

2019-2020



**THE STATE OF
PUBLIC EDUCATION
IN NEW ORLEANS**

Amanda Kruger Hill

Executive Director, The Cowen Institute

At the Cowen Institute, we are dedicated to improving the lives of young people in New Orleans. We strive to achieve this by focusing on four strategic pillars of work: contextualizing data and providing thought leadership; leading high-impact direct programs; fostering collaboration in the college and career success landscape; and developing innovative initiatives. *The State of Public Education in New Orleans* is the Institute's annual report on the city's schools, students, and educators, and it contributes to our first pillar by offering accessible analysis of the public education system in New Orleans. This is the 11th edition of the report.

The Cowen Institute was founded by Tulane University President Emeritus Scott Cowen and opened its doors in March 2007. Since then, the Institute has chronicled the transformation of public education in New Orleans. This year's report continues in the tradition of previous reports by explaining the complexity of public education in New Orleans while offering helpful information for parents, students, and educators on how to navigate the system. We hope you find it useful.

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The mission of the Cowen Institute at Tulane U
college and career success in

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**University is to advance public education and
the New Orleans community.**



CONTEXT FOR THE REPORT

For the past twelve years, the Cowen Institute has published the *State of Public Education in New Orleans (SPENO)* on a near annual basis. During that time, the purpose, content, and audience of the report have evolved. Initially, *SPENO* chronicled the dramatic changes to New Orleans' public education system following Hurricane Katrina, with a lens of comparing governance and performance to the pre-reform years. In more recent years, *SPENO* has narrowed its scope. This edition of the report is a snapshot of public education in the current academic year using aggregated data from publicly available sources to inform a wide audience that includes educators, families, and students, as well as policymakers and the general public.

This report is not intended to provide in-depth analysis on every aspect of public education in New Orleans. This decision is intentional. In truth, to provide adequate, nuanced, and detailed framing for a variety of issues, from enrollment to school performance to transportation, would require a lengthy study. That level of context, framing, and detail is beyond the scope of the current report. Rather, we believe that there is value in summarizing data on New Orleans education from publicly available sources and putting that together in one place. Doing so on a regular basis allows us to track high-level descriptive information over time and serves as an archival piece in an ever-changing landscape. It does not, however, provide the space for a deeper exploration of the data.

This report is also produced with extensive external feedback. We seek input from government bodies, state-entities, educators, non-profit organizations, community members, and researchers prior to publishing *SPENO*. This helps us to ensure the accuracy of our report and data, particularly in a system that is marked by frequent change. It also allows stakeholders to weigh in on our framing. In doing so, we are reminded that there is more than one way to tell a story, particularly a story as complicated, divisive, and emotionally charged as New Orleans public education in the 21st century. In some cases, we provide data from previous years to track changes over time. We do not, however, provide in-depth contextual framing in the current report.

As such, we acknowledge that *SPENO* does not tell the full story of public education in our city. There are tens of thousands of families with children attending public school in our city and there are thousands of people in schools, districts, and community organizations working to improve public education in New Orleans everyday. We know that each person has their own opinion about the state of public education in New Orleans. We know that their experiences often vary greatly. We hope this report can be used as a jumping-off point to a deeper exploration of these extremely nuanced subject areas and a resource for open and informed discussions among stakeholders.



INTRODUCTION

The 2019-2020 school year marked another significant stage in the evolution of public schools in New Orleans, as all but three schools in the city are now public, non-profit charter schools. The movement to a near all-charter public education system has occurred steadily since 2005, with many policy and operational changes along the way. In that time, the city transitioned from a traditional school district model prior to Hurricane Katrina, in which the Orleans School Board (OPSB) directly ran the vast majority of schools in the city and there were only a handful of charter schools, to one in which New Orleans Public Schools (NOLA-PS – the new name for the administrative side of the OPSB) serves as an authorizer and oversees 91% of the city’s charter schools but does not directly run any schools.

For most of those 15 years, oversight of the majority of the city’s schools was split between the state’s Recovery School District (RSD) and the OPSB; that changed in 2018, however, following the implementation of Act 91, a 2016 bill passed by the Louisiana Legislature that required all New Orleans RSD schools to come under the purview of the OPSB within the year.

Many of the defining features of the city’s public education – from an open enrollment policy that allows students to attend almost any school in the city, regardless of where they live, to the high level of autonomy charter school operators have over school operations, staffing, and funding – add a layer of complexity for families. Tracking and reporting on these

developments in New Orleans’ public education have been the goals of *The State of Public Education in New Orleans* report since the Cowen Institute launched in 2007.

Previous editions of this annual report have chronicled the recent history of the city’s K-12 public education system, from immediately before and after Hurricane Katrina when financial scandals marred the reputation of the system and the district was among the lowest performing in Louisiana, to the present when school performance and accountability have improved considerably, but overall, schools collectively still rank as mediocre compared to those in other areas in the state.

This year’s report, by contrast, will look less at the past and instead focus on explaining the notable aspects of the current system. The reasoning for this shift in perspective comes from the results of our annual poll *What Do Parents Think?*, which surveyed 500 public school parents about their experiences with, and opinions on, New Orleans’ public education system. We found that many parents are unclear about a number of vital issues including governance, enrollment, and oversight.

This year’s report thus aims to improve that understanding to help ensure that those who interact and engage with K-12 public education in the city have the necessary details to make informed decisions.

78 of the city’s **86** public schools are overseen by **NOLA-PS and the OPSB.**

GOVERNANCE

What is school governance?

Governance, or which entity oversees and holds schools accountable, has been one of the most notable and often contentious aspects of public education in New Orleans since 2005. Governance has assumed a place of importance in the city's education landscape because of the growth of charter schools due to the state's takeover of most city schools in 2005.

As mentioned in the introduction, governance of the city's public charter schools was split between the state-run RSD and the OPSB for most of the past 15 years. In 2018, that changed, when state law required all formerly RSD schools in the city to come under OPSB governance.

As a result, in the 2019-2020 school year, 78 of the city's 86 schools are overseen by the OPSB and NOLA-PS. It's important to note, however, that all but three of these schools are independent public charter schools; NOLA-PS does not directly run any of the schools under its purview.

Additionally, there are seven charter schools located in the city overseen by the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) and one school governed by the Louisiana State Legislature. Students from anywhere in Louisiana can attend BESE schools, whereas students attending NOLA-PS schools must live in Orleans Parish. There are no for-profit charter schools in the city.

Why does governance matter?

Governance is an especially important issue when talking about public schools in New Orleans. Here, the governing body of a school matters with respect to accountability, both from an academic and a financial performance perspective, and in deciding which charter schools can open and operate. A charter school

takes its name from the fact that the leaders of a school sign a contract, or charter, with a governing entity that delineates the terms that school must follow and the benchmarks it must meet in order to stay open. This is especially important because of the high number of charter schools in New Orleans. If a school fails to meet the standards in its charter contract, the governing entity can impose new requirements or, in extreme cases, shut the school down entirely. Last year, the OPSB authorized five new charter schools to open and closed seven.

This governance structure stands in contrast to most other school districts in the country (and to how the OPSB operated prior to 2005), where the central district office and elected school board oversee and operate local schools.

In New Orleans, it could be argued that the governing entity of a school matters less than the charter operator, as the charter operator has more control over the day-to-day decisions. In the city's schools, the charter operators, whether overseen by the OPSB and NOLA-PS, BESE, or the Legislature, are in charge of staffing, curriculum, transportation, school calendars, and discipline. Charter schools and charter management organizations (CMOs) are also overseen by charter boards that are mainly tasked with:

- Ensuring the financial good standing of the school;
- Assessing the performance of school and CMO leadership;
- Confirming the school is meeting the requirements of its charter.

Thus, understanding governance in New Orleans schools is far more complicated than in most other U.S. cities. Families and stakeholders in New Orleans might engage with any of three layers of oversight — the charter board, the authorizing entity (OPSB/NOLA-PS, BESE, or the Legislature), or the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE).



PUBLIC SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

OPSB Charter Schools (NOLA-PS): 7

ACSA

Landry-Walker High School: 9-12
Martin Behrman Charter School: PK-8

Adv. for Acad. Exc. in Educ.

Benjamin Franklin High School: 9-12

Adv. for Arts-Based Education

Lusher Charter School: K-12

Adv. for Innovative Schools

Robert Russa Moton C.S.: PK-8

Adv. for Science & Math. Edu.

New Orleans Charter Sci. & Math H.S.: 9-12

ARISE

ARISE Academy: K-8
Mildred Osborne Charter School: K-8

Better Choice Foundation

Mary D.Coghill Elementary School: K-8

Bricolage Academy

Bricolage Academy: PK-6

Choice Foundation, Inc.

Esperanza Charter School: K-8
Lafayette Academy Charter School: PK-8

Collegiate Academies

Abramson Sci Academy: 9-12
G.W. Carver High School: 9-12
Livingston Collegiate Academy: 9-12
Rosenwald Collegiate Academy: 9-10
Opportunities Academy: 12

Com. Lead. Ad. Stud. Suc., Inc.

Fannie C. Williams Charter School: PK-8

Crescent City Schools

Akili Academy: PK-8
Harriet Tubman Charter School: PK-8
Paul Habans Charter School: PK-8

Dryades YMCA

James M. Singleton Charter School: PK-8

Educators for Quality Alternatives

The NET Charter H.S.: Gentilly: 9-12
The NET Charter H.S.: 9-12

Elan Academy, Inc.

Elan Academy Charter School: PK-4

Encore Learning

Encore Academy: PK-8

FirstLine Schools

Arthur Ashe Charter School: K-8
Langston Hughes Academy: PK-8
Live Oak Academy: K-8
Phillis Wheatley Comm. Sch.: PK-8
Samuel J. Green C.S: PK-8

Foundation Preparatory, Inc.

Foundation Preparatory: K-5

French and Montessori, Inc.

Audubon Charter School: Gentilly: PK-3
Audubon Charter School: Uptown: K-8

Friends of King Schools

Dr. M.L.K. Jr. C.S. for Sci. & Tech.: PK-12
Joseph A. Craig Charter School: PK-8

Hynes Charter School Corp.

