



Castroville Elementary School Parent/Student Handbook 2025-2026

Please read and discuss the information contained in this handbook with your child. Then sign and return this form to your child's teacher. Please keep the handbook for reference. Thank you.

It is the belief of the Castroville School staff that the general school environment (both social & physical) should be a safe, engaging place where students, staff and parents feel welcome, cared for, and part of the Castroville School community. The staff also believes that parents need to be informed of the school's expectations. In order to maintain an orderly and safe school, we need your support in helping your child learn how to be responsible for his/her actions.

This is to certify that I have discussed the policies and procedures included in the Castroville School Parent/Student Handbook with my child.

Student: _____ **Teacher:** _____ **Room:** _____

Student Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date



**Castroville Elementary School
2023-2024 Parent/Student Handbook**

11161 Merritt Street

Castroville, CA 95012

(831)633-2570

Office Hours: 7:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Principal: Gigi Chiboucas

Assistant Principal: Dshon Cannon

Administrative Assistant: Yolanda Paredes

Attendance Clerk: Mayra Cisneros

WELCOME BACK PARENTS AND STUDENTS!

This document provides important information regarding school protocols and expectations in place to foster a positive learning environment for all members of our school community. We believe that by working together with parents and guardians, we can achieve our goal of ensuring the academic, personal, and social success of our students. Thank you for taking the time to review this handbook with your child!

DAILY STUDENT SCHOOL HOURS

Mon., Tues., Thurs., Fri.	7:50 a.m. – 2:32 p.m.
Wed.	7:50 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.

A copy of the daily bell schedule is included in the back of this handbook.

ACADEMIC INFORMATION (GENERAL)

- **Report Cards and Parent/Teacher Conferences:** Report cards are issued at the end of each trimester (November, February, and June). Conferences are held at the end of the first trimester to discuss student progress in academic, personal and social areas. Parents may request a conference at any time during the year. Please discuss any concerns with the classroom teacher prior to a request for a meeting with school administration.
- **District and State Testing:** Students participate in various assessments throughout the school year which reflect the Common Core State Standards and allow teachers to adjust instruction to ensure that students master curriculum. Benchmark (our ELA curriculum) assessments are given during and at the end of each unit of study. Let's Go Learn assessments take place three times during the year; and the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) occurs in the spring. Parents will be notified prior to the start of testing. Please make sure your child is well rested and has a good breakfast during this important assessment period. Students should view the assessments as important and try their best, but should not feel pressured or stressed.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

- **Communication is Key**
 - If your child will be absent or late for any reason, please call the front office at (831)633-2570 and leave the following information (you can leave a voicemail if no one is available to answer):
 - Student's first and last name

- Teacher's name
 - Your name and relationship to the child
 - Reason for absence/tardy
- **California State Law Defines Three Types of Absences**
 - **Excused Absences:** Student's illness, quarantine, medical/dental appointments, death/funeral of an immediate family member, court appearance, observance of a religious holiday. Please note that documentation may be required for an excused absence.
 - **Unexcused Absences:** Missing class or school without an excused or warranted reason – whether the absence is reported or not. Being tardy to class for more than 30 minutes shall be considered an unexcused absence from class.
 - **Truancy:** When a student misses more than 30 minutes of instruction without an excuse three times during the school year.
 - **Remember**
 - Breakfast is served from 7:15 - 7:45 only. Students arriving after 7:45 will not receive breakfast. They can have their snack at first recess.
 - School starts promptly at 7:53 a.m. Students arriving after this time will be considered late.
 - Morning supervision begins at 7:20 a.m. Students can be dropped off at this time and receive free breakfast.
 - Parents/Guardians of truant students may be referred to the District Attorney Truancy Mediation program.

BEHAVIOR/DISCIPLINE

Faculty and staff at Castroville School believe that building relationships with students and focusing on positive behavior is the best way to support/promote student success and achievement. Each month we focus on a different character trait, which is emphasized via classroom lessons and weekly announcements. We have also established a school wide set of behavior standards we call ***"Otter Expectations"*** which consist of the following:

- **Show Respect**
- **Make Strong Decisions**
- **Solve your Problems**

Students who are "caught" being positive role models with respect to these expectations may be awarded an Otter Dollar as recognition for their exemplary behavior. Students can save their Otter Dollars and spend them on things such as games, raffles, or special activities like craft or dance parties. This year, starting in September, each teacher will recognize one "Student of the Month" who demonstrates exemplary student citizenship and commitment to our "Otter

Expectations.” Students will be recognized at our monthly *What’s Up Wednesday* school wide assembly. These exemplar Otters will have their picture taken and shared in a Student-of-the-Month Slideshow.

