



The State of Public Education in New Orleans

2010 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 of experts and resources available at Tulane University. Our work is in the following key areas:



Applied Research



Public Policy



University-Based Initiatives



College Readiness Programs

Applied Research at the Cowen Institute

The Cowen Institute's Applied Research staff serve 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 (mainly finance and facilities), 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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March 2010

In the nearly five years since Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans, a fundamentally different public education system has emerged. Our city's new system of public schools, while still facing many challenges, is nonetheless improving public education opportunities in New Orleans.

The *2010 State of Public Education in New Orleans* report, written and published by the Scott S. Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives at Tulane University, provides information about how well the current system of schools is progressing, based on available quantitative data, interviews with school leaders and education stakeholders, and comprehensive surveys of New Orleans voters and public school parents. The report also offers a set of successes that schools have achieved over the two years since our last report was published, as well as the key challenges that still face public education in New Orleans. We hope this year's report will again serve as a definitive source of information about public education in New Orleans for policymakers, educators, parents, nonprofit organizations, the media, and the community at large. The full report and the executive summary can be downloaded on our website at <http://education.tulane.edu>. If you would like to receive additional printed copies of the report, please call 504-274-3690 or email coweninfo@tulane.edu.

Like no other city in the United States, New Orleans has had and continues to have the opportunity to rethink, rebuild, and reinvent our public schools so that all students are provided with a high-quality academic and developmental experience. The future of New Orleans rests in its children—therefore, it is our moral, civic, and economic responsibility to improve public schools for the next generation. This goal will not be achieved overnight, but with patience and perseverance it is possible.

Thank you for letting the Cowen Institute be a part of this ongoing transformation effort, and thanks to all of you who have dedicated yourselves to supporting and improving public education in New Orleans.

Sincerely,



Shannon L. Jones
Executive Director



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The State of Public Education in New Orleans

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Executive Summary



In the nearly five years since Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans, a fundamentally different public education system has emerged.

The *2010 State of Public Education in New Orleans* report provides information about how well the current system of schools is progressing based on available quantitative data, interviews with school leaders and education stakeholders, and comprehensive surveys of New Orleans voters and public school parents. The report also offers a number of successes that schools have achieved as well as key challenges that still face public education in New Orleans.

System Overview

The leadership of public schools in New Orleans is currently divided between the state-run Recovery School District (RSD), the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB), and a number of non-profit charter school operators.

- In the 2009-2010 school year there are 88 public schools open in New Orleans, including 37 traditional schools and 51 charter schools. The majority of public school students, 61 percent, are enrolled in charters.
- Over 90 percent of public school students in New Orleans are African American. The number of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch in New Orleans was 82 percent in October 2009, well above the Louisiana average of 66 percent and the national average of 41 percent.
- The Cowen Institute's 2009 poll of voters and parents revealed general support for the major post-Katrina education reforms in New Orleans, including the state takeover of public schools in New Orleans and the expansion of charter schools.

Operations and Administration

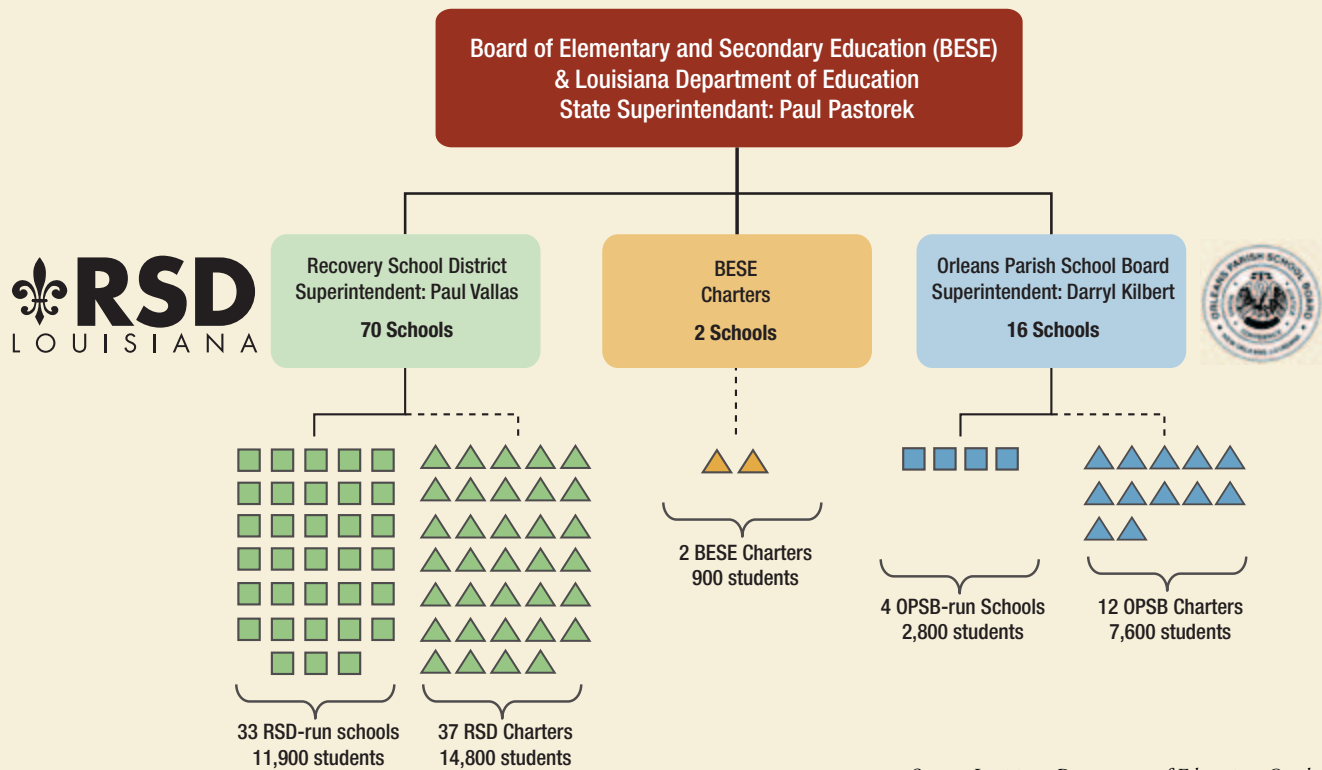
Though school operations were often chaotic in the first few years after Katrina, each school year since the storm has brought further stability to the daily operations of both traditional and charter schools in New Orleans. However, significant operational and administrative challenges remain.

School Facilities

- The quality of school facilities was cited as a major challenge by the vast majority of the public school leaders in New Orleans interviewed by the Cowen Institute.
- Significant activity is underway in school facility planning and construction. The School Facilities Master Plan, approved in November 2008, will spend \$700 million renovating and rebuilding campuses during the fully-financed first phase of the plan. The remaining phases are estimated to cost approximately \$1 billion and remain unfinanced.

Public School Governance in New Orleans

TOTAL: 88 Schools & 38,000 Students



School Finances

- School financing for operations is another major challenge cited by charter and traditional school leaders, district administrators, and school support organizations. Many charter school advocates are concerned about the sustainability of the charter model given the current per-pupil funding available through the state.
- Despite many claims, there is little evidence to date that charters have more resources on average than traditional RSD-run or OPSB-run schools.
- Without more recurring funding or significant operational savings, public schools in New Orleans will face financial problems going forward.

School Choice

- All public schools in New Orleans are now open to any student residing in the city without regard to their area of residence or attendance zone (though some schools have other admission requirements).
- In the Cowen Institute's recent poll, both voters and parents strongly supported school choice, agreeing that parents should be able to send their children to any school in the city.
- Most parents also responded that it was easy to register their child for school and that they were able to enroll their child in either their first or second choice school.
- Even so, nearly a third of polled parents said that they tried to enroll their child in their neighborhood school but were unable to.

Transportation

- The high cost of transportation created by a system of choice was cited as a major challenge by RSD charter leaders and administrators in the two school districts.
- The public clearly values choice while also valuing the ability to attend neighborhood schools. If education policymakers can work out a way to balance these two competing preferences, it could free up more money for instruction.

Human Capital

- Unlike the school system before Hurricane Katrina, charter schools hire their employees at the school site level according to their own processes and procedures. In addition, RSD-run school leaders have significant flexibility to make hiring decisions at the school site level.
- When asked whether new teachers are improving education in New Orleans, over half of all voters and over two thirds of parents in the Cowen Institute's poll agreed.

Student Achievement

School leaders, district administrators, and other education stakeholders cite rising student achievement as the main success of public education in New Orleans over the last few years. This improvement is substantial and extends to all school types.

- Many school leaders feel that they are starting to succeed in establishing a positive and disciplined school culture that holds higher expectations for student achievement.
- A lower proportion of schools were considered “Academically Unacceptable” in 2009 versus in 2005, indicating that relatively fewer schools are failing now than were before Hurricane Katrina.
- In terms of performance growth, no single school type has consistently shown the highest growth in performance over the past three years.

Governance

The Recovery School District's entry into New Orleans changed the public school system overnight from a centralized, single-district model of education to a decentralized system of schools.

- The current division of oversight and authority has led to a lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities of different educational entities in a number of areas.
- In addition, the different organizations within the current governance model do not get along well. For instance, the RSD and OPSB have a very strained relationship.
- The lack of a plan for governance remains a serious challenge for the long-term viability of the school system, making it difficult for schools to plan for the future and for the public to understand where accountability lies for public education services.

Conclusion:

SUCSESSES

- 1 Improved school culture and increased expectations.** School leaders and school support organizations agreed that the culture of public schools in New Orleans is improving. School leaders and teachers are building school environments that are more orderly and set higher expectations for students.
- 2 Stronger focus on improving instruction and student learning.** A number of school leaders and school support organizations expressed that, as schools have begun to stabilize their operations and build more orderly school cultures, there is a renewed focus on the quality of instruction.
- 3 Progress on facilities planning and construction.** Though all of the funding is not yet lined up, the Recovery School District and the Orleans Parish School Board have undertaken an ambitious and important effort to rebuild or renovate nearly all of the public school buildings in New Orleans that will be in use over the coming decades.
- 4 Improving relationships between districts and their charter schools.** Though tension remains between the RSD and its charter schools over certain facilities services and vendor contracts, most charter leaders express appreciation for Paul Vallas' support of charter schools. In the OPSB system, the relationship between the OPSB and its charters has begun to improve from a low starting point.
- 5 Sustained leadership at the state, local, and school levels.** Since the summer of 2007, there has been stable leadership in the Recovery School District, New Orleans Public Schools (NOPS), and at the Louisiana Department of Education. Though principal turnover remains high among the RSD-run schools, there has been a general strengthening of school leadership in RSD charters and RSD-run schools.

CHALLENGES

- 1 The quality, maintenance, and control of school facilities.** While important progress is being made on improving school buildings, school leaders cite poor facilities as one of their greatest challenges. Schools also move frequently between buildings and sometimes feel like they have little understanding and voice in the process. A fair and transparent process should be articulated for how schools are chosen to move from one building to another as space opens up and how schools will be prioritized for rebuilding if the RSD receives a large settlement from FEMA.
- 2 Financial sustainability of public education.** The financial sustainability of the current system of schools is a concern of charter school leaders and school district administrators in the RSD and OPSB. In the short term, budgets will be tight and schools will have to look for savings by coordinating more services with other schools. Over the long term, the state and the city will need to finance schools at a more sustainable level.
- 3 Governance of the system of schools.** Governance is a challenge wherever roles and responsibilities are sufficiently unclear that it is hard to ensure that all students have access to a good education. While some confusion about governance was inevitable after the state takeover, an official process must now begin to decide on the future structure of the school system.
- 4 Data access and transparency.** A decentralized system of schools requires access to timely information about schools and districts. At the same time, good governance requires transparency about finances, program effectiveness, building plans, meeting times, and many other areas. While basic information for parents has improved over the past few years, a number of problems remain in the area of data access and transparency.
- 5 The relationship between the RSD and OPSB.** Relations between officials from the RSD and OPSB are frequently strained. This tension is often related to financial issues. These struggles drain resources and foster divisiveness. In the long-term, a new governing structure will hopefully ease some of these tensions by clearly defining and separating the powers of each organization. In the short-term, however, the two districts will need to recommit to working together.

Methodology



In order to capture the relevant trends, successes, and challenges of public education in New Orleans, the Cowen Institute employed a number of data gathering methods and sources of information. These include:

Interviews:

- Thirty-three out of 88 public school leaders in New Orleans were interviewed by Cowen Institute staff. These school leaders represented charter and traditional schools in both the OPSB and the RSD.
- More than 30 additional education stakeholders were interviewed, including district administrators, charter board members, education support non-profit leaders, and charter management organization CEOs, among others.
- Interviews were based on a standardized set of open-ended questions that left substantial opportunity for discussion.

