



# New Orleans by the Numbers: ACT Scores, Class of 2011

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The Scott S. Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives at Tulane University launched the NOLA by the Numbers series in October 2010. This series aims to provide journalists, policymakers, community leaders, and the public with a timely and comprehensive review of state-released school-level data on public schools in New Orleans. This briefing focuses on ACT scores for the graduating class of 2011. It, and others released by the Cowen Institute in the past, can be found at <http://education.tulane.edu>.

The Louisiana Department of Education releases annually the average composite, English, mathematics, reading, and science reasoning American College Test (ACT) scores at both the district and school levels. ACT scores range from 1-36. The averages are computed using the ACT scores most recently obtained by the Louisiana public school students who were or would have been members of the graduating class of 2011. The ACT, which students generally take in the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade, is intended to measure students' general educational development and their capacity to complete college-level work; college entrance exams such as the ACT are required for admissions to most two- and four-year colleges and universities in the state.

## Fast Facts

- The 2011 average ACT composite score for all public school students in New Orleans was **18.0**, an increase of 0.5 points from 2010.
- Average ACT composite scores at New Orleans public schools ranged from a low of **14.8** – the lowest in the state – to a high of **27.4** – the highest in the state.
- New Orleans has improved its scores on the ACT since Hurricane Katrina. The average composite score for the class of 2005 was **17.0**.
- A minimum ACT composite score of **20** is required to qualify for free tuition at four-year public colleges in Louisiana, while a minimum composite score of **17** is required to qualify for free tuition at two-year public colleges in Louisiana.
- **2** of the **18** public high schools in New Orleans with graduates in the class of 2011 earned average ACT composite scores of 20 or above. An additional **7** schools had an average score of 17 or higher, three more schools than the previous year.



The average ACT composite score for all Louisiana public and nonpublic school students in the graduating class of 2011 was 20.2, an increase of 0.1 from last year. The national average, which also includes both public and nonpublic school students, increased from 21.0 in 2010 to 21.1 in 2011. Based on 2011 average ACT composite scores, Louisiana ranked 41<sup>st</sup> in the nation and 10<sup>th</sup> of the 16 Southern Regional Education Board states. According to ACT, Inc., Louisiana was one of eight states with 100 percent of high school graduates taking the ACT in 2011. Nationally, 47 percent of graduates took the ACT, though likely many additional students took the SAT Reasoning Test, another college entrance exam.

### ACT Results in New Orleans by School Type

In New Orleans, the 2011 average ACT composite score of all public school students increased from 17.5 in 2010 to 18.0 in 2011. Despite this growth, New Orleans remains in the lowest third of all Louisiana school districts and well below the national average. However, this marks a general upward trend since the class of 2005 when the average ACT composite score was 17.0. The state does not report the percentage of graduates who took the ACT by school or district, though the number of total test-takers has gradually increased over the past three years.

Average ACT composite scores in New Orleans varied significantly by school type. Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) charter schools had the highest absolute performance (20.3) of all New Orleans school types and were the only school type to outperform the state average (20.2). These schools have a history of relatively high academic performance, and a number of them have selective admissions and retention policies that are based on academic performance. Overall, they saw an increase in their average ACT composite score from 19.6 in

2010 to 20.3 in 2011. Priestley, originally an OPSB charter school, was taken over by the OPSB as a direct-run school in December 2010 and thus is included in the OPSB charter school average for 2010 but not 2011. Had it remained a charter school, the 2011 average ACT composite score for OPSB charter schools would be 20.0.

OPSB direct-run schools saw a slight decrease in their average composite score from 17.6 in 2010 to 17.5 in 2011. This is due to the addition of Priestley, without which their average score would have increased to 17.7.

Recovery School District (RSD) direct-run schools reported the lowest average ACT composite scores of all schools and school types in New Orleans, though overall they improved by 0.3 points from the previous year (15.0 in 2010 to 15.3 in 2011). RSD charter schools improved their average score from 16.9 in 2010 to 17.0 in 2011. Many of the RSD direct-run and charter schools had a long history of low achievement and were transferred to the RSD following Hurricane Katrina.

