

U.S. Department of Education
2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [] Title I [X] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Mr. Lawrence Patton
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Princeton Charter School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 100 Bunn Drive
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Princeton State NJ Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 08540-2821

County Mercer

Telephone (609) 924-0575 Fax _____

Web site/URL <https://princetoncharter.org/> E-mail lpatton@princetoncharter.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent* Lawrence Patton E-mail lpatton@princetoncharter.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Princeton Charter School Tel. (609) 924-0575

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. Stefanos Damianakis
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date _____

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, leave blank.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2023 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2022-2023) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
0 Middle/Junior high schools
0 High schools
0 K-12 schools
- 1 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for the district.**)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

☐ Urban (city or town)
☒ Suburban
☐ Rural

3. Number of students in the school as of October 1, 2022 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Students
PreK	0
K	40
1	42
2	44
3	48
4	50
5	50
6	50
7	50
8	50
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	424

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 48.2 % Asian
 - 4.1 % Black or African American
 - 1.4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0.1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 33.3 % White
 - 12.9 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2021 - 2022 school year: 2%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	5
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	3
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	8
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	423
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Arabic, Chinese, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Gujarati, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Kannada, Mandarin, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Telugu, Turkish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %
7 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 4 %
 Total number students who qualify: 19

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 7 %
Total number of students served 28

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services with an IEP should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>1</u> Autism	<u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>8</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>6</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>8</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 2 %
Total number of students served: 9

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 13

11. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	3
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	42
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	3
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	0
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

12. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 10:1

13. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	94%	94%	98%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

14. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2022.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

15. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes ☒ No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2004

16. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

The Princeton Charter School's vision is to provide a diverse student body with the best possible education by focusing on fundamental academic disciplines in an atmosphere that affirms academic achievement.

17. Provide a URL link to the school's nondiscrimination policy.

<https://princetoncharter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/PCS-Non-Discrimination-Policy-4111.1-P-docx.pdf>

18. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

Students who are over the age of five and residents living within the Princeton Regional School District and surrounding districts are eligible to enroll in the Princeton Charter School free of charge. There are no other requirements. Parents apply online or by paper application. If there are more applicants than spots at any grade, students are selected through a random lottery. Lottery numbers assigned to each applicant are pulled randomly from a lottery tumbler.

Princeton Regional residents are given first priority for admission. Siblings of a current student enrolled in the school are also given priority for enrollment.

Princeton Charter School offers a weighted lottery approved by the New Jersey Department of Education. Children who receive certain types of public assistance will have their names entered into the lottery twice. Documentation of eligibility for this preference is based on ONE of the qualifying factors: 1. The child lives in Princeton public housing, 2. The child lives in Princeton Section 8 housing, 3. The child or guardian qualifies for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits, 4. The child already qualifies for a free or reduced price lunch in his or her current public school.

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Princeton Charter School (PCS) is a free K-8 public school that has been providing Princeton families with an educational choice for their children since 1997. Our school motto is: “Inspire, Challenge, Support, and Accomplish.” The goal is to inspire students to learn, challenge them to reach their full potential, and support them in this process to accomplish real understanding and learning. These four core elements start with our amazingly dedicated and talented teachers and are supported by the school’s design that optimizes for a successful learning environment. This design starts with the K-8 structure and small school size. We feel that the small scale allows for close knowledge of every student, strong partnership with families, and excellent communication between school and home.

Our small school environment allows all students to be known and feel known. The K-8 structure and small class size, no grade larger than 50 students, creates a learning environment where we can help all students to reach their fullest potential. Over the nine (9) years that a child spends at Charter, in small classes with dedicated teachers, administrators, faculty, and staff, we develop a deep understanding of each child as an individual learner.

We also have certain key program designs that demonstrate our commitment to real achievement and learning. These school structures include early introduction of specialization in subjects, starting in kindergarten with a dedicated science teacher for example, and early introduction to world language which begins in kindergarten for French and Spanish and meets daily from first to eighth grade. Specialization occurs for every subject starting in grade three. In addition, co-teaching in Language Arts in grades 3,4,5 ensures a 1:12.5 teacher ratio and greater differentiation with two certified teachers in the classroom for English. Math also has co-teaching in grades 3 and 4. Starting in fifth grade math is broken into four separate sections ensuring small class sizes and targeted instruction. In grades 6-8, English classes are broken into sections of 16. These decisions on how school resources are applied, position students and teachers to be successful and demonstrate our commitment to excellence in learning for our students.

During these nine years from K-8, we also build strong relationships with our families. These relationships form the basis of the critical school-home partnership that has been present since the school’s inception. Parents are regularly involved in all facets of school life, as volunteers at school events, chaperoning trips, helping to serve lunches, participating on school committees, and serving on the Board of Trustees of the school.

