

# Princeton Charter School

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December 1, 2016

Hon. Kimberley Harrington  
Commissioner of Education  
New Jersey Department of Education  
100 Riverview Plaza  
P.O. Box 500  
Trenton, NJ 08625

RE: Princeton Charter School — Request for Charter Amendment to Establish  
Weighted Lottery Based on Low Income and to Expand Enrollment

Dear Commissioner Harrington:

In order to increase access for disadvantaged students, the Board of Trustees of Princeton Charter School (PCS) respectfully requests an amendment to the PCS charter to implement a weighted lottery that would give an advantage to economically disadvantaged students coupled with a request to expand from one class to two classes in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade and to add two seats in grades 3 through 8 to increase the number of seats available for these students.

We believe this proposal will not be burdensome to our district of residence, Princeton Public Schools (PPS). An expansion will assist our district of residence by partially absorbing substantial spikes in student enrollment this year resulting from the recent development of new higher-density housing including 325 units of faculty housing built by Princeton University (Merwick-Stanworth), a 280-unit development by Avalon Bay, and the conversion of a recently constructed “active adult” project (Copperwood) to market housing. Given PCS’s substantially lower operating costs, a modest expansion of PCS by 76 students will allow Princeton residents to continue providing superior K-8 education to all residents — both at PCS and PPS — at a lower cost than if the costs of addressing the substantially higher number of K-8 students were borne exclusively by the school district.

If approved, the phased implementation plan would take effect as of September 2017. We would expand the kindergarten and first grade class for the 2017-18 academic year, and would add the second grade expansion in the 2018-19 academic year.

As the Department is well aware, PCS has been a remarkable success academically, achieving outstanding results by any measure, whether judged by NJASK, PARCC, or ERB scores, by the high level of parent demand for seats at the PCS, significant levels of voluntary parent financial support, or by extraordinary levels of parent and teacher satisfaction. Our charter challenged us to establish a parent-led school that provided a preeminent education equal or superior to that of the best schools in our community without charge to parents, and to do so at a substantially lower cost than PPS. Twenty years later, for a per pupil cost of \$15,339 in public funding, PCS has established a school whose results match or exceed those schools charging \$30,000 and more, and achieves these results at considerably lower cost than those of PPS. This allows lower and middle-income families the opportunity to enjoy an excellent K-8 education that would be well beyond the means of most.

In 2013, New Jersey CAN's rankings placed Princeton Charter School's middle school as tied for first place with three other middle schools and ranked our elementary school in second place among all public schools in New Jersey ([https://jerseycan.org/sites/jerseycan.org/files/report\\_cards/NJ\\_Top\\_10-2013\\_0.pdf](https://jerseycan.org/sites/jerseycan.org/files/report_cards/NJ_Top_10-2013_0.pdf)). We are a "Blue Ribbon School" and have been classified as a "Tier One" school by the Department, its highest recognition. Princeton Charter School's student performance growth percentiles are extraordinary, as detailed within.

Based on these results, the Department renewed the PCS charter last year -- without any opposition whatsoever from our district of residence, the NJEA or groups generally opposed to charters — despite PCS's unique status as the only charter school operating in a high-performing suburban district. The Department's reviewers gave PCS top marks for its academics, commitment to Special Education, school management, and even its finances in a challenging environment of flat funding for the past eight years.

At the same time, the Board recognizes that despite successfully having served many economically disadvantaged students, PCS's enrollment of these students compared to Princeton's school age population has not been as fulsome as envisioned by our charter despite ongoing outreach and education efforts in the community. The Board has spent considerable time reviewing its efforts and progress in this area to address this disparity, consistent with our obligation to seek the enrollment of a cross section of the community to the maximum extent practical, and consistent with one of the pillars of our Strategic Plan.

As a result of those diligent efforts, we identified several structural impediments to increasing the enrollment of economically disadvantaged students. In particular, our current structure allows for the enrollment of 19 students in Kindergarten, the addition of two seats in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, one seat in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and then the introduction of 24 additional students in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. As a result, our principal entry points are in Kindergarten and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. This creates two problems: first, because of the limited number of seats available in Kindergarten and the sibling preference established in the PCS charter, PCS typically has only 10-12 seats available for new families, against a consistently demonstrated high demand of 61-79 applicants between 2007 and 2016. This sharply limits the chances of disadvantaged families to secure a seat in the school.

