Princeton Public Schools Preschool Program Family Handbook

2025 - 2026

We are growing through …
*"**P**articipation…..**P**artnership…..**S**upport"*

July 17, 2025

Welcome to PPS Preschool!

Welcome to PPS Preschool for the 2025-26 school year! I am Dr. Amy Hnasko, the Supervisor of Early Childhood. This will be my 6th year with Princeton Public Schools preschool, my second in the role of supervisor. I have been so fortunate to be a part of developing this program over the past years. This year we have 13 general education/integrated preschool classrooms across seven sites for a total of 195 three- and four-year-old children in the program! We also have one self-contained special education preschool classroom. We have a wonderful staff comprised of over 30 qualified professionals working closely together and supporting an amazing program, children, and families.

The intent of this handbook is to outline some of the common areas that families have questions around. I know this year will be fabulous and I look forward to meeting with everyone and connecting throughout the year.

What is the goal of the PPS PreK Program?

The PPS PreK Program provides a **high-quality learning environment** for children ages three to four years old. The administrators and teachers in the program support a **strength-based vision** of **whole child learning** focusing on all aspects of development including physical, social-emotional, cognitive, and emergent literacy and math skills. The goal of the program is to provide a structured, high quality, and developmentally appropriate learning environment fostering foundational **relationships between home and school** with supports for **diverse and individualized child and family needs.**

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QUICK GUIDE: Who to Contact

I have questions about…	Who do I contact?	
○ General program ○ Enrollment	**Supervisor of Early Childhood:** Dr. Amy Hnasko amyhnasko@princetonk12.org (609) 806-4203 Option 8	
○ My child's attendance	**For students at Community Park or Johnson Park**, follow directions on: https://www.princetonk12.org/quick-links/report-a-student-absence to call the main office. **For students at the Cub School,** call the center line (609) 454-3637 to report your child's absence and state nature of illness. **For students at the YWCA Burke Foundation, Pannell Learning Center or Redding Circle,** contact your child's teacher through ClassDojo and/or call (609) 273-6524 to report your child's absence.	
○ Classroom instruction or school specific policies	Contact your child's teacher	
○ Health forms, screenings or medications	**Community Park**	Janel Stucky, RN, CSN, JanelStucky@princetonk12.org 609.806.4233
	Johnson Park	Liz Dyevich, MSN, BSN, RN, CSN LizDyevich@princetonk12.org 609.806.4243 (Nurse Liz is also the nurse liaison/support for our provider site locations)
	YWCA, Pannell & Redding Circle	Jada Jackson jjackson@ywcaprinceton.org
	Cub School	Lori Musa Director lori.musa@princetoncflc.com 609.454.3637

PPS Preschool classroom locations and PPS staff list

Preschool instructional coaches/PIRS – Christina Maloney & Alexis Puleio

Community Parent Involvement Specialist – Alexis Puleio

Community Park Elementary School
Dual Language Immersion program & Traditional track Integrated classrooms
372 Witherspoon St. Princeton, NJ 08542
School hours: 8:25 – 3
Principal: Ms. Dineen Gruchacz
Teachers: Ms. Rodica Asay (DLI), Mrs. Dawn DeVeaux (4's), Ms. Jeanine Ryan (mixed age)
Website: www.princetonk12.org/johnson-park-elementary-home

Johnson Park Elementary School
285 Rosedale Rd, Princeton, NJ 08540
School hours: 8:25 – 3
Principal: Dr. Stacy Young
Teacher: Ms. Theresa Lampley (4's), Ms. Julie Frank (PSD)
Website: www.princetonk12.org/johnson-park-elementary-home

Princeton Community Family Learning Center ("Cub School")
16 All Saints Rd., Princeton, NJ 08540
School hours: 9 – 3:30
Director: Ms. Lori Musa
Teachers: Ms. Jennifer Yanovitch (4's), Ms. Ashlee Mack (3's), Ms. Karen Marmion(mixed ages)
Website: https://princetoncflc.com/

YWCA- The Burke Foundation Early Childhood Center
59 Paul Robeson Place, Princeton, NJ 08540
School hours: 9 – 3:30
Director: Ms. Tara O'Shea
Teachers: Ms. Erin Kane (4's), Ms. Seyedeh Mousavian (3's), TBH (mixed aged)
Website: www.ywcaprinceton.org/programs/childcare-princeton/

Pannell Learning Center
2 Clay St. Princeton NJ 08542
School hours: 9 – 3:30
Director: Ms. Tara O'Shea
Teachers: Ms. Donia Abdelaal (3's), TBH (4's)

Redding Circle Learning Center
61 Clay St. Princeton, NJ 08540
School hours: 9 – 3:30
Director: Ms. Tara O'Shea
Teacher: Ms. Carissa Titus (mixed age)

The school calendar and school day

All classrooms in the PPS Preschool Program follow the PRINCETON PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2025 – 26 CALENDAR, therefore will be closed for all PPS holidays and staff development days and follow any school closures or delayed openings due to severe weather.

School hours vary depending on location:

PPS IN DISTRICT SITES	
Community Park School **Johnson Park Elementary School**	**FULL DAY: 8:25 – 3** **DELAYED OPENING: 9:55 - 3** **EARLY DISMISSAL: 8:25 - 1**
PPS PROVIDER SITES	
The "Cub" School **YWCA- The Burke Foundation Early Childhood Center** **Pannell Learning Center** **Redding Circle**	**FULL DAY SCHEDULE: 9 – 3:30** **DELAYED OPENING: 10:30 – 3:30** **EARLY DISMISSAL: 9 – 1:30**

Wrap around care programs are available at our locations for a cost. Please contact the specific contact person below for information on registering your child and costs.

After Care Programs

- For JP and CP

  https://www.tigertimeasp.com/

  Registration is on a first come, first serve basis, opening on June 29, 2025 @ 10am for the 25-26 school year

Before and After Care Programs

- For students placed at the Burke Foundation Early Childhood Center at YWCA, Redding Circle or Pannell Learning Center:

  The Burke Foundation Early Childhood Center at YWCA Princeton — YWCA Princeton | Eliminate Racism And Empower Women

- For students placed at the Cub School, Contact: Lori Musa, lori.musa.pcflc@gmail.com

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PPS Preschool Topics and Policies

NOTE: All PPS preschool classrooms abide by the Department of Education Division of Early Childhood and Princeton Public Schools Board of Education policies. Those classrooms housed in provider sites (i.e. ALL YWCA operated sites and Cub School) may have additional policies outlined as per NJ Childcare licensing and will be communicated directly through directors and/or specific site family handbooks.

