



Teaching in Charter Public Schools Frequently Asked Questions

Why do teachers choose charter public schools?

Many teachers are attracted to charter public schools because charter schools are driven by shared, school-level missions and educational approaches, targeted toward the needs of students. Within the array of charter schools, teachers find organizations with missions that match their values and skills. In charter schools, they find like-minded colleagues and supportive professional communities, including a great emphasis on professional development. In addition, many charter schools use their flexibility to offer smaller class sizes and other features that allow teachers to provide more personalized support to students. Flexibility also allows charters to adapt to the needs of students more easily over the course of the school year – by adding a needed program or changing class schedules, for example. Teachers in charter schools report that these factors, and others, allow them to be successful in meeting the needs of their students and raising student achievement, especially among traditionally underserved student populations.

Do charter public school teachers need to be certified?

In Chicago, 50%-75% of teachers in each charter school must hold a valid Illinois teaching certificate, depending on when the school was founded. Teachers who are not certified must possess the following qualifications: a) a bachelor's degree, b) employment for at least five years in a relevant field, c) passing scores on required state basic skills and subject area tests, and d) demonstrated evidence of "professional growth." Charter school teachers who meet these requirements are considered to be "highly qualified" under Illinois law. Note that some charter schools set additional requirements, above and beyond those listed here, for teachers in their schools. For more details on teacher certification and state tests, visit: http://www.isbe.net/certification/html/becoming_teacher.htm

How do charter public school salaries compare to salaries in traditional public schools?

In order to attract quality teachers, charter public schools offer competitive salaries and benefits to those offered by traditional public schools. Base salaries vary among charter schools. Many charter schools with longer school days or years provide higher salaries to compensate teachers for extra time. As in traditional public schools, education level and experience often impact salaries. In addition, many charter schools provide performance bonuses to teachers.

What benefits do charter public school teachers receive?

All charter schools offer medical and dental insurance to their employees. Most charter schools also offer paid time off and retirement plans to teachers. Additional benefits vary from school to school. Many teachers find that the greatest benefits come from taking advantage of the opportunity for year-round professional development that a majority of charter schools offer.

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

Charter schools or charter school networks are directly involved in the hiring process. Visit schools' websites to learn about school-specific hiring practices or contact school leaders or human resources representatives in charter school networks directly. The Illinois Network of Charter Schools (INCS) also maintains a jobs website on which charter schools and networks post many of their open positions. Visit www.incschools.org for more information about teaching positions available in charter public schools.

What happens if a teacher switches to a charter public school from a district school?

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