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
- Civic Engagement
- College Readiness Programs

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Louisiana PK-12 Education: Governance, Demographics, and Enrollment

Local & State Governance Organization Chart

**Louisiana Legislature**
- Drafts and passes laws related to public education in the areas of accountability, curriculum, and school district employment requirements
- Gives corporate power to local school boards and grants them the right to levy taxes
- Appropriates money for the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) to fund K-12 public education across the state

**State Board of Elementary & Secondary Education (BESE)**
- Established by the Louisiana Legislature at the Constitutional Convention of 1973
- Acts as administrative policy-making body for elementary and secondary public schools
- Comprised of eleven members, eight elected from single-member districts and three appointed by the Governor
- Responsible for preparing the MFP, approving teacher certification, adopting policies for student assessment, and adopting operating standards for schools
- Has authority to grant charters to schools throughout the state

**State Superintendent of Education**
- Appointed by BESE
- Mission is to recommend and implement policy in accordance with applicable legislation, the Louisiana Constitution, and the policy set forth by BESE
- Responsible for directing and overseeing the Louisiana Department of Education

**Local School District Superintendents**
- Hired by local school boards to oversee the administration and operation of districts
- Responsible for implementing the policy set by the board(s)

**Local School Boards**
- Elected by citizens of the district
- Has authority to grant charters to school operators in their district
- Acts as administrative policy-making body for elementary and secondary public schools in their district

**Louisiana Department of Education**
- Manages, budgets, and allocates funds from federal appropriation and the MFP to districts and programs
- Provides ancillary educational services, such as those related to nutrition, drug-free schools, transportation, and adult education
- Establishes a statewide curriculum and standards and administers the student assessment and school accountability system
- Administers the Recovery School District (RSD)

Basic Facts About Louisiana Public Schools, 2011-12
- Student Enrollment: 709,471
- Number of Schools: 1,467
- Grades Served: PK-12
- Percent Receiving Free or Reduced Price Lunch: 67%
- Charter School Enrollment: 44,391
Percentage of Students by Ethnicity

Ethnic minorities make up 53% of public school students in Louisiana, higher than the national average (42%).

Data on Louisiana students taken from the October 2011 student enrollment count. National data from the 2009-10 school year are from the National Center for Education Statistics. Data for East Baton Rouge, Caddo, and Orleans Parishes include Recovery School District direct-run and charter schools.

Percentage of Students by Free and Reduced Price Lunch Eligibility

Nationally, 47% of public school students are eligible for free and reduced price lunch. Across Louisiana and most of the state's largest school districts, this percentage is considerably higher.

Data on Louisiana students taken from the October 2011 student enrollment count. National data from the 2009-10 school year are from the National Center for Education Statistics. Data for East Baton Rouge, Caddo, and Orleans Parishes include Recovery School District direct-run and charter schools.
Charter School Enrollment

Percentage of Public School Students Enrolled in Charter Schools Versus Traditional Public Schools

Nationally and statewide only a small percentage of public school students attend charter schools. However, Orleans Parish has the highest rate of charter attendance of any district in the nation at 77%.

Data on Louisiana students taken from the October 2011 student enrollment count. National data are from the National Association of Public Charter Schools for the 2010-11 school year. Data for East Baton Rouge, Caddo, and Orleans Parishes include Recovery School District direct-run and charter schools.

Districts with the Largest Proportion of Public School Students Enrolled in Charter Schools

1. New Orleans, LA 77%
2. Washington, DC 39%
3. Detroit, MI 37%
4. Kansas City, MO 35%
5. Flint City, MI 32%
6. Gary, IN 30%


Private and Parochial School Enrollment

Private and Parochial School Enrollment as a Percentage of Total K-12 Enrollment

Nationwide, private school enrollment is approximately 11% of total K-12 enrollment, while in Louisiana it is nearly 15%. In East Baton Rouge, Orleans and Jefferson Parishes, more than 27% of students are enrolled in private schools.

