

HILLTOP MONTESSORI SCHOOL COMMUNITY HANDBOOK-2020-2021

**Please note that this is an unusual year with COVID-19 so see our Fall Reopening Plan for more details regarding operations and our parent “cheat sheet” for procedures. All parents will have to sign a liability waiver to have their child participate in on campus instruction and should follow CDC guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19 including prevention strategies, monitoring their family and child for symptoms, traveling internationally and reporting COVID-19 cases. Our most current COVID plan is here:*

<https://hilltopmontessori.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/REOPENING-PLAN-FINAL.pdf>.

MISSION STATEMENT

Hilltop Montessori School’s mission is to light the flame of learning to achieve a lifetime of success.

Hilltop Montessori School is a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation, offering quality private education based on the principles of the Montessori philosophy. The carefully planned, self-motivating environment helps each child develop naturally at the child’s own pace. The environment promotes a child’s discovery, learning, teaching, and growth. Hilltop Montessori School is dedicated to the development of the whole child: academically, emotionally, and socially. Students, teachers, and parents play an active role in the educational process. The educational environment celebrates cultural, ethnic and economic diversity such that children from various backgrounds are taught to live to their greatest potential.

In our commitment to embrace diversity, Hilltop’s enrollment is open to all children and their families without regard to race, color, religion, creed, gender, disability or national origin. Hilltop is also non-denominational and works toward the goal of having each child celebrated for their own unique traditions, culture and religion.

Diversity Statement: Hilltop Montessori School celebrates diversity and inclusion in all aspects of academic and campus life. Reflective of best practices of an authentic Montessori education, we celebrate and value the uniqueness of every individual.

Philosophy Statement: Hilltop Montessori School is a highly engaged, academic community of students, parents and educators that embrace the Montessori philosophy. Global citizenship, environmental stewardship, critical thinking and best practices in education contribute to each student’s individual learning experience.

CURRICULUM and ADVANCEMENT

Hilltop Montessori School offers a full Montessori curriculum based on the philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori, which is available in outline format at our website, <http://www.hilltopmontessori.com/curriculum>.

Hilltop Montessori School meets each child’s need academically so “skipping” grades is not permitted. On some occasions, Upper Elementary students excelling in mathematics may participate in the middle school math program, in keeping with the Montessori philosophy of meeting each child’s academic needs. Parental request is not a basis for placement in the middle school mathematics program and requires approval from classroom teachers, The Director of the Elementary & Middle School Program, and the Head of School. In order for a student to be considered, his or her mathematics standardized test scores must be at the top 10 percent and above. Maturity and internal motivation are also evaluated as part of the decision making process.

ADMISSIONS

Hilltop Montessori School accepts children between the ages of eighteen months and eighth grade. Hilltop Montessori accepts children without regard to race, color, religion, creed, gender, disability, or national origin. The school recruits a culturally diverse student population where children learn respect and understanding for others, cultural heritage, and individual differences. Admissions information is available on our website at: <http://www.hilltopmontessori.com/admissions-procedures/>.

Observations are scheduled as part of the process, to determine the appropriateness of the environment for each child and records (including standardized test scores and progress reports) are requested from your child's current institution. Observations of all children are set once a spot becomes available.

Any child enrolling in the preschool must be toilet trained before entering the program. Toddlers do not need to be toilet trained.

Any child seeking enrollment as a first grade student from another institution must be six years old prior to September 1. Rare exceptions may be made for children who have attended Hilltop as preschool for a minimum of two years (provided the child's birthday is in September) if the student meets all standards of the readiness profile utilized, which would indicate readiness academically, socially and emotionally.

In the rare instance of a current HMS student (enrolled two years prior) meets all readiness goals, the staff will meet regarding the child and consensus must be met that the child is 100% capable of transitioning to the rigors of the first grade before an exception can be made. The child's birth date cannot be later than October 1st. Exceptions might be made for students completing kindergarten from other states and are addressed on an individual basis.

All parents are required to sign an enrollment contract with Hilltop Montessori School and are subject to all rules, regulations, and policies established by the Board of Directors and the Head of Hilltop Montessori School. The enrollment contracts are binding, obligating families to pay for the entire year. Please see the enrollment contract for further information.

All children are accepted on a conditional basis. Should the Head of School, under the advisement of The Directors of the Early Childhood, Elementary or Middle School programs, determine a child does not benefit from this Montessori environment, or a child's behavior is disruptive to the educational process, the School reserves the right and option to terminate any child's enrollment in the school. Additionally, if the parent fails to cooperate with the school and the school determines that they are unable to work cooperatively with the family to assist in the child's education, the school reserves the right to terminate the enrollment of the student.

Admissions Policy:

Children are considered for admission after parents complete an Admission Application. Children are typically admitted to Hilltop Montessori School in the Toddler Program (18 months and walking through 36 months before September 30) and Primary/Preschool (three years before August 1 through kindergarten) levels. Montessori classrooms incorporate multi-age groupings and whenever possible, children stay with the same teaching team and classmates. To take advantage of this unique learning opportunity, parents are encouraged to plan for a multi-year commitment to the school and enroll their child as early as possible. Although children may be accepted at any age, for maximum benefit of the program, we encourage enrollment no later than three to four years of age.

Admissions for Elementary and Middle School Students:

Prior to admission, all assessments, screening tool results, evaluations and/or testing information must be submitted to the office. Ideally children are admitted at the beginning of the school year to take full advantage of the orientation period. Later applicants are considered for admission on a case by case basis.

Children in grade levels 1-8 are considered for enrollment after the school reviews the student's report card and, if possible, standardized test results. Previous assessments and any other pertinent behavioral information will also be considered. The child's present (or previous) teachers are contacted as part of the admission process. If after this review, the school believes the student is a good candidate for Hilltop Montessori School, the applicant will be invited to come for a visit for 1-8th grade. During the visit, the child has the opportunity to experience the classroom environment and the faculty have the opportunity to evaluate the child's commitment to learning and ability to meet the behavioral expectations of the school. Informal placement testing will occur during the visit. After the visit, parents receive feedback from the school regarding their child's suitability to the environment. At that time, an offer of enrollment may be extended or the school may recommend an alternative placement within or outside the school. Because the school adheres to the Montessori educational philosophy that stresses individual responsibility for learning, potential students at any level will be assessed for admission on the basis of their ability to make developmentally appropriate choices. Children are also assessed for their ability to participate in group and individual lessons.

The first six weeks of school are considered an orientation and evaluation period for any child entering or moving up to a new level at Hilltop Montessori School. Parents are notified by classroom teachers of any concerns that arise during this period and teachers urge parents to notify them if their child brings home a school-related problem. If concerns continue, a meeting is scheduled with parents, teachers and appropriate staff to discuss intervention strategies. An outside evaluation may be required.

A six-week trial period may be initiated any time a child's behavior is significantly disruptive to the classroom or is affecting the students' ability to learn. During this time, teachers and administration observe the child, intervene when problems occur, and document the incidents. Parents are contacted and a plan is developed to address the child's behavior. If the child does not make progress, parents will be asked to withdraw their child.

