



The State of Public Education in New Orleans

2013 Report





The Scott S. Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives at Tulane University

The Cowen Institute is an action-oriented think tank that informs and advances solutions – through policies, programs, and partnerships – to eliminate the challenges impeding the success of K-12 education in New Orleans and beyond. It also serves as a clearinghouse for K-12 public schools in New Orleans to directly access the myriad experts and resources available at Tulane University. Our work is in the following key areas:



Applied Research



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Applied Research at the Cowen Institute

The Cowen Institute's Applied Research staff serves as an objective voice to education leaders, policymakers, the media, and the public about what is taking place in public education in New Orleans – particularly in the areas of accountability, operations, and governance – by disseminating relevant data and research. We draft briefings and conduct forums, meetings, and seminars that inform educators, administrators, media, and the general community on issues impacting public education in New Orleans.

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This report was made possible through the generous support of the Osa Foundation and an anonymous donor.

June 2013

Since 2007, the Cowen Institute at Tulane University has dependably chronicled the dramatic transformation of our city's schools. This report, *The State of Public Education in New Orleans*, provides evidence that New Orleans remains intent on realizing its unprecedented opportunity to rebuild its public schools.

Overall the numbers are positive. New Orleans' test score data continues an encouraging upward trend. Academic gains are evident on all measures, and the district is cited as the most improved in the state since 2005.

Yet the problems here are widely acknowledged – some are the trade-offs of decentralization. And it is true that broad community support for this reform is still elusive. Electing new board members at Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) caused some to have hope, but political divisiveness has limited the group's credibility to lead the city's schools. Additionally, community leaders argue that access to the best schools is not yet fairly distributed across the city; this is a problem. However, both OPSB and the state's Recovery School District are authorizing new schools to increase quality options for families.

The toughest continuing question is what will be the governing body of public schools in New Orleans. Nearly all the schools are autonomous decision-makers on key matters related to educating the young people who choose their schools, and such autonomy is likely to stay in place as it is regarded as the main reason for the solid academic results reported herein. School networks, or CMOs, and an effective set of nonprofits have assumed many district roles. However, it is not clear what can be created at the center to engage community fairly and appropriately while respecting this new model and its successes.

Nevertheless a degree of central authority is present in two areas. Schools share a common expulsion policy and hearing office to review all expulsion decisions – delimiting the actions of some schools that push out low-scoring or “problem” students. And a centralized enrollment system, OneApp, using a sophisticated algorithmic matching system, is bringing more fairness and satisfaction to parental choice. We believe this kind of central control is needed and could be the first steps in knitting together a city-wide governance model. While this issue is not yet ripe for a comprehensive solution, its day is coming.

We hope you find value in this reference guide on the system's basics. For many this volume is a necessity to navigate the complicated public education landscape in New Orleans. As an unbiased broker of information on this reform, the Cowen Institute will conduct deeper studies this year, working with the newly created New Orleans Education Research Alliance, to deliver our findings into your hands, and to improve decision-making in this reform so that over time many more students have access to a quality public education leading to successful life outcomes. Please let us know how we are doing.

Sincerely,



John Ayers
Executive Director



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The State of Public Education in New Orleans

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System Overview



The 2012-13 school year marks the seventh full school year since the dramatic transformation of the public school system in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent flooding.

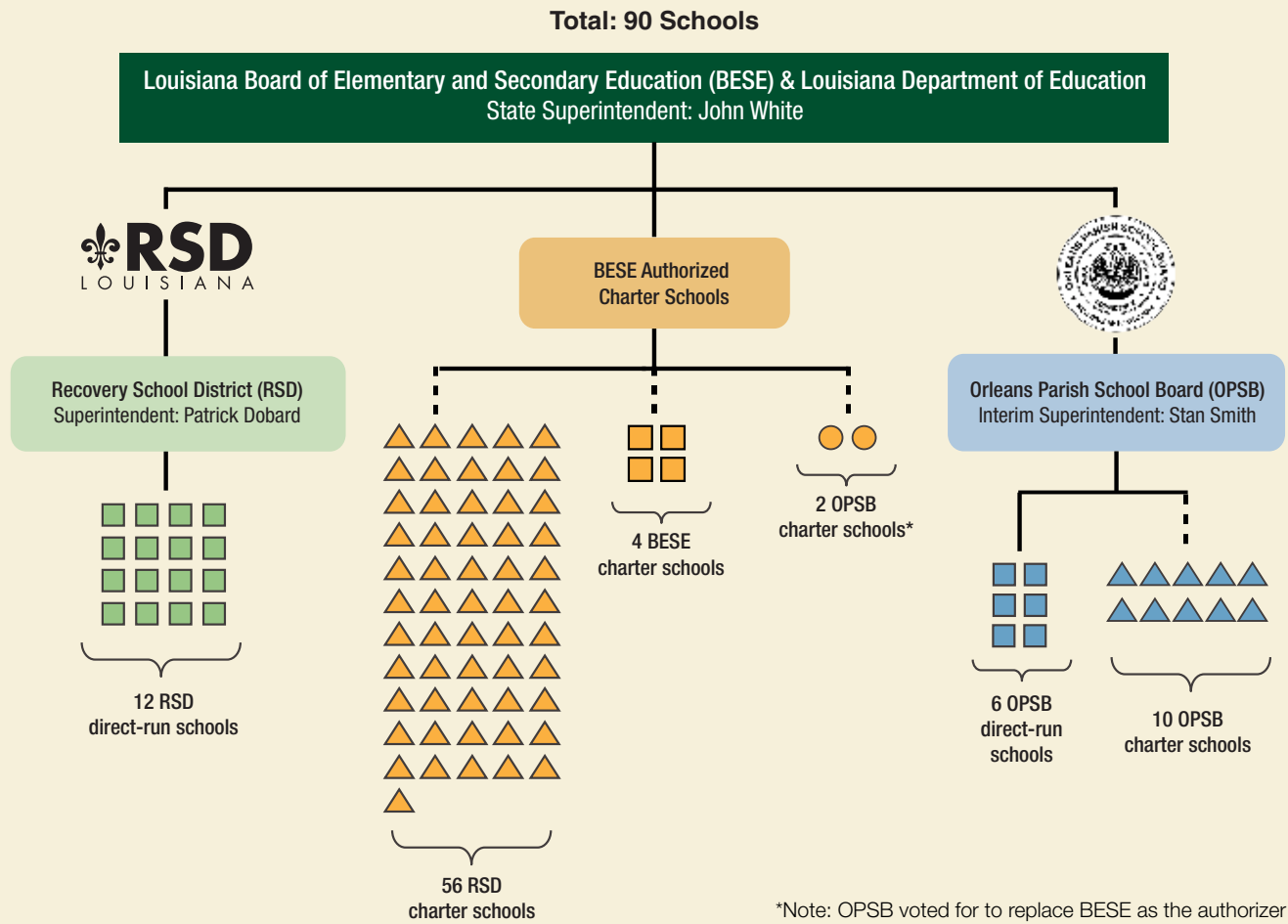
Though policies and structures continually evolve, the overarching reform mechanisms of school autonomy, parental choice, and accountability delineate the unique public education model in New Orleans. Reflecting on the past school year, the *2013 State of Public Education in New Orleans* report provides information about the system of schools based on available quantitative data, media coverage, and conversations with school and district leaders. The report also offers important examples of successes as well as key challenges that still face public education in New Orleans.

System Overview

Following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) placed 114 public schools in New Orleans under the oversight of the state-run Recovery School District (RSD), while the local Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) retained fewer than 20 schools that reported relatively high performance before the storm.¹ As schools reopened, charter schools began to dominate the portfolio of schools operated by both the OPSB and RSD.

The majority charter school district in New Orleans is considered a portfolio district. In a portfolio district, the government authority oversees a system of independent schools that operate under performance contracts.² Schools decide whom to hire, how to allocate their budgets, and what services to buy. The portfolio district acts as a performance manager seeking better school operators and closing poor-performing schools. Parents choose among the portfolio of schools, and schools are funded based on enrollment. As a portfolio district, the system of schools in New Orleans is defined by parental choice, school-level autonomy, and an aggressive and firm performance-based accountability system in which low-performing schools are routinely closed or chartered.

Figure 1a: Public School Governance in New Orleans, 2012-13 School Year



*Note: OPSB voted for to replace BESE as the authorizer of these two schools and will assume governance in 2013-14.

School Governance

Public schools in New Orleans are operated by RSD, OPSB, or one of 42 different non-profit charter organizations. Charter schools are authorized by either the local school board, OPSB (“OPSB charter schools”), or the state school board, BESE. BESE authorizes three types of charter schools: “BESE charter schools,” which operate under BESE and enroll students from across the state; “RSD charter schools,” which operate under RSD and replace failing schools; and a unique type of charter school in which the charter is between the local school board and BESE, and the local board hires a nonprofit operator to manage the school (also referred to as “OPSB charter schools”). In the 2012-13 school year, RSD oversaw three-quarters of the schools and enrolled 70 percent of all public school students in New Orleans.

The complex and decentralized nature of public education creates barriers to the system equitably serving all students, but, in 2012-13, New Orleans education leaders implemented new solutions to eliminate barriers by unifying key aspects of the system. With multiple governing bodies, the different organizations within the governance structure do not always communicate, coordinate, or align their efforts. Rules, policies, and procedures vary across the system, and no single entity is responsible for ensuring students receive fair treatment across these changing rules and directives. Additionally, the complex system can be difficult for parents and students to navigate.

Some common sense policy and practice solutions put in place in the 2012-13 school year seek to address this system's unique challenges. This year, for the first time since 2005, most public schools in New Orleans used the same enrollment system and expulsion policies and procedures. In the spring of 2012, RSD launched a centralized enrollment system, OneApp. In its first year, only RSD schools (charter and direct-run) participated in OneApp, but RSD, OPSB, and BESE worked together during the 2012-13 school year to require more schools to join the centralized system.³ As OneApp expands, continued cooperation among the districts and charter school operators will be critical to ensuring the application meets the needs of families and schools.