ABSENCES/TARDINESS/ATTENDANCE

Students are required to attend school regularly and on time. State school attendance laws require that students attend school whenever school is in session unless the child is ill or for state approved reasons including death in the family and/or religious holidays approved by the Board of Education. Family vacations are NOT considered excused absences. If a trip of more than 10 school days is planned, parents may be asked to complete a withdrawal form and the child will be taken off the register. If a child is withdrawn from the preschool program, parents would then be able to re-register upon return but are not guaranteed a preschool spot and/or a spot at the same location.

A child is marked "tardy" if arriving 10 minutes after the start of the school day (8:35 in district/9:10 provider sites). Frequent tardiness may result in possible action steps created with support from the Preschool Family Support Group.

A child who accumulates 10 or more unexcused days absent from school is considered truant and will be reported to the early childhood supervisor and possible action steps created with support from the Preschool Family Support Group.

Families are urged to leave their children in school for the entire length of the school day. Removing a child from school before the regular dismissal time should be reserved for only urgent instances, such as serious illness or necessary doctor's appointments.

SEE Board of Education attendance policies:
https://www.straussesmay.com/seportal/Public/DistrictRegulation.aspx?Regulationid=5200&id=709acb364e9449a5a79b5b64a77d552d

https://www.straussesmay.com/seportal/Public/DistrictRegulation.aspx?Regulationid=5230&id=709acb364e9449a5a79b5b64a77d552d

https://www.straussesmay.com/seportal/Public/DistrictRegulation.aspx?Regulationid=5240&id=709acb364e9449a5a79b5b64a77d552d

COMMUNITY PARENT INVOLVEMENT SPECIALIST (CPIS)

The role of the CPIS is to plan, coordinate and implement family programming specific for preschool children throughout the year along with regularly communicating and collaborating with the family liaisons working in our private provider sites.

DISCIPLINE

The early childhood years are critical development years for social emotional skill development. Children come from widely divergent backgrounds and display a range of social and emotional behaviors and skills. The goal of the PPS Preschool program is to provide high-quality experiences that are designed to prevent challenging behaviors, teach foundational social and emotional skills, and reinforce, nurture, and encourage children to access and utilize their growing skills. All teachers are trained in the Pyramid Model which is a social emotional framework explained in a later section of this handbook. The Pyramid Model provides an array of strategies, supports and materials utilized in the classroom as well as provided to support skill development at home.

In the case of repeated and extensive challenging behaviors, teachers work with families to assist in developing a plan to address the behavior positively and developmentally appropriately in both school and home environments. This plan is typically created in conjunction with the Preschool Intervention and Referral Team (PIRT) which is explained in more detail within this handbook.

https://www.nj.gov/education/earlychildhood/preschool/docs/suspensionexpulsion.pdf

FOOD

All children may bring their own lunch and snacks from home. Breakfast and lunch are available for purchase at all sites. Free and reduced-priced meals are available to those who qualify.

HEALTH AND MEDICATIONS

Upon registration to the PPS Preschool program, families will be required to submit a Child Universal Health form which outlines the child's current vaccination status and any particular medical needs.

WHEN DO I KEEP MY CHILD HOME?

If your child's temperature is 100 degrees F or higher, you will be contacted to pick your child up immediately. Your child may return to school once her/she has been fever-free for 24 hours. Please keep your child home if he/she has had fever, nausea, diarrhea, or vomiting in the past 24 hours.

GUIDANCE FOR MEDICAL CONSIDERATIONS

PPS preschool complies with the district and all private provider medical protocols. Please be sure to reach out to your school nurse or center director if your child has any medical needs (e.g allergies, asthma, seizure disorder). The nurse/director will collaborate with all involved to ensure safety procedures are implemented.

GUIDANCE FOR MEDICATION

Never send any medications in with your child. Please contact your school nurse or center director for appropriate protocol.

OUTDOOR PLAY

All preschool children will play outdoors for a minimum of 30 minutes per day, weather permitting. All sites follow the Child Care Weather Watch guidelines (https://www.cuphd.org/documents/wellness/weatherwatch.pdf) to determine if the weather is conducive to outside play. Please dress your child accordingly.

PRESCHOOL REGISTRATION/LOTTERY

Proof of residency and child's birth certificate, visa or passport is necessary for registration. Complete registration form on this page: https://www.princetonk12.org/quick-links/registration

In the event that the district does not have enough preschool "seats" for all of our children, we will use a lottery system. If your child is 3 or 4 years old by October 1st you can submit his/her name by fully registering your child. All registrations must be complete to participate in the lottery. This includes a residency verification. A

lottery process will be held to randomly select the students who will participate in the program. A number will be assigned to each applicant. When the number of students needed to fill the available preschool spots is reached, applications will continue to be drawn and this group of students will be the basis of the Princeton Public Schools waiting list. If a student drops out or declines a placement and a vacancy occurs, we will go to the next number on the wait list and that student's parents will be contacted. The wait list will remain active and will be utilized throughout the year. Parents of selected students will be notified by mail and email following the lottery. You do not need to be present at the lottery to accept admission. You will receive a confirmation email and letter.

1 - Child's original birth certificate, visa, or passport
2 - Proofs of Residency

- Primary Document
  - Own Home – Deed, tax bill, or closing documents
  - Rent Home – Executed lease with signatures and expiration date
  - University Housing Letter
  - Seminary Housing Letter
  - Notarized Affidavit of Residency (rent without lease)
- 3 Secondary Documents
  - Any 3 utility bills (gas, water, electric, phone bill, etc.)
  - Pay Stub
  - Car registration
  - Any Insurance Documents
- OTHER – Living with family, friend, or homeless
  - Notarized affidavit of residence – Owner of the home must attend a registration meeting with the parent/guardian of registrant. An appointment must be scheduled with the grade level appropriate registrar. Owner of the home providing the affidavit must provide a primary document and 3 secondary documents.

