



Castle Island
Bilingual Montessori

Family Handbook

2025-2026

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 Fam/y 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 and the Early Childhood Half-Day Program finish each day at 11:30am, and are dismissed from 11:30-11:45am. 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, family 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 and Early Childhood Half Day Program** are dismissed at 11:30am. A \$35 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 \$35 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 \$35 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 are 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 cars to come to a complete stop 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 your child

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 1st** 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/y 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 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 a school official and/or an ambulance. The consent statement that the parent signs at the beginning of the school year will accompany the child so that treatment can be given 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.***

Severe Weather Days

CLOSED FOR THE DAY: When the weather is severe enough to last throughout the day, the school will make a determination about whether or not to close for the entirety of the day. Families will be notified via text message and email as soon as the determination is made and as early as possible before the start of the school day. There will be no classes nor lessons in-person nor remotely for that singular day.

CLOSED FOR THE MORNING: When there is a 2 hour delay, Castle Island opens at 10:30am.

CLOSED FOR THE AFTERNOON: When severe weather begins midday, the school will make a determination about whether or not to close school for the remainder of the day based on the severity of the weather and safety for travel. Families will be notified via text message and email as soon as the determination is made and as early as possible before Full Day dismissal and/or before the Extended Day Program.

In Case of an Emergency Situation During the School Day

In the event of a threat of violent action against the school building, children, or staff, the following procedure will be followed:

A threat is defined as “any violent action threatened against our school, staff, children or other building occupants.”

The school director and teaching team 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 has been cleared to be 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, the NYS DEC building; 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.

In Case of an Emergency Situation Prior to the Following School Day

In the event of a threat of violent action happening near the school building, or in the event that the following procedure will be followed: *the school will make a determination about whether or not to close for the entirety of the day. Families will be notified via text message and email 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 must 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 state and local law, the school conducts eight fire drills and four lock down drills each academic year.. The Albany Fire Department makes periodic visits to check the location of each classroom and familiarize themselves with our facility; and, to conduct an annual fire safety inspection and to present to the children about fire safety protocols at school and at home.

Twice each year, the school will participate in an evacuation drill: one from the school facility, and one from the safe shelter location at the NYS DEC, 625 Broadway.

Visitors

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 community partners; and, members of the school's leadership team. Protocols for these visitors mandate that they be always escorted and accompanied by a school staff person and never left alone with a child or group of children.

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 the unknown visitor. An authorized visitor may not be allowed inside the building and is invited to contact the school director by phone or email to schedule an appointment.

Personal Belongings

Toys and other personal belongings (such as electric devices, fine jewelry, watches, games, etc) should remain at home. This avoids children becoming upset when they

are lost or broken and minimizes disruption. The presence of toys at school can also create distracting and highly competitive situations, frustrating those children who have no such “treasures” to show off. Your support in keeping toys at home is greatly appreciated. If your child needs an electronic device for use before or after school, it must stay in his or her backpack during school hours. “If it needs a battery, it stays in the backpack.”

When guides do conduct a “Show and Tell” in the classroom, called “News,” there is an opportunity to share time for experiences, nature discoveries, etc., when the child is encouraged to express his or her thoughts and observations. Books, stories, or science/cultural/natural artifacts from home are always welcome. These are enjoyed by all and can be equally participated in and learned from.

If your child brings home a piece of classroom material by mistake, please return it, as these materials are quite costly. Some of our miniature objects are immensely enticing, which is why the school owns them, but the school needs them on site for curriculum activities.

Outfitting for School: Clothing

The Montessori environment encourages independence, and so should your child’s clothing. Elastic waistbands, for example, are much easier and quicker when making quick bathroom trips than are metal clasps, brass buttons, or belts. Overall style pants or jumpers are particularly challenging. Shoes should be easy for a child to put on and take off independently.

Plain play clothes, without character or text designs, are encouraged; they are comfortable, washable, sturdy and easy to manage. A rule of thumb: Always dress your child as if he or she will be spending some time outdoors, but allow for an “under” layer if your child gets warm during the morning. Clothing with images and writing on them are discouraged so that children can focus on their learning during lesson presentations, and each other during conversations.

Inside Shoes

All children should have a pair of rubber 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. 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.

Boots are a must in snowy weather, as are hats, gloves or mittens, and snow pants.

Extra Clothes

Each child should have a complete change of clothing including underwear and socks at school. The clothing should 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. We believe that with toilet accidents; the less said, the fewer accidents. The school accepts accidents as a part of being human. Accordingly, the school makes no fuss and simply encourages the child to help in the clean up.

Any soiled clothes will be returned at dismissal and a replacement set of clothes should be sent to school the next day.

Rest (or Nap) Linens and a Sleeping Plush Animal/Doll

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. Children who nap may also bring a plush 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.

Curriculum

New Sections Coming Soon!

- Levels ([Toddler](#), [Early Childhood](#), [Lower Elementary](#), [Upper Elementary](#), Adolescence)
- Resources for Transitions to the Next School
- Links to the Curricula (Early Childhood, Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, Adolescence)

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

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 what milestones lie ahead.

Twice a year (in November and May) the school provides parents with written descriptions of their children's social development and a summary of the academic work they have been doing in all subject areas in your child's **Progress Report**. In lieu of grades, these reports describe what work your child has been doing in the classroom.

Guides will also report on developmental milestones attained, particular academic accomplishments, and concerns if any. This information is also reviewed during Parent-Guide Conferences in November and May. Parents and guardians are expected to attend both conferences each year. For Elementary, your child may be invited to the conference as well.

Excursions, aka Field Trips or Outings

Castle Island offers field trips, or Excursions, throughout the school year.