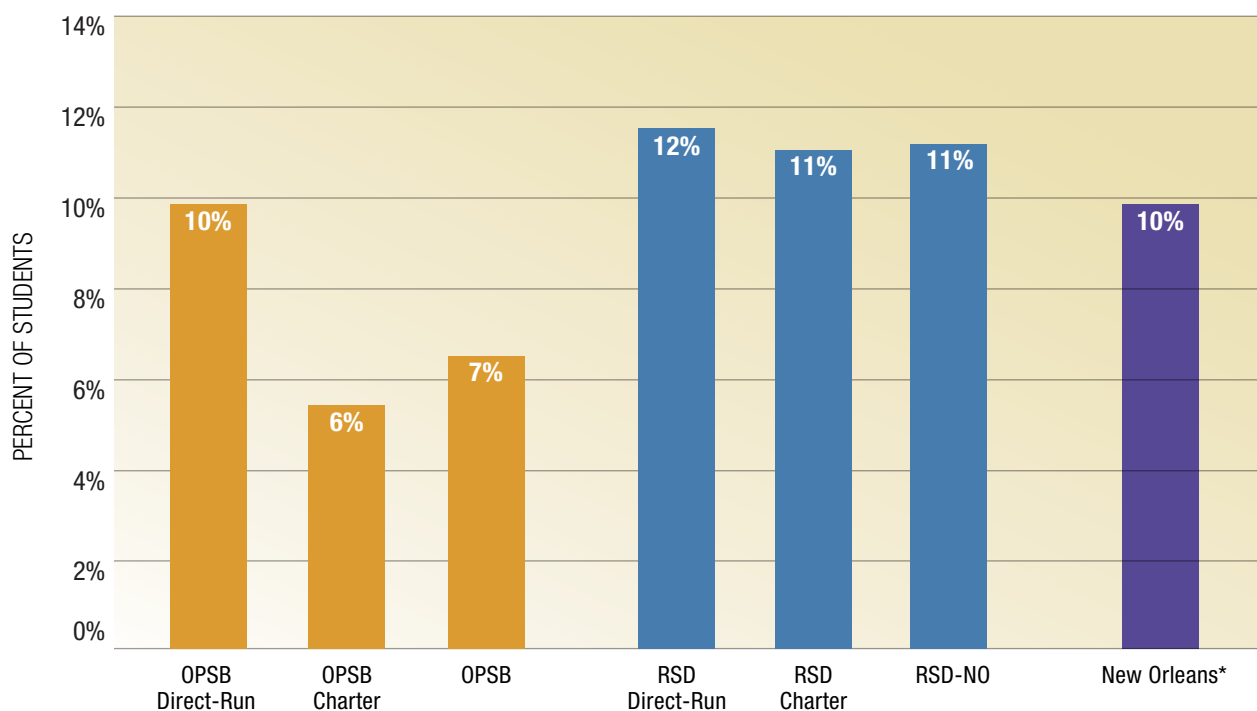
Additionally, beginning this school year, all RSD and OPSB schools—nearly every public school in the city—used the same list of expellable infractions and worked within the rules issued by a centralized expulsion hearing office, which is hosted by RSD.⁴ These two new processes reduce inconsistencies and inequities among public schools in New Orleans.

Ensuring academic, financial, and legal accountability is both critical and difficult in New Orleans' decentralized system of schools. In an effort to address this issue,

BESE approved a Charter School Performance Compact in January 2013 that codifies management and financial requirements for state-authorized charters, including three-quarters of the schools in New Orleans. The goal of the Compact is to provide charter school operators with clearer expectations for reporting, evaluation, and renewal procedures. The Compact tracks indicators such as transfer rates, special education processes, compliance with the state's open meetings law, and financial health, and it provides for the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) to intervene in schools if needed.⁵ The results will be posted annually on the LDOE website. A report by the Louisiana legislative auditor's office released in May 2013 but assessing the previous year highlights the need for additional oversight measures such as those included in the Compact. The auditor's report found that LDOE adequately monitored schools' financial health but needed additional oversight to verify schools' dropout, attendance, and graduation numbers.⁶

Even as new solutions are put in place, the decentralized system of schools in New Orleans poses ongoing challenges. With each charter operator responsible for purchasing services such as food, transportation, and special education, the lack of economies of scale can keep costs high. However, the

Figure 2: Percentage of Students with Disabilities by School Type, 2012-13



*Does not include BESE charters.

Source: Dreilinger, Danielle (2013, May 17), "Special education enrollment numbers show Orleans Parish School Board charters lagging," *Times-Picayune*.

“If we’re going to be cohesive as a system, we need to work together. Right now, we’re ships in the night. We don’t work together.”

– OPSB School Leader

“I know I do not want to be sent back to OPSB as it currently stands.”

– RSD School Leader

decentralization organizational structure may offset these costs with better decision making. Additionally, no single entity is responsible for ensuring students with special education needs are served, making it difficult to track students across schools. The complex system also places a unique burden on parents—particularly those with children with disabilities—as they try to navigate the complex system to find the best program for their child’s specific needs.⁷ Notably, the percentage of students with disabilities varies widely across the school system with the relatively high-performing OPSB schools serving a disproportionately low number of students with disabilities (see Figure 2).

A long-term, unified governance plan continues to be elusive. RSD schools can opt to transfer to OPSB if they have been open at least five years and meet a performance standard, according to a BESE policy approved in 2010.⁸ Thirteen RSD charter schools met the eligibility requirements to transfer governing bodies this year, but none chose to do so.⁹ Despite protests from the faculty and staff at two eligible schools, the charter boards of all 13 eligible schools voted to remain in RSD.¹⁰

One reason cited by charter organizations choosing not to transfer to OPSB is that doing so would cause charter schools to lose their status as a Local Education Agency (LEA).¹¹ As an LEA, charter schools under RSD receive federal grant funds directly; under OPSB, federal grant funds filter through the district, which takes a percentage. H.B. 661, approved by the Louisiana Legislature during the 2013 Regular Session and signed into law by Governor Jindal, allows RSD charter schools to transfer to OPSB while retaining their LEA status.¹²

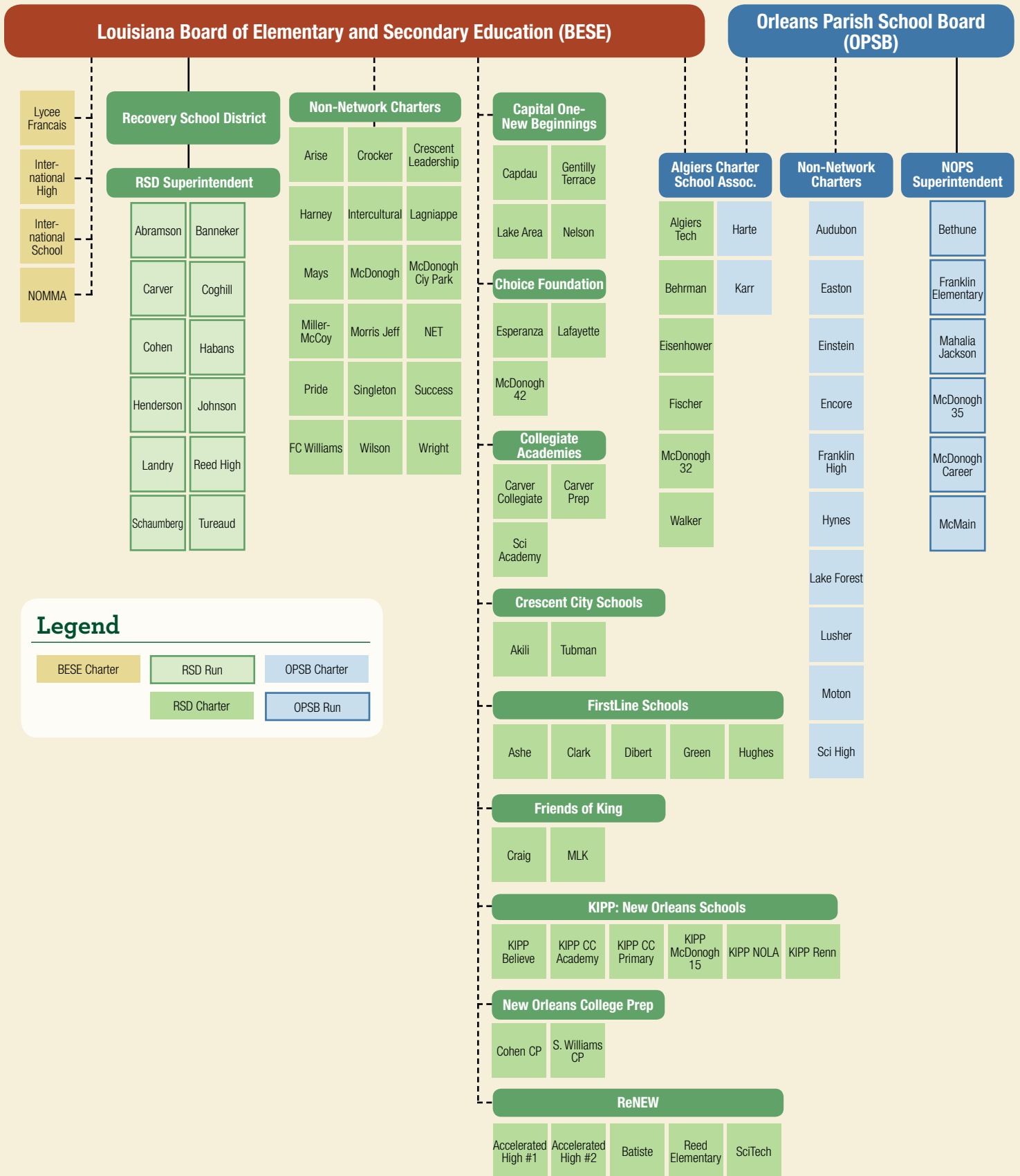
In addition, a March 2013 survey commissioned by the Cowen Institute found that two-thirds of Orleans Parish voters polled think OPSB should change its practices.¹⁴ The poll revealed an absence of urgency by the electorate

to have RSD schools transfer to OPSB before the board is ready to accept and support them.¹⁵

OPSB elections in November 2012 replaced three of the seven board members, but the shift in board makeup has not yet resulted in significant changes in the board’s approach to governance. In addition to persuading RSD schools to transfer to OPSB governance, the new board is tasked with hiring a permanent superintendent to replace Interim Superintendent Stan Smith, who has been in office since May 2012. Since the new board took office in January 2013, it has argued over Smith’s contract as well as the contract of the deputy superintendent over charter schools, and a time-sensitive vote on tax credits.¹⁶ These public displays of divisiveness undermine the board’s credibility as a stable, responsible governing body.