3 - Immunization Register
4 - Physical Form
5 - Records release form

PRESCHOOL INSTRUCTIONAL COACH
The primary role of the PIC is to provide each teacher with direct support within the classroom through observation, modeling, discussion, and ongoing professional development. The PIC supports teacher's ongoing reflections on curriculum, assessment, and social emotional resources among other topics. The PIC is an active member of the preschool instructional community and regularly is found within our preschool classrooms.

PRESCHOOL INTERVENTION AND REFERRAL SPECIALIST
The primary role of the PIRS is to provide strategies and supports for teachers to assist in their continued support of children who are falling below expectations in any of the developmental domains. Coaching support from the preschool instructional coach and ongoing data analysis of the individual widely held expectations assist in the determination that a teacher would access the team for further support and suggestions.
The PIRS and teacher would collaboratively develop an intervention plan for the teacher to monitor. Families would be notified and/or invited to attend any meetings.

SPECIAL OPPORTUNITIES
All our PPS preschool sites strive to provide special opportunities to enrich our young learners in a variety of areas such as physical education, music, art, and literacy experiences. Classroom teachers and/or school sites may arrange opportunities throughout the year for families to be involved in some of these enriching activities. As each site schedules and arranges their own special opportunities, please ask your child's classroom teacher for further information.

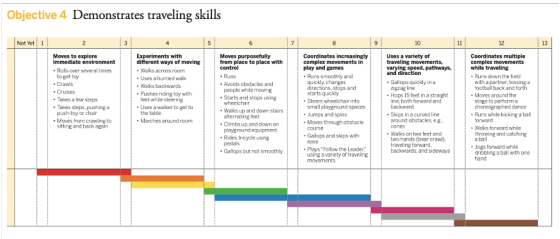
TRANSPORTATION
PPS provides transportation to all locations for families living more than 2 miles from the school. You will be mailed information at the beginning of the school year regarding bus stops. Any questions, please contact Transportation Supervisor Donna Bradin - DonnaBradin@princetonk12.org

TOLIET TRAINING
Does your child have to be toilet trained? In short, no, your child will not be denied access to the program if not fully toilet trained. However, as toilet training is a developmental milestone, families and teachers must work in close collaboration to provide consistent and developmentally appropriate expectations towards achieving this milestone. Note that all the preschool locations provide convenient toileting provisions for developing self-help skills but are not fully equipped for regular diapering procedures.
https://www.nj.gov/education/earlychildhood/preschool/docs/toileting.pdf

Curriculum and assessment

All PPS Preschool teachers utilize the Teaching Strategies – Creative Curriculum and corresponding Gold Assessment System.
The curriculum is developmentally appropriate and research-based and approaches all areas of your child's development in a play-based environment. Teachers individually support and assess the learning and development in various skill areas including social-emotional, cognitive, physical, literacy and math. Assessment is done primarily through teacher observation of these skills in an authentic environment using the widely held expectations for your child's age.

What are the Widely Held Expectations?



The term 'widely held expectations' describes the range of knowledge, skills, and abilities that children of a particular age typically demonstrate over a year of life. The "color bands," as they are sometimes called, indicate development of the specific skills from birth through 3rd grade. Three-year-old classrooms are in the green color band; Four-year-old classrooms are in the blue color band.

How will I be informed of my child's progress?
- Report cards will be distributed TWO times a year (mid and end).
- Parent-Teacher Conferences will be held TWO times a year (November and April).
- Contact your child's teacher directly at ANY time throughout the school year to provide information and/or ask your questions.

Beginning of the year developmental screening

Every year newly enrolled preschool children receive a developmental screening within the first 6-8 weeks of the school year. In Princeton, we use the Early Screening Inventory-3rd edition (ESI-3). This screening helps the teacher identify children who might be at risk for a possible learning difficulty. This screening is a tool to help teachers meet the needs of each child. The ESI-3 looks at children by quickly sampling their skills across areas of language, reasoning, gross motor, fine motor and social development. This screening is only the first step in the assessment process. Families will be notified by letter of the results of the screening.

National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations

The Pyramid Model is a social-emotional framework that aligns with and supports the curriculum to promote early childhood healthy social and emotional development. Topics such as Emotional Literacy, Friendship Skills, Problem Solving and Dealing with Anger are specifically taught and reinforced throughout the classrooms.
http://challengingbehavior.org/pyramid-model/overview/basics/

Family Communication

Families will receive communication from the school district, school site and/or classroom teacher in a variety of ways. The process of creating, activating, and storing any necessary passwords for the important programs/apps below will be discussed in the New Family Orientation meeting and the directions/guidance are also on the following pages of this handbook. You can also access these resources individually under the "Family Resources" tab on our PreK webpage for more information.
Our family resources:

- □□ Family Orientation recorded zoom
- □□ Family Orientation video – provides a "sneak peek" into our classrooms
- □□ Power School guidance for creating and updating information
  - o□ IMPORTANT because PPS communication to all district families regarding district news such as closures/delays will be communicated through this portal
- □□ My School Bucks
  - o□ IMPORTANT because this is the PPS process for ordering and paying for school lunches (NOT necessary for families at the Cub School).
- □□ Teaching Strategies Family APP
  - o□ IMPORTANT because this is the primary electronic teacher communication tool and process for receiving your child's PPS PreK report card.

Preparing for the first day of preschool

Each individual teacher will present a list of required items necessary for their classroom in their Welcome letters and/or at Back-to-School night at the start of the school year. Below is a general list of items EVERY preschool child needs to help you prepare for the first day of school.

- ☐☐ **Make sure to label your child's belongings with their first and last name.**

- ☐☐ **Fitted crib sheet and small blanket for REST TIME.** These items are stored in your child's cubby so NO large sheets/blankets or sleeping bags are permitted.

- ☐☐ **Extra set of clothing.** These items will be stored in your child's cubby or other designated area in the classroom in case of accidents or spills. Please regularly update these as needed depending upon use, weather, and our growing children!

- ☐☐ **Backpack.** This item should be an appropriate size to fit a full-sized folder and your child's lunch box.

