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**

**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, 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.

Scott S. Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives

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The State of Public Education in New Orleans
2012 Report

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Executive Summary

The leadership and strategy changes in the 2011-12 school year mark an important moment in the post-Katrina New Orleans public education landscape.

Reflecting on the past school year, the 2012 State of Public Education in New Orleans report provides information about the current system of schools based on available quantitative data, newspaper stories and interviews, and a comprehensive survey of New Orleans public school parents. The report also offers a number of successes as well as key challenges that still face public education in New Orleans.

System Overview

Public schools in New Orleans are governed by the state-run Recovery School District (RSD), the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB), or a non-profit charter school operator.

- During the 2011-12 school year, there were 88 public schools open in New Orleans, including 22 traditional direct-run schools and 66 charter schools. The majority of public school students, 78 percent, were enrolled in charter schools; this rate has continued to grow since schools reopened after Hurricane Katrina.

- The decentralized system of public schools creates unique governance challenges, including communication and coordination among the various governing bodies, division of school oversight and authority, and the transition of schools out of the RSD.

- In the 2011-12 school year, 90 percent of public school students in New Orleans were African American and 85 percent were eligible for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program.
Operations and Administration

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

School Facilities

- During the 2011-12 school year, the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), the RSD, and the OPSB made a number of critical decisions regarding the School Facilities Master Plan and school building assignments.
- As of May 2012, eight school buildings had been completed, nine schools were under construction, and nine schools were in the design or procurement stage. Stabilization projects were also in progress for a total of 66 major projects underway and $417 million in open contracts.
- RSD long-term school building assignments, announced in November 2011, align with the Master Plan and include nearly all RSD schools.

Finances

- As the amount of one-time federal revenue related to hurricane recovery decreases and proportionally fewer schools are in the expensive start-up phase, the financial state of public schools in New Orleans is becoming more representative of how it is likely to be in the coming years. Among individual charter schools and networks, however, a wide range of revenues and expenditures were reported with some well above or well below the state average.
- Major changes to Louisiana's school funding formula approved by BESE and the Louisiana Legislature in 2012 may impact New Orleans public school finances in the future by allowing public school dollars to be used to fund private education options.

Human Capital

- In the decentralized public school system in New Orleans, school leaders have flexibility in personnel decision-making, which leads to variation by school in teacher experience, salaries and benefits, and recruitment and retention strategies.
- Anecdotal evidence suggests that teacher recruitment needs have leveled off in recent years after spiking post-Katrina, while issues with teacher retention vary by school.

School Choice

- In the 2011-12 school year, the RSD took a major step towards streamlining the school application and enrollment process for schools and families. The new “OneApp” system allows parents to rank multiple RSD direct-run or charter schools on a single application, then uses an assignment formula to match students to schools.
- The results of the Cowen Institute's October 2011 public school parent opinion poll suggest overall support for school choice. Nine in ten public school parents surveyed (90 percent) strongly agreed that it is important to be able to choose their child's school, up from 81 percent in 2009.
- Though the school choice system gives parents access to multiple schools, 68 percent of those surveyed in 2011 reported applying to just one school and another 25 percent applied to two to four schools. This finding aligns with the outcome of the RSD’s new enrollment system, in which parents on average listed just two to three schools.
Student Achievement

In the years since Hurricane Katrina, public schools in New Orleans have seen standardized test performance improve, fewer students attend failing schools, and more students graduate from high school prepared for college and the workplace. The progress extends to all school types and all performance measures.

- Passage rates on high-stakes tests have improved over the past few years, but gains from 2011 to 2012 were smaller than in previous years.
- Though standardized test scores and school performance scores indicated improved performance in public schools in New Orleans, wide disparity exists among schools in both their absolute performance and in their performance growth over time.
- In the coming years, new standards and assessments will be implemented in New Orleans and across the state of Louisiana. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) provide an important opportunity for Louisiana to ensure all students are prepared for success in college and the workforce through more rigorous and relevant standards and assessments.
- Academic performance at the elementary school level has outpaced that of high schools in the years since Hurricane Katrina, but state and local initiatives focused on college and career readiness in high schools promise continued investment.

Impact of the 2012 Louisiana Legislative Session

Recent decisions by Governor Jindal and the Louisiana Legislature will likely have a major impact on the public education landscape both across the state and in New Orleans going forward.

