

# SCHOOLS: Structure

Although Illinois has decreased the number of school districts over the past 50 years, it still maintains a disproportionately high number of districts compared to other states. In 2007, there were 871 districts. Consolidating districts has been an issue in the Illinois legislature for many years, which has consistently offered one-time consolidation grants, most recently in 2005.

Predictably, the City of Chicago SD 299 (Chicago Public Schools) is the largest district in the state with more than 407,000 students in 2007. Nearly 300 other school districts across Illinois have more than 1,500 students enrolled, and only 27 districts have enrollment of less than 100 students.

School districts with low-income students are in every region of the state, not just in urban and rural areas. In fact, 244 districts have low-income enrollment of 10 to 25 percent, and there are 357 districts in which 25 to 50 percent of their student body is low income. There are 31 districts in which more than three-fourths of the students enrolled are low income.

In terms of students who are Limited English Proficient (LEP), in 2007, nearly half of Illinois school districts educated students who spoke a primary language other than English. Sixteen percent of districts had an LEP population greater than 5 percent; the average percentage of LEP enrollment for these districts

was 14 percent. Another 30 percent of districts had an LEP population of 5 percent or less.

As previously noted in *Illinois Kids Count 2009*, increasing numbers of students for whom

English is not their first language present challenges for these districts and the entire state. Illinois must put greater emphasis on culturally relevant education, more investment in bilingual teachers and more focus on reaching out to parents of LEP students.

Even those 463 districts that did not have any LEP students enrolled in 2007 are not immune to the challenges. With the growing LEP population across Illinois, these districts will become fewer and fewer. As

the population demographics continue to change, it is likely that districts currently with no LEP students will need to educate bilingual children in the future.

Districts vary greatly in average class size. Rockford 205 (Winnebago County) has the largest at 26.6 students and Herscher CUSD 2 (Kankakee County) has the smallest at 7.8 students. Compare these two with the average Illinois class size of 19.6.

In addition to encouraging school district consolidation, the General Assembly passed legislation in 1996



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leading to the creation of a new type of school: the charter school. The statute offered parents and communities “more flexible ways of educating children within the public school system.” Charter schools are able to set their own school calendar, hours of operation, and grades or ages they wish to serve. Charters are not exempt, however, from meeting rigorous school standards as defined by the Illinois Learning Standards, and students must take state assessments.

Charter schools themselves vary widely. Some are designed to serve specific populations, such as primary grades or dual-language students. Others provide a specific curriculum such as Montessori or Direct Instruction. Still others are designed with governance and parent involvement components that are integral to their mission.

Charter schools are one of the fastest growing segments of education both in Illinois and the nation. Charters in Illinois increased by 77 percent since 2003 and the number of charter school campuses or buildings has grown more than two and a half times over the same period. The vast majority—nearly 80 percent in 2007—of charters are in Chicago.

If history is any indication, Illinois will continue to provide incentives for school district consolidation and set policy allowing for the creation of more charter schools, encouraging them in what the RAND Corporation called “laboratories of innovation.”



# School Structure

## Illinois Public School District Enrollment, 2007

	Number of Districts	Total Enrollment	Average Enrollment
<b>Total districts*</b>	871	2,056,861	2,361
<b>Districts excluding Chicago Public Schools*</b>	870	1,666,618	1,916
<b>Districts under 100 students</b>	27	2,076	77
<b>Districts between 101 and 500 students</b>	213	64,739	304
<b>Districts between 501 and 1,000 students</b>	205	147,669	720
<b>Districts between 1,001 and 1,500 students</b>	127	154,776	1,219
<b>Districts larger than 1,500 students</b>	299	1,687,601	5,644
<b>Districts larger than 1,500 excluding Chicago Public Schools</b>	298	1,297,358	4,354

