Teaching in Illinois Charter Public Schools
Frequently Asked Questions

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 and extracurricular programming
- Strong focus on raising student achievement, especially for underserved student populations

Do charter public school teachers need to be certified?

In Illinois, 50%-75% of teachers in each charter public 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:

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 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.
- Certified teachers participate in the Chicago Teachers’ Pension Fund (Chicago) or Illinois Teachers’ Retirement System, and most charters provide retirement plans for uncertified staff.
- 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.
- Additional benefits vary from school to school.
What is the hiring process for teachers in charter public schools?

Charter public schools or charter school networks are directly involved in the hiring process. To learn more about the hiring process for a particular public charter school:

- 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 in 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 public school, and their service status and retirement benefits will not be affected.

Are charter public schools unionized?

Charter public school teachers are not affiliated with their local district teacher union. Therefore, in Chicago, charter public school teachers are not affiliated with the Chicago Teachers Union. However, charter public school teachers can vote to unionize their individual school if they so choose. Currently, there are nine charter public schools that are unionized and officially recognized by the Illinois Education Labor Relations Board.