Data on Louisiana students taken from the October 2011 student enrollment count. National data are from the National Association of Public Charter Schools for the 2010-11 school year. Data for East Baton Rouge, Caddo, and Orleans Parishes include Recovery School District direct-run and charter schools.
Public Education Governance in Orleans Parish

2011-12 Governance Structure
Total: 88 Schools & 41,779 Students

Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) & Louisiana Department of Education
State Superintendent: John White

Recovery School District
Superintendent: Patrick Dobard
16 Schools
16 RSD Direct-Run Schools
16 RSD Charters

BESE Authorized Charters
55 Schools
5 Type 2 Charters
50 Type 5 RSD Charters

Orleans Parish School Board
Superintendent: Darryl Kilbert
17 Schools
6 OPSB Direct-Run Schools
11 OPSB Charters

Louisiana PK-12 Education: Governance, Demographics, and Enrollment
In the 2010 legislative session, the Louisiana Legislature passed Act 718, which provided for the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) to assign letter grades from A to F to schools and school districts to rate their performance. Schools that meet their growth target receive a “+” in addition to their letter grade, while schools that decline receive a “-”.

School grades are determined by School Performance Scores (SPS). PK-12 public schools in Louisiana receive an SPS based primarily on how well each student performs on the state’s standardized tests (LEAP, iLEAP, and GEE), as well as on dropout rates and attendance. The scores range from 0.0 to either 236.4 or 266.7 depending on a school’s grade configuration. The threshold between a D and F grade increased from an SPS of 65 in the 2010-11 school year to an SPS of 75 in the 2011-12 school year.

Louisiana’s goal is that all schools have an SPS of 120 or higher by 2014.

### 2010 and 2011 School Performance Grades for Louisiana

The number of schools receiving an F, D, or C decreased while the number of schools receiving a B or A increased from the 2009-10 school year to the 2010-11 school year.

**Note:** The letter-grade scale for the 2010-11 school year is used for both school years

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2011
Schools that serve high proportions of economically disadvantaged students tend to demonstrate lower academic achievement than schools with fewer economically disadvantaged students.

**2010-11 Poverty Levels and School Performance in Louisiana**

The graph shows the relationship between free lunch eligibility and school performance scores in Louisiana K-12 public schools.

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2011
Achievement Gaps in Louisiana

Though the performance gap between white and black students in Louisiana has declined over the past decade, a significant achievement gap still exists.

Percent of Students Scoring Basic or Above in English/Language Arts

Between 1999 and 2011 the difference between the percentage of white students and black students achieving at the Basic or above level on the English/Language Arts portion of the LEAP test has declined from 34 to 22 percentage points.

Percent of Students Scoring Basic or Above in Math

Between 1999 and 2011 the difference between the percentage of white students and black students achieving at the Basic or above level on the math portion of the LEAP test has declined from 38 to 27 percentage points.
The cohort graduation rate is based on the percentage of students who enter the ninth grade and graduate four years later. In 2009, the Louisiana Legislature set a goal of raising the state cohort graduation rate to 80 percent by 2014. The state’s 2011 cohort graduation rate is 70.9 with 12 school districts reporting a rate above 80 percent.

Note: The map does not include cohort graduation rates for the following school districts: City of Monroe, City of Bogalusa, Zachary Community, City of Baker, Central Community, and the Recovery School District. Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2011

Students who meet the ACT benchmarks have a high probability of success in college. The ACT derived these benchmarks based on the performance of students in college.

Note: Data include test-takers that attended private and parochial schools as well as public schools. Source: The ACT, 2011
Percentage of High School Graduates Enrolled as First-Time College Freshmen, 2010-11

High school graduates in the class of 2010 who enrolled as full-time college freshmen the following fall semester in a Louisiana two- or four-year, public or private college are reported as first-time college freshmen.

Note: Data does not include graduates who attend colleges out-of-state or are enrolled part-time.