\* Does not include charter schools

Source: Illinois State Board of Education

## Illinois Public School District Enrollment by Limited-English-Proficient Population, 2007

	Number of Districts	Total Enrollment	LEP Enrollment	Average LEP %
<b>Illinois total</b>	871	2,056,861	148,669	7.2%
<b>Districts with 0% LEP population</b>	463	341,655	0	0.0%
<b>Districts with 0-5% LEP population</b>	261	759,450	13,820	1.8%
<b>Districts with 5%+ LEP population</b>	147	955,756	134,849	14.1%

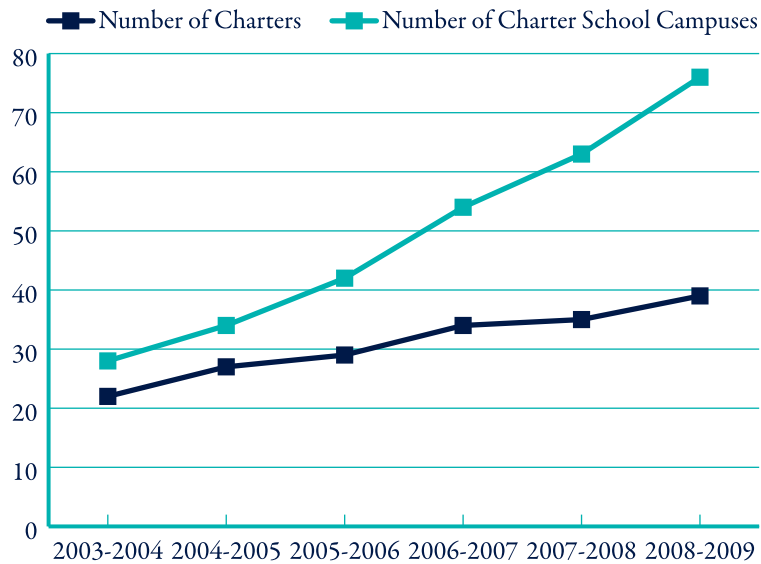
Source: Illinois State Board of Education

## Illinois Public School District Enrollment by Low-Income Population, 2007

	Number of Districts	Total Enrollment	Low-Income Enrollment	Average Low-Income %
<b>Total</b>	871	2,056,861	833,700	40.5%
<b>Districts with &lt;10% low-income population</b>	146	392,113	20,891	5.3%
<b>Districts with 10%-25% low-income population</b>	244	418,433	70,414	16.8%
<b>Districts with 25%-50% low-income population</b>	357	547,954	204,175	37.3%
<b>Districts with 50%-75% low-income population</b>	93	230,608	142,680	61.9%
<b>Districts with &gt;75% low-income population</b>	31	467,753	395,540	84.6%

Source: Illinois State Board of Education

## Number of Illinois Charters and Charter School Campuses



Source: Illinois Network of Charter Schools

## Illinois Charter School Student Retention, 2006-2007

School	Related Public School District	Number of Students Leaving for District Public School	Number of Students Leaving for Out-of-District Public School	Number of Non-Returning Students*
The Academy	Chicago 299	19	6	25
ACE Tech	Chicago 299	7	11	26
ASPIRA	Chicago 299	17	2	43
Bronzeville Lighthouse	Chicago 299	10	6	16
Catalyst	Chicago 299	5	5	NA
Chicago International	Chicago 299	190	8	162
Chicago Math & Science	Chicago 299	24	23	35
Chicago Virtual	Chicago 299	36	9	59
Choir Academy	Chicago 299	4	4	28
Erie	Chicago 299	4	6	9
Ft. Bowman	Cahokia 187	17	34	71
Galapagos	Chicago 299	24	23	37
KIPP	Chicago 299	31	12	33
L.E.A.R.N.	Chicago 299	60	30	40
Legacy	Chicago 299	5	2	8
Locke	Chicago 299	13	2	15
Namaste	Chicago 299	0	5	6
Noble Street	Chicago 299	35	25	39
North Lawndale	Chicago 299	19	5	24
Passages	Chicago 299	13	24	22
Perspectives	Chicago 299	19	13	64
Prairie Crossing	Woodland 50, Freemont 79	5	5	44
Providence Englewood	Chicago 299	9	3	NA
Robertson	Decatur 61	18	6	24
Shabazz	Chicago 299	19	10	55
SIU East St. Louis	East St. Louis 189	6	2	10
Springfield Ball	Springfield 186	24	15	41
Tomorrow's Builders	East St. Louis 189	4	2	40
University of Chicago Charter School (UCCS)	Chicago 299	12	32	32
UNO	Chicago 299	91	59	90
Urban Prep	Chicago 299	14	4	NA
Young Women's	Chicago 299	11	7	36
Youth Connection	Chicago 299	403	71	105