Commitment to Service and Leadership: We feel that the development of character, leadership skills, and an understanding of service to others are key elements to the development of every individual. We have a number of activities engineered to promote the awareness of others and the importance of helping others. Eighth grade students participate in a buddy program in which they meet regularly with kindergarten and grade one students to guide them through a science activity. Students volunteer, giving up their study hall time, to read to or help younger students pack up in the afternoon, and students volunteer as homework helpers. Our Student Council organizes fundraisers to support others in need; our Operation Smile club raises money for surgeries to address cleft palates. Our Polar Plunge team jumps in the ocean in February to raise money for the Special Olympics of New Jersey.

Beyond the classroom, we are committed to providing opportunities for students to explore new activities, discover their interests, and pursue their passions. We have a full array of sports, clubs, and activities: Sports include cross-country, soccer, field hockey, basketball, girls lacrosse and volleyball. Performing arts programs include: fall play, winter musical, orchestra, prep orchestra, jazz ensemble, and chorus. Students pursue academic interests in clubs such as Science Bowl, a coding club, MathCounts, WordMasters, chess, the school newspaper, and they pursue other interests such as art club or garden club.

We are very proud of our overall school performance as we see growth over time for all of our students as measured by the New Jersey Student Learning Assessments (NJSLA) at the end of the year, as well as our own internal testing using a nationally normed battery of tests called the ERB CTP5. These tests reflect that our students are performing at a very high level overall as well as demonstrating steady improvement over

their time at the charter school.

Last year, out of 14 different tests taken for the NJSLA in English, Mathematics and Science grade 3-8 , Princeton Charter school students were ranked number 1 in the state in four different tests: Grade 4 and Grade 5 ELA, and Grade 5 and Grade 8 Science, based on Median Scale Score. We were in the top ten on six other tests out of all public schools in the state. We are incredibly proud of the teachers and students for this incredible performance.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Since English language skills are an essential part of a child's early education, Princeton Charter School is committed to the development of strong reading and writing skills for all students. Students must learn to read so that they can read to learn. They must have a fluent written and oral command of standard English. They must read the literature that forms the knowledge base of a literate citizen. The Princeton Charter School English curriculum is a carefully sequenced, comprehensive program for teaching children to read, write, and speak standard English. The main elements of the curriculum are: the use of literature to enliven reading, to inform, and to use as a model for writing; reading for comprehension, vocabulary, and entertainment; writing for communication and for creative expression, with emphasis on organization, syntax, spelling, and penmanship.

Princeton Charter School has always focused on the basics that form strong reading skills and comprehension strategies. In kindergarten, Big Book read-alouds provide the springboard for phonetics, grammar, punctuation, spelling and sentence structure examination. Spelling and grammar go hand in hand as knowledge of graphemes supports development of phoneme recognition. Targeted phonics work makes use of the Orton Gillingham explicit, systematic, and multi-kinesthetic approach establishing a multi-modality approach for learning: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Students are grouped developmentally for targeted guided reading instruction to prevent boredom or lack of engagement due to material beyond the student's grasp. Additionally, beginning in grade two, book specific vocabulary is introduced and skills for decoding these are taught and the meaning and importance to the overall story are examined. Teachers begin using guided reading strategies for novels in grade two with strategies that gradually lessen the emphasis on fluency and continue to build complex comprehension strategies.

At each grade level, students are assessed appropriately for the age of the students. At lower elementary grade levels, we use reading assessments to determine reading level, Calkins Reading Assessments and Diebel Assessments. At upper grades, students take quizzes and tests designed by grade level teachers. Student writing is assessed regularly in all English classes. Unit tests are summative and at older grade levels students take end of year exams. In addition, as mentioned above, students complete milestones at every grade level.

Students also took the CTP 5 Exam through ERB. These provided feedback on student progress in the all of 2021 in language arts and mathematics.

By third or fourth grade the children read individually through guided reading then the class discusses themes, plots, and character motivations; they make inferences, generalizations, and distinguish fact from fiction. As they advance in school, the students read, discuss, interpret, analyze, and compare literature of all forms, including plays, fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. By the end of eighth grade, students are careful readers, able to analyze the structure and style of a work of fiction, and to understand and summarize a written argument.

The acquisition of writing skills progresses in conjunction with reading. Beginning in kindergarten, we employ the Writers Workshop approach. Our youngest students begin by writing about things they know in "How To" books where they sequentially list the steps to complete an action or activity they know well. Students are encouraged to write the most complex sentences they can, mirroring their speech. Throughout their early writing experience, students are learning what drafting and revision are, editing, and "publishing," which we know as the final draft.

Starting from second grade on, students write stories, poems, letters, book reports, and biographies, and begin to learn the formal writing process of outlining, drafting, revising, and editing. They begin to refine composition skills such as paragraphing, dialogue, and more complex sentence structure. Students write

every day, and assignments are selected to examine and use writings of all types: narrative, expository, persuasive, and descriptive. As their knowledge of sentence and paragraph structure, grammar, spelling, and vocabulary progresses, students are expected to apply these skills to their writings in all subject areas. By the end of eighth grade, students' writing should exhibit coherent thought, appropriate vocabulary, correct syntax, and style.

