



## NORTH CHICAGO COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 187

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# Charter School Proposal Questions & Answers

### **Q: What is a charter school?**

A: A charter school is a public school that is tuition-free and open to all families in the District. Charter schools must meet the same challenging State goals and follow the same learning standards and assessments as regular public schools, but they are free from many of the regulations and policies that regulate other public schools. Teachers and school leaders have flexibility to try new and innovative programs and teaching methods to meet the needs of their students. In exchange for this flexibility, charter schools must meet high benchmarks and can be closed if they are not performing.

### **Q: Why is opening a charter school a good idea for North Chicago?**

A: The charter school proposed for North Chicago is the first step in the District's plan to begin offering new and exciting educational opportunities to students and families of the District. Increasing educational options will ensure that North Chicago families continue to enroll their children in District 187 schools or reconsider District 187 if they are now homeschooling or sending their children to private schools.

In addition, because charter schools are free from many of the regulations and policies that apply to regular public schools, charter school leaders can develop curriculum and set goals that best address the needs of their particular students. For example, charter schools can have longer school days and school years than regular public schools. They can offer smaller class sizes, hands-on-learning experiences and block scheduling that gives greater emphasis to specific subjects. Charters can also incorporate parent involvement in core curricular activities. Extracurricular activities, such as music and the arts, can be part of the curriculum for core subjects like science and math, and field trips and excursions can be part of the regular education program. Successful charter school programs can be implemented by other public schools within the District to benefit all students.

### **Q: Who can attend this charter school?**

A: The charter school proposed for North Chicago will be open to all families in District 187. Illinois State law requires that enrollment at the charter school would be open to all students who are residents of the District, and prohibits the charter school from using entrance exams or other admissions hurdles as a barrier to enrollment. Simply put, students must be enrolled in the charter school on a first-come, first-served basis, and if there are more applications to the school than spaces available, enrollment must be determined by lottery.

Although the charter school will be located on the local military base, the charter school will not serve only Navy families. The District and the Navy are working together to explore avenues to allow a fixed percentage of military children to apply, but that would require a change in the law. The potential benefit of such a change would be to maintain and attract additional Navy family enrollment to the District. Bringing military families back into the community generates more money for the school district because

the District receives federal funds in direct proportion to the attendance of military children. Under no circumstances will enrollment be limited exclusively to children of military families.

**Q: If the charter school is located on the Navy base, will students, faculty and staff have to go through security checkpoints to go to school?**

A: District 187 is working with the Illinois Department of Transportation to establish open access to the building off of Sheridan Road.

**Q: How will the charter school financially impact the community?**

A: To be selected to open a charter school in North Chicago, potential charter operators must demonstrate that they have identified strong business and foundation partners who will provide financial support for the school. There is a financial impact to any school district that establishes a charter school, but by bringing in financial partners, that impact will be minimized.

Additionally, opening this charter school can help to ensure that District 187 will continue to receive federal Impact Aid funds by bringing families back into the community and increasing student enrollment.

**Q: Who will make the decision to award the charter?**

A: Applications for a charter proposal will be evaluated by a Charter Evaluation Review Team composed of the North Chicago administration, representatives of the Illinois State Board of Education, the Lake County Regional Office of Education, and the Navy, regional and charter educational experts, and local community members.

This Review Team will make a recommendation to Superintendent Thompson and the District 187 Board of Education to approve a charter school. Prior to voting on the charter application, the board will have a hearing to discuss the plan for a charter school. That hearing will be open to all members of the public.

**Q: How will a charter school benefit the entire community of North Chicago?**

A: The charter school proposed for North Chicago will offer a college preparatory model with a unique academic focus, providing a convenient and high-quality educational option for all District 187 families. By opening this charter school on the local military base, District 187 will have access to an outstanding facility that lends itself to high levels of technological learning.