\* Does not include graduates

Source: Illinois State Board of Education

# School Structure

## Average Class Size in Public Schools, Illinois and Chicago, 2008

	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grades 9-12
Illinois	20.5	21.0	21.1	21.7	22.3	22.7	22.2	21.6	21.5	19.6
Chicago	24.2	22.9	22.6	23.1	24.6	25.3	25.3	24.4	24.7	23.2

Source: Illinois State Board of Education

## Average High School (Grades 9-12) Class Sizes by District, Illinois, 2008

District	County	Average Class Size
Illinois		19.6
<b>Districts with the Largest Average Class Size</b>		
Rockford 205	Winnebago	26.6
Woodland CUSD 5	Livingston	26.0
Ball Chatham CUSD 5	Sangamon	25.3
Staunton CUSD 6	Macoupin	25.1
North Clay CUSD 25	Clay	24.8
Manhattan SD 114	Will	24.6
Peoria SD 150	Peoria	24.5
Alsip-Hazelgreen-Oaklawn SD 126	Cook	24.5
Unity Point CCSD 140	Jackson	24.4
Trico CUSD 176	Jackson	24.4
<b>Districts with the Smallest Average Class Size</b>		
Herscher CUSD 2	Kankakee	7.8
Brown County CUSD 1	Brown	7.9
Dunlap CUSD 323	Peoria	8.2
Alton CUSD 11	Madison	8.3
Byron CUSD 226	Ogle	8.3
Cairo USD 1	Alexander	8.4
Kildeer Countryside CCSD 96	Lake	8.4
SD U-46	Kane	8.4
Antioch CCSD 34	Lake	8.9
Galesburg CUSD 205	Knox	9.1

Source: Illinois State Board of Education

## Pupil-Teacher Ratio, Illinois and Chicago

	Illinois		Chicago	
	Elementary	Secondary	Elementary	Secondary
2003	18.4	18.2	19.3	19.0
2004	19.4	18.8	22.7	19.6
2005	18.9	18.4	20.2	16.9
2006	19.1	18.9	21.7	19.3
2007	18.8	18.8	21.1	19.6
2008	18.3	18.0	20.0	24.6

Source: Illinois State Board of Education

## Attendance, Truancy and Mobility Rates, Illinois and Chicago, 2008

	Attendance Rate	Chronic Truancy Rate	Mobility Rate
Illinois	93.3%	2.5%	14.9%
Chicago	89.9%	4.2%	23.1%

Source: Illinois State Board of Education

## Mobility Rate of Public School Students, Illinois, 2007

	Number	Percent
Illinois total	871	15.2%
Districts with a <5% mobility rate	76	8.7%
Districts with a 5-10% mobility rate	271	31.1%
Districts with a 10-20% mobility rate	394	45.2%
Districts with a 20-30% mobility rate	85	9.8%
Districts with a 30-40% mobility rate	34	3.9%
Districts with a >40% mobility rate	11	1.3%

