership for educational excellence with our parents in the Stonebridge and DuFief Mill communities. When we opened our doors in 1988, we were named, “Muddy Branch Elementary.” Because we have always enjoyed a robust and productive relationship with our families, the name was changed after six months to honor the identity of our students. This is a beloved school with very little turnover because of everyone’s commitment to making Stone Mill a welcoming and inclusive second home to all who enter. In our 35 years, we have had only four principals (the current for 22 of the 35 years), two administrative secretaries (both community members who walk/ed to work), three building services managers, and three special education resource teachers. Former students now are teachers here. Every day on the morning announcements, we reaffirm our commitment to making each day the very best by reciting our Stone Mill Expectations. Children pledge to honor their school, their family and themselves by being their very best selves through being kind in their words and actions, being honest and making good choices, following school rules and being a good friend, and by taking responsibility for themselves and their actions. This is everyone's true home away from home.

We enjoy an internationally-diverse school population which is reflected in our school culture. Recognizing that there are myriad interests, our school enhances the students’ elementary experience with a wide variety of activities that affirm, strengthen, and engage children. Our wonderfully-supportive Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) works with school administration and school staff to plan academic, cultural, and recreational enhancements during and outside of our daily program. To showcase our children’s passions we offer many options. For academics, Stone Mill offers a book society, a spelling bee, a geography bee, and a science fair. To showcase the arts, we have band instruction and concerts, orchestra instruction and concerts (70 percent of our fourth and fifth graders participate in our instrumental music program), a non-performance art, “Creation Celebration,” and a talent show. For our service-oriented friends, we offer a Student-Government Association, Safety Patrols, STARS volunteering (Students Training for Assistance and Responsibility), a garden club, a recycling club, coat and food drives, and a participation with “Muttigrees” to support the adoption of homeless animals. Many of our parents share their cultural and business acumen with our children as well. We have “adopted” a Southwest Airlines pilot, have dentists and doctors speak for health topics, and have parents share information about cultural celebrations in our community with the children. For our fifth graders, we invite our parents to share about their different jobs. Finally, we also plan things just to engage and enthrall. We have dances, family fun nights, movie nights, book nights, and more. The school and community truly work together as one, dynamic powerhouse to ensure learning and success for all of our children.

Stone Mill is a place where individuals can shine. Each child is personally placed with a teacher whose teaching style matches the student’s learning style. Students are paired with a friend/positive learning partner in the classroom to ensure that the social and emotional needs will be met. We do take input from teachers and families, but do ensure a personalized experience for each student. Once classes are balanced for gender, race, ethnicity, learning needs, and friendships, the teaching staff use their formidable skills and the excellent Montgomery County Public Schools’ (MCPS) curriculum to present multi-modal and culturally-relevant lessons. Differentiation and personalized data collection enable the staff to target time and effort to what is needed for the success of each and every child.

We utilize a multi-pronged approach to helping students learn: self-reliance, initiative, planning, managing emotions, resolving conflicts, finding creative solutions and valuing differences in others in addition to our academics. We use a mix of the commercial programs, Harmony SEL (Social/emotional learning) and Leader in Me, to foster meaningful relationships and healthy identities, in addition to a variety of school-based interventions. We have the traditional reading and math support groups in addition to 1:1 mentoring, cross-grade reading buddies, Book Society, Student Government Association, board games on Friday (to promote interpersonal skills and academic knowledge), data chats, tutoring, and Tiger Achievement Time (for students to check in with different staff for support). One of the deepest core values of our school, from administration to students, is the tenet of success for every student, every day. We deliver food, gift cards, and clothes to those families in need. Our counselor (MCPS Counselor of the Year two years ago), our teachers and the administration have helped families learn to cook, access sports and activities for free,



and made home visits to help with attendance, illness, and any hurdle preventing school success. It is our expectation, as we state daily, that each day will be the very best we can make it.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

#### **1a. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Guided by the Maryland English Language Arts Content Standards (2008) and the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (2010), Stone Mill's English Language Arts program focuses on the communication processes of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing through the study of language and literature.

Designed to provide opportunities to challenge all learners, our English Language Arts curriculum offers a flexible program focused on developing strategies for active reading and clear writing. Instructional activities guide students to examine the techniques authors use to develop universal themes in various genres. Students build, refine, and apply skills in organization and clear use of language in recursive writing tasks throughout the year.

