

HMS Learning from Home Handbook - April 3, 2020

Dear Families,

I am very proud of how quickly, thoroughly, and thoughtfully the teachers have adapted the Hilltop Montessori School programs to this virtual learning environment. For an example, pretend you are at a Lower Elementary morning meeting and watch Amelia's [The Months Macarena](#) to celebrate the start of April!

We have been able to document what we are doing as a school and what each program is doing in our [HMS: Learning from Home Handbook](#). This is available on the [HMS Website](#) and will also be provided in hard copy to every HMS family next week. We are working to translate both the sense of community that Hilltop provides, along with the academic and “whole child” offerings that are regularly given by our school.

Each program was up and running quickly in a virtual way, and now, three weeks in, we are continuing to evaluate how to enhance and adapt the offerings further. How do we “Follow the Child”, when we are not with the child to follow them? How do we support parents, who are trying to work from home, etc., in following their child . . . This adaptation continues to bring up more questions as we wrestle with how to best support students and families through this unprecedented time:

- How can we best continue to serve students academically so that they don't “lose” skills during this time out of the regular school environment, and ideally gain additional school skills?
- To what extent do we need to acknowledge the trauma that this experience entails and adjust academic expectations accordingly?
- How can we support students emotionally and with a sense of community during this time when we can't visit in person?
- What are appropriate expectations for families to be able to support a student's school activities with all that is going on at home, and how can we tailor those supports and expectations to each family's needs?
- How has an appropriate amount of “screen time” changed now that screens are our main opportunity to socialize with anyone outside of our nuclear families?

This [article](#) from NPR elaborates on some of these questions in the context of other school disruptions in history. Children are impacted differently at each plane of development. We are very aware of the profound repercussions that this event is likely to have on children's development. How can we honor the sadness, loss, and fear that students feel and also support resilience, steadfastness, and optimism?

We will continue to communicate and collaborate with families as we work through these questions. In the coming weeks we will be offering more opportunities for our adult community. We are starting with weekly parent ZOOM meetings. **The first one will be Thursday, April 9th, at 7 PM (ZOOM invitation will be sent by email). A reconfiguration of the "Open Board Meeting" has been rescheduled for Friday, May 1st at 7 PM.**

If you all have any questions or suggestions as we continue to adapt our programs in this new setting, please reach out to your teachers or me. We appreciate all the communication, appreciation, and suggestions. You all have been wonderful partners - let's keep at it!

Stay well,
[Tamara](#)