



# New Orleans by the Numbers: ACT Scores

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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 2010. 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. Scores range from 1-36. The averages are computed using the ACT scores most recently obtained by the Louisiana public and private school students who were or would have been members of the graduating class of 2010. 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 capability to complete college-level work, and it is required for admissions to most two- and four-year colleges and universities in the state.

The average ACT composite score for all public high school students in New Orleans remained unchanged from last year at 17.5, compared with the state average of 20.1 and the national average of 21.0. Students enrolled in high schools operated by the Recovery School District had low scores but showed large gains, increasing from an average 14.8 in 2009 to 15.5 in 2010.

## Fast Facts

- The average ACT composite score for all public school students in New Orleans was **17.5** in 2010, the same as it was in 2009, placing it in the lowest third of all Louisiana school districts.
- 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 colleges in Louisiana, while a minimum composite score of **17** is required to qualify for free tuition at two-year colleges in Louisiana.
- RSD charter schools experienced large gains this year, improving **13%** from last year.
- **2** of the **18** public high schools in New Orleans with 2010 graduates earned average ACT composite scores of 20 or above, while an additional **4** schools had an average score of 17 or higher.



*The Scott S. Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives at Tulane University is an action-oriented think tank that creates and advances solutions to the issues impeding student achievement in New Orleans and beyond. Areas of concentration include Applied Research, Public Policy, University-Based Initiatives, and College Readiness Programs. Additional information can be found online at <http://education.tulane.edu>.*

The average ACT composite score for all Louisiana public and nonpublic school students in the graduating class of 2010 was 20.1, unchanged from last year. The national average, which also includes both public and nonpublic school students, decreased from 21.1 in 2009 to 21.0 in 2010. Based on average ACT composite scores Louisiana ranked 41<sup>st</sup> in the nation and 11<sup>th</sup> of the 16 Southern Regional Education Board states. Louisiana had the seventh highest proportion of high school graduates taking the ACT in 2010 at 98 percent. Nationally, 47 percent of graduates took the ACT, though likely many more students took the SAT Reasoning Test, another college entrance exam.

### ACT Results in New Orleans by School Type

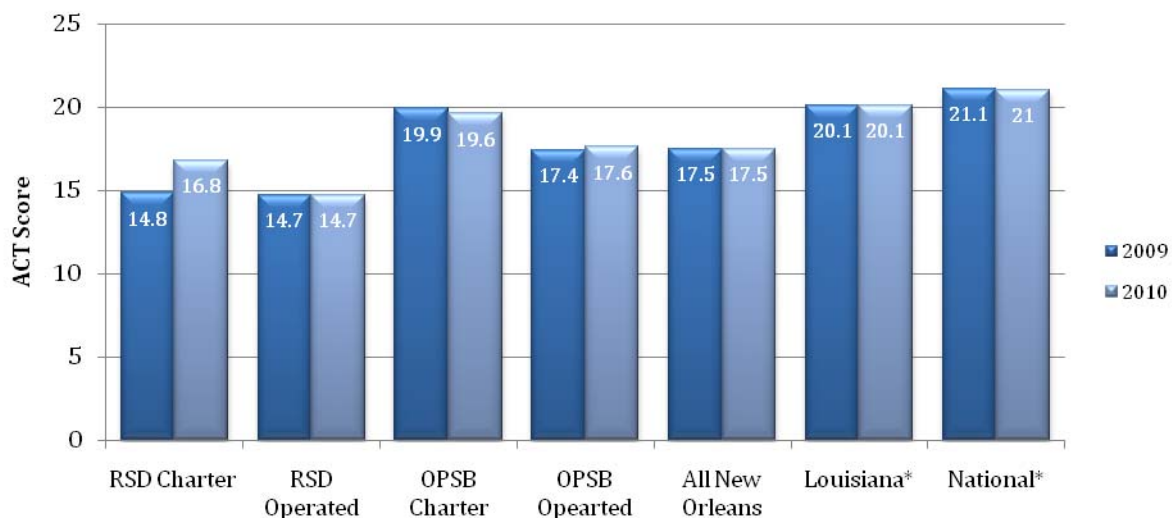
In New Orleans, the class of 2010 average ACT composite score of all public school students was unchanged from last year at 17.5, placing it in the lowest third of all Louisiana school districts and well below the national average. However, this marks a general upward trend since the class of 2005 when 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.