Public Data

Data used in this report also comes from a number of organizations, including:

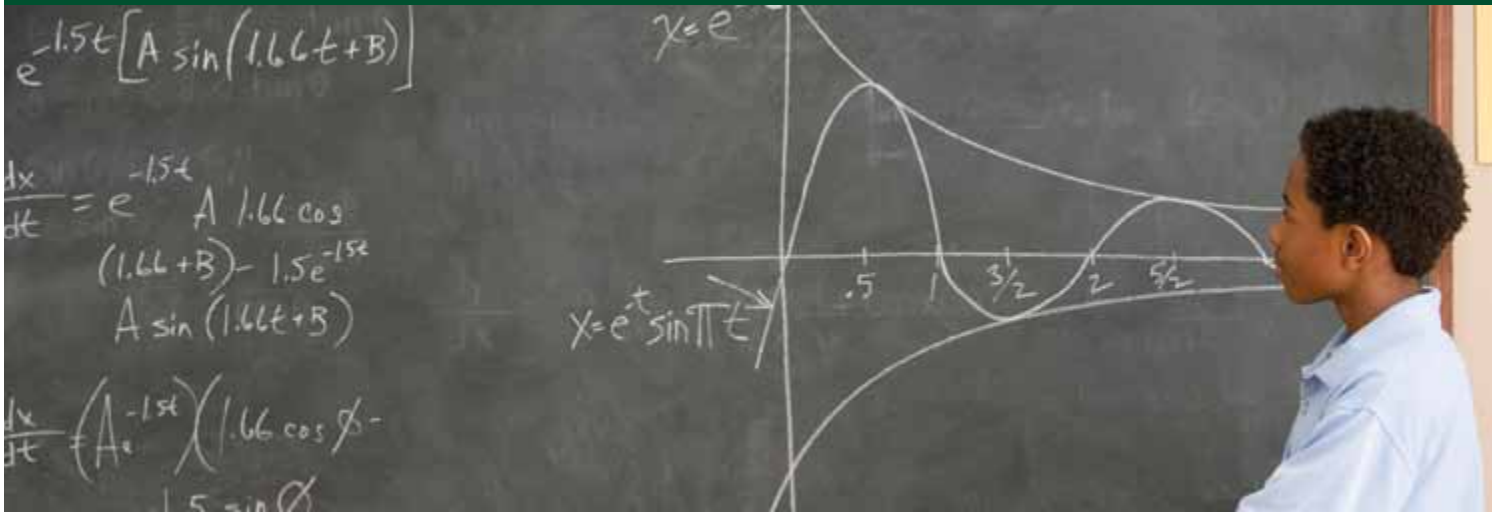
- Louisiana Department of Education
- Recovery School District
- Orleans Parish School Board
- Individual schools
- Media reports

Public Opinion Survey:

- The Cowen Institute commissioned Market Research Insight, a public opinion research firm, to conduct a randomized phone survey of registered voters and parents of public school children in New Orleans in order to assess their opinions about and experiences with public education in New Orleans.
- The survey was conducted between the dates of November 3-14, 2009. The sample consisted of 600 randomly selected registered voters in Orleans Parish with an over sample of 300 parents with children enrolled in a public school (charter or traditional).
- Survey results for the sample of 600 registered voters have a sampling error of plus or minus 4.1 percent while the 300 public school parent sample has a sampling error of plus or minus 5.7 percent, both at the .95 level of confidence.



System Overview



Development of the Current System

Prior to Hurricane Katrina's landfall in August 2005, nearly all of the public schools in New Orleans were controlled by the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB), a locally elected 7-member body.

The New Orleans Public Schools (NOPS) system that the OPSB oversaw was one of the worst performing school districts in Louisiana, itself one of the lowest performing states in the nation on academic indicators.¹ In addition to low student achievement, the management and governance of the system had significant problems. The OPSB and its individual members regularly engaged in ineffective, and sometimes illegal, practices while governing the district. The high turnover of the superintendent's position, as well as the lack of steady leadership in the administration's central office departments, allowed poor performance to continue for years.²

State legislators attempted to take control of schools away from the OPSB on more than one occasion. Legislators filed several bills before 2005 to allow the state or mayor to gain control of the district, none of which became law.³ While takeover legislation specific to New Orleans was never passed before Katrina, in 2003 voters approved a constitutional amendment creating a state-run Recovery School District (RSD) to intervene in schools identified by the state as failing. In addition, the state passed legislation

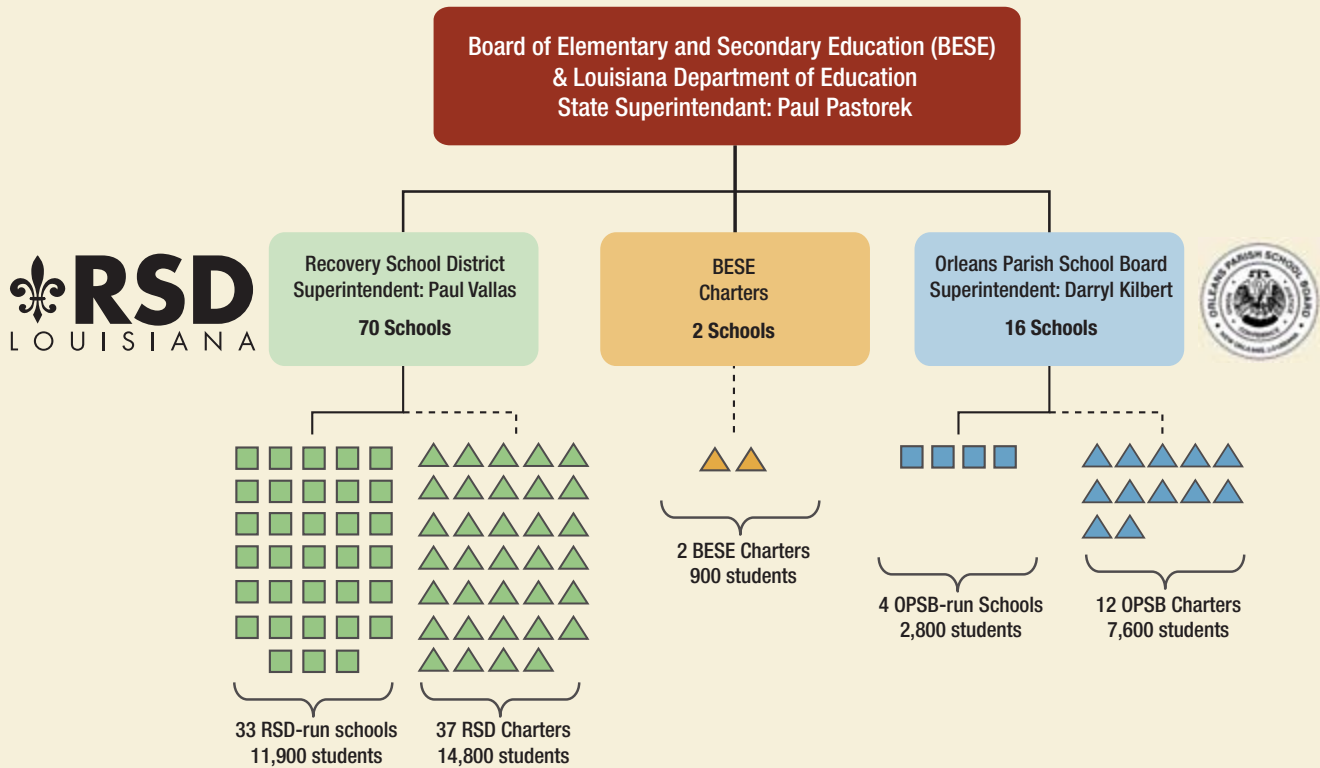
in 2004 that limited the OPSB's power by giving control over all financial management and personnel to the superintendent.⁴

By the time Hurricane Katrina struck in August 2005, the situation in New Orleans had reached a crisis point. Auditors declared that the school system was bankrupt and the state forced the OPSB to hire a turnaround firm to overhaul district finances. While the storm destroyed facilities, displaced students, and disrupted school operations, it also served as an opportunity for a major overhaul of the operations and governance of NOPS. Governor Kathleen Blanco promised after Hurricane Katrina that the state was not going to re-create NOPS as it was before.⁵

With Governor Blanco's support, a special session of the Louisiana Legislature passed Act No. 35 in mid-November 2005. The Act increased the power of the state to intervene in school districts labeled "academically in crisis" by raising the performance threshold to consider a school failing.⁶ With this expanded authority, the state was then able to shift over 100 low-performing OPSB schools into the state-run Recovery School District (RSD). The RSD was charged with opening and operating the schools under its control for an initial period of five years and was given all "rights and responsibility of ownership regarding land, buildings, facilities, and other property" of the schools it took over.⁷ The OPSB retained control of only a small number of the schools it operated before Katrina.

Public School Governance in New Orleans

TOTAL: 88 Schools & 38,000 Students



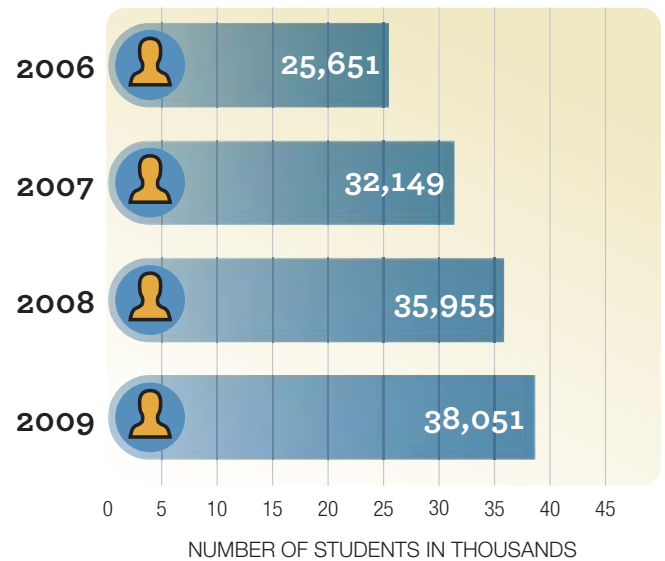
Source: Louisiana Department of Education, October 2009

The political leadership of public schools in New Orleans is currently divided between the OPSB, the RSD, and a number of charter schools.

Schools are either directly operated by the OPSB or RSD, or are charter schools authorized by the OPSB or the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) and run by non-profit school operators. The “Public School Governance in New Orleans” chart outlines the organizational structure of school governance in Orleans Parish.

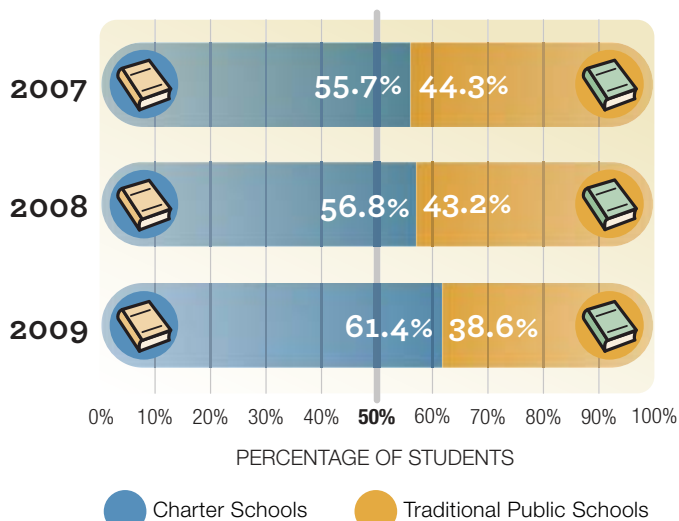
Just before Hurricane Katrina, public schools in New Orleans had an enrollment of approximately 65,000 students. Student enrollment in New Orleans has grown since public schools reopened after the storm, but the rate of growth continues to slow each year. From October 2008 to October 2009, enrollment in all public schools in Orleans Parish grew from 35,955 to 38,051 or 5.8 percent. This was less than the 11.8 percent gain seen from October 2007 to October 2008 or the 25.3 percent from 2006 to 2007.

Public School Enrollment in New Orleans



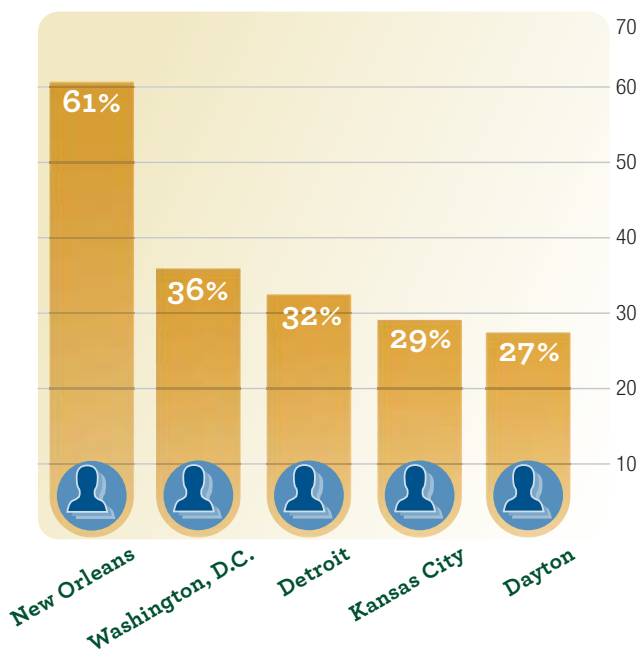
Source: Louisiana Department of Education

Percentage of Students Enrolled in Charter and Traditional Public Schools



Source: Louisiana Department of Education

Communities with the Highest Percentage of the Student Population Enrolled in Charter Schools



Source: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

Schools and Operators

In the 2009-2010 school year there are 88 public schools open in New Orleans, including 37 traditional schools and 51 charter schools.