**2011 Average ACT Composite Scores by School Type**



Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2011

## ACT Results in New Orleans by School

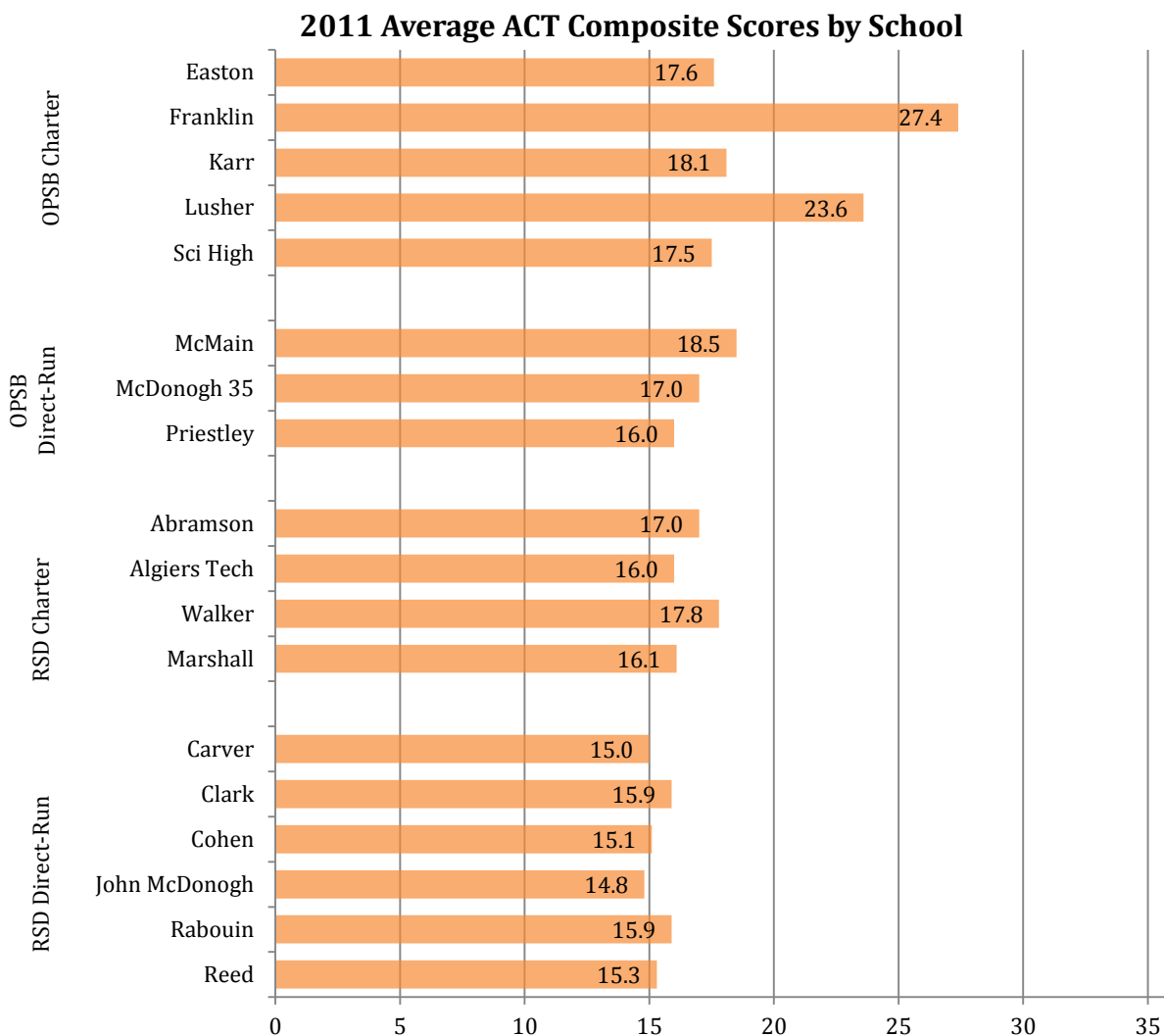
Average ACT composite scores in New Orleans also varied significantly by school. In fact, New Orleans schools reported both the lowest average composite score in the state (14.8) and the highest in the state (27.4). There were 18 public high schools in New Orleans that reported average ACT scores for 2011, 17 of which also reported scores for 2010. Of those 17 schools, 11 reported an increase in their average composite ACT scores from the previous year. Four saw decreased average composite scores and two stayed flat.

The schools with the highest ACT composite averages were Benjamin Franklin and Lusher, both OPSB charter schools that have selective admissions policies based on academic performance. They were also the only schools to outperform the state

average. Franklin, however, decreased by 0.7 points from the previous year, from 28.1 to 27.4.

The school showing the largest gain in its average ACT composite score was Clark, an RSD direct-run school, with a 1.2 point increase from 2010 to 2011 (14.7 to 15.9), and a 1.4 point increase since 2009. O. Perry Walker, an RSD charter school, also saw large gains in its average composite score, increasing from 14.7 in 2009 to 16.9 in 2010 and 17.8 in 2011.