Each child must have the following forms on file when accepted for admission:

Admission Form
Enrollment Contract
Medical Emergency Form (before the first day of school)/Emergency Contact Information
Certificate of Immunization or religious exemption certificate (before the first day of school)
COVID-19 Liability Waiver

GENERAL INFORMATION

Hilltop Montessori School offers an academic year program, beginning in August for the Toddler, Preschool/Kindergarten, Elementary, and Middle School students. Hilltop is accredited with SACS/CASI (Cognia) and SAIS (The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and The Southern Association of Independent Schools). Our toddler through 6th grade is accredited with The American Montessori Society (AMS).

TODDLER PROGRAM

The school offers several toddler programs. Toddlers can attend school three days (Monday-Wednesday), or five days, with a morning session or all day for 5 days, based on availability. All morning sessions are from 8:30 to 12:00. All day sessions are from 8:30 to 3:00 Monday through Thursday and 8:30 to 2:00 on Friday.

PRESCHOOL/KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

The school offers a half-day or full-day preschool program and a full-day kindergarten program. The programs begin at 8:30 AM and ends at Noon or 3:15 PM respectively, with a Friday 2:15 PM dismissal. Half day preschool students also have the option of staying until 1:00 PM (lunch bunch).

ELEMENTARY PROGRAM and MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM

The school offers a full-day elementary program for first through eighth grade classes. Classes begin at 8:30 AM and dismiss at 3:15 PM, with a Friday 2:15 PM dismissal.

EARLY CARE AND AFTER CARE

Early care for all ages is offered from 7:00-8:30 AM, and after care for K-8th grade is available from 3:15-5:30 PM at additional costs if there is enough interest. There is also early drop-off offered from 8:00 AM and late pick-up available until 3:45 PM at an additional charge. Depending on student interest, aftercare may be offered through a private babysitting service on site from several of our certified teachers.

LUNCHES/Farm to Fork Program:

The School provides a hot lunch daily for all students at an additional charge or students may bring their own lunch. Orders are sent home electronically and there is a variety of choices for each child to make. Milk and water are also available on a daily basis for an additional fee. In the event a family chooses not to purchase lunch, they must sign a waiver indicating they waive the right to hot lunch for those students under school age per DHR policy.

In the event a parent chooses not to purchase lunch, a nutritional and complete lunch must be sent from home that contains foods off the approved list. Students should pack whatever utensils or napkins/plate they will need for that day's lunch. **In keeping with the school's wellness policy, we would also like to request that fast food lunches not be brought into the building in their containers.**

CHANGE OF CLOTHES AND INDOOR SHOES/FOOTWEAR

We would like to ask all parents of preschool and toddler children to have at least one full change of clothes (seasonally appropriate) on site, in a Ziploc bag labeled with your child's name. Please also note that

extremely soiled underwear might be thrown away as there is not laundry or sanitation equipment on site and sending soiled underwear home can be a health issue. If your child is passed the “accident” stage, sometimes the children can get muddy or wet so it is always handy to have a change of clothes regardless of your child’s age. In this event, we can use your spare clothes on site to keep your child comfortable. Additionally, “indoor” footwear is encouraged for all preschool and toddler children; options will be discussed at Parent Orientation but typically are soft soled shoes such as crocs or slippers. Children in K-8th grade participating in PE need sneakers that are non-marking for the gym floor.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES—(TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED DUE TO COVID)

**Please note that with COVID-19, only essential instruction that is more academic in nature will occur until advised by CDC recommendations but once it is considered safe to do so, HMS will resume all extracurricular activities..*

Private piano lessons are available for Kindergarten, Elementary, and Middle School students during the regular school day. Elementary aged children are also invited to participate in after school percussion classes for an additional fee.

*Those interested in private lessons are given a sheet of interest when school begins. Once we receive that sheet, the school will have the private instructors contact each family individually regarding additional fees and schedules. Certain age requirements for each activity are listed.

*After school activities are offered on site based on interest. These activities are not associated with the school’s curriculum or programming. All correspondence and issues for these activities should be directed to the appropriate person in charge. **The school offers their facility for these additional opportunities and participation is completely optional. A complete listing of extracurricular activities is listed on our website.**

COMPLAINT POLICY

Initial concerns regarding any issue occurring in the classroom (whether it is in the primary or a specialty classroom) context such as academic issues or a child’s or staff’s behavior in the classroom should be addressed with your child’s **primary lead teacher**. Simply discussing your concern with the primary lead teacher and getting information clarified can easily remedy this matter, in most cases. All concerns regarding students, parents, volunteers, or employees of the school regarding a classroom/academic issue should be handled by scheduling a conference with the primary teacher. Problems should not be discussed during school hours when there are other students, parents, volunteers or employees present.

*If a parent has a concern regarding a classroom or one that involves students, we respectfully ask they clarify with the teacher in charge. Parents are NOT permitted to speak to students other than their own children regarding disciplinary issues on campus or other concerns that they might have.

Please note that texts or emails are not an ideal correspondence for lengthy explanations and questions. Although email can be an easy alternative to communication regarding short questions or small concerns, it is best to address more complicated issues through scheduling a personal conference or having a phone conversation. **We would like to ask that parents refrain from calling their teachers at home or texting them during class. To set up a conference, it is best to contact your child’s teacher by leaving a message at the school or texting/emailing them to ask that they can return your call after school hours to arrange a time for conferencing. Please do not all approach our staff for lengthy conferences while they are directly caring for children as this becomes a safety issue.**

If satisfaction is not met regarding a concern after your conference with your child’s teacher, then a formal written complaint should be filed with The Director of the Early Childhood Program or the Director of the Elementary and Middle School for the matter to be moved forward.

Any serious concerns regarding a school action, or the behavior of students, parents, volunteer or employees of the school would be considered a complaint. A formal written procedure should ensue so that the initial issue and follow-up responses can be documented. If the issue remains unresolved to a party’s satisfaction, the Early Childhood or Elementary and Middle School Director should be informed in writing. If satisfaction is still not met, then a meeting with the Head of School is warranted. If satisfaction is still not met, then the written complaint should be given to the President of the Board of Directors. The complaint will be addressed by the board as soon as possible. **ALL formal complaints must be in writing.**

Issues regarding tuition payments, donations and other financial matters should be addressed with the Director of Business and Operations.

Any parent that fails to comply with the complaint policy or becomes abusive to the staff will be asked to leave the school permanently and the enrollment contract will be immediately terminated by the school. Because of the increased concerns about security in schools, HMS has a no tolerance policy for verbal, physical threats, abuse or screaming, yelling at faculty, particularly when students are present. Parents or visitors that act abusively will be asked to leave the premises and the authorities will be contacted. The school reserves the right to terminate the enrollment contract for the children of the parent. If the school determines that it is best for the family to finish the school year or semester, all further correspondence with the school will have to be submitted in writing. Hilltop's employees must maintain a level of professional courtesy for each parent and the same is expected from our parent body. This includes making arrangements for conferences with the faculty, not approaching them at public venues to discuss concerns and being respectful of our employee's time so that full attention can be given to your concerns.

If the school makes the decision to allow the family to remain at Hilltop after such incidences and if such abuse continues so that a level of professional courtesy is not maintained, the school reserves the right to take whatever steps they deem necessary to remedy the situation. This could include immediate termination of a child's enrollment, providing parameters for the parent to complete the school year or to recommend or mandate family counseling. Hilltop Montessori School is a peaceful environment and we feel strongly that this atmosphere is maintained for the benefit of the students.

