



Castle Island
Bilingual Montessori

Resource Directory

2025-2026

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Special Education

Introduction

Welcome to Castle Island's Special Education Resource Directory! The purpose of this directory is to provide families with information regarding locally offered services for students with disabilities or special needs. The following expert list explains how Montessori education itself is beneficial for students in need of accommodations for any reason:

“Maria Montessori’s vision for education included children with special needs from the very beginning. Not only did she study intellectual and developmental disabilities, but she was the co-director of an institute for special education teachers. It was with this background that she started her first “Casa dei Bambini” (Children’s House) for disenfranchised children in Rome in 1907. Many of the tenets of Montessori education serve students with special needs well.

Because children are grouped with others of different ages and have the same teacher for three years at a time, students with special needs tend to have less pressure to keep up with their peers and more freedom to learn and grow at their own pace. The classroom continuity can also help students with special needs form close connections within their classroom, making for a safe and stable environment in which to learn.

Montessori’s “follow the child” philosophy allows for all children—not just those with special needs—to receive an individualized education. A Montessori instructor’s lesson plan may have each child’s name on it with different goals and ideas for their unique learning style. This especially helps students with special needs to learn at their own pace.”

From: [Exploring the Pros and Cons of Montessori Education](#)

The Montessori Model

Beneficial aspects of a Montessori learning environment for a child with special needs

1. The materials and the environment: The Montessori classroom is filled with beautiful materials that engage all of the senses. The materials are hands-on, therapeutic, enticing, and include a built-in control of error. In most cases, they teach only one skill (or salient point) at a time. They offer a wonderful chance for children with special needs to use their hands to explore and learn.

2. Multi-age classrooms: In Montessori, children are put into multi-age classrooms, so they can learn from older children, and help the younger children in the classroom. If a child needs to repeat a grade, they can do so without being “held back” while watching their friends move to a new classroom.

3. Following the child: Montessori children are encouraged to work at their own pace, without the burden of competition, test scores, and grades. They are also encouraged to follow their own interests when it comes to reading, writing, and research. This kind of freedom allows the special needs child to flourish.

4. Consistency: The multi-age classroom means a child is with a teacher for a 3-year cycle, allowing the teacher to build a strong relationship with the parents and the child. As well, the child doesn't have the stress of always starting in a new classroom at the beginning of each school year.

5. The philosophy of Montessori: In Montessori, there is an emphasis on peace, cooperation, and respect, making it much less likely that a child with special needs will be teased or ostracized. Instead, the other children usually make an effort to accept, befriend, and encourage a special needs child.

From: [Montessori for Everyone Blog](#)

Additional testimonies:

Below we have included some additional testimonies to the effectiveness of a Montessori classroom for children with disabilities or special needs.

[Montessori and special needs](#)

The above article gives details regarding How Montessori schools can support children with special needs. The article discusses the suitability of Montessori education for students with different types of special needs. It focuses on [giftedness, learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, behavioral problems, and physical disabilities](#). The article highlights the ways in which the Montessori approach is often a great fit for students with certain kinds of special needs.

[Special Needs & the Montessori Child: Thinking, Learning, & Playing Outside the Box](#)

This article shows an example of how other Montessori schools accommodate special needs students. An important point made, that applies at Castle Island as well is: “Special needs in the Montessori classroom means finding our way into the child’s world, rather than requiring them to find their way into ours.”

[Montessori for Children with Special Needs](#)

This article is from the American Montessori Society (AMS). It gives additional information regarding special needs in the Montessori classroom, provides testimonials, and recommendations.

[What the Montessori Method Does for Special Needs Children](#)

This article gives a parent’s perspective on how the Montessori model can be a good fit for children with special needs.