Second, our third grade entry point has had somewhat less demand over this period, from 43-60 students for 24 spots, and has been more attractive to high performing students of the PPS schools and private schools rather than those facing disadvantages. Based on our review of the data as well as many conversations with parents, applicants, and our recruitment and enrollment staff and volunteers, we have concluded that parents are less inclined to move their children from the PPS elementary schools in 3<sup>d</sup> grade due to disruption in academics, social relationships, and in the case of disadvantaged students, services they may be receiving in the PPS schools. As well, we believe that PCS's emphasis on a vigorous curriculum, homework and testing, as well as our commencement of World Languages in Kindergarten and specialized teaching in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade may amplify the sense that moving to a new school with a substantially different model causes a disruption to students and their families, especially those facing economic challenges.

Accordingly, we propose a multi-pronged, integrated approach specifically designed to meaningfully increase the number of economically disadvantaged students at PCS:

- First, PCS seeks to implement a weighted lottery that will double the chances of economically disadvantaged students gaining admission through our lottery.
- Second, by adding a second class of students in grades K-2, we would substantially increase the chances of those students gaining admission in Kindergarten and beginning their academic career in PCS's curriculum from the beginning. Instead of 10-12 spots available in kindergarten, we would expect to offer approximately 30 seats not tied to the sibling preference.
- Third, by adding these additional sections, PCS would be able to implement increased differentiated learning strategies, assigning students to teachers best suited for their specific needs.
- Fourth, by adding these additional classes, we will be able to better manage inevitable student conflicts that arise at these early years of school socialization by gaining the ability to separate students who have difficulty getting along, again

improving the attractiveness of PCS for families whose children present behavioral challenges.

- Fifth, we intend to expand our current practice of commencing the study of World Language in Kindergarten, a core element of our charter, currently limited to French, to consider offering Spanish, which we believe may be attractive to a broader cross-section of the community.
- Sixth, the increased enrollment would allow us to fund additional support services for all students, whether they be classified as special needs or English Language Learners (ELL), or simply in need of some additional help to succeed at the highest levels. As part of this effort, PCS is currently exploring the development of Personalized Student Plans for each and every entering student to assess each student's needs and family resources to ensure that PCS is providing appropriate support services for each and every student who enrolls. As the community becomes aware of these supports which will exist from the very beginning of a student's academic career, we believe that PCS will become a much more attractive environment for all families, especially those confronting economic challenges, and thereby increase the participation of these families in our lottery.
- Seventh, the increased enrollment would allow for a modest facility expansion on our current campus that would allow for greater space to be devoted to Special Education services, as well as common facilities (a larger cafeteria and a new media center/library) that will materially improve the educational experience for all students.

Taken together, the Board believes it presents a thoughtful, considered plan developed by teachers, administrators, and parents to achieve an enrollment that better reflects Princeton's school age population. The Board also asks the Department to recognize the integrated nature of this plan: each of the above efforts requires the others to succeed. Implementing a weighted lottery alone will not meaningfully improve equity if there are only ten seats available and 70 applicants. And without the modest expansion in enrollment proposed, PCS is unable to fund the numerous initiatives designed to make the school a more attractive option for families of all means and needs.

As well, PCS makes this application mindful of its role as an important part of Princeton's system of public education. Many if not most of our parents have children both in PCS and the PPS schools at the same time. Fully 85-90% of PCS graduates matriculate to Princeton High School, where our alumni have typically excelled in academics and extracurricular activities. We have always been mindful of our budgetary impact on the district of residence, and prided ourselves on doing more with less. Our parents have been exceptionally generous in augmenting public funds with donations approaching \$150,000-\$200,000 annually for supplemental costs related to extracurricular activities, facilities

construction, and technology improvements. Our ability to expand our facility will not require a public bond issue; it can and will be funded out of the current \$15,339 per pupil allotment we receive. Finally, with the PPS district experiencing a significant spike in enrollment due to new residential developments, PPS has already acknowledged the need to expand its facilities to accommodate many new students in the community. This proposal, if approved, would allow Princeton residents to absorb a significant amount of the new students at far less cost than PPS is able to achieve — and to continue to make Princeton a community that offers preeminent public education and a choice in public education options. In addition, by having the students enroll in Kindergarten, the district will be able to plan with the knowledge of the total number of students in each grade at each school. Currently, students leave from four different elementary schools at third grade to come to PCS. This leaves PPS uncertain about enrollment levels at its four elementary schools for grade three in any given year depending on the outcome of the lottery.