Our PBIS team is in the process of developing an explicit behavior policy for the upcoming year. We are committed to a Restorative Justice process when encountering discipline challenges. Restorative Justice is a practice that empowers students to resolve their conflicts on their own in small groups and allows for students to take ownership, build relationships, set goals and learn from their experience to improve. This is proving to have a more positive impact on students and schools across the nation. Here is our current behavior policy, which we are in the process of updating:

1. First Violation: warning and restorative conversation; establish root cause and self reflect
2. Second Violation: parent contact and/or a restorative conversation with an intended goal/outcome
3. Third Violation: Admin meet with parent/student for next steps.
4. Fourth Violation: a privilege is postponed for an appropriate duration until student earns the privilege back through restorative strategies. This consequence will be determined by members of our intervention team, not just one individual. These members must have already established a relationship with the student(s).

CELL PHONES

Cell phones and smart watches will be turned off and inside backpacks while on campus.

If it is necessary for a student to have a cell phone (including phone watches), it must remain off and in their backpacks during school hours (this includes NEST and after-school programs. Phones must remain off until students are off campus. This prevents: a) distractions from learning, b) social media bullying c) a compromise to individual privacy and confidentiality. The school is not responsible for lost or stolen cell phones. A telephone is available for student use in the office. For the safety and protection of our students, we encourage ALL students to know at least one telephone number of an adult listed on their emergency contacts.

Cell Phone policy:

- 1st violation: device confiscated by adult and returned to student at end of day.
- 2nd violation: device confiscated, turned into office, and parent required to pick up (per ED Code 48901.5)
- 3rd violation: administrator meets with parent/student to discuss further action. This may result in loss of the privilege of bringing a phone to school.

BLUE ZONES PROJECT/WELLNESS POLICY/FOOD ON CAMPUS

NMCUSD recognizes the link between student health and learning. The District is committed to supporting student and staff well-being by promoting an environment that encourages and supports students, staff and families to make healthier choices. Our school site will play an active role in this mission by adhering to our District Wellness Policy and through the implementation of the Blue Zones Project policies and practices. If we all do our part, we will share the benefits of living in a community where well-being is a way of life. For more

information on our District Wellness Policy and the Blue Zones Project, please visit our District Wellness page <https://www.nmcusd.org/domain/896>

Guidelines for All Foods on School Campuses

The Wellness Policy nutrition guidelines apply to all foods and beverages served, donated or sold to students on school campuses during the school day. This includes but is not limited to:

- After school programs
- Celebrations
- Classroom-based activities
- Donated food
- Field trips
- Fundraisers
- Rewards
- School meals
- Snacks
- Vending machines

These guidelines are in effect all school day, from midnight until thirty minutes after the completion of the after school program. We ask all parents/teachers to follow these same guidelines when bringing food on campus.

Foods/Drinks **NOT** allowed on campus include (but are not limited to):

- Chips or other foods that may stain clothing or school property – such as Hot Cheetos, Takis, etc.
- Candy and gum
- Any drinks other than water, milk or fruit juice (no sports drinks, energy drinks, soda, or other beverages with high sugar content)

Because of possible food allergies or dietary restrictions parents need to check with the school before bringing food.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Bus transportation is a privilege extended to students who display good conduct while boarding, riding, and exiting the bus. Continued disorderly conduct or refusal to comply with the authority of the bus driver shall be sufficient reason for a student to be denied transportation. The bus driver may issue bus tickets for misbehavior on the bus, and parents will be notified. Three tickets may result in suspension of transportation privileges.

CAFETERIA

While in the cafeteria, students are expected to demonstrate our Otter Expectations (see section on Behavior/Discipline). Rules will be explained to students at the beginning of the year, and reinforced as necessary. For the safety and comfort of all, students are expected to demonstrate the following behaviors at all times:

- Remain seated in the assigned lunch area (raise hand if necessary to use the restroom)
- Keep hands, feet and objects to yourself; and do not throw objects
- Do not share food (for safety reasons)
- Use inside speaking voice (no shouting or yelling) and appropriate language

- Demonstrate good manners by throwing away all trash and cleaning up after yourself before leaving the lunch area

CALENDAR

A yearly school calendar is sent out in the first day packet. Please keep it handy so you can refer to it throughout the year. A copy is located at the back of this handbook, and It is also posted on the district website: www.nmcusd.org.