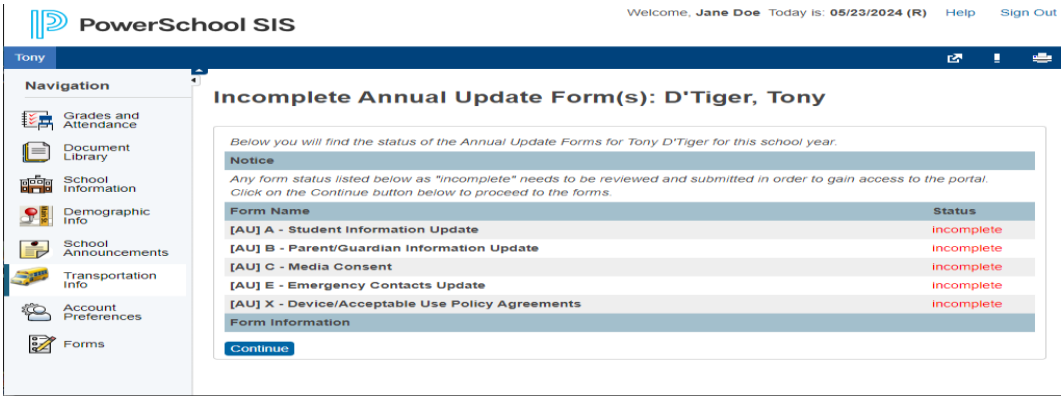
- ☐☐ **Lunch box with nutritious snack and lunch** (If your child is not purchasing lunch.) The lunch box will also most likely be stored in your child's cubby, so please take note of the size. While we will assist your child if they need help opening/closing items, we strive for as much self-help and independent skills as possible so make sure to send "child friendly" items that are easier to open and close for your child.

Directions for parent(s)/guardian(s) on navigation in the parent portal and use:

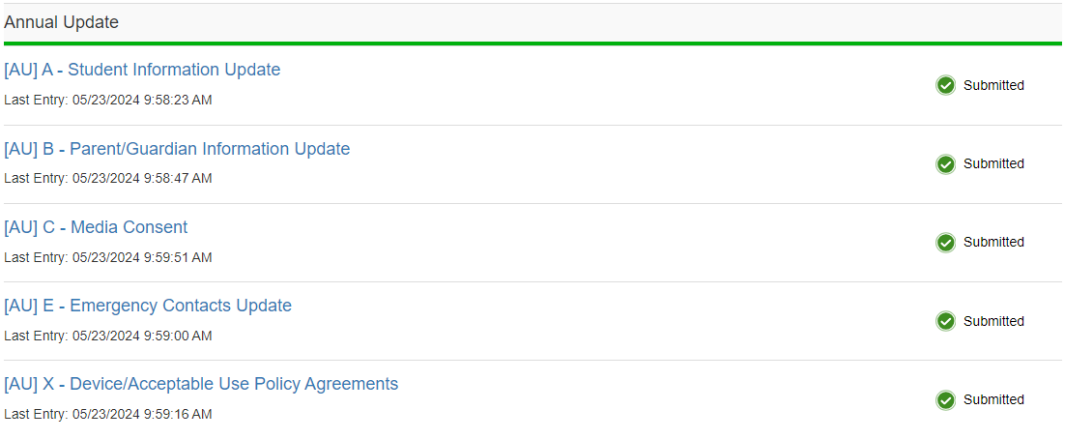
1. Login to the PowerSchool Parent Portal.

   URL: https://princeton.powerschool.com/public

2. If you have not completed all the Annual Update forms a status page will come up. Click Continue and update the forms. Making sure even if there is no change to the information, to click the submit button to update the form status.



3. Click on any of the navigation buttons on the left side, the Grades and Attendance is the default starting place.
4. (Grade and Attendance) – Daily attendance for the last two weeks.
5. (Document Library) – Stored or electronic reports published by the district.
6. (School Information) – Basic School Contact Information.
7. (Transportation) – Busing Information.
8. (Access Account) – Students who are associated with the account and password update.
9. (Forms) – Parent collect information, can be updated any time by the parents to ensure the school has the most updated information.

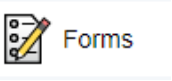


Directions for parent(s)/guardian(s) on how to update your student annual update forms in the parent portal:

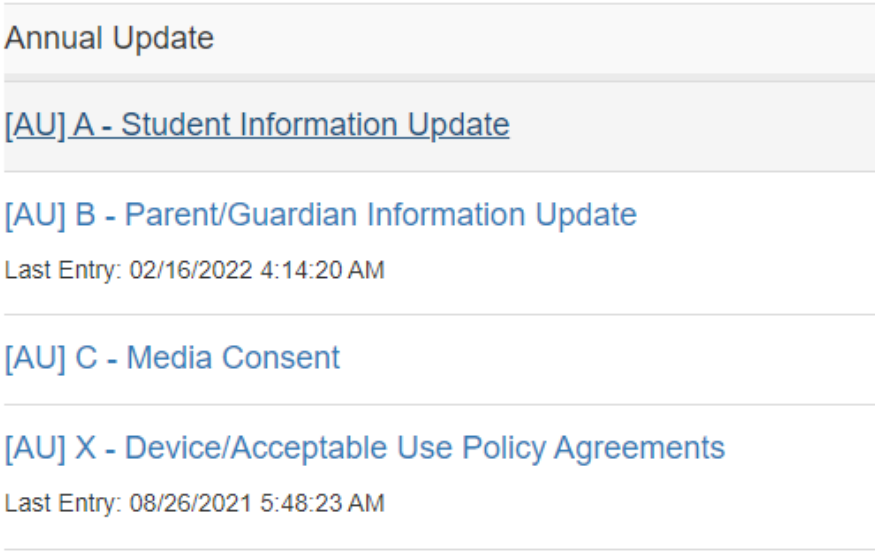
1. Login to the PowerSchool Parent Portal.

   URL: https://princeton.powerschool.com/public

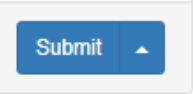
2. Click on Forms button in the left navigation.