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2011

Percentage of First-Time College Freshmen in Remedial Courses, 2010-11

Beginning in the fall of 2012, public four-year universities in Louisiana will no longer offer remedial courses, requiring students who need remedial courses to attend a two-year college.

Common Core State Standards

In July 2010, the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

- Having adopted CCSS, 44 states and D.C. will share the same standards and curriculum.
- CCSS is being coordinated by the National Governor’s Association and the Council for Chief State School Officers.
- A survey by the Center on Education Policy found that states generally agree that CCSS is more rigorous than their previous standards.

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) will implement CCSS according to the timeline below while offering on-going professional development to help educators transition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop new curriculum to align with CCSS and develop transitional curriculum to help with transfer.</td>
<td>K-1 grades taught with new curriculum. 2-12 grades taught with transitional curriculum.</td>
<td>K-2 grades taught with new curriculum. 3-12 grades taught with transitional curriculum.</td>
<td>All grades taught with new curriculum.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Louisiana Compared to the U.S.

The results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) serve as a common metric of student learning.

Louisiana ranks between 46th and 48th in 4th and 8th grade English and math on NAEP.

Source: US Department of Education, National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>4TH GRADE MATH</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4TH GRADE READING</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8TH GRADE MATH</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
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<tr>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8TH GRADE READING</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Funding

Minimum Foundation Program (MFP)

- The Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) is a formula used to allocate state funding to local districts.
- The Louisiana Constitution requires the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) to annually develop and adopt a formula which determines the cost of a minimum foundation program of education in all public elementary and secondary schools as well as to equitably allocate the funds to parish and city school systems. Once BESE adopts the formula, the Legislature passes it by Concurrent Resolution without making changes to the formula.
- The MFP formula also includes factors that provide more funding for special classes of students (e.g., at-risk and special education students).
- State law requires that 70% of MFP revenues be spent for instructional purposes.

Total State and Local Funding per Pupil by Parish

The map represents the per-pupil funding from local and state sources for each parish in the state. Parishes receive varying levels of funding based on student population needs and local tax revenue.

Total State and Local Per-Pupil Funding (2011-12)

- Bottom Fifth: $6,690 - $8,270
- 2nd Fifth: $8,280 - $8,970
- 3rd Fifth: $8,980 - $9,480
- 4th Fifth: $9,490 - $10,550
- Top Fifth: $10,560 - $18,910

Note: The map does not include funding for the following school districts: City of Monroe, City of Bogalusa, Zachary Community, City of Baker, Central Community, and the Recovery School District.

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, Minimum Foundation Budget Letter, 2011
Public schools in Louisiana receive funding from local, state, and federal sources.

**Local**
- Local funding from property and sales taxes levied by local school board

**State**
- State funding appropriated by the Legislature and allocated to districts based on the Minimum Foundation Program formula

**Federal***
- Federal funding generally targeted to specific populations (such as at-risk students) or programs (such as training for teachers)

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Local school districts develop their own formulas to distribute funds among schools

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**Local School District Funding Formulas**
- The following are three of the many ways local districts allocate state and local* funding to schools:
  - **Flat Funding**
    - Schools receive funding per pupil based on the total amount of state and local funding divided by the total number of students in the district.
  - **Staff-Based Funding**
    - Schools receive funding based on the number and experience level of the staff at that school.
  - **Student-Based Funding**
    - Schools receive funding based on the individual needs of the students attending the school as determined by the MFP.

*Federal funding programs include: Title I—Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged; Title II—Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High Quality Teachers and Principals; Title III—Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students; Title IV—Safe and Drug Free Schools; Title V—Innovative Education Program Studies; the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); the National School Lunch Program; and the Public Charter Schools Federal Grant Program, among others.

**Charter School Funding**
- Charter schools in Louisiana receive funds from their local school district, the Recovery School District (RSD), or the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE), depending on their type.
- RSD charter schools receive federal funds directly, because by law they are individual school districts.

