March 11, 2009

Dear 5-6th grade parent/guardian,

From now to the beginning of May, Ms. Linn's class will be taking part in a pilot writing program designed to help them develop their writing and explore their interests by sharing their writing about Great Stone Face books with a real audience. Students will be using a Weblog, designed by Mrs. Lesser, the MRSD Library Media Specialist, to post their comments to the Internet. You can view the blog yourself at: greatstonefacebooks.blogspot.com

A Weblog, or blog as they are commonly called, is a special type of Web page that can be created and easily updated using a Web browser. Each new entry has its own date stamp. Each entry has a comments section where visitors to the blog may leave comments for the author.

The students have been learning about and reading the Great Stone Face Books in library all year and this is a culminating activity before they get to vote in early May. The Great Stone Face Book award is specific to the state of New Hampshire and includes a list of 25 titles for 4-6th graders. Students are encouraged to read as many titles as possible over the year and then vote for their favorite in early May. The votes are sent to the NH Library Association who announces the winner in mid May.

How it Works

Each week in library Mrs. Lesser will give students the opportunity to write an entry for the blog about either a Great Stone Face Book that they have read, or the opportunity to comment on another student's writing. The emphasis is on the quality, not the quantity of what they write.

Students will receive instruction in how to use the blog as well as instruction in what makes a good blog entry.   Students may also work from home. All that is required is an Internet connection and a Web browser.

Having a real audience is one of the key components to this program. In addition to receiving comments from their classmates, Ms. Linn's students will receive comments from both Ms. Linn and Mrs. Lesser. Parents are also invited to visit the blog and respond to the writing. Potentially, anyone on the Internet could respond to our blogs, however, it is not likely that the world at large will stumble across them.

Security

This blogging project is designed to minimize risk to your child. Students will post under "fake" user names assigned by Mrs. Lesser. There will be no mention of our school name or our location. Students are allowed to post their comments and opinions, but not their age, email address, photographs of themselves, or other sensitive information. Postings are not automatically put on the blog; Mrs. Lesser has to approve any posting before it appears on the blog. This will prevent any kind of inappropriate postings. The blog will not appear as a link on our website and has been created as a "private" blog which means it won't be listed on any other website.

Before your child may start posting to their blog, we are asking for you and your child to discuss this information.

After reading this if you do not want your student to be part of this blogging program, please contact Ms. Linn by XXXX (date).

Blogging Terms and Conditions

1. Students using blogs are expected to act safely by keeping personal information out of their posts. You agree to not post or give out your family name, password, user name, email address, home address, school name, city, country or other information that could help someone locate or contact you in person. You may share your comments, ideas and opinions about Great Stone Face Books.

2. Students using blogs agree not to share their user name with anyone besides their teachers and parents. You agree to never blog as another student.

3. Students using blogs are expected to treat blogspaces as classroom spaces. Speech that is inappropriate for class is not appropriate for your blog. While we encourage you to engage in debate and conversation with other bloggers, we also expect that you will conduct yourself in a manner reflective of a representative of this school.

4. Student blogs are to be a forum for student expression. However, they are first and foremost a tool for learning, and as such will sometimes be constrained by the various requirements and rules of classroom teachers.

5. Students who do not abide by these terms and conditions may lose their opportunity to take part in this project.