

Illinois Teacher Lane Change

How to Advance Your Salary with Graduate Credits

Read the Full Article Here:

<https://www.modelteaching.com/education-articles/teacher-wellness/illinois-teacher-lane-change>

If you teach in Illinois, you may have noticed that your district's salary schedule may be different from that of a neighboring district, and options for salary increases depend on the individual school district you work in.

In many districts across Illinois, earning graduate-level credits can help you increase your salary. [<https://www.modelteaching.com/teacher-salary-advancement-courses>] For every 15 or 30 credits you accumulate beyond your bachelor's degree or your master's degree, your district could allow you to trigger a lane change on your salary schedule and add thousands of dollars to your paycheck every year.

How salary advancement works in Illinois

Illinois has a little over 850 school districts, and each district negotiates its own salary. But despite variation across districts, the framework of a teacher's salary schedule is often consistent, with steps that correspond to years of experience and lanes that correspond to your education level. Steps advance automatically each year. The longer you work in your district, the higher your salary will be. Lanes are different and require you to take action by advancing your teaching practice through additional degrees or the accumulation of credits related to your teaching practice.

Most Illinois districts that allow for salary advancement use 15-credit increments per lane, where you can change salary lanes after accumulating 15 credits after a bachelor's degree or a master's degree. To activate a lane change and increase your salary, districts across Illinois generally state that you must earn graduate-level credits, meaning credits that come after your bachelor's degree, with a grade posted on an official transcript from a regionally accredited university. So, in a state like Illinois, continuing your learning and improving your teaching craft through additional degrees and credits means more money in your pocket.

Some Example Illinois districts

Take a look at just a few Illinois districts to better understand how earning additional credits can improve your salary.

Chicago Public Schools (CPS)

CPS is the third-largest district in the U.S. with approximately 21,000 teachers. CPS uses a salary advancement structure with 6 lanes to advance your salary over your years of service. You begin at the bachelor's level, then can advance higher with a master's degree. After a master's degree, earning an additional 15 credits moves you up to the next lane, then accumulation of 30 credits, then accumulation of 45 credits, and finally earning a doctorate puts you at the highest lane for your salary schedule. The salary implications are significant: over a 25-year teaching career, you can earn over an additional \$500,000 just by earning credits and changing lanes. [CPS Compensation and Pay Plan \(Policy 302.8\)](#)

Niles Township High School District 219

Let's take a look at a smaller suburban district next. D219 (Niles North + Niles West) employs about 900 professionals serving 4,600+ students in Skokie, Lincolnwood, and parts of Morton Grove and Niles. The district uses the standard Illinois lane structure where you advance every 15 graduate credits and move from your bachelor's to a BA +15, then BA +30, and again for a master's: MA, then MA +15, then MA +30. A lane change in a district like this is very valuable because, since the average salary is already so high here, each lane change step can increase your salary by \$3,000- \$5,000 mid career, per year. Over the course of your career, you could potentially earn an additional \$300,000 just by earning salary advancement credits. [D219 Salary Schedule and Benefits](#)

Naperville Community Unit School District 203

Let's take a look at Naperville 203 next, since they take a slightly different approach to lane changes compared with many other Illinois districts. Instead of a 15-credit lane change increment, they use a 12-credit lane change, meaning they get a lane change after adding an additional 12 credits. Their lanes look something like this: BA, BA+12, BA+24, MA, MA+12, MA+24, MA+36, MA+42, and MA+54. Like other districts, the impact on your salary is substantial. Over your teaching career, advancing through the lanes from your BA all the way up to the highest level of a master's plus 54 additional credits, could put somewhere between \$700,000 to \$900,000 back into your bank account by the end of your career! The benefits of earning a master's degree and additional credits are clear here.

<https://www.naperville203.org/departments-services/human-resources/collective-bargaining-agreements>

Acero Charter Schools

Finally, let's take a look at a charter school example. Acero Charter School is a unionized network of about 15 schools serving 8,000 students with approximately 500 teachers. The lane structure here is a bit simpler, with lanes at a BA, a MA, and then a few additional advanced lanes at the +30 and +60 level. While the base pay increases are typically just a few thousand dollars, over the course of a teacher's career, that still amounts to over \$100,000 in additional salary over your career. [Acero CBA via CTU](#)

How Model Teaching helps Illinois teachers earn lane change credits

Model Teaching offers graduate-level credit courses through regionally accredited university partners, including **Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU)**, **University of Massachusetts Global**, **University of the Pacific**, **Augustana University**, and **Valley City State University (VCSU)**. [LINK: <https://www.modelteaching.com/university-partners>] All five are regionally accredited and issue official graduate-level transcripts upon course completion. Courses from one of these regionally accredited institutions provide an official transcript, a letter grade, are taught by an instructor of record with a master's degree or higher, and include ongoing instructional support and individualized written feedback, essential features of a strong course that are eligible for credits to advance your salary.

