



**Castle Island**  
**Bilingual Montessori**

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# **Family Handbook**

## **2026-2027**

Revised August 2025

*Appendices include:*

**Safety Plan**  
**Resource Directory**  
**Financial Appendix**

All Policies are applied to all CIBM Programs:

**Academic Year Enrollment**

**Extended Day**

**Enrichment**

**Parent-Toddler**

**Parents' Night Out**

**Child Care during Parent Meetings, including Community Forum**

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## Introduction

Castle Island Bilingual Montessori provides a high quality and fully implemented Montessori education combined with full immersion in English and Spanish for children from toddler through sixth grade, growing to include seventh and eighth grades, in a beautiful and natural environment in the state capitol, Downtown Albany. Castle Island enhances children's ability to learn and grow by fostering a "house for children," where all are happy, secure, and respected with dignity as individuals.

The school is committed to the five core components of a fully-implemented Montessori education program: properly trained Montessori teachers, multi-age classrooms, the use of Montessori materials, child-directed work, and uninterrupted work periods. We value Montessori principles of our work with children: observation, individual liberty within structure, and preparation of the environment. Caring, nurturing, specially trained and highly qualified instructors guide our children through a comprehensive accredited curriculum. It is the school's intention that our children emerge from this period in their lives as strong, caring, creative, and capable individuals. Castle Island is a nonprofit incorporated PK-8 school authorized by the New York State Education Department, accredited by the American Montessori Society, and is governed by a volunteer Board of Trustees.

Students, to whom we refer as "children," teachers, to whom we refer as "guides," parents, to whom we often refer to as "families," our community partners, and our leadership team, all play important roles in cultivating a strong feeling of community collaboration in the school. Founded in 2012, Castle Island Bilingual Montessori continues to develop into a close-knit community. Partnerships in our region have included mutually beneficial relationships with: the First Church in Albany, Redburn Development, Siena College, UAlbany, New York Capital Region Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Albany Black Chamber of Commerce, New York State Montessori Alliance, BrightSide Up, QualityStarsNY, Albany Center Gallery, Albany Institute of History and Art, NYS Museum, The Radix Center, an elementary school in Puerto Rico, Albany Downtown Business Improvement District (BID), Capitalize Albany, City of Albany, Albany Police Department, Capital Region Spanish Table Meet-Up, Martinez Gallery, and local restaurants: Viva Cinco De Mayo, La Oaxaqueña Triqui, El Mariachi, and Viva Empanadas!

Our school facility provides an opportunity for us to maximize enrollment to serve children from toddler through adolescence. Children emerge from Castle Island with strong self-awareness and confidence as connected and committed members and leaders of their community, the natural environment, and the larger world.

## **Mission, Vision & Diversity Statements**

### **Mission**

Castle Island provides an accessible world-class education fully immersed in English and Spanish in a fully implemented Montessori environment for families in the Capital Region.

### **Vision**

Our school inspires learning by honoring each child's potential in an environment designed to foster curiosity, collaboration, and innovation. Immersion in a bilingual, diverse Montessori school will offer our children the unique challenges and opportunities to become creators of solutions and leaders of a technologically advanced, environmentally vital, peaceful global community.

### **Diversity Statement**

From the beginning, inclusivity has been embedded in the mission, vision, and everyday experience of our school. Diversity is inherent in the structure of our community, and we embrace an ongoing commitment to equity at all levels of our organization. Our global outlook is reflective of our local model which is focused on peace, making joyful connections, and upholding our responsibilities to each other.

## Affiliations & Credentials

The Castle Island Bilingual Montessori is a nonprofit educational corporation, established as an independent elementary school. The school holds a provisional charter issued by the New York State Education Department as a non-public (independent, or private) school from the New York State Board of Regents for preschool through eighth grade. In 2022 Castle Island achieved accreditation through the American Montessori Society, upholding **high standards of excellence** and the **code of ethics**. The school is affiliated with the following organizations:

- American Montessori Society
- National Association of Independent Schools
- NYS Montessori Alliance
- NY Capital Region Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Albany Black Chamber of Commerce
- BrightSide Up (formerly the Capital Region Child Care Coordinating Council)

## Montessori Philosophy & Teaching Approach\*

*\*Adapted from "The Montessori Method," distributed by the **American Montessori Society***

Underlying the Montessori philosophy is the conviction that, carried within each child, is the person the child will become. To develop to the fullest physical, spiritual, and intellectual potential, the child must have freedom – within an ordered and self-disciplined environment.

Dr. Maria Montessori created what is known as “the prepared environment” in each classroom community. Among its features is an ordered arrangement of manipulative learning materials designed to be developmentally appropriate and aesthetically pleasing. Used in the non-competitive Montessori classroom, the materials allow children to develop at their own pace.

Dr. Montessori recognized that children learn best when they are self-motivated, and they naturally move themselves toward learning. Montessori guides, or teachers, prepare the environment, provide activities, function as reference persons and facilitators, and *observe* in order to guide children in “learning how to learn.” The children learn, motivated through the work itself, to persist in a chosen task.

Following this philosophy, the children at Castle Island Bilingual Montessori are free to learn as a result of having steadily acquired an inner discipline from exposure to both physical and mental order. This is the core of the philosophy. Habits of concentration, perseverance and thoroughness established in the early years produce a confident and competent learner in later years.

Montessori introduces children to the joy of learning and provides a framework in which individual and social discipline go hand in hand. Castle Island Bilingual Montessori proudly adheres to the American Montessori Society Code of Ethics:

### AMS Code of Ethics

We at the American Montessori Society hold ourselves to high ethical standards, and act in accordance to our commitment to build a more just and equitable world by adhering to the following principles. It is our hope and intention that the members of our organization, as advocates, ambassadors, and practitioners of the Montessori model of education, do the same.

#### Principle I: Commitment to Students & Their Families

In fulfillment of the obligation to students and their families, AMS will:

Share resources for protecting equitable access to all programs and services, regardless of each student's and family's race, color, culture, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, ancestry, national or ethnic origins, or any other classification protected by applicable law. Support practices that protect the physical health and psychological safety of each student and family.

Encourage independent action in the pursuit of learning, community building, and social action. Honor professional commitments, and maintain obligations and contracts while neither soliciting nor involving students or their families in schemes for commercial gain.

Keep in confidence information that has been secured in the course of professional service, unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law.

#### Principle II: Commitment to Staff & Colleagues

In fulfillment of the obligation to staff and colleagues, AMS will:

Protect equitable access to AMS employment, programs, services, and other opportunities regardless of each individual's race, color, culture, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity,

religion, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, ancestry, national or ethnic origins, or any other classification protected by applicable law.

Dedicate ourselves to recognizing, addressing, and eradicating all forms of racism and systemic oppression within our organization and programs. Represent one's own professional qualifications with clarity and true intent. Accept, offer, recommend, and assign professional positions and responsibilities on the basis of professional preparation and legal qualifications. Use honest, equitable, and effective methods of administering duties and conducting business.

#### Principle III: Commitment to the Montessori Movement

In fulfillment of the obligation to the Montessori Movement, AMS will:

Uphold and publicly support the greater vision of Dr. Maria Montessori through such initiatives as the development and promulgation of standards for affiliation of teacher education programs and accreditation of schools, the providing of professional development opportunities, and support of Montessori research and advocacy.

Ensure that our work honors the core components of Montessori education: properly trained Montessori teachers, multi-age classrooms, the uninterrupted work period, the prepared environment, and child-directed work.

#### Principle IV: Commitment to the Public

In fulfillment of the obligation to the public, AMS will:

Share perspectives consistent with all of the items set forth in the principles above, when engaged in public discussion. Distinguish private views from the official position of the American Montessori Society when engaged in public discussion.