Administration and Staff Concerns: Please note that if concerns are brought to the office regarding a teacher that the teacher WILL be involved in the discussion to clarify the situation or seek information. Please do not contact the administration for a concern about a staff member but ask us not to discuss it with them. We often find that parents are not receiving all the information regarding their concern or that more clarification is needed and in order to follow up appropriately, a discussion will have to occur with the teacher related to the concern.

CHALLENGED MATERIAL OR METHODS

The school annually reviews its curriculum and instruction as part of the overall educational experience. HMS values the diversity among its families and therefore realizes that viewpoints may vary on appropriate materials, methodologies, trips, or other components of the school's curriculum and activities. If a student, or parent, objects to a component of a class or student life, the parent should contact the instructor for clarification. If satisfaction is not acquired, then the parent should contact the appropriate educational Director for further inquiries. The school will handle each concern on an individual basis to allow for sensitivity in each situation. However, students are responsible for all grades regarding materials even in the case of an objection by the student or family. The school does not promote any certain political, religious, or philosophical approach but desires to expose its students to appropriate experiences to be successful after graduation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Each child's work progress and behavior will remain confidential. Parent volunteers, teachers, and aides are not permitted to discuss a child's progress or behavior with anyone not directly involved in the child's education. In order to help maintain confidentiality, we ask that parent volunteers not use the office computer or the classroom computers and refrain from discussing children other than their own. We sometimes utilize parents as volunteers in the classroom and ask that parent volunteers refrain from discussing other children's progress as well. If a parent volunteer has a concern regarding a child's progress or an event observed in the classroom, they should discuss the matter privately with the lead teacher for that classroom. The teacher will do his/her best to explain the matter without providing personal details on student progress.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If there is ever a change in any of the contact information you have given since the forms you filled out and sent to the school, please immediately let the office know of these changes in writing.

Custody issues/separate households: In challenging family situations, HMS will take all necessary steps to communicate to both parents regarding a student's progress. We do assume that the natural parent has custody, unless presented with a court order to the contrary. In order to keep the best interest of the child in mind, non-custodial parents can participate in the education process, receive information and be listed on the child's emergency information, unless the school has court documents noting otherwise. In the event of

a potential disagreement regarding the child's education, we rely on the custodial parent (that enrolled the child) to secure consensus in the decision making process.

Community Resources: Hilltop maintains a list in the front office for resources regarding family counseling, physicians and educational testing. Parents are free to use this referral list and all referrals are confidential.

COVID-19 Resources and Information

The school maintains a COVID-19 page of resources on our website and regularly updates the community regarding CDC guidelines, which may change based on community spread. All parents that have students at the school are required to sign a waiver as part of their child's attendance and should realize that sending their child to a school environment, however small the setting, does pose a risk for exposure. Additional HMS protocols may change or procedures might be altered as the need fits during this time of crisis and HMS will follow CDC guidelines to the best of our ability. This may include restrictions on parent access to classrooms, temperature checks for students and drivers, limiting mass gatherings/large groups and changes to the schedule for arrival/dismissal if needed to limit congestion in the hallways. Please be patient with us during this time as we will always strive to keep our community, and the students, as healthy as possible. Our fall reopening plan is here: <https://hilltopmontessori.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/REOPENING-PLAN-FINAL.pdf>.

We want our students to thrive this year academically, socially and emotionally but due to COVID-19 restraints, we will be following different policies and procedures as outlined in our reopening plan, however, we feel that we need to also discuss other issues that could arise from COVID-19 in our area. As guidance is constantly changing, any and all of these policies may be adjusted throughout the year.

Entering school and screening

- The CDC currently recommends daily symptom (and temperature if possible) screening by families in their homes prior to school each day.

- The Alabama Department of Health suggests the following symptoms are potentially COVID-19 symptoms and should apply to anyone attending or working in a school (i.e. children and adults in schools):
 - New, worsening cough
 - Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Fever (temperature of 100.0°F or greater) or feeling feverish

 - Sore throat
 - Muscle aches and pains
 - Headache
 - Nasal congestion/runny nose
 - Nausea/vomiting/diarrhea/abdominal pain

- Families should check their children's temperatures at home. Parents should keep their child at home if he or she has any of these symptoms. If a child is behaving as though he or she does not feel well or feels feverish (feels cold, staying under blankets, shivering) or hot to the touch, the child should be kept home.
- If a child has any of the higher-risk symptoms (fever/feverishness, cough, shortness of breath or loss of taste/smell or has two or more of the other symptoms) the child should be seen by his or her health care provider. These children should be tested for COVID-19 if possible.
- If a child has only one of the lower-risk symptoms (sore throat, headache, muscle aches, headache, congestion or gastrointestinal symptoms) then he or she should be kept home for observation for other symptoms. The siblings of a child with high-risk symptoms should be kept home until it is determined if the child has COVID-19.
- Anyone who is a close contact (household contact or within 6 feet for ≥ 15 minutes) of a known COVID-19 case should stay home for 14 days.
- Should COVID-19 community transmission drop to and remain at a lower level, the need for testing and exclusion for these symptoms will be reassessed.

Sick children or staff members

- Children and adults in schools may begin to feel ill at any time of day. Teachers and other staff will be watchful of students and refer students to go home if needed.
- The ill individuals should leave the school as soon as possible. Based on the symptoms present (one high-risk or two or more low-risk symptoms, see Section 5), the ill individual should call his or her primary care provider and be tested for COVID. The school will isolate the child immediately, as well as siblings until the parent arrives. *We stress the importance of having a lengthy list of emergency contacts on file in the office this year so if you are not available, someone can quickly pick up your sick child.*
- Plan for a child to be picked up within one hour. If there are siblings of the ill child in school, siblings will be dismissed as well.

- We encourage two or three emergency contacts with updated phone numbers to be provided for each family in case the parent cannot answer the phone or leave work. Avoid having a high-risk individual (someone who is at risk for severe COVID if infected e.g. grandparent older than 65 years) pick up the child if possible. The person picking up the child must wear a mask in the school and is strongly recommended to wear the mask in the car.
- Students and staff should stay at home if ill.

Protection for Educators and staff members

- Staff attending to ill individuals will wear a COVID will wear an N-95 mask, face shield, gown and gloves and the sick child will be immediately isolated, as well as siblings.
- We will minimize aerosol-generating procedures. The most common aerosol generating procedure is use of nebulize medications for asthma. Nebulizers are not permitted on campus. Families should obtain MDIs/spacers for children with asthma in place of nebulizers. Most school-aged children should be able to use a spacer.
- For these procedures, designated individuals will don N-95 masks, face shields, gloves and gown. Aerosol-generating procedures should preferably be done outdoors where possible in a private place to maintain confidentiality of the student.

Masks and social distancing

- Masking and physical distancing are required to keep children healthy and in school.
- **Masks should be worn every day as much as possible by students and staff, with the exception of individuals who have a medical exemption for masking for behavioral or medical reasons or students under 3.** Physical distancing of children who cannot wear masks is very important to prevent exposure. Parents should notify staff and administration of these students in advance of the start of school.
- If a person with a mask exemption has symptoms suggestive of COVID, a mask will be placed on this person, and the person should be monitored closely and have the mask removed if the person cannot tolerate the mask. If moving such a person through the school, hallways should be cleared of as many people as possible and keep people not directly attending to the person at

least 6 feet away. All staff members should be wearing masks.