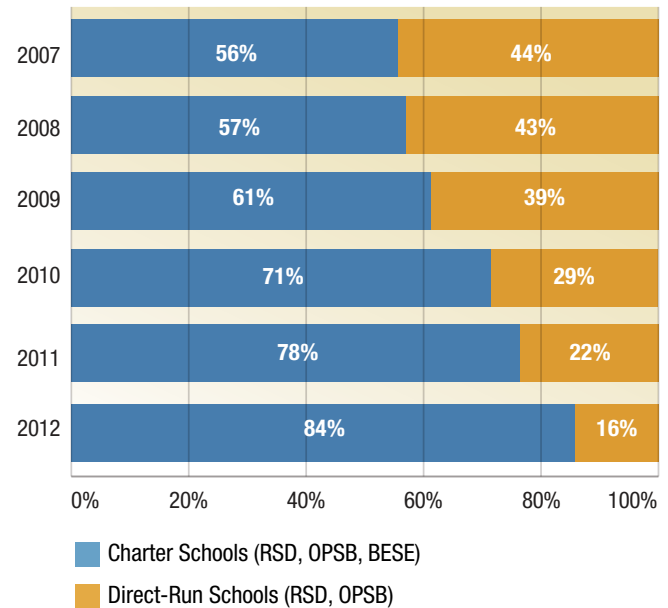
Figure 1b: Public Schools in New Orleans, 2012-13



Schools and Operators

In the 2012-13 school year, 90 public schools in New Orleans enrolled nearly 43,000 students. The majority of public school students, 84 percent, attended charter schools, a proportion that has grown each year since Hurricane Katrina (see Figure 3). New Orleans leads the nation in the percentage of public school students enrolled in charter schools (see Figure 4), though charter schools continue to gain market share in cities across the country. Seven school districts nationwide had at least 30 percent of their public school students enrolled in public charter schools in 2011-12.¹⁷

Figure 3: Percentage of Students Enrolled in Charter and Direct-Run Public Schools, 2007-2012



Source: Louisiana Department of Education, *Multiple Statistics By Site For Elementary/ Secondary School Students - October 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, & 2012.*

Publicly-Funded Private School Scholarships (Vouchers) in New Orleans

In addition to public school options, low- and moderate-income families in New Orleans can apply to participate in a publicly-funded private school scholarship (voucher) program. Launched in 2008 in New Orleans, the Louisiana Scholarship Program, formally known as the Student Scholarships for Education Excellence Program, was expanded statewide in 2012. To be eligible for a voucher, students must have a family income of less than 250 percent of the federal poverty line (approximately \$57,600 for a family of four in 2012) and must be entering kindergarten or be enrolled in a low-performing public school with a C, D, or F grade.¹⁸

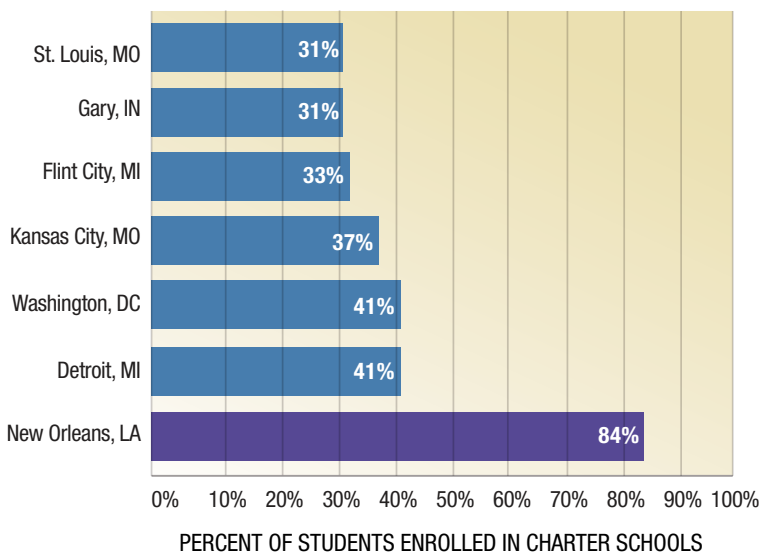
In 2012-13, 25 private schools in New Orleans and 12 in nearby Jefferson Parish participated in the program.¹⁹ As of October 2012, 2,400 students from New Orleans received vouchers to enroll in participating nonpublic schools.²⁰ Among these students, just 58 percent qualified for free or reduced-price lunch, which requires an annual household income less than 130 percent of the federal poverty line.²¹

Though the pilot program in New Orleans received funding through an annual legislative appropriation, the legislation creating the statewide program provided for funding through the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP).

However, in May 2013, the Louisiana Supreme Court ruled 6-1 that the voucher program's funding method was unconstitutional because MFP funds are designated for public education.²² In order to fund the program for the 2013-14 school year, the Louisiana Legislature approved a budget appropriation that will allow approximately 8,500 Louisiana students to participate.²³

Annual standardized test results for the 2012-13 school year showed overall poor performance among Orleans Parish students in the voucher program. Seven private schools in New Orleans and nearby Jefferson Parish will no longer be allowed to accept new voucher students because less than one-quarter of their students performed at grade-level for the third year in a row.²⁴ However, the results of a survey conducted by the Black Alliance for Educational Options and the Louisiana Federation for Children showed that 94 percent of parents in the voucher program were very satisfied with their child's academic progress.²⁵

Figure 4: School Districts with the Highest Concentrations of Students Enrolled in Charter Schools, 2012



Source: Louisiana Department of Education, *Multiple Statistics By Site For Elementary/Secondary School Students – October 2012; (2012, November)*, “A Growing Movement: America’s Largest Charter School Communities,” *National Association of Public Charter Schools*.

Charter school networks, which operate two or more charter schools, play an increasingly large role in the public school landscape in New Orleans.

Of the 42 charter organizations operating schools in New Orleans, 10 operated two or more schools. Overall, 49 percent of public school students attended a school that was part of a charter network in 2012-13, up from 35 percent in 2011-12. In 2011-12, 29 of 88 public schools (33 percent) were operated by a charter network; in 2012-13, 40 of 90 public schools (44 percent) were operated by a network (see Table 1).

Charter networks vary in size, ranging from two to eight schools in 2012-13, and generally function as miniature school districts with a central office providing leadership and administrative services. KIPP New Orleans is part of a larger, national network that oversees schools across the country, while the other nine networks were founded locally. The networks are growing each year as existing charter operators take over low-performing charter schools slated to close. Two charter networks expanded in the 2012-13 school year and four operators grew to become networks.

Table 1: School Enrollment by Charter Network

Charter Network	2011		2012	
	# of Schools	% of Total Enrollment	# of Schools	% of Total Enrollment
Algiers Charter School Association (ACSA)	8	13%	8	12%
Choice Foundation	2	3%	3	4%
Collegiate Academies	--	--	3	1%
Crescent City Schools	--	--	2	2%
FirstLine Schools, Inc.	4	4%	5	6%
Friends of King	--	--	2	3%
Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) N.O.	6	6%	6	8%
New Beginnings School Foundation	4	4%	4	5%
New Orleans College Preparatory Academies	--	--	2	2%
ReNEW-Reinventing Education, Inc.	5	5%	5	6%
Non-Networked Charter Schools	37	39%	32	36%
Direct-Run Schools (RSD & OPSB)	22	25%	18	16%
Total	88	100%	90	100%

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, *Multiple Statistics By Site For Elementary/Secondary School Students - October 2011 & 2012*.

The school and school operator landscape in New Orleans is continually evolving as RSD closes and transforms low-performing schools and OPSB opens new charter schools.

OPSB received two charter applications in 2012 and approved one to open in 2013-14.²⁶ Additionally, two new charter schools approved by OPSB in 2011 will open in the 2013-14 school year.²⁷ OPSB also voted for Alice Harte Elementary and Edna Karr High, both of which are currently authorized by BESE through a contract with OPSB, to replace BESE with OPSB as their authorizer.²⁸ Five groups filed letters of intent to open OPSB charter schools in the 2014-15 school year.²⁹

RSD will see significant changes in its portfolio of schools in the 2013-14 school year, continuing the trend from previous years. In 2012, BESE approved four charter operators that already run schools in New Orleans—ReNEW Schools, Crescent City Schools, New Orleans College Prep, and ARISE Academy—to take over low-performing schools slated to close.³⁰ These charter operators will take over either a low-performing RSD direct-run school or an

RSD charter school whose charter was not renewed. BESE also approved a new community-based charter organization, the Better Choice Foundation, to take over the low-performing RSD direct-run school Mary D. Coghill Elementary; the charter organization plans to keep the principal in place.³¹ Funding to expand high-performing charter operators in New Orleans is provided through a \$28 million federal Investing in Innovation (i3) grant and a \$25 million grant from the Laura and John Arnold Foundation.³²

In addition to approving new charter schools, BESE determines whether charter schools remain open. BESE assesses RSD charter schools in their fourth and fifth years, and schools with an F letter grade or without evidence of substantial improvement in student achievement may be shut down.³³ In December 2012, BESE voted to revoke the charters of four RSD charter schools based on their poor academic performance.³⁴ Eleven charter schools in New Orleans have been closed since 2005, either voluntarily or by BESE, and two have changed charter board governance.

Based on BESE's decisions around charter authorizations, renewals, and closures, RSD announced in late December 2012 that the following school transformations will take place beginning in the 2013-14 school year:

- 3 low-performing RSD charter schools will be taken over by different charter operators;
- 3 low-performing RSD direct-run schools will be taken over by charter operators;
- 1 low-performing RSD direct-run school will merge with an existing RSD charter school; and,
- 1 RSD charter school and 3 RSD direct-run schools will close altogether, with students receiving priority admissions to at least one other school.³

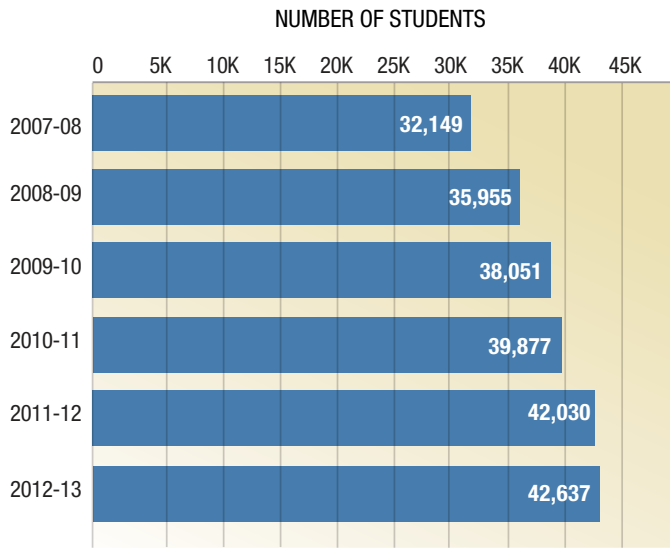
Though RSD has improved transparency and communication around school closures and transformations from previous years, such decisions remain contentious. This year, administrators and teachers from Benjamin E. Mays Preparatory School petitioned BESE to keep the school open, arguing that the school's failing test scores did not capture the full story.³⁶ BESE disagreed and endorsed RSD's recommendation to close the school. The decision to merge the failing RSD direct-run high school L.B. Landry with the relatively high-performing charter high school O. Perry Walker also garnered frustration.

The Landry community argued for their school to remain independent.³⁷ Advocates of the portfolio model argue closing low-performing schools is central to the success of New Orleans school reform, and RSD continues to rely on such closures and transformations to intervene in its lowest scoring schools.