*Adopted by the American Montessori Society Board of Directors January 2022*

## School Policies & Procedures

### Calendar

Castle Island's Academic Year begins in September and ends in June. A Summer Session for academic enrichment with Spanish immersion is offered during July and August.

The school maintains a calendar that generally resembles, but is not identical to, those of most local public school districts. Please check the Academic Calendar to make note of any dates when Castle Island is open and public schools are closed, or vice-versa. The Academic Calendar is available on the school website, hard copies are available in the office.

### Holidays

The guides provide cultural celebration lessons and acknowledgements, often accompanied by a hands-on artifact or material to observe or practice with, we do not celebrate national or other holidays.

The school strongly encourages the sharing of families' cultural and religious traditions, including recipes and family celebratory rituals through guest speaker presentations. We invite parents and community partners to share, *please contact your child's guide to set up an appointment to share your presentation with small groups, the class, or even to the entire school at the All-School Assemblies which are held the last Friday of each month at 11:15am.*

The school does celebrate together with school events for families that have an emphasis on building community and expanding our cultural horizons. Monthly events include three major all-school community gatherings: Heritage Potluck & Variety Show in December; bilingual children's theater production & bake sale in February; and, *Fería de Español*: spring concert and science, gastronomical, or artisan fair in April. For a complete list of family events, please refer to the Academic Calendar.

### Birthdays

Birthdays are special for children and the school recognizes this with a simple Montessori tradition in your child's classroom acknowledging your child's birthday with a walk around the "sun" signifying the years since they were born. Your child will carry a globe around a candle representing the sun while the guide tells a brief developmental story about the life of the child through the years since they were born. After the birthday song, your child blows out the candle.

Your child's Guide will reach out for details about your child to help write their Birthday story ahead of time. Birthday walks are generally held during Morning Meeting at 11:15am on your child's birthday (or the school day closest to it). Families are invited to attend and welcome to bring a healthy snack that is a favorite of your family to share with the rest of the class after lunch.

*One of our school's favorite traditions invites the birthday child to donate a book or a potted plant for the classroom or school library.*

This enables children to learn the value and pleasure of giving. Parents wishing to participate in this tradition should inscribe the book with the child's name and birth date and which birthday is being celebrated. Feel free to consult your child's guide about books that might be especially appreciated. Generally, non-fiction and fine literature are preferred. Books that feature licensed characters are not used in the classroom.

Birthday party invites work best distributed directly to specific families using the Family app Messages platform. If your family is planning a birthday party for your child, please do not distribute invitations through the school. Likewise, if your child is attending a party after school, do not send gifts to school with your child. Out of respect for all children's feelings, the school asks that you tell your child not to discuss parties during school that they will be attending or holding. It is not appropriate for guides and support staff to attend your child's parties. It is best not to invite any staff to attend children's birthday parties.

## **Daily Schedule**

The doors are open from 8:00-8:30am for the children's arrival and 8:30am School Day Start. Toddlers begin arrival at 8:30am, for a 9:00am Morning Program Start.

Each school day begins with a three-hour morning academic work cycle starting promptly at 8:30am for all children. Children enrolled in the Morning Toddler Program finish each day at 11:30am, and are dismissed from 11:15-11:30am. Children enrolled in the Full Day Program remain in school for lunch, recess, and an afternoon rest and/or second academic work period, including enrichment programs. The afternoon session for children enrolled in the Full-Day Program ends at 3:15pm, and are dismissed from 3:15-3:30pm.

## Enrichment Schedule

For children enrolled in Early Childhood Year 3, the kindergarten year, and in Elementary, grades 1 - 6, enrichment classes are provided each afternoons:

**Monday** Movement with Sports (Physical Education)

**Tuesday** Movement with Music (Dance)

**Wednesday** Creative Visual Arts (Art)

**Thursday** Music Composition and Performance (Music)

**Friday** Open Studio (Art/Music Practice)

## Arrival and Departure

Drop-Off and Pick-Up are through the carline at the school entrance. It is expected that for safety, vehicles form a single line starting by the wooden retaining wall. Children may board and depart from the first three vehicles in the line (between the traffic cones). Afterwards, these three vehicles may exit the parking lot and the carline may move forward to the wooden retaining wall. Children may enter or exit the first three vehicles in the line, and so on.

We appreciate our shared concern for children's safety in the parking lot. To ensure safety, the Drop-Off and Pick-Up procedure provides for three families to load or unload children at one time. **Parents may not park in a space in the lot and walk children through the carline.** The loading zone is also a cellphone- and idle-free zone.

*Arrival for the 8:30am School Day Start is between 8:00am-8:30am.*

We believe that children's school days start out best when they arrive at least 5 minutes before the start of the day. Please aim for your child to arrive at or before 8:25am, in order to be ready in each classroom for the morning work cycle (three-hour academic work period) at 8:30am.

Children who are enrolled for the **Morning Toddler Program** are dismissed at 11:15am. A \$75 fee is charged for every pick-up made after 11:45am.

Children who are enrolled in the **Full Day Program** are dismissed at 3:15pm. A \$75 fee is charged for every pick-up made after 3:30pm.

Children participating in the **Extended Day Program** from 3:15pm, must be picked up before 5:30pm. A \$75 fee is charged for every pick-up made after 5:30pm.

## **Recess and Outdoor Play**

Outdoor play takes place daily, weather and air quality permitting (please see Air Quality Protocols, under Health and Hygiene). Children are expected to arrive at school prepared for outdoor activities. Seasonally appropriate outdoor wear is required. Children will not go outdoors if the wind chill or temperature is below 18°F, or in the case of heavy rainfall or extreme heat (over 95°F). Additionally, if the Air Quality Index (AQI) is higher than 50, the children will stay inside.

## **Walking to a Park or Playground**

There is always a minimum of two staff, but there are usually 4-6 staff, walking the children to the park and back to school. We adhere to strict safety protocols for our walking trips:

- The children have a presentation during Morning Meeting about the focus required during the walks, including: no talking while crossing the streets; keeping hands held; not picking up any objects along the way; following the persons in the line in front of them; and following directions by carefully listening to the guides or support staff at all times.
- The children hold hands with a partner, and each staff person holds two children's hands - usually the youngest of the group. There is a staff person at the head and at the tail of the walking line; additional staff within the line.
- When we come to a crosswalk, we:
  - press the button for the crosswalk beacon and wait for the walk signal
  - wait for all vehicles to stop completely and make eye-contact with the drivers if possible to ensure that they see us
  - walk quickly and silently to the sidewalk
  - stop and wait on the sidewalk to ensure every person has crossed safely before proceeding.
- During recess time at the park/playground, the staff stand separately at the perimeters of the play area. They do not use their phones, but have them on with the volume on high, in their pockets, for emergency communications. Children are directed to play and run within a perimeter, explicitly described and shown to the children.

## **Indoor Recess**

The children in Early Childhood and Elementary have indoor recess during inclement weather in the multi-purpose space.

## **Authorized Adult to Pick-Up**

If an adult other than your child's legal guardian will be transporting your child to or from school on a regular basis, you should include this information on the Emergency Card.

Each time an adult who is not listed on the Emergency Card or an unfamiliar designated adult is to pick up your child, a written message or phone call from the child's guardian designating this adult to pick up **must be** provided to the school office ahead of time. Please inform the designated adult to be prepared to show photo identification and inform them of the car line protocol. We will not release a child without confirming that the designated adult has the guardian's permission to pick up the child and their identity is confirmed.

### **Bus Transportation**

Parents interested in having their children bussed to school must communicate with their home public school district's transportation department by **April 1<sup>st</sup>** each spring.