Each English Language Arts unit integrates the communication processes and contents. No one process (reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing) is taught in isolation. Rather, students learn the dynamic relationships among them as they study the significant role language plays in literature and in the craft of expressing oneself through the written and spoken word. Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions for each unit provide a larger purpose for learning targeted content. Specifically, each unit exposes students to the following aspects of the communication processes, literature, and language: Reading and Listening, Viewing, Writing and Speaking, Literature, Language.

#### **1b. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Mathematics lessons at Stone Mill are designed to create mathematical thinkers. Learning progresses from the concrete to the abstract, building essential conceptual understanding and mathematical fluency, simultaneously developing both mathematical content and language. Stone Mill utilizes Eureka Math: a coherent, aligned, focused curriculum. By using common models and problem solving methods, and an established math block, the student experience progresses smoothly from one grade to the next, and ensures consistency across classes and schools.

Each Stone Mill student, from Pre-K through grade five, is expected to achieve mathematical proficiency as outlined in the Maryland College and Career Ready standards.

Our pre-K students learn counting to 20, shapes, comparisons of weight, length and capacity up to five, and addition and subtraction stories.

Kindergarten students focus on numbers and counting to 100, two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes, comparison of length, weight, capacity and numbers to ten, number pairs and addition and subtraction up to ten, and analyzing, comparing and composing shapes. Students in grade one learn place value, comparison, addition and subtraction to 100, ordering and comparing length measurements as numbers, identifying, and composing and partitioning shapes. Students in grade two focus on addition and subtraction of length units, place value, counting and comparison of numbers to 1,000, addition and subtraction within 1000 with word problems to 100, foundations of multiplication and division, problem solving length, money and data, time, shapes and fractions as equal parts of shapes.

Students in grade three learn place value and problem solving with units of measure, multiplication and division and multiples of 10, multiplication and area, fractions as numbers on the number line, collecting and displaying data, and geometry and measurement word problems. Students in grade four work on place value, rounding and algorithms for addition and subtraction, unit conversions and problem solving with metric measurement, multi-digit multiplication and division, angle measure and plane figures, fraction equivalence, ordering and operations, decimal fractions, and exploring measurement with multiplication.

Students in grade five learn place value and decimal fractions, multi-digit whole number and decimal fraction operations, addition and subtraction of fractions, multiplication and division of fractions and decimal fractions, addition and multiplication with volume and area, and problem solving with the coordinate plane.

#### **1c. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Stone Mill students achieve full scientific literacy through standards-referenced, problem/project-based instruction that develops critical thinkers who apply scientific and engineering practices to authentic problems in a globally competitive society. We support community partnerships and our second graders take a yearly trip to our local recycling center. Science lessons at Stone Mill incorporate literacy and math and engage students and make connections to real world phenomena. Stone Mill's Science lessons engage all students through phenomenon-based, three-dimensional learning and provide opportunities for students to connect their learning to real world problems. Our instructional goal is to prepare students for lifelong learning by developing skills necessary for success in college and career as outlined by the Next Generation Science Skills (NGSS) Science and Engineering Practices.

#### **1d. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

The goal of social studies is to help create literate and well-informed citizens who actively participate in a democratic society. Students at Stone Mill learn how to become effective citizens through: active engagement in the learning processes and skills of the social sciences and history; development of a useful knowledge base in culture, economics, geography, history, and politics; learning the fundamental structures of human systems of interaction and how these systems have developed over time; application of concepts and knowledge of the past to problem-solving real-world issues of the present; application and evaluation of the role of an effective citizen, including putting citizen participation theory into practice; effective use of multiple sources of investigation for research and learning, including technology, primary and secondary source materials, the arts, film, and oral history; and development and communication of social studies concepts and knowledge using a variety of formats, with a special emphasis on analytic and argumentative writing.

#### **1e. For schools that serve grades 7-12:**

#### **1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:**

Stone Mill's Preschool Education Program (PEP) is a non-categorical program serving children with a variety of disabilities. Most children who receive PEP services have moderate learning delays in more than one area of development. All children in PEP have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP includes learning goals and objectives based on needs identified through formal evaluations. Staff use the learning goals and objectives as a guide to assist students in acquiring skills that children their age have already learned.

Many children enrolled in PEP receive related services such as speech/language, occupational, and/or physical therapy. Parent education may also be provided.