**Recovery School District (RSD) Funding**
- Property and sales taxes levied by the local board are transferred to the RSD based on the MFP.
- The RSD cannot have monetary reserves and must partner with local districts to borrow money when needed.
Average total state and local funding in Louisiana is $9,322 per pupil. The difference between the most funded and the least funded parish is over $12,000 per pupil.

### The 10 Districts with the Highest Total State and Local Funding per Pupil

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>State Share</th>
<th>Local Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DeSoto</td>
<td>$18,906</td>
<td>$18,102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red River</td>
<td>$15,249</td>
<td>$13,991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bienville</td>
<td>$13,991</td>
<td>$13,744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Charles</td>
<td>$13,582</td>
<td>$13,249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameron</td>
<td>$13,423</td>
<td>$13,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iberville</td>
<td>$12,538</td>
<td>$10,912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaquemines</td>
<td>$10,900</td>
<td>$10,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James</td>
<td>$10,900</td>
<td>$10,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John the Baptist</td>
<td>$10,900</td>
<td>$10,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>$10,900</td>
<td>$10,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### The 10 Districts with the Lowest Total State and Local Funding per Pupil

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>State Share</th>
<th>Local Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. Martin</td>
<td>$7,911</td>
<td>$7,911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livingston</td>
<td>$7,787</td>
<td>$7,787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermilion</td>
<td>$7,741</td>
<td>$7,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vernon</td>
<td>$7,741</td>
<td>$7,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrebonne</td>
<td>$7,644</td>
<td>$7,535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Carroll</td>
<td>$7,644</td>
<td>$7,535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Landry</td>
<td>$7,384</td>
<td>$7,384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acadia</td>
<td>$7,384</td>
<td>$7,384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangipahoa</td>
<td>$6,693</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoyelles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, Minimum Foundation Budget Letter 2011-12
Per-Pupil Expenditures by Major Category for All Public Schools in Louisiana, 2009-10

Total expenditures average $10,745 per pupil. In addition, central office overhead is $1,529 per pupil on average.

Louisiana Compared to the U.S.

*Education Week* (a national education news and information source) publishes an annual report called *Quality Counts*, which focuses on state education policies. The report includes a financial analysis section that evaluates and ranks states. Highlights of the 2012 report’s findings for Louisiana are below.

- Louisiana’s overall funding grade is up from C- to C from last year’s report.
- Louisiana ranks 22nd in coefficient of variation, the amount of funding disparity across districts.
- Louisiana ranks 39th in tax effort, state expenditures on K-12 education as a percent of Louisiana’s taxable resources.
- Louisiana ranks 18th in adjusted per-pupil expenditures.
- On average, 36% of students in Louisiana school districts are funded above the national per-pupil funding average.
- On average, Louisiana school districts spend 94% of the total funding needed to bring all students to the median level.
Race to the Top

What is Race to the Top (R2T)?

- In December 2011, the U.S. Department of Education awarded Louisiana over $17.4 million in the third round of their R2T grant competition.
- R2T was authorized through the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.
- The third round of R2T was created to support states that are implementing aggressive reforms and placing an emphasis on enriching science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) initiatives.
- Louisiana is one of 18 states to be awarded R2T funds so far.

Louisiana Districts Participating in Race to the Top

Programs funded by Race to the Top will impact 37% of the student population in Louisiana. Participating districts will receive R2T funds through the Louisiana Department of Education. The goal of R2T reforms is to impact every student in Louisiana.

- 526 schools in 20 districts are participating in R2T-funded programs, with a total enrollment of over 245,500 students.
- In addition to the participating districts, 28 Recovery School District Type 5 charter schools located in Caddo Parish, Orleans Parish, and Ouachita Parish are participating, with a total enrollment of over 12,300 students.
- On average, the schools participating in R2T have a higher percentage of minority and low-income students than the state.

Note: Participating districts not included in the map are Bogalusa City, Monroe City, and the Recovery School District.