There are a variety of different types of schools currently operating in New Orleans. While none of the various school types in New Orleans outperformed the state average, the RSD charter schools experienced the largest gains. Collectively, their average scores jumped 13 percent, from 14.8 in 2009 to 16.8 in 2010. On the other hand, students enrolled in high schools directly operated by the Recovery School District (RSD) received low scores again this year and maintained an average composite score of 14.7.

The scores for both the RSD charter and directly operated schools remain below the city and state averages. Many of these schools had a long history of low achievement and were transferred to the Recovery School District following Hurricane Katrina.

The OPSB charter schools had the highest absolute performance of all New Orleans school types, which is expected since they have a history of relatively high academic performance. In addition, a number of them have selective admissions and retention policies that are based on academic performance. Overall, they experienced a slight decrease in their average ACT composite score (19.9 in 2009 to 19.6 in 2010). The average scores for the two high schools directly operated by the OPSB improved slightly (17.4 in 2009 to 17.6 in 2010).

Average ACT Composite Score by School Type, 2009-2010



\*Louisiana and national averages include both public and nonpublic school students, while all other averages include only public school students.

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2009 & 2010

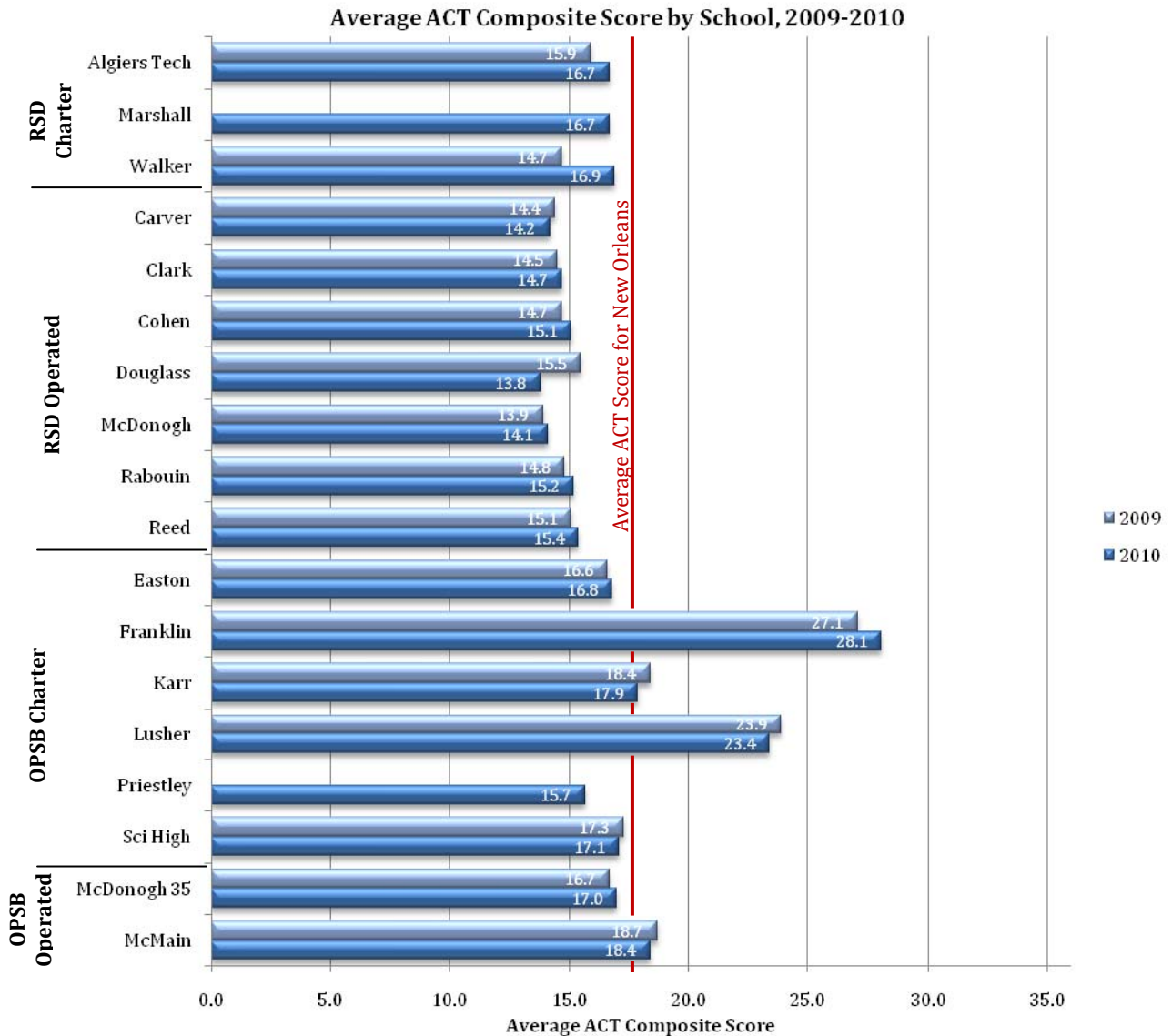
## ACT Results in New Orleans by School

There were 18 public high schools in New Orleans with a graduating class in 2010, and 16 schools with a graduating class in both 2009 and 2010. (Marshall and Priestley did not have graduating classes in 2009, but did in 2010.) Of these 16 schools, 10 reported an increase in their average composite ACT scores from the previous year. Schools with the highest ACT composite averages were Ben 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.