PEP's philosophy is based on the premise that early intervention is effective in addressing learning deficits. PEP identifies strategies to offset the impact of educational disabilities in young children. Developmental skills such as communication, exploration, movement, play and socialization are essential for all children. Some children with disabilities need specialized intervention to gain the skills necessary for kindergarten. PEP staff members collaborate in order to address the individual goals and objectives of students. Services are provided in the least restrictive environment, including community settings.

#### **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

## **2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)**

Each student at Stone Mill is engaged in a high-quality arts education at every grade level and generates new ideas by applying artistic learning to new situations to become a creative, independent, and critical thinker. The primary goal of arts education at Stone Mill is to enable children to develop their minds and intellectual capabilities using all forms of creative intelligence as means for achieving this goal. The expressions of thoughts and feelings take many forms. Stone Mill focuses on art, music, and chorus to communicate thoughts and feelings through visual forms, sounds, and movements.

For children to develop their mental capabilities and realize their fullest potential, they need to be exposed to many kinds of knowledge, to many ways of knowing their world and expressing their thoughts. Through experiences in art, music, dance, and theater, children learn to express themselves in terms of their own ideas and feelings. All the fine arts – performing and visual – provide knowledge about the world, its cultures, and ways of experiencing them that contribute to an understanding that is unique.

## **2b. Physical education/health/nutrition**

Students at Stone Mill are evaluated by a set of six standards in the Curriculum Framework for Physical Education: Exercise physiology, Biomechanical principles, Social psychological principles, Motor learning principles, Physical activity, and Skillfulness. Stone Mill's comprehensive instructional program provides a developmentally appropriate, instructional program for all students that advances the student's knowledge, confidence, skills, and motivation to enjoy a lifetime of healthful physical activity. Our program accommodates the diversity of student needs, abilities, and interests during students' early learning years. Stone Mill's physical education program includes all of the Maryland Physical Education Content Standards with related indicators and objectives as set forth in the Maryland State Framework.

## **2c. Foreign language(s), if offered (if not offered, leave blank)**

## **2d. Technology/library/media**

The media specialist at Stone Mill works with students both in the classroom and in the media center. The intent is to move the students from guided instruction to independent information literacy. It is recognized that younger students need more guidance and that, as students mature, they are able to perform certain components of the information literacy process on their own.

Classrooms have a set of Chromebooks that students use during daily lessons for activities such as exit tickets, research guided by the media specialist, assessments, standardized tests, and interactive digital lessons.

Our Media Specialist works with students to help ensure they meet six content standards. Students follow an inquiry process to define a problem, formulate questions, and refine either or both to meet an information need. They learn to identify, locate, evaluate, and select resources and sources in a wide variety of formats to help them find, generate, record, and organize information relevant to the information needed. Students interpret recorded data/information to create new understandings and knowledge related to the information needed. Students learn to share findings/conclusions to support written, oral, and multimedia information products and evaluate the products and the processes. Students demonstrate an appreciation of literature and multimedia as a reflection of human experience and use the inquiry process for life-long learning.

## **2e. Any other interesting or innovative curriculum programs you would like to share**

The study of music assists in the acquisition of 21st Century Skills. The cooperative learning setting of music ensembles allows students to develop both individually and as members of a larger community. The creativity inherent in the creation or interpretation of a musical selection fosters creative thinking and problem-solving strategies that permeate other facets of life. We encourage and celebrate the personal

expression within every child.

Stone Mill offers both band and orchestra to students in fourth and fifth grade. The Instrumental Music Program at Stone Mill aligns with National and State Music Education Standards. Beginning band and orchestra are for students with no instrumental music experience who wish to learn how to play an instrument from the strings, woodwind, brass or percussion families. Areas such as elements of musical form, terms and symbols, tone production, instrument care, and the importance of practice habits are presented. Public performances outside of the school day may be required to meet course objectives.

### **3. Academic Supports**

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level:**

Our staff members track individual student data to ensure that any difficulties in learning are addressed immediately. We currently use a three-tier system for interventions. MCPS provides eighty to ninety percent of our students universal, proactive interventions. For the five to ten percent of children who are at-risk, we use research-based, high-efficiency, rapid-response interventions and for the small number of children, we employ an intense, assessment-based series of daily interventions. Intervention groups are regularly held by our teaching and paraeducator staff members.

At Stone Mill, our children are performing better overall in math versus reading. The Kindergarten through second grade population has nineteen percent of the population struggling with reading and the classes in grades three through five have twenty-four percent of students receiving assistance in reading. For math, we have no students below grade level in grades Kindergarten through second grade. We have ten children in grades three through five who are struggling.

