

# Student & Family Handbook

Hilltop  
Montessori  
School

# 2023/24

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# HILLTOP MONTESSORI SCHOOL CALENDAR FOR 2023-2024

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Here are some helpful acronyms we use at Hilltop Montessori School (**HMS**)

**TP** = Toddler Program (18 - 36 months), **CH** = Children's House (3 - 6 year old), **LE** = Lower Elementary (Gr 1 - 3), **UE** = Upper Elementary (Gr 4 - 6), **MS** = Middle School (Gr 7 - 8), **BC/ED** = Before Care / Extended Day

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## AUGUST 2023

- 21 All School Work Party 3-4:30 pm
- 24-25 New Student Conferences & Visiting Days
- 28 First Day of School
- 28 - 31 Orientation Schedule for TP & CH

## SEPTEMBER 2023

- 1 First full day for all TP & CH
- 4 NO SCHOOL: Labor Day
- 5-8 MS in Upland (3 nights)
- 7-8 UE Pinnacle Trip (1 night)
- 12-14 September Parent Meetings
- 21 Peace Day
- 5 - 7 pm Family Picnic

## OCTOBER 2023

- 6 HALF DAY: Grandparents & Special Friends Day
- 8 Putney School Harvest Festival
- 9 NO SCHOOL: Indigenous Peoples' Day
- 23-27 Annual Fund Week

## NOVEMBER 2023

- 2 HALF DAY: Parent Conferences
- 3 NO SCHOOL: Parent Conferences
- 10 NO SCHOOL: Teacher In-Service
- 21 HALF DAY: Stone Soup
- 22-24 November Break

## DECEMBER 2023

- 22 HALF DAY and Cookie Swap
- 23-1/7 Winter Break

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## JANUARY 2024

- 8 NO SCHOOL: Teacher In-Service Day
- 9 Students Back
- 15 NO SCHOOL: MLK Day

## FEBRUARY 2024

- 10 Curriculum Morning
- 19-23 February Break
- 26 NO SCHOOL: Teacher In-Service

## MARCH 2024

- 28 HALF DAY: Parent Conferences
- 29 NO SCHOOL: Parent Conferences

## APRIL 2024

- 15-19 April Break
- 22 NO SCHOOL: Teacher In-Service Day

## MAY 2024

- 6 Moving Up Parent Meeting
- 24 HALF DAY: Grandparents & Special Friends Day
- 27 NO SCHOOL: Memorial Day

## JUNE 2024

- 5-7 UE Trip
- 10 - 12 MS in Upland
- 13 Final Day of School for Lower School Field Day & Bead Ceremony
- 14 Final Day of School for Middle School & Graduation



## OVERVIEW

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### **School Mission Statement**

Hilltop Montessori School's mission is for students to practice responsible independence in a caring community of curious, critical learners and thoughtful citizens.

### **Core Themes**

#### **The Educational Partnership**

Honest, open communication forms the basis of the educational partnership among teachers, students and parents. Members of the Hilltop community believe that it is the responsibility of each individual to be respectful and caring of each other and of the world in which we live.

#### **The Montessori Curriculum**

The Montessori curriculum fosters inquiry and exploration. Teachers committed to Montessori principles serve as role models and guides in a multi-disciplinary curriculum that requires initiative, problem solving skills and the personal integrity to work to one's fullest capacity.

#### **The Prepared Environment**

Each child is given the freedom and permission to learn directly from a thoughtfully prepared environment. The responsibility to make choices instills in students self-discipline, independence, and joy in the learning process.

#### **The Collaborative Learning Community**

In Hilltop's multi-age classrooms students are encouraged to develop, share, and acknowledge individual strengths and skills. Learning is a collaborative process in which students inspire, motivate, teach and, above all, respect each other.

#### **The Potential of Each Individual**

On an intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual level students are guided and supported as they strive toward fulfilling their individual potential. By respecting a child's unique voice, learning style, rhythm and pace, teachers foster self-confidence and a willingness to take risks. Student assessments measure the personal growth of each individual in the academic and social context.

## School Diversity Statement

*"We shall walk together on this path of life, for all things are a part of the universe, and are connected with each other to form one whole unity."*

— Maria Montessori

### At Hilltop Montessori School:

**We endeavor** to honor the qualities that make us similar to each other and those that make us different, co-creating a space that values and respects the race, ethnicity, national origin, immigration status, language, religion, socioeconomic status, gender identity, size, sexual orientation, and dis/ability of all students, families, and employees.

**We understand** that this effort is a work in progress and that the achievement of such principles grows from the work of educating ourselves and each other as we address our biases and revisit program curriculums and school policies. The empowerment of the members of our community will bring confidence and compassion for understanding and communicating with a more inclusive language, challenge discrimination and stereotypes, and provide guidance.

**We strive** to develop, embrace, and celebrate diversity in order to fulfill our mission, affirm the principles of Montessori education, and carry out a responsible role in our community.

## Non-Discrimination Policy

Hilltop Montessori School complies with all applicable state and federal nondiscrimination statutes, including the Vermont Public Accommodations Act (9 V.S.A. Chapter 139), the Vermont Fair Employment Practices Act (21 V.S.A. Chapter 5, Subchapter 6) and Vermont State Board of Education rules 2226.6 and 2229.1. Hilltop Montessori School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability in the administration of its educational policies, admissions, scholarships and other school programs. The school affords each of its students its full range of social, academic, and athletic opportunities.

## Enrollment Policy

As an approved independent school Hilltop Montessori School (HMS) follows these enrollment policies:

1. All applications to HMS shall be made voluntarily.
2. No student shall be denied acceptance for enrollment in HMS on the basis of disability (as defined in Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended), or that the student is eligible for special education or undergoing the comprehensive evaluation process for special education, race, ethnicity, national origin, immigration status, language, religion, socioeconomic status, gender identity, size, sexual orientation, dis/ability or any other classification protected by federal or state law.

3. HMS may make acceptance decisions based on considerations such as student and family agreement with the Montessori philosophy (including a commitment to the three year cycle), student ability to be successful within the parameters of a Montessori learning environment, enrollment of other family members, age (in respect to a balance of our mixed-age classrooms), general makeup of the classroom, and date of application.
4. If the number of applicants to HMS exceeds capacity, enrollment decisions shall be based first upon continuing to enroll previously enrolled students and then upon considerations itemized in paragraph 3 above.

## Accreditation and Affiliations

HMS is an independent school as defined by Vermont statute pursuant to Title 16, Section 166(b) and is AMS (American Montessori Society) Accredited, and a member of VISA (Vermont Independent School Association), NAMTA (North American Montessori Teachers Association), and Montessori Schools of Massachusetts. HMS is a level 5 program in the Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS), Vermont's Quality Recognition and Improvement System for child care, preschools, and after school programs.

**Child Care Consumer Line** 1-800-649-2642 a toll free number in Vermont to get information about child care provider license, accreditation, or STARS rating. Website is <http://dcf.vermont.gov/childcare/parents/consumer-line>

## School History

Hilltop Montessori School was founded in 1972 by a group of parents who wanted a quality pre-school experience for their children. Housed for the first three years on a hilltop at West Village Meeting House in West Brattleboro, it was aptly named Hilltop Nursery School Inc. The school opened with an enrollment of 20 pre-schoolers and a head teacher who happened to be Montessori trained. There was intense parental involvement on every level, from building shelves, cleaning bathrooms, making snack for the week, to subbing in the classroom and serving as administrative board members. Forty years later parental involvement remains essential to the success of the school. From that humble beginning the school has grown and expanded, adding a kindergarten in 1975 and an elementary program in 1984 and utilizing spaces throughout Brattleboro for its fledgling campuses. By 1990, with the enrollment at 72, two classrooms were needed for what were grades 1-4 and by 1991 Hilltop had grown enough that it moved to buildings at the Austine School for the Deaf.

No sooner had Hilltop's first class of sixth graders graduated in the spring of 1993, than mumbling about continuing Hilltop through middle school began. In the fall of 1994 the Middle School opened its doors to 14 sixth and seventh graders, in the space at Center Congregational Church that Hilltop had vacated several years

earlier. Finally, in the fall of 1997, the middle school moved into renovated space right upstairs from the rest of the school in Vermont Hall at Austine.

Though it had flourished, Hilltop Montessori School had never owned its own campus. For 16 years the school occupied 13,000 sf on two floors in a building owned by The Austine School for the Deaf. As good as the quarters had been, Hilltop's programmatic needs began to outgrow this space and the Board began searching for a permanent home.

After exploring over 30 sites throughout the Brattleboro area, Hilltop Montessori School found its field of dreams. To buy, build, and relocate took the concerted effort of every Hilltop supporter. It is an effort that assures that a Hilltop Montessori education will be available to many future generations of children. In 2009 after an intense period of planning, fundraising, and building, Hilltop Montessori School moved to the current location on Summit Circle. With the start of the 2014 school year, the final phase of the new campus was completed with the addition of The Arts Barn: a music, theater, and gymnasium space. This same year our youngest children were enrolled in the first year of Hilltop's Toddler Program, when a vision held for many years was fully realized.

Today there are more than 120 students enrolled in the Toddler through grade 8 programs. Hilltop is located at 99 Stafford Farm Hill, situated on 43 acres within a five minute drive of downtown Brattleboro and easy reach of the interstate.

The commitment to Montessori philosophy, originally a twist of fate, is very much at the heart of Hilltop's mission: to develop confident, independent learners who, like their parents, value their involvement in the Hilltop community and recognize their responsibility to the community at large.

### **How We Use Our Campus**

HMS utilizes our full campus as a learning environment that is available and used by many students throughout the day. While classrooms are the center point for each program, and much of the day's activities and work take place within those classrooms, each program utilizes every part of our campus, inside and out, at both designated and spontaneous times that include lessons, projects, reset time, and more.

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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The role of the Board of Trustees is to determine and oversee policies that support the mission of the school and to ensure the school's fiscal stability. This includes hiring and evaluation of the Head of School, appointing standing and ad hoc committees, overseeing facility use, fundraising, and strategic planning. Equally important, Board members serve as ambassadors for the school community, help parents feel comfortable, and refer their concerns or questions to the proper channels.

**Geneva Morse** (Board Chair, Leadership Team)  
genevarose24@gmail.com

**Louisa Conrad** (Incoming Board Chair, Leadership Team)  
louisaconrad@gmail.com

**Nancy Dickson** (Outgoing Board Chair, Leadership Team)  
n\_dickson@caisct.org

**Shelley Lockyear** (Treasurer)  
shelley@thenutmegvermont.com

### **Members at Large**

Juliette Carr  
Doug Flood  
Kate Purwin  
Asher Pucciarello  
Julia Scannell  
Avery Schwenk  
Dora Urujeni



## FAMILY GOALS

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Families play a huge role in the success of their children's education. We appreciate your hard work and commitment to Hilltop, and in turn want parents/grandparents/guardians to understand what makes Hilltop unique and exceptional. Your contribution to the community is important to the school and your child.

### Hilltop hopes ...

- That families commit to learning as much as possible about the Montessori approach to be able to support their child in their day-to-day school life (see reading list, page 31).
- That families commit, as part of this education, to observing their child in class during work shares.
- That families sign up and attend scheduled conferences.
- That families attend informational/educational events clarifying expectations and deepening knowledge of Montessori philosophy.
- That families, as best they can, be willing to support the values and expectations their child experiences at school. This means that families have a value system that is enough in alignment with that of the school so that the child is not in conflict. [\*With credit to Judi Orion, NAMTA Journal, Spring 2006]
- That families review this **Student & Family Handbook**, also available on our website, to fully understand policies and guidelines.

## FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

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Thank you for partnering with Hilltop! Parents, caregivers and families are at the heart of Hilltop's success. Your participation is what helps build and strengthen the Hilltop community. The support of families as volunteers and as fundraisers is a defining characteristic and ensures that Hilltop Montessori School is a lively, vibrant, and stable community. By joining Hilltop, we welcome you to take on an active role in the school community. Below are a number of ways we are building community at Hilltop, and always welcome your participation based on your ability and means. Please contact Sarah Thessing, Development Director, if you are every interested and available to volunteer at [sthessing@@hilltopmontessori.org](mailto:sthessing@@hilltopmontessori.org). Thank you!

### Program Events

We hope you and your family can participate in as many Hilltop events as possible throughout the year - from our work parties, to peace day picnic, grandparent and special friend days, parent ed series, middle school graduation, and many more! Having as many Hilltop families involved and present in Hilltop events strengthens and builds community. We are also always looking for volunteers to provide an

extra set of hands at the many events during the year – it's a fun and wonderful way to help Hilltop!

## **Middle School (MS) Graduation**

The MS Graduation is a special day at Hilltop. Seeing our most senior students get up on stage and each deliver a self-written piece, reflecting on where they have been, where they are at, and where they are going, is truly remarkable. This may be the most moving day of the year, and we welcome all families and students to join us on this day as we support our 8th graders as they say goodbye to Hilltop, and say Hello to High School.

## **Parent Education**

Delivering an exceptional and authentic Montessori education is at the core of Hilltop – and one that has allowed the school to keep on growing and thriving. Hilltop is committed to helping parents learn more about Montessori. We hear from parents time and again that the more they learn about Montessori and Hilltop's curriculum and approach, the more enthusiastically they partner with the school on their child's journey and are able to support their child beyond the classroom. We hope to see families at the various parent education events throughout the year, and welcome feedback from parents on how we can continue to deliver parent education.

## **Mountain Days**

These 5-6 days in January and February (Downhill Skiing and Snowboarding, Cross Country Skiing, Ice Skating) are some of the most exciting days of the year! To keep them going we rely on parent volunteers – whether it be by bringing equipment and kids back and forth between Memorial Park and Hilltop, chaperoning or teaching. Thank you for your support in helping instill a love for winter sports in our students, and keeping them active throughout the long, Vermont winter!

## **Sports**

Being a chaperone, coach, or referee for after school team sports is a great way to get involved and help show support to our eager student athletes! We also love a big showing of family, students and staff at sporting events – especially our home games. All are welcome to come and cheer on the Hilltop Hedgehogs!

## **Building and Grounds**

We welcome families who are interested in gardening, carpentry, painting, or other fix-it activities to maintain the health and growth of the school environment. Please contact Travis Thiele, Facilities Director, if you would like to help out with our buildings and grounds, at [facilities@hilltopmontessori.org](mailto:facilities@hilltopmontessori.org).

## Community Connectors

Previously called “Classroom Coordinators”, Community Connectors help teachers to coordinate events such as finding chaperones and drivers for field trips, coordinating volunteers for activities, and participating in all-school events. Community Connectors also act as important ambassadors for the school and help encourage parent participation. Although up to two families per classroom serve as Community Connectors, we are always looking for volunteers. The list of community connectors will be shared with parents early in the school year.