- School-aged children should wear a cloth mask (or if preferred, a neck gaiter), but some will struggle with it more than others.
- Mask breaks will be done outside and/or when 6 feet of separation from others can be assured. Children can remove masks to eat and drink.
- Teachers should wear masks and may use those with a clear plastic cut out in the center for young children or children who have hearing loss to be able to see their mouths when they speak. An alternative to this style of mask would be a face shield that fits closely on the sides with a hood or drape to prevent escape of aerosols beneath the shield.
- Masks will cause no harm to children when they are sitting still or exercising. Masks should not be removed for sneezing and coughing. Spare masks will be provided if a mask becomes wet from sneezing or coughing.
- Masking will not be considered as protective in contact tracing triggered by a COVID case in the school. Exposure will be defined by distance and duration of exposure only.
- Physical distancing of 6 feet between individuals (between students, and between students and teachers) in classrooms, and other locations around the school, is recommended based on recommendations from the CDC. The current definition of an exposure to COVID from CDC is:
 - An individual who has had close contact (< 6 feet) for ≥ 15 minutes with:

* a person with COVID-19 who has symptoms (in the period from two days before symptom onset until they meet criteria for discontinuing home isolation; can be laboratory confirmed or a clinically compatible illness)

○ a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 (laboratory confirmed) but has not had any symptoms (in the two days before the date of specimen collection until they meet criteria for discontinuing home isolation)

- Physical distancing should be maintained as much as possible, including outdoors. Smaller distances between individuals for prolonged periods of time (such as in the classroom) will require more students to require prolonged isolation at home should a case occur in the

school.

- Students will spend as little time as possible in areas where students may be in close proximity to others, such as hallways and our halls and arrival/dismissal policies have been changed to limit flow of students.

Protocol for ill child or adult in school

There is a long list of signs and symptoms that are associated with COVID-19 including:

○ **High-risk symptoms for COVID (those that are common and relatively specific for COVID) include:**

- * **fever**
- * **cough**
- * **shortness of breath/increased work of breathing**
- * **loss of sense of taste or smell**

Low-risk symptoms for COVID (those that more common and alone do not necessarily indicate COVID- 19) include:

- **sore throat**
- **nasal congestion/nasal discharge**
- **nausea/vomiting/diarrhea**
- **myalgias (muscle aches)**
- **headache**
- **fatigue**
- **Any child or adult with one high-risk or two low-risk criteria (any one of the first group or any two of the second group of symptoms) should be considered to have a “COVID-like illness” and will be isolated until he or she can leave the building. The child have a mask on at**

all times and anyone with the child will wear full personal protective equipment (PPE) – i.e. an N-95 mask and face shield, as well as a gown and gloves.

- **Any child or adult with only one low-risk** symptom is considered less likely to have COVID but will be sent home. These individuals will be able to return after 24 hours if they are feeling better and no further symptoms develop. One exception to this is young children with nasal discharge, which is very common in the young school-aged child. Children younger than 10 are less likely to be symptomatically infected and less likely to transmit virus to others.
- Any sibling of a child identified as having a COVID-like illness will be required to leave the school as well and isolate at home until it is determined if the ill child has COVID.
- Any child or adult (including all family members) with a known or possible COVID contact and with any one symptom in the high- or low-risk category should be seen by a physician and should have a COVID test if possible; however, when testing is not easily available, it is reasonable to assume an ill individual with a known contact has COVID and notify the Health Department.
- Parents should notify the Health Department immediately if someone in their household (adults and school- aged children) has a positive test. Ill teachers or staff should do the same. The school will also notify the Health Department of confirmed COVID infection.
- Positive test results will also be reported by the laboratory, physicians' office or testing site performing the test as well. The Health Department officials will help administrators determine a course of action for our school. The Health Department will ultimately determine which contacts require home isolation.
- Names of COVID cases and contacts will not be released to anyone but the Health Department. Families of students will be informed about the presence of the COVID case(s) in the school, but individuals will not be named. Those deemed to be contacts should also be given information about remaining in isolation at home for 14 days. The Health Department will contact families of cases and contacts as well for contact tracing and to provide them with information on what do.

Individuals who are identified as contacts of a possible case will be excluded from school until the suspected case is confirmed positive or negative. If the suspected case has a negative test, then contacts can return to school.

- Likely, the classroom where the exposure took place will be shut down for at least 24 hours for a thorough cleaning. The Health Department may choose to shut the classroom or school for two to five days for cleaning and contact tracing. If the school remains open, the individuals (including entire class) should be rescreened for symptoms and fever. Children who are not considered contacts (were not within six feet for ≥ 15 minutes) may be able to stay at school, but contacts will be immediately sent home. If possible, the remaining class members will be

moved to a different room while the other classroom is cleaned and ventilated per CDC guidance.

- If a cluster of cases (**two or more cases sharing a common source**) occurs in school, or if widespread exposures have occurred as a result of an infected teacher or employee who spent time in multiple locations in the school, then the school will need to be closed to allow for contact tracing and cleaning. This will also be done in consultation with the Health Department.
- Children required to stay at home because of illness and quarantine will have access to online learning during school absences.
- ILLNESSES THAT ARE LIKELY NOT COVID-19:
 - Anyone with an illness that is unlikely to be COVID (single low-risk symptom resolving in 24-48 hours or non-infectious diagnosis e.g. migraine, allergies) may return to school when symptoms have improved and afebrile for ≥ 24 hours (usual policy for any illness).
 - - This person does not need to see a physician or be tested to be cleared to return to school. If symptoms do not resolve quickly, the individual should be assessed by a physician and considered for testing.
 - If this person is a contact with a known COVID case, then this person should be seen by a physician and tested to determine if he or she can return to school or requires isolation.
 - Anyone with a COVID-like illness (one high-risk or two or more low-risk symptoms) should be assessed by a physician and tested for COVID (as well as influenza, RSV, group A *Streptococcus* depending on the signs and symptoms).
 - - If the test is negative, or another pathogen is identified and the person is not a contact of a COVID case, then he or she can return to school when symptoms have improved and afebrile for ≥ 24 hours.
 - If the test is positive or no test is done (and no other pathogen identified), this person must stay home for minimum of 10 days and be afebrile with improving symptoms for ≥ 24 hours.
Asymptomatic children and adults
 - Anyone who is a contact of a known case of COVID must be isolated at home for 14 days from the date of last potential exposure to the COVID case. If there is ongoing exposure to the case in the

household then the date of last potential exposure is 10 days after the onset of symptoms of the COVID case.

- If this person develops symptoms during this 14-day period, he or she should continue isolation for 10 days beyond the day of onset of symptoms and have improving symptoms for ≥ 24 hours and no fever.

* If anyone in the household develops symptoms of COVID during the 14-day isolation period, then the start date of the isolation period resets to the first day of symptoms for that contact and must continue for 10 days after that exposure (see section on symptomatic with likely COVID).

- If this person remains asymptomatic during this 14-day period, testing for COVID is not recommended as the best timing for such a test is unknown and a negative test would not shorten the period of isolation.

- Anyone who has not been exposed to a COVID case and is asymptomatic should not be tested. Students and staff need clearance from the Health Department or a physician, to return to school when the isolation period has ended.

School sports, supplies, etc.-

* Contact sports are suspended as long as there is widespread virus transmission in the region. Individual and non-contact sports such as cross country where 6 feet of distance can be maintained should be able to continue. Full participation in contact sports (games between schools) during a period of high COVID transmission puts players at high risk for exposure so if not advised by the CDC, these sports will not be offered. We have not made a decision yet on basketball but will seek CDC guidance closer to time.