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2011
Race to the Top Reforms

R2T Reform Focuses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards and Assessments</th>
<th>Data Systems</th>
<th>Effective Teachers and Principals</th>
<th>School Turnaround</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy</td>
<td>Measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction</td>
<td>Recruit, develop, reward, and retain effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most</td>
<td>Turn around lowest performing schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using Student Test Scores to Evaluate Teachers

Race to the Top funds will support the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (BESE) teacher evaluation policies as prescribed by Act 54, which requires performance at every level of K-12 public education in Louisiana to be based on growth in student academic achievement. The policies will use growth in individual student test scores to measure teacher and administrator performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>½ Test Scores ½ Observations</th>
<th>Accounting for Variables</th>
<th>Certification and Employment Decisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher and administrator evaluations will be based half on student test score growth and half on observations.</td>
<td>Act 54 requires measurements of student growth to account for student- and classroom-level variables that affect performance, such as free and reduced price lunch eligibility and attendance.</td>
<td>Certification and employment decisions will be based on the results of the new teacher and administrator evaluations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The STEM Goal Office

Race to the Top funds will be used to create a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Goal Office at the Louisiana Department of Education. The main focus of the office is to ensure students are performing above grade level in math. The following are strategies the office will use to reach its goal.

- Increase professional development resources available to STEM teachers.
- Provide teachers with access to real-time benchmark data to inform STEM instruction.
- Increase the number of statewide common assessments that can be used to measure student growth in STEM subjects.
- Expand successful programs to prepare STEM teachers through effective alternative certification programs.
- Invest in scaling and incubating high-performing charter operators, with an emphasis on STEM.
- Increase the number of STEM courses offered by school districts.
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Facilities

Facilities Construction Expenditures Per Student

- **National Average**
  - $1,086 per student (2005 - 2008)

Louisiana ranks among the states putting the least amount of funding into school facilities. In fact, Louisiana is one of only seven states in the country that does not dedicate state funding for public school maintenance, repair, or construction.

- On average, 88% of schools in Louisiana report a need to upgrade or repair buildings.

- Thirty-nine percent of schools in the state have at least one inadequate building and 50 percent of schools have at least one inadequate feature, e.g., roof, plumbing, HVAC.

Source: State Capital Spending on PK-12 Facilities, 21st Century School Fund, November 2010

Louisiana Does Not Provide Funding for Facilities

- 70% of MFP funding is required to be used for instructional purposes.
- 30% of the MFP is used for all other expenses, including utilities, employee and retiree benefits, and student transportation.

- The MFP dictates local and state funding sources, the primary source of school funding in Louisiana.

- The MFP formula does not dedicate funds to capital repair and maintenance.

- School districts must use the MFP to cover instructional expenses first. Instructional expenses are related to activities dealing directly with interaction between students and teachers and activities designed to improve teaching and the process of learning.

- All other expenditures covered by general funds must be paid for out of the remaining 30% of funds. This includes, among other things, administration of the school, services provided centrally (such as planning and evaluation), student transportation, and all expenses related to operating and maintaining the physical plant of schools (including repairs of buildings, upkeep of grounds, and security).

Source: Government Accountability Office – School Facilities: State Profiles, 2005
Why Are School Facilities Important?

Our educational facilities are an important investment because our children and teachers spend most of their day inside these buildings. Many research studies have shown that school facilities affect the outcome of student performance.

- **Teacher Retention**: Poor building conditions greatly increase the likelihood that teachers will leave their school – a troubling fact given the need for more and better teachers in most disadvantaged schools.

- **Absenteeism**: Overcrowded schools lead to higher absenteeism for both students and teachers and have detrimental effects on children’s ability to learn and perform well.

- **Cognitive Abilities**: Cognitive requirements for learning – motivation, energy, attention, hearing, and seeing – are affected by the physical surroundings where they take place.

- **Classroom Environment**: The amount of natural light, the indoor air quality, the temperature, and the cleanliness of schools and classrooms all impact student learning.