The school showing the largest gain in its average composite score was O. Perry Walker, an RSD charter

school, with a 15 percent increase from 2009 to 2010. Schools with the lowest average scores were Frederick Douglass and John McDonogh, both directly operated by the Recovery School District. Douglass, which showed the biggest drop in scores in the city, was closed by the RSD after the 2009-2010 school year. Rabouin will close following the 2010-2011 school year.

The following graph illustrates 2009 and 2010 average ACT composite scores for each public high school in New Orleans. The average scores on the English, mathematics, reading and science reasoning sections of the ACT for all public high schools in the city are located in the appendix.



Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2009 & 2010

## 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, 2010

ACT Test	College Readiness Benchmark Score	Class of 2010 Average Scores						
		RSD Charter	RSD Operated	OPSB Charter	OPSB Operated	All New Orleans	Louisiana*	National*
English	18	15.6	12.9	<b>19.4</b>	16.9	16.6	<b>20.1</b>	<b>20.5</b>
Math	22	16.7	15.5	19.2	17.4	17.5	19.6	21.0
Reading	21	17.3	14.4	19.4	17.5	17.4	20.2	21.3
Science	24	17.1	15.7	19.7	18.0	17.9	20.2	20.9

\*Louisiana and national averages include both public and nonpublic school students, while all other averages include only public school students.

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2010

## 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, while an additional four schools had an average ACT composite score of 17 or higher. 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.

## Appendix: Class of 2010 Average ACT Scores in New Orleans

The averages below were computed using the ACT scores most recently obtained by the students who were or would have been members of the graduating class of 2010.

