

Princeton University Prize for Distinguished Secondary School Teaching

NOMINATION PROCESS

Prize recipients will be honored at the Princeton University Commencement on May 27th, 2025 and each prize recipient will receive \$5,000, with an additional \$3,000 awarded to their school's library. Applicants should be prepared to attend the ceremony if they are awarded the prize.

Each secondary school in New Jersey is invited to forward one nomination of a teacher or a team of two co-teachers to the Selection Committee. The nominee's major activity (a minimum of three-fifths) must be secondary school classroom teaching (grades 7 –12), and that person must have at least five years of continuous secondary teaching in the nominating school or school district.

A school that has had a recipient of the award in 2022, 2023 and 2024 is not eligible to submit a nominee, nor should previous prize winners be nominated again.

The nomination process includes school observations of the teachers selected as finalists. The winners and nominees will be notified of the outcome of the selection process in late April.

Please note only electronic submissions will be accepted. Please email all nomination materials to: mvgobbo@princeton.edu by December 13, 2024.

Selection Criteria

The selection committee will focus on and look for specific evidence of:

The nominee(s) effectiveness as an exceptionally well prepared and talented teacher(s) of the subject matter and the extent of his/her/their success in inspiring and engaging students in their own learning, both in and out of the classroom;

The nominee(s)'s contributions to the school and the community that have greatly enhanced the emotional and intellectual life of students;

The extent to which the nominee(s)'s work has had a particularly profound influence on students' learning, whatever their academic strengths or weaknesses;

The nominee(s)'s intellectual leadership among colleagues and the extent of his/her contributions to curriculum development that have resulted in stronger programs and improved student performance;

Innovative and/or pioneering teaching activities or research in which the nominee is engaged;

Professional development and advanced degrees, membership and active involvement in professional organizations, administrative and public relations work that have benefitted the school and its students, and other contributions to the community or profession.

Nomination Materials

Please email the following materials in a single PDF file. The PDF file should contain:

1. **Nomination Form** signed by the superintendent, principal, or head of school. Please note that a nominee must be assigned to classroom teaching in grades 7 – 12 for at least three-fifths time, and teachers may not nominate themselves.
2. **A letter of support written by the nominator or by a designee.** The nominator may request that the letter of support be written by the administrator or department head who can best attest to the nominee's work. Please note that the letter of nomination is most useful when, rather than repeating information from the nominee's resume, it describes specifically how the nominee's work reflects the selection criteria.
3. **Nominee's resume of no more than two pages.**
4. **A letter of support from one other colleague of the nominee.** We urge that the letter of support describe in detail how the nominee's exceptional qualities and performance have contributed to teaching and learning in the school setting as well as in the larger community.
5. **Letters of support from two students whom the nominee has taught within the past five years (2020-2024).** Students are asked to identify the grade level in which they are currently enrolled and to indicate when and in which class(es) they were taught by this teacher. Students' letters are particularly helpful when they contain specific examples of the impact that the teacher's work had on them as individuals and on their classmates.
6. **A personal statement of no more than two pages from the nominee** that will provide the selection committee with a sense of that person's perspective on his/her work. In this statement, the nominee should describe an important episode in his/her teaching career and discuss its significance to the student(s) involved, to the school community, and to the nominee's teaching career.
7. **The nominee's complete teaching schedule.**

For school leaders nominating two teachers who are co-teaching (please see above for detailed requirements)

1. Nomination form;
2. A letter of support written by the nominator or by a designee on behalf of the two teachers;
3. A copy of each teacher's resume;
4. A letter of support from one other colleague of the two teachers;
5. Letters of support from two students whom the teachers have co-taught within the past five years (2020-2024);
6. One co-written personal statement of no more than two pages from the teachers that will provide the selection committee a sense of the teachers' perspective on their work;
7. The teachers' complete teaching schedules.

We are unable to accept or consider any materials other than described above. Questions should be directed to Dr. Kent's office (609) 258-3336 or email tprep@princeton.edu.

RECOMMENDATION SAMPLES

Below are paragraphs taken from nominating letters submitted in previous years. We thought that it might be useful to nominators to see what kinds of comments and descriptions the Selection Committee found helpful.

Teacher V believes that it is her duty to establish a rigorous learning environment within the classroom to enable student centered learning. A testament to this is my visit to her AP Calculus class two days ago. Students were working in groups of four on problems requiring implicit differentiations that were at the level of AP Calculus BC open-ended questions. The students created the solutions, articulately presented those solutions to their peers, critiqued and discussed each other's work, and mastered the content while the teacher strategically injected questions to enhance the discussion. In the middle of the class, a student filled with pride from a successful presentation, blurted out, "This is the best class ever!" I went over to ask him why he had said that, and he replied, "Because we learn so much here." And the test results bear him out.

However, the attribute that makes Teacher V a special teacher is that she addresses the affective nature of the students with the same vigor that she applies to their intellectual nature. Her disposition toward students is welcoming. At any time of the day and well beyond the end of school, one will find students in her room. Many come for extra help. Just as many are there doing service projects as members of the National Honor Society which she advises, honing their skills to participate in mathematics competitions for which she is a coach, working on projects as members of our Math Club which she also advises, coming in for emotional support or advice, or just taking a rest in a warm place from an emotionally charged world.

.....

If there is a committee that will improve the quality of education in our school, Teacher W is either on it or chairing it. He recently collaborated with the history department in creating an interdisciplinary unit based on *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. It was extremely well received by both students and teachers, and he is hard at work thinking of other ways to energize instruction. On the school or district level, this teacher is a "go-to person."