In the following documents, we provide all of the necessary materials for the amendment review. Princeton Charter School has a consistent record of high academic performance, enrollment at capacity, a robust wait list, fiscal stability, sound governance, stable school leadership, low faculty turnover, and minimal student attrition.

PCS is a shining example of what charter schools were intended to achieve for our system of public education. We are a stand alone, independent charter school, established by parents and with a parent-run board. We have no for-profit management organization, and devote the vast majority of the public funds with which we are entrusted the classroom, i.e. teacher salaries, not to administration, bureaucracy, or private vendors. We have a twenty-year history of outstanding academic and financial stewardship. We offer our community meaningful public school choice. Our approach has been working for twenty years. We ask now that our charter be amended to achieve our goal of increasing equity and access to an outstanding education for all families in the Princeton community, especially those facing economic challenges.

***Proposed Amendment to the Charter to Allow Weighted Lottery***

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:11-2.6, please accept this request to amend the charter of the Princeton Charter School to authorize a low-income preference in Princeton Charter School's lottery for the 2017-2018 school year, to be conducted in March 2017. The following documents are enclosed with this letter in support of Princeton Charter School's request to amend its charter:

- Approved resolution of Princeton Charter School’s Board of Trustees, unanimously approved by the Board in support of a low-income preference in PCS’s lottery for AY 2017-18.
- Princeton Charter School’s original charter mission stating the goal of the school to serve all members of the community with the goal of helping to address the achievement gap for economically disadvantaged students.
- Proposed Charter addendum, describing the enrollment process and lottery.

This request seeks to amend Princeton Charter School’s charter to include a weighted lottery that gives children of low-income families a greater chance of getting a seat in PCS.

PCS has made substantial efforts over time to offer a school choice to all parents in the Princeton Public Schools district. This choice is intended for all members of the Princeton community regardless of race, ethnicity, or income level. The Princeton Charter School Charter mission states:

Princeton Charter School's mission is to provide its diverse student body the best possible education by focusing on the fundamental academic disciplines in an atmosphere that affirms academic achievement, and in so doing, to offer the community true choice in public education.

Disturbingly but not surprisingly, [achievement] gaps often correspond to children's socioeconomic differences and varying levels of parental support. Some are created by inconsistent or even ineffective treatment of core areas such as language arts and mathematics. Princeton Charter School cannot hope to close these gaps entirely, but it believes that a stronger education program will help to bridge them.

These problems are urgent and cannot await gradual reforms. The children in our schools today have only one chance at a good education. Princeton Charter School hopes to influence the course of public education by positive example for the benefit of our children and the society they will create.

Clearly stated in our mission is the goal of “bridging” the gap in achievement that is based on low socio-economic status.

In addition, in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:36A-8, charter schools are required to adopt admission policies that, “to the maximum extent practicable, seek the enrollment of a cross section of the community’s school age population . . . .” Despite extensive recruitment

efforts and a blind lottery process, Princeton Charter School’s percentage of economically disadvantaged students is less than the resident district, as demonstrated in in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Economically Disadvantaged School-aged children

Economically Disadvantaged School-aged children <sup>1</sup>	PRINCETON	PCS
Based on U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) (which does not include those between 100-185% of poverty line)	5.3%	1.44%
Estimate using U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), including those between 100-185% of poverty line	10.0%	1.44%
Based on Princeton Public Schools Enrollment	12.2%	1.44%
Based on PPS District accounting for students attending Private Schools	10.3%	1.44%

When we compare the percentage of students at Princeton Charter School who qualify for a free or reduced lunch compared to the percentage of students in the municipality of Princeton who qualify, the disparity is evident. We have cited the percentage of students enrolled in the Princeton Public School district who qualify for free or reduced lunch, but we have also used other calculations to estimate the overall percentage of students in Princeton who would qualify for free or reduced lunch. In all cases, we feel that the disparity needs to be redressed. Our goal is to increase the percentage of low-income students through a weighted lottery. PCS will continue its outreach in neighborhoods to persuade families who are economically disadvantaged to enter the lottery.