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Estimated Amount of Facilities Needs on a Per Pupil Basis

A December 2008 study by the American Federation of Teachers identified the school infrastructure funding needs of states across the nation. Because some states lack statewide facilities assessments, they were matched with similar states that do have a usable assessment. **Louisiana is matched with South Carolina because Louisiana has never conducted an assessment of school facilities across the state.**

Based on this study, Louisiana needs the second highest amount ($10,070) of estimated funding per pupil for facilities in the nation after Hawaii ($18,373).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>Per Pupil Need</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>$18,373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Louisiana, South Carolina</strong></td>
<td><strong>$10,070</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska</td>
<td>$9,726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina, Virginia</td>
<td>$7,086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama, Mississippi</td>
<td>$6,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>$5,834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin</td>
<td>$5,065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia, Idaho, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming</td>
<td>$4,257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>$3,943</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tennessee, Indiana, Oklahoma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia, Florida</td>
<td>$3,365</td>
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<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>$2,855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>$1,505</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Building Minds, Minding Buildings: School Infrastructure Funding Need, American Federation of Teachers (2008)
Recovery School District

What is the RSD?

- During the 2003 Regular Legislative Session, the Louisiana Legislature passed Act 9 to create the Recovery School District (RSD). Following Hurricane Katrina, the Louisiana Legislature passed Act 35 to allow the RSD to more easily takeover schools in failing districts.

- The RSD is a school district administered by the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) and is designed to take over academically failing schools and turn them into successful schools.

- An academically failing school is determined by Louisiana’s statewide program of school accountability adopted by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). School accountability in Louisiana is based on the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP).

- Schools that do not meet the minimum academic standards for at least four consecutive years are eligible for state takeover. The minimum academic standard is a School Performance Score of 75 or below beginning in the 2011-12 school year.

- Schools that are placed in the RSD must remain there for a minimum of five years. This length of time is meant to allow the schools to fully establish the instructional practices and expectations necessary for success prior to returning to the control of the local school board.

- Currently there are 81 schools open under the RSD statewide, 66 of which are in Orleans Parish.
A school is considered Academically Unacceptable (AUS or “failing”) if its School Performance Score (SPS) is below 75, beginning in the 2011-12 school year. The SPS is primarily based on a school’s scores on state standardized tests. If a school receives an SPS below 75, it means that more than 50% of its students are not passing state standardized tests.

A school is found eligible for RSD takeover according to BESE Bulletin 111 if any of the following conditions are met:

1. The local education agency (LEA) fails to submit a reconstitution plan for a school in AUS Year 4 to BESE for approval.
2. A school’s reconstitution plan is submitted to BESE but is deemed unacceptable.
3. A school and/or LEA fails to comply with the terms of a BESE approved reconstitution plan.
4. A school is labeled AUS for four consecutive years.

There are currently more than 200 schools statewide considered to be Academically Unacceptable (AUS). This means that more than one-quarter of Louisiana schools could be under RSD control within four years.

What Happens When a School is Found Eligible for the Recovery School District

A school is found to be eligible for RSD intervention. Depending upon the capacity of the RSD and the district of the eligible school, one of two actions is taken.

- The school enters into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the RSD.
  - After a time period the school complies with the terms of the MOU, reaches certain standards, and is released.
  - The district regains full control over the school’s operations.

- The school is taken over by the RSD and either closed, chartered, or directly operated.
  - After a time period the school fails to comply with the terms of the MOU and the RSD exercises its right to takeover.
  - After 5 years the school continues to fail to reach certain academic standards.
  - The school can leave the RSD if a takeover proposal by a chartering group or the original district is approved by BESE.

- The school can elect to remain in the RSD.
  - After 5 years the school reaches a certain academic performance threshold.
  - The school can elect to return to its original governing body.

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2011

- RSD direct-run schools and RSD charter schools have shown consistent improvement in School Performance Scores since 2007.
- In fall 2005, under Act 35 the RSD was allowed to take over schools that fell below the state average SPS (86.2), not only those deemed failing.