Bus transportation is available for children age 5 and older and is an arrangement between you and your home school district. Should you have any concerns or complaints about the nature of your bus service, contact your school district's transportation department. Day-to-day transportation arrangements with the drivers and dispatchers, including notification when children will not be riding the bus, should be made by the parent with the district's transportation department.

### **Attendance**

Your child's attendance is recorded daily after their arrival. Children who arrive after 8:30am are marked late.

When your child will be absent, please notify the school by making their absence via the Fam/ly App, or by phone or email as soon as possible.

If you plan an extended vacation, notify the office and make arrangements with your child's guide two weeks prior to your departure. Parents and guardians should be aware that extended time away from school can affect a child's progress. The school encourages families to plan vacations during school holidays.

If your child contracts an infectious disease or other illness (see Health Policy) and will be absent for an extended period of time, the school should be notified as soon as possible.

### **Separation during the First Days of School**

For new families, we want to reassure you that young children who are leaving home for the first time or are transitioning to a new school sometimes experience separation feelings of worry.

This is a normal reaction. Most children are excited about coming to school, but some are apprehensive at first, and this is quite natural. Often, gentle reassurance by a parent that everything is okay and that they will be returning is enough. Parents need to be aware that they, too, may be experiencing some separation anxiety, and that they may be feeling insecure about leaving their child. The child will surely sense those feelings and react accordingly. Children experiencing separation anxiety will be ushered from their parents by the guides as gently, carefully, and efficiently as possible.

*The school asks that the parents and guardians leave quickly with a reassuring comment addressed directly to the child, such as: **"See you soon! I love you."***

Children experiencing separation difficulties sense that even if a parent or guardian stays, once they seem happy, they will leave them anyway. A lingering parent adds to the child's stress, especially if the parent disappears once the child becomes at ease.

Be assured that your child will be supported through those tender and sometimes angry feelings, and that the guide will stay with your child, until they are ready to join the group or work in the class. Feel free to phone the office later in the morning if you would like reassurance that things are going well. Very often within minutes or even moments, the child is feeling content again.

If your child has a strong separation reaction, you may be asked to pick up your child earlier than usual. These measures can be very effective in helping the child who needs some extra time to transition to the school environment.

Separation anxiety can recur after vacation periods and even after weekends. Families' full support and close coordination with the child's guide will be helpful in resolving separation problems with sensitivity and care.

### **Child Observation & Assessment Practice: Progress Reports & Conferences**

At our school, observation is the foundation of the work that our Montessori guides do. Rather than directing every moment of a child's day, our guides spend time each day observing quietly and without interference, allowing the child to reveal their interests, developmental stage, pace of work, and emerging needs. This intentional, systematic observation is what allows a guide to know exactly which lesson, material, or challenge to offer next, and precisely when the child is ready to receive it.

Guides (teachers) record what they observe each day: how long a child sustains concentration on an activity (the child's "work cycle"), which materials draw their attention, how they interact with peers, and which developmental "sensitive period" order, language, movement, or sensory refinement, among others the child appears to be moving through. These daily notes are organized according to the Montessori curriculum albums for Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, Mathematics, and Cultural (sciences, geography, history, art and music), along with social-emotional growth, building a rich and continuously updated picture of who each child is becoming.

The way that we carefully and intentionally assess each child is through this same ongoing observation, not through standardized tests or letter grades. A guide (teacher) considers a skill mastered only once the child can perform it independently, with accuracy and confidence, after repeated practice and the classic Montessori three-period lesson with each piece of knowledge or skill: an introduction with naming, practice with recognizing, and mastery in recalling. This kind of assessment values the process of learning as much as the outcome, and it respects that every child reaches mastery on their own timeline.

This continuous evaluation is documented through individual portfolios, work samples, photographs, and skills checklists aligned with the Montessori lesson presentations, so that each child's growth is tracked thoroughly across every area of the curriculum throughout the school year.

### **Progress Reports & Conferences**

Progress reports at our school reflect the Montessori philosophy of assessment: they are narrative and descriptive, not based on traditional letter grades or comparisons between children. Each report draws on the observations the guide has gathered throughout the period and describes the child's development across Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, Mathematics, and Cultural (sciences, geography, history, art, and music), as well as growth in independence, concentration, self-discipline reports are not intended to rank a child against an external standard; instead, they document the child's individual learning journey: their trajectory, highlighting achievements, the materials and concepts presented, and the next areas of focus in the child's developmental plan.

Twice each year, we require an adult family member to attend a conference with your child's guide (teacher) to discuss in detail the written progress report, personalized to each child, describing academic, work habits, and social/emotional development to date. These conferences are by appointment - once during the Fall in November and then during the Spring in May. In January, we invite you to

observe inside the classroom as your child demonstrates some of their favorite learning materials. This event is also available by appointment with your child's guide and is called "Show What You Know"!

Parent-guide conferences are a natural extension of the written report: an opportunity for dialogue in which the guide (teacher) shares specific observations, examples of the child's work, and photographs of the environment, while parents offer their own perspective on the child's development at home. This two-way communication strengthens the family-school partnership essential to Montessori philosophy.

We encourage families to come to conferences with specific questions and to view the meeting not as a performance evaluation but as an opportunity to collaborate in supporting the child's overall development. Outside of scheduled conferences, families are always welcome to request an additional meeting with the guide (teacher), if they have concerns about their child's progress.

### **Child Discipline Policy ("Code of Conduct")**

At Castle Island Bilingual Montessori, children at every level, Toddler, Early Childhood 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 guides, 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 children, including those who have an IEP or 504 Plan.

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

When a child's behavior is outside acceptable school or classroom norms, guides 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.
3. The clarity of the guide's observation.
4. The impact of the child's action on the classroom/school community.
5. The frequency of occurrence, or pattern, of the negative behavior.

If a negative behavior continues over time, and the guides' interventions with communication and conflict resolution skills prove to be ineffective, the guide 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. A physical injury caused by a child's action will be summarized in either an **Incident Report** or a **Behavioral Safety Report**, which will be delivered to the parent or guardian within 24 hours, and usually on the same day of the incident.

Guides will contact parents by phone to inform them about any continuing behavior concerns in the classroom. Parents can be invited to in-person or virtual video meetings for conversations about the child as well. Phone or face-to-face meetings will be summarized in writing in a **Post-Meeting Report**, often in the form of an email message, shared with you and kept on file.

If the unkind and unsafe behavior continues, guides and administrators will involve parents in a conference to talk about next steps. Some of the following consequences for inappropriate behavior would 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, the school will contact the parents of all children involved immediately, depending upon the severity of the incident. The consequence to the child will take into account the circumstances listed above.

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

### **Reporting Discrimination or Harassment**

If anyone believes that they are the victim of discrimination harassment, ie "bullying," or has reason to believe that somebody else is the victim of discrimination

or harassment, the concern should be immediately reported to the School Director or to the Vice President of the board, via the Administrative Coordinator. The following can be expected from CIBM:

1. That person or their designee will conduct an immediate and thorough investigation.
2. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible, however, it is important to recognize that those with pertinent information will be interviewed as part of the investigation, including the accused.
3. The results of the investigation will be reported to the school's Leadership Team, made up of the School Director, Board of Trustees, Board of Advisors, and Administrative Coordinator, who will take swift and appropriate action toward any person who is found to have violated this policy, up to and including dismissal or removal from school.
4. The school strictly prohibits retaliation against anyone who, in good faith, brings forth a complaint or otherwise cooperates in the investigation as a witness.
5. When the investigation ends, a determination will be made, and the results will be communicated to the complainant, the alleged perpetrator, and, as appropriate, to all others directly concerned.