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<sup>1</sup> ACS data on those living at or below 185% of the poverty line, with a population-weighted average for the 08542 and 08540 zip codes.

Estimates on the percentage of school aged individuals who are economically disadvantaged vary because Free and Reduced Lunch students include those up to 185% of the poverty line, the ACS and SAIPE estimates (which are based on the percentage living in poverty) are therefore too low. The estimates based on merely the percentage in poverty, not including those from 101-185% of the poverty line, also suggest we are under-representing economically disadvantaged students.

Based on the early anecdotal experience of other charter schools, Red Bank Charter School and the Hoboken Dual Language Charter School (HoLa), the number of economically disadvantaged students who enter into a lottery may increase over time due the knowledge that there *is* a weighted lottery.

### **Method of Identification**

If approved, Princeton Charter School will use the following mechanisms to identify low-income children and give them double the chance of a seat at Princeton Charter School in the March, 2017 lottery and subsequent lotteries. Any family who can provide evidence of ONE of the following criteria would have its children placed into the lottery **twice** rather than **once**.

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.

### **Proposed Amendment to the Charter to Expand Enrollment**

Please accept this request to amend the charter of the Princeton Charter School to authorize an increase in enrollment for Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 2, and to add two seats in grades 3 through 8 to increase the number of seats available for economically disadvantaged students and their older siblings. We are not seeking to add grades beyond grade 8, but we wish to increase the maximum enrollments in order to allow all students to start together in Kindergarten thus forming a cohesive student body and allowing students to benefit from our program from the outset. Such expansion would simply build out the lower grades to coincide with the already existing higher enrollment grades. The new maximum school-wide enrollment would be 424.

Currently, PCS has one section in each grade for Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 2. In Grade 3, the number of students doubles from one to two sections, see Table 2.

**Table 2**

<b>Current Enrollment</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>Proposed enrollment</b>
<b>Pre-K</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>K (1 section)</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Grade 1 (1 section)</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Grade 2 (1 section)</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Grade 3 (2 Sections)</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Grade 4 (2 Sections)</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Grade 5 (2 Sections)</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Grade 6 (2 Sections)</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Grade 7 (2 Sections)</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Grade 8 (2 Sections)</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Maximum enrollment:</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>424</b>

Princeton Charter School serves the community of Princeton by offering a rigorous curriculum that starts early and spirals upward with each grade building upon the content established in the previous grade. The community demand is strong. The school continues to maintain a robust waiting list for Kindergarten and Grade 3, reflecting the interest and demand in getting into the school. We have had full enrollment for the last four years. See Table 3 for Lottery application data.

**Table 3 Lottery Applications 2007-2016**

Gr.	Available seats w/o attrition.	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
K	19	79	63	74	77	62	64	62	61	71	79
1	2	33	57	34	38	34	34	31	32	29	36
2	1	35	58	45	48	36	37	35	30	33	20
3	24	60	49	48	51	51	51	43	52	49	46
4	0	40	39	20	25	23	23	27	15	27	21
5	0	56	56	60	61	14*	14	20	35	13	22
6	0	24	21	30	30	33	33	17	28	26	21
7	0	8	9	12	2	7	7	8	6	11	9
8	0	10	2	4	5	3	3	5	11	8	6

The School has operated at maximum enrollment for the past three years, 348. We have had full enrollment in grades K-6 for the last 20 years. There have been some years in the past when we did not fully fill eighth grade. At the time of our lottery, we have had no spots available for new students in grades 4-8. As a result of high parent satisfaction and low students attrition, we typically have few available spaces for students on the wait list in the upper grades, 1-2 per year.

\*Note that the decrease in application for grade five starting in 2011 coincides with the change in entrance year from grade 5 to grade 3.

### **Rationale for Expansion in Grades K, 1, and 2**

With all children commencing in Kindergarten, students would benefit from a more logical and sequential academic experience and a smoother social development without the disruptions associated with doubling the class size in Grade 3.

1. The students would all experience our curriculum for all subjects and the specific pedagogy starting at the same time.
2. Students would begin our program earlier, which in addition to the Singapore Math and Lucy Calkins approaches, also includes starting World Language, science, and chess instruction in Kindergarten from teachers other than the main classroom teacher who have specialized in the content.
3. There would be better socialization as the students would grow together from grade to grade in the same culture and environment.
4. An expansion in the number of students would provide greater economies of scale which would allow us to provide a more robust program of support for students at this younger age level. This support addresses the need for screening for dyslexia and associated support, intervention, and referral services, etc.