- HB 974, the “Tenure Bill,” and HB 976, the “Choice Bill,” were signed into law as Acts 1 and 2, respectively, within the first 24 days of the 2012 Louisiana legislative session. Limiting teacher tenure and expanding school choice in the state, the reforms outlined in these bills are modeled on, but go well beyond, those employed in New Orleans in recent years.
- Among the changes most likely to impact public schools in New Orleans, Act 2 establishes a statewide publically funded private school voucher program and creates new paths to open charter schools.
Conclusion:

**SUCCESSES**

1. **Increased transparency and communication in decision-making by the RSD.** Under its three-year strategic plan, the RSD has made considerable progress in improving communication to parents, students, and school administrators, and to being transparent in the decision-making process.

2. **Meaningful efforts to intervene in chronically failing high schools.** The RSD’s direct-run high schools have been academically failing New Orleans’ students for years. The RSD’s efforts over the 2011-12 school year to begin transforming its failing direct-run high schools are an important first step towards improving educational opportunities for New Orleans students.

3. **Improving relationships between the RSD and the OPSB.** Though tension still exists between officials from the RSD and the OPSB, relationships have begun to improve. Most notably, the two districts negotiated the settlement of a longstanding dispute over flood insurance proceeds.

4. **Progress on facilities planning and construction.** The revised School Facilities Master Plan approved in October 2011 goes a long way toward providing every New Orleans student with a physical environment conducive to learning, is more cost effective, and lays the groundwork to fund repair and maintenance costs in the future.

5. **Creation of a centralized enrollment system.** The centralized enrollment system created and implemented by the RSD in 2012 addresses one of the biggest challenges of New Orleans’ decentralized system of public schools. The new system is more equitable and accessible for parents and families, and it increases the level of transparency and accountability for RSD schools.

**CHALLENGES**

1. **Governance of the system of schools.** With multiple governing bodies and a lack of clarity in district roles and responsibilities, it is hard to ensure that all students have access to a high quality education. Identifying a governance framework that addresses the current problems plaguing the system of schools and promotes high quality schools for all is critical to the long term success of the education system in New Orleans.

2. **Community distrust of public school reform.** Transparency and communication improved over the 2011-12 school year. However, a deeply-rooted distrust amid the rapid changes threatens to undermine school turnaround efforts. Much of this distrust is focused on the state-run RSD and charter schools, often perceived as outsiders of the New Orleans community. Public school reform cannot succeed without buy-in from students, families, teachers, and leaders.

3. **Transitions in leadership at the state and local levels.** From 2007 to 2011, there was stable leadership in the RSD, OPSB, and at the LDOE. However, with RSD Superintendent Paul Vallas and State Superintendent Paul Pastorek’s departures at the end of the 2010-11 school year, two major leaders in New Orleans education reform were lost. Changes in leadership can be challenging as it takes time to establish trust and to enact long-lasting reform.

4. **Data access and transparency.** In New Orleans’ decentralized system of public schools, no single entity is responsible for data collection and analysis. Many questions that a district may have been able to answer in the past can now only be answered by the state. Though Louisiana is lauded for its statewide data system, access to that data for program evaluation and research remains difficult.

5. **Financial sustainability of public education.** Though school and district finances have stabilized in recent years, the overall financial sustainability of the current system of schools is an ongoing concern. In the short term, budgets will be tight as revenues stay flat or decrease. Over the long term, the state and the city will need to finance schools on a more sustainable basis.
The 2011-12 school year was, in many ways, the beginning of a new era in the post-Katrina public education landscape in New Orleans. The year was marked by momentous changes in leadership and strategy at the state and local levels.

After four years overseeing the majority of public schools in New Orleans, Paul Vallas stepped down from his position as superintendent of the Recovery School District (RSD) at the conclusion of the 2010-11 school year. John White, former deputy chancellor of schools for the New York City school system, began his tenure as RSD superintendent on May 9, 2011. The following day, State Superintendent Paul Pastorek announced his resignation. Though Governor Bobby Jindal, among others, quickly endorsed John White to replace Pastorek as the state superintendent, White was not officially promoted until January 2012 by a newly-elected state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). As state superintendent, White has supported Governor Jindal’s education overhaul in the 2012 Louisiana legislative session and proposed major changes to the state’s school accountability system.