## Safety & Security

### Physical Illness or Injury Emergencies

In the event of a physical accident or sudden onset of illness, our staff will immediately seek proper care for any child. Each child's individual emergency instructions on file in the school office are consulted immediately, and the school will make every effort to reach the family or child's emergency contact person. If necessary, the child will be transported to the hospital by an ambulance. The Emergency Card, which includes the emergency medical treatment parent consent, will accompany the child so that paramedics can provide treatment immediately in case the parent cannot be reached. ***It is imperative that parents and guardians keep each child's Emergency Card information up-to-date.***

### Emergency School Closings

***CLOSED FOR THE DAY:*** When the school needs to be closed for the day due severe weather or facilities systems disruptions, families will be notified via Family App as soon as the determination is made and as early as possible before the start of the school day.

***CLOSED FOR THE MORNING:*** When there is a 2 hour delay, Castle Island opens at 10:30am. With Drop-Off from 10:30-11:00am. Morning Toddler Programs are canceled for that day.

***CLOSED FOR THE AFTERNOON:*** When the school needs to be closed for the day due severe weather or facilities systems disruptions, families will be notified via Family App as soon as the determination is made and as early as possible before before Full Day dismissal and/or before the Extended Day Program.

### Emergency During the School Day

In the event of a threat, defined as any violent action threatened against our school, staff, children or other building occupants, the following procedure will be followed:

The school staff are responsible for determining if a threat poses a real and direct possible danger to our school community. If a threat is determined to pose a real and direct possible danger to our children and staff, they will shelter in place or be evacuated as quickly as possible. For a shelter in place, or "lock down", the children and staff will remain hidden and quiet until notified, by the safety officer in charge, that the school facility is safe to resume the regular schedule. For an evacuation, the process is the same as that of our fire drill procedure.

Emergency personnel will be informed, and transportation will be arranged to take children home or to temporary shelter. **The primary location for the school's emergency evacuation shelter is 625 Broadway, NYS DEC; the secondary shelter location is 110 North Pearl Street, the First Church in Albany.** The children will remain under staff supervision at the designated evacuation site while parents and guardians are contacted to pick up the children who will await transportation home.

### **Emergency Prior to the Following School Day**

In the event of a threat, defined as any violent action threatened against our school, staff, children or other building occupants, the following procedure will be followed: *the school will make a determination about whether to close for the entirety of the following day. Families will be notified via the Family App as soon as the determination is made and as early as possible before the start of the school day.*

In the case of a potential spread of contagious illnesses, the school may make a decision about how to shift the educational program to remote learning and temporarily close the building. Careful consideration will be made when determining the best way to move forward. The school will consult our Health Advisory Team, who closely monitor local public health data, to help make an informed yet cautious determination. Because of the unpredictable nature of viruses and health epidemics, these decisions may change swiftly, and the school appreciates patience and cooperation from families when determining the best course of action to take.

### **Fire, Lock Down & Evacuation Drills**

In accordance with NY State law, the school conducts eight fire drills and four lock down drills each academic year. The Albany Fire Department makes periodic visits to conduct an annual fire safety inspection, and to present to the children fire safety protocols at school and at home.

The school participates in evacuation drills twice each year to practice evacuating from the school facility, and from the safe shelter location at the NYS DEC building, 625 Broadway. **Please check the Academic Calendar and add these dates to your calendar.**

### **Visitors**

All visitors, including current parents visiting during regular school hours, must sign-in and out in the office upon arrival/departure.

Visitors to the school building during the school day include: authorized adults to pick-up children; delivery drop-offs; inspectors; authorized parent or community

partner volunteers; authorized guest presenters; prospective enrolled children and their families; invited prospective employees and community partners; and members of the school's leadership team. Protocols for these visitors mandate that they always be escorted and accompanied by a member of school staff and never left alone with a child or group of children.

Current parents have access to visit their child at school, and are invited to conduct at least two classroom observations and to volunteer for a variety of activities throughout the school year. **When current parents visit for a reason aside from a planned observation or activity**, an appointment confirmed by school staff is required to maintain grace and courtesy among the school community and in the interest of maintaining cohesion of your child's learning environment.

The school's exterior doors are always locked; and, a direct visual of the visiting persons through the doors' windows is made before opening the door to welcome an expected visitor or to inquire about an unknown visitor. An unauthorized visitor may not be allowed inside the building and is invited to contact the school director by phone or email to schedule an appointment.

## Outfitting for School

### Clothing

It is important that your child is dressed appropriately for the full range of school day activities. Your child's clothes work best when they feel comfortable and are easy for your child to manage independently. **Plain play clothing is required.** Graphic shirts, dress-up costumes, long skirts including tutus, and hats indoors are not permitted. These items can pose logistical issues in the classroom by causing distractions, being hazardous, and creating competitive situations. This dress code is intended to maintain the cohesion of your child's learning environment.

***If your child arrives dressed inappropriately for the school day, you will be asked to return back to school immediately with a change of clothing that meets clothing requirements for your child to change into.***

Always ensure that your child is dressed as if they will be spending some time outdoors; this includes providing layers.

Clothing with elastic waistbands and velcro closings are encouraged. Metal clasps, buttons, belts, overall-style pants, and jumpers are strongly discouraged. Likewise, all shoes, inside and outside (including boots), should be easy for a child to put on and take off independently. High-heels, cowboy boots, open-toed shoes or sandals, and character slippers are prohibited.

### Indoor Shoes

All children are required to have a pair of rubber (or traction) soled, plain indoor shoes to wear inside the classroom that stay at school. These will be stored in each child's cubby basket. It is helpful if indoor shoes do not have laces; also please do not send clogs, flip-flops or any other shoes that might make distracting noises or lights, nor with licensed characters. Bedroom slippers without a rubber sole are not recommended.

### Outdoor Clothes

Because children dress themselves for outdoor play while at school, it is best to find items they can operate independently. For instance, children generally have success with large, plastic zippers, while small metal zippers can cause frustration. Remember to dress your child for the weather every day, layering is always a good idea. If it is raining, they will need a raincoat and boots. Send hats and mittens every day during winter. Properly fitting outdoor closed-toe footwear, such as sneakers, boots, or athletic-hiker sandals, is required. Loose sandals and flip-flops are unsafe on the playground equipment and are not permitted.

***All clothing should be labeled with your child's name.***

Winter boots are required during the winter, December through March, for cold and/or snowy weather, as are hats, gloves or mittens, and snow pants and jacket.

### **Extra Clothes**

Each child should have a complete change of clothing including underwear and socks at school. The clothing must be labeled and brought to school the first day. Your child's guides will provide a container with your child's name on it to store the clothes. There can be spills involving water and art materials, slips in mud outside, or dirt spills with gardening, as well as bathroom accidents during the day, and children are much happier to be in their own dry clothes.

*Soiled clothes will be returned at dismissal and a replacement set of labeled clothes must be sent to school the following day.*

## Personal Belongings

### Items from Home

Toys,\* electrical devices, and other personal belongings (such as jewelry, watches, games, etc) must remain at home. The presence of these items at school creates distracting and highly competitive situations. Your support in keeping toys at home is greatly appreciated.

A book or an artifact from home may be brought to school “News,” a Montessori term for “Show and Tell.”

*If your child brings home a piece of classroom material by mistake, please return it, because these materials are expensive, and more importantly, each piece is an intentional component of a Montessori material, which can only function as a complete set.*

### Rest (or Nap) Linens and Sleeping Toy

Children who nap are required to bring a sleep sack, or “nap mat,” to school. These will be sent home every other Friday to be washed and returned to school the following Monday. Children who nap may also bring a stuffed animal or doll to sleep with. These toys must stay with their nap mat and/or in their backpacks, when it is not nap time.

