

# FAQs

at  
**The Caedmon  
School**

## The Program Structure

*“We do what we say we do...”*

### **Q. What makes Caedmon unique in comparison to other NYC independent schools?**

**A.** The Caedmon School offers children a unique combination of experiences that are devoted solely to their development as young, pre-adolescent children. Many independent schools either focus entirely on the pre-school years, or else begin their program at Kindergarten - squarely in the middle of the early childhood developmental process.

At The Caedmon School, we believe it makes utmost sense to consider childhood as a single, continuous developmental process. At Caedmon, the social responsibility and pre-academic skills that children learn in our pre-school are the natural building blocks for the discipline and study habits required by our rigorous elementary program.

The Caedmon program utilizes a “Modified Montessori” philosophy, which remains true to the primary maxims of Maria Montessori’s work, while adjusting constantly to the changing educational environment of New York. Montessori’s self-correcting materials, her emphasis on independent work skills and completing the work cycle, and her logical sequence to learning, are augmented by traditional activities that are typically considered less Montessori, such as art projects, dramatic fantasy play, and (in the Elementary Program) testing, homework, and extensive creative writing.

Caedmon is also uniquely diverse in terms of its cultural, racial, religious, economic, and intellectual mix. Typically, 25 percent of our families are not American. These families come from as many as 30 different countries. In addition to the natural tolerance that it fosters among the children, such diversity encourages an open mindedness to new experiences and allows them to be more creative in their thinking, writing, and problem solving.

After enjoying these unique environmental and programmatic qualities throughout this entire developmental phase of their lives, our Caedmon graduates have proven particularly appealing to other independent middle schools.

### **Q. Why is Caedmon deliberately small?**

**A.** By maintaining small class sizes (the average is 16-18 children per two teachers), our teachers are able to focus on each child’s individual learning needs, and to challenge him or her in a way that is developmentally appropriate. Children who demonstrate that they are ready can be given more demanding work, while those who are struggling with certain material can receive the extra support they need. For example, a child who reads and retains information at an advanced grade level may be moved to a different study group, or be challenged to analyze information at a deeper, more abstract level. Likewise, a child whose kinetic style of learning causes him to struggle with certain math exercises may spend one-on-one time with a teacher to figure out a more physical way to make the lesson clear.

In all cases, the teachers continually look for ways to deepen each child’s understanding of the material, while expanding their sense of personal success.

### **Q. Why does Caedmon stop at fifth grade?**

**A.** From a developmental perspective, Caedmon’s Board of Trustees has long felt that mixing young children with adolescent students would compromise the school’s mission. Caedmon children have the advantage of a learning environment devoted only to other children, where they will never play second fiddle to adolescents with their issues of puberty and their socially driven attitudes. Caedmon children become extremely well known by the entire community: administration, staff, specialists, and teachers. By the end of fifth grade, secure in their own sense of self and with a thorough love for school and the learning process, they have generally reached the end of their childhood phase and are ready for the social distractions and relative competitiveness of

Middle School. Therefore, this becomes the most appropriate time for them to make a transition into the new Middle School environment.

As New York City is such a fast paced, sophisticated environment, it is truly a gift for children to be allowed the time to just be children, without the distracting influences of media and adolescent issues.

This attitude seems to be shared by New York City in general. Over the past decade, public and independent schools alike have been incorporating the sixth grade into their middle school programs, so as to allow fifth grade children one final year of unchallenged childhood.

As ‘big fish in a little pond’, Caedmon fifth graders enjoy that all important ‘senior’ experience - a maturing opportunity that further prepares them for the social and academic demands of Middle School.

**Q. How are grade levels structured at Caedmon?**

**A.** Children begin at Caedmon as young as 2 years and 9 months old and graduate after completing 5<sup>th</sup> grade. During that time, they have the unique opportunity to experience both single grade and mixed-age classrooms.

Our youngest class, called Beginners, is designed for children 2.9 – 3.0 years old. (They must be three by December 1.) The Beginners class provides a gentle and highly structured half-day introduction to school life.

This is followed by the Early Program, a two-year program and the first of Caedmon’s combined-age levels. Children spend two years in the Early Program - in the same class with the same classroom teachers. A child needs to be 3 years old by August 31 to enter the first year of Early Program.

After Early Program, comes Kindergarten. Children must have turned 5 by August 31 to be

eligible. As with the Beginners class, Kindergarten is a single age group.

The Lower Level is a mixed-age class that combines first and second grades. Once again, the children spend two years in the same classroom with the same teachers. The same is true for Middle Level, a combined third and fourth grade.

During their fifth grade year, children are all alone in Upper Level, where they are able to prepare in earnest for the transition to life after Caedmon.

**Q. Why are some classes mixed-age groups and others single-age groups?**

**A.** Children who begin at Caedmon in the Beginners class and continue through to the fifth grade experience three single grade and three mixed-age classes. Beginners, Kindergarten, and Upper Level are the single age groups. When the children are passing from home to school, from pre-school to elementary, and from elementary to middle school, they experience a single-age class, which addresses the particular needs of those transitional years.

In mixed age classrooms of Early Program, Lower Level, and Middle Level, they are freed from the burden of always being the oldest or the youngest. Older children act as the more competent mentors, while younger children are guided and challenged by these positive role models. By alternately experiencing themselves in both roles, the children are encouraged to learn from each other, take responsibility for each other, and respect each other’s gifts.

Curriculum in the mixed-age levels rotates on a two-year cycle, so that the older children will have new challenges in their second year.

**Q. What will a typical day be like for my child in the Beginners class or the Early Program?**

**A.** Beginner and first year Early Program children are in school each day from 8:30-11:30 am. Second-year Early Program children stay until 3:30 pm with a

mid-day lunch and a rest period. The day is a well-balanced mixture of structured group time, creative play, and additional independent work. The children are confident and secure in a predictable routine, within which they can explore their individuality and skill.

Each morning, the children have forty minutes of outdoor free play in the courtyard. They have numerous artistic opportunities in class and leave the classroom for special instruction in music and movement. (Beginners have these in their classroom.) During the afternoon, with fewer children in the class, there is opportunity for more extensive instructional work in the language arts, math, and geography, and additional specialist classes in science, library, and art.

Once a child is in school for a full day, he is also able to participate in the after-school programs.

**Q. What will a typical day be like for my child in the Elementary Program?**

**A.** In Kindergarten through fifth grade, the schedule becomes more traditionally structured. Following a morning meeting during which the day is planned, 45-minute periods are spread throughout the day. Classroom teachers present three of the eleven subjects: language arts (reading, writing, spelling, grammar); math; and social studies. For language arts and math, the children are divided into small instructional groups based on their relative confidence and ability rather than strictly by age. The other classes are taught 2-3 times a week by specialists in music, art, science, computers, library, physical education, Spanish, and yoga.

Along with lunch period, each day there is a free period in the school courtyard. Frequent field trips are an exciting departure from the routine, and twice each year the entire schedule is dedicated for a few weeks to rehearsals for one of the school plays.