Edward Hynes Charter School: PK-8
Edward Hynes Charter School - UNO: K

IDEA Public Schools NOLA

Oscar Dunn: K-5

InspireNOLA Charter Schools

Alice Harte Charter School: PK-8
Andrew H. Wilson Charter School: PK-8
D.D. Eisenhower Acad.of Glob. Studies: PK-8
Edna Karr High School: 9-12
Eleanor McMain Secondary School: 9-12
McDonogh #35 College Prep: 9-12
McDonogh #42 Elem. C.S.: PK-8

Institute for Academic Excellence

Sophie B. Wright Charter School: PK-8

KIPP New Orleans

Booker T. Washington H.S.: 9-12
Frederick A. Douglass H.S.: 9-12
KIPP Believe: K-8
KIPP Central City: PK-8
KIPP East Community: PK-5
KIPP Leadership: K-8
KIPP Morial (McDonogh 15): PK-8

Lake Forest Elem. C.S. Charter School

Lake Forest Elementary Charter School: K-8

Legacy of Excellence, Inc.

Benjamin Franklin Math. & Science: PK-8

Living School Charter

Living School: 9

Morris Jeff Community Schools

Morris Jeff Community School: PK-8

IN NEW ORLEANS: 2019-2020

5 Schools

New Beginnings

J.F.K. High School at Lake Area: 9-12
P.A. Capdau C.S. at Av. Alex. Elem.: PK-8

New Orleans College Prep

L.D. Crocker College Prep: PK-8
Walter L. Cohen College Prep: 9-12

ReNEW Reinventing Ed. Sch.

ReNEW Accelerated High School: 9-12
ReNEW Dolores T. Aaron Academy: PK-8
ReNEW Schaumburg Elementary: PK-8
ReNEW SciTech Academy: PK-8

Rooted School

Rooted School: 9-11

Significant Educators, Inc.

M.M. Bethune Elem. Sch. of Lit. & Tech.: PK-8

Success Preparatory Academy

Success Preparatory Academy: K-8

The Citizens' Comm. for Educ.

Homer A. Plessy Community School: PK-8

The Einstein Group

Einstein C.H.S. at S.T. Reed: 9-12
Einstein C.M.S. at S.T. Reed: 6-8
Einstein C.S. at Sherwood Forest: PK-5
Einstein C.S. at Village de l'Est: PK-5

Warren Easton C.H.S. Found.

Warren Easton High School: 9-12

86 TOTAL SCHOOLS

OPSB Contract Schools: 3 Schools

McDonogh #35 College Prep. H.S.: 10-12
The Bridge: 6-8
Travis Hill School: Youth Study Center

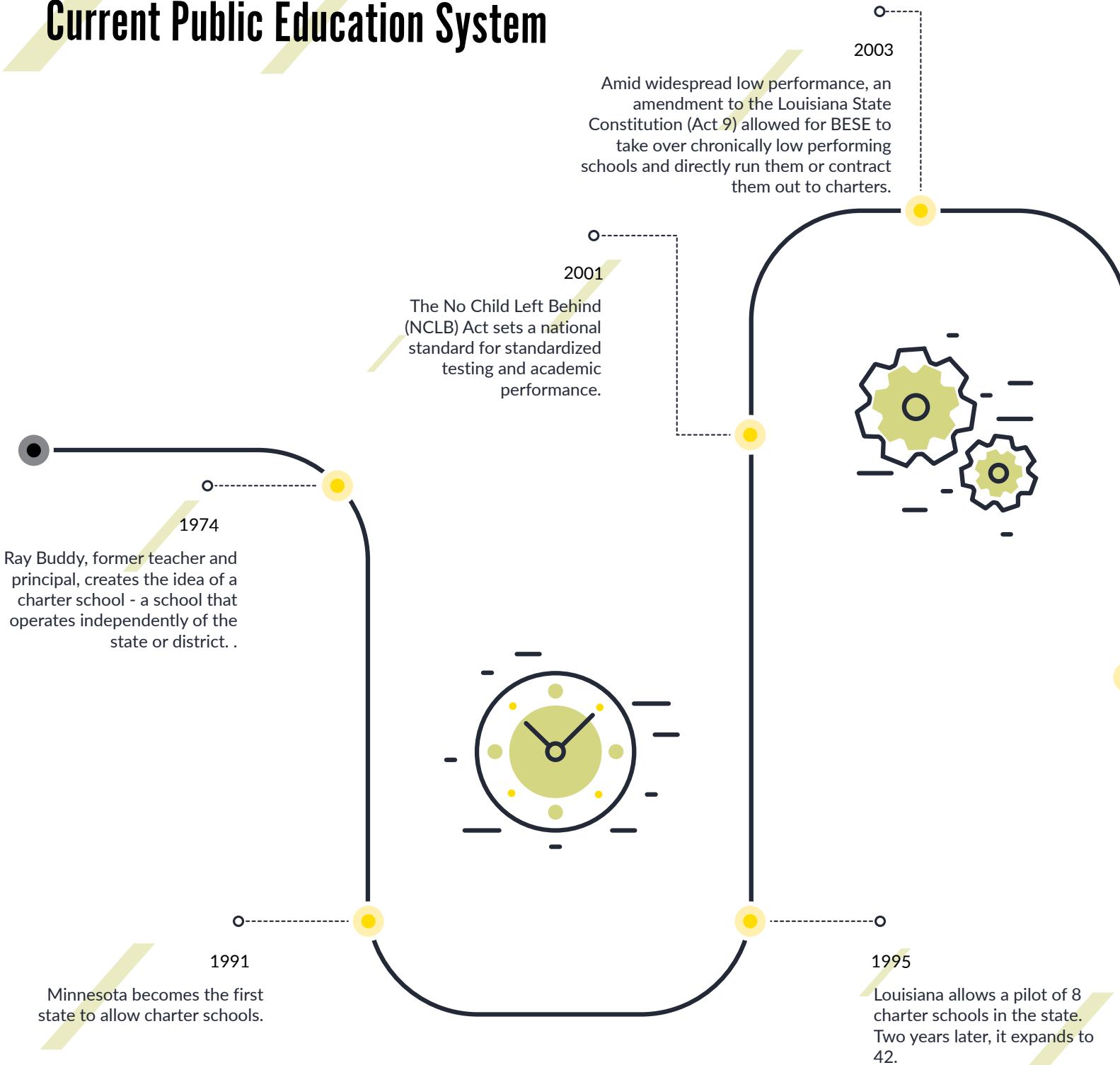
BESE Charter Schools: 7 Schools

International High School: 9-12
International School of Louisiana: K-8
JCFA-Algiers: 8-12
Lycee Francais de la Nouv.-Orl.: PK-9
New Harmony High: 9-10
N.O. Military and Maritime Acad.: 8-12
Noble Minds Inst. for W.C.L.: K-4

LA State Legislature: 1 School

New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts: 9-12

The Road to New Orleans' Current Public Education System



2007

Following the destruction of Hurricane Katrina, schools began reopening in 2006, and by the 2007-08 school year, there are 80 open schools in the city. OPSB retains direct control of seven of the highest performing schools.

2016

The Louisiana Legislature approves Act 91, requiring all New Orleans RSD schools to transition to OPSB oversight by 2018-19.



1998-2005

During these years, the OPSB and New Orleans public schools struggle with corruption, low academic performance, federal investigation and charges, and bankruptcy.



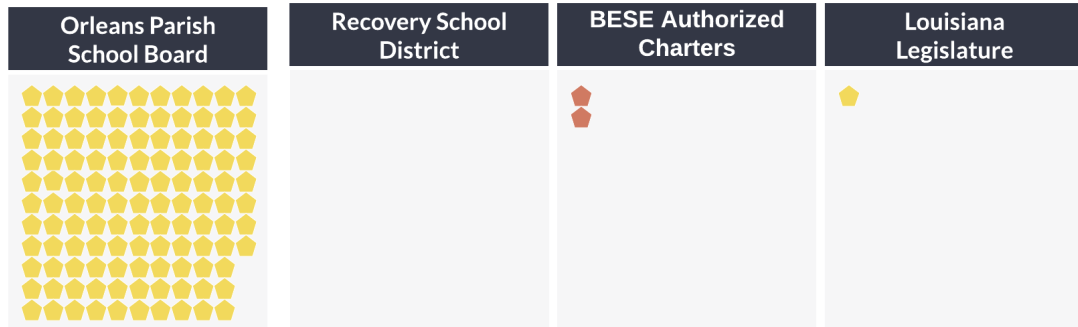
2005

Following Hurricane Katrina, Act 35 is approved by the Louisiana Legislature, expanding the ability of the RSD to take over low-performing and failing schools. The bill has an immediate effect on New Orleans. Facing insolvency, the OPSB terminates the contracts of more than 7,000 employees and teachers.



PUBLIC SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

New Orleans Schools Governance Chart SY 2004-2005



121 Schools

- 118 Non-Charter Schools overseen by OPSB
- 0 Charter Schools overseen by OPSB
- 0 Non-Charter Schools overseen by RSD
- 0 Charter schools overseen by RSD
- 2 Charter Schools overseen by BESE
- 1 Non-Charter School overseen by the Louisiana Legislature

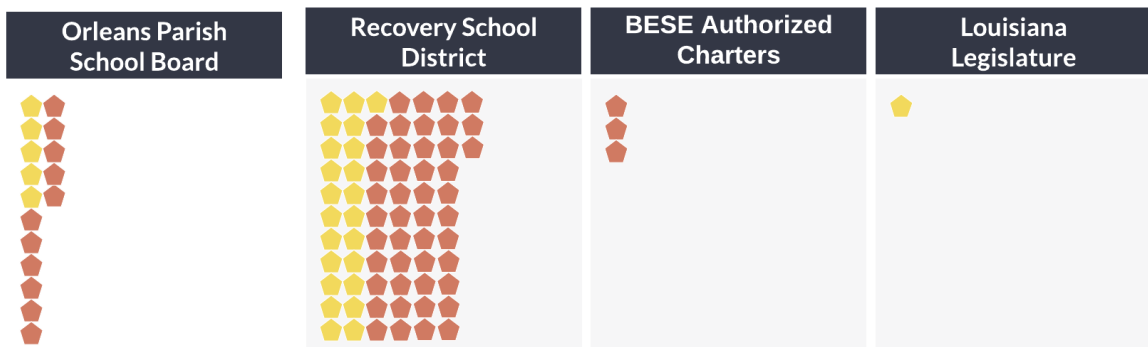


Non-Charter



Charter

New Orleans Schools Governance Chart SY 2010-2011



89 Schools

- 5 Non-Charter Schools overseen by OPSB
- 11 Charter Schools overseen by OPSB
- 23 Non-Charter Schools overseen by RSD
- 46 Charter schools overseen by RSD
- 3 Charter Schools overseen by BESE
- 1 Non-Charter School overseen by the Louisiana Legislature



