Princeton Charter School

Gifted and Talented Program

2025-26

Program Overview

New Jersey's "Strengthening Gifted and Talented Education Act" (SGTEA) requires all school districts to have a program for gifted and talented students.

Princeton Charter Schools offers students who demonstrate a high level of ability in one or more content areas — a reading program in grades K-4 and a Mathematics program in grades 5-8.

High ability is characterized as a student who "possesses or demonstrates a high level of ability, in one or more content areas, when compared to their chronological peers in the local district and who require modification of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities."

Program Structure

The Gifted and Talented program is broken into two age groups, Kindergarten - grade 4 and Grades 5-8.

The K-4 program

The focus of the K-4 program is on Reading and literacy development. Differentiation is offered within the language arts curriculum for identified students in order to increase the level of challenge in accordance with their capabilities in reading.

Students at each grade level are broken into different reading groups reflecting different levels of ability. The highest reading groups in each class provide differentiation and higher challenge. Based on an individual student's reading ability, leveled readers and additional resources are provided to meet the learner's accelerated needs.

Reading groups are fluid and may change based on regular teacher assessments, formal reading assessments, observations, and classroom work in addition to standardized test assessments.

Parents are informed of placement at parent teacher conferences.

The 5-8 program

Students are identified for accelerated math classes starting in grade 5 to provide a more advanced curriculum, a faster pace, and a deeper conceptual understanding of mathematics in order to challenge and meet students at their level.

Students who are identified as more advanced in math will be placed into accelerated courses as follows:

Grade 6:	Accelerated Pre Algebra (with a heavy emphasis on algebraic concepts)
Grade 7:	Accelerated Algebra I as a one-year course
Grade 8*:	Accelerated Geometry.

*A small number of students who demonstrate very high aptitude and performance will be selected to take Accelerated Algebra II and trigonometry in grade 8 in addition to Accelerated Geometry.

Parents are informed of the placement process through a number of communications:

- A letter outlining the process is sent to families in the summer before grade 5 (appendix A).
- a detailed presentation at Back to School night for grade 5
- Updates are given during parent teacher conferences which meet twice a year in grade 5.
- Students entering grades 6, 7, 8 receive a placement letter indicating mathematics placement (Appendix B).

Identification Process

Princeton Charter School uses "multiple measures" to identify students for the K-4 and the 5-8 programs.

For the K-4 reading program

- **Standardized Test Scores** are used as measures for assessing the acquisition of literacy skills. These tests include the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), Orton-Gillingham Phonics Assessments, and Teacher's College Reading and Writing Workshop Reading Assessments
- **Classroom Performance:** classroom work samples, evidence of a student's work, creative projects, and a student's demonstrated level of achievement.
- **Teacher Recommendations:** Teacher-completed checklists or behavioral scales that assess a student's curiosity, creativity, leadership, and other traits associated with giftedness.

For the grades 5-8 mathematics placement program

At the end of grade 4, students are selected for the accelerated classes in the program based on four(4) criteria:

1. ERB - Quantitative reasoning and Mathematics I&II
2. Grade Average
3. Math League Competition
4. End of year Test

Teacher recommendation is also considered in the process.

The fifth grade year is used to determine students' placement through a months-long process of assessing student performance in class and on a series of unit tests. Students start with one of four different teachers, and throughout the fall and into part of winter, there is movement among the classes/levels in response to the students' performance on the same unit tests given in each class.

Students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their mathematical aptitude and performance. By mid year, we will have a good idea as to the correct math placement and the class assignments will remain stable. However, at the end of grades 5 and 6 placements for math will be made after reviewing five separate measures again:

Criteria*:

1. Grade Average: Students final grades are considered in the identification process. Throughout the first half of Grade 5, shared common assessments are used to determine students' placement.
2. Summative assessments:

a. At the end of grade 5 students take a comprehensive skills test.

b. Students at the end of grades 6 take a final exam.

3. ERB (Standardized) Tests : The school administers the ERB-CTP 5 assessments for Mathematics and Language arts for all students in grades 3-8 every fall. These are nationally normed tests. Individual test performance is used to determine placement in the accelerated program.
4. Math League Competition
5. Readiness Assessments
    a. Grade 5: Pre-Algebra Readiness
    b. Grade 6: Algebra Readiness

*In cases where it is uncertain, additional criteria may be considered, e.g. AMC 8 scores, teacher recommendation.

And, at the end of sixth grade, there is another opportunity for students to move up or down for grade 7. Through this process, we are committed to accurately placing students at the appropriate level for each individual learner.

Parent Appeal Process

Princeton Charter School's gifted and talented plan is available on the school website.

For students who are not found eligible for the K-4 program or 5-8 program: Should a family feel it has additional, relevant information that it would like to be considered, an appeal can be made to the Assistant Head of School, for the relevant division, K-4 or 5-8, who will review the case and make a final decision. If the initial placement decision is overturned based on the parent appeal, a student will enter the program on a probationary status* to ensure it is the best fit for the student.