- Children will not share school supplies. There should be no communal writing or art utensils that cannot be cleaned between uses.
- Classes will have dedicated play equipment as much as possible, and these items will be cleaned to the extent possible between uses by different children. These items will be cleaned at the end of playtime to be ready for their next use. Classroom and physical education teachers will plan outdoor activities for children that limit contact such as running games, calisthenics, as much as possible until it is safe to resume other activities.
- Our playgrounds will be regularly disinfected between classes. Equipment will be cleaned before and after use by a single classroom group. Sections of a playground may be blocked from use to maintain social distancing while using equipment. Children will wash or sanitize hands before and after use of playground equipment.
- Physical distancing during outdoor play will be enforced and monitored to the best of our ability. Masks may be removed outside if physical distancing can be maintained.

DAILY ARRIVAL and DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

For the 2020-2021 school year, HMS will follow the procedures for arrival and dismissal that are outlined in our back to school reopening plan to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Note regarding changes in pick-up: Unless we receive confirmation releasing your child to another adult from you via telephone, fax or email, only parents are permitted to pick up their child. If someone on your emergency contact list is picking up your child, you must still inform the school. If we receive email or faxes from listed accounts on file, we are assuming that this information is from a designated parent. Please do not text the faculty updates for dismissal during the day as the staff is teaching & not able to check their phones. Contact the office at 437-9343 for immediate assistance.

SCHOOL PROPERTY/COMMUNICATION

Parents will be held financially liable for loss, breakage, or destruction of school property or other student's or staff's personal property. This includes all books, materials, fixtures, etc.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Fire, tornado and intruder drills will be conducted at the beginning of the school year and thereafter to ensure all children and staff understand the disaster procedure. The library and piano room serves as a tornado shelter in the primary building and the large bathrooms serve as shelter in Phase 3. In the event that tornadoes are imminent in our area, mass emails and phone calls will be put in place so that all available parents can pick up their children before a tornado watch goes into effect. If parents are not comfortable with their child in school due to inclement weather, they should feel free to pick them up from school. The school has emergency/crisis management plans for all crisis situations. Please note that once inclement weather is in the area, the school may hold students until we are advised it is safe to dismiss them.

DISCIPLINE

Hilltop is committed to implementing discipline of a child in a respectful, firm, and encouraging manner. Establishing and maintaining clear limits prevent most problems. No corporal punishment is tolerated, nor is psychological or humiliating punishment allowed (e.g. name calling, intimidation, threats). Because the Montessori philosophy does not use extrinsic rewards (i.e. stickers or stars for good behavior) it is fully expected that each student maintain a level of self-control that is age and developmentally appropriate. When necessary, parents will be contacted for assistance at home with self-control or self-discipline issues, particularly if the problem is ongoing and distracting from the prepared learning environments.

The school's philosophy of discipline is based on the concept that each child should be respected and that discipline is a learning process. Each child is given an explanation of what behaviors are expected and what limits are set for the school environment. Further, the child is told what consequences occur when inappropriate behaviors are exhibited.

The specific methods of discipline used at Hilltop Montessori School are as follows:

1. Establish ground rules and teach them to each child.
2. Prevent unacceptable behavior by adult alertness to redirection of activities.
3. Reason with the child by explanation and problem solving.
4. Have the child sit and observe the group. The child may re-enter the activity when the child is calm and ready to follow the ground rules.
5. Remove the child from the learning environment. A parent will be notified of the child's removal and continued unacceptable behaviors for continued issues.
6. Notify parent to remove the child from the school setting until the child is ready to return as agreed by the parent and Preschool or Elementary/Middle School Directors.
7. Hilltop Montessori reserves the option of terminating a child's enrollment if the child is repeatedly disruptive or in any way endangers the safety of others or themselves or if the staff feels that the parents are not being supportive of the school's concerns.
8. Hilltop Montessori does not condone, nor practice, any form of corporal, psychological, or humiliating punishment in the school setting.

Children who present behavior problems are discussed at staff meetings in a confidential manner. Appropriate remedial strategies will be created. Parents will be notified if inappropriate behaviors persist.

EXPULSION

Any student can be expelled from the school at any time at the discretion of the Head of School and/or the Board of Directors. Any family which maligns school credibility or any family failing to comply with school policies and rules outlined in this handbook, may cause the termination of their child's enrollment at the discretion of the Head of School. Any parent who fails to follow the published complaint policy listed in this handbook may also cause the termination of their child's enrollment.

The school reserves the right to immediately terminate enrollment for a family that is verbally abusive to the staff. The staff maintains professional courtesy at all times and expects the same in return from our parents and students.

MONTESSORI OUTINGS

****Montessori outings have been temporarily suspended due to COVID-19.***

A few outings are scheduled throughout the year for school age children only. A Field Trip Authorization and Information Form must be completed for each trip. We encourage the students to wear their Hilltop Montessori School shirts on days they attend field trips to show school pride and so it is easier for the teachers and parent drivers to keep track of who is in the group. All children are required to wear seat belts during transport and are to follow school safety guidelines. Please leave a booster seat for your child on the day of the field trip; all children less than 40 pounds are required to be in a children's car seat and all children weighing between 40 and 80 pounds are required to be in car booster seats. **YOUR CHILD WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO GO ON THE FIELDTRIP IF THERE IS NOT A COMPLETED AUTHORIZATION FORM OR A BOOSTER SEAT LEFT FOR YOUR CHILD ON THE DAY OF A FIELD TRIP.** These rules, including the booster seat rule, will be strictly enforced and your child will have to remain at school with the other children if the rules are not followed. If a parent feels that their child does not need a booster seat, they should furnish this in writing.

We would like to ask that each family drive children to field trips at least twice during the year. We realize many parents work, but our field trips last only a few hours and it means a lot to your children for you to drive. The school requests that all field trip drivers provide a copy of their driver's license and car insurance certificate to have on file in the office. Please note that the car insurance carried must have certain limits regarding coverage as outlined in the separate paperwork (in order for you to drive children other than your own). Additionally, the school requests that parents transporting children other than their own, not drive "open" vehicles such as jeeps or convertibles and follow all state laws regarding driving safety, including not texting while driving. We would also like to ask parents to refrain from cell phone use while driving children other than their own and be mindful of appropriate radio stations or videos being shown while in transit.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Hilltop Montessori School has limited funds available for financial assistance. Any family afforded financial assistance is strongly encouraged to provide volunteer assistance back to the school. Financial assistance money is awarded on an annual basis and must be requested each year. Tuition and financial aid information is available on our website at <http://www.hilltopmontessori.com/tuition-and-financial-aid/>.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY PROCEDURE

By state rules, Hilltop staff is not allowed to administer medical treatment beyond wound washing, offering an ice pack, and offering a bandaid, if appropriate. A parent or designated alternate, and perhaps the child's physician, will be contacted in the case of an emergency. If there is a medical emergency that cannot wait until the arrival of the child's parent or designated alternate, Hilltop will call 911. The majority of Hilltop staff is certified in basic cardiopulmonary resuscitation and Hilltop staff will initiate CPR, if needed, in the event a life or death emergency and continue providing CPR until the EMT's can arrive. A staff member will stay with the child until the parent or alternate assumes responsibility.