Having two sections starting in Kindergarten would allow students to begin our academic program from the outset, avoiding any disruption to their social and academic development. World Language introduction will begin in Kindergarten for the whole class as well as specialization in sciences. Having two sections would provide the ability to group or separate students as needed.

Currently, the influx of 24 new students (doubling the class) in Grade 3 poses two main challenges:

1. A considerable disruption to the academic program due to a bifurcated educational experience between new and old students.
  - a. Students spend a good portion of the opening months adjusting to each other, to the homework, to grading, and to the fact that they have several of teachers due to our philosophy of early departmentalization.
  - b. Returning students have been exposed to World Language in Kindergarten three times per week and daily since Grade 1; new students have had far less instruction in World Language.
  - c. Returning students are familiar with specific instructional approaches that are used in English (Readers and Writers Workshops); Math (Singapore Math); and Science (Foss Kits). Some of the foundational concepts relied

- upon in our Grade 3 classes are not developed in the Princeton Public Schools, for instance early mastery of multiplication and division facts.
- d. Incoming students from four different elementary schools have varied experiences in Math and Language Arts instruction creating even more groups with different skills and knowledge.
2. The single section size prior to Grade 3 creates a less than optimal social environment in Grades K, 1, & 2.
    - a. There is no real way to separate or group students in advantageous configurations since there is only one classroom for placement. This is a significant challenge given that students experiencing real social/personality incompatibility will be in the same classroom for three years in a row.
    - b. The integration of 24 new students at Grade 3 poses social disruption.
    - c. Conflicts would be reduced in two ways: by eliminating the need for social positioning as currently happens with the influx of new students in third grade which coincides with the age at which more complex social dynamics begin to emerge and by offering the ability to mix students yearly in order to alleviate personality clashes.

### **Proposed Increase in Maximum Enrollment**

The expansion of the Princeton Charter School by 76 students would be phased in over two years: See Table 4. We would add a new Kindergarten class and Grade 1 section in the first year, and also add two spots in grades 3 through 8 to increase the number of seats available for economically disadvantaged students and their older siblings totaling 54 new students. In the second year, we would continue to add a second Kindergarten, reaching the total increase of 76 students. By phasing in the expansion over two years, we would better manage the transition and reduce the number of years where we experience the large influx of students at grade three.

Table 4

Proposed increase in enrollment					
	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Pre-K					
K	19	40	40	40	40
Grade 1	21	42	42	42	42
Grade 2	22	22	44	44	44
Grade 3	46	48	48	48	48
Grade 4	48	50	50	50	50
Grade 5	48	50	50	50	50
Grade 6	48	50	50	50	50
Grade 7	48	50	50	50	50
Grade 8	48	50	50	50	50
<b>Totals:</b>	348	402	424	424	424
<b>Additional Students:</b>		54	76	76	76

**Crowding in the Princeton Public Schools**

Princeton is currently experiencing an enrollment increase with housing developments, Avalon Bay, Copperwood, and Merwick-Stanworth faculty apartments bringing more students into the system.

Superintendent Steve Cochrane has reported an enrollment of 3700; with just under 1600 at the high school (PHS), 200 more than the school is optimally designed to hold; some eighth grade class sizes pushing 30 at John Witherspoon Middle School (JW), where the overall student population jumped from 720 at the end of last year to 765 at the beginning of this year; and an unexpected surge in Kindergarten

numbers at Community Park, where a fourth section has been added, and in third grade at Riverside, which has added an additional section.

“The concern is the unknown,” Mr. Cochrane said. Sources of the uncertainty include new developments at Avalon Bay, with demographic projections of 135 students but a low percentage of units rented and only ten students so far; 21 students residing at Copperwood, which was originally proposed as a 55+ community, but later welcomed younger families; and Merwick Stanworth, projected between 25 and 30 students, with the actual number currently 75 and likely to climb closer to 100 as more of the 325 units there are occupied.

At the School Board’s September 27 meeting, Board vice president Patrick Sullivan suggested that the district could see more than 200 additional students as these developments fill up.