## New Parent Buddy

New families to Hilltop are paired with a current family to help support both the new student’s and new families’ transition to Hilltop. If you would like to participate, please contact Sarah, Development Director, at [sthessing@hilltopmontessori.org](mailto:sthessing@hilltopmontessori.org).

## Giving

Hilltop’s sustainability and growth is thanks to the time donation of time, expertise, and resources from families past, present and future. Hilltop’s growth and success has been possible because of the culture of giving – in its many facets – transforming from a one-room classroom to the thriving, multi-program campus it is today. As Maria Montessori said, “An education capable of saving humanity is no small undertaking...”, and it has been at Hilltop’s core to bring an education ahead of its time to Brattleboro and the surrounding community to create the generation of tomorrow. To help realize this vision, this coming year Hilltop is offering almost \$500,000 in school grants to ensure our school is affordable and accessible to more families who strive to give an authentic Montessori education to their child. We look for various ways throughout the year to make up this deficit through fundraising, and hope you can help participate in helping us meet our annual fundraising goals – whether it be through time, expertise, or resources – so we can continue to bring an exceptional Montessori education to the Brattleboro and surrounding community.

## VISITING AND OBSERVATION

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We welcome parents, relatives, and friends to observe the classrooms and children at work. You are able to arrange to observe from the hallway through one of our observation windows in the main building at any time, just ask someone from the admin staff to accompany you down the hall and get you settled. If you would like to enter a classroom to observe, we ask that you contact the Admissions office to set up a time so we can ensure that the class will be having lessons during that time. We would like to make the classrooms as accessible as possible so that families can gain a deeper understanding of the wonders of a Montessori classroom. Yet, it can be very distracting for children to have a family member in the room, and confusing and dysregulating for younger children. This can be helped by having you observe in a classroom where your child is not a student.

When entering into a classroom to observe, please note that you are entering a space that belongs to the children. This is a unique place in a world that is designed primarily for adults. The teachers work diligently to design and preserve this space that is focused on the children and their needs. Montessori classrooms are exciting to watch because the children can be seen deeply engaged in realistic activities, they are encouraged and supported to do for themselves, and they are given opportunities to make choices throughout their day.

The children's focus changes when new adults are in the room, so we kindly ask that you keep the following in mind during your observation in order to see the classroom function as normally as possible. **Your goal is to be a fly on the wall.**

- You will be provided a seat to sit in while you enjoy the opportunity to observe the children busy in their classroom. Please resist the desire to walk around the classroom or engage the children.
- Please sit quietly unless directly approached by a child. If this does happen, feel free to say hello, but keep conversation to a minimum. If a child continues on, a good response might be, "I'm here to observe the children working."

As you focus your observation, being as non-distracting to the students as possible, you might...

- Observe one child's pattern of work: their choice, focus, and interaction with others.
- Follow the teacher's way of alternating presentation, guidance, and observation.
- Note the breadth of activities the students are engaged in and the depth of their concentration.
- Contemplate the elements of independence, responsibility, movement, and choice available.

## HILLTOP MONTESSORI SCHOOL TRADITIONS AND EVENTS

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For the most up-to-date listing of events and times, go to the Hilltop website at <https://hilltopmontessori.org/current-families/calendar/> and be on the lookout for specific listings in the Hilltop Happenings Newsletter. *Please note: these events are subject to change.*

### AUGUST

#### **Community Work Party**

Parents, guardians, friends, and students are invited to the first all-school community work party of the year. In addition to classroom specific projects, we will tackle one or two large projects. This is a great time to mingle with new and returning families and staff, to grow as a community, and to set up the campus for success for the school year ahead.

Students will work alongside parents and teachers to help prepare our school environment for the new year ahead! Please bring a picnic or snack to enjoy after the work party on the soccer field if you would like to extend the togetherness.

#### **Summer Letters**

Summer Letters are sent mid-summer and will provide dates/times for these start of the year events:

#### **Toddler Program Home Visits**

Home visits are a great way for teachers to create an initial connection with a child and their family. It is during this time that the child has an opportunity to meet their new teachers for the first time in their own home, a place where they are already very comfortable. When parents welcome teachers and interact with them in their home, they are communicating to the child that the teachers are “friends” and people that can be trusted. The trust and relationship building that begins during the home visit is paramount for this age group and allows the toddler to transfer this comfortable feeling into the classroom.

#### **Children’s House, Elementary and Middle School Conferences for Families**

Parents of students new to the Children’s House, Elementary and Middle School meet with faculty before school starts to set goals for the year and get to know each other better. Children’s House and Elementary conferences include parents and teachers. Middle School conferences include parents, teachers, and students.

#### **Visiting Day for Toddler and New Children’s House Students**

Toddlers and new Children’s House students are invited to stop in with a parent/guardian and spend 10-20 minutes in the classroom. This is an informal visit to become acquainted with the space.



## **Parent/Caregiver Montessori Orientation**

*The More You Learn, the More You Appreciate!* ALL Hilltop parents/caregivers are invited and encouraged to attend to help deepen your understanding of your child's experiences each day, from the Toddler Program through Middle School. For optimal development and success, we have found it is essential to partner with parents in our efforts to support your child(ren). Towards this end, we offer families a basic understanding of the fundamentals of Montessori pedagogy with clear examples, time for questions and answers, and many helpful tips during this three day workshop (1.5 hrs per day). Multiple sessions will be offered in hopes of making this workshop as accessible to as many people as possible.

## **Before Care and Extended Day**

Before Care (7:40-8:15am) and Extended Day (3-4pm) begin the second week of school for students who have signed up.

## **Bagel Lunch Wednesdays and Pizza Day Fridays**

CH-MS Students are invited (but not required) to sign up for Bagel Lunch served on Wednesdays, or Pizza Lunch served on Fridays. Children's House students staying beyond 12 noon on Wednesday or Friday can participate as well.

- Pizza is offered and coordinated by the school administration.
- The Bagel Lunch Program is implemented by Middle School students as one of their fundraising businesses.

Lunch options and cost information will be sent home during the first week of school.

## **SEPTEMBER**

### **Middle School Upland Odyssey**

The Middle School students and faculty start the year with a community-building, 4-day odyssey (Monday – Thursday during the second week of school) to their outdoor classroom. Students will be cooking, living, and learning in the outdoor classroom as well as getting to know their new community. Students will return Friday to Hilltop in time for normal pick up at 3:00 pm.

### **Upper Elementary Pinnacle Trip**

On Thursday of the second week of school, Upper Elementary students will leave directly after school and head to Tom Griffith's house at the base of the Pinnacle, in Westminster West, VT. Students have dinner at Tom's house and then head up the hill. After unpacking their sleeping bags in the three-sided cabin at the top of the Pinnacle, students spend the evening looking at stars, playing games, and telling stories. Friday morning students head back down to Tom's house for a day of games, fun, and outdoor learning. Students will arrive back at Hilltop in time for normal pick up at 3:00 pm.

**September Parent Meeting:** *The Year Ahead and Supporting Home to School Life*

This is an afternoon meeting for all new and returning parents to learn about the upcoming year's curriculum, program, expectations of students, and ways to be involved in your child's education. Program times will be split so parents with children in more than one program level can attend both orientations or parents may split up and attend different program levels. Childcare will be provided – please reserve childcare at the Front Desk.

**International Peace Day Celebration: September 21**

Students and staff celebrate with others worldwide for a day of peace through song, readings, a peace dove procession, and a moment of silence. This school-wide celebration includes the pairing of "Peace Buddies," an endearing and community building Hilltop tradition, where younger and older students are paired together.

**Hilltop Family Picnic**

Join Hilltop Montessori School community for the annual early evening picnic. Families from each program will be asked to contribute a dish, and we'll have the grill going. Pack a blanket and join us to connect with old friends and make some new ones!

**Soccer Programs for LE, UE, MS: September through late October**

Soccer will run from September through late October. Hilltop offers co-ed soccer skill building for Lower Elementary students and co-ed teams for UE and MS students who play games with other area schools. Whether your student is a beginner or advanced soccer player, they will surely enjoy this serious but fun sports opportunity.

**Before Care and Extended Day**

Hilltop Montessori School recognizes the need for families to extend care beyond the regular school day. To meet these needs, we offer a Before Care Program, 7:40–8:15 am and an Extended Day Program to extend the day until 4 pm. We are working hard to be able to provide care and activities until 5 pm. Stay tuned!

**Student and Classroom Photo Day**

Class photos are taken late September. Families can purchase individual photos of their children and a class photo.

**OCTOBER**

**All School Gathering (ASG) and Community and Coffee: Thursdays,  
Oct – June, 8:30–9:20 am**

The Head of School and other staff will host a Community and Coffee gathering for parents to connect with the school and with each other prior to each ASG. We understand that not everyone is able to attend during this time, and we want to

make sure that families know we are always available! As a school we work to be as transparent and accessible as possible, but realize that we sometimes miss the mark and/or are unable to meet every individual's needs or situation at all times. Please know that we care about cultivating an open and supportive community, and we invite you to reach out to any member of the admin team at any time. We are always happy to answer questions, hear your suggestions, or talk through specific policies or situations.

During ASG, students and teachers gather to share stories, learning, and events from the classrooms and sing songs together. Parents are invited to join in the audience for this gathering.

### **The Annual Fund**

A Hilltop Montessori School education is possible for many children because the school keeps the tuition as low as possible. In fact, even full tuition payments do not cover the total cost of educating each child. On average there is a \$5,000 gap between tuition and actual cost. This is common practice for independent schools: fundraising makes up the difference. Instead of the school asking each family to pay more tuition, families choose the tax-deductible contribution fitting their financial ability each year. 100% participation inspires the foundations who preferentially offer grants to independent schools most supported by their community. Making up 3% of the annual budget, the Annual Fund supports all facets of Hilltop. Every dime contributed to the Annual Fund serves Hilltop students by further enriching our strong programs, whether it is a new set of knobbed cylinder blocks for the Children's House, tickets to Sturbridge Village for Upper Elementary students, or computers for the Middle School.

### **Children's House Parent & Child Work Shares**

Children are invited to bring their parents to school in the morning to show parents what they're working on and learning. Students are excited to have a parent's undivided attention and endorsement of the work they are doing at school. Since the classroom can get crowded, we suggest one parent attend and alternate the dates.

### **Lower Elementary Parent Work Shares**

Lower El parents are invited to come into the classroom for a work share. In the first half hour, children will show their parents works that they are currently doing; the second half hour will be for parents, and will often feature a lesson on a Lower El subject, with time for discussion afterwards. Complimentary childcare provided.

### **Teacher In-Service Days**

In addition to days in June and August at the end and beginning of each school year, staff and faculty have in-service days throughout the year usually on the Monday after holiday breaks or on a Friday. See the school calendar on page 4 or on the website for all in-service dates. From preparing the classroom environment

to professional development, these are important days for all of the faculty and staff to be together to help improve and enhance the academic programs at Hilltop.

### **Middle School Harvest Festival at the Putney School**

This is a wonderful and important fundraising event for the Middle School trips. All families are invited to join us for the fabulous community event at The Putney School in Putney, VT. Hilltop is one of many and our tent will be selling our famous homemade soups, baked goods, hot coffee, and cider.

### **Middle School Community Programs: Younger Mentoring & Elderly Companions: October - December**

Seventh grade students work with Children's House and Lower Elementary students one morning a week, while eighth grade students form a relationship with an elder from one of the resident institutions in town during this six week program.

### **Fall Grandparent & Special Friend Day**

Twice a year we invite grandparents and special friends to visit in the classroom with their grandchild or special friend and attend an All School Gathering. The first is held in the fall on the Friday before Indigenous Peoples Day, and the second on the Friday before Memorial Day weekend. Those traveling long distances can choose a time of year that works best for them.

## **NOVEMBER**

### **Parent Conferences: November and March**

Parent conferences are scheduled twice a year. Upper Elementary and Middle School students attend and lead their conference. Third grade students will participate in their spring conference in preparation for their transition to Upper Elementary. Parents will be invited to sign up for conferences through an online system. Child Care will be provided for no charge during your conference time.

### **Stone Soup**

On the Tuesday before November break the entire school joins together to prepare and cook soup and cornbread, set and decorate large community tables, and share in the fall harvest as one big family. We also encourage students to bring in non-perishable foods for a local food pantry.

## **DECEMBER**

### **Elementary Present Making Day (the last day before Winter break):**

Parents and friends are invited to help elementary students create hand-made crafts for gifts.

### **Upper Elementary Museum**

Students present their projects in a museum format to family and friends.

## **JANUARY**

### **Mountain Days: January – February**

Hilltop's winter sports program takes place on Thursdays for six weeks during January and February. Elementary – Middle School students may choose ice skating, cross-country skiing, or downhill skiing/snowboarding, which are all just down the hill at Living Memorial Park! HMS is working to reduce our impact on the environment and strengthen the community through our winter sports program. This program requires the efforts of our whole community, and having parent volunteers is a critical component to making this wonderful program work. Please consider signing up to help with this program!

**Applications for Indexed Tuition are due January 15** to be considered to receive a school grant towards student's tuition in the initial round of applications. More information on pages 60–64.

## **FEBRUARY**

### **Curriculum Morning**

This annual, all school parent education event is designed to deepen parent's understanding of the Montessori Curriculum at all program levels. Whether it is Math, Language, Culture, or some other focus of the curriculum, parents are able to visit different program levels to experience lessons provided by the teachers in each classroom. These have recently been well attended on Saturday mornings, accompanied by a fun activity for young children. The morning culminates in a Q&A hosted by a panel of faculty from all programs and a potluck community lunch. **All parents are strongly encouraged to attend.**

### **Re-enrollment**

Re-enrollment information for the coming school year is sent to parents in February. The deadline for re-enrollment of current students is mid-February. HMS uses FACTS for admissions, enrollment, and tuition management, as well as for our student information system. Families will create a FACTS Family Portal to complete re-enrollment. The annual tuition deposit and a payment method and schedule must be completed to confirm enrollment.

### **Pottery Class for Children's House Olders: February – March**

Pottery class with Bonnie Stearns takes place one afternoon a week for 5 weeks at her local studio, which is just down the road from the school. Bonnie often integrates clay exploration with classroom studies, using pottery work to deepen children's understanding of mammals, dinosaurs, Native American storytelling pieces, picture frames, or wind chimes.

### **Upper Elementary Poetry Performance**

A presentation of poetry and music written and composed by Upper Elementary students.