Looking at disaggregated data for a gap between the population as a whole and the different focus groups of children, there are three grade levels that have achievement gaps in reading of ten percent or more for the focus groups of special education, English language learners (ELL) and Free and Reduced Meals (FARMs). For students receiving special education in first, third, and fifth grades there is a gap. For ELL and students receiving FARMs in grades three and five, there is also a gap.

Our reading specialist has trained various staff members and volunteers with strategies from research-based programs in addition to working with intervention groups herself. Our ELL teachers and our special education teachers all provide intensive services. All progress is monitored and interventions are modified as needed for student success. Because of our use of the monitoring data, we are able to see growth with each and every student.

#### **3b. Students performing above grade level:**

Stone Mill is a very academically-driven school. More than three-quarters of our students are identified as gifted and talented or are working above grade level or both. The school is in an area where parents are educated and employed and want to ensure that they are working collaboratively with the school for their children's educational success. We tailor our teaching to stretch every mind. We spend much time working with differentiated instruction, and we offer advanced classes in math so that each child can be maximized in his/her education. Additionally, our school provides project-based learning opportunities as well as extracurricular activities to engage and excite our students.

#### **3c. Students with disabilities:**

Stone Mill has the largest, special education, preschool program in our school system. Our PEP program serves children from a larger catchment area than our Kindergarten through fifth grade program. The children have a range of disabilities and are in small classes with teachers and paraeducators daily and then speech therapists, occupational therapists, hearing and vision therapists, interactive-device therapists, and physical therapists throughout the week. As with most preschool programs, there are circle and small group activities in addition to personalized, data-tracked, learning activities as required for children with

developmental delays.

For our Kindergarten through fifth grade children who have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), we have two, full-time special educators and a few paraeducators who assist them with their IEP goals. Research-based programs such as Orton-Gillingham, Wilson Reading, and others are used and data-monitored by trained, special education professionals to ensure that children are learning apace of their peers. All data indicating a lag in performance or a gap compared to others is monitored, evaluated, and revised as needed.

### **3d. English Language Learners:**

For the (approximately) twenty percent of our students who receive additional services for emerging language acquisition, we have one full-time and two part-time ELL teachers. Children are grouped based on their demonstrated skills in speaking, writing, and listening. The teachers work with the children inside the classrooms during instruction in addition to working with groups of children in their ELL rooms, outside of the general classroom. At Stone Mill, the ELL work is designed to empower Emergent Multilingual students to master academic English so that they may thrive in school, college, careers, and eventually, as global citizens. The education of students learning English as a new language is a collaborative responsibility shared by the ELL teacher, the classroom teacher, all other appropriate MCPS staff, as well as the student. The ELL teachers regularly consult with staff and families (even making regular home visits) to ensure that the academic journey for our emerging language learning students is supported collaboratively and thoroughly.

Our school has a statistically-unusual percentage of Asian children in attendance. Our school infuses many Asian cultural pieces into our daily learning so that our Asian students feel invested and that the students who are from other backgrounds have an understanding of the cultures around them. Within the Asian population, most of the children identify as Chinese. Two of the three ELL teachers are Chinese and can communicate with the children and their families seamlessly. As with all of our students, it is the school's goal to make everyone feel important, integral, and valued. For our students in grades three and five where an academic gap is present, all staff are involved in mitigating the disparity through relationship, intervention, and persistence.

### **3e. Other populations, if a special program or intervention is offered:**

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

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### **1. Engaging Students:**

Stone Mill is a community-engaged school whose foundation is built upon positive relationships. Leading child psychiatrist, Dr. James P. Comer, who pioneered the movement to improve learning for students, is famous for his belief that, “No significant learning can occur without a significant relationship.” At Stone Mill we use that belief to underpin all that we do to ensure academic, social, and emotional success for our students. The principal and the assistant principal greet parents and children each morning by name. One administrator does valet loading and unloading of cars while the other supervises walkers and bus riders. Teachers greet their students at the classroom door by name as well. Parents are included in our morning greetings, conversations, and daily work with children. We are thrilled that this year we are back to fully including the parent community in-person as an integral part of what we do to support children. We espouse and demonstrate the concept of the entire village working together to ensure the success of everyone.