**\*Nap Time “Toy”:** doll or stuffed animal (ie stuffie) permitted for children who nap and are accessed only during nap time.

## Curriculum

### Levels

The Castle Island Bilingual Montessori implements a Montessori curriculum. A detailed description of the curriculum is available on the school website. For curriculum questions, please inquire with your child's guides.

[Toddler](#) (ages 1 - 3)

[Early Childhood](#) (ages 3 - 6, including PreK and Kindergarten)

[Lower Elementary](#) (ages 6 - 9, 1st-3rd grades)

[Upper Elementary](#) (ages 9 - 12, 3rd-6th grades)

Adolescence (12 - 14, 7th & 8th grades, ie Middle School)

### Assessment and Testing

Assessment of children's work at Castle Island Bilingual Montessori is focused on each child's academic growth and attainment of specific educational milestones and outcomes. The school endeavors to provide parents and guardians with high quality information about what their child has accomplished in school and which milestones to achieve next are anticipated.

Twice each Academic Year in November and in April, the school provides you with written descriptions of their child's social development and a summary of the academic work they have been doing in each subject area in your child's **Progress Report**. In lieu of grades, these reports describe what work your child has accomplished and is still working on independently and with their guides.

Guides will also report on developmental milestones attained, particular academic accomplishments, and concerns, if any. This Progress Report is reviewed during Parent-Guide Conferences. **Parents and guardians are required to attend both conferences each year; please mark your calendar with the Parent-Guide Conference dates; there is no school on these days.**

For Elementary Levels, your child is invited to the conference as well. For all Levels: Toddler through Elementary, Pre-Conference Parent Observation Visits are expected; *see details in the "Parent/Family Participation" section below.*

### Excursions (AKA Field Trips or Outings)

Castle Island offers Excursions throughout the school year. Most Excursions are within walking distance and for some, vehicle transportation is required with a

rented van or bus, or with parent drivers of personal vehicles. Transportation and any ticket or other expenses are included in the tuition as often as possible. Sometimes trip fees are requested from families. The school will notify parents of all Excursions the week prior to the scheduled trip.

*The General Release Form within the Emergency Card authorized by parents or guardians includes: field trip, transportation, and emergency medical treatment consent as well as authorizes your child to participate in class field trips.*

### **Montessori Resources**

There are several sources of information about the Montessori philosophy and its practical approach to education. The school can recommend books, periodicals and videos available for parents.

As a starting place to learn more about Montessori philosophy, method, and curriculum, you are invited to visit our [school website](#), and our school's accreditation association, [American Montessori Society](#).

We recommend these books:

*Montessori Madness* by Trevor Eissler

*The Science behind the Genius*, by Angeline Stoll Lillard

*Montessori at Home*, also in Spanish, *Montessori en Casa*, by Simone Davies

### **Support for Children with Special Needs**

See the CIBM [Resource Directory](#) and [NYS Council on Children and Families](#).

### **Bilingual Education**

See the CIBM School [Website](#).

### **Resources for the Transition to High School**

*Coming soon!*

## Parent/Family Participation

There are many ways for parents, guardians, grandparents and other caregivers and family members to participate within the school community. In addition to helping out with parent or family events, we invite help in the classroom during the school day or committee membership to support and sustain various enrichment programs, for example: care of the gardens in our Outdoor Classroom!

**During the school day, the staff appreciate volunteer help from parents as door greeters, gardeners, classroom readers, guest speakers, recess helpers, and excursion chaperones.** The school also benefits from parent volunteers who help lower our facilities maintenance costs by assisting with general upkeep of the property. **We invite you to offer additional assistance with an area of expertise you think would benefit the school.**

### Parent/Guardian/Family Conduct Policy

For participation at school sponsored family events either on school grounds or held elsewhere, including daily drop-off and pick-up, parents must adhere to the following:

1. Follow the parking rules,
2. Treat all school property with care,
3. Respect school policies that support the safe and effective operations of the school and its community,
4. All visitors to the school during school hours must sign a visitors' register located at the school office and parents will comply with all safety and emergency procedures in place at CIBM,
5. When attending any kind of school assembly or public meeting, parents will listen respectfully, in the same manner required of students and staff and will refrain from creating any noise or disturbance during performances or speeches by students, staff or visitors,
6. A parent may not interrupt or distract a teacher while classroom instruction or learning activities are underway,
7. When visiting a classroom, parents accept the authority of the teacher and that they are in attendance on the teacher's terms,
8. CIBM staff value parental involvement and assistance, but they may ask a parent to leave for any reason, such as:
  - Parental assistance not being required,
  - Parental presence in the classroom or at the activity is disturbing or distracting to a student or teacher,
  - The parent is not in control of their emotions.

## **Volunteering**

### **Guest Speaker**

Sharing an expertise, family tradition, or travel experience with the class is a wonderful way to contribute to the classroom curriculum. If you would like to make a presentation to your child's class community as a guest speaker or have ideas about special events, please contact your child's guide. Guides will be happy to help you integrate your topic with the community's curriculum.

### **Observations**

Parents and families often ask what they can do to support their child's educational experience. Our answer is: become well-educated about the Montessori philosophy and method. In a Montessori school like ours, a classroom observation is one of the key contributions you can make to ensure your child's success at school.

The assessment tools your guides provide, such as conferences, meetings, and the written Progress Reports, will be twice as effective if you have spent time observing inside your child's classroom. Observation time increases your understanding of the classroom and allows you and your child's guides to have much richer discussions about their classroom experience. We ask you to make a serious commitment to make one or two observation visits during the school year. You can schedule an observation by phone or via the Fam/ly App.

When observing, it is helpful to remember that a parent's presence may affect their child's behavior, and observations may not always be true indicators of a child's typical classroom behavior. In these cases, observations serve more to give parents or guardians a feel for the daily activity of the classroom and the range of work being done by the children. The school usually schedules observations beginning in November, after the classroom has become a normalized community. Should parents or guardians desire an observation prior to November, they are invited to check with their child's guide.

### **Parent Leadership**

We believe in the intercultural and innovative approach to education the school offers. Our intentionally inclusive community is important to us, and we welcome you! Here, your voice matters and is heard. Together we shape the school's vision towards the school mission.

## **Board of Advisors**

The Board of Advisors (BOA) is the parent/community leadership group that supports Castle Island Bilingual Montessori school with fundraising, event planning and community engagement & outreach, much like a conventional Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). The school's governance group, Board of Trustees (BOT), looks to the Board of Advisors for input and recommendations.

Monthly Board Meetings and quarterly Community Forums are the regularly scheduled commitments along with communications and additional meetings as needed.

### **BOA ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **Co-Chairs (two members)**

**Expected Time per Month** 4-8 hours **Term Length** 2 years

- Parent and school community communications
- Community Forum facilitation
- Monthly BOA meeting facilitation and agenda coordination
- Oversight of feedback forms
- Point of contact with school through Community Engagement & Outing Coordinator
- Media representation
- Attending BOT meetings to give relevant reports to BOA

#### **Treasurer (one member)**

**Expected Time per Month** 2-4 hours **Term Length** 2 years

- Budget and financial management and oversight
- Fundraising and grant identification
- Bank account and cash flow management
- Preparing financial reports for tax filing

#### **Secretary (one member)**

**Expected Time per Month** 2-4 hours **Term Length** 1 year

- Meeting documentation
- Board member communications point person
- Record keeping
- Ensuring compliance: by-laws & legal requirements for 501(c3)

#### **Classroom Liaisons (three members)**

**Expected Time per Month** 1-2 hours **Term Length** 1 year

- Point person between parents and guides
- Send reminder messages to parents about events
- Gather parent questions to share with guides
- Provide parent feedback to the BOA

### **Community Forum Meeting**

The Advisors sponsor quarterly Community Forum Meetings. All current and alumni parents and grandparents, community partners, and school staff and leadership are invited to attend!