Source: Illinois State Board of Education

## End-of-Year Expulsions by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, Illinois and Chicago, 2006-2007

Statewide	% White	% Black	% Latino	% Asian	% American Indian/Alaska Native	% Multiracial	% Male	% Female	Total
Total Demographics	54.9%	19.6%	19.3%	3.8%	0.2%	2.2%	51.3%	48.7%	2,077,856
Expulsions	39.4%	42.5%	14.8%	1.4%	0.3%	1.7%	70.8%	29.2%	3,451
Suspensions									
Once	34.3%	44.0%	18.6%	1.1%	0.2%	1.8%	65.0%	35.0%	99,620
More than once	27.1%	54.7%	15.6%	0.5%	0.4%	1.7%	69.9%	30.1%	75,310
<b>Chicago</b>									
Total Demographics	8.3%	46.9%	38.9%	3.3%	0.1%	2.4%	50.3%	49.7%	413,694
Expulsions	1.6%	79.4%	16.6%	0.2%	0.0%	2.2%	81.1%	18.9%	549
Suspensions									
Once	4.3%	69.0%	23.7%	0.9%	0.1%	2.0%	59.8%	40.2%	25,736
More than once	3.1%	79.2%	15.5%	0.4%	0.1%	1.7%	67.8%	32.2%	19,552

Source: Illinois State Board of Education

# Incubators for Educational Breakthroughs

By Elizabeth Evans

*Executive Director, Illinois Network of Charter Schools*

Over the past dozen years, Illinois' charter public schools have been a highly successful innovation in public education—yet they remain scarce. Charters are publicly funded schools, open to all. They work especially well because they place decision-making as close to the classroom as possible. This makes teachers and students the pivot point of the school and maximizes teachers' ability to engage in the art and science of their profession.

When adults (educators, other staff and parents) are all aligned and focused on instructional quality, students' learning improves. A study of the Essential Supports for School Improvement, by the Consortium on Chicago School Research, showed that one key element is a “professional community [involving] close collaborative relationships among teachers. . . focused on student learning and coupled with strong norms governing teachers' responsibility for all students.”

Illinois' charter law grants extensive flexibility to charter public schools to focus resources

and incentives for educators to work urgently on academic achievement. In exchange, charters must establish clear, high-quality outcomes for student achievement and financial management before they open, and they face serious consequences for failure to meet those outcomes.

Academic achievement happens when students and their parents find the school that best “fits” their needs. Charter public schools are uniquely suited to support particular cultures of scholarship. They have the administrative flexibility to alter their structure in five key areas: governance, budgets, staffing, curriculum and schedule. For example, if a charter school sees the need for additional counselors to help kids apply and get admitted to college, it can shift resources to hire them. The charter school would not be restricted by bureaucratic mandated staffing formula.

And Illinois' charters have delivered. A recent study conducted by the nationally renowned RAND Corporation found that for the average eighth-grade charter student in Chicago,

continuing on to a charter high school can result in an advantage of 11 percentage points in the likelihood of enrolling in college. Charters consistently achieve higher attendance rates and higher graduation rates than comparable neighborhood schools.

Equally important, when specific charters have failed, our public officials have made the tough but essential decision to close them. Five charters have been closed since our state enacted a charter law in 1996. Never something to celebrate, closing a school is wrenching for teachers, parents and students. But, tolerating a failing school has many more devastating consequences. As a result of this smart and tough public administration, Illinois' charters are among the highest performing as a group in the United States.

Charter public schools are an entrepreneurial tool for the public school system. Public school leaders can identify charter innovations that work and then bring their successes to scale. Although it is nearly impossible to start at

full force, since people first want to see if a new approach truly works. In Illinois, we have seen charters serving as the incubators for real educational breakthroughs. These innovations can be adapted by a single public school or by a school system overall.

Ultimately, what matters is finding structures that enable all the adults in the school community—parents, teachers and administrators—to focus their efforts effectively on the learning that will benefit our children. Thankfully, in Illinois we have just such a structure already in place—charter schools.