

Castlewood's Guide to Student Success

On the following pages you will find helpful hints, suggestions and procedures to ensure that your child's time at Castlewood is happy and productive.

Beginning on September 6, students (grades 2-5) will grab a bagged breakfast and go directly to their classrooms. Teachers will meet students at the classroom doors. Students in Pre-K will report to their classrooms and be greeted by Ms. Rowe or a member of the guidance staff and the classroom paraprofessionals until their teachers arrive at 8:00am. Students in grades K and 1 will report to the auditorium and be greeted by Ms. Mizrahi and a member of the administration until their teachers arrive at 8:00am. Morning meetings will be held from 8:00-8:15am in each classroom. During the morning meeting, teachers will "check in" with their students using the 5-point scale. The morning meeting may include mindfulness, yoga, or conversations that tackle issues that students find important, emotion recognition and regulation... The student led pledge will be said over the public address system at 8:15am.

"New" Beginning of the Year Assessments:

We believe that the cornerstone of student success is grounded in our knowledge of their strengths, preferences, and learning styles. To that end, the first two weeks of school will be dedicated to getting to "know every child well." Classroom and Cluster (Music, Art, Theater, Technology and Physical Education) teachers will engage your children in fun activities that accentuate their positive attributes. We pride ourselves on striving to implement strength-based lessons and curricula rather than that which is deficit based. Only after we get a sense of who your child is as an individual will we begin more formal assessments in academic areas such as reading and math. It is our hope that this approach will lead students to love school and learning and put them on the path of personal confidence and success.

Homework Policy:

At Castlewood, we strive to ensure that our students succeed academically while fostering their emotional and social well-being. To that end, homework is assigned strategically so that children have ample opportunity to spend time with their families and friends, engage in extra-curricular activities, and rest/rejuvenate in preparation for the next school day. Additionally, it is important that the work that students are expected to do at home is work that they are capable of accomplishing independently. Parents are not expected to reteach lessons or do their children's assignments. However, they may be asked to collaborate with their children on projects. Children should always take the lead on the project and help their parents to understand the concept being presented. Daily assignments will include independent reading (and family reading for younger students) and responses as well as a minimal number of review problems (in math) or recall/practice activities (ex: letter-sound correspondence, handwriting sheets, spelling/vocabulary words). Homework (exclusive of reading) should not exceed 10-20 minutes (in K-2 grade) and 30-40 minutes (in grades 3-5). Since the homework that will be assigned throughout the year is minimal, it is expected that it is completed on a regular basis. Students who miss homework consistently (more than three times) will be brought up to the Guidance Department. Guidance staff and teachers will work together to develop a plan to assist these students and their families.

Parent Engagement Opportunities:

In an effort to increase parent presence and participation at Castlewood, we will present several workshops covering a variety of topics including, but not limited to, curricula at our PTA meetings. Our "My Adult and Me" group activities, for the younger siblings (18 months-3 years) of our students, will continue several times throughout this year.

We are also very excited to introduce a new opportunity for parents with "**Walk-In Wednesdays!**" Adult family members (**without younger siblings**) are invited to school each Wednesday during first period. At this time, you can observe the children as they learn. Additionally, one Wednesday per month will be dedicated to a special parent/child activity during that period.

Dates are as follows: 9/18*, 9/25*, 10/2, 10/9, 10/16*, 10/23, 10/30, 11/6, 11/20*, 11/27, 12/4, 12/11, 12/18*, 1/8, 1/15*, 1/22, 1/29, 2/5, 2/12, 2/26*, 3/4, 3/11, 3/18*, 3/25, 4/1, 4/8, 4/22*, 4/29, 5/6, 5/13, 5/20*, 5/27, 6/3, 6/10* (*Parent/Child activity)

Communication:

Teachers will be in **regular** communication with you throughout the year via telephone and/or email. Because each teacher is responsible for many students, please note it may take a few days for them to thoughtfully respond. They will reply to you **within the week**. Additionally, appointments (phone or face-to-face) can be scheduled on Tuesdays from 2:20pm—3:00pm. Please refrain from approaching teachers at dismissal as they are responsible for the safety of your children, and their attention must be devoted to maintaining the safe “delivery” of children to their parents. If you have any questions or concerns that need to be addressed immediately, you can always reach out to the parent coordinator, Michele Rowe mrowe22@schools.nyc.gov . Our assistant principal, Mrs. Sci, and I are always available via email (esci@schools.nyc.gov and mhaidar@schools.nyc.gov).

Trips and Celebrations:

Although we value your presence in school and at school functions, our priority must be the safety and well-being of all students as well as their academic achievement. First and foremost, please remember that ALL visitors to the building, including parents, must sign in **with identification** at the security desk prior to proceeding to the main office (room 109).

If you are chaperoning a trip, you will be asked to wait for the class in the lobby. **Chaperones** will be chosen by teachers on a random and rotating basis.

