

The Recovery School District in New Orleans 2003-2011

May 14, 2003

Governor Kathleen Blanco signs into law Act 9, which allows the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) to take over the operations of a failing school. The Recovery School District (RSD) is created as the mechanism to do so under the authority of State Superintendent of Education Cecil Picard.

July 1, 2004

Pierre A. Capdau Middle School in Orleans Parish is transferred to the RSD. A Type 5 charter school operator, meaning it is approved by BESE to operate under the RSD, is approved to take over operations of the school beginning in the 2004-05 school year.

May 2005

Four additional schools in Orleans Parish are transferred to the RSD. The schools all open as Type 5 charter schools at the start of the 2005-06 school year.

August 29, 2005

Hurricane Katrina strikes the Gulf Coast. The storm and the subsequent levee failures unravel the operations of New Orleans Public Schools, destroy or damage school facilities, and displace students, teachers, and staff across the country.

November 30, 2005

Governor Blanco signs into law Act 35, passed by the Louisiana Legislature during an extraordinary session. Act 35 raises the minimum School Performance Score (SPS) necessary for the RSD to take over a failing school in a district academically in crisis. Subsequently, over 100 low-performing schools in Orleans Parish are transferred to the RSD for an initial period of five years.

January 3, 2006

The RSD reopens three charter elementary and middle schools: Sophie B. Wright, Samuel J. Green,

and Pierre A. Capdau (Capdau's actual opening is delayed until January 30, 2006). All three schools were chartered prior to Hurricane Katrina.

April 18, 2006

The RSD opens three direct-run schools: Joseph A. Craig and Benjamin Banneker elementary schools and Joseph S. Clark Senior High School.

April 20, 2006

State Superintendent Picard announces that Robin Jarvis will serve as acting superintendent of the RSD. BESE also approves six new Type 5 charter schools to open in New Orleans in the 2006-07 school year.

September 7, 2006

Now overseeing 17 direct-run and 18 charter schools in New Orleans, the RSD begins its first full school year since Hurricane Katrina. Five charter schools delay opening due to unfinished building repairs.

October 1, 2006

The RSD has a total of 15,819 students enrolled in its charter and traditional schools in New Orleans, representing 61.7 percent of all public school students in the city.

November 1, 2006

At a joint education subcommittee meeting of the Louisiana Legislature, RSD Superintendent Jarvis fields complaints about subpar conditions at RSD schools, including teacher vacancies, a lack of textbooks and supplies, security problems, and slow progress in repairing buildings.

February 15, 2007

State Superintendent Picard passes away from complications of Lou Gehrig's disease.



March 1, 2007

BESE names Paul Pastorek the new State Superintendent of Education.

May 1, 2007

RSD Superintendent Jarvis announces that she will resign at the end of the month.

May 5, 2007

State Superintendent Pastorek announces that Paul Vallas will be the next superintendent of the RSD.

May 10, 2007

Nearly half of RSD students failed in most fourth- and eighth-grade categories on the state's high-stakes standardized tests, and two-thirds of high school students failed.

June 12, 2007

OPSB and the RSD award Parsons Corporation and Concordia contracts to develop a School Facilities Master Plan for Orleans Parish, which will guide future school construction and renovation.

June 20, 2007

Newly appointed RSD Superintendent Vallas presents his reform plans and initiatives to BESE. He announces plans to open 12 new schools for the 2007-08 school year as well as a "welcome school" to help process students as they return to the city. Schools will open after Labor Day.

July 2, 2007

The RSD unveils a \$400,000 national teacher recruitment campaign including website, radio and newspaper advertisements across the country.

July 25, 2007

State Superintendent Pastorek announces that the RSD will use FEMA funding for a Quick Start initiative that will construct or renovate up to five schools in New Orleans by the end of the year.

September 4, 2007

34 RSD direct-run and charter schools open for the first time under RSD Superintendent Vallas.

October 1, 2007

The RSD has 21,648 students enrolled in its charter and traditional schools. Enrollment has increased by over 5,000 students, or nearly 40 percent, from the previous October.

October 2, 2007

RSD officials announce that the Quick Start initiative will include three new and two renovated school buildings located at the Lake Area, L.B. Landry, Langston Hughes, Andrew H. Wilson and Fannie C. Williams sites. The Fannie C. Williams site is later changed to Joseph A. Craig.

October 22, 2007

RSD Superintendent Vallas announces that, beginning next school year, principals at RSD direct-run schools will have the authority to hire their own teachers and administrators, as well as more control over their budgets.

January 10, 2008

The RSD and the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) hold the first of five community meetings to get input regarding the draft School Facilities Master Plan. The meetings are part of over 200 meetings being held to solicit input on school facilities needs in New Orleans.

January 16, 2008

BESE approves the RSD's pay-for-performance plan that would give bonuses to teachers and principals in schools that achieve a specific school performance score or another state assessment index.

