



## FUTURE BUILDING

# 2025-2026 IMPACT REPORT

Sustainability Campaign  
and  
Expansion Plan



Castle Island  
Bilingual Montessori

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# *Introducción*

Castle Island generates a vibrant community that sustains and strengthens our school. As we lay the groundwork for long-term sustainability to ensure the continued transformative impact of a Castle Island education to more children throughout the Capital Region, we are inviting our community to walk with us.

As our economy and world become more unpredictable, and financial hardship knocks at every door, safeguarding education for young people is more essential than ever.

To meet these challenges our Board of Trustees and school leadership are pursuing a multipronged strategy: expanding donor outreach and fundraising, forming new community partnerships, and exploring structural models that will allow our mission to thrive.

Community engagement is vital in this journey. The support raised here directly supports our students and helps close the budget gap, while also fueling the creativity and resilience that define Castle Island.

Castle Island has always been more than a school - it is a safe, loving community where children flourish, and families come together in shared purpose. With your partnership, we will not only weather this challenge but emerge stronger, ensuring that our mission endures for generations to come.

Thank you for your dedication to Castle Island and for standing with us during this critical time.

We were deeply grateful.

# Who We Are

## OUR PURPOSE

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

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.

## OUR MISSION

Since our founding in 2012, we are focused on enhancing our core values for learning in community. At Castle Island our School Community is:

**Innovative.**  
**Intercultural.**  
**Inclusive.**

Castle Island provides world-class and accessible education fully immersed in English and Spanish in a fully implemented Montessori learning environment for children of the Capital Region of New York.

**“We can only help  
humanity if we aid  
the child to be better  
adapted to  
the **future** of civilization.”**

Dr. Maria Montessori  
The 1946 London Lectures, p. 102

**Community**

6

**Bilingual Teachers**  
(+ Bilingual Admins)

**Bilingualism**

The only elementary school located in Downtown Albany



The only accredited Montessori program in Albany, serving students through Grade 6

50%

of our students access enrollment from our sliding scale tuition model

**Diversity**

56

**Students**

**Our impact over the last 13 years is measurable.**

The community we have built is vibrant and strong representing a cross-section of City of Albany Neighborhoods.

**Our teachers are highly qualified and specialists in individualizing lesson presentations, tailoring academic learning to each student.**

Our students portray confidence and agency with adept academic skills and knowledge mastery across the curriculum.

# Sustainability Campaign

Our **Sustainability Campaign** has launched with these three goals to successfully **bridge our budget shortfalls** due to an overextension of tuition accommodations; boost our enrollment to reach our full capacity; and, restructure our sliding scale tuition model to balance financial stability while still upholding our values of equity and accessibility.

## Increased Access

**2** Equitable access to our education has always been a foundational element of our Mission since our start in 2012. Over the last 13 years we have offered our tuition in a sliding-scale income-based model that has allowed us to modify tuition amounts so that no family is turned away. Unfortunately, even with this initiative to create affordability, **we still lose families who are dear to our community each year because of financial constraints.**

For this reason we are committed to pursuing alternatives to a tuition model, by supporting a partner educational group to apply to receive a charter - establishing a tuition-free alternative to CIBM in Albany NY.

## Enrollment Growth

**1** We have partnered with the public relations team at Relentless Awareness to help generate more brand awareness for Castle Island. We still have 12 spots in Early Childhood and Elementary for the year, and we welcome transfer students for maximized enrollment.

**Our school's main challenge has been sustaining enrollment through the Elementary grades.** Parents, though satisfied with the education that their child is experiencing, have shared the reason for transferring to a public school is that their child's "education would be free."

We seek funding to alleviate the unaffordable expense that even sliding-scale tuition brings to parents so they can keep their children enrolled.

## Financial Stability

**3** Each year since 2012, including the current Academic Year, **we have operated at a budget deficit.** Thanks to generous contributions from donors and partners, we have continued to sustain and grow our school!

Each contribution, large and small, brings us closer to securing the vibrant future our children deserve. Your one-time or sustainable tax-deductible donation matters.

To stay involved and to invest in Castle Island's Mission, we invite you to make a gift of any size, connect us with sponsors, volunteer your professional expertise, or join a fundraising or grant-writing committee.

