

Comparison of Traditional Public Schools and Charter Schools



State Requirement	Traditional Public Schools	Charter Schools
<p>Must accept all students who want to enroll</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Conditional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • May limit admission to a particular grade level or areas of concentration of the school (such as performing arts). • Charter schools with a particular focus may establish criteria to evaluate prospective students. • 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.
<p>Must provide gifted education programs to identified students</p>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Districts must comply with state regulations for gifted education. 	<p>No</p>

<p>Provide students access to extracurricular and athletic activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May provide students with extracurricular and athletic activities including sports, band, clubs, etc. • Must provide equal opportunities for charter students to compete for spots within an activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>Provide transportation services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May provide transportation for their own students, but most districts do and must follow state laws and regulations in providing services. • Required to provide transportation for all students to and from charter schools. • Required to provide transportation to charter school students, regardless of the districts' own schedules. 	<p>No</p>
<p>Require all professional staff to be appropriately certified by the state in the field they are teaching or supervising</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>No</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional employees without appropriate state certification may teach students. • Only 75% of teachers and administrators must hold appropriate state certification.
<p>Require teachers and principals to participate in an annual, uniform system of evaluation to measure standards of performance and competency</p>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must comply with state law and use of state-developed evaluation system for teachers and principals based on student performance and other factors. 	<p>No</p>

<p>Require superintendents to meet evaluation plans</p>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must comply with requirement to conduct locally-developed annual evaluation that meets specific criteria as outlined state law. 	<p>No</p>
<p>Governing boards are elected by the public</p>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members are elected for four-year terms. • Board members must be residents of the school district and meet other eligibility requirements. 	<p>No</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees are privately selected.
<p>Must demonstrate accountability to taxpayers, must have public meetings where operations, budget and other decisions are made</p>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<p>Conditional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • EMOs are not public entities and are not subject to any public transparency or accountability laws. • There are no restrictions on the amount of taxpayer dollars that can be paid to an EMO.

<p>Require budget transparency</p>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must follow specific requirements in state law for adopting preliminary and proposed budgets. • Budgets must be available for public inspection prior to final adoption. 	<p>No</p> <p>No requirement to make preliminary and proposed budgets available to the public prior to final adoption.</p>
<p>Required to participate in the Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS) and pay for employer contribution costs for employee pensions</p>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Districts must participate in the PSERS system and pay employer contribution costs. • Districts must reimburse charter schools for their employer contribution costs for pensions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All charter school employees must be enrolled in PSERS <u>unless</u> the school provides benefits through another retirement program. Most are in PSERS. • Participating charters pay for their employer contribution costs and are reimbursed by the school district.