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 class field trips, the week prior to the scheduled trip. The General Release Form within the Emergency Card authorized by parents, or guardians, includes field trips, transportation, and emergency medical treatment releases, and authorizes your child to participate in class field trips.

Montessori Resources

There are several fine 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 and curriculum, you are invited to visit the website at: www.castleislandmontessori.org, and our school's accreditation association, The American Montessori Society at: www.amshq.org.

We recommend two great books to start with also:

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](#)

Bilingual Education

See the CIBM School [Website](#)

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 help to maintain the campus, especially the gardens in our new Outdoor Classroom!

During the school day, the school appreciates help from parents as arrival volunteers, garden facilitators, classroom readers, guest speakers, recess helpers, and field trip chaperones. The school also benefits from parent volunteers who help lower our facilities maintenance costs by assisting with general upkeep of the property. Feel free to offer additional assistance if you have an expertise you think would benefit the school.

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, 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 teachers to have much richer discussions about his or her classroom experience. The school asks you to make a serious commitment to make an observation visit during the school year. You can schedule an observation by phone or online in the parent portal, vCita.

When observing, it is helpful to remember that a parent's presence may affect their child's behavior, so 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 & Family Orientation

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

Tuesday, September 2

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") on:

Early Childhood *Comunidad Amarilla* **Friday, August 29**

By Appointment

Elementary *Comunidad Azul* **Wednesday, September 3**

During the First Day of School

Toddler *Comunidad Verde* **Wednesday - Friday, September 3 - 5**

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 [calendar](#). Three special annual events are highlighted here:

- **“Winter Flurry” (*working title!*) Variety Show and Heritage Potluck Brunch**
Saturday, December 13, 11am-1pm @ Zimmerman Hall, First Church in Albany
Bring a family favorite dish from home to share and dust off your guitar! 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 - Friday, January 27-30, 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 27, 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, October 25, 9-11am
@ Albany Black Chamber of Commerce

Montessori Deep Dive + Curriculum Area Workshop Saturday, March 7, 9-11am
@ 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.

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, follow:

Communication at School

The school's goal is to provide the children here 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, Toddler (15 months) through Grade 6.

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.

These tools are available for the following communications:

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 or virtual by appointment

November & May

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 **Fam/ly** account, billing, registration for Before/After Care; Winter, Spring and Summer Camps; or other programs, and for Emergency Card updates.
- **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.

- **Co-Chairs of the Family & Friends of CIBM** Contact parents Courtney or Jocelyn for information about Family Events regarding volunteering, projects, fundraising, or other parent involvement at school

If you have a concern about what is happening in their child's community, they are asked to please contact their 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 their child's lead guide, parents or guardians may send a message via **Famly** 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 Families & Friends](#).

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 in Early Childhood and in Elementary 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 email or text notification. By having a "single point of communication," you will always know to look for the Friday Folder, and you can be confident that you've received all school communications once you've received the folder.

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!

Via email, lead guides send home a monthly classroom update to families of the children at the beginning of each month. This gives you a chance to see what topics will be studied and practiced in the classroom, including reminders of future celebrations and family events.

School Wide Weekly Newsletter: La Semana

Via email, upcoming events and highlighted photos from the week's activities at school are shared in a newsletter each Wednesday.

Website

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

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 verbal description of the childrens' current work 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*

The following has **always been included in the Family Handbook, even prior to the COVID Pandemic. Please see below for the 2022-2023 COVID Protocols, as of 8/12/22.*

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 it, and the medication, to the school office. 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 to guide parents in 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 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, he or she needs to stay home at least another full day before returning to school.
- 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 he or she is contagious.
- If a child has Strep throat, pink eye, or another bacterial contagious infection, confirm that he or she has 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 should 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 a child, in the guide's judgment, is determined to have illness symptoms while at school, the school will call a parent to come and pick him or her 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 he or she gets 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 as of 06/07/2023

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 50.

COVID-19 Protocols as of 08/12/2022

- **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. The Early Childhood classrooms provide a snack table where children may prepare their own snack, pour their own water, and socialize with a friend; Elementary children may bring a snack daily from home. 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.

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 fruit, cheese, and bagels or crackers) and the snack calendar of families assigned to bring in snacks.

Children enrolled in the Full Day program must bring lunch to school each day. 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 religious food preferences of the families in their room and be in charge of ensuring these are honored.

Food Allergies, "No Peanut" 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.

Food Allergies

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 (Before and After Care; and, Winter, Spring and Summer Camps). This includes the exclusion of *Nutella*. “Sunbutter”, a spread made from sunflower seeds may be consumed at school.

The school will also continue our current 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.

If parents are curious to know more about food allergies, please go to the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN) website at 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

The school will offer \$500 for referring a new student. It is to the entire school community's benefit to maximize our enrollment capacity and the school's income from tuition each Academic Year. Current parents can earn a \$500 Tuition Credit. Alumni Parents and Community Partners can earn a \$500 Gift Card for referring a new student. We encourage you to invite your friends, colleagues and neighbors to [schedule a tour found on the school website](#).

Open Houses

Current families are encouraged to attend Open Houses to help promote the education offered here to new prospective families; and the school invites families to attend at least one. The school hosts Open Houses throughout the year for interested families and friends of the school.

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 strives 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.

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 in the classroom, 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 February 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

Wish List

There are several items that the school would love to obtain, both to improve the campus and to enrich the classrooms. Families can find a detailed Wish List on the school's website at 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. The school greatly appreciates families' support and generosity.

Appendix

[CIBM Financial Appendix](#)

[CIBM Resource Directory](#)

[CIBM Safety Plan](#)

DRAFT 2025-2026 PENDING REVISIONS/ADDITIONS:

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