“At this point we are watching our class sizes closely,” Mr. Cochrane added. Crowding at the high school means larger class sizes in some subjects and less flexibility in student scheduling. Some eighth grade classes at JW are pushing 30. Class sizes at the elementary schools are averaging 17-18, though some are as high as 22-23.

“We now have very few unoccupied classrooms across our elementaries, so even if we budget for additional teachers, we will have very few places to create new sections. We have even less space at the high school,” Mr. Cochrane explained.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Strong Academic Performance**

Princeton Charter School has had a track record of success with our students, showing steady improvement in achievement based on their time here. Our school-wide Student Growth Percentile (SGP), measuring the improvement of students at all levels of ability,

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<sup>2</sup> *Town Topics*, October 12, 2016, “Princeton Schools Address Widespread Challenges of Crowding,” <http://www.towntopics.com/wordpress/2016/10/12/princeton-schools-address-widespread-challenges-of-crowding/>.

Similar accounts have been reported in the *Princeton Packet*, November 14, 2016, “Princeton: School District Weighing Its Space Need,” [http://www.centraljersey.com/news/princeton-school-district-weighing-its-space-need-options/article\\_aab455fa-aabd-11e6-9291-5fc130e8802a.html](http://www.centraljersey.com/news/princeton-school-district-weighing-its-space-need-options/article_aab455fa-aabd-11e6-9291-5fc130e8802a.html), *The Princeton Sun*, <http://theprincetonsun.com/2016/09/30/board-of-education-tackles-plan-for-rapid-student-growth/>, and *Planet Princeton*, September 28, 2016, “Enrollment at Princeton Public Schools Climbs, Referendum to Expand Likely,” <https://planetprinceton.com/2016/09/28/enrollment-at-princeton-public-schools-climbs-referendum-to-expand-likely/>

indicates outstanding growth for our students regardless of whether or not their initial scores indicated that they were very strong, in the middle, or at the lower end of performance on state testing. See Table 5.

Table 5 Student Growth Percentile

Student Growth Indicators	Schoolwide Performance	Peer Percentile	Statewide Percentile	Statewide Target	Met Target?
Student Growth on Language Arts	64	94	89	35	YES
Student Growth on Math	77	100	99	35	YES
		97	94		100%