1b. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

A strong foundation in mathematics is a prerequisite for success in our increasingly analytical world. Just as PCS is dedicated to early achievement in reading, early mastery of arithmetic skills and basic mathematical problem solving are viewed as essential first steps.

PCS students master the basic mathematical skills including problem solving; applying mathematics to everyday situations; alertness to the reasonableness of results; estimation and approximation; appropriate computational skills; geometry; measurement; reading, interpreting, and constructing tables, charts, and graphs; using mathematics to predict; and computer literacy. PCS adds to this list a knowledge of probability and statistics, risk, and orders of magnitude.

At each grade level, students are assessed appropriately for the age of the students. At lower elementary grade levels, we use teacher based worksheets and workbook assessments using Singapore math. At upper grades students take shared assessments among different sections created by the teachers. Students are tested in pre and post units to determine mastery. Unit tests are summative and at older grade levels students take end of year exams.

Students in grades 3-8 take the NJSLA exams and also took the CTP 5 Exam through ERB. These provided feedback on student progress mathematics.

The K-4 math program is structured to help students cultivate their mathematical reasoning, problem solving, and communication skills. Students start in kindergarten by developing numerical and spatial sense. In first grade, students build on this by learning to count, and compute using whole numbers. In second grade, students strengthen these skills and develop their mathematical vocabulary. Upon entering third grade, students have their multiplication and division facts memorized and are emerging with fraction sense. In fourth grade students apply their mathematical vocabulary, and learn to compute with not only whole numbers, but also with fractions and decimals. Each year in the K-4 program, students extend their knowledge in the areas of geometry, data organization, and analysis. To help students build a strong facts-based education, the K-4 math program uses the Singapore math program.

We use a co-teaching model for grades 3-4 mathematics: Two teachers are assigned to each class of 24-25 students. The co-teaching model allows for greater differentiation and attention to individual students' needs in heterogeneously grouped classrooms.

Starting in Grade 5, math sections are grouped homogeneously and broken into 4 sections per grade (1:12.5 ratio). Math sections in grades 5-8 are determined by student performances on assessments throughout the year. Class sizes range from 5 students in lower achieving groups to 18 in higher achieving classes. Providing a low teacher-student ratio for struggling students enables more individualized student guidance.

Advanced Courses: All students complete Algebra I by the end of grade 8, Some students will complete Algebra I in a two-year sequence in grades 7 and 8, Other students will complete a Pre-Algebra course in grade 7 and then Algebra I in one year in grade 8. More advanced students in math will be able to take Accelerated Algebra I as a one-year course in grade 7 and then Accelerated Geometry in grade 8. A small number of students who demonstrate very high aptitude and performance will be selected to take Alg II in grade 8 in addition to Accelerated Geometry.

1c. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Science specialization begins in kindergarten with a designated teacher for science at every grade level. This specialization allows the teacher to be an expert in science instruction at each grade band, K-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8. In addition, science meets three times a week for grades K, 1, and 2. Science instructional time increases to five times a week in grades 3-8. This commitment of time in the schedule and specialized instructors for science demonstrates our commitment to science learning and thinking. Our curriculum is aligned with the Next Generation Science curriculum.

Curiosity is a central human trait: All historical cultures have formulated explanations for the natural phenomena surrounding us. What we refer to as science is an approach to understanding nature that relies on careful, systematic observation and measurement, the formulation of hypotheses to make quantitative predictions concerning natural phenomena, and — most importantly — the testing of these hypotheses by further experiment. Princeton Charter School adopts a “minds-on, hands-on” approach to science education; it stresses quantitative reasoning as well as experimentation and observation. Students are encouraged to be curious about the natural world surrounding them and come to understand the importance of science in many different careers.

Our approach uses three essential components of science education: knowledge, skills, and application of scientific information in resolving problems. In our lessons, projects, and assignments, we routinely employ an engineering design process while solving problems, designing conceptual models, and completing actual project builds.

The process skills emphasized are: observing, measuring, classifying, recording, predicting, hypothesizing, inferring, and experimenting. Knowledge and skills mastered are used to discuss issues of social concern, such as burning of fossil fuels. Core scientific skills, e.g. measurement, observation, and scientific reasoning are developed through hands-on experiences and experiments at each grade level.

At each grade level, students are assessed appropriately for the age of the students. At lower elementary grade levels, we use teacher based worksheets and projects. At upper grades, students take quizzes and tests designed by grade level teachers. At upper grades students are tested in pre and post units to determine mastery. Unit tests are summative and at older grade levels students take end of year exams.