3. Click the General Forms tab.
4. Click on the form name to open the form.

5. Make the desired selection.
6. Click the Submit Button.

7. Repeat steps 4 – 6 for each form one at a time. (If nothing is to be changed on any form, you must submit the form to acknowledge it has been reviewed)

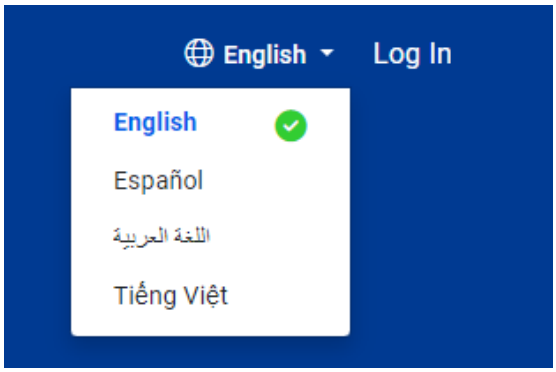
(Please Note: All forms must be submitted for each student in the household by clicking on the student first name at the top of the screen and then repeating steps 2 - 7)

Directions for Creating A My School Bucks Account for parent/guardian:

1. Navigate to My School Bucks.

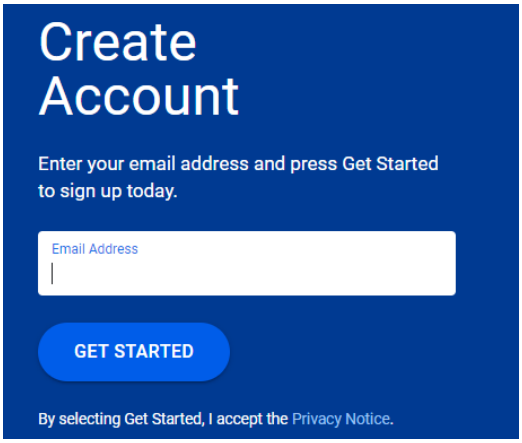
   URL: https://www.myschoolbucks.com/

   Note: If language translation is needed, Click on the globe and then choose the language from the drop-down menu.

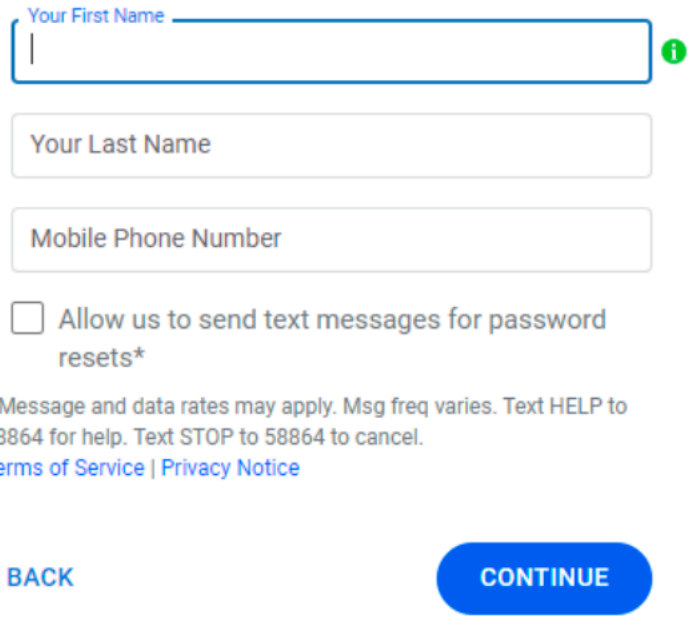


2. Click on Sign Up Free button in the middle of the page.

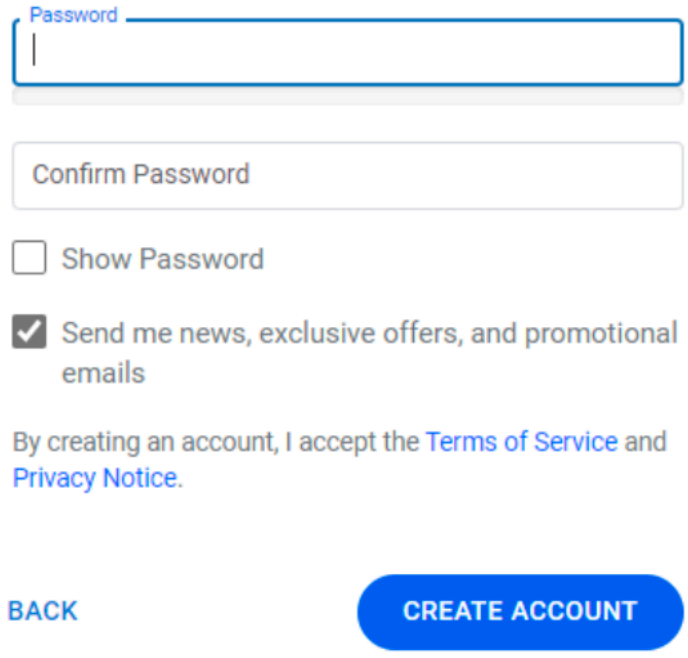
3. Type in an Email Address.
4. Click the Get Started button.



5. Fill in Your First Name, Last Name and Mobile Number.
6. Click to allow txt message for password resets.
7. Click the Continue button.

