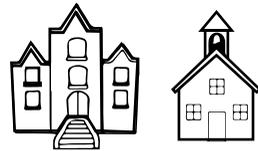
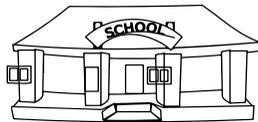


# Charter schools are free public schools that are open to all Mississippi students.

## 1 Charter schools are public schools.

A charter school is a free public school that is open to any Mississippi student in the district in which the charter resides. Charter schools are named for the “charters” they operate under which are awarded by the state authorizing board. Charter schools are publicly funded by the same sources that fund traditional public schools (local, state, and federal dollars) and are held accountable to the academic standards adopted by the Mississippi State Board of Education.

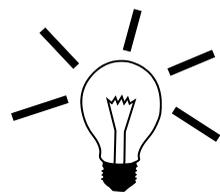


## 2 Charter schools in Mississippi will be run by non-profit organizations.

All charter schools in Mississippi will be non-profit organizations that are governed by a local board of directors made up of educators, community people, and parents. Some charter schools are operated by a Charter Management Organization (CMOs) that has a contract with the local board of directors. CMOs are nonprofit entities that manage two or more charter schools. CMOs often provide back office functions like accounting, but some provide a wider range of services, including hiring, professional development, data analysis, public relations, and advocacy. While some states allow for-profit entities to open and/or operate charter schools, Mississippi’s charter law strictly prohibits for-profit charters.

## 3 Charter schools try new ideas.

Charter schools have the ability to be innovative in order to increase student achievement. This might mean increasing the school day to provide more time for instruction, adjusting curriculum to meet students’ needs mid-year, or focusing on creating a unique learning environment by dedicating school culture to a specific theme such as performing arts or technology. Charter schools encourage change in the traditional public school environment.



## 4 Charter school students are diverse.

Critics often accuse charters of drawing only elite, high-achieving students. In reality, charter schools give a traditionally underserved student the opportunity to excel. Students who attend charter schools come from a variety of academic, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. In Mississippi, admission tests of any type are illegal in a charter school and a charter school’s underserved student population must be reflective of the underserved student population of the traditional district.



## 5 Charter schools empower teachers.

Because charter schools have more autonomy than traditional public schools, teachers and administrators have the flexibility to change course when students are not succeeding. This means being innovative when making curriculum decisions and having the ability to be creative when dealing with instruction and classroom management. Charter school administrators also have complete control over their budgets which allows administrators to choose to pay higher teacher salaries and benefits.



## 6 Charter schools are accountable.

In order for a charter school to open in Mississippi, they must fill out an extensive application that is then reviewed and approved by the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board (MCSAB). This independent board is the only agency in Mississippi charged with authorizing and monitoring the performance of charter schools. MCSAB requires each applicant to submit a detailed application regarding school culture; the leadership, governance, and operational structure of the school; the educational plan; and the financial plan of the school. Once the MCSAB enters into a contract with a charter school’s governing board, the MCSAB holds the charter school accountable through yearly academic and financial reviews and decides to renew or non-renew the charter school every five years. Charter schools are held to the same academic standards as traditional public schools; they use the same state standards and assessments to track performance.

1997

HB 1672 was signed into law by the governor. It allowed existing public schools to qualify for charter status on a pilot program basis. Only one school in the state, an elementary school in Merigold, was converted to a charter school under this law.

2010

During the 2010 MS legislative session, the 2010 Conversion Charter Schools & New Schools Act was passed. Schools became eligible for its provisions in the 2012-2013 school year since the law’s three-year timeline began with data from the 2009-2010 school year. No charter schools were created.

2012

In 2012, three new charter school bills were presented to the legislature; Senate Bill 2401 (Sen. Tollison), House Bill 888 (Rep. Moore), and House Bill 1152 (Rep. Moore). Each charter school bill from the 2012 session died in committee or failed to be considered by the deadline.

2013

Charter school legislation was discussed again in 2013. Sen. Tollison authored SB 2189, but it died on the House floor. HB 369, the Conference Report passed by the House and Senate, was signed into law by the Governor.

2014

First round applicants have until March 14, 2014, to respond to the full application; a letter of intent is due on January 22, 2014. The first MS charter schools are scheduled to open in 2015.

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