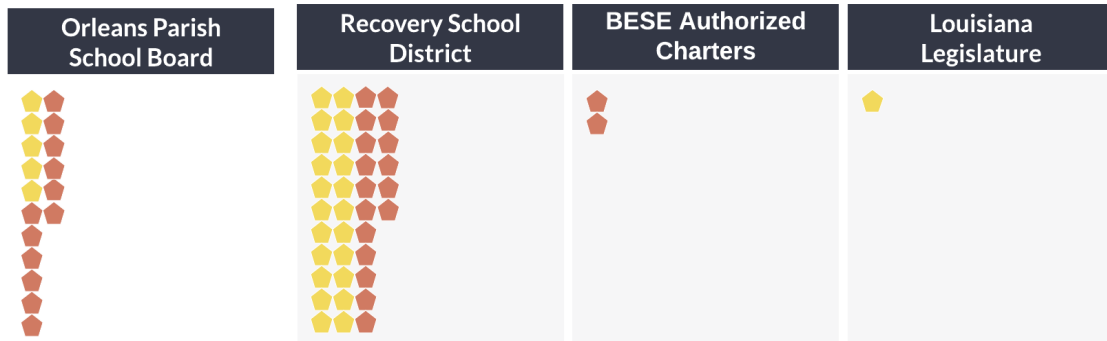
Non-Charter



Charter

ANCE CHANGES: 2004-2019

New Orleans Schools Governance Chart SY 2006-2007



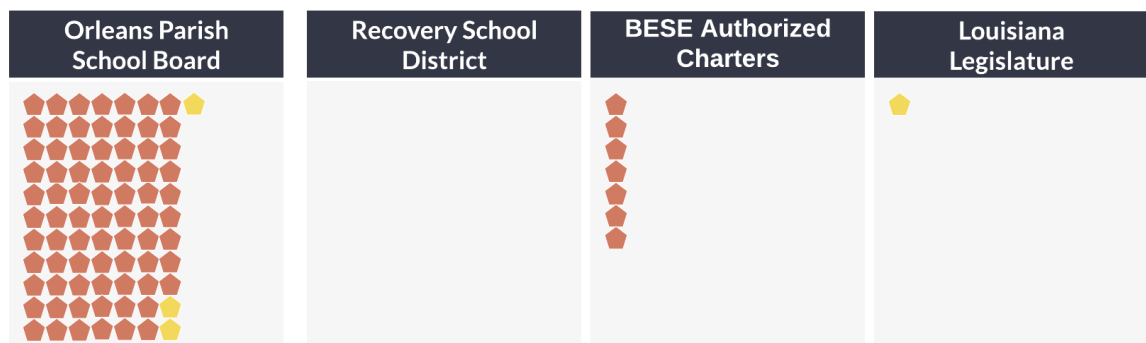
59 Schools

- 5 Non-Charter Schools overseen by OPSB
- 12 Charter Schools overseen by OPSB
- 22 Non-Charter Schools overseen by RSD
- 17 Charter schools overseen by RSD
- 2 Charter Schools overseen by BESE
- 1 Non-Charter School overseen by the Louisiana Legislature

Non-Charter

Charter

New Orleans Schools Governance Chart SY 2019-2020



86 Schools

- 3 non-charter schools overseen by OPSB
- 75 charter schools overseen by OPSB
- 0 non-charter schools overseen by RSD
- 0 charter schools overseen by RSD
- 7 charter schools overseen by BESE
- 1 non-charter school overseen by the Louisiana Legislature

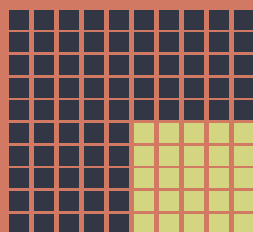
Non-Charter

Charter

ACCOUNTABILITY

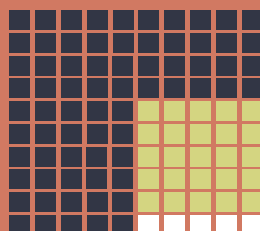
HOW DID LOUISIANA MEASURE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE IN 2018-19?

ELEM: K-6



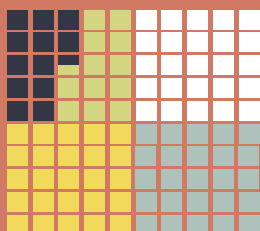
- 75% Student Performance
- 25% Student Growth

MIDDLE: 7-8



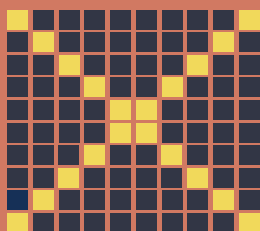
- 70% Student Performance
- 25% Student Growth
- 5% HS Credits Earned by End of Freshman Year

HS: 9-12



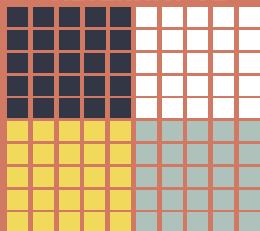
- 12.5% Student Performance
- 12.5% Student Growth
- 25% ACT / WorkKeys
- 25% Grad Rate
- 25% Diploma Strength

COMBINATION



- (K-8 SPS x # of Units)
- +
- (HS SPS x # of Units)

ALTERNATIVE



- 25% Student Growth
- 25% Current Year Core Credit Accumulation
- 25% Diploma Strength
- 25% Second Year Dropout / Credit Accumulation

How are public schools held accountable?

The word accountability is used frequently when talking about public schools, particularly in recent years. But accountability has a very specific meaning with regard to public education in New Orleans and Louisiana. For public education in the state, accountability means the way that schools are held responsible for a number of student outcomes. On a national and a state level, schools are responsible for making sure that their students achieve a set of predefined standards. Another commonly used phrase when talking about accountability is school performance. Schools are thus held accountable based on their performance.

How is school performance in New Orleans measured?

In Louisiana, schools are held accountable through a scoring system known as school performance scores (SPS). A school's SPS is calculated using a number of factors and the formula varies between elementary, middle, high, and combination schools. All schools are assessed along the lines of academic achievement (how many students achieve a certain score on an end-of-year-standardized test) and academic growth (how many students perform better on an end-of-year standardized test than expected).

Currently, schools are assessed on a 150-point scale and then assigned a letter grade from an A to an F based on their cumulative score. Assessment scores in grades 3-8 (students in grades K-2 are not tested) are based on proficiency levels on standardized tests, of which there are five: Advanced, Mastery, Basic, Approaching Basic, and Unsatisfactory. The state shifted from an expectation of basic to mastery in 2015.

In high school, all public school students take state-level End-of-Course (EOC/LEAP 2025) tests and the ACT. Levels of proficiency are divided among four bands (Excellent, Good, Fair, and Needs Improvement). High school performance scores also take into account student growth (an in-depth analysis of the growth score is provided later in the report) and graduation rates.

In Brief

- Elementary, middle, and high schools across Louisiana are all given a school performance score (SPS) and a representative letter grade based on numerous factors. The measured factors differ by the grades of the school, but all are assessed on student achievement and student growth.
- 2018-2019 is the second year that a growth measure is included in the calculation of SPS and letter grades. The growth score measures not just the absolute performance of a student, but the student's academic progress. On the whole, it has helped improve many schools' SPS compared to what they would have been without accounting for growth.
- **The vast majority of the New Orleans' public schools received a C (26) or a D (24) in the 2018-19 school year.** Eight schools received an A and 11 earned a B. Twelve schools received an F, four of which closed at the end of the 2018-19 school year.
- **A majority, 55%, of NOLA-PS's public schools received an F on the assessment portion of the school performance, but 75% received an A or B on the growth assessment.** This is inline with last year's performance.
- Overall, **NOLA-PS schools received a C letter grade** from the LDOE.

How Did the State Measure Progress in 2018-19?

To measure progress, the state looked at students standardized test scores from one year to the next. Specifically, the state looked at:

- **1. Growth to Mastery:** Is the student on track to achieving Mastery on English Language Arts and Math test scores by 8th grade (if the student is in elementary or middle school) or 10th grade (if the student is in high school)?
- **2. A Value Added Model:** Did the student outperform their expected score based on a comparison to similar students state-wide?

Understanding Growth to Mastery

- All students who score below Mastery on their end-of-year English Language Arts (ELA) and Math tests from third grade onwards are given a unique, annual target that breaks down what's required for them to reach Mastery by 8th or 10th grade. For example, if Jane scored a 650 in 3rd grade and she needs to reach 750 by 8th grade, you divide the total number of points she needs to gain by the number of years she has until 8th grade. Therefore, she would need to improve 20 points each year. If she meets or exceeds that target each year, the school is awarded points.
- Once students achieve Mastery, they continue to receive growth targets towards Advanced, which is the highest designation a student can receive on end-of-year standardized tests.
- When a student scores Mastery, the school receives *at least* 85 points towards its performance score.
- When a student scores Advanced, the school receives 150 points towards its performance score.

Understanding Value Added Models

- The value added model (VAM) compares a student's test score to that of similar students across the state and then calculates an estimated score based on how the student should score on the year's test. The following factors are considered:
 - Previous standardized test scores
 - Student attendance
 - Student suspension
 - Student mobility (whether the student switched schools during the year)
 - Gifted classification
 - 504 classification
 - Special Education classification
 - Economically disadvantaged classification
 - English Language Learners
- Considering all of these factors, each student is assigned an expected score based on the average statewide performance for students with similar circumstances. For example, Jane scored 650 last year and she has a higher-than-average absence rate. Compared with her peers, it is expected that Jane will score a 645. Then, the difference between her expected score and her actual score is calculated and called the "value added." The school receives points based on students' growth compared to their peers.

Understanding How Schools Earn Points

First Step

If the student meets their Growth to Mastery target, the school receives +150 points for that student, the highest score possible. If not, move to the second step.

Second Step

If the student doesn't meet their Growth to Mastery target for the year, the student's VAM is compared to that of their peers. Schools earn points based on the student's growth percentile. Students who reach Mastery will earn a minimum of 85 points.

If the student is in the...

80 - 99th Percentile -- **+150 points**

60 - 79th Percentile -- **+100 points**

40 - 59th Percentile -- **+85 points**

20 - 39th Percentile -- **+25 points**

1 - 19th Percentile -- **+0 points**

- Schools receive points toward their progress index following a two-step process, outlined above.
- Schools' progress index scores were averaged over two years.
- Schools earn a minimum of 85 points per student if the student achieves Mastery.
- Schools' progress points are assigned for ELA and math end-of-course tests.
- If a student was at Advanced in the previous year, the school receives +150 if they maintain their Advanced score.