## MARCH

### **New Student Applications**

Applications for the coming year are accepted starting September 1. The deadline for new students to complete the admissions process is March 1. Applications submitted after March 1 will be considered as space is available.

## APRIL

### **Middle School Odyssey**

The Odyssey is a culmination of the Middle School's extensive humanities study, *"What does it mean to be Human?"*

### **Upper Elementary Performance**

More details to come!

### **Young Children's Art Exhibit**

Art from the HMS Children's House goes on display at The River Garden in downtown Brattleboro during the Month of the Young Child community event.

### **Eighth Grade Apprenticeships Program: April – May**

Eighth graders spend one morning a week as an apprentice in a local business or service agency.

## MAY

### **Hilltop Green Up Day**

Hilltop participates in the long-standing Vermont tradition of Green Up Day on the first Friday of May each year. The Hilltop community takes this opportunity to clean up the garbage and debris that has accumulated on our campus and roadways. Students spend part of their school day caring for their outdoor classrooms by picking up trash, clearing trails, sweeping sidewalks, weeding garden beds, etc.

### **Middle School Performance**

This performance is a student-created reflection of the curriculum's concepts and ideas. Families from all programs are encouraged to attend and see the MS students in action.

### **Moving Up Night: *What Lies Ahead for You and Your Child***

Whether your child is moving up to a new program or becoming an older member of the classroom community, the coming year holds new roles and responsibilities. Join the faculty in each program for a presentation and discussion.

### **Student Moving Up Days**

Moving Up Days are designed to help students prepare and transition to the next program level, from Toddler to Children's House, Children's House to Lower El, Lower

EI to Upper EI, and Upper EI to Middle School. Students participate in various activities designed to help them become better acquainted with the new environment, older students, and teachers.

### **Spring Grandparent & Special Friends Day**

Twice a year we invite grandparents and special friends to visit in the classroom with their grandchild or special friend and attend an All School Gathering. The first is held in the fall, and the second on the Friday before Memorial Day weekend. Those traveling long distances can choose a time of year that works best for them.

## **JUNE**

### **Upper Elementary End of Year Field Trip**

To celebrate the end of the year, UE students enjoy a 3-day (2 overnights) camping trip.

### **Middle School Spring Upland Odyssey**

The Middle School students and faculty end the year with a 3-day odyssey to their outdoor classroom campus. Students will be cooking, living, and learning in the outdoor classroom.

### **Field Day and Bead Ceremony**

Field Day is an all-school event with the pairing Peace Buddies to join in traditional cooperative games. After field day, we all join together for the Moving Up Bead Ceremony by the middle school pond, where students welcome younger children into their new programs. Parents are welcome to observe the Bead Ceremony.

### **Hilltop Montessori Graduation: second Friday in June**

All families are invited to the Hilltop Montessori School Eighth Grade graduation ceremony. This event sums up each graduate's individual experience and is a wonderful community celebration. We are not only celebrating the great passage of the eighth graders, but also the tremendous work and growth of all the students.

## COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL

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Good communication is an essential component of a positive school experience. Parents and teachers are partners in the education process. The school encourages parents to ask questions, express concerns, visit, and volunteer.

### School Newsletters

School news and classroom updates are provided in our two newsletters: **Hilltop Happenings** and **Classroom Connections**. **Hilltop Happenings** will contain important information, events, messages from the Admin team, and more. **Classroom Connections** will be exclusively classroom updates, photos, and snippets of the week in each classroom. Both newsletters will be published on the school website: <https://hilltopmontessori.org/news-events/newsletter/>. Community flyers, announcements, and events may be posted on the Community Bulletin Board in the front lobby. These items are often also included in the school newsletters.

### Website

[www.hilltopmontessori.org](http://www.hilltopmontessori.org)

Hilltop's website provides lots of general information about the school, program information and curriculum summaries, resources on Montessori, as well as a school calendar, weekly newsletters, and announcements of school closings. Classroom specific events will also be posted throughout the year.

### School Calendar

The school's yearly calendar on page 4 of this handbook delineates the school year's basic structure. In addition, the school provides the Calendar available on our website at <https://hilltopmontessori.org/current-families/calendar/>. This calendar will be your source for all school-wide and classroom-specific events and school closings. It will be updated on a regular basis.

### Communication with Teachers

The teachers are always ready and eager to work with families to provide a clear understanding of a child's needs and progress, and to link the child to the learning environment. Direct communication with teachers is often the best way to more fully understand the work of the child. Sometimes a quick question and answer, or story of the day, at pick-up or drop-off can be good communication, but often other means/times are better. At arrival and dismissal, teachers are responsible for oversight of children and not able to give a conversation with a parent their full attention. Often an email or meeting at another time is the best form of communication. Please know that the Head of School has asked to be cc'ed on any correspondence of a significant nature regarding a curricular or student question or issue. In most cases, this will be a passing "cc" just to keep the Head of School

informed about topics of interest to parents and teachers. In some cases, it is useful background or input to a topic that might require more attention. So please cc the Head of School yourself on such correspondence, or expect to be cc'ed in a reply from a teacher, as the Head of School needs to be included in all significant correspondence.

### **Communication With Administration**

The Hilltop Administration welcomes communication from families! We want to hear your questions, concerns, and ideas. If you are unsure of who to direct a question or query to, see below for "proper lines of communication".

### **Supporting our Teachers and Staff**

Historically, at holidays and at the end of the school year, some families have given gifts to teachers and staff to express their appreciation. We would emphasize that it isn't an obligation but a family choice. At times parents have organized to give a collective gift, often something to be used within the classroom.

Hilltop values our community and each individual. Over the past ten plus years we have augmented staff benefits to support teachers and staff during times of hardship, including short term disability insurance. We therefore ask that personal requests for support (such as meal train or GoFundMe, for example) be conducted outside the workplace and classroom auspices, rather than under HMS official communication channels. This is an important part of us working to have a more equitable community without numerous financial appeals.

### **School Contact Information**

Hilltop Montessori School

99 Stafford Farm Hill

Brattleboro, Vermont 05301

Main phone number: 802-257-0500

for the Front Desk, press "0"

Main email adress: [frontdesk@hilltopmontessori.org](mailto:frontdesk@hilltopmontessori.org)

Fax number: 802-254-2671

Website: [www.hilltopmontessori.org](http://www.hilltopmontessori.org)

## **Proper Lines of Communication**

Contact ...

### **Head of School / Tamara Mount / phone ext 2 / [tmount@hilltopmontessori.org](mailto:tmount@hilltopmontessori.org)**

for matters related to...

- school policy and procedures
- school mission and goals
- Board of Trustees
- Indexed Tuition

### **Administrative Coordinator and Front Desk / Desi Plumley / phone ext 0 / [frontdesk@hilltopmontessori.org](mailto:frontdesk@hilltopmontessori.org)**

for matters related to...

- attendance
- calendar
- Before Care and Extended Day scheduling
- conference schedules
- parent contact updates
- messages to classrooms during school hours
- school forms
- student medications
- school mail
- student schedules

### **Business Office / Barb Beckwith / phone ext 4 / [busadmin@hilltopmontessori.org](mailto:busadmin@hilltopmontessori.org)**

for matters related to...

- tuition payment and billing
- BC and ED charges
- expense reimbursements
- check requests
- facility rentals

### **Admissions and Enrollment Director / Zoe Proctor / phone ext 1 / [zproctor@hilltopmontessori.org](mailto:zproctor@hilltopmontessori.org)**

for matters related to...

- admissions materials for a friend or family
- marketing and outreach
- questions concerning Indexed Tuition applications
- re-enrollment and new enrollment applications
- transfer of records
- student & family visits, tours, and observations

**Equity, Justice, and Inclusion Director / Marco Yunga Tacuri /**

**myunga@hilltopmontessori.org**

for matters related to...

- curriculum and resources regarding equity, justice, and inclusion
- concerns about potentially discriminating or harassing behavior

**Development Director / Sarah Thessing / phone ext 3 /**

**sthessing@hilltopmontessori.org**

for matters related to...

- fundraising and donations
- press and media
- school events

**Facility Director / Travis Thiele / 802-490-9999**

**tthiele@hilltopmontessori.org**

for matters related to...

- facility and grounds maintenance and repairs
- facility access

**Classroom Teachers / Program Directors**

for matters related to...

- curriculum
- student progress
- classroom observation
- transition to the next level
- referral to specialists
- classroom events
- attendance issues
- high-school application process

**To reach teachers and students during school hours**, please call the Front Desk and your message will be delivered. Teachers and students will not be called to the phone during school hours. If you need to get a message to your child or a teacher during the school day, please contact the Front Desk at 802-257-0500, extension "0", or email [frontdesk@hilltopmontessori.org](mailto:frontdesk@hilltopmontessori.org).

If you would like to schedule a time to talk with a teacher, please leave a message with the Front Desk, or contact the teachers by email. Emails are checked periodically and you can expect to hear back within a 24-hour period.

## Administration & Teacher Contact Information

### Toddler Program (TP)

**Lily Enchin** (TP Director)  
lenchin@hilltopmontessori.org

**Miranda Sherman** (TP Teacher)  
msherman@hilltopmontessori.org

**Jessica Shelby** (TP Assistant Teacher)  
lgypson@hilltopmontessori.org

### Children's House (CH): Birch Room

**Cheryl Matthews** (Birch Director)  
cmatthews@hilltopmontessori.org

**Haley Hopkins** (Birch Teacher)  
hhopkins@hilltopmontessori.org

### Children's House (CH): Willow Room

**Rebecca Baldini** (Willow Director)  
rbaldini@hilltopmontessori.org

**Megan Schrull** (Willow Teacher)  
mschrull@hilltopmontessori.org

### CH Spanish & PE

**Marco Yunga Tacuri**  
myunga@hilltopmontessori.org

### CH Assistant and Extended Day

**Annie Woodward** (CH Assistant & Extended Day)  
awoodward@hilltopmontessori.org

### Music Teacher

**Jen Hed**  
jhed@hilltopmontessori.org

### Elementary Art Teacher

**Jade Harmon**  
jharmon@hilltopmontessori.org

### Lower Elementary (LE)

**Kerstin Kjellberg** (LE Director)  
kkjellberg@hilltopmontessori.org

**Akari Stimler** (LE Teacher)  
astimler@hilltopmontessori.org

**Malindi Chesnut-Tangerman** (LE Assistant Teacher & Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Coordinator)  
mchesnuttangerman@hilltopmontessori.org

### Upper Elementary (UE)

**Lifei Osborne** (UE Director)  
losborne@hilltopmontessori.org

**Kathy Leone** (UE Teacher)  
kleone@hilltopmontessori.org

**Tom Griffith** (UE Teacher)  
tgriffith@hilltopmontessori.org

**Izzy Snyder** (UE Assistant Teacher)  
isnyder@hilltopmontessori.org

### Learning Specialist Team

**Wendy Lynde** (LST Director)  
wlynde@hilltopmontessori.org

**Ashley Dierkes** (LST Assistant)  
adierkes@hilltopmontessori.org

## **Middle School (MS)**

**Becky Eisenhandler** (MS Director)  
beisenhandler@hilltopmontessori.org  
203-824-3272

**Finn Campman** (MS Teacher)  
fcampman@hilltopmontessori.org  
802-380-1479

**Ani Schaeffer** (MS Teacher)  
aschaeffer@hilltopmontessori.org

**Nora Gordon** (MS Teacher)  
ngordon@hilltopmontessori.org

## **Facilities Team**

**Travis Thiele** (Facility Director & Athletic Director)  
tthiele@hilltopmontessori.org  
802-490-9999 (Facilities Phone)

**Trudy Vandertuin** (Facilities Staff)  
tvandertuin@hilltopmontessori.org

**Daniel Muller** (Facilities Staff)  
dmuller@hilltopmontessori.org

## **Administration**

**Tamara Mount** (Head of School)  
tmount@hilltopmontessori.org  
257-0500 ext 2 or  
802-246-7983 (cell)

**Desi Plumley** (Administrative Coordinator)  
frontdesk@hilltopmontessori.org  
802-257-0500 ext 0

**Zoe Proctor** (Admissions & Enrollment Director)  
zproctor@hilltopmontessori.org  
802-257-0500 ext 1

**Barb Beckwith** (Business Office & Human Resources Director)  
busadmin@hilltopmontessori.org  
802-257-0500 ext 4

**Sarah Thessing** (Development Director)  
ethessing@hilltopmontessori.org  
802-257-0500 ext 3

**Marco Yunga Tacuri** (Equity, Justice, and Inclusion Director)  
myunga@hilltopmontessori.org

**Laura Gypson** (Early Education Program Partnership Director)  
lgypson@hilltopmontessori.org

**Ashley Stephens** (Montessori Curriculum Coordinator)  
astephens@hilltopmontessori.org

**Malindi Chesnut-Tangerman** (LE Assistant Teacher & Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Coordinator)  
mchesnuttangerman@hilltopmontessori.org

## **FACTS / Online Enrollment & Tuition Management**

**Tuition payment plan:** 866-441-4637

**Index Tuition application:**  
866-315-9262



## SCHOOL CLOSINGS AND CANCELLATIONS

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Hilltop follows the Windham Southeast School District (WSESD formerly WSESU) closing policy for snow days and other area closings.

Cancellation of school will be announced in the following locations:

1. Posted on the date in the Calendar on our website, by going to [www.hilltopmontessori.org](http://www.hilltopmontessori.org) and clicking on “calendar”.
2. A communication blast (text, email, and/or phone) will be sent to all families and staff.

Other school functions will be cancelled in the same manner when necessary with as much notice as possible.

In the event of a two-hour delay, school will start at 10:30 am and early morning care will be cancelled. We also follow early closings of WSESD schools. Additionally, the Extended Day program is sometimes cancelled. Notifications will be sent by email. In the event of five or more snow and/or emergency days throughout the school year, these days may be made up at the end of the school year.

## EMERGENCY PLAN

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### SCHOOL EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROTOCOLS

A school crisis can take a number of forms including an environmental event, such as a chemical spill or gas leak, a weather emergency, or an intruder in or near the school. The nature of a school crisis dictates whether school officials will put in place a lockdown, lockout, shelter-in-place, evacuation or any combination of these protocols, as a means to ensure the safety and well-being of students and staff.

### THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN AN EMERGENCY

In a school emergency, the first instinct as a parent is to pick up the telephone and start calling the school or rush up to the school and get your child/children. The truth is, this only complicates matters from a safety and security standpoint. Parents too close to an incident often hinder the rescue attempts of police and fire officials on the scene. The best action parents can take in an emergency is to stay close to their phone and email and to monitor local radio and TV reports for regular updates and instructions.

