

Plans for Re-Opening and a Remote Learning Workgroup - May 29, 2020

As teachers are working to finish up the school year with students in remote learning, our school administration is working to plan for our in-person reopening in the fall. We have many pieces working simultaneously to prepare for being together next year.

We have many options available to us at Hilltop Montessori School, and the ability to be nimble to meet any requirements set forth. We expect to be able to conform to group size and facilities restrictions that health and safety guidelines will call for. With a high student to teacher ratio, and flexible, accessible classroom spaces with lots of outdoor facilities, we are making plans to be open in-person on August 31st!

Some ongoing activities in support of Hilltop reopening include:

General School Preparations

- Reviewing all the guidelines from the CDC, Vermont OSHA, and the Vermont Agency of Education to plan and begin to implement needed measures (facility zoning/physical distancing, program modification, daily health screenings, PPE, cleaning and disinfecting policies and procedures, and more).
- Working with the Vermont Independent Schools Association and the Vermont Agency of Education in developing the "Healthy and Strong Start: Reopening Vermont's Schools for In-Person Instruction, Fall 2020".
- Holding a Staff Retreat on June 15 and 16th to go over the likely new requirements and to develop plans and summer work necessary to adapt our spaces and programs to meet them.
- Reviewing finances at the Board level to ensure that funding resources and strategies are employed (including federal and state programs) to enable us to best meet the needs of students and families.

Toddler Program and Children's House

- Developing and implementing the health and safety protocols, staffing, and facilities adjustments for two groups of Toddler and Children's House students at school during June and July for SummerFun, which is helping us practice for the fall.
- Renovating the playground and doorway configuration to facilitate different drop off and entrance locations.

- Our current plan is to spread out classes using additional spaces if group size is limited to significantly less than 25.

Elementary

- Limiting class size to a maximum group of 25, if that ends up being required.
- Developing plans to spread out Elementary students among more classrooms, if needed, to limit group size (using the Art Room and parts of the Arts Barn as classroom space, if needed).

Middle School

- Enrollment of under 20 students to ensure a maximum group size of under 25, if that ends up being required.
- Easily spread out within the Middle School building and grounds to have smaller group size, if necessary.

We feel very fortunate to have the facilities and staffing expertise and resources to enable us to meet the requirements that could be imposed for a variety of scenarios that might come our way. We are poised to be flexible and able to open in the Fall if at all possible!

We are working full speed ahead on plans for being at school in person starting on August 31, in addition to doing 5 weeks of SummerFun for Toddlers and Children's House this summer. And this summer is also a great time to discuss remote learning. Having just had the three month experience of remote learning, we have teachers, parents, board members, and students who are primed to analyze what worked and how to create a more dynamic, developmentally sensitive Montessori experience should we ever be called upon to do remote learning again in the future.

Drawing on all these levels of expertise, we are putting together a workgroup that will likely meet every two weeks or so over the summer to share ideas about remote learning. We are beginning to develop a shared folder where we can collect resources and reflections. Several parents, teachers, and Board members have already expressed an interest in being a part of this effort. **If you would also like to participate in the Remote Learning Workgroup, or if you have specific input on this, please let me know.** We'd love to have you engaged in a small or great way, whatever your interest/availability may be.

Stay well,
Tamara