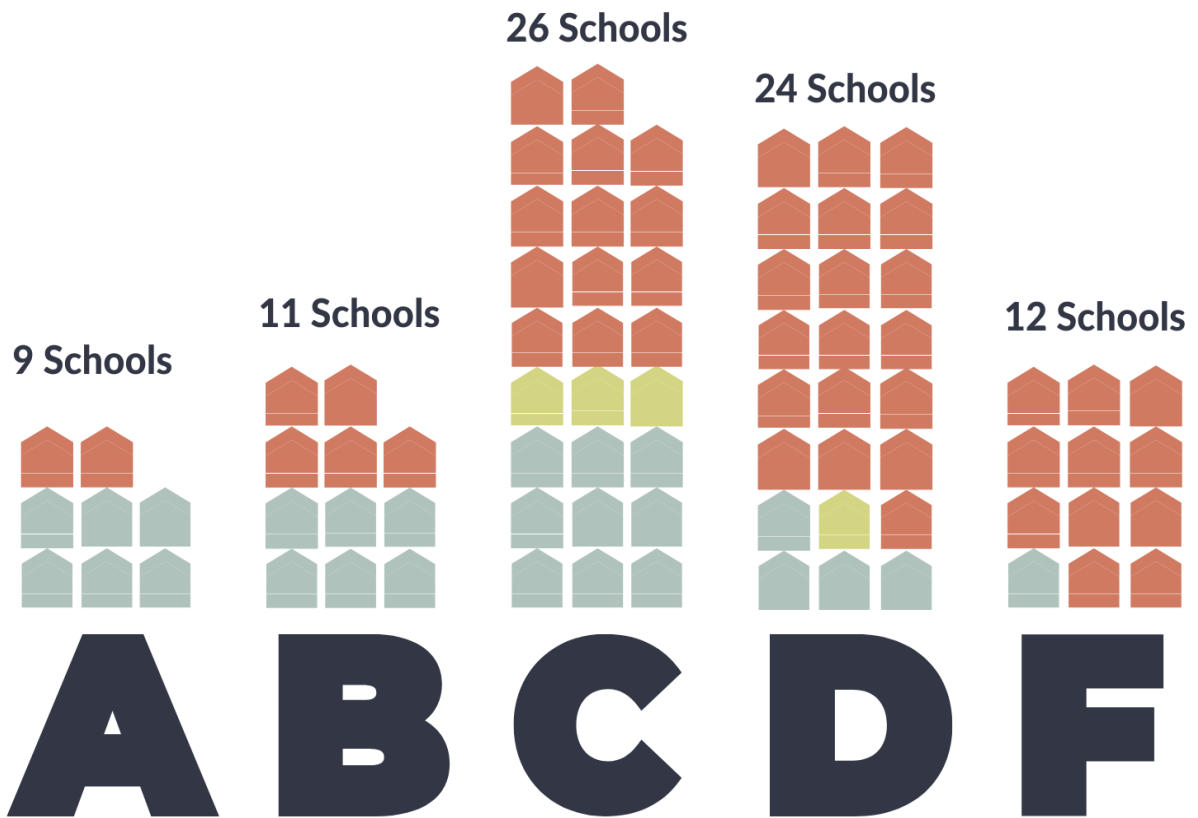
Summary Points




1. Schools earn progress points for each student either through 1) growth towards Mastery or 2) relative growth compared to similar peers. Schools can earn 150 points (or an A+) based on either category.
2. While this approach rewards schools that make improvements toward Mastery among all students, it also rewards schools who serve high-achieving students, such as magnet schools, if they improve or maintain high performance.
3. In 2018-19, the progress index accounted for 25% of elementary school performance scores, 25% of middle school performance scores, and 12.5% of high school performance scores.

SCHOOL LETTER GRADES IN



Overall School Grades for Orleans Parish in SY 18-19

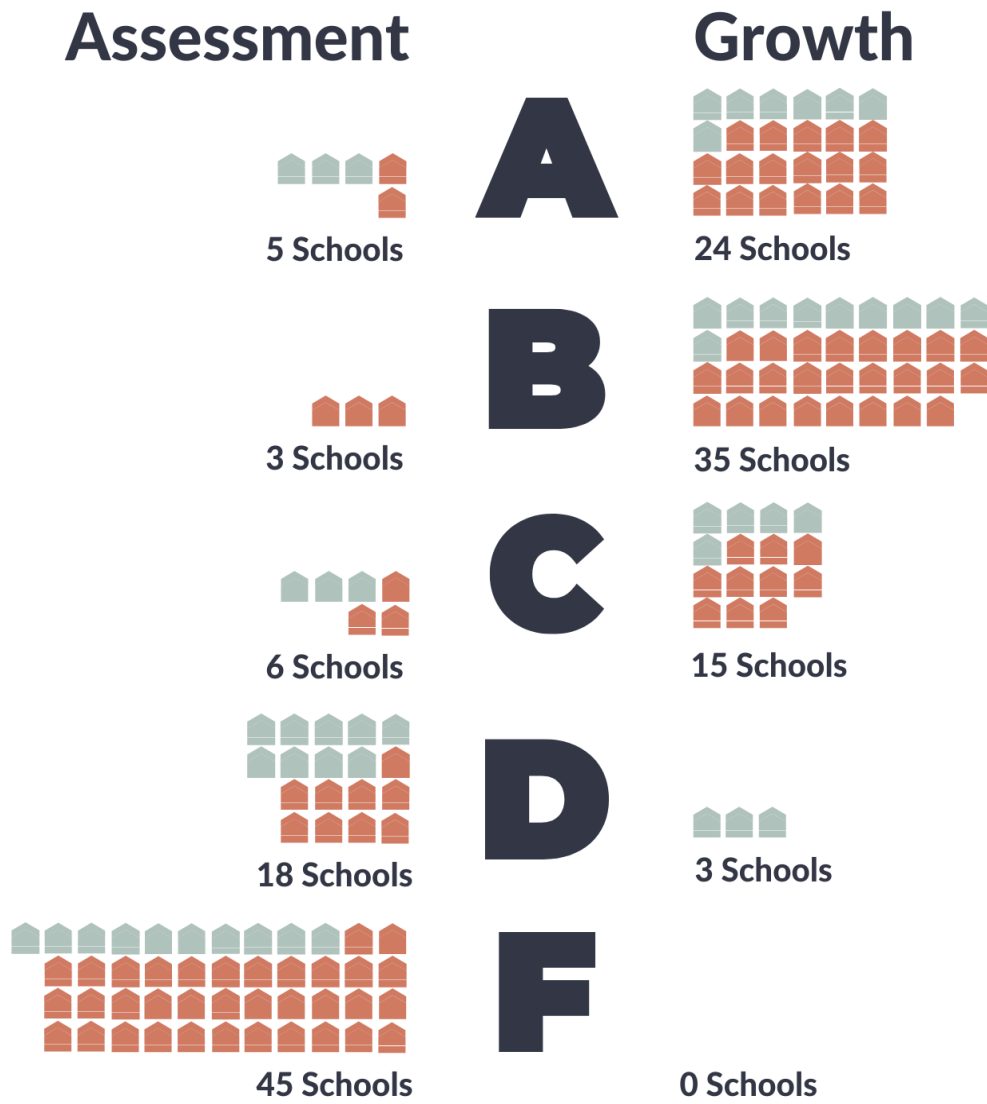


-  Elementary/Middle Schools
-  High Schools (includes K-12 schools)
-  Alternative Schools

NEW ORLEANS: 2018-19



Assessment and Growth Grades for Orleans Parish in SY 18-19

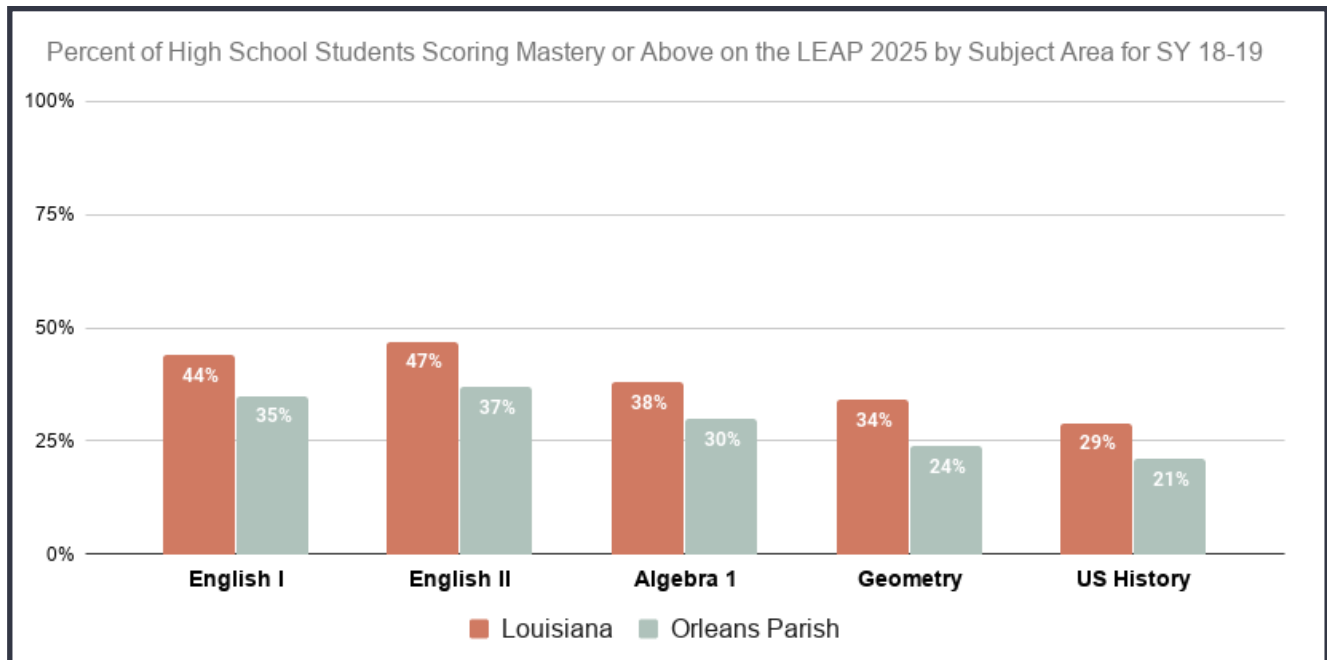


- Elementary/Middle Schools
- High Schools (includes K-12 schools)

*Alternative Schools are assessed using a unique funding formula that does not provide grades for assessment and growth

