



Hilltop Herald



August/September, 2020

WELCOME TO HILLTOP!

Hilltop closed when the Coronavirus came to the US and hit Connecticut pretty hard. We thought it would be a couple of weeks, but we could soon see this was going to be a while! We never had the chance to properly close out our year. I want to recognize the Hilltop staff for stepping in to this crisis with grace. They kept calm and were able to coordinate online options for the children and families.

I also want to recognize the Hilltop Advisory Committee. This is Hilltop's board, who volunteer to help coordinate and oversee the policies for Hilltop. They have continued to meet throughout this pandemic and have had to make some very difficult decisions. The board has taken a huge step in faith to go ahead and open Hilltop this fall. In spite of a number of families making the decision to keep their child at home, creating a low enrollment, they believe we can open safely and go ahead with another year providing quality early education! Hilltop has been in our community for over 46 years! God has had his hand in this program from the start, and this year will not be an exception!

September is at our doorstep. I have been back in the building this month, and it has been so quiet! I look forward to hearing all of the fun little voices filling Hilltop hallways again! The teaching staff and I are excited to be working with you and your child!

Mr. Mike, Mrs. Sosnicki's husband & Hilltop's custodian has been busy cleaning and preparing the center for a new school year! We wish him well, as he moves on to another job this year. He will be the main caregiver for our young grandson, running his own "grandpa day care"!

We are thrilled to welcome back most of the staff from last year. Mrs. Sears, Mrs. Fosbrook, Mrs. Miller, Mrs. Valente, Mrs. Brozka, Ms. Roberts and Ms. Nicole. Mrs. Guzman has made the decision to stay home and support her son in distanced learning. She plans to step into Mr. Mike's position, keeping our building spotless, and free of germs!

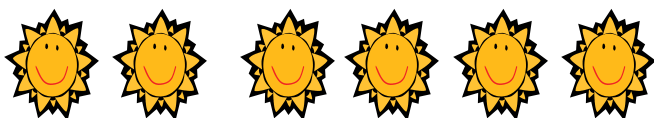
FORMS ON FILE

A packet was emailed out in June, and the link was provided on our website at www.hilltopchristianELC.com. These forms include the Parent Agreements, the Emergency Contact Form, and the Child's Health Record. The state requires these forms to be in your child's file as a licensing requirement. If you have not yet done so, please be sure to get those in to the school office as soon as you are able. You may drop them off at the church office M-F 9-12, email it at director@hilltopchristianELC.com or snail mail it to Hilltop Christian ELC, 837 Charles St., Torrington, CT 06790.

PARENT ORIENTATION

Remember to set aside an hour of time on Monday evening, August 31st on ZOOM beginning at 7:00 p.m. This will be a time **for parents only.** After a presentation by Mrs. Sosnicki regarding Hilltop's policies etc., we will provide parents the opportunity to hear from the teachers along with a virtual tour of their classroom. They will share with you classroom activities and expectations. We look forward to welcoming you!

To Join Zoom Meeting, please check your Remind message or contact the office for the meeting ID and Password. We will not post this information on our website.



DAYS AND DATES OF THE FIRST WEEK OF SCHOOL

Visitation Day is the first day that your child is scheduled to attend class at St. Paul's Hilltop Christian Early Learning Center. This session will be *one hour long*. Your child will attend this day accompanied by Mom, Dad or another designated adult. **Due to Covid-19, we ask that ONLY ONE adult accompany your child. We also ask that you find a sitter for any siblings. We are trying to do this in the safest way, and that means limiting the number of people only to the enrolled child and one adult.** Visitation Day is intended to help transition your child into the program, give the children an opportunity to meet others in their class, and give the grownups an opportunity to meet others. Visitation for each class will take place **ON THE PLAYGROUND**. The class routine will be different from a usual day due to the shortened time. Your child's usual schedule will begin the next scheduled day.

The days, dates and times of the First Days of School are as follows:

VISITING DAYS:

Tuesday, September 1, 2020—9:00-10:00 a.m. School Readiness

Wednesday, September 9, 2020—9:00-10:00 a.m. MW and MWF preschool class

Wednesday, September 9, 2020—10:30-11:30 MWF and M-F 4 year olds

Thursday, September 10, 2020—9:00-10:00 a.m. 2 year olds

Thursday, September 10, 2020—10:30-11:30 a.m. T/Th and M-F preschool class

FIRST FULL DAYS OF SCHOOL:

Wednesday, September 2, 2020—9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. School Readiness

Friday, September 11, 2020—9:15-11:45 a.m. MWF, M-F 4 year olds

Friday, September 11, 2020—9:30-12 noon MW & MWF preschool

Monday, September 14, 2019—9:30-12 noon. MW 3 year olds

Tuesday, September 15, 2020—9:15-11:45 a.m. T/Th preschool

Tuesday, September 15, 2020—9:30-11:00 a.m. 2 year olds



DROP OFF AND PICK UP PROCEDURES

Following the Guidance document from the state of CT Office of Early Childhood, there will be some changes to our drop off and pick up procedures.