For the second year in a row John McDonogh, an RSD direct-run school, reported the lowest average ACT composite score, though its average score increased from 14.1 in 2010 to 14.8 in 2011. Average ACT composite scores for each public school in New Orleans from 2007 to 2011 are located in the appendix.



Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2011

## ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks

The ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks are the minimum ACT test scores required for students to have a high probability of success in credit-bearing college courses such as English composition, algebra, biology and social sciences. The ACT empirically derived these benchmarks based on the actual performance of students in college. No school type in

New Orleans had average scores that met all of the ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks. The following table compares the ACT's benchmarks for each subject with New Orleans average subject scores by school type as well as the Louisiana and national averages. Bolded and shaded scores met or exceeded the benchmark.

### Average ACT Subject Test Score by School Type, 2011

ACT Test	College Readiness Benchmark Score	2011 Average Scores						
		OPSB Charter	OPSB Direct-Run	RSD Charter	RSD Direct-Run	All New Orleans	Louisiana*	National*
English	18	<b>20.5</b>	17.0	15.8	13.7	17.5	<b>20.4</b>	<b>20.6</b>
Math	22	19.8	17.2	17.2	15.8	17.9	19.7	21.1
Reading	21	20.2	17.5	17.0	15.2	18.0	20.3	<b>21.3</b>
Science	24	20.0	17.6	17.5	15.7	18.1	20.1	20.9

\*Includes both public and nonpublic schools.

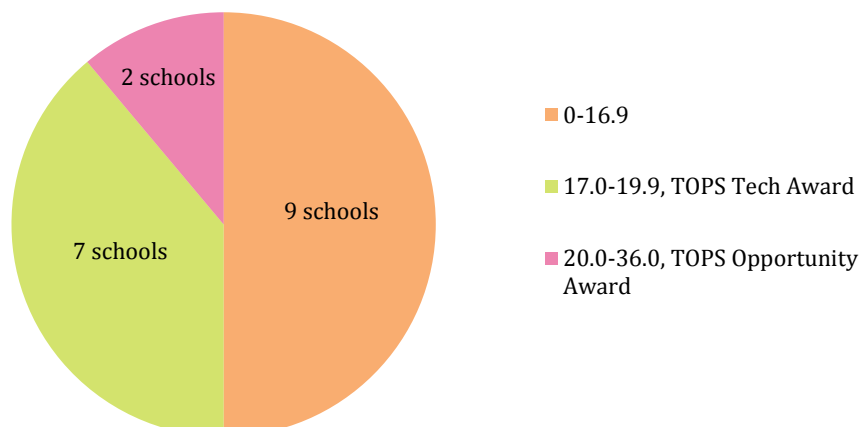
Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2011

## TOPS Award Eligibility

ACT scores in Louisiana are used to determine student eligibility for the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) awards, which provide free tuition to in-state two- and four-year colleges and universities. A minimum ACT composite score of 20 is required to qualify for free tuition at four-year higher education institutions, while a minimum composite score of 17 is required to qualify for free tuition at two-year schools. As was the case last

year, only two high schools in New Orleans, both with selective admissions policies, had an average ACT composite score of 20 or higher. An additional seven schools had an average ACT composite score of 17 or higher, three more schools than in 2010. The average scores at the remaining high schools did not meet the minimum qualifications for the TOPS program, meaning many of their students are ineligible for free tuition offered by the TOPS awards.