# Expansion Plan



## FUTURE BUILDING

Five Year Plan 2025-2030

Action steps are already underway:

### SEP 2025

Acquire and equip a permanent, state-of-the-art **MAIN CAMPUS BUILDING** to maximize our enrollment from Early Childhood (PreK) through Adolescence (Grade 8) for 150 students.

### SEP 2026

Establish the first of five **SATELLITE SITES** in City of Albany Neighborhoods, offering Full Day Child Care for children beginning age 1, Toddler and Early Childhood Programs, including the Kindergarten Year.

### SEP 2027

Convert our current independent nonprofit structure to a **CHARTER SCHOOL** educating students, Toddler through Adolescence, enhancing our Spanish immersion fully-implemented Montessori programs.

### SEP 2028

Partner with local college for a **MONTESSORI TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM** to train teachers.

### SEP 2029

Achieve **ACCREDITATION RENEWAL** with the American Montessori Society and initial accreditation with NYSAIS.



This year is a transformational moment  
for Castle Island. We've launched  
our expansion plan:  
**Future Building**

# Conclusión

## Lower Cost

Three years of public Montessori preschool from ages 3 to 5 costs approximately \$13,000 less per child than traditional public preschool programs.

## Stronger Learning

Montessori students demonstrate significantly higher outcomes in reading, executive function, short-term memory, and social understanding by the end of kindergarten, and beyond ...

**Sustained Benefits** Unlike many other preschool programs, the positive effects of Montessori do not fade over time

**Greatest Impact** The benefits are particularly strong for children from lower-income families, although all children benefit



## PARENT TESTIMONIAL

"Castle Island doesn't just educate children in academics, the school also fosters a sense of personal responsibility and of community.

The teachers understand that children can do much more for themselves - and each other - than we generally assume.

My child has become more confident as a result."

# Call to Action

We are actively building a bridge to sustain and grow our school from present day through to conversion to charter school - making our school fully accessible for many more students throughout Albany.

Your donations are always tax-deductible as our independent nonprofit school is a 501(c)3 charitable organization.

## Sustainable Contribution

Monthly contributions, ranging from \$25 - \$500 can be made:



Or through an ACH debit account set up with the school.

Contact Sara E Mercado, to set up your automatic giving:

[sara@castleislandmontessori.org](mailto:sara@castleislandmontessori.org)

(518) 533 - 9838

## Matching Funds

We are seeking ten contributions of \$5,000, each matched by a local foundation to directly fund scholarships for residents in Albany's South End Neighborhood.

Scan here for your online contribution:



A personal or business check can be made out to "Castle Island Bilingual Montessori" and mailed to:

Castle Island Bilingual Montessori  
602 Broadway  
Albany NY 12207

## Transformational Legacy Gift

To bridge the gap, leading our school toward becoming a long-term Albany institution, we invite you to consider contributing a legacy donation.

We acknowledge that you believe in the power of the education we provide here - one of high value - for our Albany Community, for future leaders, and for each child attending school today.

A Transformational Gift will ensure that our school will remain the integral part of the community we are, providing world-class education for children in the Capital Region - now and for generations in the future.

We invite you to contact us to learn how your gift will make a lasting impact.

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# Acknowledgements

We thank those responsible for concept and coordination of **Future Building:**

**Board of Advisors**, our parent leadership group, including Chair: Dr. DeeDee Bennett-Gayle

**Board of Trustees**, our school governance team, including President, Ed Nickerson

**Admin Team**, Communications & Community Outreach Coordinator: Zan McKenna; Administrative Coordinator: Sara Mercado; and, School Founder & Director: Diane Nickerson

**Research**, "National Randomized Controlled Trial of the Impact of Public Montessori Preschool ...," Angeline S. Lillard, David Loeb, Juliette Berg, and Emily D Daggett. **National Academy of Sciences.**  
Oct 20, 2025



We thank you for your continued support of our programs.

**Castle Island Bilingual Montessori**

602 Broadway  
Albany, NY 12207

518.533.9838

[www.castleislandmontessori.org](http://www.castleislandmontessori.org)