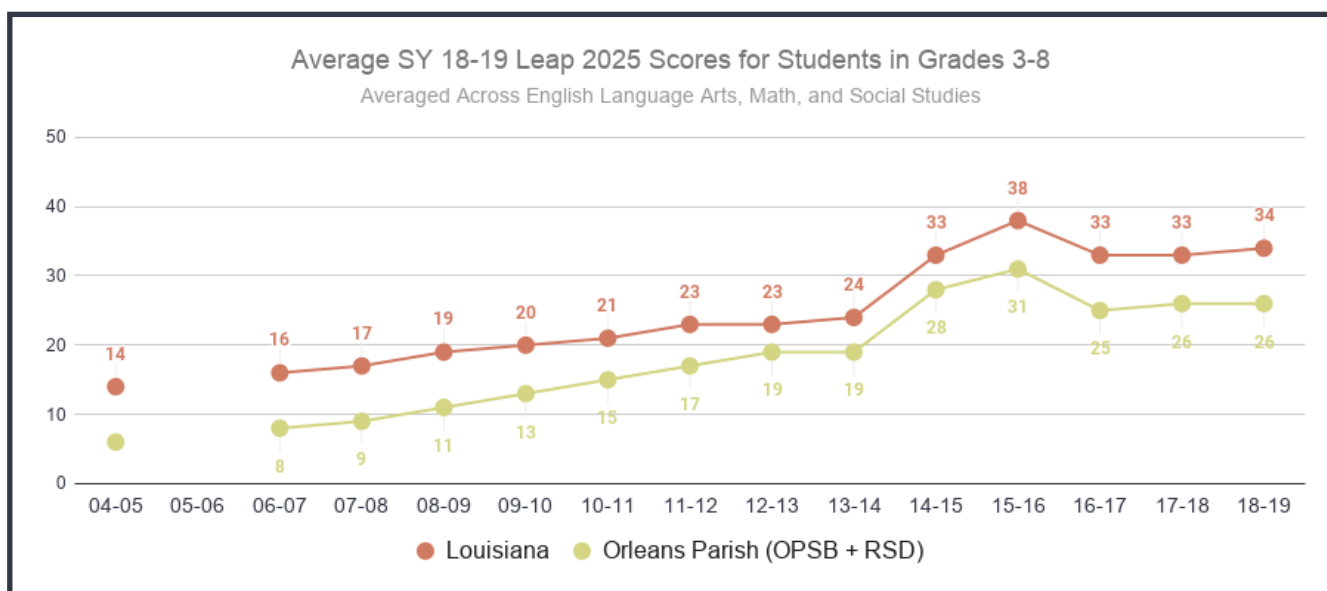
SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

LEAP 2025 Scores for High Schools



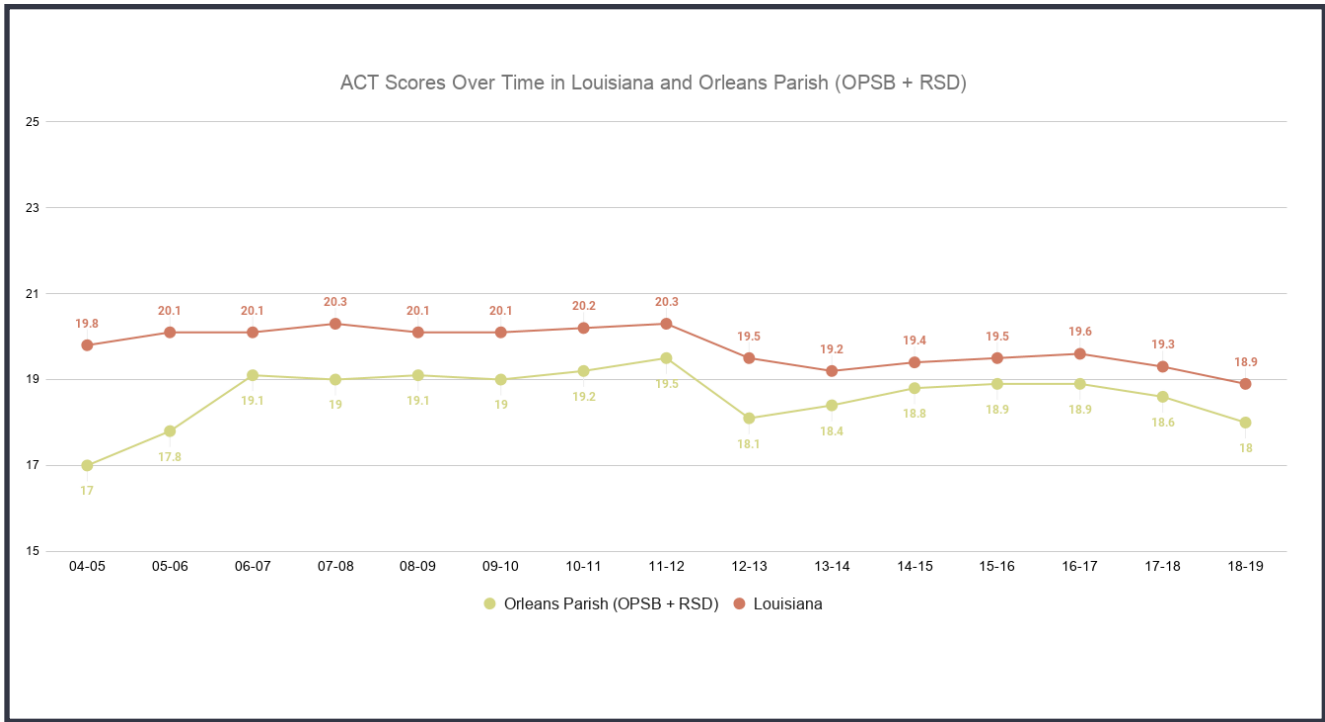
Over the past five years, the LDOE has evolved its assessment of student proficiency in key academic subjects. The state transitioned away from End-of-Course (EOC) tests to LEAP 2025 tests in all subjects. Today, all students in grades 3 through 12, except for those with significant cognitive disabilities, take LEAP 2025 exams. The exams are given in the following subjects: English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, Algebra I, Geometry, English I, English II, Biology, and U.S. History. The LEAP 2025 tests are fully aligned to Louisiana's standards and also help Louisiana educators to compare student performance in the state with student performance across the U.S.

LEAP 2025 Scores for Grades 3-8

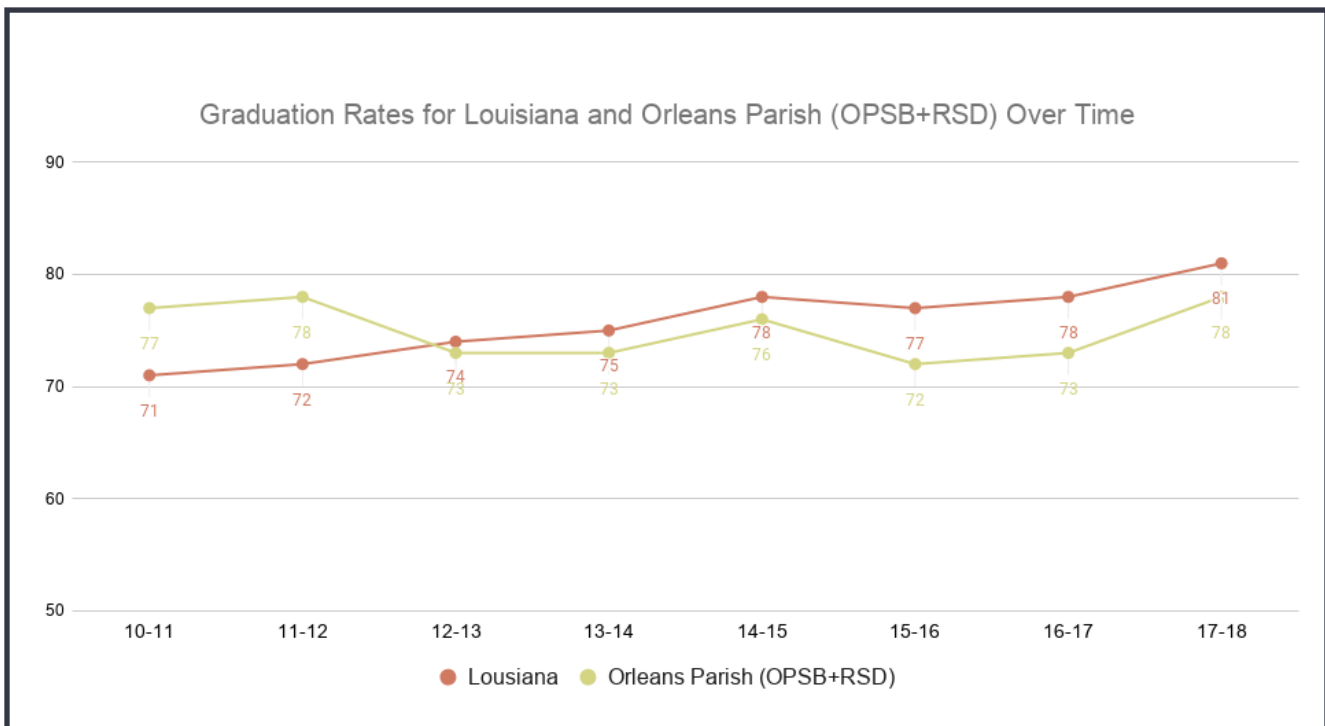


ANCE IN NEW ORLEANS

ACT Scores



Graduation Rates



TRANSPORTATION

How do students get to and from school?

One of the unique aspects of public education in New Orleans is the open enrollment policy. This policy allows students to attend almost any school in the city, regardless of where they live. In most school districts in the U.S., public school students attend the school closest to their home. The open enrollment policy has been in place in New Orleans for over a decade and aims to remove geographic barriers to educational opportunities.

In Louisiana, there are no standard requirements for the transportation of students to and from school. State law does, however, require that public school districts provide transportation for students who live beyond one mile from their school. Federal law also requires that transportation must be provided for all students with a documented disability – even if that means providing individualized transportation.

In New Orleans, NOLA-PS requires all of its schools to provide students with either free direct transportation or public transportation vouchers. Public transportation is only an option for schools serving students in Grade 7 and above; elementary schools must provide free transportation by an approved vehicle (generally a yellow bus). BESE-authorized schools in the city are also required to provide free transportation for students that can include buses, shuttles, or public transportation passes.

The city's open enrollment policy does contribute in part to higher per pupil transportation costs for schools in New Orleans as compared to those elsewhere in Louisiana. Taken together, schools in New Orleans spent an average of \$901 per pupil on transportation, compared to the state average of \$718.*

** Note: All financial and transportation funding data is from the 2017-2018 school year, whereas the rest of the data in the report is from the 2018-2019 school year. 2017-2018 is the most recent available data from the LDOE for finances and transportation.*

\$901

Average per pupil spending on transportation in New Orleans public schools in 2017-2018.