### **Committees**

Parents are invited to join BOA committees including Outdoor Classroom, Events, Theater Arts, Fundraising & Library! Please reach out to the [BOA](#) for more information on how to sign up!

## Events

### Parent & Family Orientation

**Back-to-School Parent Orientation** is held before the first day of school on:

#### **Tuesday, September 8**

- **New Parents** 10:30am-12:30pm
- **Returning Parents** 11:00am-1:00pm

This is a required meeting during which you will meet the staff, familiarize yourself with school policies and protocols, and prepare for a successful Academic Year start.

### Child Orientation (and Toddler “Phase-In”)

**Early Childhood** *Comunidad Amarilla* **Wednesday, September 9, by Appointment**  
**Elementary** *Comunidad Azul* **Wednesday, September 9, the First Day of School**  
**Toddler** *Comunidad Verde* **Wednesday - Friday, September 9-11, by Appointment**

Your child’s guide will schedule your appointment and communicate class community specific information in August to prepare for your child’s orientation.

### Curriculum Events

Parents are invited to visit school with their children for family events, found in the [Academic Calendar](#). Three special annual events are highlighted here:

- **“Copos de Nieve” Variety Show & Heritage Potluck**  
Saturday, December 12, 11am-1pm @ Zimmerman Hall, First Church in Albany  
*A potluck is a gathering of our school community where each family brings a different dish of food from their family kitchens to share with others. All school community members are invited to sign up to perform an act! Singing, dancing, juggling, joke-telling and more are welcome for the show!*
- **“Show-What-You-Know” Curriculum Demonstration**  
Tuesday - Thursday, January 26-28, by appointment @ School  
*This is a special time for children to show parents or another special guest the type of work they do on a daily basis.*
- **“Féria de Español” Science/Artisan/Gastronomic Fair**  
Friday, March 19, 3-5pm @ Albany Black Chamber of Commerce  
*This is a culminating family event – part Curriculum Fair and part Spring Concert – during which the children display academic and arts content, presented in Spanish. Songs and stories are performed in Spanish. Our Féria is on a three-year curriculum rotation: science, gastronomic, and artisan. This is an excellent opportunity to invite relatives to visit!*

## **Parent Workshops**

Informative sessions are special events for parents held each school year. Saturday morning workshops hosted by the teachers offer you an opportunity to learn in detail about how bilingual education is presented and its benefits for your child; and about how the different Montessori curriculum areas develop your child's learning.

These workshops are scheduled for **on Saturdays, right before Prospective Parent Open Houses, and your family is invited to volunteer as greeters and ambassadors at these events after the workshops conclude:**

**Montessori Deep Dive + Bilingual Ed Workshop** Saturday, November 14, 9-11am  
*@ Albany Black Chamber of Commerce*

**Montessori Deep Dive + Curriculum Area Workshop** Saturday, January 30, 9-11am  
*@ Castle Island Bilingual Montessori School*

## Communication

Consistent communication between parents, staff and children is the underpinning of a strong and healthy school community. Our school's norms for respectful communication, in addition to several ways to keep information flowing, are described here:

### Communication at School

The school's goal is to provide the children with the ability to communicate in a respectful and constructive manner. One of the ways this is accomplished is by providing informal communication and social skills instruction in the classroom.

To start each day, children are greeted individually each morning by name and when possible in their home language, especially if the home language is English or Spanish, as Castle Island is a Spanish Immersion elementary Montessori school.

The school believes that one of the best ways to teach communication skills to children is to model them as adults. It is a norm among the school staff that when someone has a concern, they go straight to the person with whom they have the concern. When conflict arises, the staff exhibits reflective listening skills, and when necessary, colleagues are asked to facilitate a difficult conversation. The school encourages all members of the school community to embrace this approach to relationships and communication.

Communication tools available:

### Website

Program Overview including:

- The Curriculum Scopes for [Early Childhood](#), [Lower Elementary](#) & [Upper Elementary](#)
- [Our Bilingual Model](#)
- [Family Handbook](#), [Safety Plan](#), [Resource Directory](#), [Carline Procedures](#), etc.
- [Health Policies](#)
- [Parent Group: Board of Advisors \(Family & Friends of CIBM\)](#)

### Fam/ly App

- Photo sharing
- Document uploading
- Messaging:
  - To your child's Lead Guide, After Care Coordinator or Admin Team

- To the classroom community
  - To the entire school community
  - To a selected parent
- Newsletters & Updates from the Classroom Communities and the School
- Event Registration & Confirmation Notifications
- Emergency School Closings

### Guide-Parent Conferences

In person, and by appointment in November & April.

### Who is the best person to contact at school?

- **Guides** Contact your child's lead guide regarding academic progress, social development, changes at home, classroom volunteering, class events, the snack schedule, etc.
- **Administrative Coordinator** Contact Sara regarding your **Family** account, billing, registration for Extended Day; Parents' Night Out, or other programs; and, for Emergency Card updates.
- **Community Engagement Coordinator** Contact Zan volunteering at school, Parent & Family Events, Parents' Night Out, and other programs; and, for more information about parent leadership..
- **Board of Advisors** Contact the Parent Liaison for your child's class or Co-Chairs: DeeDee & Zan for information about Family Events regarding volunteering, projects, fundraising, or other parent involvement at school
- **School Director** Contact Diane regarding general school questions including events, fundraising, Parent/Partner Ambassador Program, the Fall & Spring Parent Workshops, or for concerns or ideas for improvement.

If you have a concern about what is happening in your child's community classroom, we ask you please contact your child's guide first. This allows parents and guardians to get immediate action on their concern, and it also allows for the opportunity to collect accurate information from the people directly involved with the situation. To contact your child's lead guide, parents or guardians may send a message via Family App or via email, during the Academic Year.

If, after approaching the child's guide, parents or guardians feel their concerns have not been adequately addressed, they may contact the School Director, Diane M Nickerson, or the Administrative Coordinator, Sara E Mercado. Further, parents and guardians are invited to reach out to additional members of the leadership team: [Board of Trustees](#) or the [Board of Advisors](#).

The school will arrange further discussion, a meeting of involved parties, or a facilitated conversation to create a win-win solution that meets the needs of everyone involved.

### **Friday Folder**

Each child will receive a Friday Folder at the beginning of the year. The Friday Folder will go home each Friday, and will contain your child's work that was conducted on paper and may contain school notes for you. In addition, if there is anything you want to send back to the office or to your child's guide the following Monday, you may send it in the folder. In our effort to be green, school and class community news, the Weekly Update and *¡Noticias!* will be sent by the Family App.

The school needs cooperation from families to make this system work. Friday Folders need to be returned the following Monday so that the school can send them out again each Friday. This is also a great opportunity for your child to practice responsibility. Each child's name will be written on his or her Friday Folder, so there should be minimal confusion, even when a folder gets misplaced.

### **Class Community Monthly Newsletter: *¡Noticias!***

The guides send a monthly newsletter for their class community via the Family App Messages. This includes an update about topics to be studied and practiced in the classroom, including reminders of upcoming celebrations and parent and family events, along with Snack Week and Birthday Walk reminders for the month.

### **School Wide Weekly Newsletter: *La Semana***

The School sends out a weekly newsletter via Family App Newsfeed regarding upcoming events and highlighted photos from the week's activities each Wednesday.

