

## **The Power of “Welcoming” to Develop a Sense of Belonging**

“Grace and Courtesy” are the foundation of Montessori pedagogy. It is the consistent practice of the teacher to welcome students into the classroom. Teachers are not just modeling the behavior they want the student to reproduce among each other, but a culture that fosters a sense of belonging and respect. Grace and Courtesy are a bridge and a medium that allows teachers to get to know the community of students and vice versa. A child that internalizes this practice in an environment that welcomes their desires and needs will navigate with confidence and reciprocity in the world.

At Hilltop, we believe that constructing an equitable, just, and inclusive community starts with the work of the adult who internalizes the responsibility with the care of the environment surrounding us. This is why we, as a staff, try to embody our practices with our philosophy and diversity statement that expects and encourages us to be aware of the community we are trying to build. The practices of Grace and Courtesy cannot be isolated from the understanding of our diversities because, as in the classroom, the expectation is not to reproduce a “good” behavior but to foster a sense of belonging; the same is applied and encouraged to our larger community of staff and parents.

We have recently worked, as a community, to develop a more inclusive [diversity statement](#). We appreciate everyone’s commitment to respecting and following these goals. We can’t wait to see you all this evening at the family picnic party. Please, take this as an opportunity to welcome our new families, and introduce them to others so we can foster a welcoming and inclusive community for all.

Hugs,

Yupaichani / Gracias/ Thank you,

Marco Yunga Tacuri