CLASS CELEBRATIONS

Classroom celebrations are up to the discretion of the classroom teacher. In order to maintain our Blue Zones Approved status, there can be only one celebration per month including food. Any food served must meet all Smart Snacks guidelines, and be approved in advance by site principal or vice principal. Smart Snacks can be ordered through the Child Nutrition department if desired. Please do not plan to send cupcakes, candy, or other sweets for your child's birthday. Some healthy alternatives include fruit cups, yogurt, baked/low fat/whole wheat chips, popcorn, frozen yogurt, all fruit popsicles.

COMMUNICATION

- **From the School:** We use various forms of communication to share information with families, including – automated phone calls, personal phone calls, text messages, email, letters and fliers. If you see you missed a call from the school, please check your voicemail first, as it may be an automated message. We also encourage all parents/guardians to sign up for the NMCUSD district app. This will allow you to receive important information in a timely manner directly to your cell phone. Please also check our school website regularly for updated information.
- **To the School:** Your child's teacher should be your first point of contact since she/he spends the day with your child and knows her/him best. If you believe an issue is very serious or sensitive, you are welcome to reach out for administrative assistance. If you desire an in-person meeting, it is best to schedule an appointment so we can set aside time just for you.
- It is important to bring issues to the attention of the teacher or administration promptly so that they can be resolved in a timely and appropriate manner.

DRESS CODE

The following guidelines are intended to define appropriate student attire and accessories. A standard dress code encourages students to “dress for success” and helps create a safe environment where students can focus on learning. Students who do not follow the dress code will need to call a parent or guardian to bring appropriate attire that adheres to the policy. School administration reserves the right to make adjustments to the guidelines below during the school year based on the needs of the school.

- No Crocs
- No spaghetti straps
- No visible undergarments at any time

- Skin shall not be visible above the mid-thigh; this includes ripped jeans, skirts and shorts (leggings may be worn underneath to cover skin)
- Clothing must cover the torso/midriff area; tops must have wide straps (at least two fingers wide; no spaghetti straps); no low cut or tight-fitting tops
- No unkind, obscene, vulgar, discriminatory (including race, gender, class, orientation), sexualized images, or any other inappropriate words or graphics on clothing, buttons, backpacks, binders, or other items
- No drug, alcohol, or tobacco-related logos, slogans, brand names, or references
- Hoods, hats, caps, and sunglasses are not allowed to be worn inside buildings unless stated in a student's IEP/504, for medical or religious purposes. Exceptions happen; must have principal approval to make the exception.
- Sleepwear/Pajamas (including blankets and slippers) shall not be worn to school other than for spirit days
- No open-toe or high-heeled shoes, sandals, slippers, or roller shoes
- For safety purposes, please be sure students know how to tie shoelaces; if not, please have them wear shoes with velcro straps (students may trip on untied shoelaces)
- On PE days, students should wear sturdy athletic shoes that allow for safe and comfortable running
- No gang-related items (bandanas, belt buckles, suspenders, jewelry, hats, or other clothing/items that denote gang membership) or grooming that indicates gang activities
- Students are asked to keep fingernails at a manageable length for completing classroom tasks; young students are asked to refrain from wearing press-on or glue-on nails

DROP OFF AND PICK UP PROCEDURES

In an effort to ensure safety for all students it is important that parents/guardians understand the following procedures put in place for student drop off/pick up. Smooth traffic flow and pedestrian safety requires the help and cooperation of everyone. Please also note that at this time the campus is closed to the public for COVID safety reasons.

- **Drop Off**
 - Students may be dropped off starting at 7:15 a.m. (unless your child is enrolled in Kids Zone or the NEST program for early drop off).
 - Breakfast is served ONLY up until 7:45 because the first bell rings at 7:53. There is no supervision for students arriving to eat at that time.
 - Due to very limited parking, parents/guardians who want to drive their children to school are asked to remain in their vehicle and drop students off at the entrance gate on Pajaro Street. Please be sure students exit the vehicle on the curb side. A staff member will be present to welcome students and direct them to the appropriate area. Make sure to have your student ready to go at drop off, with backpack and materials ready to go in order to be considerate of others' time at drop off.
 - Students who walk to school may enter through the Pajaro Street gate or the breezeway entrance on Union Street.