\$718

Average per pupil spending on transportation in Louisiana public schools in 2017-2018.

FUNDING

How are schools funded in New Orleans?

In New Orleans, as is true for the rest of the U.S., K-12 public education funding comes from a combination of federal, state, and local allocations. Local and state tax dollars are by far the largest source of funding for public education across the country.

As of 2015, in Louisiana, 44% of all K-12 education funding came from state tax dollars, 43% from local tax dollars, and 13% from federal grants. Federal grants are usually administered through the LDOE, which then distributes the funds directly to schools and local education agencies (LEAs). The LDOE distributes state and local funding through the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP), a funding formula that determines how much funding districts and schools receive based on a per-pupil basis.

The MFP factors in student enrollment in a school or district, as well as student demographics such as family income, and English Language Learners (ELL), Gifted & Talented, and Special Needs status. Across the state and in New Orleans, charter schools, like traditional districts, are also able to raise additional philanthropic dollars through donations and grants. As shown below, schools in New Orleans have higher than average per pupil expenditures than Louisiana schools as a whole.

Differentiated Funding

Beginning in 2016, schools in New Orleans under the governance of the OPSB also use differentiated funding, a student-based allocation formula. This funding model is designed to provide schools serving a higher percentage of exceptional need students with more funding to support the costs of their education. Under the formula, schools receive weighted funding on a per-pupil basis for serving Special Education, Gifted and Talented, ELL, and Over-age Students. The formula takes into account the severity of the disability of the needs of special education students, allocating funding to schools through five tiers based on the type of exceptionality of the students and the service minutes necessary to educate them. The use of the formula does not mean NOLA-PS schools receive more money. Rather, it is a way to distribute the existing funds more equitably. The formula also received a phase-in period in which no school received less than 98% of the funds it had in the past, so as to protect schools serving fewer special education students from sudden funding cuts.

Last year, NOLA-PS Superintendent Henderson Lewis and the OPSB approved revisions to the city's differentiated funding formula that will go into effect next year. The revised formula will provide additional funding for schools educating students at high risk of dropping out, as well as directing more funding to schools for Gifted and Talented and ELL students.



ENROLLMENT & STUDENTS

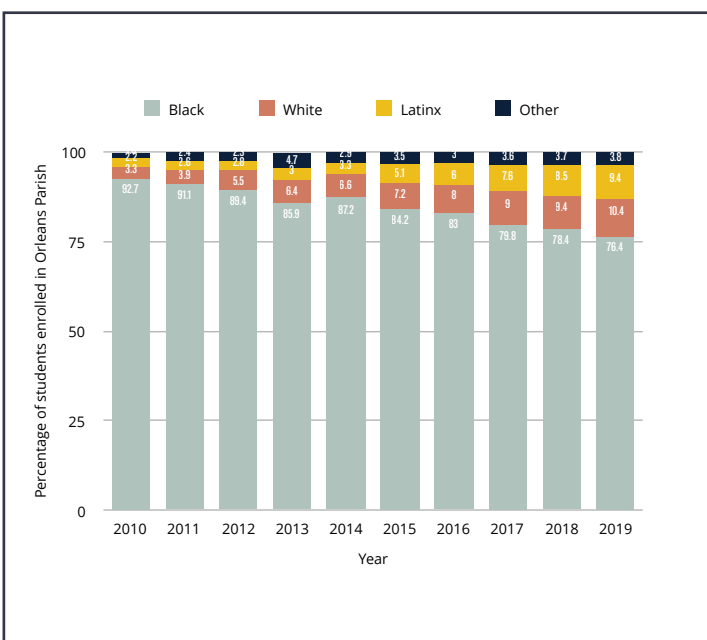
Who attends public schools in New Orleans?

As of October 2019, there were 49,574 K-12 students enrolled in public schools in New Orleans. Students and families apply to schools through a common enrollment system called OneApp (the process is explained more fully later in the report). The city's schools serve primarily students of color (89.6%) and/or students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (83.4%). While the majority of the city's public school students are Black (76.4%), there has been an increase in the number of White and Latinx students in New Orleans public schools in recent years. Enrollment in New Orleans public schools remains largely segregated along racial and socioeconomic lines. The relatively small percentage of White students in New Orleans public schools are largely concentrated in A and B schools, and selective admissions schools (75% of White students attend an A or B school). Meanwhile, fewer than 5% of White students attend a D or F school. Conversely, almost half of Black and Latinx students (45% and 46%, respectively) attend C schools, while another 30% of Black students and 20% of Latinx students attend D/F schools. Less than a quarter (24%) of Black students and roughly one third (33%) of Latinx students attend A/B schools.

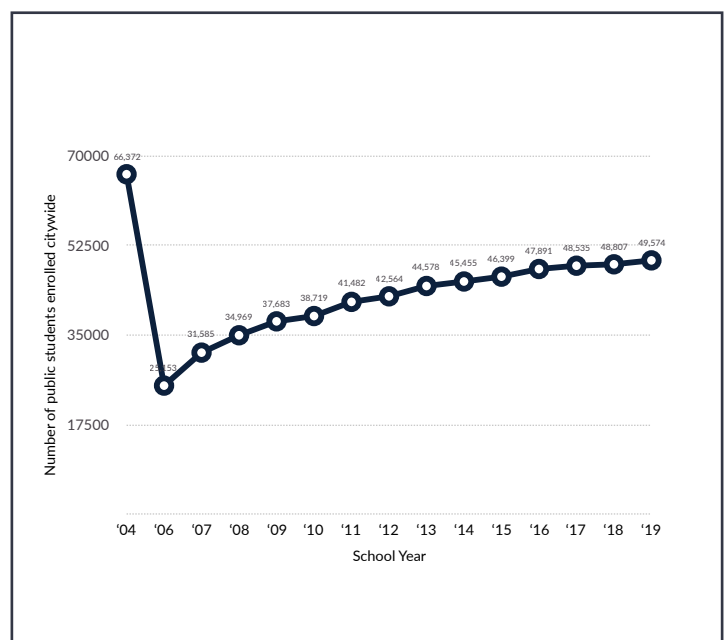
New Orleans public schools have been segregated along racial and socioeconomic lines for decades. While the past decade has brought some progress in the racial and socioeconomic integration of the city's public schools, it has been a small shift rather than widespread change. Another factor contributing to school segregation is that the city has a number of high-performing, selective admissions schools that have been in operation for decades. These schools require students to pass an academic test to be eligible for enrollment and are not currently a part of the city's common enrollment system. They have historically served an over-representation of White students from higher-income households and continue to do so today.

Finally, New Orleans has one of the highest private school enrollment rates in the country, with an estimated 25% of the city's students enrolled in private schools. A notable number of the city's middle and upper class families send their children to private schools, further contributing to the over-representation of students from low-income households in New Orleans public schools.

Enrollment By Race Over Time



Citywide Enrollment Over Time



In Brief

- Enrollment in New Orleans public schools continues to increase but remains below pre-Katrina levels.
- Nearly all public school students in the city now attend public charter schools.
- The vast majority of New Orleans public school students are Black (76.4%) and, as has been the trend in recent years, the percentage of White and Latinx students enrolled in New Orleans public schools continues to increase.
- The vast majority of New Orleans public school students are from low-income households.
- Approximately 5.5% of New Orleans public school students are English Language Learners. This is higher than the state average but considerably lower than the national average.
- Inequities persist with regards to accessing schools with high letter grades. The relatively small percentage of White students in New Orleans public schools is largely concentrated in A and B schools (75% of White students attend an A or B school). Meanwhile, less than 5% of White students attend a D or F school.

HOW DOES ONEAPP WORK?

New Orleans students can apply to enroll in any school in the city, regardless of where they live. Families must complete the online OneApp application in order to apply to most schools. They can list and rank up to eight schools on their application. Families will be assigned to a school through the process explained below.

1. After completing the OneApp application, each student is randomly assigned a lottery number. As long as it is completed on time, the date you complete your OneApp application has no impact on the lottery number you receive or your chances of getting your top choice school.
2. Eligible students are then assigned a priority group for each school they have listed. Priority groups are based on the number of priority categories students meet and the weight of those priorities. There is one district-wide priority – closing school. Schools determine the other priorities and the weight of those priorities. See the next panel for more detailed information on school priorities.
3. A student's school ranking, priority group, and lottery number are all used to assign a student to a school. First, students are ordered based on their priority groups. Second, students are ordered within each priority group based on their lottery number. Third, students are matched with the school they have ranked the highest that has space for them based on their priority group and lottery number.
4. If a student is provided a placement during the main round and they want to attend that school, they must register at the school or risk losing their seat. A student can accept the placement and participate in round 2 if they wish. If a student is not placed at a school during the main round, they can try to enter new preferences in round 2.
5. During round 2, NOLA-PS provides families with a list of schools with projected availability. Families select their schools and rank them, just as they did in the main round. If a family does not have a placement after round 2, the family can participate in open enrollment.

Glossary of Terms

Siblings: Students who share a household and/or a parent or guardian (Superintendent's Admissions, Transfers, and Re-admissions Procedures, 2018).

Family Link: The OneApp uses Family Link to keep siblings together when they are applying for spots at the same school. Families will need to list the same schools in the same order on each child's application in order for Family Link to work.

Feeder School: A feeder school is a lower grade school that is affiliated with a higher grade school. Feeder schools are especially common in large charter networks with lower grade and higher grade schools.

ONEAPP PRIORITY: DEEP DIVE

What are priority groups and how do they work?

If a student gets placed at a selected school, it's partially determined by their priority group number.

School- and district-level priorities determine how students get assigned to priority groups. Priority groups are ordered based on the rank of each priority. The district-level priority – closing school priority – outweighs all school-level priorities. As a result, students with the closing school priority will be in priority group 1 at all schools. Schools then determine ranking order for their priorities.

Priorities can be stacked, but the weight of each priority takes precedent over stacked priorities.

For example, a school has some applicants with a closing school priority, some applicants with a sibling priority, and some applicants with sibling and geographic zone priorities. Students with closing school priority will be in priority group 1, followed by applicants with sibling and geographic zone priority in group 2, and applicants with only sibling priority in group 3.

Students are sorted within priority groups by their lottery number.

For example, if a school has five open seats and there are five students in priority group 1, only the students in priority group 1 will be assigned to the school. If a school has four open seats and there are five students in priority group 1, only the first four students will be assigned based on their lottery numbers.

Top district and school-level priorities

District-level priority: Closing Schools

Students who attend a school that is scheduled to close by the end of that school year receive closing school priority. In order to qualify, students must be attending the closing school at the time of the application deadline. Also, this priority only applies to closing schools. School transformations, turn-arounds, or phase-outs do not qualify.