### 2011 Number of New Orleans Public High Schools by ACT Composite Score Averages at TOPS Award Levels



Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2011

## Appendix

### New Orleans Public School Average ACT Scores, Class of 2011

School	2011 Student Count	Average Composite Score	English	Math	Reading	Science
<b>OPSB Charter</b>						
Benjamin Franklin	116	27.4	28.2	26.6	27.9	26.2
Edna Karr	189	18.1	18.4	17.6	17.7	18.1
Lusher	94	23.6	24.4	22.7	24.0	22.7
Science & Math High	79	17.5	16.7	17.8	17.3	17.8
Warren Easton	193	17.6	17.6	17.2	17.3	17.7
<i>Average - OPSB Charter</i>	<i>671</i>	<i>20.3</i>	<i>20.5</i>	<i>19.8</i>	<i>20.2</i>	<i>20.0</i>
<b>OPSB Direct-Run</b>						
Eleanor McMain	150	18.5	18.4	18.0	18.7	18.4
McDonogh 35	188	17.0	16.4	16.8	16.9	17.3
Priestley	47	16.0	14.7	16.2	16.2	16.5
<i>Average - OPSB Direct-Run</i>	<i>385</i>	<i>17.5</i>	<i>17.0</i>	<i>17.2</i>	<i>17.5</i>	<i>17.6</i>
<b>RSD Charter</b>						
Abramson	24	17.0	15.3	17.9	16.5	17.8
Algiers Tech	61	16.0	15.1	16.2	15.6	16.7
Miller-McCoy	1	-	-	-	-	-
O.P. Walker	190	17.8	16.3	17.9	18.4	18.2
Sojourner Truth	1	-	-	-	-	-
Sophie B. Wright	7	-	-	-	-	-
Thurgood Marshall	115	16.1	15.6	16.4	15.4	16.6
<i>Average - RSD Charter</i>	<i>399</i>	<i>17.0</i>	<i>15.8</i>	<i>17.2</i>	<i>17.0</i>	<i>17.5</i>
<b>RSD Direct-Run</b>						
Frederick Douglass	9	-	-	-	-	-
Greater Gentilly	1	-	-	-	-	-
G.W. Carver	53	15.0	14.0	15.5	14.6	15.2
John McDonogh	60	14.8	13.3	15.7	14.3	15.2
Joseph S. Clark	52	15.9	14.4	15.9	16.2	16.2
Rabouin	18	15.9	14.4	16.4	16.1	16.7
Sarah T. Reed	84	15.3	13.5	16.0	15.4	15.6
Walter L. Cohen	53	15.1	13.3	15.5	15.1	16.3
<i>Average - RSD Direct-Run</i>	<i>330</i>	<i>15.3</i>	<i>13.7</i>	<i>15.8</i>	<i>15.2</i>	<i>15.7</i>
<b>New Orleans*</b>	<b>1,766</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>18.1</b>
<b>Louisiana*</b>	<b>35,870</b>	<b>20.2</b>	<b>20.4</b>	<b>19.7</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>20.1</b>
<b>Nation</b>	<b>1,623,112</b>	<b>21.1</b>	<b>20.6</b>	<b>21.1</b>	<b>21.3</b>	<b>20.9</b>

\*Includes both public and nonpublic schools.

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2011

## New Orleans Public School Average ACT Composite Scores, 2007-2011

School	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>OPSB Charter</b>					
Benjamin Franklin	28.0	27.2	27.1	28.1	27.4
Edna Karr	18.3	18.3	18.4	17.9	18.1
Lusher	-	23.6	23.9	23.4	23.6
Priestley	-	-	-	15.7	-
Science & Math High	19.5	18.1	17.3	17.1	17.5
Warren Easton	16.5	16.5	16.6	15.7	17.6
<i>Average - OPSB Charter</i>	<i>20.4</i>	<i>20.0</i>	<i>19.9</i>	<i>19.6</i>	<i>20.3</i>
<b>OPSB Direct-Run</b>					
Eleanor McMain	18.3	18.9	18.7	18.4	18.5
McDonogh #35	16.9	16.2	16.7	17.0	17.0
Orleans Parish PM	-	14.8			
Priestley	-	-	-	-	16.0
<i>Average - OPSB Direct-Run</i>	<i>17.5</i>	<i>17.2</i>	<i>17.4</i>	<i>17.6</i>	<i>17.5</i>
<b>RSD Charter</b>					
Abramson	-	-	-	-	17.0
Algiers Tech	-	-	15.9	16.7	16.0
O.P. Walker	14.4	-	14.7	16.9	17.8
Thurgood Marshall	-	-	-	16.7	16.1
<i>Average - RSD Charter</i>	<i>14.4</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>14.8</i>	<i>16.8</i>	<i>17.0</i>
<b>RSD Direct-Run</b>					
Frederick Douglass	-	14.1	15.5	13.8	-
G.W. Carver	-	-	14.4	16.7	15.0
John McDonogh	14.2	15.3	13.9	14.2	14.8
Joseph S. Clark	13.8	14.8	14.5	14.7	15.9
Rabouin	14.7	14.3	14.8	15.2	15.9
Sarah T. Reed	14.9	16.1	15.1	15.4	15.3
Walter L. Cohen	-	16.4	14.7	15.1	15.1
<i>Average - RSD Direct-Run</i>	<i>14.5</i>	<i>15.2</i>	<i>14.7</i>	<i>14.7</i>	<i>15.3</i>
<b>New Orleans</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>18.3</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>18.0</b>
<b>Louisiana*</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>20.1</b>	<b>20.1</b>	<b>20.1</b>	<b>20.2</b>
<b>National*</b>	<b>21.1</b>	<b>21.2</b>	<b>21.1</b>	<b>21.0</b>	<b>21.1</b>

\*Includes both public and nonpublic schools.

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2007-2011