Changes to the charter authorization process will take effect beginning in 2013. Since 2005, both BESE and OPSB have relied on independent evaluations by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) to inform their charter school authorization decisions. However, in 2012 the state issued a Request For Proposals (RFP) to identify a new charter school evaluation organization. Beginning in 2013, the educational consulting group SchoolWorks will replace NACSA as the independent charter evaluator for BESE.³⁸ Under SchoolWorks, the RSD charter application process timeline will be moved forward; instead of December, applications will now be reviewed by August.³⁹ Applicants will also have more opportunities to make revisions.⁴⁰ Additionally, experienced and new charter operator applications will be reviewed separately.⁴¹

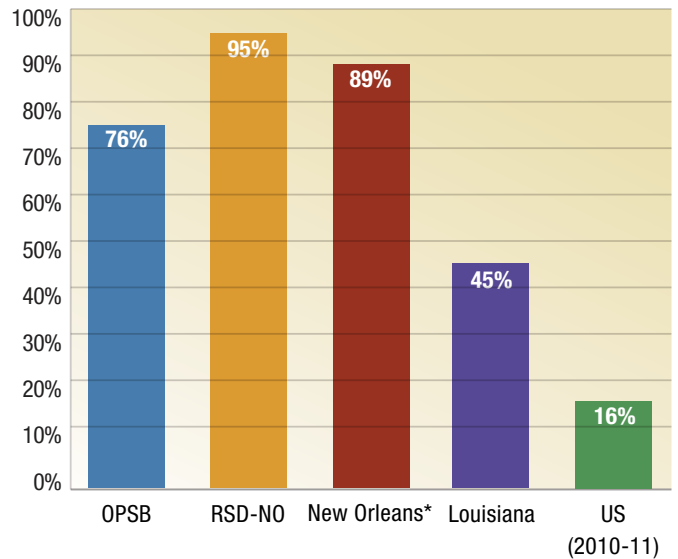
BESE received applications from eight charter operators to open RSD charter schools in New Orleans; four of these are national operators new to Louisiana (Celerity, Green Dot, VSchoolz, and Yes Prep), while the other four currently operate schools in New Orleans (Collegiate Academies, FirstLine, Friends of King, and KIPP).⁴² Current New Orleans charter operators Collegiate, KIPP, and Friends of King also applied to expand to other parishes in Louisiana.⁴³

Figure 5: New Orleans Public School Enrollment, 2007-08 to 2012-13



Source: Louisiana Department of Education, Multiple Statistics By Site For Elementary/Secondary School Students – October 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, & 2012.

Figure 6: Percentage of African American Students in Public Schools, 2012-13



*Does not include BESE charters.

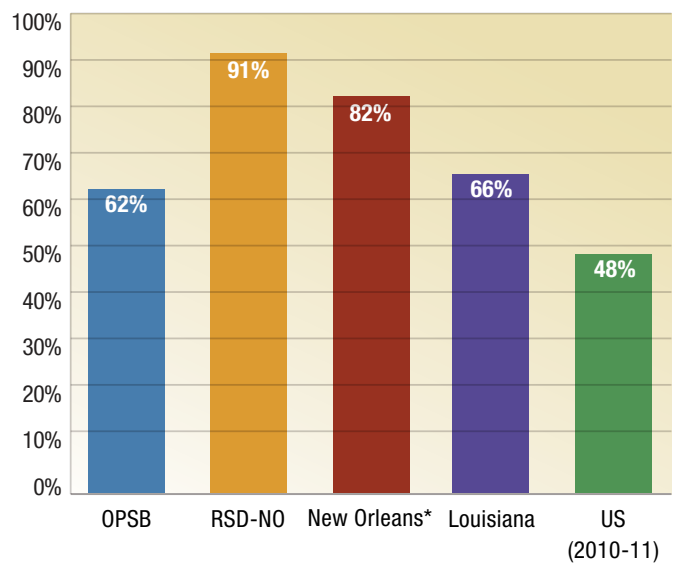
Source: B. Landry, personal communication, May 31, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), “State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education,” 2010–11, Version 1a.

Student Enrollment and Demographics

Though public school enrollment continued to grow in 2012-13, enrollment grew by just 1.4 percent from the previous school year, slowing from 5 percent growth the prior year, suggesting enrollment may be stabilizing. Public schools in New Orleans enrolled a total of 42,637 students in October 2012, up just slightly from 42,030 in October 2011. Since 2007, public school enrollment in New Orleans has grown nearly 25 percent (see Figure 5), compared to just 4 percent in nearby Jefferson Parish. However, total public school enrollment in New Orleans is just two-thirds what it was in the year just prior to Hurricane Katrina (66,372 in 2004). A large proportion (25 percent) of school-age children in New Orleans attend private schools.⁴⁴

Across all RSD and OPSB schools in New Orleans in 2012-13, 82 percent of students received free or reduced-price lunch and 89 percent were African American (see Figures 6 and 7).⁴⁵ These percentages suggest a slight change from previous years; in 2007-08, 78 percent of students received free or reduced-price lunch and 88 percent were African American. As illustrated in Figure 7, New Orleans’ public schools enroll a more disadvantaged student population than the state and nation.

Figure 7: Percentage of Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Students in Public Schools, 2012-13



*Does not include BESE charters.

Source: B. Landry, personal communication, May 31, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), “Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey,” 2010–11, provisional version 2a.



Serving a socioeconomically disadvantaged student population adds a number of strains on public schools in New Orleans. One major ongoing challenge is serving students with mental health needs. According to a study conducted by the Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies in 2011, New Orleans middle-school students cite symptoms of depression and post-traumatic stress at much higher rates than typical teenagers.⁴⁶ The students also had elevated rates of witnessing violence and feeling concerned about their safety, with more than 29 percent reporting that they had seen assaults and almost 14 percent saying they had witnessed murders.⁴⁷ Compounding these challenges is the lack of adolescent mental health services in New Orleans following the 2009 closure of the New Orleans Adolescent Hospital (NOAH).⁴⁸ New Orleans has an insufficient number of psychiatric hospital beds and lacks intensive, short-term, in-patient treatment for adolescents.⁴⁹ Schools feel the effects of these issues intimately and often lack the capacity to serve students in need of psychiatric care.

“What’s happened at the state level in terms of lower funding for services, at the end of the day it plays out. It has a direct impact on educators and makes it harder for people to do their job.”

- RSD School Leader

Operations and Administration



In the years immediately following Hurricane Katrina, schools and the school districts in New Orleans focused much of their energy on managing operational and administrative issues, particularly around facilities and funding, as the city worked to rebuild the public school infrastructure.⁵⁰ Each year since the storm has brought increased operational stability, though the opening and closing of schools creates some administrative challenges. With fewer uncertainties, however, school and district leaders can turn their attention to issues of long-term sustainability, equity, and improving student learning.

School Facilities

The School Facilities Master Plan for Orleans Parish, adopted in late 2008, serves as the city's blueprint for renovating and rebuilding school facilities through 2016. In August 2010, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) awarded RSD and OPSB a final settlement of \$1.8 billion, a single lump-sum settlement for hurricane-damaged public schools.⁵¹ In response to concerns expressed by the community regarding \$420 million in unfunded projects under the Master Plan, OPSB and BESE approved a revised Master Plan in October 2011.⁵² The revised plan is intended to build, refurbish, or renovate public school facilities without requiring additional local funding. The revisions replaced previously unfunded renovations and new construction projects with less expensive refurbishment projects and smaller school sizes. It also identified additional cost savings in the plan and cited additional revenue opportunities, including Louisiana state historic tax credits and federal New Market Tax Credits (NMTCs).⁵³

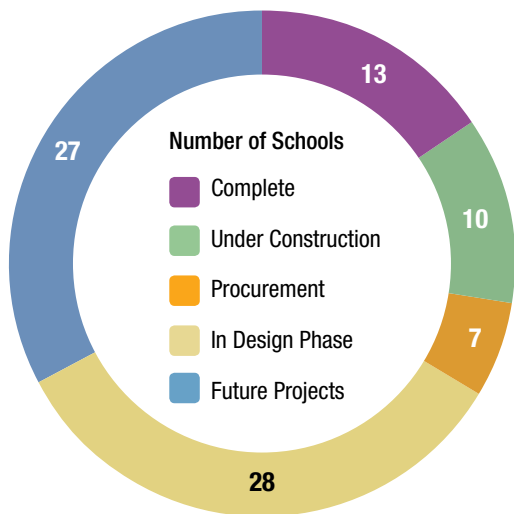


“We’re in an old building and just maintenance is killing us.”

– OPSB School Leader

Fifteen percent of school rebuilding or rehabilitation projects included in Phases 1 and 2 of the Master Plan are complete, with another 12 percent under construction, 8 percent in procurement, 33 percent in the design phase, and 32 percent in planning.⁵⁴ Additional capital projects, including minor stabilizations, demolitions, and securing vacant buildings, are in progress. As of March 2013, RSD had \$274 million in open contracts and OPSB had \$177 million.⁵⁵ The majority of capital projects under the Master Plan fall under Phase 1 and 2, though a small number of projects were completed prior to these phases. Total expected costs for the Master Plan are \$1.84 billion with Phases 1 and 2 comprising \$1.52 billion.⁵⁶

Figure 8: Master Plan Phase 1 and 2 Current Status

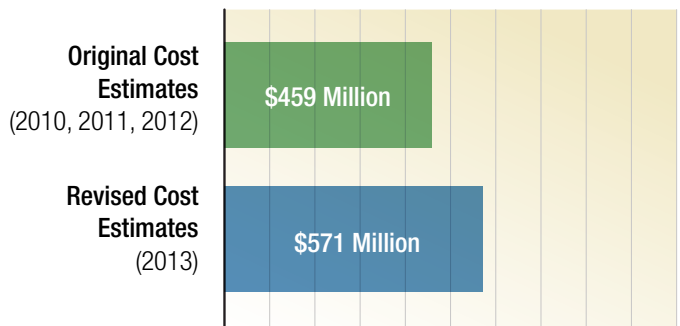


Source: Recovery School District and Orleans Parish School Board (2013, March), “Program Update: OPSB & RSD Phase I Projects” and “Program Update: OPSB & RSD Phase II Projects.”

Managing spending and staying on budget will continue to be a challenge as the Master Plan projects move forward. It is common for the budgets of construction projects, especially renovation projects, to increase throughout the life cycle of the project, and so some variance between original and revised cost estimates is to be expected. Nonetheless, a large variance in project costs could have a major impact on the districts’ ability to complete the entire plan with currently available funds. As illustrated in Figure 9, a large gap exists between original cost estimates and actual spending. For Phase 1 projects under the Master Plan that were already

complete or in construction as of March 2013, revised cost estimates totaled \$111 million (24 percent) more than the original cost estimates for those projects.⁵⁷ Going forward, staying on budget will be critical to completing the Master Plan with the available funds.

Figure 9: Master Plan Original vs. Revised Cost Estimates, Phase 1 Projects



Source: Recovery School District of Louisiana and Orleans Parish School Board (2010, 2011, and 2012), School Facilities Master Plan Quarterly Reports.

In an effort to access additional funding for facilities construction, in 2012-13 RSD and OPSB worked together in the pursuit of New Market Tax Credits (NMTCs). NMTC is a tax credit program established by the U.S. Congress in 2000 to spur new or increased investments into real estate projects located in low-income communities.⁵⁸ RSD and OPSB expect NMTCs to result in as much as \$40 million in additional funding for the Master Plan.⁵⁹ Although RSD manages the majority of Master Plan projects that qualify for the NMTC program, OPSB is the taxing and bonding authority and has funds available that can be used for NMTC transactions. In February 2013, OPSB agreed to transfer \$24 million in order to pursue NMTCs for RSD’s Phillis Wheatley Elementary school facility.⁶⁰ To make the transaction, RSD and OPSB signed a leveraged financing cooperative endeavor agreement (CEA), a lease, and a grant funding agreement.⁶¹ RSD and OPSB will need to continue to cooperate on Master Plan projects in order to access additional funding and maximize use of existing funds.