What Castle Island is Doing

Progress Monitoring, Supports, and Evaluation

Castle Island teachers carefully observe students daily and notice the work that they choose and the progress each student makes on *su* planned lesson presentation and individual work and, for elementary students, on their weekly work plan. Teachers meet with students daily and weekly to review and assess their development in each curriculum area. At semi-annual parent-teacher conferences, teachers and parents together review and evaluate the students' ongoing development. Any concerns that parents may have are discussed and recorded in these 30-minute meetings. When a teacher has a concern about a student's development, s/he contacts the parent before the conference to ask clarifying questions to gather information about what is observed at home. Then, close monitoring and record keeping is conducted for the teacher and parents to be able to notice patterns and to carry out a deeper evaluation at subsequent meetings. When it is noticed that there is a pause in progress a collective decision can be made to begin the process of a formal needs evaluation for psychological, cognitive or behavioral testing. Such testing may be conducted by private evaluators arranged by the parents, in conjunction with the child's pediatrician, or by evaluators in the Special Education Department of the Albany City School District, jointly arranged by the parents and the staff at Castle Island. This process takes several months to a year and culminates in a CSE meeting at a public school district (Ask Holli about Noah re the district for the meeting).

Once a student is diagnosed and assigned either a 504 Plan* or an IEP** (Individualized Education Program), students' work time at school will include: individualized curriculum, extended work and assessment time, flexible seating, one-on-one instruction, hands-on materials, choice in assignments schedules, and modified assignments. Further, students may eat snacks in the classroom when they are hungry. The student's plan is shared with all staff and all staff including special area teachers and support staff work together to provide accommodations to support the ongoing development of the student in ways that maintain positive aspects to interactions and activities throughout each day, and that are consistently encouraging to the student.

The student is continuously observed and progress, or a lapse in progress, is noted and communicated informally and regularly to the parents throughout the school year, and a formal progress report is presented twice a year. Further, based on

parent invitation, the lead teacher and school director can attend an annual CSE Annual Meeting, held at the public school district, along with the parents for a reassessment of the student's IEP or 504 Plan to be implemented the following academic year.

Discipline Policy

At Castle Island Bilingual Montessori, students at every level, primary and elementary, are expected to demonstrate consistency in their choices and actions to practice kindness and safety for themselves, for one another, and for their teachers, to value the property of others and of the school, and to treat both their own and another's personal belongings with care. Trust and integrity are important for maintaining the success of our community. This expectation holds true for all students, including those with an IEP or 504 Plan.

In the classroom, students are given lessons at class meetings, in small groups, and individually, regularly by their teachers regarding appropriate conduct, procedures, manners, communication, courtesy, and language at Castle Island Bilingual Montessori. All students are taught, in developmentally appropriate ways, the use of communication skills and conflict-resolution processes with their peers. Visual representations of rules and procedures are provided to support the concrete meaning of kind and safe behavioral expectations. Further, teachers work with each student systematically and consistently throughout the entirety of the school year to alleviate frustrations and to provide a learning environment that offers a low effect of stress so that students feel at ease and comfortable to do and be their best.

When a student's behavior is outside acceptable school or classroom norms, teachers consider the following circumstances before deciding what action to take:

1. The intent of the child(ren) involved.
2. The severity of the action observed, especially as it concerns safety.
3. The clarity of the teachers' observations over time.
4. The impact of the child's action on the classroom/school community.
5. The frequency of occurrence, or pattern, of the negative behavior, be it unkind or unsafe.

If negative behavior continues over time, and the teachers' interventions with communication and conflict resolution skills prove to be ineffective, the teacher will ask the child to sit in a chair or space away from the classroom community until he or she can return to the group and behave in accordance with the classroom norms, ready to make kind and safe choices.

Teachers will contact parents by phone to inform them about any continuing behavior concerns in the classroom.

If the negative behavior continues, teachers and administrators will involve parents in a conference to talk about the next steps. Some of the following consequences for inappropriate behavior will be discussed:

- Leaving the classroom and spending time in another classroom space, or in a separate office space with adult supervision.
- Leaving school for a specified period of time, with parent support.

In the case of aggression or physical force that harms another person, we will contact the parents of all children involved immediately, depending on the severity of the incident. The consequence to the student will take into account the circumstances listed above.