### HOW WILL YOU BE REUNITED WITH YOUR CHILD?

Parents/Guardians will be directed by school or public safety officials via TV/Radio or other emergency notification systems to their child's specific location. Based on internal standard operating procedures, students will be released to parents/guardians at the family reunification center. The reunification process can be time-consuming so parents are urged to be patient.

## **BE PREPARED FOR A SCHOOL EMERGENCY**

Ensure that your child's emergency contact information is accurate and current in FACTS. Become familiar with your schools' emergency communication procedures. Each school is committed to providing accurate and timely information in the event of an emergency.

### **In Case of a School Emergency**

Although your first reaction would be to call or rush to your child's school, please follow the tips listed below.

**DO** tune into local TV/Radio/Social Media for official school news alerts.

**DO** rely only on official communication from school which will be provided by email.

**DO** rely only on official communication from public safety officials. The Brattleboro Police and Fire Department Facebook pages provide the up-to-date information.

**DO** listen for official information regarding reunification with your child. Call 211 if email systems are not operational.

**DO NOT** call or rush to your child's school. Your presence could interfere with emergency responders. Help us keep roads clear for emergency vehicles.

**DO NOT** phone your child or school. Staff and students are discouraged from using cell phone communication for safety reasons.

*These resources have been developed from materials provided by Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS).*

### **Safety Terms & Procedures**

In the event of an emergency at your child's school, it is important to know these terms.

#### **SECURE YOUR CLASSROOM: Lockout**

A lockout collects all students from outside the building, secures the building perimeter, and locks all outside doors.

#### **OUT OF SIGHT: Lockdown**

A lockdown takes place if an internal or external threat is identified at the school. All school doors are locked and students are confined to classrooms. No entry into or exit from the school will be allowed until an "all-clear" announcement is made. Students will NOT be released during a lockdown.

#### **TAKE SHELTER: Shelter-in-place**

Students take refuge in designated areas to protect them from hazardous materials or severe weather. No entry into or exit from the school will be allowed until an "all-clear" announcement is made. Students will NOT be released during shelter-in-place.

#### **EVACUATE/FIRE: Evacuation**

In the event of a fire students will be relocated to an evacuation assembly area on or off site. Students will be released to parents/guardians through a formalized family reunification process to ensure the safety of all children.

### **CAMPUS EVACUATION: Evacuation**

In the event of certain building emergencies, students will be relocated to an evacuation assembly area off site. Students will be released to parents/guardians through a formalized family reunification process to ensure the safety of all children.

*These resources have been developed from materials provided by Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS).*

## **PARENT CONFERENCES & STUDENT ASSESSMENTS**

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Parents of students new to a program will have a family conference before school begins. Formal parent/family conferences are held twice yearly for all students. Conference days are marked on the school calendar and all efforts should be made to adhere to the schedule provided. Upper El and Middle School students are included in the conferences with parents and teachers throughout the year. Third grade students will also participate in their spring conference in preparation for their transition to Upper Elementary.

There is a written year-end assessment for a child's last year in the Children's House. Elementary and Middle School students will receive written assessments at the end of each semester. Additional copies of this information may be requested by parents at any time.

## **PARENT CONCERNS**

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Parents are encouraged and expected to call, send a note, or meet with teachers if they have concerns or questions. Often a five-minute mini-conference can clear up misunderstandings about behavior, expectations and homework, or clarify a classroom routine. Please know that the Head of School has asked to be cc'ed on any correspondence of a significant nature regarding a curricular or student question or issue. In most cases, this will be a passing "cc" just to keep the Head of School informed about topics of interest to parents and teachers. In some cases, it is useful background or input to a topic that might require more attention. So please, cc the Head of School yourself on such correspondence, or expect to be cc'ed in a reply from a teacher, as the Head of School needs to be included in all significant correspondence.

Parents are always invited to set up a formal conference with the classroom teachers if they have more serious concerns about their child. If the issue is not resolved, parents should express their concerns to the Head of School. Usually a joint conference with the teachers and Head of School will be scheduled at that time to work towards resolution.

## PARENT GRIEVANCE POLICY

- Grievances with a teacher or program should be directed to the Teacher and Program Director (who shall keep the Head of School informed).
- Grievances with a Program Director should be directed to the Program Director and the Head of School.
- Grievances with the Head of School should be directed to the Head of School and the Board Chair.

The Head of School shall keep the Leadership Team of the Board of Trustees (current chair, incoming chair, and outgoing chair) fully informed as to any significant grievances brought to the Head of School's attention.

1. Grievances should be resolved, if at all possible, by the parties involved.
2. If unresolved, however, the Head of School shall have full authority to finally resolve grievances concerning Teachers, Program Directors, or Programs.
3. The Leadership Team will review any grievance with the Head of School or any unresolved grievance referred to the Board by the Head of School and resolve the same or make appropriate recommendations to the Board.
4. A Grievant may appear in person, with the Head of School in attendance, before the Leadership Team.
5. The Leadership Team will take the grievance into consideration and will later contact the party with their recommendation or action if any.
6. If the Leadership Team recommends full board deliberation, the Board will take the grievance under consideration.
7. The Grievant may then present their grievance to the full Board.
8. The Board will take the grievance under consideration and will later contact the party with their recommendation or action if any.

## PARENT READING LIST & ONLINE LIBRARY

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The Hilltop Montessori School offers parents a lending library of education books and articles for loan. All books must be signed out at the Front Desk and returned.

### Recommended reading on Montessori Education

- Duffy, Michael & D'Neil. (2002) *Children of the Universe*
- Duffy, Michael. (2008) *Math Works: Montessori Math And The Developing Brain*
- Duffy, Michael, and O'Neil. (2012) *Supporting Intrinsic Motivation in Montessori Students*
- Lillard, Angeline Stoll (2005) *Montessori the Science Behind the Genius*
- Lillard, Paula P. (1996) *Montessori Today*
- Lillard, Paula P. & Jessen, Lynn L. (2003) *Montessori from the Start*
- Montessori, Maria. (1948) *To Educate the Human Potential*
- Montessori, Maria. (1949) *The Absorbent Mind*
- Montessori, Maria. (1973) *From Childhood to Adolescence*
- Schmidt, Maren. (2009) *Understanding Montessori: A Guide for Parents*
- Standing, E. M. (1957) *Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work*

- Wolf, Aline D. (2009) *A Parents' Guide to the Montessori Classroom*

Many of these books are described and can be ordered through the NAMTA website at <http://www.montessori-namta.org/NAMTA/geninfo/recommbooks.html>

### **Recommended Readings in Support of a Montessori Education**

- Faber, Adele, and Elaine Mazlish (2001) *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk*
- Kohn, Alfie (2006) *Unconditional Parenting: Moving from Rewards and Punishment to Love*
- Kohn, Alfie (1993) *Punished by Rewards*
- Dweck, Carol (2006) *Mindset*

### **Equity, Justice, and Inclusion – Anti-Bias Resources**

We acknowledge that in our school community, despite our best efforts, there have been and continue to be racial, economic, gender, and ableist disparities. In the effort and commitment to reducing these social disparities, the school, staff, and parents have been doing intentional work on understanding and revealing biases of all sorts. Initially, we began with a focus on racial discrimination; then, we continued our journey to explore gender and LGBTQ+ bias as well as Indigenous Peoples' land ownership with emphasis on Abenaki people. Our work doesn't end here, and we would like everyone in the Hilltop community, Board members, parents, staff, etc., to commit to this work too. We invite you to read these books that are helping us build a more equitable, just, and inclusive community. Check out our Equity, Justice, and Inclusion page on our website for more resources ([www.hilltopmontessori.org/our-school/equity-justice-and-inclusion/](http://www.hilltopmontessori.org/our-school/equity-justice-and-inclusion/)).

### **Indigenous Peoples'**

- Laurent, Jos, *Abenakis And English Dialogos*.
- Momaday, Scott N., *Earth Keeper: Reflections on the American Land*, 2020.
- Savageau, Cheryl, *Out of the Crazywoods*, 2020.
- Wall Kemmerer, Robin, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 2013.
- Dumbbar-Ortiz, Roxanne, *Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, 2015.
- Hamalainen, Pekka, *Lakota America*, 2020.
- Fournel, Kelly, *Native Woman of Courage*, 2007.

### **Antiracism**

- Ellison, Ralph, *Invisible Man*.
- Painter, Nell Irvin, *The History of White People*, 2010.
- Diangelo, Robin, *White Fragility*, 2018.
- Kendi, Ibram X., *How To Be An Antiracist*, 2019.
- Winters, Mary-Frances, *Black Fatigue: How Racism Erodes the Mind, Body, and Spirit*, 2020.
- Wilkerson, Isabel, *Cast: The Origins of Our Discontents*, 2020.
- Reynolds, Jason & Brendan Kiely, *All American Boys*, 2015.

- Heredia, David, *Little Heroes of Color*, 2019.

### **Gender-LGBTQA+ - Sexuality**

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- Kurman, Hollis, *Counting Kindness*, 2020.
- Cornejo Villavicencio, Karla, *The Undocumented Americans*, 2020.
- Gonzalez, Juan, *Harvest of Empire*, 2011.
- Mendoza, Paola & Abby Sher, *Sanctuary*, 2020.

### **Culture and Religion**

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- Bown, Monica, Pelé: *El Rey del Fútbol*.
- Lê, Minh, *Drawn Together*, 2018.
- Asare, Meshack, *Sosu's Call*, 2019.
- Morales, Yuyi, *Just a Minute: A trickster tale and counting book*, 2003.
- Yang, Kelly, *Front Desk*, 2018.
- Al Mansour, Haifaa, *The Green Bicycle*
- Rashid, Qasim, *Hannah and the Ramadan Gift*, 2021.

### **Disabilities**

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- Simran Jeet Singh, *Fauja Singh Keeps Going*, 2020.
- Golio, Gary, *Dark Was the Night*, 2020.
- Meltzer, Brad, *I am Heller Keller*, 2015.
- Parker, Rowan & Abigail Healey, "Parenting for Disability Justice, Chapter 5," in *Parenting 4 Social Justice*, 2021.

HILLTOP PROGRAMS AND HOURS

**Toddler Program (TP):** Ages 18 – 36 months

**Children’s House Program (CH):** Ages 3-6 years  
*To be eligible for kindergarten, a child must be 5 before September*

**Lower Elementary (LE):** Grades 1 – 3

**Upper Elementary (UE):** Grades 4 – 6

**Middle School (MS):** Grades 7 – 8

	Drop Off Time	Pick Up Time
Toddler Program	8:15 – 8:30am	11:30 – 11:45am (½ day) 2:30 – 2:45pm (full day)
Children’s House	8:15 – 8:30am	11:45am – 12pm (½ day) 2:45 – 3pm (full day)
Lower Elementary	8:15 – 8:30am	3pm
Upper Elementary	8:15 – 8:30am	3pm
Middle School	8 – 8:30am	3pm

More information about all of our programs can be found on our website at <https://hilltopmontessori.org/programs/>

Before Care and Extended Day

Hilltop Montessori School recognizes the need that families have to extend care before and after the regular 8:30 am – 3 pm school day. We offer Before Care from 7:40 – 8:15 am, and Extended Day extending the regular school day until 4pm, for Toddler, Children’s House, and Elementary students.

All students TP–UE arriving before 8:15 am need to sign up for Before Care in order to ensure enough staffing is in place. Because Before Care is often a small group of children ranging in ages, all students attending Before Care need to be dropped off at the Children’s House playground gate by an adult. Teachers need to know who is here and be able to keep track of all children.

**What are the costs?** The Extended Day program can be charged with a flat fee per month, or an hourly or drop-in rate. The Before Care program can be charged a flat rate per month, or an hourly or drop-in rate.

**What schedule options do I have?** Extended Day is offered from 3–4 pm, Monday through Friday while school is in session. Your weekly schedule may include any weekday and we encourage consistent weekly schedules. Please provide 24 hours notice for use of BC/ED to ensure we have space to accommodate your child by contacting the Front Desk in person or by email to [frontdesk@hilltopmontessori.org](mailto:frontdesk@hilltopmontessori.org). Due to staffing ratio requirements we might not be able to accept additional students without 24 hours notice. Schedule changes to flat rate and regular schedules can change at the end of a monthly billing cycle.

**Who can join?** Only students enrolled in Hilltop Montessori School can participate in the Before Care & Extended Day Programs.

**Toddlers and Children's House Extended Day** – These younger students will have a snack, followed by activities outdoors or in the theater/gym. Children's House students will spend their time outside on the playground, or inside the Arts Barn doing age appropriate games and activities. The toddlers will be able to continue in their own familiar toddler-sized space.

**Lower and Upper Elementary Extended Day** – These older students will meet outside, in the Art Room, or in the Arts Barn space. They will have a snack together that they have brought from home. They will also have the possibility of indoor crafts and games in the gymnasium.

**Middle School Before and After School Agreement** – Students are welcome to arrive as early as 8:00 am and stay after school to work on homework until 4:00 pm. On rare occasions when all middle school staff need to leave before 4:00, students staying after 3:00 pm may need to work in the front lobby of the main building.

### **After School Athletics / Elementary and Middle School**

After school sports are offered seasonally through the school year. These programs are optional and there is a fee in addition to the school tuition.

**Soccer** takes place during September and October for LE, UE and MS students.

**Basketball** is offered during the winter for UE and MS students.

### **SummerFUN**

During six weeks in the summer, Hilltop is transformed into an exciting summer camp. Enrollment is open to the larger community. Information about SummerFun goes home in early spring and is available on the school website, <https://hilltopmontessori.org/programs/summerfun-camps/>

### **Mountain Days**

HMS' winter sports program takes place on Thursdays for six weeks during January and February for Elementary and Middle School. Students may choose ice skating, cross-country skiing or downhill skiing/snowboarding. We are thrilled to use our local community resources for these activities.



## Getting To and From School

Families must identify all persons responsible for pick-up on **“The Consent for Dismissal”** to be completed in FACTS. Changes to those responsible for pick-up can be updated in your FACTS Family Portal at any time. For their safety, students will not be released to anyone other than those names listed or you have notified the Front Desk prior to pick up.

For any adult who comes to Hilltop Montessori School to pick up a child, should that adult appear under the influence of drugs or alcohol or otherwise impaired to the degree that the Hilltop staff suspect they cannot drive safely, we will:

1. Tell the adult our concern, and ask them to arrange for someone else to come to pick up the child.
2. Call another guardian/caregiver/emergency contact for the child to be picked up.
3. If met with resistance, call 911 for assistance.

**If You Are Picking Your Student Up Early**, please call or email the Front Desk in advance. You can meet and pick up your student in the lobby.