RSD and OPSB also committed in 2012 to increase the participation of small local contractors owned by women and minorities through Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) programs. RSD, which will bid out nearly \$1 billion in additional contracts, committed to requiring that contractors give 25 percent of work to a DBE.⁶² OPSB, which has about \$100 million in

contracts to bid, set its goal at 35 percent, the same percentage as the city government.⁶³ DBE programs nationally and in New Orleans have long dealt with legal and logistical complications, and both RSD and OPSB struggled to identify appropriate language to ensure an effective policy while preventing potential lawsuits.⁶⁴

With nearly \$2 billion being spent on school facilities, careful oversight and monitoring are needed to ensure efficiency and transparency in school construction, maintenance, and renovation. OPSB and BESE passed resolutions in December 2008 and January 2009, respectively, to create the Master Plan Oversight Committee, tasked with ensuring the Master Plan is being implemented on time and on budget by reviewing the annual capital projects budget, monitoring progress, and considering necessary changes to the plan.⁶⁵ The committee met ten times between November 2009 and September 2011; however, the majority of its members left or resigned by December 2011.⁶⁶ OPSB and BESE approved new members in October 2012 and February 2013, and the new committee held its first meeting in nearly two years in May 2013.⁶⁷

Additionally, in order to protect facilities construction and rebuilding projects from fraud, RSD contracted with the City of New Orleans Office of Inspector General (OIG) to monitor RSD construction projects in New Orleans. The \$1.2 million three-year contract began in June 2012 and was paid with FEMA settlement funds.⁶⁸ The agreement provided for the OIG to screen contractors for previous financial trouble, fraud, or failure to complete projects.⁶⁹ In June 2013, the OIG and RSD ended their contract, citing a duplication of services. RSD has fraud oversight contracts with the Louisiana Legislative Auditors and Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness.

“The money’s not adequate. At the end of the day, we’re trying to do work that nationally people are doing on twice the money.”

– RSD School Leader

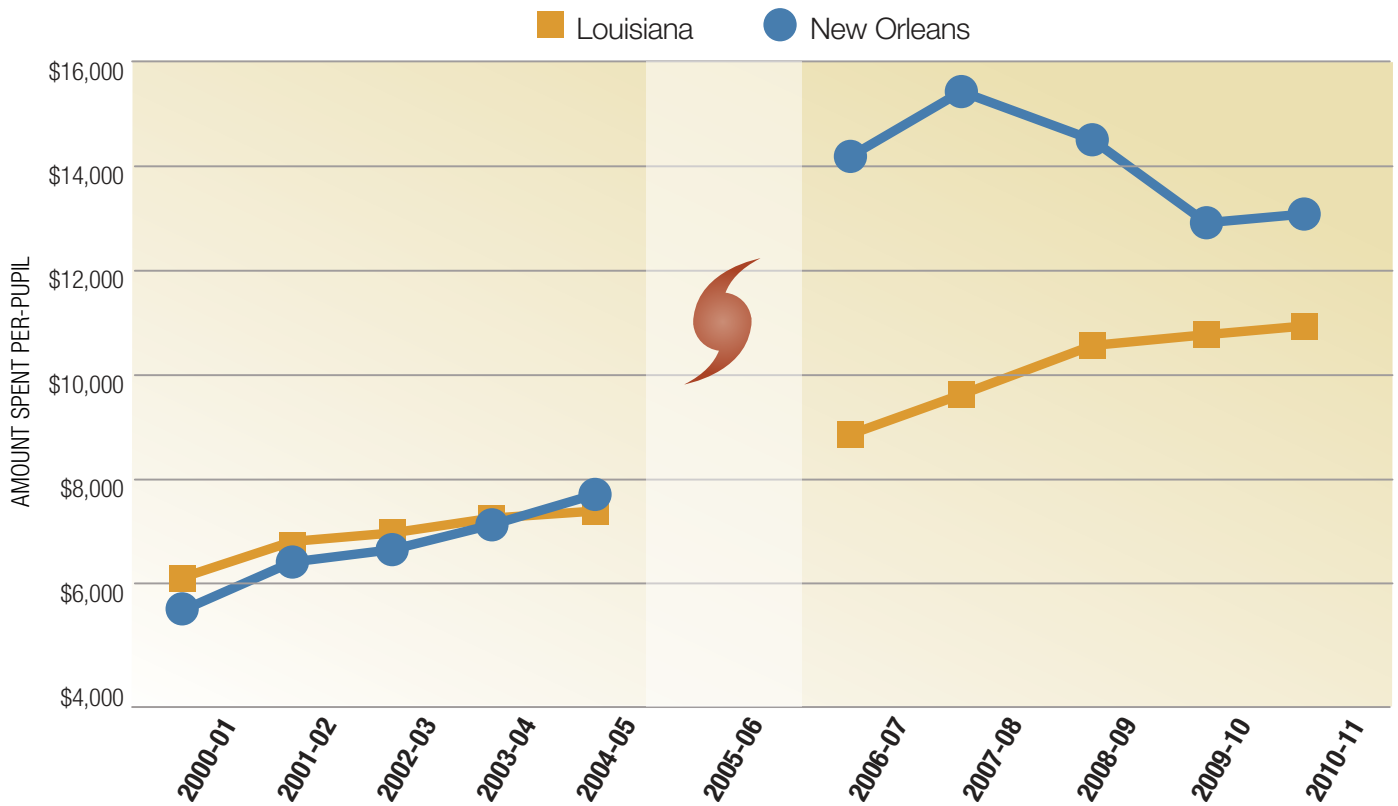
School Finances

Public school expenditures in New Orleans have become more in line with the state average each year since Hurricane Katrina, though New Orleans schools continue to outspend the state on a per pupil basis. One-time funds related to hurricane recovery are dwindling, resulting in decreased spending across the school system. As illustrated in Figure 10, average spending at public schools in New Orleans was \$13,203 per pupil in the 2010-11 school year (the most recent year of data available), about 22 percent higher than the state average of \$10,825. This represents a slight increase from New Orleans' average per pupil spending in 2009-10 (\$13,040), though the gap between New Orleans and the state remained about the same (21 percent). In general, spending has declined significantly from the years just following Hurricane Katrina. In 2008-09, New Orleans public schools' average per pupil expenditures were 34 percent higher than the state, and in 2007-08 New Orleans' school expenditures were 58 percent higher than the state. Both state and local public school expenditures are slightly higher than the national average, which was \$10,560 per pupil in 2010-11.⁷⁰

Revisions to the state's school funding formula, the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP), approved by the Louisiana Legislature in 2012, resulted in some confusion about the amount of money schools would receive in state and local funding for the 2012-13 school year. In May 2013, the Louisiana Supreme Court nullified the 2012-13 MFP formula, saying the Legislature did not follow proper procedure in approving the formula, which required the state to revert to the previous year's budget.⁷¹

The 2012 changes to the MFP included the addition of programs previously funded by other means, such as private school scholarships (vouchers) and BESE charter schools, and resulted in reduced per pupil funding for public schools.⁷² BESE proposed substantial changes to the MFP formula for 2013-14 as well, but the Louisiana Senate Committee on Education rejected the proposed formula, meaning the state will revert to the 2011-12 formula. However, the Louisiana Legislature approved a state budget for 2013-14 that includes an additional \$34 million for local school districts to spend as needed and another \$34 million in raises for certified public school teachers.⁷³

Figure 10: Per Pupil School Expenditures in New Orleans and Louisiana, 2001-2011

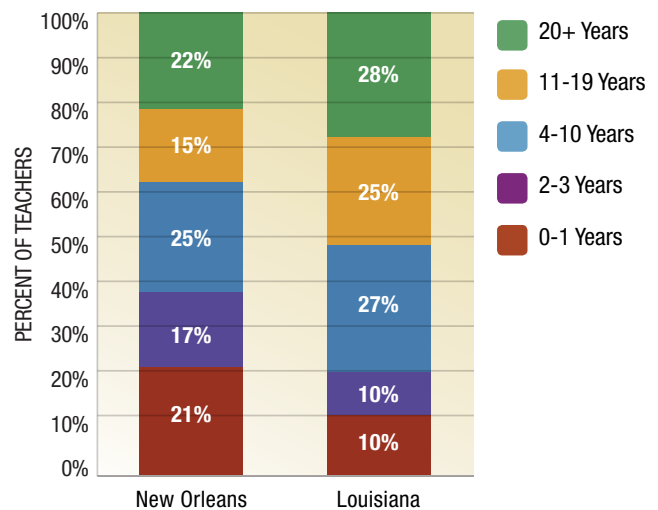


Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010

Human Capital

New Orleans' school leaders have flexibility in personnel decision-making, which leads to variation in teacher experience, salaries and benefits, and recruitment and retention strategies. Available data on the human capital landscape in New Orleans, however, are limited and not up-to-date. Teacher experience, particularly in charter schools, is a key issue in the national dialogue around urban education reform. Many schools in New Orleans rely on new teachers recruited through programs like Teach For America and the New Teacher Project's teachNOLA. As seen in Figure 11, according to the most recent year of data available, public schools in New Orleans employed twice the proportion of new teachers in their first year than the state. On average, teachers at public schools in New Orleans had 16.2 years of experience; average years of experience ranged from 0.5 at one RSD charter school to 28.5 at an OPSB charter school.⁷⁴

Figure 11: Teacher Years of Experience, 2010-11



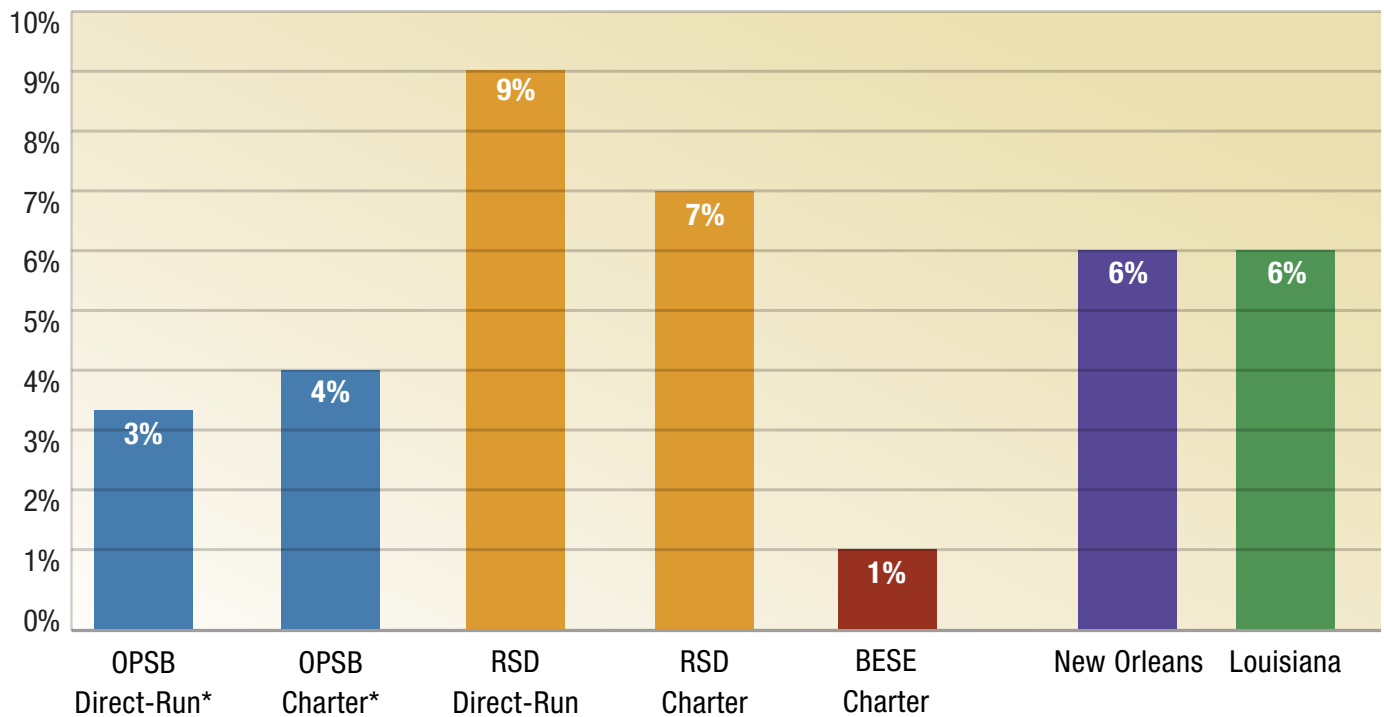
Source: Louisiana Department of Education (2010-2011), "Actual - Classroom Teacher Full-Time Equivalents (FTE)."