School	Student Count	Composite	English	Math	Reading	Science
<b>RSD Charter</b>						
Algiers Tech	52	16.7	15.4	16.4	16.9	17.7
Marshall	58	16.7	16.4	16.3	16.8	16.3
Walker	179	16.9	15.4	16.9	17.6	17.2
Average - RSD Charter	231	16.9	15.6	16.7	17.3	17.1
<b>RSD Operated</b>						
Carver	54	14.2	11.7	15.0	14.3	15.3
Clark	62	14.7	13.1	15.7	13.6	16.0
Cohen	56	15.1	13.7	15.6	14.8	15.8
Douglass	44	13.8	12.0	14.6	13.3	14.8
McDonogh	73	14.1	12.2	15.0	13.9	14.9
Rabouin	80	15.2	13.3	15.8	15.0	16.3
Reed	89	15.4	13.9	16.1	15.3	16.1
Average - RSD Operated	516	15.0	12.9	15.5	14.4	15.7
<b>OPSB Charter</b>						
Easton	182	16.8	16.0	16.8	16.3	17.4
Franklin	103	28.1	29.5	26.9	28.3	26.7
Karr	179	17.9	17.4	17.6	17.4	18.5
Lusher	88	23.4	24.4	22.5	23.9	22.3
Priestley	52	15.7	14.7	15.6	15.8	16.2
Sci High	75	17.1	16.3	17.1	16.6	17.9
Average - OPSB Charter	679	19.6	19.4	19.2	19.4	19.7
<b>OPSB Operated</b>						
McDonogh 35	153	17.0	16.2	17.0	16.9	17.4
McMain	115	18.4	17.9	18.0	18.4	18.8
Average - OPSB Operated	268	17.6	16.9	17.4	17.5	18.0
<b>New Orleans</b>	<b>1,694</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>17.4</b>	<b>17.9</b>
<b>Louisiana</b>	<b>35,601</b>	<b>20.1</b>	<b>20.1</b>	<b>19.6</b>	<b>20.2</b>	<b>20.2</b>
<b>National</b>	<b>1,568,835</b>	<b>21.0</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>21.0</b>	<b>21.3</b>	<b>20.9</b>

*Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2010*

## Appendix: Class of 2009 Average ACT Scores in New Orleans

The averages below were computed using the ACT scores most recently obtained by the students who were or would have been members of the graduating class of 2009.

School	Student Count	Composite	English	Math	Reading	Science
<b>RSD Charter</b>						
Algiers Tech	22	15.9	14.8	15.6	16	16.2
Walker	166	14.7	13.1	15.4	14.2	15.5
Average – RSD Charter	188	14.8	13.3	15.4	14.4	15.6
<b>RSD Operated</b>						
Carver	37	14.4	12.3	15.2	14.2	15.3
Clark	49	14.5	12.9	15.2	13.8	15.6
Cohen	31	14.7	12.5	15.3	14.9	15.7
Douglass	37	15.5	13.8	16.0	15.1	16.4
McDonogh	52	13.9	11.5	15.1	13.3	15.0
Rabouin	80	14.8	13.3	15.2	14.6	15.8
Reed	88	15.1	13.9	15.6	14.7	15.5
Average – RSD Operated	374	14.7	13.0	15.4	14.4	15.6
<b>OPSB Charter</b>						
Easton	194	16.6	15.8	16.6	16.6	17.0
Franklin	129	27.1	28.1	26.5	28.0	25.2
Karr	189	18.4	18.1	18.1	17.6	19.0
Lusher	53	23.9	25	23.5	23.9	22.3
Sci High	84	17.3	16.9	17.2	16.9	17.6
Average – OPSB Charter	649	19.9	19.8	19.6	19.8	19.7
<b>OPSB Operated</b>						
McDonogh 35	188	16.7	16.1	16.5	16.3	17.4
McMain	106	18.7	18.6	17.9	18.6	19.4
Average – OPSB Operated	294	17.4	17.0	17.0	17.1	18.1
<b>All New Orleans</b>	<b>1,505</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>17.9</b>
<b>Louisiana</b>	<b>34,548</b>	<b>20.1</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>19.6</b>	<b>20.2</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>National</b>	<b>1,480,469</b>	<b>21.1</b>	<b>20.6</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21.4</b>	<b>20.9</b>

*Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2009*