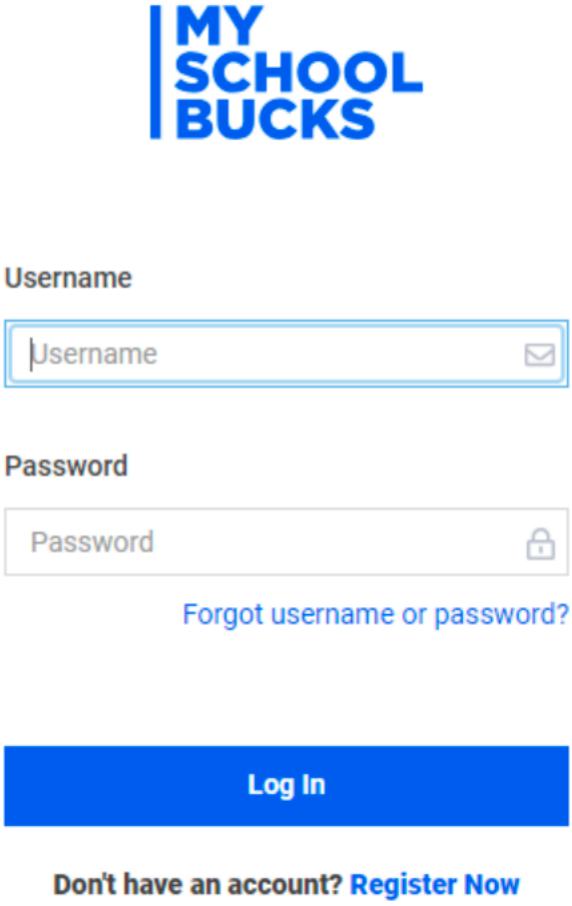


8. Type in a password.
9. Type in confirmation of the password.
10. Click Create Account Button.

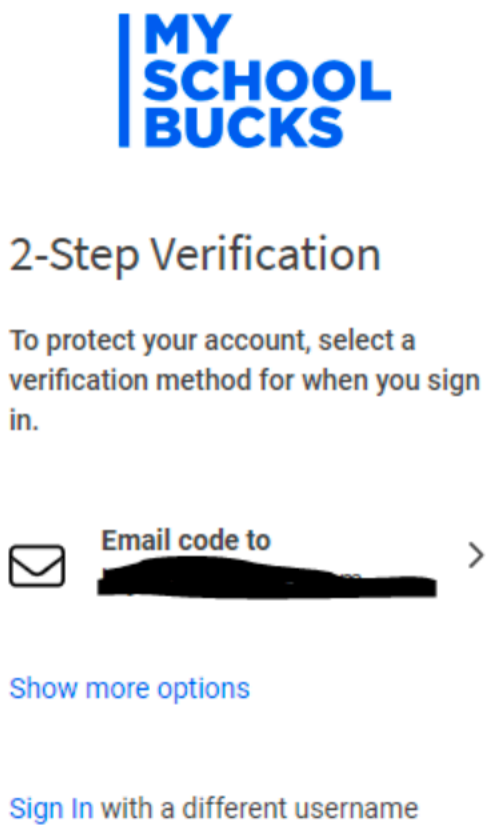


11. Click the Log In button.

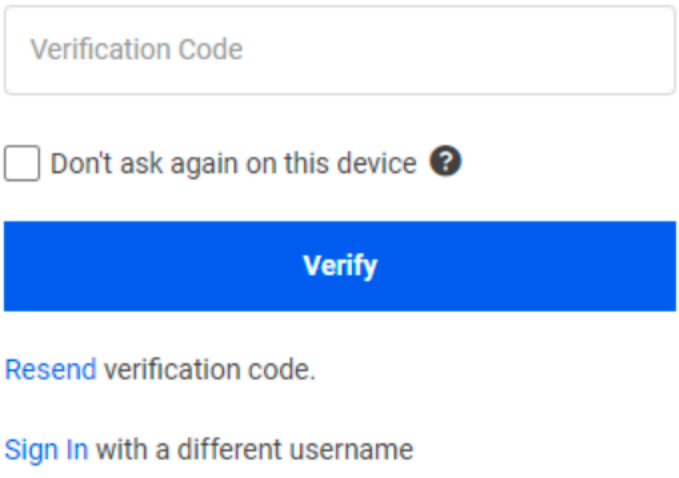
12. Type in your Username which is your email address.
13. Type in your password.
14. Click Log In



15. MySchoolBucks will want to send a 2-Step verification, click on your email address.

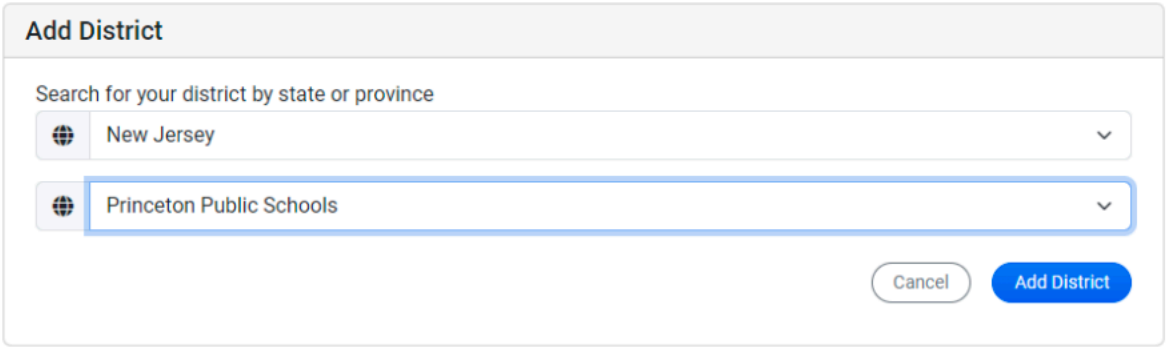


16. Check your email.
17. Type in the Verification Code.
18. Click Verify.
19. If you do not want to do 2-Step every time, click on Don't ask again on this device.