School-level priority: Siblings

All schools give a priority to potential students with siblings at the school. Students receive a sibling priority if they have a sibling attending that school when they submit an application. The sibling must be scheduled to attend the school the following year for the sibling priority to take effect.

School-level priority: Geographic zone

Nearly all elementary and middle schools give a limited geographic priority. Students receive a geographic priority if they live in a pre-designated area around the school. There are two geographic priorities: half-mile, for students living within a half-mile radius of the school, and zone, for students residing in the nearby zip code(s). The geographic zone priority is not provided to everyone who qualifies. Anywhere from 50-75% of students eligible for the priority will receive it depending on the school.

School-level priority: Feeder school

Some schools give priority to students previously enrolled in a feeder school. Feeder priority is only given in transition years (e.g. Kindergarten, 6th grade, 9th grade).

ONEAPP FAQs

Q: If I complete my Round 1 OneApp early, do I have a better chance of getting my top choice school(s)?

A: No. It doesn't matter when you complete the OneApp, as long as you complete it before the Round 1 deadline.

Q: Do I have a better chance of getting my top school if I only list one school?

A: No. You should list all of the schools that you would like your student to attend, and no schools that you would not like them to attend. The number of schools you list doesn't impact your likelihood of getting your top choice(s).

Q: Can I stay at my current school if I don't like my assigned school after completing the OneApp?

A: No. If you are placed into a school you listed on the OneApp, you lose your seat at your current school. Never complete a OneApp unless you're willing to lose your spot at your current school for one of your new schools.

Q: Can I change my selected schools after submitting a OneApp?

A: Yes. If you change your mind about your selected schools, you can submit a revised OneApp as long as it's before the deadline.

Q: If my child gets placed in a school, are all of my other children guaranteed places at the same school?

A: No. The OneApp works to keep families together using their sibling priority system but there is no guarantee that all of your children will get placed at the same school.

Q: Why didn't I get placed at any school in Round 1?

A: At some schools in the city, the demand for seats is much higher than the number of available seats (ex: last year, one school had 749 applicants for 14 kindergarden seats). If you only listed high-demand schools on your application, it is possible that you won't receive a placement in Round 1.

Q: Can I use the OneApp for early childhood education?

A: If you are eligible for Headstart, you can use the OneApp to access early childhood education seats at daycares and early childhood centers across the city. There are a number of infant seats available.

EDUCATORS

Who teaches New Orleans' public school students?

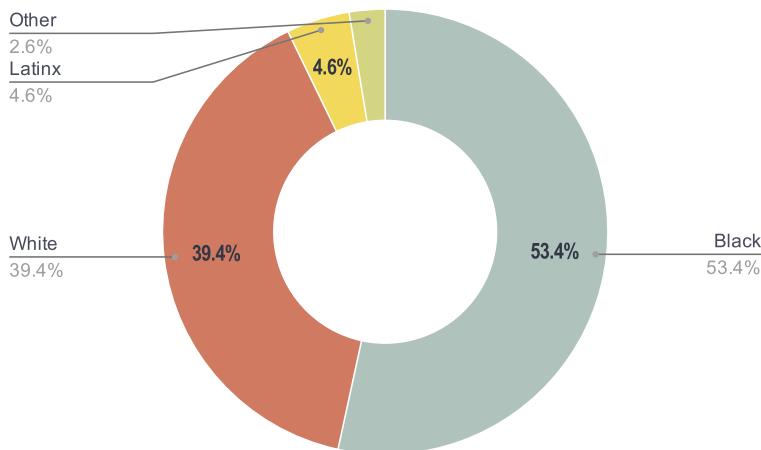
Staffing decisions are one of the clearest ways in which New Orleans charter schools exercise more autonomy than schools in traditional districts across the U.S. Employment decisions in New Orleans are made at the school rather than district level. This means that choices around hiring, firing, professional development, and salaries are made by the leaders of individual schools or CMOs, rather than by the district.

Over the past 15 years, the racial demographics of educators in city schools have changed significantly. In 2004-2005, 71% of teachers in the school were Black. In 2018-2019, by contrast, of the over 3,000 teachers working with students in New Orleans' public schools, 53.4% were Black and 39.4% were White. Overall, teachers in New Orleans are predominantly (73.5%) female. When it comes to the education level

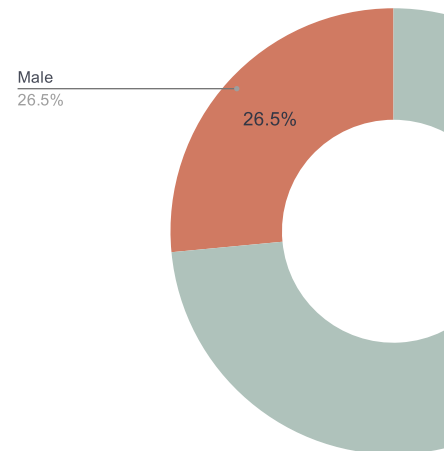
of New Orleans' public school teachers, two-thirds have a Bachelor's Degree, while another 32.3% have a Master's Degree or more. Half of the city's teachers have five years of experience or less. Another 21.0% have between six and ten years of experience. Only 16.8% of the city's educators have more than 15 years of experience.

There is a great degree of variability among schools with regards to the racial and experiential make-up of the teaching staff. Some schools or CMOs are staffed almost exclusively by Black educators, while others have almost all White educators. We also see variability with regards to teacher experience, with the city's selective admissions schools employing more experienced teachers (>15 years) at three times the citywide average.

Educators by Race



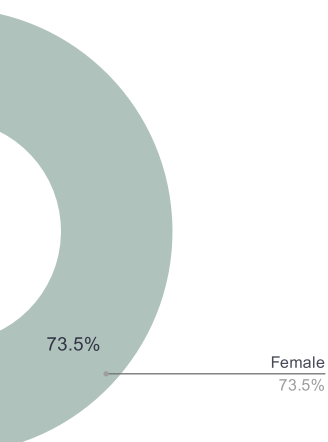
Educators by Gender



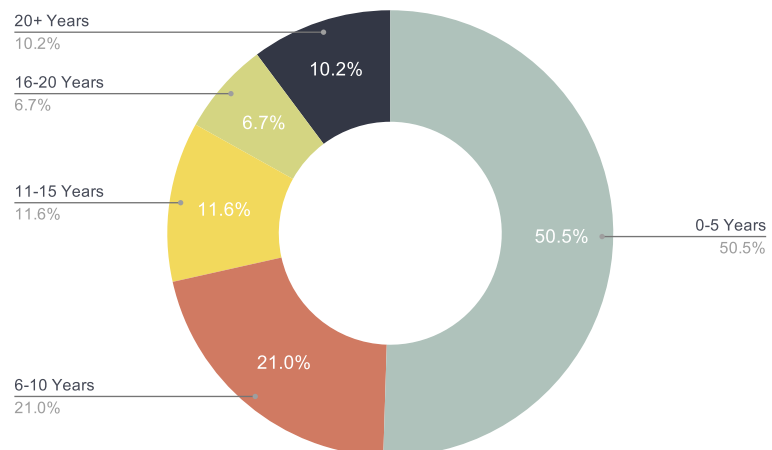
In Brief

- There were **3,118 teachers** working in New Orleans' public schools in 2018-2019.
- **The majority (53.4%) of the city's teachers are Black**, which is consistent with recent years.
- Nearly **three-fourths (73.5%) of the city's teachers are women**.
- Half of the city's teachers are within their first five years of teaching.
- There is great variability between schools with regards to teacher race and experience level.