**If your student is coming in late** for any reason, please let the Front Desk know in advance by phone or email.

**If your student will not be in school** for any reason, you must call or email the the Front Desk.

## Morning Drop Off

Late morning arrivals must check in at the front office. If your child is sick or will not be attending school, please let the office know by 9:00 am. Toddler, Children's House, or Elementary students arriving before 8:15 am must be signed up for Before Care in advance. **Should punctuality become a chronic problem for a student, the family will be asked to keep the child home on any day that they are not able to get to school by 9am.**

Please notify the Front Desk of any changes in the day for your child (for example, who is picking up or early pick up).

## Afternoon Dismissal (for full day students):

All parties, staff included, must strive to be punctual in the pickup process, as the art of dismissal here at Hilltop – from a time and motion and civility perspective – is completely dependent upon the community-at-large respecting one another's schedules and commitments and obligations.

Both **Toddler Program and Children's House** programs will be able to be picked up on the playground. We ask that you promptly leave the playground with your child at pick up. While we appreciate the camaraderie and community that hanging out

on the playground brings, we need to keep the lines of supervision and responsibility clear.

Both **Elementary and Middle School** programs will be picked up in the circle. All parents, if not part of a carpool or picking up siblings in multiple programs, are asked to drive directly to the circle (waiting patiently in the queue as necessary) where students will be ready to be released into your care. Please park in the parking lot when picking up students in carpools and siblings in multiple programs.

### **Late Pick Ups**

Students (Toddler, Children's House, and Elementary) who are not picked up by 3 pm will be brought to the front lobby. At 3:10 pm students who have not been picked up will be brought to Extended Day and charged the hourly rate of \$15. After 4 pm, there is a \$1 per minute charge.

For safety, non-carpool students will only be allowed to enter cars at the circle. Each student must check out with teacher on duty before departing. If a student is delayed for any reason, the teacher(s) on duty will provide an explanation and direct you to park until the student arrives. **No pick up or drop off in front of Middle School – please use the circle at all times.**

### **Driving**

- The speed limit is **15 mph** everywhere on campus and at all times.
- **Please be mindful of walkers and bikers** on the driveway.
- **Please use caution at all intersections** – particularly at the Middle School / Barn cross walk and around the Barn corner as you turn left to the parking lot.
- **Please park only in the parking lot**; this means no parking next to the middle school, along the tree line behind the barn, no parking in the circle at any time (it is a marked fire lane and the fire department checks regularly).
- **No parking on the grass** (particularly in the area between the middle school and the barn).
- Driving and cell phones are a hazardous mix. **Cell phones should not be used at all on campus during drop off and pickup**, and an extra reminder is offered to not talk or text and drive.
- **\*\*PLEASE REMEMBER THAT THE SPEED LIMIT ON GUILFORD ROAD IS 25mph.**  
Please drive respectfully and responsibly.

### **Idling**

In compliance with Vermont Law (23 V.S.A. § 1110), and in respect to Hilltop's environmental sustainability efforts, all vehicles stopped for 5 minutes or more must be turned off when parked during drop off, pick up, or while visiting our school campus.

## Bikes on Campus

Students biking to and from school must:

- have given permission via FACTS before the school year authorizing them to come and go by bike
- always wear proper bike safety gear
- use the outdoor bike rack on campus to store bikes
- check out with a teacher on circle at pick up
- if leaving early, a parent must notify the school in advance, the student must check out with teacher, AND the Front Desk before leaving
- follow the rules of the road on campus and on town roads

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

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### Learning Specialist Team

“To follow the child” is a principle of Montessori pedagogy that allows teachers to better understand the many different ways children acquire knowledge. Maria Montessori suggested that to help a child fulfill their physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual capacities, educators should understand the child as a whole. In acknowledging and understanding each child’s diverse capacities to learn, we implemented the Learning Specialist Team (LST).

For the past ten years, the LST has supported programs to determine which students would likely learn with the standard instruction, and those who would benefit from more specialized instruction. To implement these strategies, the LST conducts benchmark assessments of Math and Reading three times a year for all students Kindergarten through 8th grade. The data from these assessments, added to the classroom teacher’s observations, helps to provide a complete picture of each student that enables us to better understand and meet their specific learning profile, organize literacy and math groups, and help to track academic progress throughout the year.

When we identify a child as needing additional support beyond what is “typical” or beyond what the classroom teachers are able to sustainably provide, the LST communicates with the student’s parents/guardians about the need, content, goals, and measures for the support needed. Students who work with the LST and who, in a public school, may have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) receive Educational Support Plans (ESPs) at Hilltop that are supplemental to their in-classroom instruction. Additionally, in-person meetings are often encouraged to further understanding and partnership between school and home. The LST also plays an integral role in helping to take the first steps in identifying students with a learning disability in coordination with the local school district. More information

about the federal policies for students identified by the district but attending an independent school can be found below under “Forfeiting FAPE”.

Hilltop’s Learning Specialist Team aims to assist both students and teachers and to involve parents in understanding their child’s learning needs and options for support. When a child is identified as needing more academic support in learning how to read, the LST will then work with those children in small groups to augment their reading abilities and confidence. This collaboration allows us to truly follow the child by providing specific support in areas with lagging skills. Our hope is that, in serving a broader range of learning styles, every student can benefit from Montessori education.

## **Forfeiting FAPE**

### **Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for Students With Disabilities: Requirements Under Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973**

The Section 504 regulation requires a school district to provide a “free appropriate public education” (FAPE) to each qualified person with a disability who is in the school district’s jurisdiction, regardless of the nature or severity of the person’s disability.....If a student is placed in a private school because a school district cannot provide an appropriate program, the financial obligations for this placement are the responsibility of the school district. However, if a school district makes available a free appropriate public education and the student’s parents or guardian choose to place the child in a private school, the school district is not required to pay for the student’s education in the private school.

If a determination is made through the “child find” process (see below) by the LEA where the private school is located that a child has a disability under 34 C.F.R. § 300.8 and needs special education and related services, and a parent makes clear their intent to keep the child enrolled in the private elementary or secondary school located in that LEA, then the LEA where the child resides is not required to make FAPE available to the child.

**Child Find** is a component of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) 2004 that requires States and Local Education Agencies (school districts and charter schools) to identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities residing in the State, regardless of the severity of their disabilities, and who are in need of special education and related services (34 CFR§ 300.111).

If a parentally-placed private school child also resides in the LEA where the private school is located, then that LEA would also be responsible for making FAPE available to the child, unless the parent makes clear his or her intent to keep the child enrolled in a private elementary or secondary school located in that LEA.

More information on FAPE can be found here:

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/qa-parentally-placed-private-schools-12-2020.pdf>

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/edlite-FAPE504.html>

By voluntarily enrolling in an independent school, you (the family) are forfeiting your right to FAPE and all publicly funded services. If it is determined that your child requires services beyond HMS' regular capacity, and you choose to continue to have your child enrolled at HMS, you will be responsible for acquiring and the payment of said determined services.

If HMS determines that the services your child requires compromise or alters the Montessori pedagogy, practices, and teaching methods intrinsic to our mission, we reserve the right to deny enrollment or re-enrollment to your child.

## **Social Emotional Learning Coordinator And Child Study Team**

In 2022-23 the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Coordinator and the Child Study Team (CST) were both added as a way to grow the resources available to both students and staff at HMS. Although Social Emotional Learning has always been, and continues to be, implemented every day by all teachers and staff at Hilltop through lessons, interactions, and modeling. Our intention is always to help students learn responsible independence through developing skills to self-regulate and communicate successfully. A main goal is to provide support to students and staff to continue the great work and learning they are already doing. By naming a SEL Coordinator and a Child Study Team, we are bringing more intention, transparency and consistency to the SEL work that we have always aimed to do.

The goals for the SEL program include:

- Developing a systematic process with tools to document, address, and communicate around students with lagging Social Emotional Learning needs. This will be a system that can be used for any child across programs.
- Having a Child Study Team to support students, teachers and families. This team is made up of administrators as well as teachers who meet to discuss specific students, general school wide support systems, and implement and follow up on regulation plans put in place to support student's lagging skills.

Who can, and how to, best support the student with Executive Function challenges, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), trauma, speech challenges, and other identifiable needs is determined case by case. We are continuing to refine how we address and communicate about serving students with diverse needs.

The Child Study Team consists of a group of teachers and administrators who meet weekly to help brainstorm a number of strategies that can be implemented to support individual students. The CST helps to create a regulation plan that outlines said strategies, which is then added to the student's file so that as they progress through the programs there is information of the strategies implemented and their

outcomes. The main goal of the CST is to ensure that each student at Hilltop is considered wholly, and with consideration to their individual learning styles, circumstances, strengths, and challenges, with the hope that they are able to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. The goal is to better equip them for their social, emotional, and academic development.

As Hilltop's mission is for students to practice responsible independence in a caring community of curious, critical learners, and thoughtful citizens, it is a mission of the CST to help each classroom, and the school as a whole, create a space that is safe, supportive, and gives your child a sense of belonging and success. All of the teachers who work with our students day-to-day are capable, qualified educators who have all of their students' best interests at heart. Bringing a student's name to the CST is taking advantage of a wonderful resource that we have here at Hilltop, adding multiple viewpoints, ideas, experiences, and a greater support team that we all learn from.

We contact families when we feel we are not able to support a student's academic or social/emotional needs, we are not seeing progress, we need a caregiver's help to overcome an impasse, or we want to update you with new information.

### **Communicating and Partnering with Parents**

All of our teachers work to follow the child, and support both academic and SEL progress at all times of the school day. Many of these efforts do not necessitate additional communication, as they are a routine aspect of what we do as a Montessori school. However, when we observe needs that are beyond the expected norms, we communicate with the family so as to have awareness, partnership, and consistency of approach between home and school.

Should a parent/guardian ever have concerns about their child's social-emotional or learning style/needs/progress, they are encouraged to start with a conversation with the classroom teachers, who will schedule a meeting with the LST or CST to determine appropriate next steps. If, after speaking with the classroom teachers, you would like to contact them directly, they are available: Wendy Lynde, Learning Specialist Director ([wlynde@hilltopmontessori.org](mailto:wlynde@hilltopmontessori.org)) or Malindi Chesnut-Tangerman, Social Emotional Coordinator ([mchesnut-tangerman@hilltopmontessori.org](mailto:mchesnut-tangerman@hilltopmontessori.org)).

### **PEACE CURRICULUM & RESTORATIVE PRACTICES**

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The primary guiding philosophy of Montessori schools around the world is to teach peace. As Maria Montessori said: "It is quite strange that, as yet, there is not such a thing as a science of peace, since the science of war seems to be highly advanced." ("Education and Peace," The Clio Montessori Series). The Peace Curriculum and Restorative Practices are both community-oriented practices that

allow the individuals involved in a conflict the opportunity for healing and restoring trust without the traditional concept of “punishment”.

We draw from the Montessori Peace Curriculum and encourage children to see conflict as a learning opportunity to problem-solve and exercise leadership skills. When conflict arises, Montessori students are encouraged to use the tools provided in the classroom and through lessons of Grace and Courtesy and the Peace Curriculum. You can learn more about these areas of the curriculum on our website at <https://hilltopmontessori.org/programs/childrens-house/>. Our practice is to have the students learn to express their points of view, feelings, and possible commitments, feeling that they are in a safe and supportive place.

When trust has been broken by repeated or egregious errors that violate the classroom rules (be kind, be gentle, and be safe are at the core of each classroom's rules), the school's mission statement, and/or conduct norms, we go through a restorative process. This involves reflective listening that provides the opportunity for all parties involved in a conflict to share their perspective, verbalize their feelings, and suggest future commitments towards resolution and restoration of trust. Each program level has an age-appropriate version of the Peace Curriculum that also incorporates some of the language and methods of “Restorative Practices” as used in other school and group settings.

- In the **Toddler Program**, these exchanges are heavily teacher facilitated, as our youngest students are learning how to use words instead of their bodies to express their feelings, how to be a member of a community, and so much more.
- Teacher support fades as the children become more articulate and independent in the **Children's House**, where students practice the reflective listening process with a speaking object at a designated “Peace Table”. Once students become accustomed to the reflective listening process, they are often able to independently identify when a conflict needs to be discussed, and can move through the process with a teacher standing by to help only if needed. Alicia Jewell's The Peace Rose is a lovely depiction of this.
- Once children reach **Lower Elementary**, every table is a Peace Table. A critical “work” for this age is learning how to manage conflict and working through issues of fairness/equity/equality, etc. The teachers often need to stop another lesson to address a conflict that has arisen. They use a similar reflective lesson process from the Children's House. At this level, class responsibilities and commitments come into play also, as the group collectively works to identify and achieve what they want to have in their community.
- At the **Upper Elementary and Middle School** levels, the Peace Table gives way to the Community Meeting and more directly restorative practices. For example, an individual student may ask other students to help them identify when they have crossed an agreed upon boundary around language or

physicality, and the community can help, as invited, to hold a student accountable for an agreed upon level of behavior. One important consideration is the willingness of the injured party to participate. At times, this participation could be re-injuring and not recommended. It is also important to have the buy-in of the other party.

The goal of the Peace Curriculum and Restorative Practices is to restore safety and trust to the community, and to gain empathy and understanding from those around us. We work to give people opportunities to learn from, and fix their mistakes. The social/emotional realm is as critical for these lessons as any area of the curriculum.

### **Parent Communication at Any Level**

A certain amount of conflict and working through it for a resolution is natural and appropriate at all age levels. When the situation is very age appropriate and typical for that level, and does not include a physical injury, we do not communicate specifically with parents, but work to address it within the student community. If there is a physical injury, that is communicated to parents in the Toddler Program and Children's House program with an "Incident Report" that goes to both parties, and copies are kept in student files. This happens whether an injury was intentional or an accident. Physical injuries in Elementary and Middle School are communicated via email. When there is a pattern of repeated incidents, or when we feel a student needs more support and that a consistent message from home is important, we will be sure to communicate with the family, and engage their partnership with addressing the lagging social emotional skill that the student and community are working on.

### **Safety Assessment**

Should a student break school guidelines as laid out in the handbook and/or disregard explicit directions laid out by the staff that result in serious concerns about the safety of themselves, others at our school, or school property, HMS may utilize A Safety (or "threat") Assessment, provided by a trained and licensed professional outside of the school, as one of many tools to determine:

- a. If the student poses a risk to themselves or others.
- b. If HMS is equipped to support a student's individual needs, or if the environment/supports already available could be adapted to do so.
- c. The best course of action for the creation and implementation of behavior/safety plan for the student.