January 18, 2008

17 RSD central office employees lose their jobs under a cost-cutting plan to save about \$1 million annually.

February 27, 2008

Student applications for the 2008-09 school year are due according to the new, streamlined common application process. The one-page application is accepted by most public schools in New Orleans and moves up registration for RSD schools by five months from the previous year.

March 20, 2008

RSD Superintendent Vallas announces the RSD's High School Redesign initiative, funded by a grant from the Walton Family Foundation.

May 6, 2008

The RSD schools see improvement across the board on the state's high-stakes standardized tests. Despite modest gains, however, 60 percent of first-time test-takers at the high school level failed both math and reading.

August 18, 2008

The RSD begins the 2008-09 school year with 33 direct-run and 33 charter schools. RSD and OPSB leaders also officially unveil the draft School Facilities Master Plan.

October 1, 2008

24,901 students are enrolled in RSD charter and traditional schools in New Orleans. The RSD now enrolls nearly 70 percent of all public school students in New Orleans. Half of all students in the RSD attend a charter school.

November 13, 2008

BESE approves a revised version of the School Facilities Master Plan. OPSB had approved the plan earlier in the month. The \$2 billion construction and renovation plan remains largely unfunded.

May 20, 2009

RSD Superintendent Vallas presents a \$176 million operating budget for the 2009-10 school year, including a 23 percent reduction from the 2008-09 budget.

May 21, 2009

RSD schools see general improvement on the state's high-stakes standardized tests. As in the previous year, RSD charters outperform RSD direct-run schools.

June 5, 2009

62 RSD central office jobs are eliminated in an effort to save \$4 million and continue a shift of administrative power to the school level.

July 22, 2009

The RSD announces the closure of its Welcome School and tells parents to instead contact schools directly in order to enroll.

August 7, 2009

34 direct-run and 37 charter schools overseen by the RSD open in New Orleans to mark the third year with RSD Superintendent Vallas at the reins.

October 1, 2009

The RSD has a total of 26,754 students enrolled in its schools, with over 55 percent of its students attending charter schools. The RSD enrolls 70 percent of all public school students in New Orleans.

January 12, 2010

BESE votes to raise the minimum SPS for Academically Unacceptable status to 65 for the 2010-11 school year and 75 for the 2011-12 school year.

May 27, 2010

RSD schools in New Orleans post the largest gains in the state on the state's high-stakes standardized tests, increasing by 20 percent since 2007.

July 2, 2010

RSD Superintendent Vallas announces that the school year at RSD direct-run schools will be extended by five weeks beginning in the 2010-11 school year.

August 5, 2010

The RSD releases a draft school building assignment plan that lays out where individual school programs will be located in the coming years.

August 6, 2010

In partnership with the RSD, the local non-profit New Schools for New Orleans receives a \$28 million federal grant to recruit and incubate charter operators to take over failing RSD schools.

August 12, 2010

The school year begins for the RSD with 23 direct-run and 46 charter schools, continuing expansion of charter schools.

August 25, 2010

FEMA awards the RSD and OPSB a final settlement of \$1.8 billion in a single lump-sum payment to rebuild, renovate or demolish K-12 public schools that were damaged in Hurricane Katrina. This money will be used to fund the projects outlined in the School Facilities Master Plan.

September 14, 2010

As schools in New Orleans near the conclusion of their initial five-year placement in the RSD, State Superintendent Pastorek and RSD Superintendent Vallas release a proposal for returning the schools to local control.

October 1, 2010

28,212 students, or 71 percent of all public school students in New Orleans, are enrolled in RSD schools. A record 69 percent of these students attend charter schools, a 26 percent increase from the previous year.

October 14, 2010

BESE's RSD committee holds a public hearing in New Orleans on State Superintendent Pastorek and RSD Superintendent Vallas' proposal for a process to return RSD schools to local control. Hundreds of parents, teachers, students, legislators, and community members crowded the auditorium to address the board members. BESE also collected comments on its website.

December 9, 2010

BESE adopts a revised policy for RSD schools in New Orleans to return to local control. All RSD schools in New Orleans will initially remain in the RSD, subject to the new policy: Schools meeting performance benchmarks will be eligible to choose to stay in the RSD or return to local control beginning in the 2012-13 school year. Failing schools will remain in the RSD, which must present an improvement plan for each school or else allow charter and local districts to apply to run the schools.

January 4, 2011

The RSD holds the first of five public meetings seeking public input on the draft school building assignment plan released in August. RSD officials say they will release a final assignment plan after all the meetings, and will hold another set of meetings in April to discuss revisions to the School Facilities Master Plan.

February 22, 2011

RSD Superintendent Vallas announces that he plans to leave his position at the end of the school year. State Superintendent Pastorek says he will likely announce a successor before April 25, the start of the 2011 Regular Louisiana State Legislative session.

March 23, 2011

BESE meets in New Orleans to discuss issues related to the RSD, including a proposal to allow charter schools to establish neighborhood zones. State Superintendent Pastorek introduces a draft vision statement for the RSD.

April 6, 2011

State Superintendent Pastorek announces that John White, New York City Department of Education's deputy chancellor, will replace Vallas as RSD Superintendent.