Students in grades 5 and 8 take the NJSLA exams for science.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Princeton Charter School teaches history, geography, and social studies from kindergarten to eighth grade. Initially, children are introduced to history through stories in grades K-2. By third grade, they embark upon more sophisticated study. The emphasis is on political, economic, geographic, cultural, and technological forces which have shaped the history of the world and the United States. The Charter School curriculum follows the guidelines of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards for Social Studies.

History and geography are taught from Kindergarten through grade 2 using good stories: folktales, legends, myths, accounts of historical events, and biographies. Starting in second grade, students take an in-depth look at the history, geography, climate, and population of the people of New Jersey. Students specifically study New Jersey’s earliest people, the Lenni Lenape.

Students in grade 3 study the geography, climate, and landforms of the United States by region. They learn how these factors influence how people live and their economic pursuits. In fourth grade, students pursue a more detailed study of United States history, learning how the original people arrived in North America, and how they adapted to the regions where they settled. Throughout the study of American history, students study the contributions of various men, women, and people from diverse ethnicities.

From fifth to eighth grade, students pursue a chronological study of world history and geography starting with ancient river valley civilizations up to the modern age. Students also examine how archaeology provides historical and scientific explanations for how people lived. Students develop an understanding of the creation of centralized systems of government and advanced societies. Students acquire the knowledge

and skills to think analytically and systematically about how past interactions of people, cultures, and the environment affect issues across time and cultures.

By the end of grade eight, students are able to analyze and interpret politically significant historical events and their consequences; describe different societies, including their ethical values; discuss the arts and customs of different cultures and analyze their similarities as well as differences; and describe different economic systems and their effects on the daily lives of people.

At each grade level, students are assessed appropriately for the age of the students. At lower elementary grade levels, we use teacher based worksheets, research projects. At upper grades, students take quizzes and tests designed by grade level teachers. Students write regularly in all social studies and history classes. At upper grades students are tested in pre and post units to determine mastery. Unit tests are summative and at older grade levels students take end of year exams.

1e. For schools that serve grades 7-12:

Education as a critical component in the preparation for career and life is central to the mission of Princeton Charter School and is perhaps the main reason that families select charter as an option for their children's education. As a result, parents who choose Princeton Charter School place a high value on education and share our view that an early, strong, academic foundation is critical for college readiness and future academic success. We emphasize the importance of core academic skills in order for students to realize full and fulfilling membership in society.

Fortunately, this is a shared belief among our families, and our students move on to pursue their studies with essentially 100% of students enrolling in college after high school. While this is driven mainly by a shared value with the families, we work hard to emphasize the importance of English, mathematics, the understanding of critical concepts, and strong reasoning skills as essential to achieving future success.

1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

The arts are a fundamental component of the educational program at PCS. The curriculum includes visual arts, music, and drama. Following the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards for the Visual and Performing Arts, our goal is to achieve art literacy for all students, i.e., to educate not only creators, but also recipients of the arts. Art and music each meet three times in a two week period. Starting in 5th grade students take either music, art, or drama each trimester and classes meet three times a week.

In music students are provided with choral singing experience, as well as age-appropriate classroom instrumental and recorder instruction. All students are exposed to notation and the basic rudiments of music theory. They learn about composers and study selected repertoire representing all periods of music.

In visual arts, students learn the elements of drawing, painting, and sculpture. A variety of techniques for creating two or three-dimensional art are taught; creative explorations coexist with instruction in specific techniques.

Students take Drama starting in grade 3 as part of their arts rotations. They learn how to use their bodies and voices in basic presentations and they also understand what it means to be a good audience. In the course of their drama study from grades 3-8, students learn character work, dialogue, public speaking, specific basic terminology of technical theatre, improvisation, dialects, staging and stagecraft, and playwriting.

Students will be aware that self-expression and originality play a vital role in the art they study and in the art they produce.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

Princeton Charter School believes the foundation for an active and healthy lifestyle is instilled at a young age. To support this idea, the Princeton Charter School promotes wellness and physical activity every day. Throughout the day each student has three fifteen-minute, outside, break periods, and P.E. twice a week.

In addition to weekly Physical Education classes, all students at Princeton Charter School complete health goals and standards as part of the NJ public school curriculum. These are broken into five separate units as follows: 1. Healthy Bodies, 2. Coping Strategies - Mental Health, 3. Personal Expression, 4. Healthy Relationships, 5. Community Safety.

Students learn many of these core ideas in everyday classes: gym, academic classes, science classes, and also in designated health classes taught by our physical education teachers. For example, students will understand the importance of “sportsmanship.” in P.E. classes as well as in all classes as an important concept for all students. Other lessons will be addressed specifically in science classes, while some will be addressed in designated health lessons only.

This multi-layered approach to the health curriculum makes sense in that it emphasizes the importance of core lessons in a logical, organic fashion as a lasting part of understanding what it means to be a healthy member of a community.