The National Association of School Psychologists explains a Safety/Threat Assessment as follows:



1. Threat assessment is intended to prevent violence and involves both assessment and intervention. Threat assessment involves determining whether a student poses a threat of violence (they have intent and means to carry out the threat).
2. A threat is an expression of intent to physically or sexually harm someone. This expression may be spoken, written, or gestured. Threats can be expressed directly or indirectly to the victim or to others, and threats may be explicit or implied. Threats sometimes, but rarely, actually involve guns or explosive devices.
3. A threat to harm others can be transient (i.e., expression of anger or frustration that can be quickly or easily resolved) or substantive (i.e., serious intent to harm others that involves a detailed plan and means).

If a Safety Assessment is determined to be necessary, a student and family's privacy will be respected, but the members of staff involved in the discussion of the findings will include: the Child Study Team, Classroom Teachers, the student's family, as well as contracted licensed child psychologists. This larger team will work together to review the findings of the Safety Assessment to determine best next steps.

To learn more about Safety/Risk Assessments, you may visit the National Association of School Psychologists at: <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-mand-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/systems-level-prevention/threat-assessment-at-school>

## STUDENT CONDUCT

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### **The school aims:**

- To balance the freedom and responsibility of the individual with the need for cooperation, order, restraint, and goodwill within the group.
- To provide an environment where the young person will experience encouragement, affirmation, and community.
- To ensure for each student physical and psychological safety.
- To enable each student to develop a high standard of moral integrity gained through growth in self-discipline.
- To support students in developing emotional regulation, empathy, resiliency, and community-based interdependent skills as a foundation to adulthood.
- To maintain a high standard for student behavior that reflects positively on self, family, school, and community.
- To nurture each student with loving firmness, respect, and fairness.

### The School expects each student:

- To treat others with dignity and respect.
- To treat themselves with that same respect.
- To respect both work and property of others and to bring only necessary materials to school.
- To have consistent attendance and punctual arrival.

In the event that a student fails to observe the above expectations, the following notes describe the approach and procedures for working with the student and family. The school reserves the right to modify these procedures as it sees fit:

1. In the event of **minor misconduct**, student and teacher discuss the issue cooperatively to resolve the problem. At times an individual's minor misconduct may be considered by the classroom community because of its impact on the life of the class.
2. **Chronic misconduct** is reported to parents by the teacher(s) and the Head of School is informed.
3. **Major misconduct**, especially that involving injury, is taken to the Head of School. The Head of School and parents, along with teacher(s), and student, as appropriate, meet to resolve.

In the event of major or chronic misconduct a student may be excluded from school, suspended, or expelled, and a Safety Assessment may be conducted. The school expects full parental cooperation in all aspects of the student's life at Hilltop. All rules apply before, during, and after school, and at all times on school sponsored outings.

### Harassment and Bullying

Hilltop Montessori School takes a strong stand against harassment and bullying. A safe and civil environment in school is a prerequisite for all student learning, and the school takes seriously any behavior that interferes with a student's sense of safety and security or the school's ability to educate its students in a respectful, peaceful environment. Demonstrating civility and respect and not tolerating harassment or bullying is expected of all members of the Hilltop Montessori School community. It can sometimes be hard to tell the difference between teasing, harassment, and bullying.

- **Teasing** usually involves two or more friends who act together in a way that seems fun to all the people involved. Often there is some reciprocity, with students teasing each other back and forth, but it never involves physical or emotional abuse. It is possible for teasing to get out of hand – and feelings to get hurt – yet still not constitute either harassment or bullying.
- **Harassment** is defined as gestures, words, or acts (whether written, verbal, graphic, electronic, or physical) that are reasonably perceived as being motivated either by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color,

religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression; or a mental, physical, or sensory disability or impairment; or by any other distinguishing characteristic. The definition of harassment is three-fold:

- substantially interfering with educational opportunities, benefits, or programs of one or more students;
  - adversely affecting the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the school's educational programs or activities because the conduct, as reasonably perceived by the pupil, is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive as to have this effect; and
  - being based on a student's actual or perceived distinguishing characteristics or on an association with another person who has or is perceived to have such characteristics.
- **Bullying** is often, but not always, harassment taken to the next level. Dan Olweus, generally recognized as a pioneer and founding father of research on bullying problems, says that "a person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and they have difficulty defending themselves." This definition of bullying includes three important components:
1. aggressive behavior that involves unwanted, negative actions;
  2. a pattern of intentional behavior repeated over time; and
  3. an imbalance of power or strength.

Many behaviors that do not rise to the level of harassment or bullying may still be prohibited by school rules and common courtesy. Any disrespectful behavior, including bullying and harassment, will result in the actions described above involving the teachers, parents, and the student.

Vermont anti-bullying laws cover off-campus conduct that does not occur during the school day on school property, on a school bus, or at a school-sponsored activity and can be shown to pose a clear and substantial interference with another student's right to access educational programs.

## Cyberbullying

We take all forms of bullying seriously, which includes cyberbullying. We take all forms of bullying seriously, which includes cyberbullying. Stopbullying.gov defines cyberbullying as bullying "that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying can occur through SMS, Text, and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behavior."

## SCHOOL POLICIES

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### Attendance

Consistent attendance and punctual arrival is important for the individual student's experience and for the educational experience of the community. **Students arriving after 8:30 am are considered late.** When a child has been late or absent more than five times the teachers will inform the Head of School who will contact the family. The number of days absent and tardy will be reported on Student Assessments. Late arrivals are extremely disruptive to the classroom community, and detrimental to the continued success of the student. Should punctuality become a chronic problem for a student, the family will be asked to keep the child home on any day that they are not able to get to school by 9am.

### Birthdays

#### Children's House

Children are welcome to participate in a birthday walk at opening circle. In the past, some parents have jotted down a notable event that happened during each year of the child's life (i.e. starting to crawl, first words, etc.) If the birthday child wants to share a treat with the class, they can provide a healthy snack for the day. Some healthy suggestions are: muffins, the child's favorite fruit, vegetables, rice cakes, crackers and cheese. Any child whose birthday is in the summer months is welcome to celebrate their birthday in June before the school year ends or their half birthday in the winter.

#### Lower Elementary

Classrooms celebrate a child's birthday with a special ceremony. Please jot down one or two significant things that you can remember from each year and send it in along with the treat of your choice. If you wish to send a birthday treat, please observe the school nutrition guidelines and the classroom teacher's request. We encourage creative thinking and healthful choices when deciding on a birthday snack. Please check with your child's teacher to clarify the classroom procedure. Please avoid bringing birthday party invitations to school to give out. They are easily misplaced and those children who do not receive one feel left out.

#### Upper Elementary

The team will contact individual families with details.

#### Middle School

Students may share a low sugar, healthy treat with the classroom community or donate an item to the classroom, (i.e. new ping pong balls)!

## Holidays

We know that Hilltop families come from various cultures, ethnicities, and religious beliefs. We would like our students to be exposed to the various customs and celebrations of all the cultures represented in our community. Families are strongly encouraged to share any unique family or cultural celebrations with the school to embrace the diversity within our community. We strive to be inclusive of all the cultural and religious holidays and celebrations represented in the classroom and beyond.

## Dress Code

A guiding framework for all decisions concerning matters of how to dress should be to be respectful and in keeping with the “grace and courtesy” considerations of the community, as well as suitable clothing for exploring and learning. Just like being polite and having manners, dressing appropriately is an important way to show respect for yourself and the school. At all program levels it is imperative that children be dressed for comfort, movement, and physical activity rather than style. At HMS students should dress in a manner appropriate to the occasion and weather. The policy includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- All students must have a pair of indoor footwear specifically for use at school. Indoor footwear will remain at school during the school year. Some examples of indoor footwear include: sneakers, plain slippers, or Crocs. Unacceptable indoor footwear includes boots, socks, shoes with high heels, oversized slippers, shoes that flash, or have a character theme.
- All clothing should be neat, clean, and comfortable. Clothing should be worn so that underwear is not exposed. Clothing should be free of distracting characters or commercial themes.
- Clothing displaying distracting, inappropriate, or offensive wording or images or that advertises or displays alcohol or drugs may not be worn.
- Proper attire is required for Fitness class, be it in or outdoors. This includes gym shorts or athletic pants, a t-shirt or temperature appropriate top, and socks and sneakers. Students will only be allowed to participate in a Fitness class if they are appropriately dressed.
- Hats, mittens/gloves, boots, and snow pants are necessary for winter recess for all students.

## Weapons

Per the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 any student who brings a weapon to school shall be referred to a law enforcement agency. Based on conferral with the law enforcement agency, and the evaluation of the teachers and the Child Study Team, the restorative justice and safety assessment processes will be engaged as appropriate.

No person shall use a weapon at a Hilltop Montessori School location. This includes grounds of buildings leased, rented, owned or controlled by HMS. This extends to all

school trips, outings, field trips, school vehicles, personal vehicles used for school purposes, or school contracted vehicles.

A “weapon” means any object, device or instrument designed as a weapon or through its use is capable of threatening or producing bodily harm, or any device modified to serve as a weapon.

No person shall use articles designed for other purposes to inflict bodily harm and/or intimidate another person. Such use will be deemed as being in possession of a weapon or use of a weapon.

### **Dogs**

All dogs must be on a leash while students are on campus to ensure the safety of the community. In addition, please be respectful of the campus and clean up after your dog.

### **Smoking**

Hilltop is a smoke-free environment; smoking is not permitted.

### **Electronics**

We ask that you not use cell phones on campus or while driving to and from campus. While on campus students are not permitted to use personal cell phones, electronic gaming and communication devices, MP3 players (iPods and the like), laptop computers, or smartwatches. Permission for usage of electronic devices may be granted by faculty only under special, academic-related circumstances.

### **Artificial Intelligence**

We understand that the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is dynamic and rapidly developing. We in no way discourage students from investigating it with scholarly curiosity. However, in our continued effort to have students acquire the necessary skills of research, writing, and independent critical thinking, we prohibit the use of AI tools for creating school projects, including writing, without the express permission of a staff member.

### **Computer and Internet Usage**

Starting in the Upper Elementary, HMS uses computers as one way of enhancing its mission to teach the skills, knowledge, and behaviors that students will need as successful and responsible members in the community, and as life long learners. Computers provide opportunities to explore resources for information and communication. In order to make these resources available to everyone, the school expects those who use the computers will do so in a way that is consistent with the Hilltop Montessori School's educational mission and this policy. With the rapidly changing nature of electronic media, and the “netiquette” which is developing among users, this policy cannot lay down rules to cover every possible situation.

Instead, this policy expresses the School's philosophy and sets forth general guidelines to be applied to all students, staff/faculty members, volunteers, and guest ('users').

**Respect the computers and the network:** Keep them safe and undamaged; use limited resources responsibly; keep your network login password secure; use the computers for educationally appropriate purposes.

**Respect your peers:** Be careful and considerate of other users and their work; respect the rights and privacy of others by not accessing private files and/or their accounts; keep to your own folders, work, and files; view, save, or send only messages and pictures of which we all might approve.

**Respect creative minds and their creations:** Give due regard to copyright laws and their coverage of text, program code, music, or video; use only legal software, shareware, or freeware on the school machines.

**Keep us all safe and informed:** Personal information, like personal addresses, credit card numbers, etc., should not be transmitted through e-mail and non-secure websites. Do notify the System Administrator immediately, if by accident, you encounter materials that violate rules of appropriate use; we all need to help each other.

**Keep yourself informed:** ASK if you do not understand any of these rules, or if you are unsure about whether or not they apply to what you want to do.

**Netiquette:** As in all forms of communication proper etiquette is expected.

**Be responsible:** You will be held accountable for your actions and lose privileges if the rules are violated.

### **Privacy**

Users have no expectation of privacy with respect to their school-provided computers. All computers and software are educational tools and property of Hilltop Montessori School. As the owner of the computers, the Hilltop Montessori School retains the right to monitor, view, or access at any time the viewing/ accessing of:

- Internet activities
- E-mail activities and accounts
- Network activities and accounts
- All data and/or software stored on desktop, laptops, and disk.

All e-mail should be sent as if it were a public document that might be read by a third party. Users should not put anything in an e-mail that the user would be ashamed of seeing in the "Wall Street Journal" the next day. The reason for this is that embarrassing or private e-mails can be forwarded or made public to others beyond the user's control (hence third party). Nothing should ever be included in an e-mail that might subject the sender or the school to embarrassment or legal action.

### **Storage**

Users may save and store data generated for school related purposes using their designated folder for their classroom.

### **Copyright/License Agreements**

The law forbids illegally reproducing copyrighted material. Users must comply with

all software licenses and copyrights. Users shall not install any software on Hilltop's computers or download or copy any software from these computers or the Internet. Users shall not agree to any end-user license agreement without express permission of the System Administrator.

### **Inappropriate Language or Images**

No material containing offensive, profane, violent, sexually explicit, harassing, abusive or impolite language or images is to be created, viewed or accessed. In the event any such material is encountered accidentally, it shall be reported to the System Administrator immediately.

### **Use of the Internet**

All student Internet access at the school is filtered by a firewall. The filtering software attempts to block possibly objectionable sites. No filter is perfect. Logs are maintained of all Internet traffic and instances where the filter has blocked a website .

\*\*\*Students may NOT access their personal Internet-based e-mail accounts, such as Yahoo, Hotmail, AOL, etc, at school for any reason. Streaming video, music, chat, and gaming is also prohibited.

### **Violations**

Access to the computers/laptops owned by the Hilltop Montessori School is a privilege not a right. This privilege may be restricted and/or revoked at any time for use not consistent with the educational goals of the school.

## **MEDICAL**

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### **Immunizations**

Every child must have had all immunizations appropriate for their age by September 1. If the child has not been immunized for medical or religious reasons, parents are required to submit a signed statement. As of July 2016 the philosophical exemption is no longer accepted by schools in the state of Vermont. Please consult your health care provider for a compliant vaccination schedule.

### **Medical Release Form**

Parents are required to sign the medical release form prior to the start of school.

### **Accident Reports and First Aid**

Staff members will administer minor first aid or emergency treatment only. In case of more serious illness or injury, staff members are authorized to call a rescue squad and the child's physician, in addition to the parent(s) or guardian. State regulations require that a staff member fill out an accident form if a child has an injury and parents will be asked to sign this form. Parents and students are expected to carry accident insurance for themselves and their children.



## **Communicable Diseases**

The Head of School and the state Public Health Office should be notified of any communicable disease or condition in the student or their immediate family, or anything of this nature to which the child has been exposed.