Many school and district leaders are increasingly turning their attention to teacher development and retention, in addition to recruitment.⁷⁵ The average teacher turnover rate[†] at public schools in New Orleans from 2010 to 2011 was about 27 percent and ranged from a low of 6.7 percent to a high of 72.7 percent.⁷⁶ However, little is known about the quality of New Orleans’ teachers who leave and where they go. A number of new or growing non-profit organizations in New Orleans support teacher professional development, including Match Teacher Coaching, the Achievement Network, Leading Educators, and Relay Graduate School of Education. Additionally, a \$13.2 million federal Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant funds performance pay and professional development at 10 charter organizations in New Orleans.⁷⁷ These programs are intended to provide teachers with mentorship and support to develop into highly effective teachers and school leaders.

Teacher evaluation using value-added measurement is now in place in Louisiana. Act 54, passed by the legislature in 2010, requires that all teachers and administrators receive annual evaluations and that measures of student growth represent 50 percent of teachers’ and administrators’ final rating.⁷⁸ Compass is the state’s educator evaluation system, which was implemented across the state for the first time in 2012-13. Under Compass, teachers receive one of four designations: 1) Ineffective; 2) Effective: Emerging; 3) Effective: Proficient; or 4) Highly Effective.⁷⁹ These ratings are intended to be used for professional development and feedback as well as to inform tenure, compensation, and dismissal decisions. Local Education Agencies, including RSD charter schools, are allowed to submit an alternate observation tool to request a waiver from Compass.⁸⁰ As a result, charter schools in New Orleans may choose not to utilize Compass, though all must implement a teacher and administrator evaluation system that is at least half based on student growth.

[†]The Louisiana Department of Education defines turnover rate as the percentage of employed classroom teachers who have left the site and are subsequently replaced between October 1 in Year 1 and October 1 in Year 2.

Figure 12: Transportation Expenditures as a Percent of Total Spending, 2010-11



Source: Louisiana Department of Education (2010-11), “School-Level Per Pupil Expenditures (State, Local & Federal Funds), Enrollment Data, and Staffing Data.”
 *Per pupil expenditure is based on total enrollment and not on ridership. Many OPSB schools do not provide school-sponsored transportation to students.

School Choice

New Orleans’ policy of citywide school choice creates operational and administrative challenges, many of which have been addressed in recent years.

Parents in New Orleans can apply to any public school in the city regardless of where they live. All RSD schools and some OPSB and BESE schools are open enrollment; four OPSB schools and one BESE school have academic or language admissions requirements. In 2011-12, students attended schools an average of 3.4 miles from home, compared to 1.9 miles in 2004-05, and 86 percent of students attended a school other than the one closest to home.⁸¹ All RSD schools and most OPSB schools provide free transportation either by yellow school bus or public transit. Because students travel from across the city, transportation costs are a significant burden for schools (see Figure 12).

The eradication of school attendance zones following Hurricane Katrina has required new systems and policies to manage the school application and enrollment process. RSD launched OneApp, a centralized school application system, in February 2012 with all RSD schools participating to enroll students for the 2012-13 school year. In OneApp’s first year, 25,000 students submitted an application and 80 percent of current RSD students elected to return to the same school.⁸²

The application allows parents to rank up to eight schools, and RSD then uses an assignment formula developed by the Institute for Innovation in Public School Choice (IIPSC) to assign each student to a school based primarily on parent preference.⁸³ IIPSC previously designed school choice processes in New York City and Boston and uses an algorithm similar to that used to assign medical school graduates to residency programs. The formula in New Orleans gives priority to siblings and elementary students living within a large geographic catchment area around the school.⁸⁴

In OneApp’s second year of implementation, OPSB direct-run schools and private schools participating in the scholarship program joined the centralized application system.⁸⁵ Of the 27,500 students who submitted applications, nearly three-quarters elected to return to the same school.⁸⁶ As illustrated in Table 3, parents most commonly selected the newly-participating OPSB direct-run schools, which tend to be higher performing than RSD schools.⁸⁷

Table 3: Most Popular Schools in OneApp Round 1, 2013-14

Most Often Listed as #1 Choice	School Type	2012 Letter Grade
Kindergarten		
Ben Franklin Elementary	OPSB Direct-Run	B
KIPP Believe Primary	RSD Charter	B
Morris Jeff	RSD Charter	D
All elementary		
Ben Franklin Elementary	OPSB Direct-Run	B
Dr. M.L.K. Charter	RSD Charter	C
Martin Behrman Elementary	RSD Charter	B
Ninth grade		
Eleanor McMain Secondary	OPSB Direct-Run	B
Lake Area New Tech	RSD Charter	C
Sci Academy	RSD Charter	B
All high school		
Eleanor McMain Secondary	OPSB Direct-Run	B
McDonogh #35	OPSB Direct-Run	C
Lake Area New Tech	RSD Charter	C

Source: Dreilinger, Danielle (2013, April 26), “Ben Franklin Elementary, McMain top OneApp choices for 2013-14,” Times-Picayune.



Student Achievement



New Orleans' public schools continue to be among the fastest improving in the state, but overall academic performance still lags behind the rest of the state. Louisiana's transition to the Common Core curriculum and more rigorous state assessments, as well as the implementation of a new accountability system, promises to drive school performance forward in the coming years. Nonetheless, even as schools have demonstrated improvement, ongoing investment, innovation, and commitment are necessary to create a sustainable system of public schools where all children have the opportunity to receive a high quality education.

"We're starting to shift our focus now from using formative assessment well and creating calm and orderly environments to now really improving the quality of instruction."

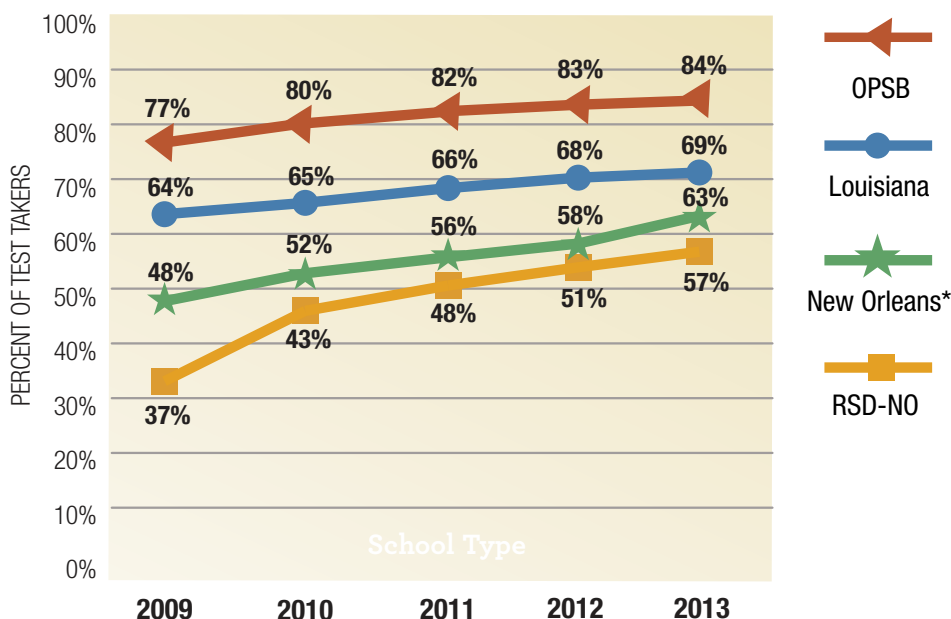
– RSD School Leader

Academic Performance

Each year Louisiana administers tests for students in 3rd grade to 10th grade. High-stakes standardized tests, which students must pass in order to move on to the next grade level, have been given in the 4th and 8th grades for nearly a decade in Louisiana. The 4th and 8th grade tests are called Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) tests, while the other annual tests are called iLEAP tests. In high school, students take End of Course (EOC) tests.

RSD schools in New Orleans achieved the largest gains on the LEAP and iLEAP in the state in 2013, while OPSB schools maintained their spot as the third highest performing district. The percentage of 3rd-8th grade students who scored Basic or above in RSD schools increased from 51 percent in 2012 to 57 percent in 2013. In OPSB schools, the percentage of students scoring Basic or above grew from 83 to 84 percent. Together, the overall passage rate for schools in New Orleans on all tests was 63 percent, a five percentage point increase from 2012, narrowing the gap with the state to just six percentage points (see Figure 13). Though New Orleans' performance on standardized tests in 2013 is promising, students in New Orleans and across the state struggled with new, more rigorous English questions aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Scores on a new writing question were five points lower for OPSB schools and 12 points lower for RSD schools, compared to 10 points lower statewide.

Figure 13: Percentage of Students Scoring Basic or Above for All Grades and All Subjects, 2009-2013



Note: 2009, 2010, and 2011 scores include grades 3-11 LEAP, iLeap, and GEE; 2012 and 2013 scores include only grades 3-8 LEAP and iLEAP. *Does not include BESE charters.

Source: Louisiana Department of Education (2009-2013), "State/District/School Achievement Level Summary Report."

Another important gauge of academic performance is the ACT college readiness and admissions exam, which students generally take in the 11th or 12th grade and is intended to measure students' general educational development and their capacity to complete college-level work. Beginning in the 2012-13 school year, Louisiana administered the ACT to all 11th grade students; approximately 75 percent of New Orleans students in the class of 2012 took the ACT.

ACT scores in New Orleans are improving at a faster rate than the state and national scores. The 2012 average ACT composite score for all public schools in New Orleans was 18.2, a 0.2 point increase from 2011. Comparatively, the state average ACT composite score, which includes public and private schools, increased 0.1 points to 20.3, and the national average remained the same at 21.1. However, New Orleans public schools' average ACT composite scores ranged from a low of 13.5 – the lowest in the state – to a high of 27.1 – the second highest in the state. One large RSD charter high school, O.P. Walker, gained 1.6 points in its average ACT score and was the primary driver of the city's overall improvement. Additionally, not every student in the class of 2012 took the ACT;

beginning in the 2012-13 school year, Louisiana is requiring all students to take the ACT in the 11th grade.

