

## Notes from the Board

On Wednesday evening, we held an Open Board Meeting. Thank you to all of the members of the Hilltop community who chose to spend a couple hours with the Board to discuss Hilltop's Board responsibilities, finances, and strategic planning. We are at a terrific moment in Hilltop's story. Through much hard work over the past several years, Hilltop has achieved stability throughout the school, and we are thus in the enviable position of being able to proactively plan for the school's future. The meeting Wednesday was a part of this process. The topics covered included:

**Board Information** - Introduction of Board Members (bios available [here](#)). Each Board member also shared why they are on the Board and what they enjoy about the experience. The common theme was their enjoyment of giving back to this school in particular, and to the Montessori and Brattleboro community in general. They also unanimously agreed that the Board is comprised of a great group of people to work with and encouraged anyone interested in joining it or a committee (such as Building and Grounds, Emergency Planning, or Diversity) to contact [Patrick Keppel](#) or [Tamara Mount](#).

**Financial Information** - Rich Wolfe, Board Treasurer, presented the finances of the school including:

- budgeting process with proposed budgets (fiscal year from July-June) from school administration with input from program staff approved by the board in February (draft) and June (final)
- the numbers from Fiscal Year 2013-14, fully approved by an external audit and reported in the [annual report](#)
- the report of long term debts (about \$1.4 million in mortgages on the campus) and long term savings (about \$1.2 million in a campus reserve and endowment fund)

**Family Strategic Plan Survey Results** - Greg Hessel, [Organizational Consultant](#), presented the results of the recent family survey. This will serve as input for our school's next Strategic Plan. We were thrilled to have 70 respondents who gave thoughtful feedback. The results showed how highly families value and appreciate the Montessori approach; the extremely high quality, dedicated staff; and the beautiful facilities of our school.

As this is the only parent survey we have had this year, it was a great opportunity for families to provide input on a variety of topics, both day-to-day and strategic. Some suggestions we are implementing immediately, such as further addressing the social challenges of the elementary years (including teachers being more involved in recess), working to increase communication from teachers to parents, and paving the driveway in June! A full summary of the survey results can be found [here](#).

**Strategic Plan Discussion** - Participants (6 staff [3 are current parents], 10 Board Members [8 are current parents], and 8 other parents [including Greg Hessel]) then held a discussion about the strategic themes that had arisen from the survey. We talked about how Hilltop is different from other schools and how we would like to see it evolve. We also weighed the goals-ethical, philosophical, and educational-behind how Hilltop structures financial aid. We also continued the discussion about why, whether and how to integrate a foreign language program.

These conversations were only the beginning. The hard work comes next - finding a way to move forward on these and other issues in ways that are consistent with the community's values and sustainable. Every person who is part of our wide community can have a voice. If you would like to be involved further, please contact us. Tamara's door is open and she welcomes your feedback and input at any time about any topic, and Mark, as Board Chair, is very interested in discussing ideas for the future of Hilltop Montessori School.

#### Timeline of Strategic Planning Process

##### Completed Tasks:

- Read background material - Fall 2014
- Design Team meeting - Fall 2014
- Interview Head of School and Senior Staff - Winter 2015
- Focus groups with staff - Winter 2015
- Current Parent Survey - Winter 2015
- Past Parent Survey - Spring 2015

##### Future Tasks:

- Board Interviews - Spring 2015
- Community Stakeholder Interviews - Summer 2015
- Industry Analysis and Environmental Scan - Summer 2015
- Synthesizing Data and Planning Strategic Retreat - Summer 2015
- Strategic Retreat - Fall 2015
- Follow-up with Leadership Group to Translate Strategy into Action Plan - Fall 2015
- Document Writing - Fall 2015
- Final Plan Available - Winter 2016

May 1, 2015