Both are FREE public schools open to any Mississippi student. The 2016-2017 charter schools are Midtown Public Charter School, Reimagine Prep, and Smilow Prep. They are available to students in Jackson and C, D, and F districts.

Both receive a grade from the Mississippi State Board of Education. Charter schools use the same state standards and the same state tests to track performance. They are both graded on the same A-F scale.

Both CANNOT discriminate. A charter school must accept any student who is in the appropriate grade level as long as there is space. In addition, the student population of a charter school must reflect the student population of the district where it is located in terms of poverty and special education rates.

Both receive local, state, and federal money. Each traditional and charter school in Mississippi receives a set amount of money for each child they serve.
Charter schools are new to Mississippi. The charter school law passed in 2013 to give parents in low-performing school districts another public school option. Nationally, there are over 6,600 charter schools. There are 3 charter schools open in Mississippi in 2016-2017.

Charter schools must complete an extensive application process and get approved by a state board. The Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board monitors them every year to ensure they are meeting the terms of their contract, which is called a charter.

Charter schools must be successful. Charter schools receive a grade every year, but unlike traditional schools, charter schools are evaluated every 5 years to determine if they will remain open. If a charter school has an “F” rating at the end of the 5-year contract term, it will be permanently closed by the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board.

Charter schools are governed by non-profits. Unlike traditional schools, charters can make decisions without waiting on the local school board. This might mean increasing the time in a school day to provide more time for instruction based on the immediate needs of the students.

WHAT MAKES PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS AND TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS DIFFERENT?