

## **Support for the HMS Community During COVID-19 - April 17, 2020**

Dear Hilltop Community,

The Hilltop Montessori School Administration and Board of Trustees have been working through many considerations to support families, staff, and students for the current crisis and for the long-term sustainability of the school. With so many unknowns regarding the COVID-19 crisis and how it will play out in the weeks, months, and years ahead, we want to communicate clearly and directly with families about where things stand.

Please know that our primary goal, as we work to consider the needs of our families and our staff, is to hold our small community fully together. No one is expendable. We are doing everything we can so that once this crisis passes we can reestablish our community in a position of strength. Working together, we can better navigate future challenges which will surely arise.

**Remote Learning:** The teachers for all of the programs have been working full-time (or more) to provide distance learning support to students and families. We have transitioned to providing an educational experience in this new context. That being said, we acknowledge that remote learning programs serve families of different age children differently. Montessori Goodie Bags, teacher check-ins, or ZOOM circle times cannot fully replace providing childcare in the prepared environment of a Hilltop Montessori School classroom and outdoor campus.

**Keeping Staff:** We have worked to keep all teachers employed (working and paid) during this period with the “stay at home” order. We have chosen this path so that our families can have a robust staff to help navigate the challenges of learning from home and to come back to once we can meet again in person. Many on the board were compelled by [this article](#) noting the importance of sustaining support to a school through such a time. We also applied for and received a Payroll Protection Program loan. This will help us continue to pay staff during the cash flow gap that would have been caused by the tuition deferrals noted below. We hope to have this loan completely “forgiven” through the provisions provided by this federal program.

**Deferral Option:** The school is offering a two month deferral of the initial tuition payment (from May to July) as an option for all families. This is an acknowledgement of the unknown financial impact that this could have on many families. About 15% of families have taken that option, others were in a position to stay with the May payment date.

**Hardship Requests:** We as a school understand that families may be significantly impacted financially by the shutdown of the economy. We have developed a "Hardship Request Form" that will enable all of those families to communicate with us consistently and efficiently. Any family who is out of work, paying extra for childcare at home now, or whose finances are otherwise significantly impacted by this current situation is strongly encouraged to contact us so we can support them through this time. This Hardship Request Form is meant to help us understand new economic changes families are facing, and therefore will be independent of the SSS/Indexed Tuition program, which relies on past year financial information that is unlikely to be relevant. **This simple request form is attached below. Please submit your request by June 1,** so that we can evaluate as many requests as possible at the same time. We plan to get responses back to families by June 15th. The form will ask for the cause of the hardship, the expected duration of the reduced financial resources, and the reduced amount the family is able to pay under the changed circumstances.

If you have any questions about the Hardship Request Program, please contact [Deb Lagoy](#), Business Manager, or [Tamara Mount](#), Head of School.