Every child is unique, and thus every journey toward self-control, self-regulation, communication, and independence in the classroom environment is different. The classroom teachers will work together with parents to determine successful strategies for each child.

Medication Administration

CIBM is not authorized to administer medications beyond emergencies, i.e. EpiPen, Benadryl, inhaler, etc. Any prescribed medications must be administered either before or after the school day, or parents may make daily visits to administer the medication directly to the student.

*A 504 plan is a legal document falling under the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. It is a plan for the provision of regular or special education and related aids and services designed to meet the student's individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of nondisabled students are met. ([504 FAQs](#))

** The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written statement of our plan to provide your child with a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in their Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Your child's IEP includes information about him/her, and the unique strengths and needs that are considered to develop a plan of the appropriate special education supports and services that will allow your child to access, participate, and progress in the general education curriculum. ([The IEP](#))

***The Committee on Special Education (CSE) is a multidisciplinary team that is approved by the Board of Education. This committee meets after a referral has

been made and a multidisciplinary evaluation has been completed to review the information and determine if a child has a disability. This committee is responsible for students who are between the ages of 5-21. The committee determines eligibility, develops an IEP, and places the student in the least restrictive environment. If a student is eligible for classification, this committee will meet at least once a year to review the student's programs and services. Every three years a student will undergo a re-evaluation process to ensure that the student continues to require special education services. ([Committee on Special Education \(CSE\)](#))

Training

All teachers are required to complete 10 hours of professional development training each academic year; at least one hour is dedicated to special education training. For example, teachers gain new knowledge and refine their skills with their work with children with various social/emotional and academic special needs by participating in: literature review and analysis, webinar participation for supporting students and developing curriculum, conference attendance, and visits to other schools to observe other teachers working with students with special needs.

Certification

When administrative and teaching staff hold multiple certifications, including Special Education, parents will be informed.

Legal Obligation & Resources

Legal Obligation (CIBM & NYS):

[Equal Educational Opportunity](#):

Students in New York schools are protected by federal, state, and local laws that prevent discrimination based on race, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, **disability**, and other categories. These laws also protect against bullying and require schools to take certain affirmative steps **to guarantee an equal education for students with disabilities**. Federal, state, and local laws protect individuals from education discrimination in different ways. Anyone who believes they have been the victim of discrimination should also follow the school, school district, or state board of education's internal complaint process for reporting discrimination within your school. Failure to utilize the internal complaint process may negatively affect your legal claims.

<http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/child.find.index.htm#sthash.PbV6gYdD.dpuf>

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) includes the Child Find mandate. Child Find requires all school districts to identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disabilities. This obligation to identify all children who may need special education services exists even if the school is not providing special education services to the child. Schools are required to locate, identify, and evaluate all children with disabilities from birth through age 21. The Child Find mandate **applies to all children who reside within a State**, including children who attend private schools, highly mobile children, migrant children, homeless children, and children who are wards of the state.

[Are Special Education Services Available for Students in Private Schools?](#)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) – the special education law – does not apply to individuals placed in private schools by their parents. *Private schools are not covered under IDEA 2004.*

If a public school places a child in a private school with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) – a part of the IDEA program, then the public school is responsible for ensuring that the private school implements the child's IEP. Children attending public schools are entitled to a free appropriate education and an IEP funded by the federal government. *Private schools do not receive funding and are not required to provide a free appropriate education or an IEP.* They are not required to provide any special education services to children with disabilities.

However, private schools are bound by Section 504 – the civil rights law. Section 504 prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities and ensures that the child with a disability has equal access to education and is not discriminated against for reasons related to his/her disability. *Private schools are only responsible for providing modifications, accommodations, and access to educational opportunities* (such as a ramp for a child in a wheelchair). Public schools have few responsibilities for children with disabilities enrolled in private schools by their parents.

