



2016 Charter School Annual Report

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Introduction

Each fall, the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board produces an annual report on charter schools operating in the state during the preceding school year. In compliance with Mississippi Code Annotated §37-28-31(2) and §37-28-37(1), the report provides information on charter school characteristics, charter school applications and approvals, and charter school outcomes and performance.

Additional information regarding Mississippi's public charter schools is available on the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board's website, including currently operating public charter schools, application and authorization materials, and answers to frequently asked questions.

Mississippi Charter School Quick Facts

- Currently, three charter schools operate in Mississippi. They are all located in Jackson, MS.
- One additional school has been approved to open in Fall 2017.
- Charter schools are free to students and receive the same per pupil funds that fund traditional public schools.
- Mississippi's law prohibits private schools from converting to charter schools.
- Mississippi's charter school law prohibits for-profit companies from opening and operating charter schools
- Charters schools are open to all students who live in the school district where the charter school is located or who reside in 'C', 'D', or 'F' rated districts.
- In Mississippi, charter schools must reflect the population of the traditional school district where they are located including the percentage of students with disabilities.
- Charter schools may not use admissions tests or criteria of any kind.
- If more students apply than there are seats, a lottery is conducted.
- Charter schools are granted an initial five-year contract.
- Charter schools are evaluated annually using the Mississippi Charter School Performance Framework.

The Charter School Landscape in Mississippi

Legislative History

In 2013, Governor Bryant signed the *Mississippi Charter Schools Act of 2013*. This legislation overhauled Mississippi's public charter school laws, which previously only permitted charter school conversions. It also created the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board, an independent state agency, to authorize charter schools across Mississippi.

The Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board consists of seven members (three Governor appointees, three Lt. Governor appointees, and one State Superintendent of Education appointee). The Authorizer Board is charged with the mission to increase access to excellent public schools by authorizing high-quality charter schools, particularly schools designed to expand opportunities for underserved students. The Authorizer Board may approve up to 15 charter schools per year and may approve charter schools in school districts rated 'D' or 'F' without local school board approval.

A charter school is a public school that is established and operates under the terms of a charter agreement and in accordance with the Mississippi Charter Schools Act of 2013 (Miss. Code Ann. 37-28-1 et. seq.). Charter schools operate as local education agencies and function as independent school districts. Governed by independent non-profit organizations, charter schools have greater autonomy over their budgets, personnel, curricula, and operations in exchange for heightened accountability. Charter schools are publically funded and are subject to the same standards, assessments, and accountability letter grades as traditional public schools. Charter schools may be closed if they demonstrate poor academic performance, violate their charter agreement, or engage in practices of fiscal mismanagement.

In 2016, the charter school law was revised to expand opportunities for Mississippi students. Students who reside in the school district where the charter school is located and students who reside in any school district that was rated 'C', 'D', or 'F' are eligible to attend a charter school. It also simplified the teacher certification requirements for charter schools and allowed charter schools, if interested, to participate in the Public Employees' Retirement System.

Charter Schools by the Numbers

Charter schools currently operate within the boundaries of one school district: the Jackson Public School District. In 2015-2016, a total of two charter schools operated in Jackson serving 226 students. At capacity these two schools will serve 648 students. Charter school enrollment currently accounts for less than one percent of the total public school enrollment in the state and in the district where charter schools have been authorized. In 2016-2017, an additional charter school opened serving 119 students in its first year.

Table 1. Charter School Enrollment by District, 2015

	Number of Charter Schools	Charter Enrollment	District Enrollment	Percent Charter Enrollment
Jackson, MS	2	226	28,019	<1%
Mississippi	2	226	486,471	<1%

Each year, the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer board releases a Request for Proposals for new charter schools. The Authorizer Board has set a rigorous bar for charter school approval and contracts with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) to conduct independent evaluations of each charter school proposal. Table 2 documents the ratios of submitted versus approved applications by each Request for Proposals cycle since the Authorizer Board’s creation in 2013. To date, the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board has approved only 16 percent of charter school applications.

Table 2. Charter School Applications and Approvals

RFP Process	Letters of Intent	Applications Submitted	Applications Approved
2014 – Cycle 1	31	12	1
2014 – Cycle 2*	10	6	1
2015 Cycle	3	1	1 (2 Schools)
Totals	44	19	3

*Starting with the 2014 – Cycle 2 process, applicants were able to submit one letter of intent and application for multiple schools.

Charter School Outcomes

The Mississippi Charter School Authorizer board utilizes the Academic, Financial, and Organizational Performance Frameworks within the Mississippi Charter School Performance Framework to annually evaluate and assess charter school performance. At this time, the Authorizer Board is waiting on complete data in order to complete its evaluations. Full academic data from the Mississippi Department of Education is expected to be released by mid-October 2016. The Authorizer Board will amend this annual report in order to include the full evaluation of charter schools in operation during the 2015-2016 school year. The Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board anticipates releasing the amended report in December 2016 after approving the report at its December board meeting.