Before moving to Baton Rouge, White set in motion a shift in strategy and priorities for the RSD, which oversees two-thirds of the public schools in New Orleans.

In September 2011 White launched a three-year strategic plan for the RSD with a focus on improving the academic performance of RSD schools, ensuring all students have equitable access to a high quality education, and maintaining transparent communication and engagement with the community. The plan, titled What Will it Take? The Recovery School District’s Commitments to New Orleans, states twelve objectives, or “commitments,” many of which were accomplished during the 2011-12 school year.

Patrick Dobard, a deputy superintendent of the RSD under White, replaced White as RSD superintendent following BESE’s approval on January 18, 2012. Dobard was born, raised, and educated in New Orleans and, as superintendent of the RSD, has expressed a commitment to community engagement and implementing the strategic plan outlined by White. Under White and Dobard’s leadership in the 2011-12 school year, the RSD worked to address many of the unintended consequences of the unique public education system that emerged in New Orleans in the years following Hurricane Katrina.

The 2011-12 school year marked the first time that schools transferred to the RSD in 2005 were eligible to return to the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB).

Though eight schools met the achievement qualifications for return established by BESE, in January 2012 all eligible schools chose to remain in the RSD for at least another year. Since then, the OPSB has created a “Transfer of Schools” committee to work on the process for eligible RSD schools to return to the OPSB and to make returning more attractive to RSD charter schools.
What Will It Take?
The RSD’s Commitments to New Orleans, September 2011

Excellence

1. 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.

2. The RSD will implement a new monitoring process for New Orleans charter schools while not distracting educators from educating.

3. The RSD will employ clear, strong accountability for both direct-run schools and charter schools starting in Fall 2011.

4. By Fall 2013, the RSD will establish a diverse set of high school pathways to college and careers.

Equity

5. Starting in 2011-12, the RSD will issue an annual Equity Report that will measure and report the things that make a great school truly great.

6. The RSD will develop a citywide enrollment system for direct-run and charter schools starting in 2012.

7. RSD charter and direct-run schools will increase the percentage of students retained from one school year to the next.

Community

8. The RSD will make it easier for parents and community members to get information, get questions answered, and get issues resolved.

9. In 2011-12, the RSD will make critical decisions regarding school transformations, school locations, building usage, and school closure through public processes and public input.

10. Schools in temporary homes or trailers will have a long-term home identified by the end of the 2011 calendar year.

11. The Facilities Master Plan will serve all New Orleans public school children in a new, renovated, or refurbished facility.

12. Through aggressive monitoring and adjustments in policy, the RSD will maximize the number of local businesses and employees working on the next round of school construction and renovation projects.

Source: Recovery School District, 2011

The OPSB is also in the midst of a change in leadership. On April 17, 2012, Orleans Parish Schools Superintendent Darryl Kilbert announced his retirement, after over 30 years as an educator in New Orleans and six years as superintendent. Stan Smith, who has been the OPSB’s chief financial officer since 2006, will serve as interim superintendent.

A more permanent superintendent will likely not be named until next year, when new OPSB members are installed following the October 2012 elections.

These transitions come at a time when New Orleans public school parents’ perceptions of the school system are increasingly positive. According to the Cowen Institute’s October 2011 opinion poll, 66 percent of parents surveyed feel that schools are better after Hurricane Katrina, compared to 31 percent of parents surveyed in 2009.

Additionally, 86 percent of parents surveyed in 2011 agreed that information on school options is readily available, up from 62 percent in 2009.

The leadership and strategy changes in the 2011-12 school year mark an important moment in the post-Katrina New Orleans public education landscape.

The 2012 State of Public Education in New Orleans report provides information about the current system of schools based on available quantitative data, newspaper stories and interviews, and a comprehensive survey of New Orleans public school parents. The report also offers a number of successes as well as key challenges that still face public education in New Orleans.
The public school system in post-Katrina New Orleans is made up of a multitude of different school types and operators. The state-run Recovery School District of Louisiana (RSD), created by the Louisiana Legislature in 2003 to take over failing schools, was given control of the vast majority of public schools in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

The local school board, Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB), retained fewer than 20 relatively high performing schools. The OPSB reopened most of these schools as charter schools in order to capture much-needed federal funding. Charter schools and charter management organizations, central to the RSD’s school transformation strategy, are an ever-growing feature of the education landscape. Indeed, New Orleans is unique among urban school districts across the country, with nearly 80 percent of its public school students in charter schools. The student body, however, is similar to many urban school districts, with a disproportionately high concentration of minority and low income students. The 2011-12 school year saw few changes in these basic components of the school system, though district and school leaders continue to work to address the unintended consequences of New Orleans’ unique system of schools.