Table 4: Class of 2012 ACT Average Composite Score Range by School Type

School Type	Lowest School Score	Average Composite Score	Highest School Score
RSD Direct-Run	14.2	14.8	15.1
RSD Charter	13.5	17.9	19.4
RSD-NO	13.5	16.8	19.4
OPSB Direct-Run	15.8	17.3	18.6
OPSB Charter	17.1	20.3	27.1
OPSB	15.8	19.5	27.1
New Orleans	13.5	18.2	27.1
Louisiana*	13.5	20.3	28.0

*State data include scores for public and nonpublic students; all other data are for public students only.

Source: Louisiana Department of Education (2012, September), "Louisiana ACT Scores, The Graduating Class of 2012, For Districts and Schools."

Since 1999, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) has assigned schools a School Performance Score (SPS) ranging from 0 to over 200 based on student achievement data. Elementary and middle school scores are based 90 percent students' performance on state assessments (LEAP and iLEAP) and 10 percent on student attendance, while high school scores are based 70 percent on students' performance on the state assessments (EOC) and 30 percent on a graduation index. Letter grades A-F correspond to a school's SPS (see Table 5). In 2012, the LDOE gave an F grade to schools earning an SPS below 75, up from 65 in 2011 and 60 in the years prior.

In the aggregate, New Orleans' public school performance score has improved over 40 percent since 2008 when the district performance score was 66.4, making it the most improved school district in the state. If all public schools in New Orleans were considered a single district, their 2012 district performance score would be 93.7, a 10.5 point increase from their 2011 score of 83.2.⁸⁸ By comparison, the state performance score increased 6.6 points from 93.9 in 2011 to 100.5 in 2012.

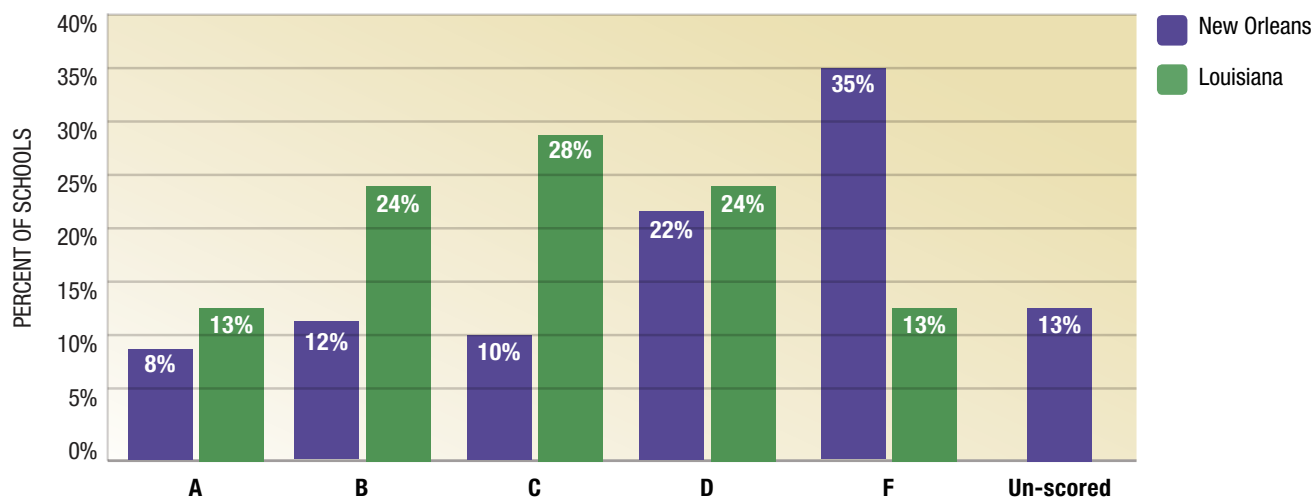
Based on their SPS, about 35 percent of schools in New Orleans earned an F in 2012, compared to about 13 percent of schools in Louisiana. Similarly, New Orleans had 20 percent of its schools earn an A or B, while Louisiana had about 37 percent (see Figure 14).

Table 5: 2012 Letter Grade Scale

Letter Grade	School Performance Score (SPS) Range	Approximate % of Students at Grade Level
A	120.0 or above	88-100%
B	105.0-119.9	76-87%
C	90.0-104.9	64-75%
D	75.0-89.9	39-63%
F	0.0-74.9	0-38%

Source: Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Bulletin 11, §1101.

Figure 14: Percentage of Schools by Letter Grade, 2012



Source: Louisiana Department of Education (2012), "2012 School Performance Scores/Letter Grades (Alphabetical by District)."

New Performance Measures

Beginning with the 2012-13 academic year, LDOE will implement a revised accountability system and letter grade scale. Under the new SPS formula, scores will range from 0 to 150, with corresponding letter grades as indicated in Table 6. Elementary and middle school scores will be based 95-100 percent on students' performance on state assessments, while high school scores will be based 25 percent on students' ACT scores, 25 percent on performance on EOC tests, 25 percent on a revised graduation index, and 25 percent on the cohort graduation rate. Unlike in previous SPS calculations, schools will no longer earn points from students who score Approaching Basic or Fair on state assessments, though schools can earn up to 10 bonus points by demonstrating significant academic growth of their lowest-performing students. In 2013, schools will receive two scores, with one based on the old formula and one based on the new formula.⁸⁹

Louisiana is transitioning to Common Core State Standards in 2013-14 and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments beginning in the 2014-15 school year. These new, more rigorous English and math standards and assessments are part of a national effort to ensure students are prepared for success in college and the workforce. The standards focus on critical thinking and problem-solving, requiring students to understand how numbers work and be able to back up written arguments with evidence. Over the past year, schools have trained teachers on the new curriculum and standards, ordered new textbooks and materials, and begun to prepare students to succeed on the new set of exams. The transition to Common Core and PARCC will continue to be a major focus for school and district leaders, teachers, and other education stakeholders in the coming years.

Table 6: Revised Letter Grade Scale, beginning 2013

Letter Grade	School Performance Score (SPS) Range
A	100.0-150.0
B	85.0-99.9
C	70.0-84.9
D	50.0-69.9
F	0.0-49.9

Source: Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Bulletin 11, §1101.

“They are moving so rapidly to PARCC. Keeping up is a problem.”

– OPSB School Leader

“Our biggest worry right now is training teachers for Common Core.”

– RSD School Leader



Successes and Challenges: What's Next in New Orleans School Reform?

In the 2012-13 school year, New Orleans' system of public schools continued to evolve to address unintended consequences of reform and improve opportunities for students. Even as policies and systems changed, the high-stakes reform mechanisms of school autonomy, parental choice, and accountability continued to define the unique public education model in New Orleans. School and district leaders are increasingly turning their attention to issues of long-term sustainability, equity, and improving student learning. Though many schools have demonstrated marked improvement on academic performance measures, ongoing investment, innovation, and commitment are necessary to create a sustainable system of public schools where all children have the opportunity to receive a high quality education.

Successes

Public education in New Orleans continues to adapt. Many of the policies and practices implemented in the 2012-13 school year have contributed to a more efficient, effective, and equitable system of schools.

Inclusion of Additional Schools in OneApp

Including all public school options in a unified application system is a critical step towards ensuring a fair, transparent, and equitable public school system in New Orleans. Of the 90 public schools in New Orleans, 74 participated in the centralized application system in the Spring of 2013. Private schools participating in the publicly-funded scholarship program also joined OneApp this year. In its first year, only RSD schools (charter and direct-run) participated in OneApp, but RSD, OPSB, and BESE worked together during the 2012-13 school year to require more schools to join the centralized system.⁹⁰ All BESE charter schools will be required to join the system in 2014, and OPSB charter schools will be required to participate upon renewal of their charters.⁹¹ OneApp goes a long way to address issues of equity and access by simplifying the application and enrollment process for parents and families. The system also increases the level of transparency and accountability by standardizing the application process and rules.

Implementation of a Centralized Expulsion Policy

In an effort to ensure all students are treated fairly and receive due process, beginning in the 2012-13 school year, nearly every public school in the city used the same list of expellable infractions and the same expulsion hearing of-fice, which is hosted by RSD.⁹² New Orleans' decentralized system of schools meant that, previously, each charter school or its board instituted its own discipline policies and ran its own hearings. Data indicated that inconsistent and punitive discipline policies at city schools resulted in large numbers of suspensions, expulsions, and discipline incidents. RSD worked with charter school leaders to develop the new expulsion policy and OPSB chose to participate. Though the policy does not address suspensions or other discipline issues, the expulsion policy is an important step to protecting students' rights.



Consistency in the School Closure and Transformation Process

Each year, BESE assesses the performance of charter schools in their fourth and fifth years and determines whether those schools should remain open. Schools with an F letter grade or without evidence of substantial improvement in student achievement may be closed.⁹³ In December 2012, BESE voted to revoke the charters of four RSD charter schools based on their poor academic performance.⁹⁴ Eleven charter schools in New Orleans have been closed since 2005, either voluntarily or by BESE, and two have changed charter board governance. Closing schools is a difficult and often upsetting task, and this year, as in previous years, some school communities expressed opposition to BESE's decisions. However, BESE has consistently and firmly upheld its policy regarding school performance metrics and closure decisions, ensuring the process is both predictable and transparent. With a new accountability policy in place next year, BESE should continue to be transparent about how it is measuring school performance for charter renewal decisions.

Improved Academic Performance

Students in New Orleans continue to demonstrate notable gains on critical performance measures, including state standardized tests, the ACT, and cohort graduation rates. New Orleans' average performance on these indicators has improved each year since Katrina, and indeed New Orleans' District Performance Score is the most improved in the state since 2005. 2011 marked the first time that the percentage of African-American students passing state standardized tests in New Orleans (53 percent) outpaced the state's African-American passage rate (51 percent), and, in 2013, RSD's test scores in New Orleans grew faster than any other public school system in Louisiana. Though schools in New Orleans remain among the lowest performing in the state, the significant academic gains made in recent years should be recognized.

Challenges

Despite the many highlights of the 2012-13 school year, public education in New Orleans continues to face challenges ensuring the long-term sustainability, effectiveness, and equity of current reform measures going forward.

Long-term Governance

The complex and decentralized governance structure of public schools in New Orleans complicates efforts to ensure all students are treated equitably and fairly. The implementation and expansion of centralized enrollment and discipline policies are important steps in addressing gaps in the system of schools. Nonetheless, without a single entity responsible for long-term planning, data management, and general oversight, challenges remain and kids can fall through the gaps. For example, even as significant investments are being made into teacher retention and development efforts, little data are available on the teacher landscape across the system of schools. While RSD continues to have jurisdiction over the majority of public schools in New Orleans, it was not meant to be a permanent fixture in the governance landscape; yet, the public does not trust OPSB to manage the entire system of schools. New Orleans' long-term governance framework should engage community, address the current administrative challenges, and promote high quality schools for all.