2c. Foreign language(s), if offered (if not offered, leave blank)

World Language instruction at Princeton Charter School starts in kindergarten and continues through eighth grade. Students are introduced to French and Spanish in kindergarten, meeting three times a week for thirty minutes. From first to eighth grade world language classes meet every day for forty-five minutes to maximize immersion.

The Princeton Charter School World Language program is academic by nature and strives to meet national (ACTFL) standards and NJ State Standards. The goal is to equip students with many of the following skills: listening comprehension, oral communication, reading, writing, and cultural awareness. Students are being prepared to become global citizens.

Instruction is given in the target language starting in kindergarten with the goal of developing comprehension and language acquisition. The development of vocabulary relies on the use of images and objects — Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS), and Comprehensible Input. Authentic pronunciation and a correct accent in the target language are practiced daily. Vocabulary units are planned around a themed approach to vocabulary development. The use of authentic stories and legends are central to the learning process. Grammatical concepts are taught as a set of structural rules that can be applied to express thoughts and to develop accurate communication

Writing in World Language is incorporated during class time and in assignments starting at early grade levels with the goal of expanding the length and complexity of written expression in older grades.

Understanding the global French/Francophone and Spanish cultures is an important goal of the World Language department at Princeton Charter School. Culture is the underlying fabric of relating to language and it is central to our curriculum.

2d. Technology/library/media

We believe that students learn technology by using it in meaningful applications in their regular course of study. Students start in kindergarten with tablets that provide programs in support of mathematics and

language arts. Throughout the different grade levels, students use a full array of learning platforms and programs in their various classes. Primarily students and teachers use Google Suite, e.g. Google Slides, Google Docs, Google Sheets, and Google Forms. In addition, teachers will introduce a variety of learning programs to address specific learning goals and topics.

The Learning Management System (LMS) that we use teaches students to use technology in a meaningful way to manage their assignments. At the end of their time at Charter, we expect all students to be fully proficient in basic technical platforms and programs such as word processing, spreadsheets, presentation programs, etc. We want our students (and staff) to be able to identify a need, choose whether technology is suited to address the problem, choose the best program to approach the task, and to be able to adapt technology, if needed, to solve the problem.

Library skills are taught through partnership with the local library starting with field trips to the library in kindergarten, library card registration, and visits from the librarian to school. The history teachers work with students to access the online resources from the library.

2e. Any other interesting or innovative curriculum programs you would like to share

Milestones: Milestones of achievement are annual assessments that celebrate and recognize student achievement. Students at each grade level complete two milestones which are designed to measure proficiency at specific tasks assessed for that grade. For the milestone, students work independently to meet a standard of excellence for a specific project. Examples include: a well-prepared science laboratory report demonstrating proper use of data analysis (grade 8); an illustrated story with correct grammar and spelling (Grade 3); and a well written five-paragraph essay on a theme from history (grade 8).

Computer Science: Computer Science lessons are now offered in all grades K-8. This follows the NJ Department of Education Student Learning Standards for Computer Science and Design Thinking which stipulates that “all students receive computer science and design thinking instruction from Kindergarten through grade 12.” We feel that Computer Science is an essential discipline and provides critical thinking skills.

The overall goals for the computer science curriculum are to have students learn about the systems that are involved and further strengthen their computational, abstract and analytical thinking. Students learn how to read, design, and create code in the programming language, Python . They learn circuitry and knowledge sensors using a Microbit. Students gain an understanding of how a computer and technology impact our society and learn about their digital footprint and digital citizenship

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

The first level of support for learners who are having difficulty is teacher support outside of the regular class time. Subject teachers meet with their students during study hall, reading period, or, in some cases, before school to provide additional instruction. There are times when another teacher may be designated to deliver this extra instruction. Parents are encouraged to contact the teacher to discuss what is being or can be done to assist their child if the parent is aware that their child is struggling.

The reading specialist in grades K-2 regularly “pushes” into reading classes to work with individual or small groups of students. Or, the reading specialist may pull students out of class. The reading specialist works with the classroom teachers to identify the need for additional reading support. In addition, all students in grades K-3 are screened for markers of dyslexia.

The Co-Teaching model in grades 3-5 for mathematics and Languages Arts provides real-time support for students. Teachers are able to address the learning needs of the students in their classes immediately. Language Arts classes have two certified teachers in grades 3, 4 ,5. Mathematics classes have two certified teachers in grades 3 and 4. Regularly, students work one-on-one with one of the teachers while the co-

teacher is working with the rest of the class. This model makes the teachers available to all students regardless of whether or not they have a classified learning disability. We also feel that this addresses many students in a timely and direct manner since it is the immediate classroom teacher who identifies the issue and can then address the need, i.e. they do not need to explain the issue to a tutor or third party who will provide the support.