Take a look at some Model Teaching course options for your lane change, below:

- **Do you need 15 credits for your Illinois lane change?** Our **15-credit Build Your Own Credit Bundle** [<https://mycourses.modelteaching.com/product/build-your-own-graduate-level-course-bundle-15-credits>] is designed to get you exactly there. Because you're bundling, you'll save hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of dollars compared with other providers. In most cases, your yearly raise from your lane change pays your credit investments back within the first year.
- **Do you need 30 credits for a major lane change or for multiple lane changes?** Our **30-credit Build Your Own Credit Bundle** is the most cost-effective way to earn credits for your salary advancement [<https://mycourses.modelteaching.com/product/build-your-own-graduate-level->

course-bundle-30-credits]. This bundle allows you to save thousands of dollars or more by completing your 30 credits over the one-year access period. With the majority of district salary increases paying for your credit investment within about a year, all future years of your salary increase become cash accumulating in your bank account.

- **What about if you need a unique amount of credits?** Model Teaching offers custom credit bundles for every amount of credits you need [<https://www.modelteaching.com/build-your-own-credit-bundles>], ensuring you select the exact credits for your lane change to increase your salary in the most cost-effective way possible.
- **Do you want to work toward a master's degree to qualify for a lane change?** Up to 9 Model Teaching credits can be applied toward Augustana University's Master of Education (M.Ed.) degree as part of Augustana's learner-designed concentration, meaning you can earn lane-eligible credits and make progress toward your master's at the same time. <https://www.modelteaching.com/masters>

Model Teaching's pay-as-you-go model means you pay a smaller registration fee up front, then only pay for the rest of your credits after you complete each course, and request your transcript right away. No payment plans, no monthly contracts, and no transcripts held until the end of a 12-month payment cycle. Most Illinois teachers can submit transcripts to their district within weeks of completing each course, ensuring you can meet your district's deadline. While these kinds of credit courses are exactly what most districts typically look for in your lane change requirements, you should still always request pre-approval from your district for your lane change credits, since every district also has its own policies and standards.

Explore our credit bundle options here: <https://www.modelteaching.com/teacher-salary-advancement-courses>

Do you instead need ISBE hours for recertification? Model Teaching provides ISBE hours, too!

Illinois lane changes and ISBE license renewal are two separate processes governed by different rules, and Illinois teachers often need both. If you instead need ISBE hours for your recertification, check out our Illinois state license renewal page here for our

recommended courses in partnership with NEIU:

<https://www.modelteaching.com/professional-development-requirements/illinois-teacher-professional-development>

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a teacher lane change in Illinois?

A lane change is a way in which a teacher with a certain number of years' teaching experience can increase their salary by moving "lanes" on their pay scale. Lane changes require you to take action by advancing your teaching practice through additional degrees or the accumulation of credits related to your teaching practice. Completion of graduate credits are one way that you can change lanes to increase your salary.

Will my Illinois district accept Model Teaching credits for a lane change? Most Illinois districts accept graduate-level credits from any regionally accredited university and Model Teaching's university partners (SNHU, UMass Global, University of the Pacific, Augustana, VCSU) are all regionally accredited. We've helped many Illinois teachers complete lane changes successfully, and Model Teaching is becoming a preferred provider of credits toward lane changes by teachers all across the state. However, always check your district approval process first, or receive pre-approval from your HR department before starting.

How many credits do I need for a lane change? This depends on your district. Most Illinois districts use 15 graduate credits per lane (BA → BA+15 → BA+30, etc.). But others have different credit increments, like a 12-credit lane change. You can check your specific district's salary schedule to learn exactly how many credits you need for your next lane change.

When should I submit my transcript to my district? Most Illinois districts process lane changes annually with deadlines of September 1 or October 1, but this again is dependent on your district. You can process your credits through Model Teaching as you complete each course, then submit your transcripts once you are ready. If you are on a tight deadline, Model Teaching can guide you on when to complete your courses and how to quickly request your transcript to meet your deadline.

What's the difference between graduate credits and ISBE clock hours? Graduate credits are issued by universities on official transcripts and are often used for **salary lane changes** (like Model Teaching's university partners SNHU, AU, VCSU, UOP, and UMG). ISBE clock hours are issued by ISBE-approved providers (like NEIU through Model Teaching's partnership) and used for **license renewal**.

Can I work toward a master's degree through Model Teaching? Yes. Up to 9 Model Teaching credits can be applied toward Augustana University's Master of Education (M.Ed.) degree as part of Augustana's learner-designed concentration. Learn more here: <https://www.modelteaching.com/masters>