### **Website & Socials**

The school's website includes information about the enrollment process, a description of the Montessori curriculum for all levels, and the school's Academic Calendar. Parents are invited to share the school's website and social media posts with family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues to help promote enrollment growth for the school:

Facebook: /CastleIslandBilingualMontessori

Instagram: @castleislandmontessori

Linkedin: /company/castle-island-bilingual-montessori/

## **Progress Reports & Parent-Guide Conferences**

Parent-Guide Conferences *are required* and are scheduled with the parents and guardians of all children in November and April.

***These are essential conversations about your child(ren)'s progress and we require that you commit to attending both each year.***

During conferences, guides provide parents with a conversational description of the child's current academic progress, work habits, and social development, as well as the written Progress Report. Conferences keep parents informed of their child's progress and keep guides abreast of family changes or parental concerns. In addition to scheduled conferences, parents or guides may request additional conferences as the need arises.

## Health & Hygiene

### General Well-Being

An updated Emergency Card must be completed and filed with the school upon the first day of each school year of your child's enrollment.

If your child requires emergency medication, please have your doctor sign a clearly written order for such and bring the note and medication to the school office at the beginning of the school year. All children enrolled at the school must be immunized in accordance with New York State law via the guidance described by the Department of Health; and, as of 2019 legal exemptions are no longer permitted in order for a child to be enrolled at Castle Island.

The school requires a collaborative effort to mitigate illness at school. **The most important thing parents can do is to keep their children home when they are sick.** The following is a list of symptoms parents can use when deciding whether their child should be sent to school. Do not send a child to school on days when any of the following symptoms are present: fever, rash, cough, discharge of discolored mucus from the nose, diarrhea, vomiting, headache or sore throat.

*It is required to follow the guidelines listed below  
to keep all children and adults healthy at school:*

- Children must be symptom free for at least 24 hours before attending school. For example: If a child throws up on Monday, they should not return to school until Wednesday or later.
- If a child has had a fever, they need to stay home at least another full day before returning to school. For example, see above.
- If a child has yellow or green mucus, they may be infectious, and should be seen by a doctor. If a child has transparent mucus due to allergies, a signed document from your child's primary healthcare provider may be submitted; and your child may attend school.
- If a child has a bronchial cough, parents need to verify with the child's primary healthcare provider to ascertain if they are contagious.
- If a child has strep throat, pink eye, COVID, flu, or another bacterial contagious infection, confirm that they have been on antibiotics for at least 24 hours before returning to school. Keep them home longer if they still seem sick, tired or weak – *give them the time they need to recover fully.*
- When a child is sick enough to warrant a call or visit to your primary healthcare provider, please remember to ask the doctor or nurse when the child may safely return to school without infecting others.
- **If unsure whether to send a child to school, parents can ask themselves: "If this was another child, would I want my child near these germs at school?"**

Children who become sick at school will be sent to the office and their parents will be called for them to be picked up to go home to visit a health care center as soon as possible.

If your child's guide observes illness symptoms in your child while at school, the school will call you to come and pick them up. Often it is a hard decision for parents to make in the morning, and the school knows that parents use their best judgment. Sometimes, when children are just getting over an illness, they need an extra day at home. If the school sees that a child needs some more time at home, parents will be notified.

If it is suspected that a child has contracted a highly communicable condition, all families of children in that child's class will be notified.

To protect the health of all the children, in the absence of a doctor's note, the guide will be the final authority on whether the child is healthy enough to rejoin the class.

Families can mitigate illness at school by doing all they can to keep their child's immune system strong. Make sure they get plenty of sleep. Children need around ten hours each night. Families should ensure that their child is well nourished. The school encourages families to foster a relaxed environment at home with predictable routines, and to make time for regular exercise and outdoor play.

### **Air Quality Protocols**

For recess and other outdoor activity, the staff and children will remain indoors for recess or other previously scheduled outdoor activity while there is a NYSDOH Air Quality Advisory or if the air quality index is higher than the Moderate Level of 100.

### **Wellness Protocol in case of Infectious, Contagious Disease**

- **MASKS** Face masks are optional as long as the Albany County COVID-19 Community Level is not classified as "High," and the person has not been exposed to a positive COVID-19 case. The school will take a layered approach as recommended by the CDC, and will implement universal masking when the COVID Community Level is designated as High in Albany County. The school will use the term "Mask Friendly" to ensure that every individual is included, whether or not they choose to wear a mask.

- **COVID EXPOSURE** All individuals, vaccinated or not, will be required to wear a well-fitted mask for at least 10 days if exposed to a positive case, ie Close Contact, with the first day of exposure being Day 0.
- **COVID POSITIVE** COVID-19 Positive individuals will be required to quarantine for 10 days with the first day of symptoms as Day 0.
- **ILLNESS SYMPTOMS** Individuals will be required to Stay at Home or Return to Home for any sore throat, headache, stomach ache, fever, vomit, diarrhea, non-transparent mucus or undiagnosed coughing condition.
- **TESTING** Testing is recommended for people with symptoms of COVID-19 as soon as possible after symptoms begin. Weekly COVID-19 testing will no longer be conducted at school.
- **SCHOOL ATTENDANCE** Individuals must be Symptom Free for at least 24 hours in order to return to in-person attendance at school, for diagnosis (cold, flu, etc) that is not COVID, Monkeypox, or other communicable disease (i.e. Chicken Pox, etc).
- **CHRONIC, NON-CONTAGIOUS SYMPTOMS** A report from an individual's PCP describing chronic symptoms (ie clear mucus from seasonal allergies) is required for in-person attendance and for exemption from isolation/quarantine for particular symptoms described by their PCP as chronic.
- **VENTILATION** High-capacity air purifiers with HEPA filters will continue to be operated continuously throughout the school day and for at least an hour after the end of the school in each of the classroom and shared use spaces at school.
- **CLEANING & DISINFECTING** The school staff will continue to clean and disinfect surfaces, especially eating surfaces, chairs, furniture, electronics (land-line phones, copiers, etc) and touch points.

## Food

Castle Island believes that a healthy diet is an important part of a child's school day. A snack is available during the morning in the classroom. Classrooms provide a snack table where children may prepare their own snack, pour their own water, and socialize with a friend. The time for each child to enjoy a morning snack is individualized, with no special time set aside for "snack time." Children are encouraged to listen to their "internal clocks" and decide when they are ready to eat. Likewise, children who do not wish to snack do not need to interrupt their work unless they choose. Children also prepare such food as fresh fruit, vegetables, cheese, bagels, hard-boiled eggs, orange juice, etc. as part of the Practical Life curriculum, and includes flower arranging with fresh flowers donated by families.

Simple food preparation exercises and cooking experiences are provided on a regular basis, and supplement the snack offering. At the start of each semester, your child's guide will send a list of items to bring (usually some vegetables, fruit, cheese, and crackers or cereal) along with the snack calendar assignments at the beginning of the school year with reminders monthly. ***Every family will be assigned to donate snack for the class for a week, including fresh flowers, at least twice each year. Please remember that our School is a peanut and tree-nut free school and foods with these nuts are strictly prohibited.***

***Children enrolled in the Full Day program must bring lunch to school each day at Drop-Off.*** The school encourages "healthy choices" for the children's lunches, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, sandwiches, grains, and natural juices or milk. *Foods such as candy, soda, juice, or pre-packaged items that are high in sugar are strongly discouraged.* Families should contact their classroom guides if they need suggestions for kid-friendly lunches that taste good and are healthy for children.

Parents and guardians are encouraged to help their child take responsibility for making lunch. The school has found that children who help prepare their own lunches are more likely to eat them. A healthy lunch that the child actually eats will enhance performance and attention during the afternoon.

Lunchtime is an educational opportunity, and it is included in the school's curriculum. Each classroom has developed a lunchtime routine as part of our "Grace and Courtesy" curriculum. This encourages children to develop the same courteous table manners and cleanup skills that you expect of them at home.