Amazing as he is with subject content, where he really soars is in his rapport and interaction with his students. Whether they are highly motivated honors scholars or struggling to pass the HSPA, he gives them the emotional support and guidance they need. I have seen him take his prep periods to counsel and mentor troubled students who just need someone to listen to them. Students can always tell when teachers really care about them, and they flock to Teacher W because of his genuine concern and gentle humor. He knows that young people learn best when their minds are engaged while their

spirits are nurtured. I am always happy when my former students have this teacher, because I know they are in safe, strong hands. I know that he will encourage them to reach their fullest academic potential while he boosts their self esteem.



I had the unique opportunity to know Teacher X in a special way, because she was my mentor during my first year of teaching, and now she is a colleague. I see her give the same intense dedication to every one of her students as she did for me. She helps each one of them to believe that, no matter how bad their home lives may be, they can be successful in life. She helps them to find reasons not to believe the stereotypes about the town they live in or the economic situations they come from. She helps them to see something more that many would never realize otherwise. She helps them to see that they can make good lives for themselves.

Her dedication to her students is unparalleled. She stays for hours after school tutoring the students who can't quite get something right. She won't let them give up, because she never gives up on them. Many of her students say she is a difficult teacher, because she won't accept less than their best from them. Many more of her students say that she's the greatest teacher they've ever had because she showed them how to learn and how to believe in themselves the way she believes in them.



Throughout my career, I have had the honor of working with many distinguished teachers who have inspired me to continue my path to lifelong learning. When one of those I supervise causes me to reflect on my own practice, inspire me and stimulate new ideas, I realize that I have been given a gift. Now beginning our sixth year together, I have been fortunate to serve as supervisor for Teacher Y in my roles as assistant principal and principal. During that time, parents, colleagues and students have continued to be impressed by his energy, determination, dedication and vision.

Many colleagues are able to describe how Teacher Y contributes to the success of his students in planning and implementing instruction, but his contributions go far beyond his instructional responsibilities. In his desire to serve students, he challenges himself and others to take risks and seek alternatives. In his quest for continued growth, he has served as a contributor and motivator in many roles that include grade level liaison to the technology department, member of the professional development committee, representative for the sciences on the district's articulation committee, member of the county Science Expo committee, and a team leader in the school. Teacher Y brings a high level of energy, insight and expertise to all of the committees on which he serves.

Princeton Prize for Distinguished Secondary School Teaching

Nomination Form

1. Teacher Nomination information (for two-teacher teams, please add second teacher information in #2)

Legal name: _____

Preferred name (if different): _____

Home Phone: _____

Home Address: _____

Email: _____

School Name: _____

School Address: _____

School phone: _____

Position: _____

Number of years **in current position**: _____

Number of years in **present school** (nominees must have a minimum of five years of continuous secondary teaching in their nominating school or district): _____

Number of years in present **school district** (nominees must have a minimum of five years of continuous secondary teaching in their nominating school or district): _____

Courses and grade level taught **during current year**. Position must be a minimum of 3/5 teaching in grades 7-12:

2. Second Teacher Nomination information (for two-teacher teams only)

Legal name: _____

Preferred name (if different): _____

Home Phone: _____

Home Address: _____

Email: _____

School Name: _____

School Address: _____

School phone: _____

Position: _____

Number of years in **current position**: _____

Number of years in **present school** (nominees must have a minimum of five years of continuous secondary teaching in their nominating school or district): _____

Number of years in present **school district** (nominees must have a minimum of five years of continuous secondary teaching in their nominating school or district): _____

Courses and grade level taught during **current year**. Position must be a minimum of 3/5 teaching in grades 7-12:

3. Nominator information (must be a principal, head of school or superintendent)

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Position: _____

Email: _____

Position other than current one through which you have known the nominee (if applicable):

What procedure was used in selecting the nominee?

Have you nominated this teacher before? _____

Have you previously nominated other teachers for this award? _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please email this form, along with the Nomination Dossier described in the [Nomination Process](#), to msgobbo@princeton.edu by 5:00 pm on December 13, 2024.

Questions? Email tprep@princeton.edu or call us at (609) 258-3336

Nomination Checklist for the Princeton Prize for Distinguished Secondary Teaching

The nominee is:

- A teacher in grades 7 through 12.
- Teaching for a minimum of 3/5 of their professional responsibilities.
- A teacher who has taught continuously in the school or district for 5 or more years.

For the nomination of a single teacher, please submit the following as a single PDF file:

- Nomination form signed by the superintendent, principal, or head of school.
- Letter of support written by the nominator or designee.
- Nominee's resume of no more than two pages.
- Letter of support from one other colleague of the nominee.
- Letters of support from two students.
- Nominee's personal statement.
- Nominee's complete teaching schedule.

For nominations of two teachers in a co-teaching team, please submit these materials as a single PDF file:

- Nomination form signed by the superintendent, principal, or head of school.
- A letter of support written by the nominator or by a designee on behalf of the two teachers.
- A copy of each teacher's resume.
- A letter of support from one other colleague of the teachers.
- Letters of support from two students whom the teachers have co-taught within the past five years (2020-2024).
- One co-written personal statement of no more than two pages from the teachers that will provide the selection committee a sense of the teachers' perspective on their work.
- The teachers' complete teaching schedules.