If parents believe the school has not complied with the law, they have the right to file a complaint with the Princeton Charter School Board of Trustees by notifying the Head of School. The Head of School will bring the complaint to the Board Grievance Committee.

*Students and family will receive a contract letter.

Appendix A - Sample of Math Program Explanation Letter

Princeton Charter School

100 BUNN DRIVE, PRINCETON NJ 08540 | WWW.PCS.K12.NJ.US

Phone: 609 924 0575 | Fax: 609 924 0282

Dear Grade 5 Parents,

You are now able to see your child's schedule on PowerSchool. Please note the following important information about your mathematics teacher for this year.

For mathematics only, we use the fifth grade year to determine students' placement through a months-long process of assessing student performance in class and on a series of unit tests. Students start with one of four different teachers, and throughout the fall and into part of winter, there is movement among the levels in response to the students' performance on the same unit tests given in each class. This is a process that we have used effectively for the last 25 years.

Students will organically switch sections based on performance on chapter assessments. In addition to the chapter tests, Students will also take a pre-test at the start of each unit. The purpose of this assessment is to measure how effectively they can transfer prior knowledge from previous years into the current academic year, as well as evaluate their ability to apply newly acquired concepts from the preceding chapter to the upcoming unit of study.

This process of switching sections allows students multiple opportunities to demonstrate their mathematical aptitude and performance. By mid year, we will have a good idea as to the correct math placement and the class assignments will remain stable. However, at the end of grade 5, placements for grade 6 math will be made based on five separate measures. And, at the end of sixth grade, there is another opportunity for students to move up or down for grade 7. Through this process, we are committed to accurately placing students at the appropriate level for each individual learner.

Note: There can be a strong temptation on the part of parents to pressure, tutor, and push students to be at the highest level. While this is a natural instinct, it is frankly, a mistake. Our process which continues over the next three years allows for students to move up or down to find the correct math level for each child.

Students at all levels of math in fifth grade are able to reach AP BC calculus in High School, *i.e.* they are positioned to finish a very high level of high school math regardless of their fifth grade math placement. However, students who are *artificially* elevated thanks to outside tutoring and undue time and pressure on math, often suffer setbacks as a result. In addition, there can be a problematic message that is understood by students: "I am not good unless I am good at math." "I am not good enough on my own since I need a tutor." Parents need to recognize the powerful hidden message of the pressure to be in the highest math section.

Also of note: We have tracked student performance over time, and students from all levels of mathematics have performed beautifully in high school and as measured by their college destinations.

Your child -------- has been assigned to ---------- for the start of the school year based on four(4) criteria:

1. ERB - Quantitative reasoning and Mathematics I&II
2. Grade Average
3. Math League Competition
4. End of year Test

We will discuss this at greater length at Back-to-School night on September ---, 20-- and in parent-teacher fall conferences, but as I said, we are committed to placing students at the correct level for mathematics.

Sincerely,

Larry Patton, Lisa Eckstrom, and the Mathematics department.

Appendix A Sample letter informing parents of the Grade 6 and 7 mathematics placement.

Princeton Charter School
Sixth Grade Mathematics Placement
(SCHOOL YEAR)

Name:

Five criteria were used to determine your child's mathematics placement. These were the ERB scores, the Math League Score, the 5th grade cumulative end-of-year test, their grade in 5th grade mathematics, and their score on a placement test. In addition to these, a teacher recommendation was also considered.

Criteria	Pre-Algebra in Two Years	Pre-Algebra	Acc. Pre-Algebra
ERB (SN)	Below 80	80 to 89	90 or above
Math League	Below 17	17-23	24 or above
End of year test	Below 80	80 to 89	90 or above
5th grade final grade	Below B-	B- or better	A- or better
Placement test	Below 18	18 to 23	24 or better

Your student's scores are as follows:

ERB:

MathLeague:

End of Year Test:

5th grade Final grade:

Placement Test:

Mathematics Placement:

Princeton Charter School
Seventh Grade Mathematics Placement
(SCHOOL YEAR)

Name:

Five criteria were used to determine your child's mathematics placement. These were the ERB scores, the Math League Score, the 6th grade final exam, their grade in 6th grade mathematics, and their score on the Iowa Algebra Readiness Test. In addition to these, a teacher recommendation was also considered.

Note: However, if your child has not yet taken a pre-algebra course, they will take pre-algebra this year. As stated in our Mathematics Placement Policy, to be eligible for an advanced class, students must "have completed the required prerequisite."

Criteria	Pre-Algebra	Pre-Algebra→ Algebra I-part I	Acc. Algebra I
ERB (SN)	Below 70	70 to 89	90 or above
Math League	Below 17	17 to 24	25 or above
Final exam	Below 70	70 to 89	90 or above
Grade in 6th	C- or below	B / C	A- or above
Alg. Readiness	Below 70	70 to 89	90 or above

Your student's scores are as follows:

ERB:

Math League:

Final Exam:

6th grade Final grade:

Algebra Readiness Test:

Mathematics Placement: