



Teaching in Charter Public Schools Frequently Asked Questions

What are charter public schools?

Charter schools are unique public schools that are allowed the freedom to be more innovative while still being held accountable for advancing student achievement. Because they are public schools, they are open to all children, do not charge tuition, and do not have special entrance requirements or exams.

Why do teachers choose charter public schools?

- Strong school culture with a shared educational mission
- Student-centered, data-driven educational approaches
- Like-minded colleagues and supportive professional communities
- Emphasis on teacher professional development
- Flexibility in scheduling class sizes and instructional extracurricular programming
- Strong focus on raising student achievement, especially for underserved student populations

What qualifications are required to teach at charter public schools?

In Illinois, 50 percent to 75 percent of teachers in each charter public school must hold a valid Illinois teaching license, although charter public school employees are not bound by any residency requirements. Teachers who are not licensed must possess the following qualifications:

1. A bachelor's degree
2. Employment for at least five years in a relevant field
3. Passing scores on required state basic skills and subject area tests
4. Demonstrated evidence of "professional growth"

Charter school teachers who meet these requirements are considered "highly qualified" under Illinois law. This allows charters to hire teachers from non-traditional teaching backgrounds, such as scientists, lawyers, artists, and other professionals. Charters may also hire individuals without certification for non-instructional roles.

Note that some charter public schools set additional requirements, above and beyond those listed here, for teachers in their schools. For more details on teacher licensing and state tests, visit www.isbe.net/licensure.

Visit www.incschools.org for more information on Illinois charter public schools. Register for the INCS Teacher & Administrator Job Fair or join the Online Resume Bank at www.teacherjobfair.org.



What is the hiring process for teachers in charter public schools?

Charter public schools and networks hire staff directly. To learn more about a school or network's hiring process:

- Visit their website to learn about school-specific hiring practices and/or contact the school. Many charters have openings posted on their website.
- The Illinois Network of Charter public schools also maintains a jobs board where charter public schools and networks post many of their open positions. Visit www.incschools.org for more information about teaching positions available in charter public schools.

INCS also maintains an online resume bank where candidates can upload their resume year-round to be viewed by charter principals and hiring managers. (www.teacherjobfair.org).

How do salaries of charter school teachers compare to the salaries of teachers in district-operated schools?

To attract quality teachers, charter public schools offer competitive salaries and benefits to those offered by district-operated public schools. Base salaries vary among charter public schools.

What benefits do charter public school teachers receive?

- Charter public schools offer medical and dental insurance to their employees. Certified teachers participate in the Chicago Teachers' Pension Fund or Illinois Teachers' Retirement System, and most provide retirement plans for uncertified staff.
- Most charter public schools offer year-round professional development.
- Additional benefits vary from school to school and can include items like childcare subsidies or wellness funds.

What happens if a teacher transitions to a charter public school from a district-operated school?

In Illinois, current teachers at district-operated schools can take a leave of absence of up to five years to teach at a charter public school, and their service status and retirement benefits will not be affected.

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