The majority of public school students, 61 percent, are enrolled in charters, a number that has continued to grow since school re-opened after Katrina. New Orleans also has the largest percentage of its students in charter schools of any school district in the United States, with Washington, D.C. a distant second.⁸

There are currently five types of charter schools in Louisiana. Type 1 charters are new start-up schools authorized by a local school board. Type 2 charters can be conversion or start-up schools and are authorized by BESE but are not part of the RSD (they are referred to as BESE charter schools in this report). New Orleans has two Type 2 charter schools: Milestone/SABIS Academy and the International School of Louisiana. Type 3 charters are conversion schools authorized by a local school board. Type 4 charters can be conversion or start-up schools and are authorized by BESE via a charter with a local school board. Type 1, 3, and 4 charter schools in New Orleans are referred to as OPSB charter schools in this report because of their relationship to the local school board. Type 5 charters are conversion schools authorized by BESE via the RSD. In this report, they are referred to as RSD charter schools. Most of New Orleans' charter schools are Type 5 charter schools.

In late 2008, BESE approved eight charter schools in New Orleans for the 2009-2010 school year. Four of the new charters, called transformation schools, have taken over the lower grades of existing RSD elementary schools with plans to add additional grades each year until the entire school is run by the charter operator.⁹ In January 2009, RSD Superintendent Paul Vallas announced, "In two to three years, this district is going to be almost exclusively made up of charter and independent schools that may not be legally charters but they have all the autonomy, flexibility, and independence that charters do."¹⁰ While new schools opened in the 2009-2010 school year, the RSD also announced the closing of others. Two low-performing high schools stopped enrolling new freshmen and will operate only until current students graduate as part of a broader attempt to reshape high schools across the RSD.¹¹ In addition, four small elementary and middle schools were closed after the 2008-2009 year.¹² In October 2009, BESE approved the charter applications of eight RSD charter schools in New

Orleans for 2010-2011, some of which will be takeovers of district-run schools.¹³ In early 2010, it considered three additional applications for BESE charter schools, two of which would be located in New Orleans. While all three of the applications were initially denied, a second vote approved the two New Orleans based schools.

Student Demographics

As in the years before Hurricane Katrina, over 90 percent of public school students in New Orleans are African American.

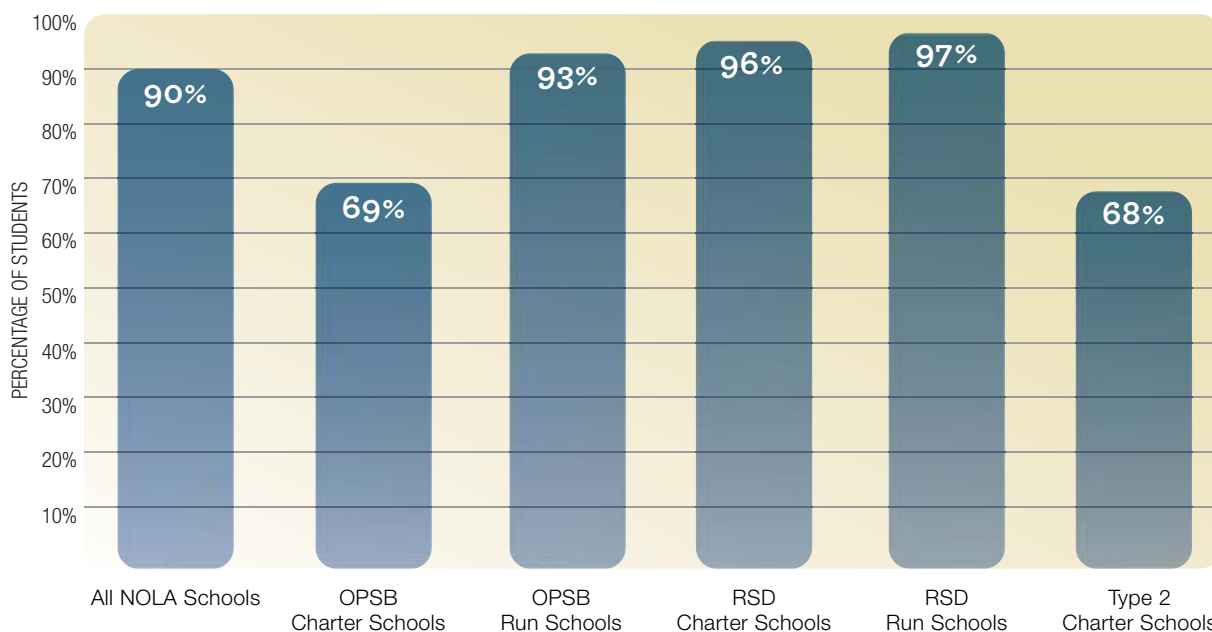
However, the percentage of black or minority students varies by school type. OPSB charter schools and BESE charter schools enroll a smaller number of African Americans than do the other types of schools, though African Americans still make up the majority of their students.

Eligibility for free and reduced lunch is a rough measure of whether a student is from a low-income family. To be eligible for free lunch, a family's income must be below 130 percent of the poverty line. For a family of four, this translates into an income of \$28,665.¹⁴ For reduced price lunch, a family's income must be below 185 percent of the federal poverty line: \$40,793 for a family of four.¹⁵

The number of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch in New Orleans was 82.2 percent in October 2009. This is well above the Louisiana average of 65.7 percent and the national average of 41 percent. There is variation in the percentage of low-income students being served by different types of schools. RSD charter schools enrolled a higher percentage of low income students (90.5 percent) than those overseen by the OPSB (60.8 percent) or the Type 2 BESE charter schools (70.0 percent). Likewise, RSD-run schools enroll a slightly higher percentage of low income students (87.5 percent) than OPSB-run schools (78.0 percent).

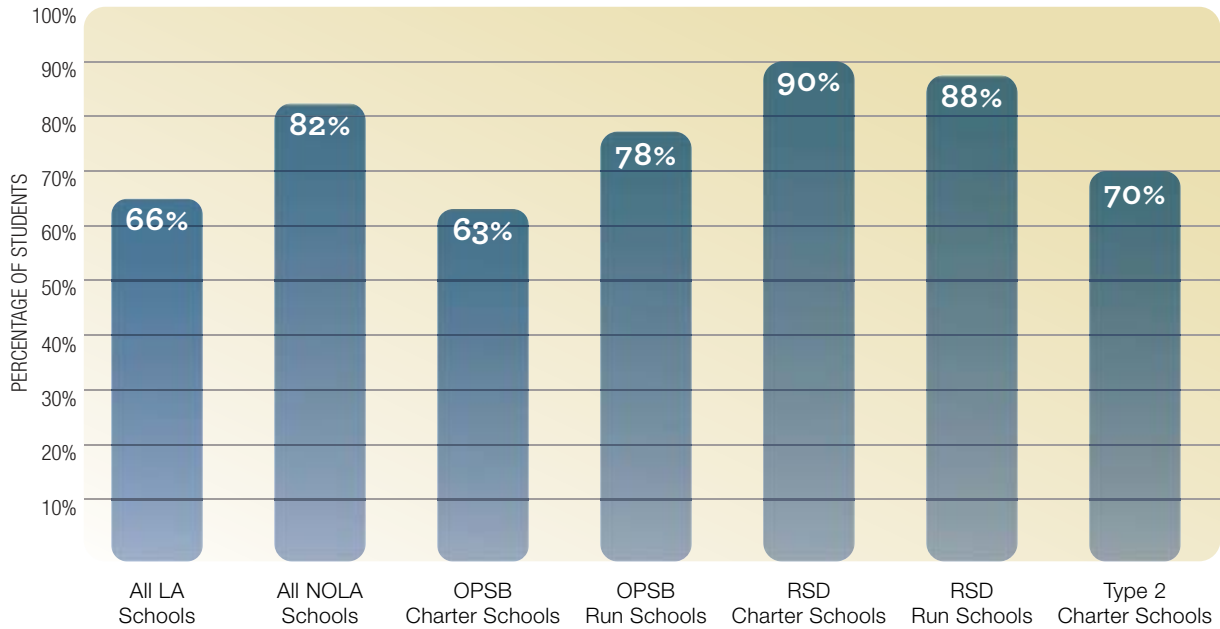
Since 2007, the percentage of students with special education designations has steadily risen, from 6.5 percent in 2007 to 8.8 percent in 2009. This is probably due more to an increase in students being assessed and identified than to a changing student population. While all types of schools have seen this growth in special education students, there is still a difference in the percentage of special education students enrolled by school type. Direct-run schools in the OPSB system and the RSD have more students on average with special education designations than OPSB and RSD charter schools. RSD-run schools serve the highest percentage of students with disabilities on average.

Percentage of Public School Students that are African American by School Type in 2009-2010



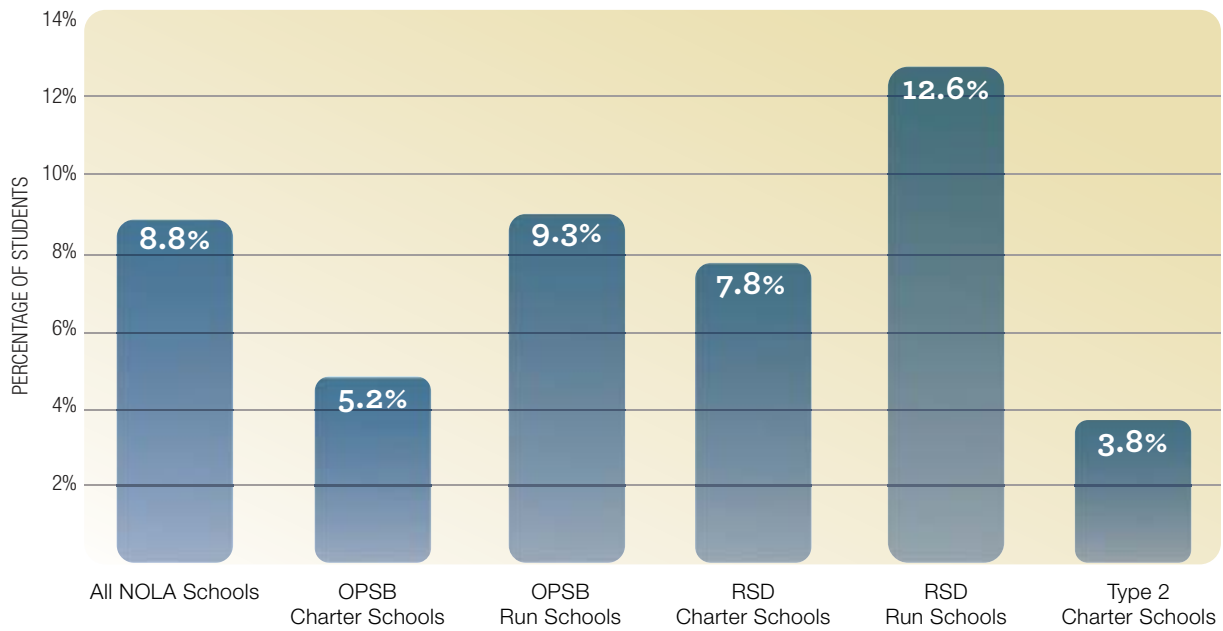
Source: Louisiana Department of Education, October 2009

Percentage of Public School Students Receiving Free and Reduced Lunch by School Type in 2009-2010



Source: Louisiana Department of Education, October 2009

Percentage of Special Education Students by School Type in 2009-2010



Source: Louisiana Department of Education, October 2009



Public Opinion about the Public Education System

The Cowen Institute's November 2009 poll of voters and parents revealed general support for the major post-Katrina education reforms in New Orleans, including the state takeover of New Orleans schools and the expansion of charter schools.

In the poll, 66 percent of registered voters agreed with the state's decision to take over the majority of New Orleans public schools in the aftermath of the storm, while 21 percent disagreed. However, there was a large difference in opinion by race: 57 percent of African American voters agreed with the state takeover compared to 80 percent of all other voters. Parents' opinions mirrored that of voters as a whole, with 66 percent agreeing and 21 percent disagreeing with the state's decision to take over schools in New Orleans.¹⁶

The Cowen Institute's survey also revealed that 70 percent of voters and 69 percent of parents agreed that charter schools have improved education in New Orleans, though this varied slightly by race. Fewer African American voters (64 percent) agreed compared to all other voters (77 percent).

Given the number of reforms that have been implemented since August 2005, survey respondents were also asked whether or not they believed that schools are better since Katrina, were better before Katrina, or are about the same before and after. While majorities of responding voters and parents supported the major reforms mentioned above, only 32 percent of all voters responded that schools are better since Katrina. Seventeen percent of voters said schools were better before the storm, and 30 percent responded that they are about the same. The rest were uncertain. These numbers vary, however, according to race and parental status of the respondents. Only 24 percent of African Americans voters thought that schools are better since Katrina, compared to 44 percent of all other voters. Among parents, 90 percent of whom were African American, 31 percent believed that schools have gotten better since Katrina.

These results could indicate that, while there is general support for school reforms to date, the majority of New Orleans voters and public school parents are still waiting for the reforms to bear significant fruit. However, voters clearly support the direction of change.

Operations and Administration



Though school operations were often chaotic in the first few years after Katrina, each school year since the storm has brought further stability to the daily operations of traditional and charter schools in New Orleans.

A number of school leaders and school support organizations said in interviews that their schools are no longer in perpetual crisis mode, and that they now have more time and capacity to focus on improving student learning.

However, significant operational and administrative challenges remain. Of particular importance are the uncertainties around school facilities and school funding and the high cost of transportation that has resulted from a system with city-wide enrollment. The following sections provide an overview of some of these operational and administrative functions.

“This facility is our school’s biggest challenge. There is no continuity between who owns it, who holds the lease, etc. This leads to questions about how long to stay, where to get more space, and how much to invest in a facility that doesn’t belong to us.”