Meeting the Needs of Special Education Students

Comprehensive and coordinated special education remains a major problem across public schools in New Orleans. No single entity is responsible for ensuring students with special education needs are served. Parents of students with disabilities have difficulty navigating the complex system to find the best program for their child's specific needs.⁹⁵ Additionally, though the state provides some additional funding for students with disabilities, small schools often lack the economies of scale to fully serve the wide range of student needs in their buildings. Students with disabilities may also bring down overall school test scores. Without an accountability system that takes disability into account, schools have a disincentive to enroll students with disabilities. Reform policies in New Orleans must continue to evolve such that all students with special education needs are properly funded and well-served under the system of schools.



Insufficient Mental Health Services

One of the major challenges facing public schools in New Orleans is the lack of social services available to their students outside the school day. According to a study conducted by the Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies in 2011, New Orleans middle-school students cite symptoms of depression and post-traumatic stress at much higher rates than typical teenagers.⁹⁶ The students also had elevated rates of witnessing violence and feeling concerned about their safety, with more than 29 percent reporting that they had seen assaults and almost 14 percent saying they had witnessed murders.⁹⁷ Compounding these challenges is the lack of adolescent mental health services in New Orleans following the 2009 closure of the New Orleans Adolescent Hospital (NOAH).⁹⁸ New Orleans has an insufficient number of psychiatric hospital beds and intensive, short-term, in-patient treatment for adolescents.⁹⁹ Schools feel the effects of these issues intimately and often lack the capacity to serve students in need of psychiatric care. The City of New Orleans, nonprofit service providers, RSD, OPSB, and individual schools must work together to identify a long-term solution to serve New Orleans' student population.

Adjusting to New Rigorous Standards and Assessments

While Louisiana's transition to the Common Core curriculum and PARCC assessments provides the opportunity to improve academic rigor and relevance in schools across the state, the transition also requires a major investment from schools and districts in professional development as well as new textbooks and technology. Schools may also see an initial decline in the percentage of students passing the state assessments. The shift will be challenging for students, teachers, and schools and will require an ongoing, continued investment.

Improving School Quality

Though academic performance at schools in New Orleans continues to improve each year, New Orleans is still a long way from providing quality school options for all students. In 2012, nearly one-third of public school students in New Orleans attended an F school and one-fifth attended a D school. School Performance Scores and letter grades, furthermore, capture only absolute performance on standardized tests, not student growth nor other indicators of school quality such as safety, discipline, and school culture. In order to measure school quality and academic improvement in post-Katrina New Orleans, such measures are necessary. Going forward, continued investment and commitment in education is critical to truly providing quality educational opportunities for New Orleans' children.

Looking Ahead

The dramatic transformation of public education in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina and the levee failures in 2005 has drawn national attention. Recent academic performance trends suggest the reforms are working, and undoubtedly students in New Orleans today have better public school options than ever before. However, challenges remain. With 84 percent of students in charter schools and a policy of citywide open enrollment, New Orleans' system of schools is entirely unique and unprecedented. The system will continue to evolve in the coming years as it responds to the unintended consequences of reform and outside policy influences, such as Common Core and the publicly-funded private school scholarship program. This evolution is critical and necessary, but will require ongoing attention, resources, and investment. RSD, OPSB, and the various charter school operators must continue to focus on improving academic outcomes and opportunities for all children in New Orleans.

Appendix: School Data

School Name	Grades Offered 2012-2013	Total Students Reported	% Free and Reduced Lunch	2012 Baseline SPS	2012 Letter Grade
OPSB Direct-Run Schools					
Benjamin Franklin Elem. Math and Science	PK-6	684	81.9%	108.5	B
Eleanor McMain Secondary School	7-12	766	74.3%	109.0	B
Mahalia Jackson Elementary School	PK-1	103	94.2%	103.8	C
Mary Bethune Elementary Literature/Technology	PK-6	378	>95.0%	111.9	B
McDonogh #35 College Preparatory School	7-12	855	81.4%	97.8	C
McDonogh 35 Career Academy	7-12	94	77.7%		
Youth Study Center	7-12	34	>95.0%		
Total/Average		2,914	81.1%	105.5	C
OPSB Charter Schools					
Alice M. Harte Elementary Charter School	K-8	681	81.6%	112.5	B
Audubon Charter School	PK-8	800	45.8%	125.3	A
Benjamin Franklin High School	9-12	794	30.5%	197.6	A
Edna Karr High School	9-12	974	81.0%	120.7	A
Edward Hynes Charter School	K-8	620	49.4%	121.7	A
Einstein Charter School	PK-8	473	92.4%	102.1	C
ENCORE Academy	PK-2, 5	190	76.3%		
Lake Forest Elementary Charter School	K-8	481	80.7%	151.9	A
Lusher Charter School	K-12	1,697	17.4%	167.1	A
New Orleans Charter Science and Mathematics HS	9-12	369	72.6%	115.7	B
Robert Russa Moton Charter School	PK-7	345	76.8%	100.1	C
Warren Easton Senior High School	9-12	929	71.7%	130.3	A
Total/Average		8,353	56.6%	136.4	A
RSD Direct-Run Schools					
A.P. Tureaud Elementary School	PK-6	246	92.3%	75.9	D
Abramson Science and Technology School	K-8	294	89.5%	59.4	F
Benjamin Banneker Elementary School	PK-8	402	93.5%	74.7	F
G.W. Carver High School	10-12	169	88.2%	46.4	F
H.C. Schaumburg Elementary School	PK-8	561	93.4%	71.8	F
James Weldon Johnson School	PK-8	280	>95.0%	70.9	F
L. B. Landry High School	8-12	466	84.9%	60	F
Mary D. Coghill Elementary School	PK-8	590	92.4%	79.5	D
Murray Henderson Elementary School	1-5	80	>95.0%	63.2	F
Paul B. Habans Elementary School	PK-8	344	93.9%	77.9	D
Sarah Towles Reed Senior High School	10-12	259	75.7%	47.6	F
Walter L. Cohen High School	10-12	119	81.5%	45.5	F
Total/Average		3,810	90.7%	65.4	F

School Name	Grades Offered 2012-2013	Total Students Reported	% Free and Reduced Lunch	2012 Baseline SPS	2012 Letter Grade
RSD Charter Schools					
Akili Academy of New Orleans	K-5	385	>95.0%	96.2	C
Algiers Technology Academy	9-12	238	73.5%	85.5	D
Andrew H. Wilson Charter School	K-8	616	78.7%	77.9	D
Arise Academy	K-5	387	>95.0%	78.6	D
Arthur Ashe Charter School	K-8	490	>95.0%	82.0	D
Batiste Cultural Arts Academy at Live Oak Elem	PK-8	678	93.5%	63.3	T*
Benjamin E. Mays Preparatory School	PK-6	361	>95.0%	53.3	F
Cohen College Prep	9-12	502	>95.0%		
Crescent Leadership Academy	6-12	159	74.2%		
Crocker Arts and Technology School	PK-5	278	>95.0%	64.8	F
Dr. Martin Luther King Charter School for Sci/Tech	PK-12	756	>95.0%	98.5	C
Dwight D. Eisenhower Elementary School	PK-8	601	87.4%	81.7	D
Edgar P. Harney Spirit of Excellence Academy	K-8	373	>95.0%	71.2	T*
Esperanza Charter School	K-8	460	88.7%	68.0	T*
Fannie C. Williams Charter School	PK-8	550	>95.0%	75.2	D
G. W. Carver Collegiate Academy	9-10	103	91.3%		
G. W. Carver Preparatory Academy	9-10	110	>95.0%		
Gentilly Terrace Elementary School	PK-8	456	91.2%	74.9	T*
Harriet Tubman Charter School	K-8	520	>95.0%	66.6	T*
James M. Singleton Charter School	PK-8	645	>95.0%	73.6	F
John Dibert Community School	PK-8	476	94.3%	73.8	T*
John McDonogh High School	9-12	389	>95.0%		
Joseph A. Craig Charter School	PK-8	379	>95.0%		
Joseph S. Clark Preparatory High School	9-12	435	92.0%	55.8	T*
KIPP Believe College Prep (Phillips)	5-8	617	94.8%	112.9	B
KIPP Central City Academy	5-8	407	>95.0%	106.4	B
KIPP Central City Primary	K-1	513	>95.0%	88.5	D
KIPP McDonogh 15 School for the Creative Arts	5-8	766	>95.0%	91.5	C
KIPP New Orleans Leadership Academy	5-7	528	>95.0%	75.8	D
KIPP Renaissance High School	9-11	380	92.9%	85.3	D
Lafayette Academy	PK-8	939	88.7%	93.4	C
Lagniappe Academy of New Orleans	K-2, 5-7	131	>95.0%	58.6	F
Lake Area New Tech Early College High School	9-12	657	87.7%	97.9	C
Langston Hughes Charter Academy	PK-8	647	>95.0%		
Martin Behrman Elementary School	PK-8	705	67.2%	107.1	B
McDonogh #32 Elementary School	PK-8	437	87.2%	63.3	F
McDonogh 42 Charter School	PK-8	446	94.4%		
McDonogh City Park Academy	K-8	422	>95.0%	67.8	F
Miller-McCoy Academy for Mathematics and Business	5-12	387	85.8%	71.0	F
Morris Jeff Community School	PK-4	304	36.5%	84.6	D
Nelson Elementary School	PK-8	500	90.4%	79.9	D
O.Perry Walker Senior High School	9-12	903	67.9%	108.9	B
Pierre A. Capdau Learning Academy	K-8	401	>95.0%	75.8	D
Pride College Preparatory Academy	K-5	323	>95.0%	62.4	F
Reed Elementary School	PK-8	690	>95.0%	68.9	T*
ReNEW Accelerated High School, City Park Campus	6-12	191	90.0%	27.3	F

School Name	Grades Offered 2012-2013	Total Students Reported	% Free and Reduced Lunch	2012 Baseline SPS	2012 Letter Grade
ReNEW Accelerated High School, West Bank Campus	6-12	178	91.0%	33.5	F
Samuel J. Green Charter School	K-8	515	>95.0%	81.0	D
Sci Academy	9-12	367	91.6%	111.8	B
SciTech Academy at Laurel Elementary	PK-8	694	>95.0%	67.0	T*
Sophie B. Wright Learning Academy	6-12	484	94.4%	78.9	D
Success Preparatory Academy	K-6	410	>95.0%	65.6	F
Sylvanie Williams College Prep	K-5	358	>95.0%	81.9	D
The Intercultural Charter School	K-7	385	93.3%	72.7	F
The NET Charter High School	9-12	150	>95.0%		
William J. Fischer Elementary School	PK-8	666	85.6%	72.3	F
Total/Average		25,848	92.7%	80.2	D

BESE Charter Schools					
International High School of New Orleans	9-11	418	75.6%	81.5	D
International School of Louisiana	K-8	743	51.7%	118.5	B
Lycee Francais de la Nouvelle-Orleans	PK-K	332	40.4%		
New Orleans Military/Maritime Academy	9	219	75.3%		
Total/Average		1,712	58.4%	100.9	C

Source: LDOE (2012), "School Performance Scores/Letter Grades (Alphabetical by District)"

*Based on their School Performance Score, these schools would have received an "F". However, they received a "T" from the State because they are led by operators who took over the governance of existing failing schools and agreed to maintain all previous grade levels and former students.



Endnotes

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