[New York State Regulations -- Office of Non-Public Education \(ONPE\):](#)

- Upon a parent or guardian's written request, nonpublic school students may receive services for gifted pupils, occupational and vocational education, and education for students with disabling conditions and related services provided the instruction is given to public school students. *An annual review of the student's needs by the City School District of Albany's Committee on Special Education (CSE) makes this determination.* Transportation is provided if the distance between the nonpublic school and the public school exceeds one-quarter mile, except students with disabilities receive transportation according to their needs. Students are considered dually enrolled for the purposes of receiving the services.
- School districts may provide students with disabilities special services or programs through contracts with private residential and nonresidential schools approved by the commissioner.

- All professional instructional and supervisory personnel at private schools providing public placements for children with disabilities must be appropriately certified.
- School boards must provide suitable transportation up to a distance of *50 miles* to and from a nonpublic school that a child with disabilities attends to receive special education services.
- The NY State Education Department has to audit nonpublic schools receiving public money for services to children with disabilities.

[SPECIAL EDUCATION: LEGAL REQUIREMENTS](#)

This document provides extensive amounts of additional information on NY State's legal obligation to provide special education services.

Legal Resources:

[Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#) This site provides information on IDEA, the act that provides regulations and requirements regarding education for children with disabilities.

[Special Education:EMSC: NYSED](#) This link is to the NYS Education Department's Office of Special Education. On this website there are a series of resources, including information about legal obligations and regulations regarding students with disabilities.

[The Law Offices of Regina Skyer & Associates, LLP](#)

For over twenty-five years, Skyer Law has been New York's premier special education law firm. Skyer Law's sole purpose is to advocate, mediate, and litigate on behalf of children with special education needs. Skyer's fifteen attorneys are recognized for their passion and excellence in representing the interests of our clients.

504s and IEP

The difference between an IEPs & 504 plan: [IEP vs. 504 - National Education Association](#)

This site offers a brief rundown of the differences between a 504 and an IEP. It is helpful when deciding and understanding the help that your child needs.

504 plan: [4323SECTION 504 POLICY REGARDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES](#)

The above link provides access to the full 504 policy. It is helpful for parents who are trying to determine the services that their child applies for.

NYSED IEP: [Special Education Itinerant Services for Preschool Children](#)

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide comprehensive policy guidance relating to Special Education Itinerant Services (SEIS) to ensure that

Committees on Preschool Special Education (CPSE), municipalities, approved SEIS providers and parents of preschool children have a common understanding of the State's laws, regulations and policy relating to individualized education program (IEP) development and implementation, SEIS provider responsibilities, and billing for SEIS sessions.

Definitions

- ** NYS = New York State
- ** NYSED = New York State Education Department
- ** NYSSA = New York State Alternate Assessment
- ** IEP = Individualised Education Program
- ** CSE = Committee on Special Education
- ** BOCES: Boards of Cooperative Educational Services

Services for K-6 Students with Developmental Skills

[Developmental Skills – Autism Spectrum Disorder](#)

This page provides information regarding The Capital Region BOCES' Autism Spectrum Disorder Program and the students who qualify for it.

[Developmental Skills – Functional Skills](#)

This page provides information regarding The Capital Region BOCES' Functional Skills Program and the students who qualify for it.

[Developmental Skills – Life Skills](#)

This page provides information regarding The Capital Region BOCES' Life Skills Program and the students who qualify for it.

[Developmental Skills – Medically Fragile](#)

This page provides information regarding The Capital Region BOCES' Medically Fragile Program and the students who qualify for it.

[Developmental Skills – NYSA \(Grades 3-8\)](#)

This page provides information regarding The Capital Region BOCES' NYSA Program and the students who qualify for it.

[Developmental Skills – Regular Assessment \(Grades K-8\)](#)

This page provides information regarding The Capital Region BOCES' Regular Assessment Program and the students who qualify for it.

[Early Intervention Program - New York State Department of Health](#)

This page provides information on the New York State Early Intervention Program for infants and toddlers with disabilities.

[Developmental Disabilities](#) (NYS Department of Health)

This page provides a series of resources from the New York DOH regarding developmental disabilities.