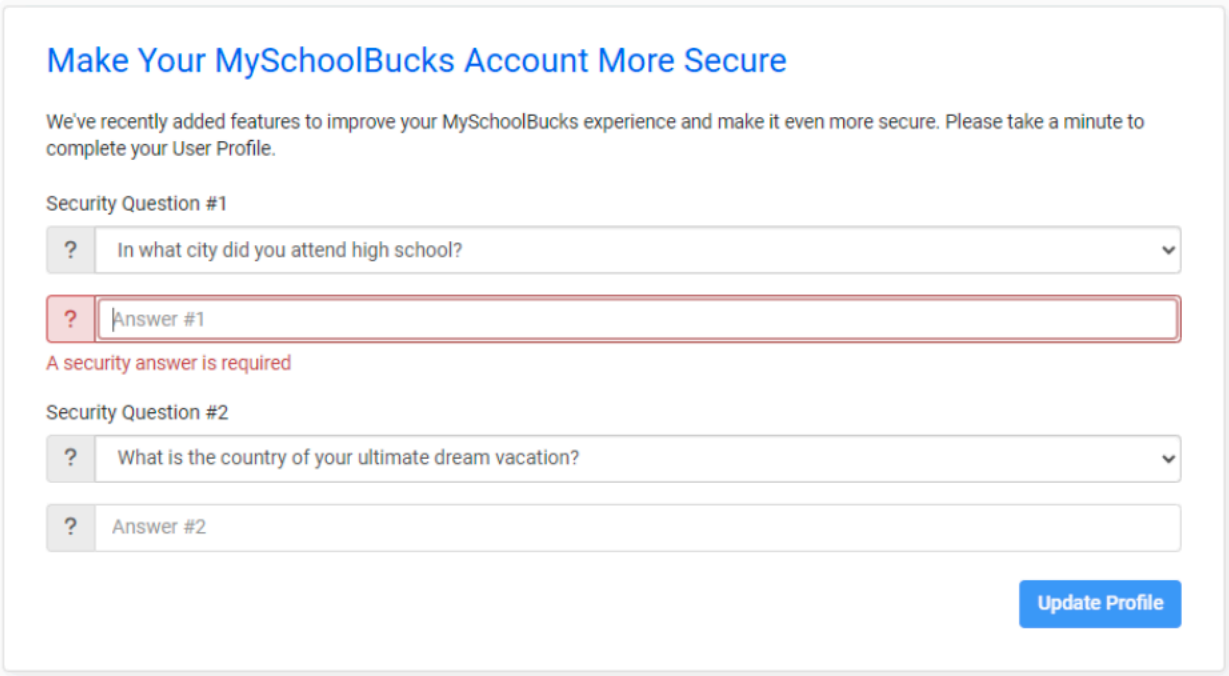


20. Once logged in, Click Get Started.

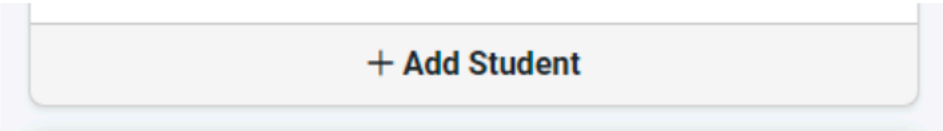
21. Click the state Drop down and choose New Jersey.
22. Click on the district and choose Princeton Public Schools
23. Click on Add District



24. Update your security Questions.
25. Click Update Profile Button.

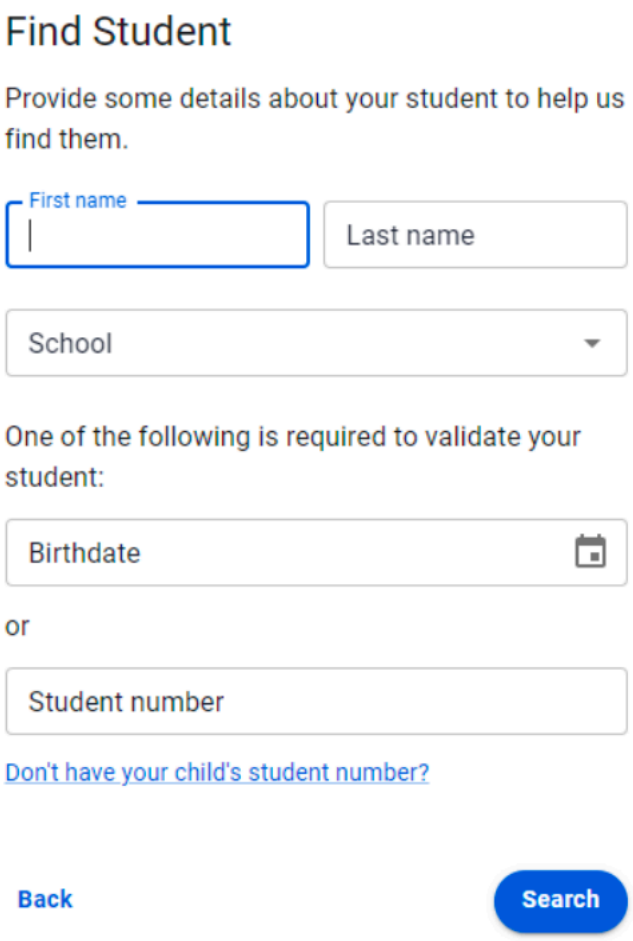


26. Click on the Add Student button.

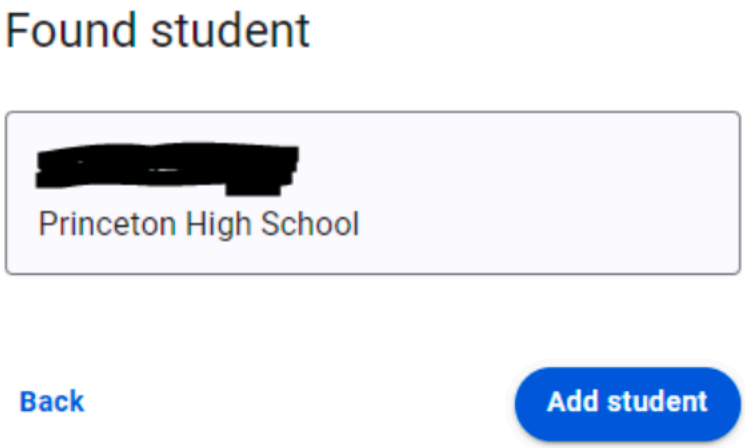


27. Click on the Add Student button again.

28. Type in the First Name, Last Name, Click on the School from the drop down, type in the birthdate or Student ID (Student ID can be found in the Parent Portal).
29. Click Search.



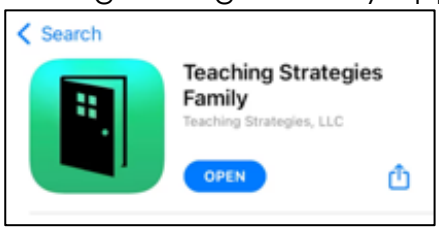
30. Click on Add student.



