



Overview of the Hilltop Montessori School Board of Trustees

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OVERVIEW

The role of the Hilltop 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 the hiring and evaluation of the Head of School, appointing standing and ad hoc committees, overseeing the lease and facility use, fundraising, and strategic planning. HMS Board members also serve as ambassadors for the school to the community at large.

HILLTOP MONTESSORI SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Hilltop Montessori School in Brattleboro, Vermont, is a state-accredited pre-K, elementary, and middle school with approximately 130 students, summer camps, and a variety of before and after school programs. Hilltop was founded in 1972 and moved to its new 43-acre campus in 2009. The school now has an annual budget of around \$2 million. Hilltop enjoys a committed and engaged parent, grandparent and alumni community.

OUR MISSION

Hilltop'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.

HMS 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.

BOARD MEMBER JOB DESCRIPTION

ROLE OF THE BOARD

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. Their work includes the 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. The Board's work is guided by the priorities outlined in the school's Strategic Plan, adopted in 2024.

EXPECTATIONS OF BOARD MEMBERS

Attendance

Attendance at Board meetings is critical for its success. Trustees must attend at least 75% of the year's regularly-scheduled meetings.

Committee Work

Board meetings are structured in part around reports from its various Board committees, which meet at least once in between full Board meetings. Thus, a great deal of most important Board work happens in committee. Trustees recognize that committee work will take additional time, energy and vision, outside of what is already given to the meetings of the full Board.

Fundraising

All trustees are expected to make a meaningful contribution to the Annual Fund each September, at a level comfortable to the trustee. All trustees will be actively engaged in cultivating and/or thanking donors and will make every effort to participate in the school's major fundraising events.

Ambassadorship

Trustees will serve as Hilltop ambassadors to the community.

TERM OF OFFICE

Trustees serve a three-year term. They may be re-elected to a second 3-year term.

BOARD MEETINGS

The full Board has monthly meetings during the school year on Wednesday afternoons or evenings, which typically run between 2-3 hours including dinner. During winter months, meetings might be held remotely. Meeting preparation usually requires approximately one hour per month. In addition, the Board holds a one-day summer retreat. On rare occasions, to deal with urgent situations, special meetings may be called. Board members are asked to make every effort to attend extraordinary meetings. Board members are invited to volunteer to provide dinner for the group one or two times per year.

COMMITTEES

Committee work happens outside the regular Board meetings. On average, committees have biweekly 1-hour meetings. However, some committees meet more frequently, especially during their busiest times of year.

Executive Committee / Leadership Team

The Leadership Team (LT) is comprised of the Chair, Outgoing Chair, and Incoming Chair, plus the Head of School. LT typically meets on a weekly basis or more as needed. Once elected as Incoming Chair, a trustee moves successively through these roles over three years.

The LT is responsible for:

- Working together with the Board and the Head of School in articulating and achieving the mission and vision of the school.
- Managing and coordinating the Board's work, including scheduling, organizing, and facilitating board meetings.
- Meeting with the Head of School to set the agenda for the next board meeting (preferably one week in advance).
- Supporting the Committee on Trustees in conducting an annual evaluation of the board's performance.
- Conducting both the annual board and faculty and staff evaluations of the Head of School and reporting the full responses to the Head and the Trustees.
- Consulting regularly with the Head to anticipate and strategize issues, concerns, and priorities.
- Being ready and willing listeners to the Head's concerns as they emerge and serving as major advisors.
- Ensuring that the Board Code of Conduct is adhered to by all board members and, when necessary, counseling unproductive, disruptive, and counterproductive trustees off the board.

A member of the Leadership Team serves as an ex-officio member of all Board committees and task groups, though they do not need to attend every meeting.

Committee on Trustees

The Hilltop Board of Trustees Committee on Trustees is composed of at least 2 Board members plus the Head of School. The CoT typically meets biweekly or weekly, as needed. The Committee on Trustees will:

- Work with LT to plan Trustee education throughout the year.
- Manage the Board's self-governance, including implementation of the Board handbook and maintenance of the Board's bylaws.
- Identify, recruit, and nominate new Trustees.
- Work with LT to identify and nominate potential officers.
- Develop and implement self-evaluation for board members.

Finance Committee

Hilltop's Finance Committee is a committee with deep support from board members, interested stakeholders, the HOS, and the school's business manager.

The FCs responsibilities include:

- Quarterly Reporting and Financial Oversight: Regularly reviews the school's finances as presented by the school's administration and offers insight and suggestions as required.
- Financial Policies: Review financial policies for accountability and transparency.
- Risk Management and long term financial planning: Identify and manage financial risks to ensure stability and sustainability.
- Budget Oversight: Reviews the annual budget in collaboration with the HOS and business manager.

Development Committee

The Hilltop Development Committee includes members of the Board and community, the Development Director, and the Head of School. The Development Committee typically meets 1-4x a month and may appoint additional subcommittees for specific fundraising or community projects.