Birthday “Parties” will be limited to 2 adult family members (no younger siblings or siblings from another class). In order to keep it as simple and safe as possible, you may bring individual “treats” such as cupcakes, cookies, donuts, etc. for the class. Please speak to your class teachers **ahead of time** to find out about any food allergies and to set up a date. Please **do not** bring in balloons, party favors, goody bags, pinatas, etc. These items are best kept for your home celebrations. All class celebrations will be held at the **end** of the school day, with the exception of Multi-Cultural Day.

Citizen of the Month:

In an effort to accommodate all parents’ and children’s wishes regarding the **Citizen of the Month** presentation, you will be given the option of either having your child honored during the Citizen Assembly or during a PTA meeting. During Citizen Assemblies, students wait with anticipation to find out if they are receiving an award highlighting their ability to exemplify the month’s precept. They, then, receive accolades from their peers and staff members. During PTA meetings, families may be present and celebrate the occasion with their children. Please note that children will receive their certificates EITHER at the assembly or the meeting. Students will not be recognized at both. Citizen of the Month is based on non-academic precepts. Therefore, all students have equal opportunities and may receive the award more than once or not at all. We may also have several students from each class who attain success and receive the award each month.

PTA Meetings:

We encourage all parents regardless of the Citizen of the Month status of their children to regularly attend **PTA meetings**. These meetings allow you to participate in school decisions as well as be privy to important information regarding all aspects of our school community. Furthermore, the monthly Principal's report will be focused on the vision of the school and the teachers' efforts to instill social awareness, relationship building, ideas for strengthening the core curriculum, inclusive environment, new initiatives of the school, district, and city, and similar topics.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures:**Arrival:**

Beginning Monday, September 9, students in grades K and 1 will enter the school through the Main Entrance at **7:50am**. They will go directly into the Auditorium where they will get their breakfast. Their teachers will pick them up from the Auditorium at **8:00am**. Students in grades 2-5 will enter through building at **7:50am**. They will enter through the entrance located next to "big yard" and go directly into the gym where they will get their breakfast bags. At approximately **7:55am**, they will be dismissed to their classrooms. Their teachers will meet them outside of their classrooms promptly at **8:00am**. Preschool Students [and one parent (optional)] will enter through the Main Entrance at **7:50am**. Parents and children will go directly to Room 118 where they will be supervised by a para professional and a member of the Guidance staff.

Dismissal:

Pre-K, Kindergarten, and first grade students will be dismissed at **2:15pm** through the main lobby doors. All other students will be dismissed at **2:20pm**. Students in grades 2 and 3 will be dismissed through the ramp exit (in the driveway next to the Castlewood Playground). Students in grades 4 and 5 will be dismissed through the exit located next to the Castlewood Playground. Students who take a bus will assemble in the gym and be dismissed through the exit next to the "big yard."

Discipline:

In order to maintain a safe and supportive environment for all students, we have clear and consistent discipline procedures as outlined in the **NYCDOE Discipline Code** which can be accessed on the www.schools.nyc.gov website or by “Googling” NYCDOE Discipline Code . Although we have a low rate of infractions, the concept of “bullying” is often brought up by students and parents. We take bullying very seriously. Please note the definition of bullying is “an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behavior that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm”. Instances of poor behavior by students is not necessarily bullying and will be addressed accordingly. Throughout the year, children will be instructed as to the appropriate use of the term. Any actual incidents of bullying will be handled in accordance with the NYCDOE discipline code. Proper behavior is expected in the classroom, the yard, and all common spaces. In the event that a child misbehaves, he/she will get a verbal warning. If that is not effective, parents will be notified. If the child continues to misbehave, a parent meeting will be requested. For occurrences happening during lunch/recess, the recess staff will communicate directly with you as classroom teachers are not present during this time. Additionally, the teacher in charge at the time of any infraction that takes place during music, art, technology, physical education or drama will be the one to contact you as the classroom teacher is not present during that time and may not be aware of the situation. Only if all measures fail will the administration be forced to take formal action and impose a more serious consequence as per the NYCDOE Discipline Code. Please note that electronic devices are not permitted in school (ex: smart watches, cameras, video games, etc.). if your child has a cell phone, it must be off and in his/her backpack during the school day or it will be confiscated and stored in the principal’s office and will only be returned to the parents.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

For our Parents:

"Education is a shared commitment between dedicated teachers, motivated students and enthusiastic parents with high expectations."

--Bob Beauprez

For our Students:

"Everyone has inside them a piece of good news. The good news is you don't know how great you can be! How much you can love! What you can accomplish! And what your potential is!

--Anne Frank

For our Teachers:

"A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in or the kind of car I drove. But the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child."

--Forest E. Witcraft

Best wishes to all for a wonderful school year!

Warmly,

The Administration and Staff of Castlewood and the
Parents of our PTA