Small Sections in mathematics and language arts in upper grades allows teachers to continue to differentiate and support students. We have some sections with as few as 4-6 students in non-pull out, or I.E.P classes. This low ratio allows a teacher to provide students with support.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Several of the strategies and structures in place for support also serve to provide challenge. The co-teaching model allows teachers to work with students to challenge them: our small class size, co-teaching model enables the teacher to differentiate instruction, assignments and expectations for students that need greater challenge. Our Learning Management system enables teachers to assign more challenging work to individuals without this being evident to others in the class.

Math sectioning: our math curriculum is challenging as it tends to run a grade level above for all students, (i.e. students in grade 4 are working with grade 5 math material). In addition, our math curriculum sequence provides the opportunity for students who demonstrate high aptitude and performance to take advanced classes and accelerated classes.

All students will complete Algebra I by the end of grade 8. Some students in the grade will have completed Algebra I in seventh grade in one year, and then take accelerated geometry in eighth grade. Furthermore, a select group of talented mathematics students are given the option to take Algebra II in addition to accelerated geometry in eighth grade. In some cases, at the younger grade levels, if a student is identified as highly accelerated and gifted, he/she will be given the opportunity to work with an upper grade teacher in mathematics to challenge and meet the student's needs.

Guided reading in grades K-4 allows students to work at the level appropriate to their reading ability regardless of "grade level."

3c. Students with disabilities:

Princeton Charter School is committed to supporting every student to meet the challenges of the curriculum, and proud to support its students in a variety of ways.

Classroom teachers are the first line of support. If a student experiences difficulty in a subject despite the teacher's support or are struggling across a number of academic areas due to problems with learning, behavior, or health issues, the Intervention and Referral Service (I&RS) team will meet to develop more targeted interventions to facilitate positive student progress.

The I&RS team may potentially make the decision to refer the student to the Child Study Team for testing to determine if they qualify for special education services. The Child Study Team consists of a special education teacher, general education teacher(s), building principal, school social worker, school psychologist, and LDTC who is the case manager, and the Student Support Service Coordinator. Should the student qualify, an IEP will be written for him/her. Princeton Charter School will actively pursue the least restrictive environment for our students' learning.

Sometimes children have difficulty pronouncing certain letters or letter blends. They may have a production impediment or difficulty in distinguishing the correct production of sound. Students may struggle with verbalization of thoughts or appropriate verbal social interaction. In these cases she/he may qualify for speech services available as a special education service. Students may be identified either by a teacher or parent. The school's speech teacher will decide if an evaluation is necessary to determine eligibility for services in which case a specific plan (IEP) will be drafted.

A child may have a physical or mental impairment that interferes with his/her ability to access instruction as traditionally presented in the classroom yet does not qualify for special education services. In this case a 504 plan can be written to list accommodations that will be made to the regular instructional process. These plans can be written to cover a limited period of time such as to offer assistance in the case of a broken limb or they may cover a longer period of time.

3d. English Language Learners:

Princeton Charter School offers instruction to support ELL students (English Language Learners). Students are identified either by parents seeking support or by teachers who believe a student may be struggling due to Limited English Proficiency (LEP). The school's English Language Services (ESL) Coordinator conducts informal assessments and a Home Language Survey to determine if the student qualifies for further evaluation and a Records Review to determine if the student has a history of ELL services or has been attending an English language US school for more than 3 years. Students who qualify for further assessment take the WIDA screener or remote Screener (W-APT for kindergarten) to determine if they qualify for services.

Our ESL Coordinator provides specialized instruction for our ELLs on the basis of their age and language proficiency. The goal is to familiarize students not only with the basic language, but with its correct usage and idiosyncrasies. Students receive the requisite 90 minutes of instruction a week and often more. Some ELLs work with the Literacy Specialist to develop phonetic pronunciation skills and word recognition in reading and writing. In addition the ESL coordinator also provides: in-class support for the ELLs, works with the student's teachers to understand what the student is learning and helps the teacher understand the student's needs, and provides support in the completion of assignments and help in preparing for tests

3e. Other populations, if a special program or intervention is offered:

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Students at Princeton Charter have the opportunity to be engaged in a number of different activities over their time at Charter as extra-curricular clubs and sports or as options within our daily program. Our goal is to provide many different and diverse experiences for students to try something new or to develop their interests to the next level. In addition, since we are a small school, students actually have the opportunity to try new activities or sports as our teams do not “cut” students; there are no tryouts. This allows a student to have a team experience, learn, and grow even if they are new to a sport. At the same time, students are also able to play and compete at a high level. Our cross country team won the county-wide competition for the girls, and many of our girls and boys have moved on to run in HS and even at the division one college level.