[City School District of Albany Special Education Services | Speech & Special Education](#)

The City School District of Albany offers a full range of special education services for students who reside in Albany or attend Castle Island, including:

- Speech and audiology
- Psychological therapy
- Physical therapy
- Occupational therapy and counseling
- Consultant teacher services
- Resource room services to provide supplemental instruction
- Transitional support services
- Integrated class services, full-time in-class support
- Day treatment
- Residential program
- Home or hospital instruction

Alternative Learning Environments for K-6 Students Who Need Social/Emotional Support

[Social-Emotional](#)

The Capital Region BOCES' Pathway to Learning Program is available at public schools for families who are interested in exploring another learning setting with a ratio of up to 8 children, 1 lead teacher, and 2 assistants to support with mental health diagnoses and have a history of trauma and school failure.

[Pathway to Learning](#)

The Capital Region BOCES' Pathway to Learning Program is available at public schools for families who are interested in exploring another learning setting

with a ratio of up to 6 children, 1 lead teacher, and 2 assistants to support mental health diagnoses.

[Ready to Learn](#)

The Capital Region BOCES' Ready to Learning Program is available at public schools for families who are interested in exploring another learning setting with a ratio of up to 4 children, 1 lead teacher, and 2 assistants to support one or more mental health diagnoses for children who have had frequent psychiatric hospitalizations.

[NYS DOH Resources for Mental Health](#)

This page provides a series of resources for people and the families of people needing mental health support and treatment.

2021 Updates: [Supporting Families During COVID-19](#)

The Child Mind Institute is an independent, national nonprofit dedicated to transforming the lives of children and families struggling with mental health and learning disorders. Our teams work every day to deliver the highest standards of care, advance the science of the developing brain, and empower parents, professionals, and policymakers to support children when and where they need it most.

CIBM is committed to providing its students with all of the resources they need, even during a global health crisis. The use of Zoom lessons and other online resources has allowed CIBM to continue offering services to our students, even throughout the pandemic. For example, one student who is in our upper elementary class (4th grade) has a 30-minute daily "Resource Room" Zoom for math and reading support. This format is also helpful because it allows students to receive services from other schools and organizations while remaining at CIBM, which eliminates the need for transportation and minimizes disruption to the student's day.

Resources for Parents/Guardians of 3-5 Year Olds

[Children with Special Needs](#) (Albany County)

This site details Albany County's offerings for students with special needs, including the Early Intervention Program; Preschool Special Education; Children with Special Health Care Needs/Physically Handicapped Children's Program; Social Emotional Intervention for Kids (SEIK); and Special Education Itinerant Services (SEIS).

[Information for Parents of Preschool Students with Disabilities Ages 3-5](#) (NYSED)

This site includes various resources for the parents of 3- to 5-year-olds specifically. It answers questions such as:

- What is Preschool Special Education?
- How will I know if my preschool-age child needs special education?
- What programs or services will my child receive?
- Where do I get more information?

The site covers areas including:

- Speech Therapy (ST)
- Occupational Therapy (OT)
- Physical Therapy (PT)
- Assistive technology
- Parent education
- Counseling

[BOCES Preschool Program \(For children ages 3-5\)](#)

This website includes information on BOCES offerings in terms of:

- Preschool Special Class Integrated Setting
- Preschool Special Classes

Family Support

[Hudson Valley Regional Office: Special Education: EMSC::NYSED](#)

This page shows all of the locations of the New York State Special Education Offices.

[Family Support](#)

This page provides a list of family support services that are available through the New York State Department of Health.

[NYS Parenting Home](#)

This is a link to the New York State parent portal. The portal has resources for parents of students with special needs. It provides caregiving tips and other resources.

[NYSED Procedural Safeguards Notice July 2017](#)

This page provides the rights of parents of children with disabilities (ages 3-21). This document was released in 2017.

[A Parent's Guide: Special Education in New York State for Children Ages 3-21](#)

This page is a document created by the New York State Education Department. It is a parent's guide to special education in New York.