– Charter School Leader

School Facilities

The quality of school facilities was cited as a major challenge by the vast majority of the public school leaders in New Orleans interviewed by the Cowen Institute. The only other challenge that reached this level of consensus was the severe academic deficits of public school students in New Orleans. School leaders in charter and traditional schools agree that the poor condition of school buildings is a major barrier to providing students with an excellent education.

In addition, some RSD charters were concerned about the process for deciding which schools would inhabit which available school buildings. Though charter leaders acknowledge the necessary difficulty of the process, they often felt that decisions made by the RSD central office about school placement were arbitrary, and lacked a clear process. For their part, district administrators admit that assigning so many schools to a shifting set of available buildings is a difficult and sometimes haphazard process. In addition, many charter schools add grades every year, meaning that their seat requirements are constantly changing. At the same time, different buildings are either undergoing renovation (and therefore cannot house a school) or are coming online after being renovated or built, requiring a school move. The RSD estimates it handled 16 moves over the summer of 2009 followed by 6-7 more in the fall.¹⁷

Indeed, significant activity is underway in school facility planning and construction.

In August 2008, the Orleans Parish School Board, Louisiana Department of Education, and the Recovery School District jointly released the multi-phase School Facilities Master Plan for Orleans Parish (SFMP). The first phase of the plan was estimated to cost approximately \$685 million and to take five years to complete. Six of the projects in Phase I were already being completed as part of an earlier “quick start” school building initiative. The remaining phases of the plan, which were initially estimated to bring the total cost to \$1.8 billion, remained unfinanced.¹⁸

Over the course of the first eight years of the original plan, over a third of the campuses that were open before Katrina would be “land-banked.” Land-banking means that the property could be available for re-use, or sale and redevelopment. Sites with more than 51 percent damage would be demolished while others could be made into housing or “made available to third parties to bring back a school.”¹⁹

The plan was hailed by State Superintendent Paul Pastorek as the greatest opportunity for New Orleans school facilities since the bequest of philanthropist John McDonogh in the late 19th century. Despite promises of high quality schools, Pastorek recognized that the process would be painful and difficult for New Orleans residents who are tied to tradition and align themselves closely with their neighborhoods and schools.²⁰

The plan also faced public criticism. Some expressed concern that public buildings would be transferred to private entities and wanted to ensure that public schools remained in public hands.²¹ Critics also pointed to the lack of money to fund future phases and limited public input as serious problems with the plan. Others were happy with the plan. One school community was pleased with the decision to move its campus to a larger site nearby, allowing greater room for athletic fields and a football stadium.²² The public was given through September 20, 2008 to comment on the proposal. At one meeting, 150 citizens showed up to criticize the master plan for not properly serving their communities and to ask for an extension of the comment period. One group claimed that the plan might “go down in history as a colossal embarrassment and one of the most unsuccessful failures of planning in our community.”²³

After a contentious comment period, a number of recommendations were taken into account and the plan was modified. The final version of the School Facilities Master Plan was approved by the OPSB on November 6, 2008 and by BESE on November 12, 2008.²⁴ Under the approved plan, over \$700 million will be spent renovating and rebuilding campuses during Phase I, which has been fully financed by FEMA and Community Development Block Grants. The School Facilities Master Plan designates 21 elementary schools and nine high schools as Phase 1 renovation or new construction projects, to be completed within four years.²⁵

The remaining phases call for approximately \$1 billion more in construction but do not yet have financing. However, the RSD has said it expects to be able to fund much of the rest of the facilities plan through a large settlement

“We were promised a school building but several other schools have been promised the same building.”

- Charter School Board Chair

with FEMA. A total of 25 school sites are expected to be land-banked, with another four that will go under review. There are 19 campuses that have been or will be demolished under the latest approved plan. In all, the plan calls for a total of 85 new or renovated school campuses, and three others that will undergo extensive maintenance, to be operational by 2016.²⁶

According to the RSD’s November 2009 Facilities Master Plan Update, 16 of the 30 schools included in Phase I are either open, under construction, or will be breaking ground in 2010.²⁷ Architects will begin developing designs for seven more facilities within the first six months of the year. Another six schools have required further logistical planning, mainly due to their current occupation and the need to find space for these students while construction occurs. In addition to the 30 schools receiving either major renovation or a new facility, the RSD has undertaken substantial maintenance and repair projects not specified in the SFMP, including the replacement of five roofs. One facility is also being modified by the Orleans Parish School Board for use as the Mahalia Jackson Early Childhood and Family Learning Center.²⁸

The SFMP's implementation is overseen by the Master Plan Oversight Committee (MPOC), whose duties include reviewing the annual capital projects budget, monitoring progress, reviewing necessary changes to the plan, and monitoring shifting demographics in order to make recommendations based on these projections every two years.

The MPOC has seven members which serve staggered two year terms. One member of BESE and one member of the OPSB serve on the committee. Additional members must be approved by both the OPSB and BESE and must include representatives with experience in construction management, contracting, and auditing, as well as one representative from the Urban League of Greater New Orleans and one representative from the Business Council of Greater New Orleans and the River Region.²⁹

By May 2009, the RSD had \$262.3 million in open capital contracts. Architects had been approved for projects at six schools, community meetings were scheduled to discuss design issues, and bids were anticipated for an additional six projects.³⁰ However, by the end of September, members of the MPOC had yet to be chosen.³¹ After this was noted in the press, the committee quickly came together. The first meeting of the MPOC was held on November 3, 2009.³²

Though facilities remain a major challenge for schools that are currently operating, significant activity is underway to provide new or renovated schools for most public school students.

This process has inevitable winners and losers, and some charter school leaders and representatives expressed frustration with the process of matching schools to available buildings. District administrators admit that this is a difficult process and sometimes haphazard, especially given that many charter schools add grades every year, meaning that their seat requirements are constantly changing. Clearly, the process of assigning schools to buildings, and moving schools as different buildings undergo renovation, will continue to be a difficult yet necessary process in order for an ambitious facilities plan to be completed. However, more transparency about how these decisions are made will go a long way to improve perceptions among school leaders and the public about the fairness of building distribution. If the RSD receives a large FEMA settlement, a similarly transparent process will be needed to determine how schools are prioritized to be rebuilt or renovated.

The policy that created the School Facilities Master Plan Oversight Committee is in place, but it has not been fully implemented. The committee could be useful in reviewing contracts, providing technical expertise, and ensuring a basic level of accountability for major public investments. However, the OPSB and BESE, the entities responsible for its creation, have not made proper use of the committee. As a result, there is not strong oversight in place yet for the \$1.8 billion school building plan.

Finally, there is no dedicated source of funding for maintaining school buildings. Indeed, Louisiana ranks among the states putting the least amount of funding into school facilities. It is also one of only seven states that dedicate no state funding for public school facility maintenance and repair.³³ As a result, if funding is not secured to maintain new school buildings, New Orleans could again end up with dilapidated schools after an unprecedented period of new construction.

School Finances

School financing for operations is another major challenge cited by charter and traditional school leaders, district administrators, and school support organizations. Many charter school advocates are concerned about the sustainability of the charter model given the current per-pupil funding available through the state of Louisiana's Minimum Foundation Program (MFP). The MFP is the program through which the state allocates funds to local school districts based on its determination of the cost of a minimum foundation of education. The MFP did not increase in real terms for this school year and most school advocates agree that the MFP will not be increased, and may even be cut, in the coming school year. Charter school leaders and supporters admit that the process of opening a new charter school with only a few grades is expensive. While start-up funding is available through federal and private foundation grants, most new charter school leaders feel that this is not enough to put their ambitious programs into place.

Traditional school leaders also feel that there is not enough funding available for their programs. Many continue to feel, as was found in the 2008 Cowen Institute report, that charter schools create a two-tier system in New Orleans and that those tiers are manifested in the areas of student recruitment and available resources. However, there is little evidence to date that charters have more resources on average than traditional RSD or OPSB schools. This issue is discussed in detail later in this report.



Prior to 2005, budgets for individual schools and central office departments in NOPS were based primarily on the previous year's staffing needs.³⁴ Essentially, schools received the funding needed to maintain current staffing levels and to pay those staff members at their appropriate wage based on the established salary schedule. After the state takeover, the manner of allocating resources to most schools changed significantly. As of the 2009-2010 school year, the OPSB directly operates only four schools. As a result, the majority of the tax revenue it collects from local sources is passed through to its own charter schools, RSD charter schools, and RSD-run schools. For the schools it does operate, the OPSB considers student-teacher ratios and teachers' salaries to determine how schools are funded, as it did pre- Katrina.³⁵

In contrast, the RSD funds its direct-run and charter schools on a per-pupil basis with a weighted student formula. The formula establishes three different levels of special education exceptionalities. A student's weight, based on their level of exceptionality, is multiplied by the base per-pupil amount for a student in a regular education program.³⁶ Unlike the RSD, OPSB charter schools are funded by the OPSB only according to the number of students they serve, regardless of any special needs the particular students enrolled in those schools may have.³⁷

“I’m worried about financial sustainability. One-time funds are ending. Will pricey charter models be able to sustain themselves?”

- Charter School Advocate

Table 1

Public School Spending: Pre-Katrina		
Year	NOPS Current Expenditures Per Pupil	LA Current Expenditures per Pupil
2002 - 2003	\$6,571	\$6,906
2003 - 2004	\$7,296	\$7,248
2004 - 2005	\$7,893	\$7,630

Source: Louisiana Department of Education

Table 2

Public School Spending: Post-Katrina		
Year	NOLA Current Expenditures Per Pupil	LA Current Expenditures per Pupil
2006 - 2007	\$14,122	\$8,881
2007 - 2008	\$15,557	\$9,966

Source: Louisiana Department of Education

Table 3

2007-2008 Teacher Salary Expenditures per Pupil	
All RSD Schools	\$4,198
All OPSB Schools	\$3,914
All NOLA Schools	\$4,074
All Louisiana Schools	\$3,522

Source: Louisiana Department of Education

Table 4

2007-2008 Total Salary Expenditures per Pupil	
All RSD Schools	\$6,056
All OPSB Schools	\$6,547
All NOLA Schools	\$6,182
All Louisiana Schools	\$5,871

Source: Louisiana Department of Education

Table 5

2007-2008 Expenses per Pupil		
	All NOLA Schools	All Louisiana Schools
Total Supplies	\$2,352	\$994
Purchased Technical and Professional Services	\$2,401	\$439
Repairs and Maintenance	\$772	\$230

Source: Louisiana Department of Education

Table 6

2007-2008 Total Instruction Spending	
All RSD Schools	\$9,641
All OPSB Schools	\$10,655
All NOLA Schools	\$9,862
All Louisiana Schools	\$6,924

Source: Louisiana Department of Education

In addition to new ways of budgeting and allocating resources, one of the more dramatic differences between pre-Katrina and post-Katrina school finance is the difference in resources available to schools.

Before the storm, schools run by the OPSB had access to set amounts of local and state money based on the state's Minimum Foundation Program. In addition, the district received federal monies through the title programs run by the federal government to support specific educational purposes.

In the three years before Hurricane Katrina, the OPSB spent between \$6500 and \$7900 per pupil in total current expenditures. Current expenditures are defined as total expenditures minus equipment costs, facilities acquisitions and construction services costs, and debt service costs.³⁸ This captures the amount spent on operating schools while excluding capital costs for major construction and repairs and paying off school board debt. Between 2002 and 2005, OPSB spending was largely in line with the Louisiana average. (Table 1)

Following Hurricane Katrina, the federal government committed \$196 million in federal "restart" grants to reopen schools in New Orleans.³⁹ This federal aid was added to normal operating revenues as a supplement in order to improve schooling and, in some cases, front the money needed to rebuild and repair schools before insurance money and FEMA funds became available. The federal government also provided a smaller amount to help start up new charter schools in New Orleans after the storm and many private foundations and individuals also provided funding to schools. As a result, in the years following Katrina, schools in New Orleans spent much more per-pupil on school operations than the state average. (Table 2)

As of this writing, the state of Louisiana has not yet released current expenditures for public schools in the 2008-2009 school year. However, according to the 2008-2009 budgets for RSD-run schools and for the OPSB as a whole (direct-run and charter schools), this figure stands at approximately \$14,000 per pupil.⁴⁰ This number excludes the large group of RSD charters whose proposed budgets are not posted online and whose end-of-year audits are not yet available.

School spending has increased dramatically on a per pupil basis since Hurricane Katrina. Though current expendi-

tures exclude equipment and facilities expenditures, some of the funds included in this category are still related to recovery as new salaries had to be paid to manage the recovery process and new supplies bought to restock schools (supplies are included in current expenditures).

For instance, teacher salaries are generally the largest expense in any school system. Per pupil spending on teacher salaries in New Orleans in 2007-2008 was larger than the state average, but only by about \$550 per pupil. In terms of overall spending on salaries, including teachers, administrators, aides, and other non-instructional staff, New Orleans schools are even closer to the state average on a per pupil basis. (Tables 3 & 4)

While the largest recurring costs associated with instruction are captured by spending on salaries and benefits, much of the extra spending in public schools is in areas that are not easily separable into instructional and non-instructional expenditures. For instance, a few of the areas in which public schools in New Orleans are spending more than the state average are shown on Table 5.

While the cost of supplies, which includes textbooks, is likely to decrease as schools are restocked after Katrina, it is unclear how many of these supplies represent one-time purchases that will last for many years versus purchases that will need frequent replacement or upgrading. For instance, the Recovery School District made a big investment in technology in the 2007-2008 school year.⁴¹ While technology can be an important instructional tool, it is also one that tends to become outdated quickly and requires a lot of specialized maintenance. It is not clear whether future budgets will be able to sustain this level of technology use. Likewise, the public schools in New Orleans are purchasing a lot of professional and technical services. In total, public schools in New Orleans (charter and traditional) are spending nearly \$2,000 more per pupil than the state average on technical and professional services.