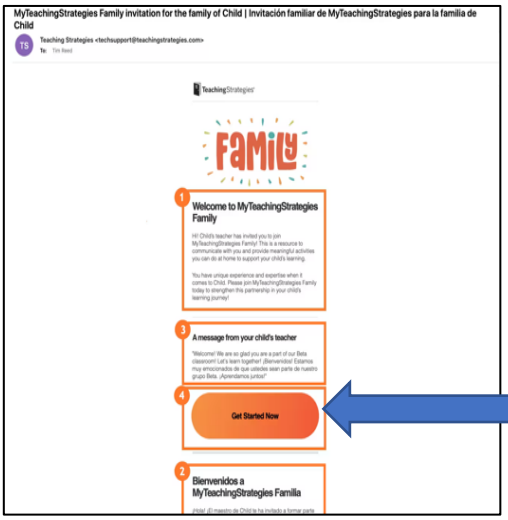
FOUR QUICK STEPS to Set Up Your Teaching Strategies Family Account

The Family App will be used by your child's Preschool teacher to regularly communicate and send home information.

Step 1: Download the Teaching Strategies Family App

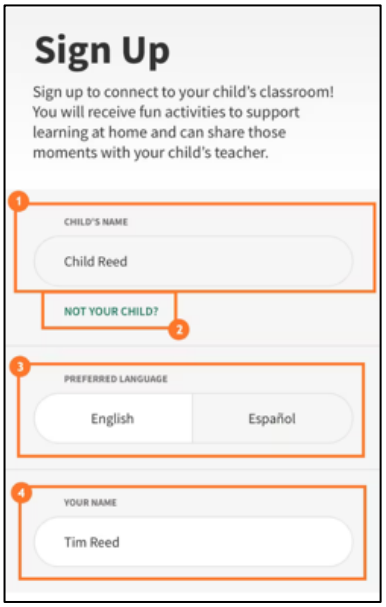


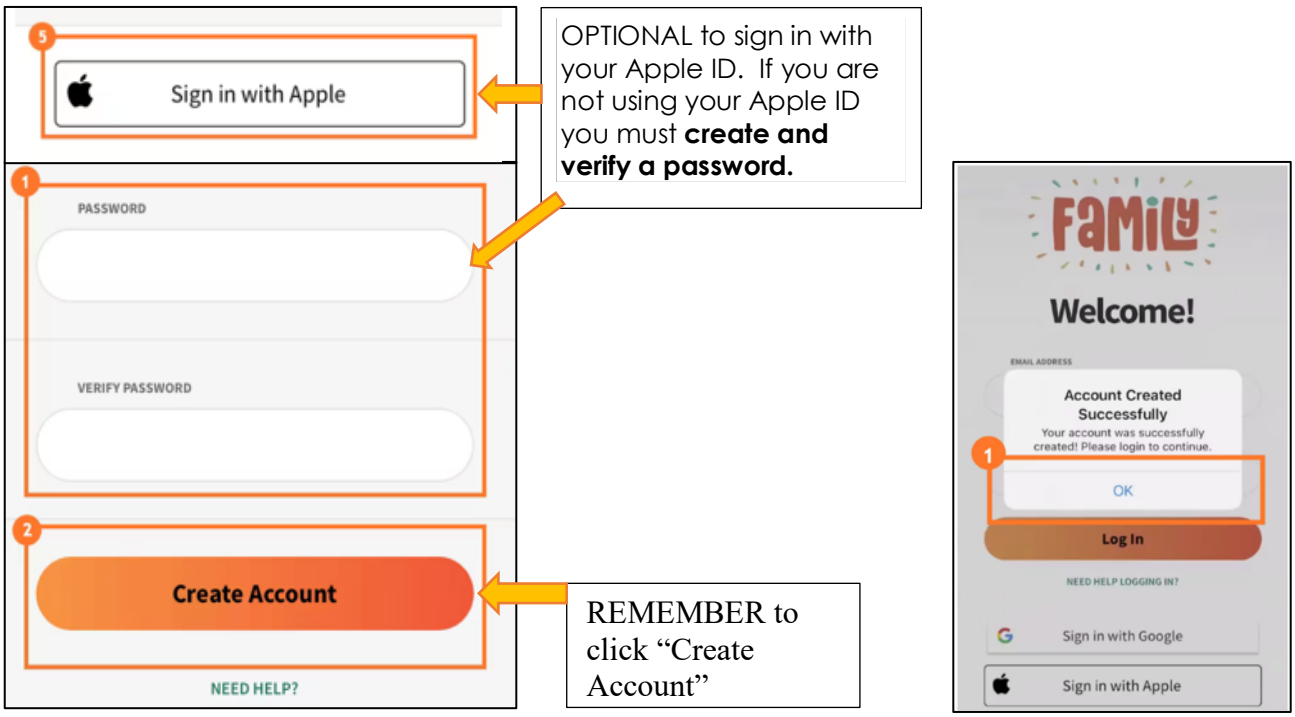
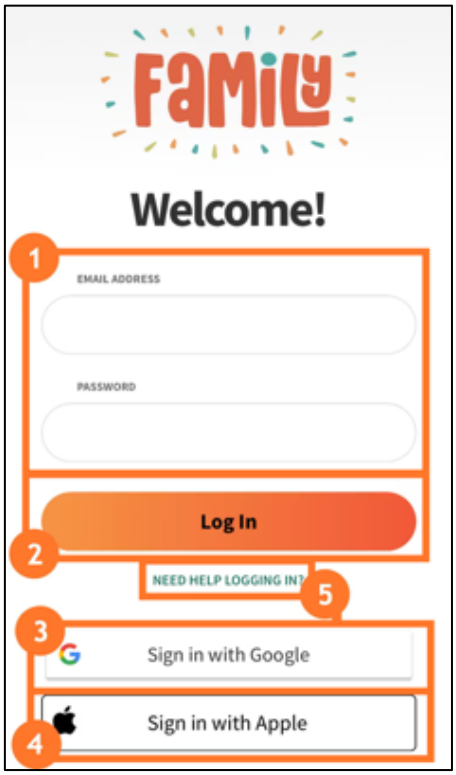
Step 2: Open Your Invitation Email (this will come from techsupport@teachingstrategies.com --- make sure to check your spam/junk folder if you do not receive this!)



****CLICK on "Get Started Now" to open the Sign Up form****

Step 3: Complete the Sign Up Form





Step 4: Log into the Teaching Strategies Family App