



FOR TEACHERS

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Pros and Cons of Teaching at a Charter School

By The Room 241 Team • January 14, 2013



Teachers exploring their employment options may find themselves deciding between a charter school or a more traditional public school. While weighing their options, they might wonder which type of school offers a better combination of environment and opportunity.

In the end, the answer depends on what the individual teacher expects, requires and feels comfortable with for his or her working environment. Would-be educators should examine the following

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pros and cons of a charter school position when making their decision.

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Pro: An empowering environment

The typical charter school endows its teaching staff with more say in the school's goings-on than a traditional public school. The more intimate environment can help establish a "family" atmosphere among teachers and administrators, and teachers may experience more leeway regarding their curriculum and teaching style while feeling empowered to give input on aspects of school operation. This sense of ownership and involvement extends to the relationships teachers can form with their students, allowing them to pay closer attention to each student's success.

Con: Potential for overwork

The openness to teacher input may translate into a voracious demand for teacher hours. In an article written for Scholastic.com, Caralee Adams cites the example of Boston's MATCH Charter Public School in which teachers commonly put in 60 to 80 hours of work each week. Charter schools in their first year of operation can prove particularly demanding in this respect. Young, ambitious teachers may respond to this grueling schedule with everything from exhilaration to burnout or resentment, and many may opt to leave the profession altogether.

Pro: 'At-will' employment

Although the NYSED (New York State Education Department) Charter School Office states that a charter school members may accept union membership, charter schools themselves are under no requirement to unionize, meaning that most of them offer "at will" employment. While this condition gives the school administration the power to dismiss a teacher without advance notice for any reason, it also gives the teacher flexibility to resign a position without penalty or legal repercussions. Young teachers still looking for their long-term career or geographic "home" may find this consideration attractive. Teachers who opt not to belong to a union will also retain more money in their paychecks by not having to pay union dues.

Con: A smaller paycheck