Note: The values represented in this graph are average scores for the RSD charters and RSD direct-run schools.
Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2011

Growth in Student Performance in RSD Direct-Run and Charter Schools in New Orleans, 2007 to 2010

This graph shows the increase in the percentage of students performing Basic or above on high-stakes tests (LEAP and GEE) from 2007 to 2010 for the Recovery School District in New Orleans compared to all students in Louisiana.

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2011
How Schools in the RSD Can Return to Their Local School Districts

A school transferred into the RSD must remain there for an initial period of five years, at the end of which BESE must decide whether the school will remain in the RSD, be returned to the transferring district, or be closed. In December 2010, BESE adopted a return policy to govern the possible return of schools to local control.

- Under the return policy, RSD schools (both direct-run and charter) that have an SPS of at least 5 points above the AUS level (80 for 2011-12) for two consecutive years are eligible to choose whether to stay in the RSD or return to their local district. Schools that do not meet this benchmark remain in the RSD.

- This policy enables a gradual return of schools to their local districts. Each year certain schools will be eligible to choose whether to return to their local district or stay in the RSD and certain schools will not be eligible to choose.

- For the low-performing schools that remain in the RSD, failing charter schools may be subject to non-renewal, and failing direct-run schools may be retained with a new turnaround plan, phased out, or transferred to a new operator (charter or local district), who must apply to and be approved by BESE.

- Eight RSD schools in New Orleans were eligible to return to local control in 2011, but none elected to do so.

The Recovery School District’s Commitments to New Orleans

The RSD outlined twelve commitments to its schools and the community in New Orleans in September 2011. The goal of the commitments is to get every student in the RSD on track to graduate from college or attain a professional career. The commitments have a theme of excellence, equity, and community. The following are a few highlights:

**Excellence**
- Direct-run RSD schools will improve significantly in 2011–12, achieving greater progress in students achieving Basic on LEAP, iLEAP, and GEE tests than the rest of the state.
- The RSD will implement a new monitoring process for New Orleans charter schools while not distracting educators from educating.

**Equity**
- The RSD will develop a citywide enrollment system for direct-run and charter schools starting in 2012.
- RSD charter and direct-run schools will increase the percentage of students retained from one school year to the next.

**Community**
- The RSD will make it easier for parents and community members to get information, get questions answered, and get issues resolved.
- The Facilities Master Plan will serve all New Orleans public school children in a new, renovated, or refurbished facility.
Charter Schools and Choice

What is a Charter School?

- Charter schools are public schools operated by a non-profit organization under an initial five-year contract (or “charter”) with either a local school board or the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). The non-profit organization may contract with a for-profit organization for day-to-day operations of the school.

- Charter schools are required to participate in the state accountability program and must meet certain achievement results in order to keep their charter.

- Charter schools are free from many of the rules and regulations that traditional public schools are subject to and have significant flexibility in the areas of hiring, budgeting, and instruction.

- Charter schools are subject to a three-year review by their authorizer and a five-year review to determine whether the charter will be renewed or revoked.

Charter School Governance

Charter School Authorizer

The authorizer is the entity that enters into a contract with the charter school operator. In Louisiana, only BESE and local school boards are able to authorize charter schools. Authorizers approve charters, monitor and hold schools accountable, and renew or end charters based on school performance and other factors (financial, legal).

Charter School Operator and Board

The charter school operator is the organization that oversees the operation, finances, and administration of the charter school. It is generally led by a board which sets policy and hires a school leader to implement its policy and handle school operations.

Charter School Leader

The charter school leader is hired by the school's operator to oversee the daily operations of the school, including budgeting, personnel, and curriculum decisions. The school leader may or may not also fill the role of principal.

Number of Charter Schools by Authorizer in Louisiana

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2011
Charter School Student Demographics

Percentage of Students by Ethnicity, 2011

The ethnicity of students in Louisiana charter schools is different from the ethnicity of students in charter schools nationally. However, students in Louisiana charter schools have ethnicities similar to the large urban public school districts where most are located.