**Governance**

Public schools in New Orleans are operated by the state-run RSD, the OPSB, or one of 43 different charter organizations.

Charter schools are authorized by either the OPSB (“OPSB charter schools”) or the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). BESE authorizes charter schools that operate under the RSD (“RSD charter schools”) in addition to charter schools that operate directly under BESE (“BESE charter schools”). In the 2011-12 school year, the RSD continued to oversee two-thirds of the public schools in New Orleans and enrolled 70 percent of all students at its charter and direct-run schools.

The division of governance in New Orleans presents a number of challenges.

With multiple governing bodies, the different organizations within the governance structure do not always communicate, coordinate, or align their efforts. Although the districts and charter schools are independent entities, their finances are intertwined. The OPSB remains the taxing and bonding authority for all public schools in Orleans Parish, including RSD charter and direct-run schools. In 2011, OPSB voted to cut the property tax rate, keeping revenue steady, as well as to approve a bond sale to finance school construction. The decisions angered charter school leaders and RSD officials who claimed they were not included in the discussion. In many ways, however, the relationship between the RSD
and the OPSB has improved. Most notably, the two districts negotiated the settlement of a longstanding dispute over flood insurance proceeds\textsuperscript{12} and maintained effective coordination to revise the School Facilities Master Plan.\textsuperscript{13}

In addition to the challenge of multiple governing bodies, there is often a lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities of different educational entities. Improved communication and transparency, especially by the RSD, and the centralization of some key education functions have helped to clarify roles and responsibilities for schools, parents, and the community. In the 2011-12 school year, the RSD opened four Parent-Family Resource Centers, launched a new unified enrollment system, finalized school building assignments, and approved a district-based expulsion hearing office for direct-run and charter schools. OPSB schools, however, are not included in these new centralized processes, and the system remains fragmented despite the RSD’s notable efforts.

**RSD COMMITMENT**

The RSD will make it easier for parents and community members to get information, get questions answered, and get issues resolved.
Schools and Operators

In the 2011-12 school year, there were 88 public schools open in New Orleans, including 22 traditional direct-run schools and 66 charter schools.

The majority of public school students, 78 percent, were enrolled in charter schools, a rate that has continued to grow since schools reopened after Hurricane Katrina. New Orleans continues to have the highest percentage of its students in charter schools of any school district in the nation, with Washington, D.C. a distant second at 39 percent.

Contributing to the growing percentage of students in charter schools, the RSD continues to transition its low performing direct-run schools into charter schools. In the 2011-12 school year, the number of RSD direct-run schools decreased to 16, down from 22 in 2010-11, while the number of charter schools under the RSD increased from 46 to 50. This strategy is supported through a $28 million federal Investing in Innovation (i3) grant, which the RSD received in partnership with the local nonprofit New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO) in August 2010.21

In January 2012, the RSD and NSNO awarded nearly $2.8 million in i3 grants to three charter operators that will open new charter schools in New Orleans in the fall of 2012.22 The OPSB also moved in 2011-12 to open additional charter schools. Until 2011, the OPSB was labeled “in crisis” by the state and therefore was unable to authorize new charter schools.23

In an effort to improve transparency and community engagement in the school transformation and chartering process, this year the RSD implemented a school transformation timeline.

RSD COMMITMENT

The RSD will implement a new monitoring process for New Orleans charter schools, while not distracting educators from educating.

RSD COMMITMENT

In 2011-12, the RSD will make critical decisions regarding school transformations, school locations, building usage, and school closure through public processes and public input.

