

## Start Date Uncertain - August 4, 2020

Dear Hilltop Families,

As you may have heard, the Governor issued an executive order last week stating that schools must delay their start until September 8th. As you know, we at Hilltop Montessori School have been working full speed ahead for an August 31st start date. In fact, there are envelopes with "Summer Letters" in the mail to you with the detailed schedule for an August 31st start, with visits and conferences happening the Thursday and Friday before.

When we first heard that this delay might happen, we weren't sure if it would apply to independent schools and/or what the reasoning behind it was. If the reasoning were for health and safety (some sort of argument that waiting another week is more protective) then we would need and want to comply. If the reason were that some schools need more planning time, that need not apply to us. While additional time is always helpful (and we could certainly make good use of it), we already have extra in-service time built in and have a Re-Entry Plan in place that our community has reviewed.

However, when the [Executive Order](#) actually came out, it did state that it applied to independent schools and that it was due to needing more planning time. The Vermont Independent Schools Association (VISA) discussed this on Friday and there is concern that:

1. This is an "overreach" for the state to be telling independent schools about start dates (due to needing planning time).
2. If a school like ours is ready and able to start educating students earlier, why deprive students and families of that opportunity?

The VISA representative is going to be speaking with people in Montpelier and asking about changing this to NOT apply to independent schools. We don't know how that will go and if it will change back to allow us to open on August 31st.

If we are not able to open when we have planned, we will need to adjust and turn the week of August 31st into an "Orientation Week", which would include the conferences, visits, and UE hike that we have planned for Thursday and Friday the 27th and 28th. If this happens, we will be sending program specific revised start date information to each of you.

We do not know how this will impact the end of the year. The state has never before dictated our start dates or end dates, so this is new territory. As with everything we've experienced this past year, flexibility is key!

Thank you for your understanding and patience. If you have any questions, please reach out.

Stay well,  
Tamara