The public schools in New Orleans, when breaking out what they spend on instruction, do indeed outspend the state by a wide margin. Amounts spent on instruction as a function (rather than on particular objects, like salaries) are shown in the table below. As mentioned above, it is unclear how much of the instructional spending is non-recurring (for instance, supplies to restock schools that will last multiple years) and how much is a recurring expense that will need to be cut once one-time money is used up. (Table 6)

Resources have also been a source of controversy across different school types.

Because charters have significant autonomy to spend and raise money, they are sometimes accused of having special access to extra funds that traditional schools do not have.⁴² On the other hand, the two school districts are often accused of spending far more per pupil than the charter schools for the schools that they operate directly. District expenditures include some spending directly on charter schools, though this does not show up in charter financial documents.

The chart below shows current expenditures by school type in New Orleans for the 2007-2008 school year. OPSB-run schools are excluded from the list below because the OPSB does not report to the state on the finances of its direct-run schools separately from its charters. By contrast, RSD charter schools are their own local education agencies (LEAs), and so they report their numbers separately to the state. The per pupil expenses number for OPSB charters comes from the individual audited financial reports of the OPSB charter organizations, and not from state numbers.

2007-2008 Average Expenditures per Pupil	
RSD-run Schools	\$20,770
RSD Charter Schools	\$10,449
OPSB Charter Schools	\$9,671
All Charter Schools	\$10,224

Source: Louisiana Department of Education & Audit Reports of Individual Charter Schools, 2008

RSD-run schools, a category that includes costs associated with the district's central office, are spending much more per student than the city's charter schools, regardless of type. Though state reports show the RSD spending over \$20,000 per student over the 2007-2008 school year, the RSD estimated that, once it removed disaster-related expenditures, that amount was \$12,900 per pupil (or \$16,700 per pupil if \$50 million spent on classroom modernization was included).⁴³

In order to understand where the RSD-run schools are spending more than charter schools, the chart below shows the difference in spending per pupil by area for RSD-run schools and RSD charter schools. Since OPSB charters do not make their finances available according to these object areas, they are excluded from this chart. However, since OPSB charter spending per pupil is only slightly lower

2007-2008 Average Per Pupil Expenditures by Object in RSD-run and RSD Charter Schools

	Teacher Salaries	All Salaries	Benefits	Professional and Technical Services	Supplies
RSD-run Schools	\$4,955	\$6,752	\$1,847	\$4,204	\$3,934
RSD Charter Schools	\$3,323	\$5,252	\$1,324	\$1,003	\$793
Louisiana Average	\$3,540	\$5,871	\$2,063	\$439	\$994

Source: Louisiana Department of Education

than RSD charter spending, it is reasonable to assume that this breakdown is also roughly similar. Clearly, RSD-run schools, at least in 2007-2008, had more money to spend in key instructional areas than RSD charter schools. (At the same time, RSD-run schools educate a higher proportion of students with disabilities and operate the city's main alternative schools). The contention that charter schools have more money on average than traditional schools is not supported by the data available to date.

Because federal Restart money is largely spent and the MFP has not increased, both the OPSB and RSD were forced to make significant budget cuts for the 2009-2010 school year.

The RSD cut its budget by 23 percent and laid off central office employees, nurses, social workers, security guards, and teachers. Other reforms such as the extended day and year continue to be funded. The OPSB approved a \$34 million budget in June, which resulted in the closing of the Orleans PM School and layoffs of 56 employees (including teachers and social workers).⁴⁵

State administrators have pinned some of their hopes for funding additional school reforms on the federal Race to the Top grant, which will be awarded to states "leading the way with ambitious yet achievable plans for implementing coherent, compelling, and comprehensive education reform" in April 2010.⁴⁶ Louisiana's application requested \$300 million, approximately \$150 million of which would go to participating districts.⁴⁷ The Recovery School District and many RSD charters have chosen to participate while the Orleans Parish School Board has declined to participate. The OPSB chose not to sign onto the application until their federal status as a financial "high-risk" district was revoked.⁴⁸

Though the Orleans Parish School Board now controls only a handful of schools, it still has a number of financial obligations from when it ran the entire public school system in New Orleans.

The OPSB has approximately \$437 million in long-term debt. Much of this debt was incurred before Hurricane Katrina when all public schools in New Orleans were under the OPSB; other debt was incurred after the storm. Despite the fact that much of this debt was incurred on behalf of all public schools in New Orleans, the OPSB alone has legal responsibility for it.

Approximately one-third of the debt (\$163 million) was generated when the school board issued general obligation bonds for school building construction and renovation in the second half of the 1990s; a dedicated property millage is paying off these bonds. About 30 percent of the debt (\$135 million) was incurred as a result of Hurricane Katrina when the school district received funds from Gulf Opportunity Bonds and a Community Disaster Loan. The board has funds set aside to pay all of the debt related to the Gulf Opportunity Bonds and most of the Community Disaster Loan. Procedures to allow the OPSB to apply for forgiveness of the Community Disaster Loan were announced in January 2010, and officials are optimistic that the loan will be cancelled by the federal government.⁴⁹

The OPSB estimates that its current exposure from existing lawsuits is \$67 million; however, the majority of this amount is from lawsuits that have not reached settlement. There is no source of funding to pay this debt. The remaining debt, totalling \$72 million, consists of several smaller liabilities, including accrued compensated absences for employees. No source of funding is available to pay this debt at this time.

“Having competition is excellent. People are looking at the data, and schools can be aware of how they compare.”

– Traditional School Leader

“Of course charter schools can perform better when they set up their own rules and regulations and choose their own students. Many say they do not have selective admissions, but just try to apply to those schools with an ‘F’ on your report card”

– Traditional School Leader

Each year, the Orleans Parish School Board incurs costs related to expenditures from when the system served all public school students in New Orleans. Specifically, the board incurs costs related to retiree health care, workers’ compensation claims, and legal fees. For FY 2010, the school board estimates that these legacy costs will total approximately \$4.5 million. Because the only source of funds currently available to the board to pay for these costs is the per-pupil funding it receives for the four schools it directly operates, these costs present a significant financial burden that is not shared evenly across all public schools in New Orleans. The OPSB is currently working on a strategy to dedicate new property tax revenue to these costs.

Finances present a challenge to the long term sustainability of school reform in New Orleans.

One-time federal money is now largely spent and state support for schools is stagnant and may decline in the near term. Without more recurring funding or significant operational savings, public schools in New Orleans will face financial problems going forward. As the subsequent sections show, certain aspects of how schools currently operate lead to high costs in non-academic areas like transportation. Certain policy changes and more coordination between schools and districts may make it possible to find the savings needed to avoid major cuts in academic services. However, though most school leaders and administrators say that relations have improved across the system of public schools in New Orleans, significant distrust remains. This in turn makes coordination between schools more difficult. Some charter organizations have begun to form cooperatives to provide them with certain back office and educational (including special education) services. It remains to be seen if financial distress might force more schools and districts to work together out of necessity, if not out of mutual trust.

School Choice

A number of enrollment options are currently available to parents in New Orleans. All public schools run by the Recovery School District (RSD) are open to any student residing in the City of New Orleans, with no regard to their area of residence or attendance zone. The same is true of RSD charter schools. The charter schools and district-run traditional schools under the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) are also open to students across the city, though many of them have admission requirements which can include auditions, parental involvement, standardized testing, or a certain level of academic achievement.

While parents can now enroll their children in any school in the city, public schools in New Orleans lack a unified application or enrollment process. The RSD and a number of charter organizations have created a common application, which is accepted by RSD-run and RSD charter schools. The common application has improved the situation, but many schools in the OPSB do not accept it. In addition, there is no entity or organization with the power to ensure all schools are following their stated enrollment policies fairly. The existence of more than 30 providers with varying admission policies, some more stringent or complicated than others, can make the process of school enrollment complicated.

In the Cowen Institute’s recent poll, both voters (79 percent) and parents (88 percent) supported school choice, agreeing that parents should be able to send their children to any school in the city.

Support was even stronger among African American voters, 88 percent of whom agreed. While there was widespread support for citywide school choice, both voters (93 percent) and parents (96 percent) also agreed that parents should have the right to enroll their children in their neighborhood schools.



While there is anecdotal evidence that some parents have difficulty navigating the system of school choice in New Orleans, the recent poll results imply that these problems do not affect the majority of parents.⁵⁰ About two-thirds (62 percent) of parents agreed that information on different school options was readily available to them and that, when deciding on a school for their child, there were “good options” to choose from (66 percent). Though promising, this still leaves a sizable minority of about one third of parents who did not feel they had good information or good options. Two thirds of these parents have children who attend traditional public schools. Larger majorities of parents perceived the registration and enrollment process as uncomplicated. Most parents found that it was both easy to register their child for school (84 percent) and that they were able to enroll their child in either their first or second choice school (85 percent). This did not seem to vary according to school type.

In addition, similar numbers of traditional (81 percent) and charter (88 percent) school parents’ children got into their first or second choice schools. Though most parents were able to enroll their child in one of their top choices, nearly a third of those polled (29 percent) said that they tried to enroll their child in their neighborhood school but were unable to. It is unclear whether this was due to the

lack of a neighborhood school serving the necessary grade level(s), a lack of capacity at the neighborhood school, or a selective admissions policy that restricted enrollment. In addition, the term “neighborhood school” was not defined for respondents of this poll and differences in its meaning may have affected the responses. However, this finding seems to imply that there is a large group of parents who would choose to send their child to a neighborhood school if they could.

While school choice is clearly important to parents, it can also hamper some parents’ ability to enroll their children in neighborhood schools.

This requires students to leave their neighborhoods to go to school even when they prefer to attend a neighborhood school. At the same time, it means that the cost of transportation (discussed below), is even higher than it would be otherwise. Many public education observers in New Orleans have begun to advocate for a mixed system of choice that would give neighborhood students some preference if they want to go to their neighborhood school while still keeping the option of citywide choice. Though it could be logistically difficult to strike the right balance, a good balance could better optimize parent and student preferences while saving schools money on transportation.

Transportation

The cost of transportation was cited as a major challenge by RSD charter leaders and forms a large part of their concern about financial sustainability. RSD and OPSB administrators also expressed concern about the high cost of transporting students across the city. OPSB charter schools are not required to offer transportation to their students, and so it is less of a concern for them.

The table below outlines the amount spent on transportation as part of the total general fund budgets for the traditional RSD and OPSB schools for the 2008-2009 school year.

Proportion of 2008-2009 General Fund Budget Spent on Transportation			
School Type	Total General Fund Expenditures	Transportation Spending	Percentage of Total
OPSB-run	\$60,732,674	\$2,793,000	4.6%
RSD-run	\$232,049,746	\$14,775,530	6.37%

Source: Louisiana Department of Education and Orleans Parish School Board

Because both districts were forced to make budget cuts in less essential operational areas, the percentages spent on transportation in 2009-2010 are expected to be higher. According to the OPSB's 2009-2010 budget, transportation spending is expected to be \$2,435,000, 7.2 percent of the total \$34,000,320 budget.⁵¹ The RSD anticipates spending \$12,503,500, or 7.1 percent of their total budget of \$176,046,526.⁵²

By way of comparison, a 2008 study by the Council of the Great City Schools analyzed transportation expenditures as a percentage of the general fund budgets of 29 large city school districts over two years, and found that the median was 4.3 percent, with a high of 17.9 percent and a low of 1.4 percent.⁵³ In the year before Hurricane Katrina, the OPSB spent \$19,415,000, only 3.5 percent of its total general fund budget, on transportation.⁵⁴

In addition to the effect of citywide school choice, spending on transportation is compounded by fewer economies of scale in a decentralized system and the reticence of some charter schools to share transportation services with other schools in order to preserve school culture. The table below shows charter schools' average spending on transportation for the 2007-2008 school year, for the schools where information was available.

These relatively low averages obscure wide variations in transportation costs for individual schools. For example, BESE charter schools and OPSB charter schools are not required to provide transportation to their students and, as a result, spend much less on transportation. By contrast, New Orleans College Prep, which is an RSD charter school and is required to provide transportation to all students, spent over 13 percent of its general fund expenditures on transportation in the 2007-2008 school year.

Transportation is an area where more coordination between schools, combined with more competition among transportation vendors, could help achieve some savings.

Citywide school choice is the main reason that transportation costs have soared since Katrina. The public clearly values choice while also valuing the ability to attend neighborhood schools. If education policymakers can work out a way to balance these two competing preferences so that more students can walk or bike to school, it could go a long way to freeing up more money for instruction.

Charter Schools' Average Spending on Transportation for the 2007-2008 School Year

School Type	Total General Fund Expenditures	Transportation Spending	Percentage of Total
OPSB charters	\$24,793,636	\$719,797	2.9%
RSD charters	\$64,423,532	\$3,481,147	5.4%
BESE charters	\$8,246,157	\$3,636	0.0%
Algiers Charter School Association	\$36,413,498	\$2,086,436	5.7%
All NOLA charters	\$133,876,823	\$6,291,016	4.7%

Source: Individual School Audits from Louisiana Legislative Auditor website



Human Capital

In the 2009-2010 school year, the vast majority of public schools in New Orleans are either charter schools or are operated by the RSD and so are not subject to the OPSB's employment policies or state tenure laws.

