

## Comparison of Traditional Public Schools and Charter Schools



State Requirement	Traditional Public Schools	Charter Schools
<p><b>Must accept all students who want to enroll</b></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Conditional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not discriminate based on intellectual ability or athletic ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, status as a person with a disability, English language proficiency, or any other basis that would be illegal if used by a school district.</li> <li>• May limit admission to a particular grade level or areas of concentration of the school (such as performing arts).</li> <li>• Charter schools with a particular focus may establish criteria to evaluate prospective students.</li> <li>• If more students apply to the charter school than the number of attendance slots available in the school, students must be selected on a random basis from a pool of qualified applicants meeting the established eligibility criteria.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Must provide gifted education programs to identified students</b></p>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Districts must comply with state regulations for gifted education.</li> </ul>	<p>No</p>

<p><b>Provide students access to extracurricular and athletic activities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May provide students with extracurricular and athletic activities including sports, band, clubs, etc.</li> <li>• Must provide equal opportunities for charter students to compete for spots within an activity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charter students are entitled to participate in the extracurricular activities of their school district of residence if the activity is not offered by the charter school.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Provide transportation services</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May provide transportation for their own students, but most districts do and must follow state laws and regulations in providing services.</li> <li>• Required to provide transportation for all students to and from charter schools.</li> <li>• Required to provide transportation to charter school students, regardless of the districts' own schedules.</li> </ul>	<p>No</p>
<p><b>Require all professional staff to be appropriately certified by the state in the field they are teaching or supervising</b></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>No</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional employees without appropriate state certification may teach students.</li> <li>• Only 75% of teachers and administrators must hold appropriate state certification.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Require teachers and principals to participate in an annual, uniform system of evaluation to measure standards of performance and competency</b></p>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must comply with state law and use of state-developed evaluation system for teachers and principals based on student performance and other factors.</li> </ul>	<p>No</p>

<p><b>Require superintendents to meet evaluation plans</b></p>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must comply with requirement to conduct locally-developed annual evaluation that meets specific criteria as outlined state law.</li> </ul>	<p>No</p>
<p><b>Governing boards are elected by the public</b></p>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board members are elected for four-year terms.</li> <li>• Board members must be residents of the school district and meet other eligibility requirements.</li> </ul>	<p>No</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trustees are privately selected.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Must demonstrate accountability to taxpayers, must have public meetings where operations, budget and other decisions are made</b></p>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School districts are subject to numerous requirements related to operations, personnel, budgeting and taxation which ensure deliberations and decisions regarding public funds are made in public and transparent.</li> </ul>	<p>Conditional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be established as non-profit entities and are subject to the “Sunshine Act”, but many contract with for-profit corporate Education Management Organizations (EMOs) to run virtually every aspect of the school.</li> <li>• EMOs are not public entities and are not subject to any public transparency or accountability laws.</li> <li>• There are no restrictions on the amount of taxpayer dollars that can be paid to an EMO.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Require annual audits</b></p>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must have their finances audited annually by an independent auditor to verify the appropriate accounting and expenditure of funds.</li> <li>• The auditor must have access to most school records and can require school officials to answer questions and produce records.</li> </ul>	<p>No</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No requirement for an independent, annual year-end audit.</li> <li>• No audit process to determine the actual costs of providing regular and special education services to students.</li> <li>• No requirement to report information regarding certain expenditures including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advertising costs.</li> <li>• lobbying costs.</li> <li>• costs of bonuses provided to administrators or members of the board of trustees.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Require budget transparency</b></p>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must follow specific requirements in state law for adopting preliminary and proposed budgets.</li> <li>• Budgets must be available for public inspection prior to final adoption.</li> </ul>	<p>No</p> <p>No requirement to make preliminary and proposed budgets available to the public prior to final adoption.</p>
<p><b>Required to participate in the Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS) and pay for employer contribution costs for employee pensions</b></p>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Districts must participate in the PSERS system and pay employer contribution costs.</li> <li>• Districts must reimburse charter schools for their employer contribution costs for pensions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All charter school employees must be enrolled in PSERS <u>unless</u> the school provides benefits through another retirement program. Most are in PSERS.</li> <li>• Participating charters pay for their employer contribution costs and are reimbursed by the school district.</li> </ul>