[Assistance for Parents: Special Education: P12:NYSED:](#)

This page provides additional information and resources for parents of students with disabilities.

Additional Resources

[Frequently Used Special Education Applications: Special Education: EMSC::NYSED](#)

This is a link to a page that has frequently used Special Education applications in the state of New York.

[Blueprint-for-improved-results-for-students-with-disabilities](#)

This is a link to the New York State Education Department's "Blueprint for improved results for students with disabilities."

[Resource Category Listing for Information on NYS Child Serving Systems](#)

This page has an extensive list of information and resources regarding special education and students with disabilities.

Capital District BOCES:

- [About Special Education](#)
- [Special Education Enrollment](#)
- [Redesign Plan](#)

New York State Education Department:

[Additional Resources:Special Education:EMSC::NYSED](#)

Contact for Capital District BOCES:

- Caralee Kardash, *Director of Special Education*
Phone: 518-464-6310
Email: caralee.kardash@neric.org

Contact for the Albany City School District:

- Jane Colfer, Sub-CSE Chairperson
Email: jcolfer@albany.k12.ny.us

Phone: 518-475-6150 (Ext. 14324)
Harriet Gibbons Student Services Center
75 Watervliet Avenue, Albany, NY 12206

Links for the Capital Districts' Committee on Special Education

Albany City School District*
Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE)
<https://www.albanyschools.org/specialeducation/cpse>

Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District
Pupil Personnel Services/Special Education
<https://www.bkwschools.org/academics/special-education/>

Bethlehem Central School District
Office of Student Support Services
<https://www.bethlehemschools.org/departments-services/sess/>

Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central School District
Special Services Department
<https://www.bhbl.org/departments-and-services/special-services-department/>

Cobleskill-Richmondville Central School District
Committee on Special Education
<https://www.crcsd.org/cms/one.aspx?portalId=20317493&pageId=21964776>

Cohoes City School District
Office of Special Programs
<https://www.cohoes.org/departments-and-services/office-of-special-programs/>

Duanesburg Central School District
Special Education
<https://www.duanesburg.org/departments/special-education/>

Green Island Union Free School
Special Education
<https://www.greenisland.org/departments-services/special-education/>

Guilderland Central School District
Special Services
<https://www.guilderlandschools.org/district-services/special-services/>

Menands Union Free School District
Special Education
<https://www.menands.org/departments/special-education/>

Middleburgh Central School District
Special Education
<https://www.middleburghcsd.org/departments/special-education/>

Mohonasen Central School District
Special Education
<https://www.mohonasen.org/district-services/special-education/>

Niskayuna Central School District
Special Education & Student Support Services
<https://www.niskayunaschools.org/academics/special-education/>

North Colonie Central School District
Committee on Special Education Procedures
<https://www.northcolonie.org/board-of-education/district-policies/4321-r-committee-on-special-education-procedures/>

Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk Central School District
The Office for Student Support & Special Education
<https://www.rcscsd.org/page/special-education>

Schalmont Central School District
Special Education
<https://www.schalmont.org/district-office-services/special-education/>

Schenectady City School District
Office of Student Support Services
<https://www.schenectadyschools.org/page/student-support-services>

Schoharie Central School District
Special Education
<https://www.schoharieschools.org/departments/special-education/>

Scotia-Glenville Central School District

Special Education

<https://www.scotiaglenvilleschools.org/special-education-2/>

Sharon Springs Central School District

Special Education

<https://www.sharonsprings.org/academics/special-education/>

Shenendehowa Central School District

Special Education Department

<https://www.shenet.org/academics/special-education-department/>

South Colonie Central School District

Special Education

<https://www.southcolonieschools.org/specialeducation>

Voorheesville Central School District

Special Education

<https://www.voorheesville.org/departments/special-education/>

Watervliet City School District

Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services

<https://www.watervlietcityschools.org/academics/special-education-and-pupil-personnel-services/>

**Please contact the school director, Diane Nickerson,
with any additional questions or concerns.**