No public school teachers, including teachers in OPSB-run schools, are covered by a union contract. Charter schools hire their employees at the school site level according to their own processes and procedures. In addition, Superintendent Vallas has said that the RSD is the first "100 percent site-selected district," meaning that hiring and promotion of faculty members in RSD-run schools is controlled at the school site, though teachers are still required to go through an initial application process at the RSD central office.⁵⁵

Working conditions and salaries can and do vary significantly between charter schools. This freedom has allowed some schools and networks to implement practices that

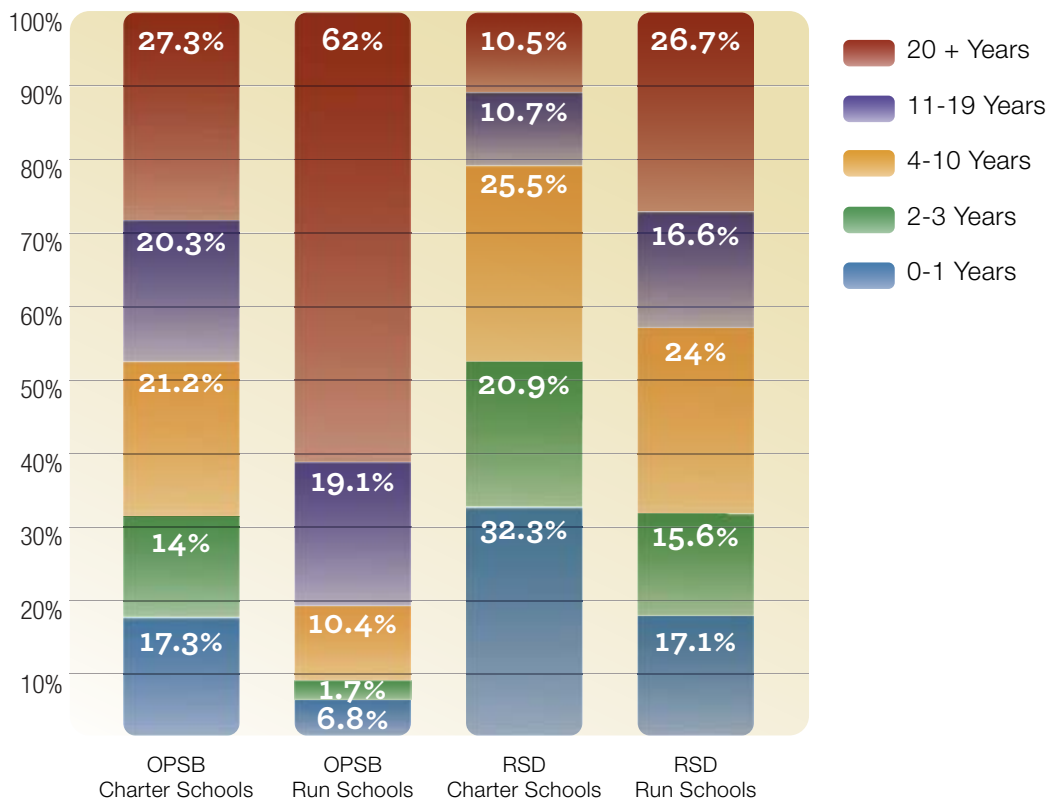
were not allowed under district control. Recently, for example, the Algiers Charter School Association has instituted the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), which includes a performance-based compensation program.⁵⁶ In the TAP program, teachers can receive bonuses based on their students' academic growth.⁵⁷

Schools also have a wide range of experience levels in their teaching force.

Many schools used national recruitment programs to hire new teachers either right out of college or among older professionals looking for a career change. The table below shows the amount of experience of teachers in each type of school for 2009-2010.

In the 2007-2008 school year, over 60 percent of teachers in schools operated by the RSD had 0-1 years of teaching experience and less than one percent had over 20 years of experience, according to the Louisiana Department of Education. (The RSD has stated that its numbers for 2007-2008 may not be entirely accurate.) By contrast, in the

2009-2010 New Orleans Teachers by Years of Experience



Source: Louisiana Department of Education, October 2009

“A lot of the new teachers have only undergone six weeks of training, and it is unrealistic to ask them to be effective in the classroom. They are not familiar with content and delivery, or with the culture and background of the students.”

- Traditional School Leader

“I used to work with mostly TFA teachers, and they were wonderful, eager to learn, and did whatever it took for kids to succeed. Now I work with mostly career veterans and it’s like pulling teeth to get them to use new strategies. New teachers need support but I would rather work with them than with veterans who can’t change their ways.”

- Traditional School Leader

2009-2010 school year only 17 percent of teachers in RSD operated schools were novices while over a quarter had over 20 years of experience. RSD officials ascribe this change to the increasing power of RSD principals to select teachers at the school site level. On average, school principals are hiring more experienced teachers than the district hired in previous years. Other schools have maintained a similar mix of teacher experience levels since the 2007-2008 school year.

The public has been generally supportive of the many new teachers that have begun working in New Orleans since Katrina.

When asked whether new teachers are improving education in New Orleans, a little more than half of all voters in the Cowen Institute’s poll (54 percent) agreed while only 17 percent disagreed, with a large number remaining uncertain. Fewer parents were uncertain, with 68 percent in agreement that new teachers are improving education and 17 percent in disagreement.

Though there is little data available on the rate of teacher turnover in New Orleans, the Cowen Institute has been able to measure approximate principal turnover in public schools based on keeping track of principal names from year to year. Based on a rough count, principal turnover from last school year to the current one is much higher in RSD-run schools than in other types of schools. In RSD-run schools that operated in both the 2008-2009 and the 2009-2010 school year, about 33 percent of principals were replaced compared to approximately 15 percent of principals in OPSB charter and RSD charter schools. There has been no principal turnover at OPSB-run schools over this period.

The stability of human capital has continued to improve since the storm, though it remains in a state of flux.

There is anecdotal evidence that teacher turnover remains high due to difficult working conditions and a reliance on young teachers in programs with short durations. However, no system wide statistics on teacher turnover are available. The heavy reliance on new teachers is waning and being replaced with more of a balance of experience levels across school types. It is possible that at all levels of experience, teachers are not staying for very long at their jobs. While some turnover should be expected and even desired, very high turnover is costly for schools and districts as they lose whatever investments they made in teacher training and mentoring. Like teacher turnover, some principal turnover should be expected and even desired. However, a lack of consistent leadership can also hurt schools that are trying to turn around performance.



Student Achievement



School leaders, district administrators, and other education stakeholders cite rising student achievement as the main success of public education in New Orleans over the last few years.

Indeed, student achievement has increased substantially since Hurricane Katrina. This improvement extends to all school types and to all of the standardized tests given by the state.

Though school leaders gave a variety of explanations to explain recent student achievement growth, there are several areas of consensus. First, many school leaders feel that they are starting to succeed in establishing a positive and disciplined school culture that holds higher expectations for student achievement. This point was heavily emphasized by RSD charter and RSD traditional school leaders. RSD schools had the biggest problems with school culture and student discipline after the storm, so it is encouraging to hear that conditions are improving from the very low baseline of where they started. Unfortunately, though the responses of school leaders is useful, there is little data available on school disciplinary actions that might shed light on the conditions in schools and whether they are improving. In addition, many school culture and discipline problems remain, especially in RSD-run high schools, which continue to perform poorly.

In those schools where school culture and discipline have improved, many school leaders say that their schools have stabilized to the point that they can now focus more heavily on detailed work of improving instruction and developing teachers. Charter schools especially noted that they are increasingly using student achievement data, based on interim tests tied to the curriculum, to better align teaching to student needs.

“Our biggest success is improved structure and order of the school culture. Students are more aware of how to behave while at school, and the rules are better enforced.”

- RSD Traditional School Leader

Assessing School Performance

The School Performance Score (SPS), calculated by the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE), is used as a measure of school performance and as a means of calculating the growth schools need to achieve under state and federal law.

It is based on two years of student test score data from all of the state tests (LEAP, iLEAP, and GEE), graduation rates, and attendance. The LDE gives a school with an SPS of less than 60 the performance label: “Academically Unacceptable.” For scores 60 and above, the LDE assigns schools a star rating from one to five stars.” A lower proportion of schools were considered “Academically Unacceptable” in 2009 versus in 2005, indicating that relatively fewer schools are failing now than were before

Hurricane Katrina. There is also a higher proportion of schools in four out of the five levels above failing than there was before Katrina, indicating that schools are moving up throughout the levels of performance outlined by the state.

While SPS creates one number out of multiple school performance indicators, student achievement is measured in Louisiana by a series of standardized tests given every year from grade 3 through grade 10. There are six main high stakes tests in Louisiana that are often cited when making arguments about student achievement: the 4th grade LEAP tests in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math, the 8th grade LEAP tests in ELA and Math, and the 10th grade Graduate Exit Exams (GEE) in ELA and Math. The table below breaks down student achievement growth on each of these tests by school type over the three full years after Katrina.

2005 & 2009 School Performance Labels for Public Schools in New Orleans				
School Performance Label (SPS)	2005 Number of Schools	Percent of 2005 Schools by Performance Label	2009 Number of Schools	Percent of 2009 Schools by Performance Label
Academically Unacceptable (below 60.0)	73	64.0%	31	41.9%
One Star (60.0 - 79.9) ★	23	20.2%	22	29.7%
Two Stars (80.0 - 99.9) ★★	7	6.1%	12	16.2%
Three Stars (100.0 - 119.9) ★★★	7	6.1%	6	8.1%
Four Stars (120.0 - 139.9) ★★★★	2	1.8%	2	2.7%
Five Stars (140 and above) ★★★★★	2	1.8%	1	1.4%

Source: Louisiana Department of Education

2007-2009 LEAP & GEE Performance by School Type in New Orleans							
Grade Level	School Type	2007 ELA: Basic & Above	2009 ELA: Basic & Above	07 to 09 Growth	2007 Math: Basic & Above	2009 Math: Basic & Above	07 to 09 Growth
4th Grade	OPSB Charter	79.9%	88.9%	9.0%	74.0%	82.1%	8.1%
	OPSB-run	80.2%	94.3%	14.1%	76.0%	89.5%	13.5%
	RSD Charter	48.6%	59.7%	11.1%	41.8%	55.1%	13.3%
	RSD-run	18.6%	43.7%	25.1%	14.0%	30.3%	16.3%
	All NOLA	48.9%	61.0%	12.1%	43.4%	52.9%	9.5%
8th Grade	OPSB Charter	74.0%	84.1%	10.1%	74.0%	86.3%	12.3%
	OPSB-run	58.0%	71.5%	13.5%	44.0%	66.2%	22.2%
	RSD Charter	34.0%	49.4%	15.4%	34.0%	48.9%	14.9%
	RSD-run	14.0%	24.3%	10.3%	17.0%	19.8%	2.8%
	All NOLA	38.6%	46.6%	8.0%	36.6%	44.4%	7.8%
GEE	OPSB Charter	68.0%	70.6%	2.6%	72.3%	77.2%	4.9%
	OPSB-run	47.3%	61.1%	13.8%	52.7%	65.4%	12.7%
	RSD Charter	25.5%	45.8%	20.3%	45.6%	67.9%	22.3%
	RSD-run	8.9%	18.4%	9.5%	13.6%	26.9%	13.3%
	All NOLA	37.3%	48.6%	11.3%	43.4%	57.8%	14.4%

Source: Louisiana Department of Education



In addition to the state's high stakes tests, there are also interim standardized tests, referred to as iLEAPs, which are taken by every Louisiana public school student in grades 3, 5, 6, 7, and 9. Though the iLEAPs do not carry high stakes for students, they do factor into a school's school performance score. A full table of iLEAP score growth by school type is included in the appendix to this report.

There is a fair amount of variation between school types in both their one-year performance and in their performance growth over time. OPSB schools, charter and traditional, generally have the highest passing rates in any given year (in terms of students scoring basic and above on state tests). OPSB schools were not taken over by the state for low performance, and many OPSB schools have some sort of selective admissions, meaning that, taken as a group, their students have better academic preparation than students in RSD-run and RSD charter schools.

Among RSD schools, RSD charters had higher passing rates than RSD-run schools in 2007. This could indicate that RSD charters enrolled students with more academic preparation in the first school years after the storm. This difference may also be due to the chaotic environment that existed in many RSD-run schools right after Katrina. Finally, it could be due to a combination of these and other factors. Determining the relative effects of student recruitment versus school quality and other factors on student achievement would require access to much more information than is available from aggregate school reports.

In terms of performance growth, no one school type has consistently shown the highest growth in performance over the past three years.

In some cases RSD charters grew the most, while in others RSD-run or OPSB-run schools show the most growth. The fact that both charter and traditional schools have improved their scores over the last few years, often by large amounts, is particularly encouraging. Though it is a rough measure, this fact seems to indicate that no particular type of school has a monopoly on improving student achievement. Indeed, using different approaches, schools run by charters and districts are all contributing to student achievement growth, albeit from a very low baseline.

As previous sections of this report have shown, different schools have very different resources, staffs, and student populations, among other factors. However, most schools in New Orleans have made significant progress since the storm. Many claims have been put forward about how resources, staffing models, particular school populations, and different school types might affect school performance in New Orleans, but few have been proven by the available data. A granular analysis of student level data which takes into account all of these factors could help answer some of these questions.





Governance



The Recovery School District’s entry into New Orleans changed the public school system overnight from a centralized, single-district model of education to a decentralized model in which the OPSB, RSD, BESE, and charter governing boards play a role.