Classrooms are colorful, teachers are warm, and children’s minds are stretched daily. Our lessons are designed to engage, excite and inform. Because the process of learning, and the changes that result from that acquisition of new knowledge, occurs as a result of experiences, it is imperative that the children be actively engaged and questioning. Our teachers use a variety of culturally-relevant materials to provide experiences for our diverse students to access the curriculum and increase students’ potential for improved performance and future learning. We use collaborative learning, project-based assignments and a spiraling curriculum so that children develop collaboration skills, self-confidence and enduring understanding with the concepts presented in class.

Because of the time away from community learning due to COVID, many of our students have not properly developed social skills necessary to navigate social situations successfully. Our use of daily anti-bullying strategies, social-emotional learning lessons, and Friday board game time (with teachers supervising and directly instructing the social skills for turn-taking, sharing, losing, winning, and collaborating) has been shown to improve student engagement, risk-taking in learning, and social navigation.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

The school administration has an open-door policy for all - children, parents, and staff. No appointments are necessary. In following Dr. Comer, the administration believes that by building relationships with the whole family and by pre-empting upset or festering issues, difficulties are dealt with right away and solutions are implemented immediately. Both administrators are outside for 30 minutes each morning and 30 minutes each afternoon ensuring safe entrance and dismissal. During this daily hour, school administrators are readily available to chat with parents about children, life, school concerns, questions, academics, school events, and/or whatever is needed. Should there not be a concern, the school uses the time to build relationships, learn about younger siblings who do not yet attend Stone Mill, get to know pets’ names, and become familiar with the community members in a casual setting.

For the past 35 years, we have successfully partnered with the non-profit Academy Child Development center that is located on our property. Through this partnership, Stone Mill has been able to help families with free or affordable daycare and summer camp.

Starting more recently, we have partnered with local dentists to come in and share hygiene lessons with our Kindergarten classes; have had local eye doctors come in and speak with the first grade about vision; have adopted a pilot from Southwest Airlines in our third grade (to learn about aviation); have parents volunteer in the classrooms and on field trips, partnered with the local Safeway supermarket for fundraising, and have a truly remarkable Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) that works with us to plan varied activities for the children and families before, during and after school.

Because of our internationally-diverse community, we invite our parents into our classrooms to teach about different cultures and religious observances. The best way to accept someone who is different is through

knowledge, understanding, and comparison. Children can see that family structures, choice of clothing, holidays celebrated, and religious practices may seem quite unusual at first, but then can realize that Stone Mill is actually one community of loving, supportive, and academically-focused people all wanting excellence for all.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

In order to create a positive, professional, workplace culture one must start with enthusiastic, motivated and engaged people who are committed to positively impacting the lives of others. Additionally, it is critical for these individuals to be invested over time as turnover can weaken initiatives and teams. Once people are in place, they must receive regular, professional development, recognition of their contributions, and opportunities for leadership and advancement. The school administration invites all interested parties to participate in hiring interviews. Once a candidate has been selected, the academic team begins to welcome and integrate the person prior to work beginning. As the start of the school year approaches, social and academic “on-boarding” occurs so that when the children arrive, the new staff member feels comfortable, valued, and knowledgeable. Each grade-level or subject-level team has a leader and is required to plan together and implement curriculum in a coordinated manner. Milestones such as marriages, babies, surgeries, and other life events are acknowledged and shared. We have daily team check-ins, weekly planning meetings, monthly data chats, core leadership team meetings, instructional leadership team meetings, and staff meetings to provide continued professional development and learning.

The school administration feels strongly about the importance of inspiring staff to be their very best. The administration voices and models the importance of relationship building to set the foundation for professional growth. Once staff members feel valued and are trained for school and MCPS initiatives, their ability to affect huge growth in the children is increased. Because of this philosophy, staff members are excited to implement and share with team members what they know and can do. There is a culture of personal excellence and sharing with colleagues with the MCPS initiatives of social/emotional wellness, equity, advanced reading and math opportunities, and technology. By creating an opportunity for staff happiness and effective and repeated training with content, the result is a high level of confidence, collaboration, knowledge, and trust. Through this, Stone Mill has created a school culture that allows for great retention of staff members creating a predictable, solid, local school. Most school staff members choose to stay for years and years.

### **4. School Leadership:**

In Montgomery County it is common for MCPS assistant principals to be at a school for two years and for principals to stay at one school for 3-8 years. In the 35 years of Stone Mill’s history, there have been only four principals with the current principal in her twenty-second year. This is a similar pattern with assistant principals at Stone Mill. In the last two plus decades, assistant principals have chosen to stay for 3-14 years because they enjoy the school culture of excellence.