Clubs include academic, game, service, and arts related activities. Students are involved in the school dramatic performances. We have a jazz band, orchestra, and a prep-orchestra for younger students. Our chess program is popular with four different levels of chess clubs meeting after school. Our Science Bowl team is competitive, winning the state competition four out of the last five years and representing New Jersey at the national competition in Washington, D.C. We have a school paper, a garden club, games club, and programming club. If a student or group of students have a particular interest, they can organize a new club.

Leadership and Service are key values that are emphasized at Princeton Charter School. The student council organizes school events such as spirit week, dances, and fundraisers for various causes. Our K-8 structure allows for older students to engage younger classmates in a buddy program which pairs older students with students in kindergarten - grade 2; we also have a homework helper program, and a Peer Leader program. Students in grade 8 are selected as peer leaders to lead lessons for grade 4 students on important social skill topics such as conflict resolution. This program is supervised by the school counselor.

We have an annual faculty-student basketball game attended by the whole school. Our kindergarten students put on the half-time show. This is an amazing all school event that engages students at all levels in the life and community of the school.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The partnership with parents is a critical aspect of Princeton Charter school. We welcome the support and input from parents as we work together to provide the best learning environment for the students at Charter. We work with all parents and families and our “Friends of Princeton Charter Association” to promote family and community involvement. The cornerstones of this partnership are communication and feedback, as well as service and engagement. Built into the school’s structures for communication with parents include: Back-to-school nights, Parent teacher conferences - twice a year. Opportunities for conversations with Board members; Annual Parent Survey; ad hoc surveys; monthly “State of the School” addresses via zoom for parents to hear from the administration; information sessions and training for parents on a variety of topics such as online safety and parenting issues for children.

Parents are also deeply engaged in the life of the school through many different events and opportunities to get involved. The different types of events allow parents to find ways to connect with the school that fits their schedule and interests. Starting with governance, we have a 100% Parent Board of Trustees; Parents participate on a variety of standing and ad hoc committees: including the Curriculum Committees and other board committees such as the Admissions Committee or School Climate Committee

Parents are invited to attend events that the school organizes as the audience: performances-Grades 5-8 chorus, orchestra, jazz band concert, winter musical; Grades K-4 chorus and music performances; Miscellaneous grade level curricular performances such as the grade 2 wax museum, grade 3 history performance, world language class project performances. We also sponsor presentations from outside speakers on topics such as mindfulness, social media and internet safety, executive function, etc.

In addition, the Friends of Princeton Charter school organizes several events led by parents/guardians for parents /guardians to further the school's mission and goals. These include: the annual Fall Barbecue, Annual Fundraising Gala, volunteering for lunch service, chaperoning trips, hosting grade level parent social gathering, organizing support for Field Day, organizing school photo day, hosting Annual Spring Picnic, hosting the International Potluck Celebration, organizing the Lunar New Year Celebration, and classroom curricular presentations.

The board conducts an annual parent survey that is used to measure parent satisfaction with the academic environment, curriculum and instructions, social and emotional development, the governance of the school, and any other parent concerns. The survey is reviewed by the board and the administration and used to make changes, or focus our efforts in specific areas.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

At Princeton Charter School we feel that creating and sustaining a strong professional culture that is committed to excellence in student outcomes and characterized by a continual effort to improve instructional practice is paramount to sustaining, long term, a great learning environment for our students.

This starts with a sustained commitment to the mission of the school, maintaining mission fidelity and mission alignment, over time as teachers leave and join the school. In other words, it is critical that we maintain the school's core mission and that we make certain that all teachers are aligned to that mission.

We start that process of creating mission alignment immediately during the hiring process. We take care to ensure new staff understand the history of the school and the importance of the mission. Our mentoring program leverages our strongest staff in bringing teachers on board and helping them to learn the school culture. In addition, we place a strong emphasis on student outcomes. We share and elevate the importance of performance on standardized tests.

At charter, teachers are also valued stakeholders in the school's decision- making. Teachers contribute as leaders in our curriculum development. They participate on the curriculum committees which meet twice a year to review and propose changes to the curriculum and the instructional approach in each subject area.

A culture of excellence in instruction is maintained through our staff evaluation plan and supervision by the administration. In addition, an open environment that elevates the value of excellence in instructional practice is developed through the practice of regular peer observations and the built-in reality of co-teaching. Teachers work together to create the best lessons that contribute to a high standard placed on student learning and student outcomes.

Professional development is used to support teachers as they improve their craft or to remain up-to-date on the latest instructional practices. Teachers have been leaders shaping and suggesting and leading professional development at Charter.

Finally the staff promote a collegial and supportive community in many different small but important ways: attending each other's class events and performances, through organizing staff meals such as monthly breakfasts, lunch pot-lucks, and running staff "team step challenge" competitions designed to get us walking, organizing secret gift givers at the holidays, and celebrating staff birthdays systematically. These all help knit the school together as a professional community that is supportive of its members and committed to the same goal of excellence in learning.