Currently, schools are operated by either the RSD or OPSB, or one of over 30 charter operators. These charter operators are authorized by the OPSB or BESE. A decision affecting this division of leadership and control should be made by late 2010, when state legislation requires BESE to make a decision about returning schools to local control after a recommendation from the state Superintendent. In addition, a strategy for overseeing the charter schools now under RSD jurisdiction must be considered.

The current division of governance has led to a lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities of different educational entities in a number of areas. These include the control of facilities, the distribution of funding, transportation, school choice, student discipline and expulsion, and others. In addition, not knowing the direction that the system will take is in itself a challenge. Education stakeholders and school leaders cited uncertainty about the future of the RSD, their school’s location, and the stability of their funding as major challenges to their ability to plan for the future.

In addition, the different organizations within the current governance model do not get along well.

Previous reports have highlighted the tension between charter schools and their districts, especially between the OPSB and its charter schools. Interviews with charter leaders and district administrators in the OPSB indicate that this relationship has improved somewhat and a better working relationship has emerged even as the tension over charter evaluations continues. In the RSD, though charters have some complaints about facilities and other services, they generally appreciate Paul Vallas’ strong support of charter schools.

More concerning is the lack of a working relationship between the two main districts, the RSD and OPSB. Representatives of both districts speak poorly about the other and the two districts have been involved in frequent spats over finances. Although the districts are independent entities, their finances are intertwined. In some cases, sources of revenue for the districts actually flow through one district to the other (e.g., local tax revenue, insurance proceeds); in other cases, one district has taken the lead in securing revenue (e.g., FEMA facilities funding). At times, disputes over one issue have delayed the resolution of others.⁵⁸ In addition, the districts are currently involved in litigation over insurance proceeds.

Public Opinion about School Governance

In the Cowen Institute’s 2009 poll of parents and voters, respondents were asked whether or not they favored or opposed a series of potential options for the future governance of public education in New Orleans.

Some options included an elected or appointed board, state or mayoral control, or an all charter system. While there was consensus on some proposed options – voters were staunchly against mayoral involvement and favored a new city-wide elected board – responses to some questions were divided by race or parental status.

When voters were asked whether they favored or opposed giving control of all schools back to the Orleans Parish School Board, a little more than half (55 percent) opposed this option. Parents responded similarly, with 57 percent opposing. However, response to this question varied according to race: while 49 percent of African Americans opposed giving control back to the OPSB, 63 percent of all other voters were opposed. In addition, 40 percent of African American voters favored giving all schools back to the OPSB as compared to 25 percent of all other voters.

While the majority of voters (66 percent) agreed that the state made the right decision in taking over most schools in the aftermath of Katrina, the public is split on whether the RSD should have control of schools going forward. Forty percent of voters agreed that the RSD should be given control of all schools while 39 percent opposed the idea.

There was overwhelming opposition to mayoral involvement in public education in the two forms that it was proposed: total mayoral control over schools or the creation of a new school board appointed by the mayor. Only 7 percent of voters favored giving the next mayor of New Orleans control of all schools, and only 13 percent favored the creation of a mayor-appointed board. The vast majority (83 percent and 80 percent, respectively) opposed both options. The one governance option that did garner widespread favor was the creation of a new school board to be elected citywide (as opposed to by district, which is currently the case), with 74 percent of voters in favor and only 17 percent opposed. Support was even stronger among parents of public school students (79 percent).

“I just want to be left alone, and as soon as my decisions are not in the best interest of my students then I want the governance structure to step in and tell me what I need to do in order to keep my school open.”

- Charter School Leader

“I don’t like that the RSD, NOPS, and charters are all separated. It feels like a tug-of-war.”

- Traditional School Leader

Voters were also split on whether or not they supported turning all public schools in New Orleans into charter schools, with 46 percent in favor and 37 percent opposed. However, responses varied both by race and, for parents, by the type of school their child attends. About the same number of African Americans favored (41 percent) and opposed (43 percent) turning all schools into charters. However, 55 percent of all other voters favored this option with 29 percent opposed. Among charter school parents, 63 percent favored and 32 percent opposed the idea. Among traditional school parents, 38 percent favored and 40 percent opposed turning almost all schools into charter schools.

A full discussion of all of the issues related to school governance in New Orleans is beyond the scope of this report.

The Cowen Institute, in a series of four separate reports, is in the process of providing background information and laying out options for what education governance in New Orleans could look like. Other organizations are also working on the issue. However, the lack of a plan for governance remains a serious challenge for the long-term viability of the school system. Uncertain governance makes it difficult for schools to plan for the future and to coordinate needed services, making them more expensive. At the same time, a lack of a clear governing framework for schools makes it difficult for the public to understand where accountability lies for public education services.

Conclusion



The system of public schools in New Orleans continues to improve even as it faces a number of major challenges.

Below, we list and explain the major successes and challenges that we have identified through our research. In the case of each challenge, we make some recommendations or propose what we think are promising ideas to address each one.

Not included in the successes is increasing academic achievement in the city's public schools. As is documented throughout this report, schools across the city have improved over the past few years. While this is certainly a success, it is an outcome of other successful practices undertaken by individuals, schools, districts, and other organizations which, where possible, we hope to highlight. Likewise, not included in the challenges below are the overall challenges that students bring with them to school due to poor academic preparation, difficult home lives, learning disabilities, trauma, and other factors. These challenges are a given in New Orleans right now, and are what all schools in the city must address in order to be successful.

Finally, there are many successes and challenges that are not included below. In trying to understand the system of schools as a whole, we necessarily have to exclude some observations that are more specific to certain schools. However, this does not detract in any way from the importance of the successes and struggles that every individual school faces.



Successes:

1 Improved school culture and increased expectations

Though difficult to measure, school leaders and school support organizations working in public schools agreed that the culture of public schools in New Orleans is improving, albeit from a low baseline. School leaders and teachers are building school environments that are more orderly and set higher expectations for students. This new environment manifests itself in better behavior, increased school pride, fewer discipline issues, and more time devoted to teaching and learning.

2 Stronger focus on improving instruction and student learning

A number of school leaders and school support organizations expressed that, as schools have begun to stabilize their operations and build more orderly school cultures, there is a renewed focus on the quality of instruction. This includes using assessment data to understand student skills at a granular level in order to improve teaching and student learning.

3 Progress on facilities planning and construction

Though all of the funding is not yet lined up, the Recovery School District and the Orleans Parish School Board have undertaken an ambitious and important effort to rebuild or renovate nearly all of the public school buildings in New Orleans that will be in use over the coming decades. This process requires more public input, oversight, and transparency, but the progress made to date on providing students with high quality school buildings is impressive and historic.

4 Improving relationships between districts and their charter schools (from a low baseline)

When the Cowen Institute conducted interviews with charter school leaders and district officials in early 2008, the relationships between them were very tense, especially between the OPSB and its charter schools. Though tension remains between the RSD and its charter schools over certain facilities services and vendor contracts, most charter leaders express appreciation for Paul Vallas's support of charter schools. In the NOPS system, the relationship between the OPSB and its charters has begun to thaw. OPSB charter representatives and OPSB members and administrators cite better working relationships even as issues like charter evaluations remain contentious.

5 Sustained leadership at the state, local, and school levels

Between 1998 and 2005, eight different superintendents served at the helm of the New Orleans Public Schools. Since the summer of 2007, there has been stable leadership in the Recovery School District, NOPS, and at the Louisiana Department of Education. While each of these leaders has their specific challenges, their persistence has provided an important measure of stability in otherwise unstable times. It is worth noting that Paul Vallas, the superintendent of the RSD, has on several occasions mentioned that he may leave in the coming year or so. If he does plan to leave soon, it would be helpful to the system as a whole for the RSD to begin making a succession plan.

Finally, school leaders have taken on even more importance as charter schools have expanded and the RSD devolves more powers to the principals in its direct-run schools. Though principal turnover remains high among the RSD-run schools, outside organizations working with schools agree that there has been a general strengthening of school leadership in RSD charters and RSD-run schools. This bodes well, as principal leadership is a key ingredient for successful schools, especially in schools with significant autonomy.

Challenges:

1 The quality, maintenance, and control of school facilities

Important progress is being made on constructing and renovating school buildings. At the same time, school leaders cite poor facilities as one of their greatest challenges. In many cases, school science labs either do not exist or are in terrible disrepair. Schools move frequently from building to building and sometimes feel like they have little control or understanding of the process. Some schools are in modular facilities right next to the still standing skeletons of their former buildings.

The responsibility for the poor quality of school buildings rests in part with the community and the school system that allowed schools to degenerate for decades before Katrina. The quality of school buildings will improve as new facilities are built or older buildings undergo major renovation over the next 5-10 years. Because of the time it will take to build and renovate so many dilapidated buildings, some schools will simply have to wait. But there are other things that can be done to ensure that the process of putting schools into buildings is fair and that the building process is transparent and uses public dollars efficiently.

A fair and transparent process should be articulated for how schools are chosen to move from one building to another as space opens up. If the RSD receives a large settlement from FEMA, a similar process should be created to decide how schools slated for later phases in the Facilities Master Plan will be prioritized for rebuilding.

In addition, all of the parties to the School Facilities Master Plan, including BESE, the OPSB, and the RSD, should ensure that the planned Master Facilities Oversight Committee meets regularly to review building plans and ensure that facilities money is being used efficiently and effectively.

Finally, though the state has secured funding to build and renovate schools from the federal government, there is currently no funding mechanism in place to pay for the routine maintenance of these buildings. This has been a consistent problem plaguing school facilities in New Orleans for decades. At the time that Hurricane Katrina struck, New Orleans' school buildings had \$1 billion of deferred maintenance.⁵⁹ Without additional funding for routine maintenance, over time these new school buildings could be in similarly poor condition.

2 Financial sustainability of public education

The financial sustainability of the current system of schools is a concern of charter school leaders and school district administrators. Non-recurring funding allowed school districts to spend more than their regular per-pupil revenues in order to restart schools after Hurricane Katrina, but these funds are largely spent. At the same time, the state of Louisiana kept per-pupil school funding flat this year, and may need to cut funding in the coming years. While district-run schools have had more money to spend on a per-pupil basis than charter schools, new charter schools have also benefited from private philanthropy and federal start up grants that may eventually decline or disappear. Many charters are small, and only add a grade or two per year, meaning that they lose some of the economies of scale that larger schools have. All schools, except OPSB charter schools, are also dealing with the high cost of transportation in a system of citywide school choice.

Though it may be possible to advocate for increases to the state and local shares of the regular per-pupil school funding, this is unlikely in the current economic climate. In the short term, budgets will be tight and schools will have to look for savings and try to produce economies of scale by coordinating more services with other schools. Some charter schools may be forced to add grades more quickly in order to support their programs. If policymakers amend the choice system to allow more neighborhood preferences, this could save money on transportation and help create more neighborhood cohesion around schools. Over the long term, the state and the city will need to finance schools on a more sustainable basis. Schools can help this process along by continuing to improve performance and stewarding their resources wisely. If they can do this, schools will have a better case to make for additional funding in the future.

3 Governance of the system of schools

Governance is a challenge wherever roles and responsibilities are sufficiently unclear that it is hard to ensure that all students have access to a good education. For example, without a more coordinated discipline and expulsion policy, it is unclear who is responsible for the education of a child expelled from a school. Though responsibility for these students often falls to the Recovery School District, there is no one entity that is ultimately responsible for ensuring that all students are educated in New Orleans. RSD charter and traditional schools have put together a common application to apply to schools; however, the process is not used by OPSB schools which have their own policies. No organization has the authority to create and police a single policy, meaning that school choice remains an incomplete, though important, part of school reform. Many other policies fall into similar gray areas.

At the same time, a number of critical questions remain unanswered about the future of the school

system in New Orleans. Will schools be returned to local control? If so, when and according to what process? What will happen to RSD Type 5 charters when there is a return? Who will control their buildings? No provision has been made to answer these questions and others that have a big impact on how schools, parents, and the public plan for the future.

While some confusion about governance was inevitable after the state takeover following Katrina, it is time to begin an official process to answer these essential questions about the future structure of the school system. The Cowen Institute and other organizations have begun to study this issue and consider recommendations. Transparency and clearly articulated and documented processes for governance transition are critical to building public trust. Otherwise, the perception that important decisions about public education are made outside of the public eye will continue to the detriment of the system as a whole.



Challenges:

4 Data access and transparency

A decentralized system of schools requires access to timely information about schools and districts. At the same time, good governance requires transparency about finances, program effectiveness, building plans, meeting times, and many other areas. Information for parents has improved over the past few years, and the majority of parents in the Cowen Institute's survey now feel like they have access to information about schools. However, a number of problems remain in the area of data access and transparency.

Though Louisiana has been lauded for its statewide data system, access to that data for program evaluation and research remains difficult. Questions about student mobility, student discipline, special education student services and mobility, teacher turnover, principal turnover, and others that a district may have been able to answer in the past can now only be answered by the state, which collects data across the districts and charter schools in New Orleans. Likewise, the ability to answer questions about the effectiveness of different types of schools and programs, while controlling for student background and other factors, requires access to the state's longitudinal data system. Anecdotes fuel many theories (and rumors) about what is happening across the system of schools in New Orleans; only a solid data system that gives ready access to legitimate researchers and education organizations will help sort the reality from the rumors.