## **Concussion Protocol**

Staff members will follow a concussion protocol whenever a student has, or is suspected to have, any "bump, blow, or jolt to the head". This is detailed in the "Heads Up Concussion Action Plan". In addition to evaluating the child and administering immediate care, parents/guardians will be notified of a head injury. For Toddler Program, Children's House, and Lower Elementary students, this notification should include a written Incident Report signed by the teacher, Head of School, and parent/guardian. For Upper Elementary and Middle School, this notification can be in the form of an email written as soon as possible after the incident.

## **Head Lice**

Preventing head lice is a community effort. We request that:

1. Families inform the school of any cases in their family.
2. Families treat their child responsibly and provide appropriate treatment prior to returning to the class.
3. Students who have been affected return to school when they have been fully treated. Continued efforts should be made by parents to be secure in the knowledge that their child will not affect the classroom.

Our current policy offers a website <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/index.html> as the most up-to-date, best source of treatment options and information pertaining to head lice.

## **Ticks**

In response to the growing health threat of tick-borne illnesses in our region, HMS has established a policy to limit exposure to these little buggers. As Hilltop as a whole spends a lot of time outside and in the woods, we will be following this procedure, which has been recommended to us by the Institute for Wilderness Emergency Medicine.

### **• Student Preparedness**

If you or or your student knows they will be spending a lot of time outside/in the woods, long pants tucked into socks are recommended as the best preventative for tick bites. Light colored clothing also makes seeing ticks easier.

### **• Family Preparedness**

- Please bring in your choice of insect repellent
- Check your child / have your child check themselves at the end of every day carefully

### **• Staff Procedure**

- Make sure we apply your repellent to exposed skin and feet for younger students. Older students will be asked to apply themselves. We will have on

hand Tick Shield by Cedarcide, which is a biting insect spray that is a chemical-free control of ticks, flees, bedbugs, mosquitoes, mites, flies, chiggers, no-see-ums, ants, and others. Its only active ingredient is cedarwood oil at a 20% concentration, which is known to both repel and kill ticks.

- Check for ticks after time spent in Haytown, and remove them if we see one.
- Older students will be reminded to self-check.
- Encourage students to stay out of unmown grass.

#### • **Tick Removal and Reporting**

In the event that a tick is found embedded in a student, a staff member will remove the tick using tweezers. The tick will be saved and taped to an incident report giving the time, date, and location of the embedded tick. Parents will be notified by phone, and may determine at that point how they wish to proceed. We will have tea tree oil and neosporin on hand, both recommended as effective topical treatments, and parents may direct us to apply these if desired.

#### • **Further Actions**

Parents may choose to pick up their student from campus immediately, or wait to see if there are any symptoms. Saved ticks may be sent to a lab for testing. We recommend the Tick Report website from UMass Amherst:

<https://www.tickreport.com>

For more information from the State of Vermont visit:

<https://www.healthvermont.gov/disease-control/tickborne-diseases/prevent-tick-bites-tickborne-diseases>

### **Illness at school**

In order for classrooms to function properly all children need to be able to participate in classroom activities. If a child is too ill (coughing, stuffiness, lethargic) to participate in classroom activities and/or care of the child compromises staff's ability to care for other children, parents will be notified to pick up the child from school. **Hilltop requires that sick children be kept home** to get the rest and care needed to get well, and be fever free without fever reducing medication for 24 hours. Parents are requested to notify the school of any absence or illness by 9:00 AM.

### **Rash**

If your child arrives at school with an unidentifiable rash, itching or eye infection the child will be sent home unless the school has received a physician's diagnosis.

### **Medication at School**

Medication information and consent is required in your FACTS account and by contacting the Front Desk. Every medication (with the exception of Ibuprofen and Tylenol, and Benadryl, which is used in emergency situations) must be accompanied by a physician's order which will include: the name of the medicine, dosage, time of administration, and refrigeration requirements. Staff members will not administer medication without a completed medication form AND a physician's order. All medications must be in their original containers. This includes over-the-

counter medication, aspirin or other pain relievers and all prescription medications. All students with anaphylaxis will have a red bag in their classroom that contains their epipen and anaphylaxis plan.

### Child Abuse and Neglect

We take every opportunity to work directly with families to support all members of the family in providing what is best for each child. Should we have reason to suspect a child is being abused or neglected, we are mandated to report. Everyone who works for Hilltop Montessori School is a “Mandated Reporter”. As such, we are required to report any suspicion of a child being abused or neglected to the Family Services Division of the Department for Children and Families by making a phone call to 1-800-649-5285, followed by a written report, if necessary.

### Signs and Symptoms of Illness Chart

This year we will be following this Signs and Symptoms of Illness chart to help determine when a student needs to out of school, and when they can return to school. It is adapted from *Managing Infectious Diseases in Childcare and Schools: A Quick Reference Guide* which is used in the Vermont Childcare Regulations. We will be using this chart on when students should go home, stay home, and when they can return to school. Every student situation is different and we will work with parents and their healthcare providers for every situation, while also maintaining student confidentiality. Please report any illnesses to the Front Desk by 9 am. We also ask that you email the Front Desk the day before sending your child back to school with updates and to make sure that return to school criteria has been met. Please contact the Front Desk with any questions. Students who are unwell, for any reason, should stay home and recover. Keeping illness out of the classrooms is always our priority.

Symptoms	Common Causes	What Might Be Seen:	Stay Home (Exclude) When:	When to Return to School:
<b>Cold Symptoms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Viruses</i></li> <li>• <i>Respiratory virus</i></li> <li>• <i>Coronavirus</i></li> <li>• <i>Influenza</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Runny or stuffy nose</li> <li>• Scratchy throat</li> <li>• Sneezing</li> <li>• Watery eyes</li> <li>• Fever</li> </ul>	<b>No, unless:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fever</li> <li>• Individual looks or acts very ill</li> <li>• Individual has difficulty breathing.</li> <li>• Individual has blood red or purple rash not associated with injury.</li> <li>• Individual meets other exclusion criteria</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion criteria are resolved and fever free 24 hours</li> </ul>

Symptoms	Common Causes	What Might Be Seen:	Stay Home (Exclude) When:	When to Return to School:
<b>Cough</b> (May come from congestion anywhere from ears to lungs. Cough is a response to something that is irritating tissues in the airway)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Common cold</i></li> <li>• <i>Lower respiratory infection (eg, pneumonia, bronchiolitis)</i></li> <li>• <i>Croup</i></li> <li>• <i>Asthma</i></li> <li>• <i>Sinus infection</i></li> <li>• <i>Bronchitis</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dry or wet cough</li> <li>• Runny nose (clear, white, or yellow green)</li> <li>• Sore throat</li> <li>• Throat irritation</li> <li>• Hoarse voice, barking cough</li> </ul>	<b>No, unless:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Severe cough</li> <li>• Rapid and/or difficult breathing</li> <li>• Wheezing if not already evaluated and treated</li> <li>• Cyanosis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion criteria are resolved</li> <li>• Masking may be required on return to school, while cough is active</li> </ul>
<b>Diarrhea</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Usually viral, less commonly bacterial or parasitic</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequent loose or watery stools compared to child's normal pattern.</li> <li>• Abdominal cramps</li> <li>• Fever</li> <li>• Generally not feeling well.</li> <li>• Sometimes accompanied by vomiting.</li> </ul>	<b>Yes, when</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stool is not contained in the diaper for diapered children.</li> <li>• Diarrhea is causing "accidents" for toilet trained children.</li> <li>• Stool frequency exceeds 2 or more stools above normal for that child.</li> <li>• Blood or mucus in stool.</li> <li>• Abnormal color of stool for child.</li> <li>• No urine output for 8 hours.</li> <li>• Jaundice (yellow skin or eyes)</li> <li>• Fever with behavior change.</li> <li>• Looks or acts very ill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diarrhea free for 24 hours.</li> <li>• Cleared to return by health professional for all cases of bloody diarrhea and diarrhea caused by Salmonella, Shigella, or Giardia.</li> <li>• Diapered children have their stool contained by diaper (even if stool remains loose) and toilet-trained children do not have accidents.</li> <li>• Able to participate.</li> </ul>

Symptoms	Common Causes	What Might Be Seen:	Stay Home (Exclude) When:	When to Return to School:
<b>Difficult or Noisy Breathing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Common cold</i></li> <li>• <i>Croup</i></li> <li>• <i>Epiglottitis</i></li> <li>• <i>Bronchiolitis</i></li> <li>• <i>Asthma</i></li> <li>• <i>Pneumonia</i></li> <li>• <i>Object in airway</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common cold: stuffy nose, sore throat, and cough.</li> <li>• Croup: Barking cough, fever, chest discomfort, and/or very noisy breathing.</li> <li>• Asthma and Bronchiolitis: individual is working very hard to breath, wheezing, whistling sound when breathing, cough, irritable.</li> <li>• Pneumonia: Deep cough, fever, and rapid breathing.</li> <li>• Object stuck in airway: similar to Croup (minus fever) see above.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Yes, if:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fever and behavioral changes.</li> <li>• Individual looks or acts very ill.</li> <li>• Individual has difficulty breathing.</li> <li>• Individual has blood red or purple rash not associated with injury.</li> <li>• The individual meets other exclusion criteria.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion criteria are resolved.</li> <li>• Fever free for 24 hours, without the use of fever reducing medications.</li> </ul>
<b>Earache</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Bacteria or viruses</i></li> <li>• <i>Often occurs in context of common cold</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fever</li> <li>• Pain or irritability</li> <li>• Difficulty hearing</li> <li>• "Blocked ears"</li> <li>• Drainage</li> <li>• Swelling around the ear</li> </ul>	<p><b>No, unless:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unable to participate.</li> <li>• Care would compromise staff's ability to care for other children.</li> <li>• Fever with behavior change.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion criteria are resolved.</li> <li>• Fever free for 24 hours, without the use of fever reducing medications.</li> </ul>

Symptoms	Common Causes	What Might Be Seen:	Stay Home (Exclude) When:	When to Return to School:
<b>Eye irritation, pink eye</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Bacterial conjunctivitis</i></li> <li>• <i>Viral conjunctivitis</i></li> <li>• <i>Allergic conjunctivitis</i></li> <li>• <i>Irritant conjunctivitis</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bacterial infection: pink color instead of whites of eyes and thick yellow/green discharge. May be swollen, or crusted in the morning.</li> <li>• Viral infection: pinkish/red, irritated, swollen eyes; watery discharge; possible upper respiratory infection.</li> <li>• Allergic and chemical irritation; red, tearing, itchy eyes; runny nose, sneezing, watery discharge.</li> </ul>	<p><i>For bacterial conjunctivitis:</i>  <b>No.</b> Exclusion is no longer required for this condition.</p> <p><i>For other forms</i>  <b>No, unless:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fever with behavior changes.</li> <li>• Looks or acts very ill</li> </ul> <p>Note: One type of viral conjunctivitis spreads rapidly and requires exclusion. If 2 or more children in the group have watery red eyes without any known chemical irritant exposure, exclusion may be required and health professionals should be notified.</p>	<p><i>For bacterial conjunctivitis:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Once parent has discussed with health professional. Antibiotics may or may not be prescribed.</li> <li>• Exclusion criteria are resolved.</li> </ul> <p><i>For other forms:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion criteria are resolved.</li> <li>• Fever free for 24 hours, without the use of fever reducing medications.</li> </ul>
<b>Fever</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Any viral, bacterial or parasitic infection</i></li> <li>• <i>Overheating</i></li> <li>• <i>Reaction to medication (e.g. vaccine, oral)</i></li> <li>• <i>Other non-infectious diseases</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flushing</li> <li>• Tired</li> <li>• Irritable</li> <li>• Decreased activity</li> </ul>	<p><b>Yes, if:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Temperature is above 100.4F(38C)</li> </ul> <p><b>Or:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavior change.</li> <li>• Unable to participate.</li> <li>• Care would compromise staff's ability to care for other children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion criteria are resolved.</li> <li>• Fever free for 24 hours, without the use of fever reducing medications.</li> </ul>

Symptoms	Common Causes	What Might Be Seen:	Stay Home (Exclude) When:	When to Return to School:
<b>Headache</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any bacterial/viral infection</li> <li>Other causes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tired and irritable</li> <li>Can occur without other symptoms</li> </ul>	<p><b>No, unless:</b> Individual is unable to participate</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Notify health professionals in case of sudden vomiting or stiff neck that might signal meningitis. The stiff neck of concern is reluctance and unusual discomfort when the child is asked to look at their belly button-different from soreness in the side of the neck.</p>	Able to participate
<b>Itching</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ringworm</li> <li>Chickenpox</li> <li>Pinworm</li> <li>Head lice</li> <li>Scabies</li> <li>Allergic or irritant reaction (eg, poison ivy)</li> <li>Dry skin or eczema</li> <li>Impetigo</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chickenpox: blister-like spots surrounded by red halos on scalp, face; fever; irritable.</li> <li>Scabies: Severely itchy red bumps on warm areas of body, especially between fingers or toes.</li> <li>Impetigo: Areas of crusted yellow, oozing sores. Often around mouth or nasal openings.</li> <li>Ringworm: Itchy ring-shaped patches on skin or bald patches on scalp.</li> <li>Head Lice: small insects or white egg sheaths (nits) in hair.</li> <li>Pinworm: Anal itching</li> <li>Allergic or irritant</li> <li>reaction: raised circular, mobile rash; reddening of the skin; blisters occur with local reactions (poison ivy contact reaction).</li> <li>Dry skin or eczema: dry areas of the body, often worse on cheeks, elbows and behind</li> </ul>	<p><b>For chickenpox, scabies and impetigo YES</b></p> <p><b>For ringworm and head lice: Yes,</b> they are unable to participate in normal programming and should be referred to a health professional for treatment.</p> <p><b>For pinworm, allergic or irritant reactions and eczema No, unless:</b> Appears infected as a weeping or crusty sore</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exclusion criteria are resolved.</li> <li>On medication or treated as recommended by a health professional if indicated for the condition and for the time required to readmitted. For conditions that require application of antibiotics by mouth, the period of treatment to reduce the risk of spread to others is usually 24 hours. For most individuals with insect infestations or parasites, readmission as soon as the treatment has been given.</li> </ul>