Because Food Preparation is a part of the school's Practical Life curriculum, **it is important that parents let us know about any food restrictions or allergies that their child may have.** Outside of classroom snacks prepared by children, NO food or candy may be distributed to children at the school. Guides check the Emergency Cards to learn about any allergies or dietary preferences of the families in their room and are in charge of ensuring these are honored.

### **Food Allergies, "No Nut" Policy**

The school has taken several steps to reduce the risk to our children who have a variety of food allergies. When a child comes to us with an allergy, the school asks parents for specific medical information about their child, and the school ensures that any adult who works with our children has this information.

There are some children with lethal nut allergies – this means that exposure to even a speck of nut protein could send these children into life-threatening anaphylactic shock. In addition, there may be children with allergies to egg proteins, lactose products, wheat, and many other things.

As a result, the school has taken steps to further limit the risk to our children with allergies. The classroom teachers modify snack lists to accommodate children's allergies to wheat, eggs, dairy, peanuts, other nuts and other items. In addition, the school asks that all parents refrain from sending food containing tree nuts, peanuts or nut or peanut butter with their children to school. In addition, the school has eliminated nuts, peanuts and peanut butter from all of our programs attended by children, including Enrichment Sessions and Parents' Night Out, and includes the exclusion of *Nutella*.

***Only "sunbutter," a spread made from sunflower seeds, may be consumed at school.***

The School maintains preventative practices: asking children to wash their hands before entering the classroom for lunch, (and faces if they had peanut butter for breakfast), having children wash their hands after lunch, and restricting children from sharing food with one another. The community's cooperation in making the school environment as safe as possible for all children is greatly appreciated.

For more information about food allergies, please go to the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN), [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org) for more information.

## **Pets**

The classrooms often have a pet in an aquarium. Please, let us know if your child has any allergies to pet with hair, ie. hamsters, etc.

Visiting pets on school grounds must remain on a leash and in their owner's care. In order to keep our property child-friendly, please clean up after your pet.

## Enrollment

### Enrollment Ambassadors

We invite you to be part of our mission to grow Castle Island Bilingual Montessori and bring the Montessori approach to more families in our community. When you refer a family to enroll their child, our entire school community strengthens. Each new child adds to our rich bilingual environment and helps our classrooms reach the capacity needed to provide meaningful peer learning experiences.

By referring friends, colleagues, and neighbors, you help sustain and expand our school's impact. We are deeply grateful for your support and belief in what we do.

Invite your friends, family, and neighbors to [schedule a tour found here, on the school website.](#)

### Open Houses

The school usually hosts three Open Houses each year for interested families and friends of the school: October, March and April.

Current families are encouraged to attend Open Houses to help promote the education offered here to prospective families. We invite you to attend at least one each Academic Year.

### Enrollment Policy

Children are enrolled at Castle Island Bilingual Montessori without regard to race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin, ancestry, or physical or mental abilities. The school enrolls with intention to create a rich and diverse classroom community that maximizes children's opportunities for learning and success. Children are admitted on a first-come, first-served basis, with the expectation that preference is given to children and their siblings who have attended Montessori programs, and who might have a multi-lingual background.

Administrators of Castle Island Bilingual Montessori will determine appropriate class size and corresponding enrollment levels for each school year. Prospective enrolled children and their parents are invited to visit the school, observe children in action in the classroom community learning environments, and meet with the School Director. Information from the child's previous school's records and teacher(s) will be taken into account in making the final admissions decision.

### **Income-Based Tuition Scholarships**

Castle Island Bilingual Montessori is committed to providing financial access to families on the basis of clearly demonstrated need. When school costs appear beyond reach, families are urged to apply for a tuition scholarship.

The primary goals of Castle Island Bilingual Montessori' tuition scholarships are to support the school's present families and to promote diversity in the school community. Our mission is to make the school accessible for families that want a bilingual Montessori education for their child(ren).

Interested families will submit evidence of annual household income by providing a copy of their most recent tax return or similar documentation. Further information about the tuition scholarship process is available from the School Director and on the school's website.

### **Conditions of Tuition Scholarships**

Tuition scholarships are awarded on a one-year basis only. A child receiving a tuition scholarship is not automatically guaranteed that scholarship will be provided the following school year, although Castle Island Bilingual Montessori shall strive to give these children first and careful consideration.

Tuition scholarships may not be renewed in a case where a family receiving a scholarship fails to keep the balance of their account up-to-date. It is the obligation of the family to ensure that all appropriate applications and documentation are submitted by the due date.

### **Tuition (Sliding-Scale Scholarship Policy)**

Castle Island Bilingual Montessori is a nonprofit independent school which is funded almost entirely by tuition. Tuition for the school made through your payments funds the teachers' salaries, our facilities, insurance, professional development and association fees; as well as: supplies, materials and enrichment for your child.

Castle Island Bilingual Montessori reserves the right to terminate the child's enrollment for non-payment of tuition. Parents are expected to make timely payments based on the agreed upon tuition payment schedule in each child's enrollment contract. Late fees can apply for untimely payments according to the enrollment contract. Upon enrollment withdrawal payment of the lesser of the remaining owed tuition or 30% of the tuition balance is required.

Payments will be made online via the school management software: ***Family.***

All families with an annual household income under \$200,000 qualify for a scholarship amount on a sliding scale for children *ages 5 through 12 (kindergarten through grade 6)*, offered annually beginning in February. There are also a limited number of income-based scholarships for children enrolled ages 3 and 4 years old. See “Exceptions to the sliding scale” below.

Please request a copy of the CIBM Tuition Scholarship Sliding Scale for information regarding tuition amounts for children ages 5 to 12 based on annual household gross income.

***Exceptions to the sliding scale:***

In addition to the scholarships provided to families by the sliding scale tuition method, the director has the discretion to designate a total of six additional scholarships, per school year for either of the following situations:

- **Children Ages 3 & 4, annual household income max of \$200,000**

Families with an annual household income under \$200,000 may be granted a tuition amount on the sliding scale offered annually beginning in March on a first-come, first-served basis until the limit of the six additional scholarships has been met.

- **Children Ages 3 - 12, annual household income max of \$40,000**

In addition to the scholarships provided to families by the sliding scale tuition method, the director has the discretion to designate scholarships at the adjusted tuition amount of \$5,850, based on family need and a maximum annual income under \$40,000, for children ages 3 - 12, offered annually beginning in January on a first-come, first-served basis, until the limit of the six additional scholarships has been met.

**Enrollment Deposit due at the time on Enrollment Contract Signing**

Each family is required to submit a \$500 deposit per child with the enrollment or re-enrollment contract each year. The **\$500 Enrollment Deposit** is applied to the school year tuition amount assigned to each child, and is nonrefundable.

**Sibling Discount Policy**

- First child = full tuition amount
- First sibling = a discount of 20% of the full tuition amount is applied
- Second sibling = a discount of 40% of the full tuition amount is applied

## School Supplies & Classroom Materials Wish List

There are several items that the school would love to obtain to enhance the children's learning experiences - improving the campus and enriching the classroom environment. A detailed Wish List is found on the school's website at [castleislandmontessori.org](http://castleislandmontessori.org). If families would like to purchase a particular item or have something they think might add value to the school, they should please check with their child's guide or a member of the administrative team. We greatly appreciate families' support and generosity.

## Appendix

[CIBM Financial Appendix](#)

[CIBM Resource Directory](#)

[CIBM Safety Plan](#)

### **DRAFT 2026-2027 PENDING REVISIONS/ADDITIONS:**

- "HW Packet" when children are out
- Balance \$0 before School Records Released for transfers to another school