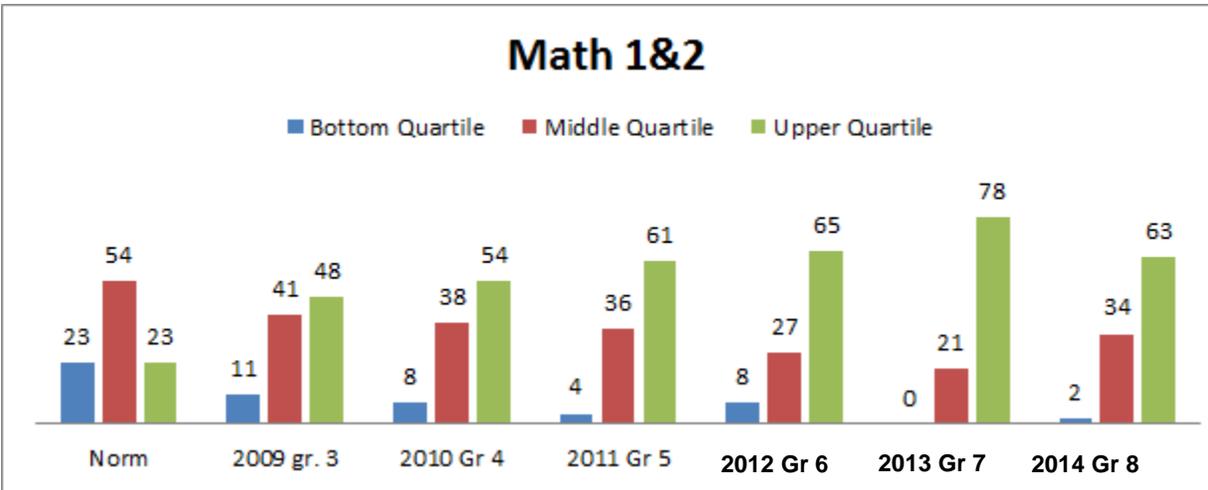
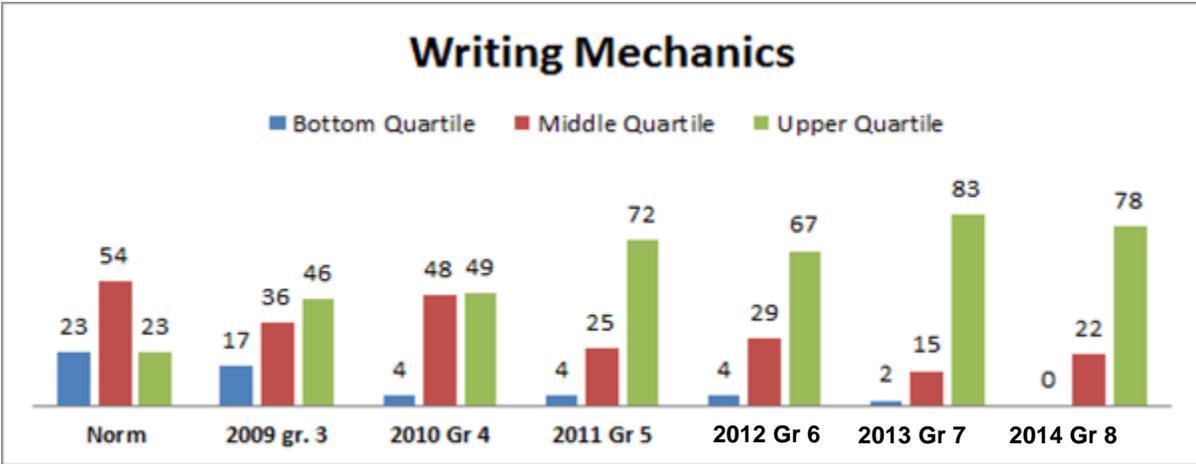
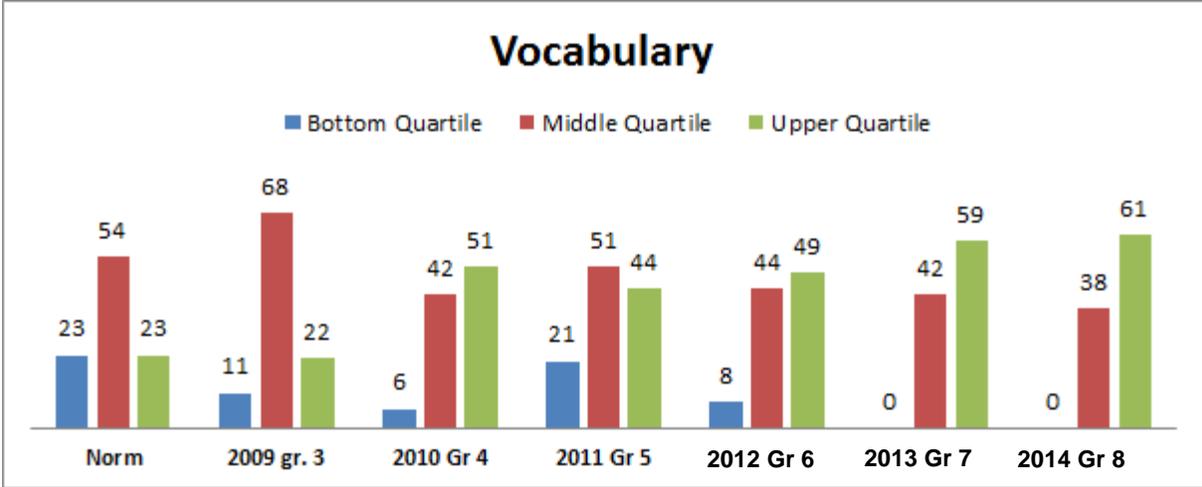
[From The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) annual reports of School Performance for AY 2014-15.]

Based on our Median Student Growth Percentile scores, Princeton Charter School students are experiencing truly outstanding growth at all levels. Our mSGP for Math places us at the 100 percentile of our Peer Group and 99 percentile in the state for rate of growth of all students. Our Growth in Language Arts places us at the 94 percentile for our peer groups and 89<sup>th</sup> percentile for the State of New Jersey. Combined, these scores place us at the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile and the 94<sup>th</sup> percentile for peer and statewide comparisons, i.e. we are outperforming 94% of the schools in the state of NJ and 97% of the schools in our peer group in terms of the rate of student growth. MSGP compares the growth of students based on their historical testing profile against similar students on standardized test. This measure does not gauge only the high performers but all students' growth. We are extremely proud of our students and teachers in accomplishing these remarkable growth indicators.