1. Parents are asked to stay out of the school building.
2. We will stagger drop off and pick up times to keep safe cohorts.
3. All children and staff will be given a health screening daily before entering the building.

When dropping off your child: Enter through the upper parking lot located on Tarringford West St. Drive to the lower parking lot and form a line in front of the sidewalk at the entrance. Mrs. Sosnicki will greet you and ask a few screening questions, after which she will ask you to remove your child from the car. The classroom teachers will greet the children from there and escort them to their classroom or scheduled location. Cars will then leave the parking lot by the lower level, exiting on to Charles St.

Upon pick up time, families are asked to follow the same procedure, entering by the upper parking lot, waiting in line by the sidewalk, where the classroom teachers will dismiss the children from there. They will escort your child to your car, and the family member will be responsible for putting their child into the car seat or booster seat and exit from the lower level onto Charles St.

REMIND APP

Hilltop utilizes the Remind App to build 2 way communications with families. Please download the app to your phone. Mrs. Sosnicki has been building classes. If you haven't already joined, Look for your notification!



STAGGERED DROP OFF AND PICK UP TIMES

Morning drop off and session end pick ups will be staggered to help us keep cohorts clean. Please arrive during your child's assigned time for drop off and pick up. If you miss your assigned time, you will be asked to return to the line for a later time.

- School Readiness class- Drop off between 9 a.m. and 9:15 a.m. pick up at 3:00 p.m.
- MWF 4, T/Th preschool and M-F- Drop off between 9:15 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. pick up between 11:45 a.m. and 12 noon.
- MW preschool-Drop off between 9:30 a.m. and 9:45 a.m. pick up between 12 noon and 12:15 p.m.
- T/Th 2 year olds- Drop off between 9:30 a.m. and 9:45 a.m. pick up at 11 a.m.

TUITION & SR FAMILY FEES

Jean Schlapfer St. Paul's bookkeeper and Rachel Harrel, the Church Secretary, handle the tuition payments. You should have received the tuition schedule in the packet you received in the spring or at registration this summer. The church office phone number is (860)482-3555, if you have any questions. You may mail in your payment, at 837 Charles St. Torrington CT 06790, drop it off in the black locked box outside of the CHURCH office door. Please make checks payable to "**St. Paul's**" and put your child's name and class he/she attends in the "memo section" of the check. You may also choose to pay online. To pay online, download the app Give+, look for St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Torrington and create your account. Be sure to note your payment is Hilltop tuition.



PEANUT/NUT SAFE SCHOOL

Hilltop is a peanut, nut safe school. NO PEANUTS, NUTS, PEANUT OIL OR NUT OIL PRODUCTS. We do have children enrolled with peanut or nut allergies. If you bring a treat or snack to school be sure that you have checked the ingredients for the safety of our children.



ALLERGY, DIETARY AND OTHER CONCERNS

If your child has an allergy, medical issue, or dietary issue, or you are concerned about an area of your child's development please call the school office before the first day of school. A care plan needs to be developed if your child has any of the above listed concerns.

SCHOOL PARKING

If it is necessary for you to park in the parking lot, please park in the parking area closest to the school entrance area. DO NOT PARK along the curbs. This is a fire safety zone and needs to be kept clear in case of emergencies.

Please **DO NOT** leave children unattended in your vehicle while you drop-off or pick-up your child. We are mandated reporters, and will report to DCF if we are aware of a child left along in an unattended vehicle. If you anticipate a problem, please discuss it with your child's teacher so we can assist you with arrangements.

For safety, please hold your child's hand in the parking lot AT ALL TIMES.

PARENT GROUP

Hilltop Helping Hands (HHH) is a parent's group which was founded and led by a parent in 2012. This group sponsors school wide activity nights, community service activities, parent/teacher enrichment as well as helping the staff with various jobs. They also host the Annual Art Show and other events which raise money for our Tuition Assistance Fund.

We are looking for parents who are ready to take on the challenge of keeping this group going. Many of you expressed that you are interested in this group from the packets that were returned this summer. Thank you in advance for your willingness to serve.

We will need one or two parents willing to take the lead in this group. Please speak to Mrs. Sosnicki to let her know if you are interested. We hope to get this group up and running soon!