As mentioned previously, the school administration feels passionately about ensuring success for all students, staff and parents. The principal believes, and demonstrates daily, that each and every member of our school should be valued, respected, and treated with the utmost importance. No one is ever too busy to work with and/or respond to the needs from a child, parent or colleague. Parents are to be responded to within twenty-four hours, and no child is to go home without the necessary information and skills to reinforce that day’s curriculum. Finally, the principal operates under the belief that being proactive is best, and when reactive, it is imperative to remain calm and focused on what is best for children.

People are the school administration’s reason for greeting each day and ending each day with enthusiasm. Every morning, in all weather, children and families are greeted outside by the principal and assistant principal. The principal does valet loading and unloading of cars morning and afternoon. She greets every child, parent, preschool sibling and pet by name. She reminds each child to have a great day. The assistant principal greets walkers and bus riders at the door and similarly sets the positive tone for their day. All issues - health, lunchroom, behavior, and academic, are handled personally by school administration. They are involved in everything that happens in the building and ensure that all issues are handled immediately.



For morning announcements, the principal recites the school's "Expectations," recognizes birthdays, talks about the social/emotional topic for the day, and sets a tone of high expectations and focus on learning. Both administrators work closely with the PTA year-round, and participate in all school functions.

World events and changes in curriculum over time have caused regular readjustment by school leadership. Due to the continuity of school leadership and a low mobility rate, Stone Mill has continued to grow, change and excel through things like curriculum changes, 9/11, the DC sniper, and COVID.

## **5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

Stone Mill has a nationally-unusual, very diverse population, so culturally responsive teaching and learning have been cornerstones of our school forever. The United States (U.S.) Census data lists our country as 76% White and six percent Asian. The Stone Mill student population has about 50% Asian students and 20% White students. Our percentages for African American and Hispanic students are reflective of the United States. Our diverse racial profile creates a great opportunity for us to embrace and celebrate all the wonder and background our students bring. Our staff and our leadership team (composed of the team leaders from all grade levels and content areas), regularly read assigned books and listen to culturally-based podcasts to explore new thoughts in ensuring respect and understanding of various cultures that may be unfamiliar to them.

The school administration believes that it is critical for children to "see themselves" in the world around them. This begins at Stone Mill with hiring. The school includes all staff members in the interview process for bringing in new employees. We undergird our hiring with the expectations of excellence and mutual respect, and search for these qualities in faces that will mirror our children. Once great staff are on board, we ensure that we have equitable curricular materials and practices. We make certain that the books we use, the math word problems we offer, the children called upon to answer questions in class, the parents we invite in to share information, the programs we employ, the assemblies and field trips we plan, and the activities we host all inform and celebrate diversity. We are also very aware that many cultures and religions have holidays that do not align temporally with Judeo/Christian holidays, so ensure that our teachers are recognizing this and giving grace for assignments.

We have found great success through our classrooms inviting parents in to share cultural and/or religious celebrations with the students and through our school wide announcements about different holidays and observances. Additionally, with the school, the PTA hosts a multicultural night as well as a talent show wherein families are invited to demonstrate the beauty of their culture. Children regularly dress in clothes from their cultures as they have learned that they are valued and their differences are celebrated.

From the adoption of our school name from the different factions in our catchment area to our current structure of acceptance and respect, Stone Mill has been and continues to be a place where cultures learn and grow together.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE**

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The Stone Mill strategy for excellence is built upon Dr. James P. Comer's ideology that relationships drive success. As mentioned in many sections previously, our community is personal, we are invested, and excellence for each and every student every day is our plan. Each one of us personally knows the other. There is daily discussion about all the people and drivers that matter to us - family, students, children at home, lessons, success, data that needs to be improved. All of it. We are in the game of learning and everyone here is on the same team. Many school staffs are busy worrying about administrivia or minutia. Many administrators want to be liked and seen as popular. At Stone Mill we focus on building relationships that honor trust, time, commitment, and mutual respect.

When a family loses a house or a person loses a loved one, we are all pulling together. When a child makes a poor behavioral choice or an adult becomes anxious or upset, it is only through leveraging relationships and having the genuine concern for a teammates' success, that we work together for the success of everyone. We believe in kindness, support, and growth-mindset. We believe in being proactive through counseling and anti-bullying and when more is needed, we employ restorative justice practices. But most of all, we believe in, "One band, one sound." The more successes we have, the more we can build upon.

By letting our data guide us, our trust in others to support us and our commitment to everyone's success to motivate us, we are unstoppable!