In addition, there are a number of basic pieces of information related to the governance of schools in New Orleans that are often difficult to access. School charters are not readily available from the state or schools; these public documents could easily be posted online. The same is true of meeting schedules for BESE, the OPSB, and charter school boards. Minutes and information from official meetings should also remain online, instead of being taken down after the meeting is complete. All of these actions would require little time, but would go a long way towards building public trust. In addition, this is all information to which the public has a right. There is no reason not to make it accessible.

5 The relationship between the RSD and OPSB

Relations between officials from the RSD and OPSB are frequently strained. This tension is often related to financial issues. These struggles affect students and schools because they drain resources – both time and money – from the districts. Furthermore, they foster divisiveness rather than contributing to a spirit that all children matter regardless of their school or district. In the long-term, a new governing structure for schools in New Orleans will hopefully ease some of these tensions by clearly defining and separating the powers of each organization involved in overseeing schools. In the short-term, however, the two districts will need to recommit to working together. Ultimately, it may be more productive for the districts to enter into binding arbitration to solve their differences quickly instead of resorting to the courts.

Appendices

School Data

iLEAP Scores by School Type: 2007 - 2009

Grade Level	School Type	2007 ELA: Basic & Above	2009 ELA: Basic & Above	07 to 09 Growth	2007 Math: Basic & Above	2009 Math: Basic & Above	07 to 09 Growth
3rd Grade	OPSB Charter	75.20%	81.80%	6.60%	73.70%	80.70%	7.00%
	OPSB-run	67.00%	78.70%	11.70%	57.10%	77.70%	20.60%
	RSD Charter	36.70%	42.80%	6.10%	34.40%	41.40%	7.00%
	RSD-run	17.60%	35.00%	17.40%	17.50%	36.90%	19.40%
	All NOLA	41.30%	48.50%	7.20%	39.50%	48.70%	9.20%
5th Grade	OPSB Charter	66.90%	83.80%	16.90%	65.40%	73.80%	8.40%
	OPSB-run	67.00%	92.80%	25.80%	51.20%	89.20%	38.00%
	RSD Charter	27.00%	47.50%	20.50%	25.70%	46.80%	21.10%
	RSD-run	20.20%	33.80%	13.60%	24.60%	36.30%	11.70%
	All NOLA	34.80%	52.30%	17.50%	34.80%	50.80%	16.00%
6th Grade	OPSB Charter	74.50%	82.90%	8.40%	77.30%	86.60%	9.30%
	OPSB-run	70.70%	92.00%	21.30%	73.20%	96.10%	22.90%
	RSD Charter	35.90%	54.80%	18.90%	38.40%	56.30%	17.90%
	RSD-run	16.60%	33.70%	17.10%	24.00%	38.30%	14.30%
	All NOLA	38.50%	56.40%	17.90%	42.80%	59.10%	16.30%
7th Grade	OPSB Charter	76.90%	85.40%	8.50%	75.50%	84.90%	9.40%
	OPSB-run	45.30%	64.30%	19.00%	42.40%	57.10%	14.70%
	RSD Charter	36.70%	43.70%	7.00%	33.40%	47.90%	14.50%
	RSD-run	14.80%	23.20%	8.40%	15.80%	28.50%	12.70%
	All NOLA	37.90%	44.20%	6.30%	36.80%	47.20%	10.40%
9th Grade	OPSB Charter	64.90%	74.50%	9.60%	59.10%	71.00%	11.90%
	OPSB-run	50.40%	55.00%	4.60%	45.60%	52.70%	7.10%
	RSD Charter	23.60%	50.80%	27.20%	20.90%	53.50%	32.60%
	RSD-run	11.40%	17.50%	6.10%	13.30%	20.50%	7.20%
	All NOLA	36.20%	50.80%	14.60%	34.60%	50.70%	16.10%

Individual School Information

School Name	Grades Offered 2009-2010	Total Students Reported	% African American	% Free and Reduced Lunch	% Special Education	2008 Baseline SPS	2009 Baseline SPS
OPSB Charter Schools							
Audubon Charter School	PK-8	775	46.6%	43.4%	4.1%	108.9	109.8
Einstein Charter School	PK-8	471	66.2%	93.8%	8.9%	84.9	85.3
Warren Easton Senior High School	9-12	849	96.2%	85.5%	3.5%	76.6	84.1
Alice Harte Elementary Charter School	K-8	615	87.2%	69.9%	11.5%	82.9	88.9
Edward Hynes Charter School	K-8	500	70.0%	65.0%	8.4%	103.8	107.1
Edna Karr Secondary School	9-12	843	92.9%	72.5%	3.6%	77.0	83.0
Priestley School of Architecture/Construction	9-12	308	98.4%	93.5%	5.5%	41.4	51.1
Lusher Charter School	K-5	1,520	38.8%	30.6%	4.7%	135.0	139.4
Robert Russa Moton Charter School	PK-7	280	99.6%	99.6%	3.2%	90.8	97.6
Lake Forest Elementary Charter School	K-8	463	94.0%	85.5%	3.9%	122.1	129.0
New Orleans Charter Science and Mathematics HS	9-12	373	88.2%	72.4%	5.9%	70.4	76.7
Benjamin Franklin High School	9-12	609	30.0%	29.9%	1.5%	165.2	167.5
OPSB Run Schools							
Mary Bethune Elementary Literature/Technology	PK-6	352	96.6%	84.9%	16.2%	108.0	117.6
McDonogh #35 Senior High School	7-12	1,008	99.5%	74.5%	7.2%	76.3	82.5
Eleanor McMain Secondary School	7-12	707	81.6%	76.9%	5.0%	81.1	84.8
Youth Study Center	NA	28	100.0%	100.0%	32.1%	NA	NA
The Alternative Learning Institute	NA	69	100.0%	100.0%	13.0%	NA	NA
Benjamin Franklin Elem. Math-Science Magnet	PK-6	609	93.1%	77.5%	12.2%	107.2	109.2
RSD Charter Schools							
P. A. Capdau School	PK-8	426	99.5%	95.3%	4.0%	62.4	66.4
Nelson Elementary School	PK-8	413	97.8%	98.3%	8.0%	65.5	63.7
Thurgood Marshall Early College High School	9-12	377	97.3%	87.0%	7.4%	NA	NA
Arise Academy	PK-2	198	99.5%	98.0%	5.6%	NA	NA
Success Preparatory Academy	PK-3	238	98.7%	96.6%	8.8%	NA	NA
Benjamin E. Mays Preparatory School	PK-2	140	99.3%	98.6%	10.7%	NA	NA
Pride College Preparatory Academy	PK-2	132	97.0%	95.5%	10.6%	NA	NA
Crocker Arts and Technology School	PK-3	174	97.1%	92.0%	5.2%	NA	NA
The Intercultural Charter School	K-5	296	62.8%	94.3%	6.8%	NA	65.8
Akili Academy of New Orleans	K-2	168	98.8%	75.0%	8.9%	NA	NA
New Orleans Charter Science and Math Academy	9-10	151	97.4%	53.6%	15.2%	NA	81.6
Sojourner Truth Academy	9-10	183	92.9%	84.2%	10.4%	NA	NA
Miller-McCoy Academy	6-7 & 9-10	388	99.0%	77.3%	7.5%	NA	67.7
NOLA College Prep Charter School	K-2 & 6-8	441	99.1%	95.9%	9.3%	NA	67.0
A.D. Crossman-Esperanza Charter School	K-8	332	48.2%	94.9%	5.7%	NA	53.8
Langston Hughes Academy Charter School	K-7	488	100.0%	92.8%	8.2%	NA	64.7
Andrew H. Wilson Charter School	K-7	525	95.6%	95.0%	9.5%	NA	62.3
Abramson Science & Technology Charter School	K-11	491	90.8%	97.4%	3.7%	NA	66.2
James M. Singleton Charter School	PK-8	617	98.2%	98.1%	5.2%	55.2	58.9
Dr. M.L.K. Charter School for Science & Tech.	PK-8	700	99.4%	97.0%	3.3%	89.2	91.4
McDonogh #28 City Park Academy	K-8	372	99.5%	99.7%	4.6%	48.6	56.6
Lafayette Academy of New Orleans	PK-7	778	97.3%	86.8%	10.9%	58.8	63.8
McDonogh #42 Elementary Charter School	PK-8	527	98.7%	86.0%	4.7%	NA	61.9
Martin Behrman Elementary School	K-8	616	97.6%	89.8%	7.3%	92.6	94.8
Dwight D. Eisenhower Elementary School	K-8	594	88.7%	82.5%	8.2%	66.7	69.5
William J. Fischer Elementary School	PK-8	451	98.7%	92.9%	5.1%	62.1	60.4
McDonogh #32 Elementary School	K-8	571	98.9%	87.2%	10.2%	41.9	55.4
O.P. Walker Senior High School	9-12	857	99.3%	86.7%	9.8%	48.6	55.9

Individual School Information

School Name	Grades Offered 2009-2010	Total Students Reported	% African American	% Free and Reduced Lunch	% Special Education	2008 Baseline SPS	2009 Baseline SPS
Harriet Tubman Elementary School	PK-8	485	96.9%	89.5%	9.5%	50.3	53.7
Algiers Technology Academy	9-12	347	93.4%	68.3%	8.6%	NA	49.9
Sophie B. Wright Inst.of Academic Excellence	4-8	348	97.4%	99.1%	6.6%	74.6	79.5
KIPP Believe College Prep (Phillips)	5-8	333	99.7%	91.9%	5.4%	98.6	97.2
KIPP McDonogh 15 School for the Creative Arts	PK-8	480	93.8%	87.1%	11.7%	94.4	88.8
KIPP Central City Academy	5-7	288	100.0%	89.6%	8.0%	NA	75.9
KIPP Central City Primary	K-1	195	99.5%	90.8%	6.7%	NA	114.6
Samuel J. Green Charter School	K-8	460	97.2%	96.5%	10.7%	60.0	66.5
Arthur Ashe Charter School	K-2 & 4-8	241	98.3%	90.5%	15.8%	NA	67.2
RSD Run Schools							
Joseph A. Craig School	PK-8	541	96.9%	92.2%	12.0%	52.3	48.8
Joseph S. Clark Senior High School	9-12	284	97.5%	68.3%	22.9%	21.4	22.1
Benjamin Banneker Elementary School	PK-8	505	95.2%	96.2%	13.3%	54.3	57.5
Walter L. Cohen High School	9-12	409	99.3%	76.0%	11.7%	NA	20.0
John Dibert Elementary School	PK-8	358	90.5%	87.2%	10.3%	56.6	56.7
Booker T. Washington High School		160	100.0%	91.3%	24.4%	NA	NA
Fredrick A. Douglass High School	9-12	291	99.3%	70.4%	17.9%	16.3	17.1
Dr. Charles Richard Drew Elementary School	PK-8	317	99.4%	94.6%	11.7%	34.9	40.8
Paul B. Habans Elementary School	PK-8	366	95.6%	85.0%	10.4%	55.5	56.1
Murray Henderson Elementary School	PK-8	238	98.7%	97.9%	11.8%	61.4	59.2
John McDonogh Senior High School	9-12	591	99.2%	78.5%	10.5%	20.9	23.2
James Weldon Johnson School	PK-8	307	97.4%	97.1%	14.3%	53.3	52.5
Laurel Elementary School	PK-8	537	97.6%	94.8%	12.8%	45.8	43.2
Live Oak Elementary School	PK-8	490	95.7%	92.0%	13.3%	41.5	44.0
Rabouin Career Magnet High School	11-12	295	98.6%	81.7%	10.8%	25.5	22.6
Sarah Towles Reed Senior High School	9-12	585	91.5%	73.2%	13.0%	30.0	33.6
A.P. Tureaud Elementary School	PK-6	338	97.6%	93.8%	8.0%	70.9	72.6
Albert Wicker Literacy Academy	K-8	245	99.6%	94.3%	15.1%	36.8	41.8
Sarah Towles Reed Elementary School	PK-8	594	98.1%	91.8%	7.9%	48.8	47.2
Schwarz Alternative School		54	100.0%	83.3%	70.4%	NA	NA
Carver Elementary School	PK-8	257	100.0%	96.5%	15.6%	NA	36.1
G.W. Carver High School	9-12	460	99.6%	95.4%	13.0%	NA	29.5
Fannie C. Williams Elementary School	PK-7	536	98.7%	94.4%	11.6%	NA	60.6
F.W. Gregory Elementary School	K-8	289	99.0%	92.0%	16.3%	NA	37.6
Harney Elementary School	PK-8	421	99.8%	96.4%	14.3%	NA	41.5
H.C. Schaumburg Elementary School	PK-8	613	98.4%	94.6%	10.8%	NA	61.8
Excel Academy		68	100.0%	88.2%	13.2%	NA	NA
Mary D. Coghill Elementary School	PK-8	534	99.4%	91.9%	10.1%	NA	53.4
Gentilly Terrace Elementary School	PK-8	416	96.6%	58.7%	5.0%	NA	61.8
Julian Leadership Academy	PK-8	318	97.8%	89.0%	10.4%	NA	46.7
International High School	9	115	71.3%	71.3%	7.8%	NA	NA
Greater Gentilly High School	9	206	96.1%	83.0%	5.3%	NA	NA
Hope Academy		96	99.0%	91.7%	9.4%	NA	NA
New Orleans Career Academy		59	98.3%	79.7%	15.3%	NA	NA
Recovery School District-LDE Central Office	NA	40	77.5%	2.5%	100.0%	NA	NA
Type 2 Charter Schools							
International School of Louisiana		522	46.6%	50.6%	1.7%	97.5	102.6
Milestone SABIS Academy of New Orleans		396	96.7%	95.7%	6.6%	61.4	74.2

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