2020-2021 ENROLLMENT

As you might imagine, we have experienced a number of withdrawals this year. The positive of this, is our cohort/classes are much smaller. On the flip side, it means we have openings in all of our programs. Options include,

- T/Th 2 year old class meets (T/Th)
- Two Preschool mixed aged classes (3s & 4s) (MW, MWF or T/Th)
- One four year old class (MWF)
- School Readiness class is a state funded class with a sliding scale fee for ages 3 & 4. They meet M-F 9-3

If you know of any friends, family or acquaintances that might be looking for a high quality early education program for their child, please refer them to Hilltop.

HILLTOP STAFF

We are pleased that most of our Hilltop staff are returning this year!

Mrs. Michelle Miller and Mrs. Christina Brzoska will work together as co-teachers in the 2 and 3 year old classes. They are a great team!

In the room 4, Mrs. Monica Valente is the lead teacher, and working alongside her is Ms. Megan Roberts. The MWF class is comprised of all 4 year old children while the T/Th class has a mix of ages. This team has worked together for a few years now, and we promise you will not be disappointed! Mrs. Sears has worked in this classroom for over 10 years now, and I know she will be missed, but with the restrictions around Covid-19, she requested to move into the School Readiness class.

All the way down the hall, our School Readiness class is co-taught by Mrs. Lezlie Fosbrook & Mrs. Nicole Sears. They have worked together for a number of years and I am excited to see them working together full time!

Ms. Nicole Waldron is returning and will help us in a variety of ways. She will maintain sanitization throughout the day including bathrooms, playroom, playground and outdoor classrooms. She will also be supporting Mrs. Sosnicki in a possible Distance Learning class. We are happy to have her back!

Mrs. Sosnicki continues as the Director /Head Teacher of the school. Besides her many administrative duties to attend to, she is trained to be our Music Together® Music Specialist! She will be leading music classes each week. She will work alongside Ms. Nicole in a possible Distance Learning class. Though her schedule is quite busy, she always makes herself available to staff, children and parents when needed. If there are ever any concerns please feel free to reach out to her via phone, Remind, or email and speak with her. Her office hours will be Monday through Friday 8:30-4:30.

Hilltop continues to be blessed with a loving team of dedicated teachers!

HYBRID AND DISTANCE LEARNING

Our plan is to open in person, and remain in person as much as possible during this time. We have plans in place to keep children distanced as much as possible without losing the important piece of preschool education around learning to be social beings in a group.

Even with all the safety protocols, we understand that there may be prolonged absences and possible classroom or school wide closures. With that in mind, we are developing plans to provide distance & hybrid learning opportunities within each classroom, so if your child must be out for a prolonged period of time they can still feel like a part of their school family. It will become a normal part of the day, so if we close down, it will be a seamless transition to a full online experience.

We recognize that screen time at this age should be limited, but we also believe that there are different types of screen time. PASSIVE screen time (such as computer games and television shows) should most definitely be limited at this age. Our distance learning experiences will be INTERACTIVE screen time. We will be interacting together via the internet, building and growing relationships while providing playful learning experiences together.

We hope you will take advantage these opportunities if needed.



FIND HILLTOP ON THE WEB

Please “like” us on Facebook! There will be some announcements made there for school families as well as pictures and information about what is happening at school! We would like to use this as an advertising platform as well, and your likes, shares and comments will help us! Photos of children will only be shared on Facebook if you so approved on the permission sheet in the package you completed this summer. Only the administrator of the page will be able to post on the page.

Please be sure to stop by and visit Hilltop’s website. Announcements and newsletters will be posted there. You will also be able to find the monthly snack menu on the website. Please “SUBSCRIBE” to the RSS feed so you will receive an alert when something new has been added to the “blog”. You will find all the information you need to know, including any upcoming dates and announcements. You will find a link to subscribe on the home page. The newsletter will be distributed on the website exclusively to save on printing costs, so your subscription is necessary. Also, if someone else regularly picks up or drops off your child, (such as grandparents, babysitters etc.) it would be a good idea for them to subscribe as well. We can make available paper copies upon request. If you would rather have a paper copy, feel free to let us know so we can get one to you.

Follow this link now and subscribe to the website:
www.hilltopchristianELC.com

We also utilize the Remind App, allowing staff and parents to have 2 way conversations and giving teachers the opportunity to send you a photo of your child at school, or to post announcements. Mrs. Sosnicki has been adding your cell phone number to your child’s class in Remind. Be sure you have downloaded the app and accept our invitation to join! If a grandparent or caregiver typically is involved by dropping off or picking up they may also want to utilize this app. We will also post menus, newsletters and other documents on Remind.