Symptoms	Common Causes	What Might Be Seen:	Stay Home (Exclude) When:	When to Return to School:
<b>Mouth Sores</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Oral thrush (yeast infection)</i></li> <li>• <i>Herpes or coxsackie virus infection</i></li> <li>• <i>Canker sores</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral thrush: Whites patches on tongue and along cheeks.</li> <li>• Herpes or coxsackie virus infection: Pain on swallowing, fever, painful yellowish spots in mouth, swollen glands, cold sore, reddened swollen painful lips.</li> <li>• Canker sores: Painful ulcers on cheeks or gums.</li> </ul>	<p><b>No, unless:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drooling steadily related to mouth sores.</li> <li>• Unable to participate</li> <li>• Care would compromise staffs ability to care for other children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to participate</li> <li>• Exclusion criteria are resolved</li> </ul>
<b>Rash</b>	<p>Many causes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Viral: roseola infantum, fifth disease, chickenpox, herpes virus, molluscum contagiosum, warts, cold sores, shingles (herpes zoster), and others</li> <li>• Skin infections and infestations: ringworm (fungus), scabies (parasite), impetigo, abscesses, and cellulitis (bacteria)</li> <li>• Severe bacterial infections: meningococcus, pneumococcus, Staphylococcus aureus (MSSA, MRSA)</li> </ul>	<p><i>Skin may show similar symptoms with many different causes. Determining cause of a rash requires a competent health professional evaluation that takes into account information other than just how a rash looks.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Viral: Usually signs of general illness such as runny nose, cough, and fever (except for warts or molluscum). Each viral rash may have a distinctive appearance.</li> <li>• Minor skin infections and infestations: See "Itching." More serious skin infections: redness, pain, fever, pus.</li> <li>• Severe bacterial infections: Rare. These children have fever with rash and may be very ill.</li> </ul>	<p><b>No, unless:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rash with behavior change or fever</li> <li>• Has oozing/open wound Has bruising not associated with injury</li> <li>• Has joint pain and rash Unable to participate</li> <li>• Tender, red area of skin, especially if it is increasing in size or tenderness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to participate in daily activities.</li> <li>• On antibiotic medication at least 24 hours (if indicated).</li> <li>• Exclusion criteria are resolved.</li> </ul>



Symptoms	Common Causes	What Might Be Seen:	Stay Home (Exclude) When:	When to Return to School:
<b>Sore Throat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Viral-Common cold viruses that cause upper respiratory infections.</i></li> <li>• <i>Strep Throat</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Viral:</b> Verbal children will complain of sore throat; younger children may be irritable with decreased appetite and increased drooling (refusal to swallow) May see symptoms associated with upper respiratory illness.</li> <li>• <b>Strep Throat:</b> strep infection usually does not result in cough or runny nose. Signs may include red tissue with white patches on sides of throat, at back of tongue (tonsil area) and at back of wall of throat, tonsils may be large, even touching each other.</li> </ul>	<p><b>No, unless:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to swallow.</li> <li>• Excessive drooling with breathing difficulty.</li> <li>• Fever with behavior change.</li> <li>• Unable to participate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to swallow.</li> <li>• Able to participate.</li> <li>• On medication at least 24 hrs (if strep)</li> <li>• Exclusion criteria are resolved.</li> </ul>
<b>Stomachache</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Viral gastroenteritis or strep throat.</li> <li>• Problems with internal organs of the abdomen such as intestine, colon, liver, bladder</li> </ul>		<p><b>No, unless:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Severe pain causing child to double over or scream</li> <li>• Abdominal pain after injury</li> <li>• Bloody or black stools</li> <li>• No urine output for 8 hours</li> <li>• Diarrhea</li> <li>• Vomiting</li> <li>• Yellow skin or eyes</li> <li>• Fever with behavior changes</li> <li>• Looks or acts very ill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pain resolves.</li> <li>• Able to participate.</li> <li>• Exclusion criteria are resolved.</li> </ul>

## NUTRITION & FOOD

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At HMS good nutrition plays an integral role in your child's day. Please pack healthy, low sugar foods in reusable containers whenever possible. Proteins, fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grains help students have the energy and focus to succeed at school.

- Candy, gum, high sugar snacks, juice and other flavored drinks will be sent home for your child to enjoy after school.
- We are unable to heat individual meals (other than the MS).
- Water is available at all times and will be served at snack and lunch.

### **All Elementary and Middle School Students**

Older and bigger children need high protein, nutritious food, and lots of it. There may be a group snack provided for the whole class on birthdays, other celebrations, and some special lessons. But, most days, students will rely on their snack brought from home to keep up their energy level during the morning work cycle. Please have students include extra food in their lunch box for them to have as a mid-morning snack and after school if they are staying past 3 pm.

### **Lunch**

- Students in the Children's House who stay after 12pm should bring their lunch.
- All Elementary and Middle school students should bring their lunch.
- CH, LE, UE and MS may sign up for pizza lunch on Fridays and bagel lunch on Wednesdays for a fee. Pizza lunch is managed by the school, and bagel lunch is managed by Middle School students.
- All students come together for lunch in their classrooms. Students set their rooms up for lunch, begin the meal together, and have time for leisurely discussions. This is seen as an opportunity to foster respect for each other and for the environment in which they share a meal.

### **Food Allergy**

Please note that Hilltop may choose to restrict certain foods, for either a classroom or for the whole school, based on severe, life-threatening food allergies. We reserve the right to do this should the need arise and will communicate with the impacted population at that time. When bringing in food items for a celebration or event, please include ingredient list as a guide for others to follow.

## TUITION

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Tuition rates are set on an annual basis. There is a non-refundable deposit required upon enrollment which goes towards the tuition and will be reflected in our payment schedule. The payment due each month or quarter is an installment on the annual amount and is not the tuition for that specific month. Prorated tuition charges will be calculated for students entering the school during the school year. Tuition includes the fees for all required programs. Some optional programs have an additional charge for students who choose Pizza or Bagel Lunch or Before Care and Extended Day.

### **Payment Plans**

Tuition may be paid annually, semi-annually, quarterly, or monthly based on a 10-month billing cycle, May – February. HMS utilizes FACTS, an online tuition management system. FACTS is an efficient and flexible online platform that gives families control over their tuition payments. The tuition agreement you complete each year outlines the payment methods. Payment can be made through your FACTS Family Portal. Checks will also be accepted by the school and should be made payable to Hilltop Montessori School, Inc.

### **Late fee**

The following fee will be applied to your account in the event of a late or returned payment:

- Payment received by FACTS or HMS after the due date will incur a \$50 late fee.
- Payment returned from the bank will incur a \$50 fee per return.

Payments are applied to outstanding balances before current charges. The school reserves the right to deny admission of the student to the facilities of the school if payments are overdue by more than 30 days.

### **Accounts Receivable Policy**

Tuition payments are payable on those dates selected in the Enrollment Agreement. If payments cannot be made according to the terms of the Enrollment Agreement, families are expected to initiate communication with the Business Manager.

## **Tuition Policies**

- If the school and the parents are able to agree on a revised set of terms, in writing and signed by all parties, then those terms will replace the original terms and become part of the Enrollment Agreement.
- No credit or refund is provided for unused days, snow days, or sick days. Re-enrollment is dependent upon being in compliance with the terms of the current Enrollment Agreement.

- The school reserves the right to suspend or expel any student(s) for so long as any payment default continues and/or in the absence of a mutually acceptable revised Enrollment Agreement.
- Progress reports and transcripts will not be released while any payment default exists.
- The exercise by the school of any of its remedies, as noted above or otherwise, shall not affect its right to exercise any other remedies, and does not change the payment obligations under the Financial Contract. Any decision by the school not to enforce a particular remedy does not mean that they have given up the right to exercise it later.

## **Withdrawal Policy**

If a child is withdrawn from the school at any time, the family is contractually responsible for the full year's tuition. After May 1 of the beginning billing cycle, HMS shall not be obligated to refund, redirect, or cancel the tuition, in whole or in part, in the event of absence, withdrawal, or dismissal of the student or termination of enrollment for any reason.

HMS may, at its option, forgive and / or refund the prorated tuition for a student less a 10% administrative fee on the outstanding balance when:

- a. Parents (or guardian) must relocate for employment purposes more than 50 miles from the school. This refund will not be available except by written request to HMS and will not be eligible after January of that school year.
- b. A student is identified by HMS to be an inappropriate match due to readiness, medical or behavior issues, or learning differences for which the school is not equipped to assist. Readiness in the Toddler and Children's House Programs is evaluated during a 30 day trial period.

A child new to the Toddler Program or Children's House who is withdrawn or dismissed during the four-week trial period is responsible for the registration fee and pro-rated tuition and fees. In the event of school cancellation there is no refund for tuition or fees.

## **The Indexed Tuition Program**

*Increasing equity and access to Hilltop Montessori School*

Hilltop recognizes the needs and benefits of economic diversity in our community for all students and families, and we have worked to make this a priority. A Hilltop education accessible to a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds cultivates a diverse student body, which not only reflects our community but aspires to global impact and enrichment.

It is a community effort to financially support the educational experience of Hilltop Montessori School. We are a 501c(3) non-profit independent school that is primarily funded by tuition, fundraising, and grants. Each year we balance the competing needs of providing the best education for our students and family financial

situations. Our annual operating budget is just over \$2M; tuition contributions at each tier are essential to the financial viability of Hilltop. The indexed tuition model is part of our larger goal of making Hilltop more accessible for all families. This model depends on families contributing at all levels. The family contributing 25% is feeling the impact on their ability to meet their financial needs equally to the family contributing 100%.

We recognize the sacrifices and prioritizing of education that many of our families need to do to make this educational experience and community available for their families. We expect families to make every effort to see that all possible sources of funding have been explored and/or secured by the family before applying to the Indexed Tuition Program. Our expectation is that both parents will contribute to their child's education to the best of their abilities. In cases of divorce or separated families, the assets and earnings of both parents are considered. If extended family members have means to contribute, that should also be taken into account.

**What is Indexed Tuition?** The Indexed Tuition Program matches families of all income levels with a level of tuition that is based on their specific situation. While every family is expected to contribute to the cost of tuition and to support the community to the extent individual family circumstances permit, the school does not expect each tuition level to be the same.

**How much tuition will I pay?** Families, who qualify for one of the state programs and/or who qualify for Indexed Tuition FACTS Grant & Aid, will pay for a percentage of tuition below the top tier (100%).

**Total Tuition – State Funding (if applicable) – Hilltop Tuition Reduction = Indexed Tuition** (Family Contribution)

**How does Hilltop use tuition income?**

- Tuition from families represents about three quarters of the 2022-23 operating budget.
- Income from state programs, grants, fundraising and endowment withdrawals represent about a quarter of the 2022-23 operating budget.

**Who is eligible for Indexed Tuition?**

- About half of Hilltop families pay below the top index.
- Indexed Tuition levels are determined by state guidelines and/or a family's entire financial profile: income, assets, family size, unusual expenses, etc.
- Indexed Tuition levels are assessed by the Indexed Tuition Committee and FACTS, and state program qualifications and guidelines.

**Who can access state funding programs?** Hilltop Montessori School participates in several state programs that enable about a quarter of our families to receive state funding towards a reduction in their tuition.

**Who is eligible for state funding?**

- All families of 3 and 4 year olds in Vermont qualify for the Vermont Universal PreK Program. For the 2023 -24 academic year they will receive \$3,764 per child to cover a portion of the tuition.
- Families who qualify for Vermont Child Care Financial Assistance receive the maximum allowed amount because Hilltop is a 5-STAR program.
- As a Vermont accredited independent school, Hilltop accepts tuition vouchers from families who live in “sending” towns. The voucher puts the family contribution for tuition at approximately the 25% indexed tuition level.

**When is the Indexed Tuition Application Due?**

	Returning Students	New Applicants	Rolling Admission
SSS Application Due	January 15	January 15	Due with admission application
Families Notified of Indexed Tuition Level	February 1 with Re-enrollment Contract	March 15	Sent with admission offer
Families sign and return Indexed Tuition Letters to HMS	February 15 with Re-enrollment Contract	March 30	Returned with enrollment papers

**What if I miss the Indexed Tuition application due date?** Hilltop relies primarily on tuition income to fund our school. For that reason, we need to manage our Indexed Tuition Program carefully. It is very important that families follow the indexed tuition application timeline in order to receive full consideration for indexed tuition.

**As a prospective family can I apply after the deadline?** Yes, although applications completed outside the above timeline will be considered on a rolling admission basis and may be subject to limited space and/or indexed tuition. Hilltop uses state program adjustments and/or recommendations from FACTS Grant & Aid in determining eligibility for indexed tuition.

**Applying for Indexed Tuition through FACTS Grant & Aid**

All families must apply each year, whether or not they have Indexed Tuition in the past. All applications are kept strictly confidential by Hilltop and FACTS Grant & Aid. The Indexed Tuition Committee consists of the Head of School, the Business Manager, and the Admissions Director. The committee reviews only COMPLETE applications and discusses the information with the family if more information or clarification is necessary. Deadline for Indexed Tuition applications is January 15, applications will be considered after this date on a rolling admissions basis. While a substantial percentage of the School’s budget is allocated to Indexed Tuition, Hilltop cannot fund all students who apply and qualify for Indexed Tuition. Please note that Hilltop does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, religion, creed, disabilities, sexual orientation, handicap status, national origin or ethnicity in

administration of its admission policies and financial aid programs.

## Other Funding Sources

**Publicly Funded Pre-kindergarten** - Hilltop Montessori School participates and partners with the school districts which support publicly-funded pre-kindergarten education for 3 and 4 year olds in Vermont. The funds are available to all families living in a participating area, regardless of income level. Funds will be credited to your account and reduces the family contribution to tuition. It is the responsibility of each family to fill out the application and mail it directly to the district.

**Vermont's Child Care Financial Assistance Program** - The Child Care Financial Assistance Program is designed to help eligible families pay for child care for children birth through age 12. Sliding scale awards are made to income- eligible families qualifying under one of the following service needs:

- Parents working or in school and falling within income guidelines;
- Families with a level of stress that creates an at-risk situation; Families who are self-employed or have recently started a business; Families seeking employment;
- Families with parents who have documented physical or mental health needs;
- Families with children substantiated as abused or neglected and under the care of protective services.
- Parents participating in training activities through Economic Services Reach Up program.
- To learn more, see if you might be eligible, and apply online for Child Care Financial Assistance, visit the Child Care Financial Assistance website.

## Vermont's Tuition Voucher System

Many smaller Vermont towns do not operate a local elementary or middle school. Students in these towns are eligible for a voucher to choose from among public or non-religious independent schools in other towns. Under the voucher system, the "sending" towns pay tuition directly to the "receiving" schools. Contact your school district for voucher eligibility.

## DIRECTIONS TO HILLTOP MONTESSORI SCHOOL

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From I-91 North or South, Exit 2, turn right off ramp onto VT Route 9 West; turn left at Creamery Bridge to Guilford Street and continue on Guilford Street about mile, take a right at Summit Circle. Take the first left on Stafford Farm Hill. The main parking lot is behind the Arts Barn.





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