The Committee's responsibilities include:

- Planning and executing fundraising (through events and other means) to support the Annual Fund goal set each year.
- Looking beyond fundraising to organize events that build community within Hilltop. (Eg: Anniversary celebrations, community events, alumni gatherings, etc.).
- Helping to strategize and implement the fundraising strategy for the school, especially the Board's role in that implementation.

Strategic Planning Committee

The Strategic Planning Committee works to develop an updated Strategic Plan every 5-7 years.

This includes:

- Carefully evaluating the school's mission and supporting statements, goals, and core values
- Surveying the community, staff, and trustees
- Developing a plan in coordination with the HOS and staff that reflects the high-level values and goals of our community, in a way that strategically advances the mission and financial stability of the school.

Once the plan is drafted and approved by the Board, the SPC works to implement the plan at the Board level, monitor for continued progress over time, and provide a committee-focus on taking the long view toward our broader goals as an institution.

QUALIFICATIONS

Serving on the HMS Board or on one of its various committees is a great way to offer your professional expertise, experience, and time to Hilltop. The Board has an ongoing need to attract potential trustees from within and outside the Hilltop community who have experience or expertise in the following areas: Law, Finance, Development/Fundraising, Contracting/Architecture, Education, Administration/ Organization, Community Connection, Equity & Justice Work.

In addition, the Board is committed to recruiting trustees who reflect a wide variety of identities and lived experiences. This includes, but is not limited to, diversity in race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, family structure, socioeconomic background, ability, and cultural perspective. The Board believes that a broad range of identities strengthens its capacity for thoughtful governance, deepens its understanding of community needs, and enriches its strategic decision-making.

CODE OF CONDUCT

As members of the Board of Trustees, deeply devoted to Hilltop's well-being and advancement, we are committed to a set of fundamental values and principles that will steer our actions and choices.

We understand the importance of confidentiality in many aspects of our board's work. In addition to the commitments outlined below, we will uphold the confidentiality of sensitive information and discussions within the board including, but not limited to, information shared during board meetings, committee meetings, board emails, discussions with the HOS, faculty, staff and conversations with one another.

1. Commitment to Inclusivity, Respect, Communication:

- We will assume positive intent, treating each other with trust and offering the benefit of the doubt in all interactions.
- Fostering an environment of non-judgmental curiosity, we will value each trustee's unique skills and respect their diverse approaches to communication.
- In our discourse, we will consider all questions and viewpoints, ensuring that no voice remains unheard.
- We recognize that our board is a caring community of citizens who respect the potential of each individual and honor the diversity of trustees' experiences and communication strengths.
- We will endeavor to maintain an appropriate, respectful tone during meetings, encouraging each member to speak. In situations where information or context cannot be shared, we will engage in transparent communication and provide explanations for our decisions.

2. Commitment to a Prepared Environment:

- Agendas will be prepared and shared with sufficient advance notice, no later than one Friday before a meeting.
- Committee reports will be submitted in advance and stored in the meeting folder or linked in the agenda by the Friday before the meeting.
- Board members will prepare for meetings by completing required reading ahead of time.
- Facilitation during meetings will be intentional, ensuring a focus on agenda items and avoiding the execution of committee work during board meetings.

- We will hold in high regard the work done by committees and seek to respect and integrate their recommendations.
- We will maintain a yearly calendar.
- We will develop standard formats for reports, decision requests, and agendas to enhance our board's efficiency and record keeping.
- We commit to actively participating in the governance of the school by attending no less than 80% of board meetings, committee commitments, school events and educational opportunities. We recognise that our presence and engagement are essential to fulfilling the responsibility we have to the students, staff and Hilltop families.

3. Commitment to a Creative and Forward-Looking Vision:

- We will actively engage in generative and creative thinking, actively seeking fresh ideas and solutions.
- We will encourage one another to embrace an innovative mindset in order to collectively contribute to Hilltop's growth and development.

4. Shared Commitment to Montessori Values:

- Recognizing Hilltop as an authentic Montessori school, we will share a commitment to uphold Montessori values and principles in all our board discussions.
- We will accept responsibility for educating ourselves on Montessori philosophy to better serve our school community.

5. Balancing Dedication with Joy:

- Recognizing our shared humanity, we will create opportunities for authentic connections among board members.
- We will care for one another, fostering mutual support and camaraderie within the board.
- We will balance our hard work and diligence with moments of levity, fun, and joy.

6. Periodic Review and Revision:

- We commit to reviewing and revising this agreement during each annual retreat, ensuring its continued relevance and alignment with our evolving goals and aspirations for Hilltop.

The Hilltop Board of Trustees is dedicated to supporting the Hilltop community and its cherished Montessori principles and, with this in mind, formally adopts and confirms the above agreement.

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