4. School Leadership:

The administrative leadership of Princeton Charter School has been consistent for a significant period of time creating stability and trust among students, teachers, and parents. Currently, the Head of School (HOS) has been at the Charter School for 15 years. The two other administrators are Assistant Heads of School — the Assistant Head of School for grades K-4 and the Assistant Head of School for grades 5-8.

They have been at the school for 14 and 11 years respectively. This consistency over time has been a tremendous benefit to the school and enabled us to bank on the trust of the parents and staff as we navigated the challenges arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Day to day operational decisions are made by the academic administrators who meet regularly and confer on issues that pertain to the two school divisions. Decisions that affect both divisions include both division heads. Furthermore the administrative team, the two Division Heads and the Head of School, meet twice a week to plan or address issues that arise and make decisions on procedures and operations; however, the reality is that administrators communicate several times a day given the small school environment. Broader institutional decisions and long term goals are set by the Board of Trustees and the Head of School.

Annually, the school sets district goals which are in effect the Head of School goals for that year. These goals guide initiatives assigned to the Assistant Heads of School, the School Counselor, etc. Assessment of school needs guided in part by annual feedback gathered through faculty surveys, the parent survey, and the student survey are used to set goals for the year. The Board is made aware of decisions and kept apprised of progress through regular feedback at Board meetings, as part of the Head of School evaluation, and through in-depth analyses reported at the annual, all-day Board retreat.

In accordance with the Princeton Charter School Charter, the Board of Trustees evaluates the Head of School, who is the professional educational leader of the school as well as its administrator, annually. The HOS is evaluated on two sets of criteria: Part I: Progress on annual District Goals; Part II - General school leadership.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

The Princeton Charter School student body reflects amazing diversity in terms of global background, religions, and cultures with many of our students being the first generation of their families in America. This globally diverse identity helps inform our perspective on the importance of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in our curriculum, approach to instruction, and our embrace of diversity as a learning community.

We have carefully reviewed our curriculum through our curriculum committee process to ensure that the perspectives offered reflect not one single lens, but reflect a broad spectrum of views to insure the inclusion and balance of diverse cultures. Our history curriculum committee has carefully mapped the scope and sequence of our coverage to ensure that it does not overly reflect a predominately western focus for example. More specifically, we are careful to ensure that the study of the various histories does not reflect a western lens of research and authorship. The language arts committee carefully reviewed the titles and topics reflected in the literature studied and replaced texts to present a more balanced and representative list of voices and topics. World language classes celebrate various cultures and countries where French and Spanish are spoken across the globe. This global emphasis broadens students' understanding and perspective beyond the immediate boundaries of Princeton, and the USA.

In our school assemblies and in grade level projects we celebrate our diversity by recognizing the many different holidays from a broad range of religions and cultures. Parents are regularly invited into the school to provide insight into their culture when it is relevant to the course study.

Teachers engage in professional development and training to expand their understanding and skill set in teaching in a culturally responsive classroom setting. The school has been deliberate in planning professional development to emphasize the importance of this topic and to build teachers' understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Recent training during professional development for the entire school staff has included: Diversity training and Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE). We have used a blend of in-house training as well as outside presenters for example, Border Crossers - Diversity Educators.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

School design to position for success: A critical aspect of Princeton Charter School is the commitment to allocate resources and make essential choices that position teachers and students to be successful. This approach changes the national debate on “the state of education today,” that we seem to hear so often, from “good” versus “bad” teachers, and places it on effective design strategies. With this in mind, one school strategy that positions our teachers to be very successful in their work with students is early introduction and specialization for subject area teaching. At Princeton Charter School, designated specialized teachers are assigned as follows:

Early Introduction of World Language: Foreign language instruction in French and Spanish is offered three days per week in kindergarten and increases to daily instruction for grades 1-8. It is understood that learning a foreign language should start as early as possible and with frequent, regularly scheduled classes. By having a teacher fluent in the target language and with expertise in second language acquisition, French and Spanish teaching and learning is optimized.

Early Introduction of Science: As early as kindergarten, grade 1, and grade 2, science is taught by a dedicated science teacher. This allows that individual to be an expert at the early elementary grade levels while focusing on one academic discipline. Since science is the main focus, not the third or fourth subject that the kindergarten teacher or grade 2 teacher is preparing, we feel it enhances the experience of science for students and prepares them for the future study of science. In addition, it has the impact of allowing the core classroom teacher to focus more on language arts and mathematics, (i.e. one less subject to plan).

Full Specialized Instruction Begins in Grade 3: Starting in grade 3, all subjects mathematics, English, history, world languages, and science are taught by teachers who specialize in that discipline, (i.e. the math teacher for third grade students only teaches mathematics, and the English teacher specializes in teaching language arts only). Similar to the argument for early science specialization, by having teachers responsible for one subject, for a narrow age band of students, they are able to be more successful in their instruction.