**Improvement over Time at Princeton Charter School**

In addition to a high Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs), we have found that, over time, students improve their performance as they spend more time at PCS as measured by a variety of unmandated tests. For example, we test all students in Grades 3 through 8 using the Educational Records Bureau (ERB) CTP 4 tests.

Based on the analysis we did for our renewal application last year, we see a strong trend of improvement over time for the same cohort. See Tables 6-8: The percentage of students in the lowest quartile decreases as the percentage in the highest quartile increases over time.



### **Early World Language**

We introduce French in Kindergarten. We participate in the National French Contest as a way to assess student performance in World Language acquisition. In 2015, the National French Contest, “Le Grand Concours,” introduced a Platinum level medal. Of the 20,768 students across the country and abroad in grades 7 - 12 who took the exam, 142 students met the requirements for the Platinum medal, i.e. 142/20,768 students. Of those 142 students in grades 7 - 12, four were from Princeton Charter School — three seventh grade students and one eighth grade student. That would be an extraordinary achievement for any school, but for a school of our size, it is outstanding.

### **Impact of increase to PPS Budget**

The increase in the number of students attending Princeton Charter School will have a marginal impact on the Princeton Public School budget. Based on the 2016-17 PPS Total Budget of \$90,861,899 (includes debt service & Fed/State grants), the proposed increase in PCS enrollment is estimated to be 0.86% of the 2017 budget and 1.22% of the 2018 PPS budget. This modest effect on the overall PPS budget was contemplated by the Legislature in enacting the Charter School Program Act. It is a reasonable adjustment in order to confer on the community the value of greater public school choice, accountability, and variety of instruction.

### **Facilities Needs**

In order to accommodate the needs of the additional students, Princeton Charter School would expand its existing K-4 building. The campus has five acres of land that the school owns which provide ample space for additional classrooms. In our plan for new space we would:

1. Convert the existing K-4 cafeteria into a new Kindergarten classroom.
2. Add three new classrooms (a grade one classroom; a grade two classroom; and one additional classroom for scheduling flexibility).
3. Add a new Cafeteria space that could accommodate more students.
4. Add additional Special Education and group instructional spaces for student support services.

In addition to accommodating the needs of the three new sections, this facility expansion plan would provide much needed spaces for individualized Special Education instruction, and Speech, Occupational Therapy, and Physical Therapy services.

Princeton Charter School has a long track record of sound fiscal management despite flat funding since 2009. We have maintained positive fund balances, we received the Association of School Business Officials International Certificate of Excellence Standards for our accounting practices in preparing the 2014 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR).

Increased revenues from the added students would adequately cover the costs of debt service for construction of a new building to accommodate the new classrooms listed above and to provide additional special education/small group instructional space without need for public bonding. Based on preliminary conversations our financial intuition, Peapack-Gladstone Bank is prepared to finance the expansion.

Princeton Charter School's facility development plan is sound.

**Staffing Needs**

In order to support the increase in students, we would add staff as follows. New staff would include: Kindergarten , Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers; Special Education and support teachers; and additional technology support. We would increase existing staff in World Language, English Language Learner (ELL) instruction, Science, the Arts, and Physical Education to cover the needs of the increased enrollment. Again, increased revenues from the added students would adequately cover the costs of additional staff and allow for the school to continue to provide an outstanding program of curricular and extracurricular studies led by an outstanding staff.

In sum, if granted, this charter amendment application to increase enrollment would advance the mission of Princeton Charter School and the salutary policies underlying the Charter School Program Act. Approval will give all parents, but particularly parents whose children qualify as economically disadvantaged, an increased chance to enter a school that has demonstrated great success for twenty years.

Thank you for your consideration of these two amendments to our Charter.

Sincerely,

Paul Josephson  
Board of Trustees President  
Princeton Charter School

Lawrence D. Patton  
Head of School  
Princeton Charter School

cc: Katherine Czehut, Acting Director, Office of Charter Schools  
cc: Colleen Schulz-Eskow, Deputy Chief of Government Affairs  
cc: Stephen Cochran, Princeton Public School District