- Students and parents/guardians are asked to ALWAYS use the crosswalks for safety.
 - Once on campus, students who want breakfast can proceed to the cafeteria, then to their assigned area by grade level.
 - Students must arrive by 7:45 in order to have the breakfast item of the day. Grades TK, Kinder and 1 will eat in the cafeteria. Grades 2-6 eat outside in the quad.
 - Grades TK, Kinder and 1 will be picked up by their teachers in the cafeteria at 7:53.
 - Grades 2 - 6 will be picked up by their teachers in the quad in their designated lines.
- **Pick Up/Dismissal**
 - School is dismissed at 2:32 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. On Wednesdays students are dismissed at 12:45 p.m.
 - Parents/guardians of students in grades TK – 2 can enter the front playground area through the main gates to pick children. If the younger child has an older sibling, the older child will come to the front playground at this time.
 - Students in grades 3-6 will be dismissed through the back gate by the two-story building on Union Street. Parents/guardians can meet children at that location.
 - **Walkers**
 - If you wish for your child to walk directly home from school, please send a note to your child's teacher indicating this and giving your permission for her/him to do so.
 - **Bus Riders**
 - The bus arrives at approximately 7:20 each morning at the loading zone on Union Street. Students exit the bus and enter school through the breezeway door.
 - At dismissal, all bus riders exit through the breezeway door, where the bus will be waiting
 - **We ask that you do not park or use this area for pick up or drop off during these times, as it prevents the bus from parking in the designated area.**

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

An emergency information card is included in the first day packet. It is very important to complete this card with ALL contact information and keep it up to date. We cannot release students to anyone not listed on the card. Phone numbers, including cell numbers, must be accurate. The school and/or district will use this information to contact you in the event of an emergency. Please notify the school immediately if there are any changes in phone numbers or addresses. The school or district is not responsible if the information provided is inaccurate.

HEALTH & SAFETY

The health and safety of our students and staff is our number one priority. Our district and school follow the latest guidelines from official government agencies such as the Monterey

County Office of Education, Monterey County Department of Public Health, and the California Department of Public Health. Currently, the protocols listed below are in place. Keep in mind that these are subject to change in the event that there are changes to state and local guidelines/requirements.

- Classrooms, restrooms and common areas are cleaned and disinfected daily
- Classrooms and other common areas are equipped with air filters
- Frequent hand washing is encouraged, and classrooms are provided with necessary supplies so students can wash or sanitize hands upon entry

The Department of Public Health has devised a new Sick Policy as we are now officially out of the pandemic. North Monterey County School District has modified our Sick Policy accordingly. The new policy includes only 3 reasons necessary to keep students at home:

1. Fever
2. Vomiting
3. Diarrhea

If your child is coughing or has a runny nose, this is no longer considered to be a high risk, unless the coughing is causing loss of breath for extended periods of time. Please send your students to school and know that we will call you if the condition worsens.

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPLIES

Students will be provided with all necessary supplies (pencils, crayons, scissors, paper, etc) in order to successfully complete assignments. From time to time, teachers may send home a “wish list” of classroom items that parents can donate if desired. Students are discouraged from bringing excessive or “special” supplies, as these can become a distraction and/or get lost.

Each student will be assigned a classroom Chromebook to use during school hours.

MEDICATION

It is preferable that all medication be taken before or after school hours. If medication is required at school the following California Education Code #49423 is in effect:

“Any student who must take medication while at school must first bring a written order from their doctor and a written request from their parent for school personnel to help the child take his/her medication. A new order and permission should be obtained each year. No student is to keep medication on his person. It must be kept in either the nurse’s or principal’s office.”

This policy includes over-the-counter medication, which must also be prescribed. Any medication not retrieved by the end of the school year will be disposed of.

PERSONAL PROPERTY ON CAMPUS

Students should not bring cash or other valuables to school. This includes toys and sports equipment. North Monterey County USD is not responsible for any lost or stolen personal property that belongs to students or parents. Property may be confiscated and returned at the end of day or parents called to pick up if repeat behavior occurs. Students should not sell or buy personal property on campus.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

As parents/guardians, you are the primary educators of your child. We believe (and research has shown) that it is critically important for parents/guardians to be involved in your child's schooling, and we are excited to be your partners in this important endeavor. We believe that by working together to build the school-home connection, we can ensure the successful academic and social-emotional development of our students.

