**Sack Lunch Guidelines**

**Hilltop is peanut-free, tree-nut-free, and shellfish-free!**

**This includes sack lunches and potluck gatherings.**

**At Hilltop we provide a breakfast consisting of a low sugar cereal, juice and milk or a non-dairy alternative (soy milk or rice milk). We also provide an afternoon and late-afternoon snack. Families provide a sack lunch. We encourage you to involve your child in learning about nutrition, and in the planning and preparation of his/her lunch. Here are some guidelines we think you will find helpful as you plan sack lunches for your child:**

**Should I label my child’s lunchbox and containers?** Yes, please label your child’s special lunch box or bag and containers with his/her first and last name.

**What about refrigeration?** Please pack blue ice in your child’s lunch box to keep items cold. Upon arrival, please place lunches in your child’s cubby or in a bin in the classroom.

**Is there a way to heat foods?** Unfortunately we are unable to heat meals for children, however; you may wish to try a good quality thermos or other insulated container to keep leftovers or soup warm.

**Do I need to send a drink?** No. Hilltop will provide milk or a non-dairy alternative per your request. Please do not send additional beverages with your child’s lunch.

**Can I bring peanut butter?** No. We currently have children onsite with severe peanut and tree-nut allergies, so Hilltop is peanut-free and tree-nut free (including almonds, cashews, walnuts, etc.). This is because nut allergies are potentially fatal and, as much as we love the convenience and taste of peanut butter, we cannot justify the risk. Please do not send items that have been cooked in nut oil or contain traces of peanuts or tree-nuts. We recommend and use seed butters like sunflower seed and soy as a safe and delicious alternative.

**Why no shellfish?** We have children enrolled who have a life-threatening allergy to shellfish, so no scallops, shrimp, prawns or crab should be included in lunches or potluck items.

**What if my child has a food allergy or intolerance?** Please let the registrar know right away, as there are forms we are required to have you fill out to ensure we are effectively supporting your child’s dietary restrictions.

**What if I forget my child’s lunch?** If we happen to notice at drop off time that you’ve forgotten your child’s lunch, we will ask you to make a quick trip to PCC to purchase a lunch for your child. PCC has a huge selection of fresh foods, fruit, and other lunch items from which to choose. If we notice after your departure that your child doesn’t have a lunch, we will provide an emergency lunch.

## Are there any guidelines about what should be included in sack lunches? Yes, the Washington Administrative Code that pertains to childcare programs lists certain regulations about what must be included in sack lunches in order to meet daily nutritional requirements. It is recommended that each child’s sack lunch includes a dairy product (such as cheese, yogurt or cottage cheese), a meat or meat alternative (such as beef, fish, poultry, legumes, tofu, or beans), a grain product (such as bread, cereal, bagel, or rice cake), and fruits or vegetables (two fruits or two vegetables or one fruit and one vegetable to equal the total portion size required). Keep in mind that we do offer milk (or a non-dairy alternative) with lunch, which meets the daily requirement.

**What is the lunch-time culture at Hilltop?** Eating food with children is as important as any other time of day in a child’s life. Children learn life long habits and develop relationships with food and their bodies during meal times. It is our goal that lunch will be a relaxed and conversational time for children and teachers to visit and enjoy their food. We will encourage children to try what’s in their lunchbox at least twice but will not insist that children eat everything or even that they save some foods for the end of the meal. Research tells us that children can learn to listen to their bodies if they are given healthy foods from which to choose and are not forced to eat them. This is how children learn to listen to and trust cues from their bodies about hunger and fullness.