Basic FAQ: Academy for Advanced Learning at Theodore Judah Elementary School for the 2026-27 school year

General Information

What is the Academy for Advanced Learning?
The Academy is a program designed for high-achieving students who require greater academic challenges. It focuses on advanced learning, depth, and complexity, encouraging intellectual curiosity and self-directed learning.

When was the Academy established?
The Academy opened in 2011.

Is this a GATE program?
No, the Academy is not exclusively for GATE students. While GATE identification is considered for 4th grade applicants, the program focuses on advanced learning for all eligible students.

Application Process

Who can apply?
THIS YEAR ONLY- Students entering 1st through 4th grade during the 2026–2027 school year. Eligibility is determined by birth date:

- Entering First Grade Academy: 9/2/19 - 9/1/20
- Entering Second Grade Academy: 9/2/18 - 9/1/19
- Entering Third Grade Academy: 9/2/17 - 9/1/18
- Entering Fourth Grade Academy: 9/2/16 - 9/1/17

What is required for the application?

- Completed online application.
- Evidence of high academic achievement (e.g., test scores, report cards, teacher feedback).
- Teacher feedback forms (recommended, not mandatory).
- Report cards, including comments, if available.

When does the application open and when is the deadline?
The application will open on Monday, December 15, 2025 after 5pm PST and will close on Friday, January 9, 2026, at 5:00 PM PST. Late applications are not accepted.

Testing and Admission

What is the testing schedule?

- **1st grade:** February 3-4, 2026
- **2nd grade**: February 10, 2026
- **3rd grade**: February 11, 2026
- **4th grade:** February 12, 2025

What does the test include?

- **1st grade:** Reading, math, and writing assessments in a small group setting.
- **2nd grade:** Timed math and writing tests, focused on comprehension and problem-solving.
- **3rd grade:** Timed math and writing tests, focused on comprehension and problem-solving.
- **4th grade:** Timed math and writing tests, focused on comprehension and problem-solving.

Is admission based solely on test scores?
No, admission decisions consider test scores, observations, report cards, teacher feedback, and overall academic performance.

How many students are admitted?

- **1st grade:** Two classes with 24–26 students each.
- **2nd grade**: Approximately 2-6 new seats across two classes
- **3rd grade:** Approximately 8-12 new seats across two classes
- **4th grade:** Approximately 26 new seats across two classes due to classroom size increases.

Will there be a waitlist?
Yes, a waitlist is maintained for all grades. If space becomes available, families on the waitlist will be contacted up until the beginning of the school year.

Program Details

What is the curriculum like?
The program uses district-adopted curriculum supplemented with advanced materials:

- Math: M^2 and M^3 enrichment programs.
- Science: Mystery Science, Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), Engineering is Elementary.
- Language Arts: Junior Great Books, Step Up to Writing, novel studies
- Social Studies: Project-based learning with TCI.

Are there extracurricular activities?
Yes, the Academy offers:

- Clubs: Chess, art, engineering, computer programming, gardening, and more.
- Competitions: Math Bowl, National Spelling Bee, History Day.
- Service learning and community involvement.

Do Academy students interact with non-Academy peers?
Yes, students join non-Academy peers during lunch, recess, field trips, and other school activities.

Logistics

How is transportation handled?
Transportation is not provided. Families must arrange for drop-off and pick-up, though carpooling is encouraged.

Can siblings of Academy students attend the school?
Siblings are not guaranteed enrollment unless space is available in their grade level.

What happens if my child is admitted but we decide not to enroll?
Families have the option to decline admission. Decisions must be made by the deadline to allow waitlisted students to join.

What is the homework workload?
Homework is intended for review and skill reinforcement. For younger students (1st–2nd grades), assignments are minimal and designed to be independent. Older students (3rd–5th grades) may have slightly more homework, but the focus remains on quality rather than quantity.

What middle school opportunities are available after the Academy?
Academy students often transition to advanced programs in high school, such as honors courses, STEM tracks, or International Baccalaureate (IB) schools like Churchill. The Academy's rigorous curriculum prepares students for these pathways.

What happens if my child qualifies for GATE?
While GATE qualification is recognized, all Academy applicants must complete the Academy testing process.

Contact Information

For further questions, reach out to:

- **Laura Sloan**, Principal lsloan@fcusd.org
- **Jill Hoisington-Rozek**, 1st Grade Teacher jrozek@fcusd.org
- **Letitia Zugnoni,** 5th Grade Teacher lzugnoni@fcusd.org