The best way to be involved in your child's education is to cultivate a relationship with your child's teacher. Teachers communicate regularly with parents using a variety of methods. The classroom teacher is also your best first point of contact when you have questions or concerns. Be sure to connect with your child's teacher early in the school year to determine the best way to keep the communication lines open.

Other opportunities for parent involvement at school include:

- Parent Teacher Club (PTC)
- School Site Council (SSC)
- English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC)
- Attending school sponsored activities such as: Back to School Night, Parent Teacher Conferences, Family Education Nights, Family Fun Events, Awards Assemblies, field trips, and other school activities
- If you are interested in volunteering, please contact the front office at (831) 633-2570.

RECESS

Recess is an important part of the school day. It improves students' physical, mental and emotional health and enhances learning opportunities. Students are expected to follow our school wide expectations (Show Respect, Make Strong Decisions, Solve Problems) during recess. Students are expected to play cooperatively and follow campus supervisors' guidance. They will also be asked to sign a Recess Code of Conduct agreement at the beginning of the school year.

RESTROOMS

Students will be expected to use the restrooms designated for their grade level and wash their hands after using the restroom. It will be highly encouraged by all staff that students use the restroom during recess, lunch, and PE and transition time so that students do not miss out on important instruction. Unless it is an emergency, students will not be allowed to go to the bathroom the first 20-25 minutes of class upon entering after recess and lunch; this is when all students are receiving direct instruction. Students have multiple opportunities to use the bathroom during their recess and PE times. Students must demonstrate appropriate behaviors in the restrooms by:

- Asking for permission if they need to leave the classroom
- Walking quietly to and from the restroom
- Respecting others' privacy while using the restroom
- Putting toilet paper in the toilet only and flushing
- Washing hands with soap and water
- Putting paper towels and other items in the trash can only

- Returning to class in a timely manner

SAFETY

Students and staff safety is our number one priority. We strive to create an environment where all community members feel safe so they can focus on the task at hand – teaching and learning. Safety drills are conducted monthly, and students are required to follow adult instructions in order to practice appropriate behavior. In the event of a true emergency, parents will be contacted using our automated system. For everyone's safety, we ask that parents do not come to campus until contacted to do so.

STUDENT TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTABLE USE

All students are responsible for signing the Acceptable Use Policy, which will be sent home separately. The full text of the policy is on the NMCUSD website. Violations of this policy are considered serious and could be grounds for suspension and/or expulsion.

SUPPORT SERVICES

NMCUSD provides a wide range of services to support students and their families. Some are provided at the school site, while others are provided by the Family Resource Center. If your student or family is in need of support, reaching out to your child's teacher or the school office is the first step in getting a referral to the appropriate support provider. Some of the supports available include:

- Our district Child Nutrition department provides breakfast and lunch daily at NO COST to students. Weekly meal distribution is often provided during periods of extended school breaks, such as winter and summer.
- The NEST (Nurture, Educate, Socialize, Thrive) extended day program (6 AM to 6 PM) for before and after school intervention and enrichment. Space is limited with priority given to homeless and foster youth, and students identified as needing additional support. Contact the school office for information.
- School Psychologist on campus daily to support students, staff, and parents with evaluating students who may be in need of special education services. Our School Psychologist also works with small groups of students to build targeted skills based on needs identified by teachers and other school staff (such as social skills, anxiety, anger management).
- Behavior Technician on campus daily to support students who need help transitioning from home to school, or who need assistance with building social/behavior skills necessary to be successful in school.
- School Based Mental Health Counselor is available by referral to support students struggling with challenges such as depression, anxiety, grief, etc.
- Coordinator for Mental Health and Social Work Services (based at the Family Resource Center) provides guidance and consultation on challenging family situations, and is available to parents for consultations, problem solving and support in accessing services for students and parents.
- Support for homeless families is provided by our district Family Resource Center. They can be reached at (831) 633-5976.

- Our school has a full-time Bilingual Family Liaison and a Bilingual Community School Coordinator. Please reach out with any assistance, resources, or questions that you may have.
- Students who qualify for Special Education support may receive services on site from our Resource Specialist Teacher, Speech Therapist, or Occupational Therapist.

TOBACCO AND ALCOHOL

Tobacco (including vaping) and alcohol use are prohibited at all times by anyone on campus, including in vehicles. This includes outside areas such as parent pick up, parking lot and field. This includes events and parent meetings/conferences as well.

Thank you for taking the time to review our school policies. Adherence to these guidelines will help ensure a safe, successful, enjoyable school year for all.