Percentage of Students Eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch, 2011

On average, charter schools in Louisiana serve a higher percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch than charter schools nationally.

Nationwide and in Louisiana, students in charter schools are eligible for free and reduced price lunch at a rate slightly higher than the general student population in traditionally operated schools.

Charter School Types

Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE)

Local School Boards
- Type 1 Charters
  - Have a charter with a local school board
  - Are new start-up schools
  - Can only be operated by a non-profit entity
  - May enroll students from anywhere in the district
  - May have admissions requirements consistent with the school’s role, scope, and mission

- Type 3 Charters
  - Have a charter with a local school board
  - Are conversion schools
  - Can only be operated by a non-profit entity
  - May enroll students from anywhere in the district
  - May have admissions requirements consistent with the school’s role, scope, and mission

- Type 4 Charters
  - Have a charter between a local school board and BESE
  - Can be conversion or start-up schools
  - Can be operated by a for-profit entity
  - May enroll students from anywhere in the district
  - May have admissions requirements consistent with the school’s role, scope, and mission

Recovery School District (RSD)
- Type 2 Charters
  - Have a charter with BESE
  - Can be conversion or start-up schools
  - Can only be operated by a non-profit entity
  - May enroll students from anywhere in the state
  - Directly receive federal funding
  - May have admissions requirements consistent with the school’s role, scope, and mission

- Type 5 Charters
  - Have a charter with BESE
  - Are conversion schools
  - Can only be operated by a non-profit entity
  - May enroll students from anywhere in the district
  - Directly receive federal funding
  - May not have any admissions requirements

Number of Charter Schools by Type in Louisiana

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2011
Charter School Authorization Processes in Louisiana

The charter school authorization processes in Louisiana are rigorous and competitive. The State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) and most school boards in Louisiana contract with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) to conduct a third party evaluation of charter applications and make recommendations to the boards based on strict criteria. Boards then decide which operators to approve based on NACSA’s evaluations and other factors, like district capacity needs.

The flow chart below represents the 2011 charter school authorization process for BESE, which authorizes Type 2, Type 4, and Type 5 charters. For local districts, which authorize Type 1 and Type 3 charters, the process is similar.

### Charter School Locations, 2011-12

**Number of Charter Schools by City**

- 1-3 Schools
- 13 Schools
- 61 Schools

**Recently Approved Charter Schools**

BESE recently approved one Type 2 charter in St. Landry Parish, nine Type 5 charters to open in Orleans Parish under the Recovery School District, and eight Type 5 charters to open statewide under the Recovery School District.
The Louisiana Legislature enacted Act 509 in 2008 establishing the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Pilot Program, a state-funded nonpublic school voucher program in New Orleans. The program was created to offer low-income families in Orleans Parish an alternative to attending a failing public school by providing a publicly-funded scholarship to attend a participating private or parochial school. The program began by serving grades K-3 and added a grade each year. It currently serves about 1,850 students in grades K-6.

### Voucher Funding
- Appropriated from the Legislature (not to exceed $10 million)
- Equivalent to 90% of total state and local funding for the participant
- Paid by the Louisiana Department of Education directly to participating private or parochial schools quarterly

### Who is Eligible?
- Residents of Orleans Parish
- Students whose household income does not exceed 250% of federal poverty level, or $57,600 for a family of four
- Students entering K-6 grades
- Students previously enrolled in a failing public school (except students entering kindergarten)

### Performance of Students Using School Vouchers in 2011

Students in New Orleans who receive a voucher to attend a private or parochial school are required to take Louisiana’s standardized tests.

This graph shows the percentage of students performing Basic or above on LEAP and iLEAP for students using vouchers, students in RSD failing schools, and all public school students in Orleans Parish (grades 3, 4, and 5 combined).

Note: Data for All Students in Orleans Parish includes Type 2 charter schools, all RSD direct-run and charter schools, and all OPSB direct-run and charter schools.