*Emergency medication will be given only by or on the direct order of a physician, and must be on the approved consent forms on file in the office unless the school must contact the physician's office via telephone in the event of an emergency. *Because emergencies can occur at anytime, we encourage at least one parent to always be available on a cell or work number during the school day. In the event that the Hilltop staff is unable to reach any of the child's parents or emergency contact numbers, we have to make the best judgment as to treatment at the time.

MEDICATIONS

Medication must be authorized in a written statement by the parents. There are special forms in the office that must be completed weekly for each medication. This applies to both prescription medicines as well as over-the-counter medicines such as topical creams and lotions, Tylenol, Benadryl, etc. All medication must be in the original container, clearly labeled with the child's name, type of medication, date of prescription, dosage amount, and dosage times. NO medication will be dispensed without parental permission, including over-the-counter medication. Medication must be carried into the school by the parent and given directly to the receptionist or administrative assistant. **DO NOT SEND MEDICATION IN WITH YOUR CHILD.** This will be strictly enforced for all the children regardless of age.

Any medication that must be taken daily or any medication that is to be used in the event of an emergency (for example, an epinephrine pen or asthma inhaler) must have explicit written instructions provided by your child's medical doctor as to when and how to administer it. There are special forms in the office that must be completed by your physician for each prescription. Also if there is any daily or emergency medication that is at the school, it is your responsibility to know when the medicine is set to expire and to come bring a replacement to the office when necessary; please mark on your calendar when a medicine is set to expire before you ever leave it at the school.

According to DHR regulations, the school staff may NOT apply sunscreen, insect repellent, diaper cream, first aid ointment or any other topical medication on your child without written parental permission and specific instructions. A parent request/permission form for an oral or a topical medication is valid only for a week and then must be resubmitted if the treatment is to last beyond a week. All medications should be in their original container.

Please do not send vitamins (for example, in a lunch box) for your child or allow your older children to bring things like Tylenol or Advil or even asthma inhalers in the book bags. There are a number of safety issues such as: younger children in the building could accidentally get into these medicines or your child could complain of an ailment to staff and then be administered medicine that you have properly put on file without the staff knowing that your child had already been pretreating themselves earlier in the day at school and unknowingly overdose your child. Thus, any unauthorized medication in the school (i.e., medication or vitamins that do not have WEEKLY permission written statements by the parents) will be confiscated and a note will be sent home.

NAP TIME

All full-day three AND four-year-olds will have a scheduled time for nap/rest each day, following lunch. If your child is awake at the end of the 45 minutes, your child will be allowed to quietly re-enter and/or continue school activities. If your child is sleeping, we will let your child continue to nap for no more than 2 ½ hours. **If your child is a full-day preschool child of age four or younger, please send a top and bottom sheet and a light blanket for your child's nap cot.** You may also send a pillow or comfort item like a stuffed animal if you wish. Your sheets will be sent home every Friday or the last day before a vacation period; also, sheets, blankets and comforters will be sent home when soiled. If these have been sent home, please make sure that you have brought these items back for the next school day. Kindergarteners who are five years old and above will not take part in nap unless they appear to need rest.

Half-day preschoolers can nap on an occasional day-to-day basis for an additional cost per day. This includes the Lunch Bunch fee, but you must send a lunch with your child on these days or have purchased a lunch for them through the hot lunch program. Pick-up time will be at 3:15 PM Monday through Thursday and at 2:15 PM on Fridays. You will be billed at the end of the month for any day-to-day charges.

OFFICE HOURS

Hilltop Montessori School office hours are 7:45 AM until 3:45 PM Monday through Friday. Parents may call and leave a message for a teacher, who will then return your call during their break time or after school. In fairness to the teachers and students, teachers will not be interrupted during class time. Likewise, please do not hold up carpool line by having lengthy discussions with teachers. You are welcome to make an appointment to meet your teacher before or after school or during one of their breaks, if there is a matter that you must discuss with him/her. Please refrain from calling your child's teachers at home or texting them during class. You are also welcome to email your teachers and if they do not provide you with their personal email, you can use hms@hilltopmontessori.com. The email message will be read by the Head of School and a hard copy will be placed in the teacher's mailbox.

Please be aware that text & email should be a form of communication for quick and simple replies and responses. If you have lengthy concerns or questions, email is not the best form of communication. We encourage this type of communication through phone calls or in person conferences. Teachers are asked to

respond within 24 hours, unless it is during a vacation, holiday or weekend and then they will respond the next business day. Please be respectful of the staff's time and try to limit correspondence during weekends, late evenings and holidays.

PARENT VISITATION and PUBLICITY

****Please see our COVID plan for temporary changes to parent visitation. We will relax this procedure as soon as health conditions allow.***

Hilltop Montessori School maintains an open visitation policy and encourages parents to visit and volunteer, which enhances the understanding of their child's development. When observing a class, please remain quiet and do not interrupt a lesson in progress. Parents are also free to observe at other levels within the school and might find these visits helpful when planning the future of your child's education. Please also note that when attending and photographing school events, some students are not to be photographed or have their images displayed on social media. Additionally, all visitors are required to present their drivers license to be scanned before going to the classes.

PARTIES and BIRTHDAYS

****We are limiting parents in the building during the COVID-19 crisis so please check with your child's teacher about alternatives to celebrating your child's birthday on campus.***

Your child's birthday is celebrated in the classroom in Montessori tradition. Please contact the teacher at least one week before your child's birthday to make appropriate arrangements. For parties and birthdays, we insist on treats being as healthy as possible. At the preschool and toddler level, good party snacks are muffins, fruit and vanilla yogurt. At the elementary level, cookies, 100% fruit juice bars, cupcakes without icing and other snacks are appropriate. Since the school does not allow chocolate and candy for lunch, it then becomes inappropriate to offer this to our students on special occasions. If you are having a celebration within the school (either for your child's birthday or assisting with a school party), please discuss treats that will be served in advance with your child's teacher as a precaution. Many of our students have dietary needs or restrictions and we want to take this into consideration as much as possible during these events. Children with allergies or dietary needs may keep acceptable treats to have at school during these times.

PERSONAL ITEMS

All school supplies are provided, but a tote or book bag should be brought to school each day in order to protect the schoolwork that is carried to and from home.

Children should not have bare feet while in the classroom. Toddler and Preschool/Kindergarten students should have indoor shoes provided by you and left at the school so that the children may remove their outdoor shoes upon entering each morning, and then put on their indoor shoes. Indoor shoes can be hard soled slippers, Crocs or other soft shoes. This significantly reduces noise, prevents dirt from being tracked into the school, protects your children's feet from objects on the floor, and prevents sliding with stocking feet. It will also protect your child's feet in the threat they have to leave the building suddenly (fire drills, etc.) Elementary and Middle School students are encouraged to have indoor shoes for at school, or may choose to be in their socks in the hallways and classrooms; however, they will not be allowed to be barefoot. Appropriate, outdoor shoes are required for all children participating in formal PE instruction.