Another challenge of the unique governance model is ensuring adequate charter school oversight when the state board is the primary charter authorizer. Until the 2011-12 school year, oversight for RSD charter schools was administered by the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) in Baton Rouge, over 80 miles from New Orleans. The issue became pressing in August 2011 when allegations of misconduct were made at one New Orleans charter school. As a result, BESE revoked the school’s charter contract — the first time the board used this power.14 In response, the LDOE proposed and BESE approved a new structure that moves charter school oversight closer to the schools.15 With the new structure, the RSD office in New Orleans directly monitors its charter schools and conducts annual on-site reviews and additional training.16 A legislative audit of the RSD for Fiscal Year 2010, released in September 2011, reinforced the need for increased charter school oversight. In particular, the audit highlighted the areas of general legal requirements, financial reporting, and academic performance at charter schools whose students are not old enough to take standardized tests.17 It is too soon to know the effectiveness of the shift in responsibility for charter school oversight from the LDOE in Baton Rouge to the RSD in New Orleans.

Perhaps the greatest governance challenge is the necessary but still generally undefined process for schools returning to local control. Discussions about a long-term solution for local control of schools in New Orleans have taken place throughout the community, but consensus has not been reached.18 While the RSD continues to have jurisdiction over the majority of public schools in New Orleans, it was not meant to be a permanent fixture in the New Orleans public school governance landscape. In December 2010, BESE approved a plan that allows schools that have been open at least five years and meet a performance standard to elect to transfer to the local governing entity, the OPSB. This year, for the first time, eight schools qualified to return. However, all chose in January 2012 to remain in the RSD for at least another year.19 Since then, the OPSB has created a “Transfer of Schools” committee to work on a process for eligible RSD schools to return to OPSB and to make returning more attractive to RSD charter schools.20
In November 2011, the RSD announced plans to phase out or charter nine of its 16 direct-run schools beginning in the 2012-13 school year. Another RSD direct-run school, Schwarz Alternative School, had previously been identified to be chartered, bringing the total number of school transformations in the RSD to ten. All schools identified for transformation were failing and/or under enrolled. The RSD also encouraged leaders of non-failing direct-run schools to apply to run their schools as charter schools. Following its announcement, the RSD partnered with community groups to hold parent, student, and community meetings at each transformation site. The RSD then matched charter operators to transformation schools and scheduled further community meetings to facilitate the transition.

The charter school application and approval process attracted significant attention during the 2011-12 school year.

Nearly 30 nonprofit organizations submitted applications to BESE in 2011 to open new charter schools under the RSD. In December 2011, BESE authorized nine of those charter organizations to open new charter schools. BESE also voted to deny charter renewal to two failing RSD charter schools. These decisions were met with criticism from local groups whose charter applications had been repeatedly denied and who argued that the application and approval process favors national groups with greater access to resources. To make charter approval decisions, BESE relies on recommendations from its third-party reviewer, the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA), a national organization with more than a decade of experience in advising charter school authorizers and researching authorizer practices. While NACSA’s requirements are highly demanding to ensure only qualified applications are recommended for approval, BESE has provided little technical assistance to help applicants understand and meet the NACSA requirements.

In response to the criticism, the RSD convened a stakeholder taskforce to identify opportunities to improve the charter approval process. In April 2012, the LDOE agreed to adopt the changes proposed by the taskforce. These changes include: allowing charter applicants to respond in writing to NACSA’s recommendation, increasing NACSA reviewers’ understanding of local context, ensuring at least one local member sits on each NACSA review team, and partnering with a community organization to provide information sessions for applicants.
The OPSB charter application and approval process also attracted attention in the 2011-12 school year. The OPSB received charter applications from seven organizations in 2011. Though NACSA did not recommend any of the applications for approval, the OPSB voted in January 2012 to conditionally approve two charter applications, one to open a school in 2012-13 and one for 2013-14. The conditional approvals are contingent on the charter organizations making improvements to their financial and organizational plans, which fell short of NACSA standards.

Charter networks, which operate two or more charter schools, play a major role in the New Orleans public school landscape.

In 2011-12, 45 percent of all charter school students in New Orleans attended schools in one of six networks. Two New Orleans charter networks expanded this year: FirstLine added one school, bringing its total to four, and ReNEW more than doubled its number of schools from two to five.

Charter networks will continue to expand in the coming years. KIPP New Orleans, ReNEW, and Choice Foundation were all approved by BESE in December 2011 to open additional schools, along with four other existing charter organizations in New Orleans that were approved to open their second school. Algiers Charter School Association (ACSA) is the only network that is decreasing its number of schools. The network lost one school prior to the 2012-13 school year when its charter was not renewed. For the 2011-12 school year, ACSA operated six RSD charter schools and two OPSB charter schools, but the OPSB is seeking new operators for those schools for the 2014-15 school year.
Student Enrollment and Demographics

Public school enrollment in New Orleans has continued to increase in the years since Hurricane Katrina, reaching a steady rate of increase of about 5 percent per year.