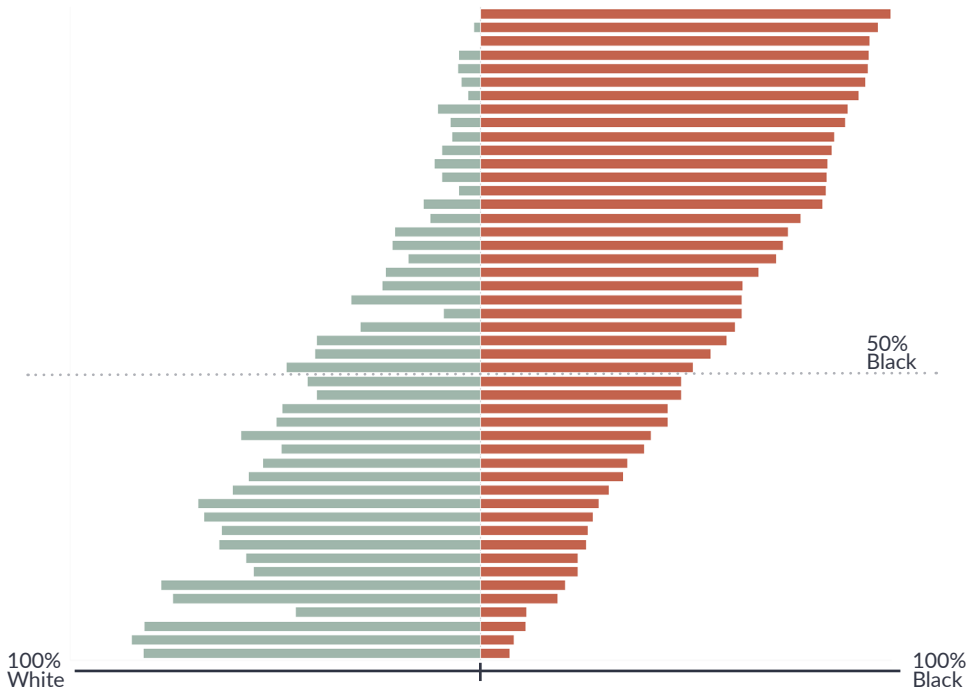
Gender



Educators by Experience in Years



Educators' Race across LEAs



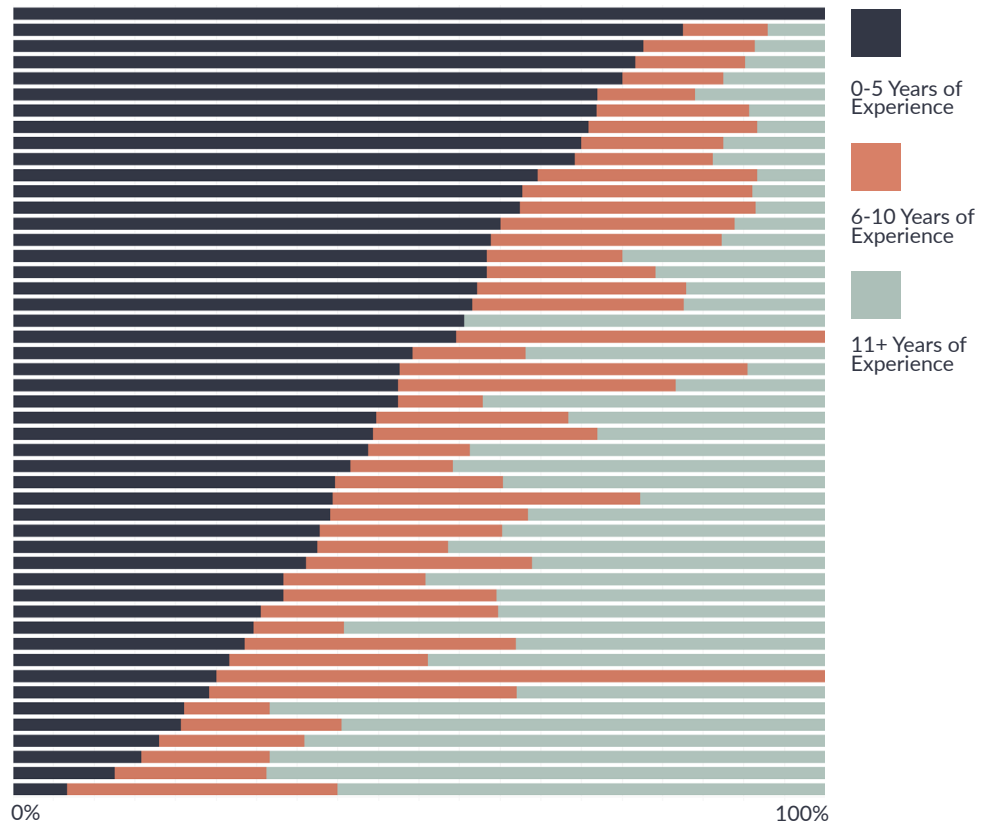
About This Graph

The graph to the left shows the proportion of Black and White teachers by Orleans Parish LEA. There is great variation among LEAs when it comes to racial diversity among educators. Some have a force of educators that is more than 95% Black. Others have educators that are more than 85% White. Please visit cowendata.org for a complete breakdown of educators' racial composition by LEA.

Educators' Experience across LEAs

About This Graph

The graph to the right shows educators' experience level arranged by Orleans Parish LEA. More than half of New Orleans' educators are in the early stages of their career, with five or less years of experience. The graph shows that the proportion of early career educators varies widely by LEA. Please visit cowendata.org for a complete interactive breakdown of educators' experience by LEA.



PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE NEWS

From school openings and closures to significant alterations of policies, curriculum, accountability, and oversight, K-12 education in New Orleans has been in a perennial state of evolution over the last 15 years. These changes can be difficult to track, so in this section, we offer a brief overview of the stories capturing headlines through the start of the 2019-20 school year. Our aim is to provide an archival overview of the key issues in public education that received attention from the local media. We recognize that there is a great deal happening in New Orleans public education that is not captured in these headlines, or in the local media landscape. However, we believe that acknowledging the stories that did capture public attention will help readers understand some of the contextual issues and personal stories making headlines in New Orleans this year.

Leadership Changes at the State Level

In a notable change for the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), in January 2020, Superintendent John White announced that he would be leaving his position in March 2020. White had served in his role for eight years, working under two gubernatorial administrations, and leading many of the education reform initiatives in New Orleans. BESE will be tasked with finding his replacement.¹

Systemwide Needs Program

In January 2019, the OPSB and NOLA-PS approved \$9 million in funding over the next three years to be directed at some of the most critical areas of public education in the city. The funds will be used mainly to support teacher training and enhanced mental health and behavioral support services for students. The program is a result of 2019 state legislation to target districtwide improvements in the city's schools overseen by NOLA-PS.²

Special Education

How schools serve special education students has been a focus for those involved in the city's education system over the past decade. In 2015, the LDOE signed a consent decree with the federal government designed to improve the quality of services and education provided to students with special needs in New Orleans. According to the court monitor of the case, city schools have largely been compliant with that agreement and the LDOE has instituted monitoring of special education in select schools citywide.

Challenges do remain, however: in November 2019, NOLA-PS cited three schools for their underservice of special education students.^{3,4} Additionally, the independent monitors overseeing the special education

1 Sentell, Will, 'John White leaving top state education post: 'Greatest blessing and privilege of my career'; *The Advocate*, January 8, 2020. https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/education/article_81d73f70-316b-11ea-b0ca-67fb123cffe.html.

2 NOLA-PS, Press Release, 'OPSB Votes to Invest \$9M to Support Teacher Workforce & Critical Student Needs,' January 17, 2020. <https://nolapublicschools.com/news/press-releases/opsb-votes-to-invest-9m-to-support-teacher-workforce-and-critical-student-needs>.

3 Hasselle, Della, 'Audubon, Lusher and Cohen schools all given warnings for violating special education rules,' *The Advocate*, November 4, 2019. https://www.nola.com/news/education/article_8a5baa9c-ff51-11e9-8751-b7c11b36f171.html.

4 Jewson, Marta, 'Sunshine parents' demand greater special education accountability at Bricolage Academy,' *The Lens*, January 8, 2020. <https://thelensnola.org/2020/01/08/sunshine-parents-demand-greater-special-education-accountability-at-bricolage-academy/>.

PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE NEWS

federal consent decree recently criticized the state for making errors in selecting which schools were monitored for their work with special education students.¹

Extension Academy Pilot

In 2019, NOLA-PS, in conjunction with YouthForce NOLA, a non-profit organization focused on improved career readiness for New Orleans high school students, became the first partnership in the state to gain approval for an extension academy pilot program. The program is a new initiative from the LDOE that is geared towards reducing student debt and assisting high school graduates in finding jobs. In the program, students embark on an alternative graduation model that allows them to stay in high school for a fifth year during which they can learn career skills and earn college credits.²

Transportation

New Orleans' open enrollment policy allows students to attend almost any public school in the city, regardless of where they live. The main benefit of this policy is that students are not bound by geographic restrictions when attempting to find a school. But it does add logistical complexities for both schools and families in determining how to transport students to schools in a manner that is cost-effective, safe, and timely.

Each school or charter management organization (CMO) must coordinate bus routes and work with private contractors to offer transportation to students. Additionally, in early 2019, New Orleans Mayor Latoya

Cantrell signed an ordinance passed by the City Council that required all school buses, drivers, and aides to be permitted by the city's Ground Transportation Bureau. In late 2019, a serious school bus crash put these issues into sharp focus and led to increased oversight and compliance monitoring by NOLA-PS. As of January 2019, 86% of buses in the city had passed inspections.³ Additionally, NOLA-PS has also launched a working group aimed at increasing quality and reducing costs for school transportation.

School Accountability

One of the central accountability tasks of NOLA-PS is to shut down failing or low-performing schools or to turn them over to other charter operators. Advocates for school closure argue that students should not attend failing schools and that charter schools that fail to meet performance or financial accountability measures must be held responsible or else the city's approach to education will be ineffective. However, school closures can also be disruptive to families, students, educators, and alumni of schools with historical connections in the city.

In 2019, OPSB Superintendent Henderson Lewis decided to revoke the charter contracts of two schools at the end of the 2019-2020 school year: Mary D. Coghill Charter School and Joseph A. Craig Charter School. Despite some OPSB board members opposing the closures, there were insufficient votes to overturn Lewis' decisions.⁴ However, neither school will be shut down: next year, the operators of Homer A. Plessy will operate Craig, while NOLA-PS will directly run Coghill.⁵

1 Jewson, Marta, 'Court-appointed special education monitors detail how the state picked the wrong New Orleans schools for federal consent decree scrutiny', *The Lens*, October 2, 2019. <https://thelensnola.org/2019/10/02/court-appointed-special-education-monitors-detail-how-over-two-years-the-state-picked-the-wrong-new-orleans-schools-for-federal-consent-decree-scrutiny/>.

2 LDOE, Press Release entitled, "LOUISIANA AIMS TO EXPAND DEBT-FREE OPPORTUNITIES FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO EARN CAREER SKILLS, CREDIT TOWARD COLLEGE DEGREE", October 28, 2019. <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/newsroom/news-releases/2019/10/28/louisiana-aims-to-expand-debt-free-opportunities-for-high-school-students-to-earn-career-skills-credit-toward-college-degree>

3 Hammer, David, '86 percent of Orleans school buses have now passed inspection', *WWLTV*, January 16, 2020. <https://www.wwltv.com/article/news/local/orleans/86-percent-of-orleans-school-buses-have-now-passed-inspection/289-a54b7abc-36c6-43da-b711-f12c9763f8df>.

4 Hasselle, Della, 'Charters for two New Orleans schools will not be renewed this year after contentious board meeting', *The Advocate*, December 19, 2019. https://www.nola.com/news/education/article_1eef3aa4-22cd-11ea-a580-ef775e951d01.html.

5 Hasselle, Della, 'Mary D. Coghill School board sues to block loss of its charter in New Orleans', *nola.com*, February 12, 2020. https://www.nola.com/news/education/article_8877ae9e-4dc4-11ea-8548-af944f4bda98.html.

Teacher Shortages

New Orleans, like many districts and states across the country, is facing a teacher shortage. There is no single cause of this shortage: a study by New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO) found that over a two-year period, 29% of the city's teachers left their jobs due to a variety of reasons including low pay and a desire for more support from school administrators. For several years, NSNO has been leading a local effort, enhanced with federal funding, to address these shortages by increasing and improving teacher training programs for people of color at local universities and training providers. The federal grants supporting the training could run out this year. Earlier this year, to address the problem, the OPSB and NOLA-PS voted to approve a multi-million dollar, multi-year funding proposal to support ongoing teacher retention and recruitment efforts in a systemwide needs funding effort outlined earlier in this section.¹

Additional Tax Revenue

In November 2019, the OPSB and NOLA-PS voted to keep property tax rates steady. Due to increasing property values in the city, this helped to ensure a boost to local funding for schools even as the total amount of state funding set to reach schools was set to decrease.²

¹ Hasselle, Della, 'Orleans School Board approves funding to keep teacher pipelines open, further address retention,' nola.com, January 16, 2020. https://www.nola.com/news/education/article_945b1b16-38b0-11ea-8db3-13eba8adb032.html.

² Hasselle, Della, 'Orleans Parish School Board votes for a full roll-forward in millage rate; 'Every penny is needed', The Advocate, November 19, 2019. https://www.nola.com/news/education/article_6dbf10e6-0b1c-11ea-884a-3bab215521fd.html.



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