SICK POLICY

****Please see COVID-19 section for further details for this year.***

While we understand that having a sick child is an imposition to your work schedule, it is very important that we all respect others at the school and not send a sick child to school. When you knowingly send a sick child to school, you place the teachers and other students at risk of becoming ill as well. If your child looks or acts sick in the morning and you have any doubts as to whether your child is going to make it through the day without you getting called to pick your child up, chances are that your parent's intuition was right the first time and your child was sick and should not come to school that day. It makes your child miserable to have to wait in the office, waiting to be picked up, not being able to curl up with their blanket in bed, not understanding why he/she cannot go back to the classroom – if your child says he/she is sick and thinks they may vomit or has a severe sore throat or "feels warm", etc, before you come to school, please keep them at home for the day and don't force the student to stick it out.

Children with signs of a serious or contagious disease or condition, such as but not limited to fever of 100 degrees or higher, diarrhea, vomiting, chicken pox, unexplained rash, scabies or head lice should remain at home for at least the next 24 hours or until the condition has been properly treated and the symptoms have subsided to avoid infecting the other children. Children with strep throat may not return until they have been on the proper antibiotics for at least 24 hours.

If your child is having severe asthma problems that require medication, please keep the child at home so he/she can be monitored more effectively. Also, if your child has had a recent flare-up of his/her asthma but is well enough to go to school, please make sure that a note has been sent that day so that the teachers know to keep an eye on him or her and make sure the office has fully functioning inhalers in the medicine cabinet for him or her. If you have a specific request (such as keeping an asthmatic child indoors on an extremely cold day), please send that request in writing by the start of school that day.

If your child becomes sick while at school, a parent or your designated alternate, as indicated on your child's enrollment form, will immediately be notified to pick up the child. A child with a fever or vomiting will be separated from other children and supervised by an adult.

***PLEASE NOTE: DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK THAT WE WILL ERR ON THE SIDE OF CAUTION. YOUR CHILD WILL BE ISOLATED ONCE THEY APPEAR SICK AND WE ASK YOU PICK THEM UP AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AS WELL AS ANY SIBLINGS OF THE SICK CHILD. WE KNOW THIS IS A SOURCE OF STRESS FOR WORKING PARENTS, HOWEVER, DURING COVID-19, WE WILL BE EXTRA VIGILANT FOR SIGNS OF ILLNESS AND RESPOND WITH URGENCY TO PREVENT THE POSSIBLE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS.**

SNACK POLICY

The school will provide a nutritious snack for each toddler/preschool/kindergarten child, everyday. If your child has special dietary needs, please indicate that on the children's pre-admission forms and speak with your child's teacher as to your particular needs. Students in grades 1-8 are able to bring their own snack as long as it is acceptable to our food policy.

Please keep in mind that you will be responsible for providing your own child's snack if the dietary restrictions cannot be accommodated by the rotational snack provided by the staff. You may wish to leave a few acceptable snacks with the teacher to have on hand for those occasions when the snack may not be appropriate for your child or on those days when there might be a special event for the class (birthday party, holiday party, etc.) with treats that your child may not be able to eat.

STANDARDS FOR DAY CARE CENTERS

You may contact the Department of Human Resources for a copy of Alabama's Minimum Standards for Day Care/Nighttime Centers at 50 Ripley Street; P0 BOX 304000; Montgomery, 36130-4000 or call (334) 242-1310. Hilltop Montessori School maintains a license for its toddler and preschool program with The Department of Human Resources. Please note that kindergarten students after 12:30 do not fall under DHR guidelines as they are considered school aged and are being taught separately at that time.

STUDENT RECORDS

The school shall maintain a permanent cumulative record of each child's personal data and academic progress throughout the year. A copy of the record can be released to another academic institution or shared at the request of a parent.

VOLUNTEERING

We will have opportunities to volunteer throughout the year for both the classroom teachers & the school. We encourage everyone to be involved as much as possible. There are community meetings to learn about volunteering as well as many online sign up opportunities. We appreciate and welcome our volunteers.

WITHDRAWAL

The school requires at least a thirty day written notice prior to the date of intended withdrawal. **As stated in the enrollment contract, you are responsible for the full year tuition if you withdraw for reasons other than those outlined in the contract. Parents are responsible for the full year's tuition regardless of the circumstances, as outlined on the contract.**

DRESS CODE FOR ELEMENTARY & MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

1. Clothing items must be in good condition, clean and without holes.

2. Pants, shorts, and skirts must be worn at the waist and fit properly. Pants worn too low, too long, too large or too loose are not permitted. This includes jeans and pants that hang off the waist.
3. No halters, backless dresses or shirts, midriff shirts, or cut-off shirts will be allowed. Shorts must be an appropriate length and should be modest.
4. Students MUST wear appropriate shoes for physical education and recess to prevent injury. Children not having appropriate footwear will be excluded from class and the parents will be notified. Each student is encouraged to leave a pair of gym shoes or sneakers at school throughout the year.
5. No excessively short shorts or skirts that can expose undergarments are permitted. Children frequently work on the floor and should be able to sit comfortably while preserving modesty at all times. It is suggested for little girls to wear bicycle style shorts underneath dresses as the children usually work on the floor until the end of sixth grade.
6. Conservative, neat clothing is encouraged for field trips (Children's Theatre, symphony, museum, etc). The children represent Hilltop Montessori School and are establishing a positive image in the community. Young children are encouraged to wear their Hilltop Montessori School t-shirts to field trip events to help make them easily identifiable to the chaperones.
7. Clothing with slogans, logos, or advertisements that may draw attention and be a distraction to the educational process is prohibited. Slogans regarding alcohol or other inappropriate content are not acceptable.
8. Any hairstyle, body jewelry or clothing that distracts from the educational process is prohibited.
9. Anyone violating the dress code will be given a Hilltop t-shirt to wear, along with a bill for the t-shirt, and a note sent home to his or her parents.

DISCIPLINARY POLICIES FOR ELEMENTARY & MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

1. Excessive tardiness or absences. Elementary students are to arrive between 8:15 and 8:30. LESSONS BEGIN PROMPTLY AT 8:30. **Arrival past 8:30 constitutes tardiness. Five (5) unexcused tardies constitute 1 absence. State guidelines mandate 12 unexcused absences are grounds for retaining a student in the same grade the following year. At the elementary and middle school level, preplanned absences must be approved in advance in writing using the appropriate form.**
2. Failure to come to class prepared. Children should be well rested at the start of each day. All specified assignments due (eg. homework, reports, research) should be completed and children should be ready to participate in the full day's activity.
3. Non-compliance with classroom guidelines. Each year, classroom guidelines are established the first week of school. Children are expected to adhere to all guidelines. General non-compliance issues include: distracting others students during work time in the classroom, PE, music, art, Spanish, or on field trips; not respecting peers, faculty, staff or parent volunteers; not participating in required activities; not actively participating in group work.
4. Non-compliance with any school policies as stated in the handbook. This includes: failure to comply with school rules in all situations (including field trips, special classes); failure to follow policies during before school care or after school care programs, gum chewing and general defiance.
5. Defiance of any school employee's authority. This includes all employees and parent volunteers.
6. Intentionally striking or touching another person against his or her will. This includes other students or staff.
7. Use of profane/obscene language or gestures.
8. Possession of inappropriate/suggestive/pornographic material. This includes viewing inappropriate material over the Internet on a school computer or a device brought onto campus.
9. Verbal or physical threats, harassment, or intimidation of peers or staff. Please note that threats can also occur through electronic means and are treated with the same severity. This includes bullying (see

student bullying section). The faculty maintains a checklist to determine if a threat is credible and will contact the authorities if they feel the safety of anyone is in jeopardy.

10. Vandalism, which destroys school or personal property.
11. Cheating. This includes giving or receiving information that should be completed by an individual student.
12. Use of verbal or written racial/ethnic insults or slurs, either verbally or online.
13. Name-calling, teasing, or taunting of another student or staff, either in person or through electronic devices (cyber-bullying). (see bullying section)
14. Fighting. Any physical contact involving two or more individuals.
15. Possession of a knife, gun, or other dangerous implement. This includes cap guns, BB guns, and any other weapon.
16. Misuse of prescribed drugs, or any use of illegal drugs, vaping, e cigarettes and alcohol.
17. Possession of any sort of medication (prescription or over-the-counter medications, including vitamins and Tylenol) in their book bag or on their person while at school.
18. Violation of the dress code.
19. Repeated failure to comply with rules of school, inability to develop appropriate strategies to solve conflicts, and continued disrespect for other's learning or the school.

The staff at Hilltop Montessori School discourages any violation, but recognizes that childhood is a learning process. For that reason, violations will be treated based on the teacher's assessment of that child at that particular time. Often a simple reminder of the rules will let the child know that the behavior is inappropriate. Any or all of the following steps may be taken at the teacher's discretion. Immediate dismissal may result for any serious violation:

- a). Exclusion of a child from the class to discuss the problem.
- b). Parent notification of the problem, which may initially be a verbal notification. Any more serious problem will be documented in the child's record and will require the elementary student to also provide a written account of the incident. A parent must respond/sign off of each written complaint.
- c). Formal parent conference clearly outlining the problem, specifying subsequent consequences, and identifying possible solutions. These meetings will be documented as part of the student's permanent record.
- d). A six-week trial period may be initiated any time a child's behavior is significantly disruptive to the classroom or is affecting the child's ability to learn. During this time, teachers and administration observe the child, intervene when problems occur, and document the incidents. Parents are contacted and a plan is developed to address the child's behavior. If the child does not make progress, parents will be asked to withdraw their child.
- e). Reviewing the child's behavior/situation with the Head of School and pertinent staff to determine additional courses of action.
- f). Either a "soft" suspension where child is sent home for the day for reflection or a true suspension, which is documented in the child's permanent record.
- g). Recommendation for outside counseling or help if needed.
- h). Immediate dismissal. (expulsion)

Student Bullying:

1. Hilltop Montessori School does not condone and will not tolerate bullying or harassing behavior. Bullying or harassing behavior is any pattern of gestures or written, electronic or verbal communications, or any physical act or any threatening communication, or any act reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic that:
 - a. Places a student or school employee in actual or reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property, or
 - b. Creates or is certain to create a hostile environment by substantially interfering with or impairing a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits. A "hostile environment" means

that the victim subjectively views the conduct as bullying or harassing behavior and the conduct is objectively severe or pervasive enough that a reasonable person would agree that it is bullying or harassing behavior. Bullying or harassing behavior will not be condoned or tolerated when it take place on school property, at any school related function or between any students at HMS, including electronically through social media or other avenues such as text, phone calls, etc.

2. HMS will make every reasonable effort to ensure that other school employees or students subject no student or school employee to bullying or harassing behavior. Likewise, HMS will make every reasonable effort to ensure that no person engages in any act of reprisal or retaliation against a victim, witness, or a person with reliable information about an act of bullying or harassing behavior. HMS encourages anyone who has witnessed or has reliable information that a student has been subject to any act of bullying or harassing behavior to report that incident to either the Head of School, appropriate coordinator or their own teacher. Additionally, the school has chosen a representative from the faculty that is the designated representative to handle bullying issues that can be brought for resolution without fear of penalty in order to remedy the situation and this employee is Stephanie Kirkpatrick. In this way, students can have an alternative adult to speak with and may be more comfortable voicing concerns to someone that is not in a position of authority to terminate a child's enrollment.

SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT STUDENT USAGE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES/SOCIAL MEDIA

Hilltop Montessori assumes no responsibility for content brought to school from student's home computers or electronic devices. Appropriate use of school technology is monitored to the best of each employee's ability but it is the parent's responsibility to ensure that student computers or other electronic devices that are used for educational purposes (and brought onto school grounds) contain only appropriate material. Additionally, each teacher reserves the right to monitor student access to cellular and hand-held electronic devices during the school day. We realize that some students need to have cell phones in backpacks but these devices are not to be used during the school day unless approved by faculty. In the event that this becomes disruptive, the staff reserves the right to retain a student's cell phone during the day (or other similar electronic devices). The use of these devices can easily interfere with the learning process and therefore, the school needs to be able to take appropriate action in these cases so that all our students' learning is not compromised. Please also note that cell phones are not to be used in carpool, especially for "gaming".

Please also note that the school maintains a comprehensive internet filtering system that blocks social media and other non-school related sites but it is the expectation that students make good choices online, just as they would in their actions. Social media sites are also blocked on school technology and use is discouraged during the school day for all occupants of the building but this only works if accessed through the schools wireless network. Overall, the faculty heavily discourages parents from allowing unsupervised technology access in the home as the students are too young for this freedom and this generally contaminates the classroom community.

**** Note:** As cell phones or personal devices are not to be used during the day, we would like to ask any parents that receive texts from students during the day to remind their child they are violating school rules and ask them to call/text after school hours. Additionally, Hilltop does not recommend that students under age 13 have unsupervised time online or to devices for pleasure. Parents that allow their child to have unrestricted devices will be notified to stop if this behavior permeates the learning environment.

HILLTOP MONTESSORI WELLNESS REGARDING FOOD CHOICES POLICY

Preschool and toddler classes are provided with a snack according to the guidelines established by The Department of Human Resources. Elementary and middle school classes ask each student to bring their own snack and adhere to the list provided below.

ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL-

It is recommended that each child bring a daily nutritious midmorning snack. Students should bring their own snack from home and follow these ground rules:

1. Please send 100% juice or milk that does not need to be refrigerated.
2. Chocolate, soda and candy are not allowed. Baked chips are okay.
3. You may only send items on the approved snack list below
4. Any food item that is not healthy will be confiscated and thrown away.
5. Gum is not permitted on campus.

APPROVED SNACKS INCLUDE:

Fresh fruit

Canned fruit
Applesauce
Raisins or other dried fruit
Fresh vegetables
Cooked vegetables
Bagels
Muffins
English muffins
Bread baked with fruits or vegetables (like banana, zucchini, carrot, apple, pumpkin, raisin bread)
Bread
Bread sticks
Crepes
Tortillas
Rice
Rice Cakes
Crackers
Graham Crackers
Baked pretzels or chips
Popcorn (pre-popped; the children will only have access to a microwave during lunch time and will not have access to one at snack time)
Dry cereal
Granola bars
Cereal bars
Oatmeal raisin cookies
Trail mix made with cereal, dried fruits, nuts, peanuts or seeds
Finger sandwiches or bread toppings with peanut butter and jelly, cream cheese, cheese slices, Lean meats
Beef jerky
Hard-boiled egg
Tofu
Cheese (cubes, slices, sticks, string cheese or cream cheese)
Yogurt
Dips for vegetables include ranch dressing, other salad dressings, hummus, yogurt, and salsa

**Non-fat chocolate milk is provided as an option for purchase at lunch as some children refuse to drink plain milk. Parents will have the option as part of the ordering process to “order” their preference for their own child, to make their own choice about what they want their child to consume.