The growth rate of public school enrollment in New Orleans mirrors that of the city as a whole, which grew 5 percent from July 2010 to July 2011. Since 2008, public school enrollment in New Orleans has grown nearly 17 percent, compared to just 3 percent in neighboring Jefferson and St. Tammany Parishes and less than 2 percent across Louisiana. Though still growing, school enrollment today is nearly two-thirds what it was in the year just prior to Hurricane Katrina (66,372 in 2004).

As in previous years, nearly 90 percent of public school students in New Orleans were African American and over 80 percent are eligible for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program, according to the October 2011 student enrollment count. These demographics are similar to the pre-Katrina student population, which in October 2004 was 93 percent African American and had 77 percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The percentage of students that are African American in New Orleans is twice the Louisiana public school average of 45 percent and five times the national average of 17 percent.

The racial and ethnic makeup of the student population in New Orleans does not mirror that of the city as a whole, which, according to the 2010 U.S. Census, is about 60 percent African American. The various school types differ somewhat in their ethnic distribution, with OPSB charter schools and BESE charter schools enrolling a smaller percentage of African American and minority students than the other school types.

Eligibility for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program is a rough measure of family poverty. To be eligible for free lunch, the student’s household annual income must be below 130 percent of the federal poverty line, or $29,000 for a family of four. To be eligible for reduced-price lunch, the student’s household income must be below 185 percent of the federal poverty line, or $41,000 for a family of four.

In 2011-12, the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch in New Orleans was 85 percent. This is well above the Louisiana average of 67 percent and the national average of 47 percent. Of students in New Orleans eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, about 94 percent receive free lunch while 6 percent receive reduced-price lunch; however, the LDOE did not report free versus reduced-price lunch eligibility for about one-third of New Orleans schools due to data suppression requirements. There is some variation in the percentage of low-income students by school type, though all types enroll a majority of low-income students.
Figure 6: Race/Ethnicity in Public Schools, October 2011

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, October 2011; National Center for Education Statistics, 2011

Figure 7: Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligibility, October 2011

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, October 2011; National Center for Education Statistics, 2011
Though school operations were often chaotic in the first years after Hurricane Katrina, each school year since the storm has brought increased stability to the operations of both traditional direct-run and charter schools in New Orleans. As one-time recovery funds have diminished, expenditures have stabilized and reached a level close to the state average. The process of rebuilding schools’ physical infrastructure continues, promising further stability for school leaders and communities. However, in New Orleans’ decentralized system of public schools, operational decisions such as budgeting and staffing are often made at the school or charter network level, resulting in a range of practices and patterns. Additionally, the system of school choice and open enrollment provides families with access to schools across the city, but also presents operational challenges.

School Facilities

During the 2011-12 school year, the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), the Recovery School District (RSD), and the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) made a number of critical decisions regarding the School Facilities Master Plan and school building assignments, alleviating a great deal of uncertainty for schools and school leaders.

The School Facilities Master Plan for Orleans Parish, adopted in late 2008, serves as the city’s blueprint for renovating and rebuilding school facilities over the next decade. To accommodate changing repopulation patterns, the Master Plan must be updated every two years. In August 2010, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) awarded the RSD and OPSB a final settlement of $1.8 billion, a single lump-sum payment for hurricane-damaged public schools. With significant funding available to finance the Master Plan, issues of project prioritization as well as financial management and oversight became more pressing.
As part of the biannual updating process, in June 2011 a peer review committee proposed significant revisions to the Master Plan. These revisions included increasing the number of students in each building and reducing the total number of school buildings from 87 to 72 in an effort to reduce costs. The proposed revisions, however, left the final phase of the plan unfunded. The final phase, which included renovation and construction of 19 school facilities at an estimated cost of $422 million, was contingent on a bond issue. A number of New Orleans business and nonprofit leaders, including the Cowen Institute, called on city and state officials to revisit the Master Plan so that all students could benefit from a new or renovated school building given existing resources.

In response to the community pressure, district officials identified opportunities for more efficient use of currently available funds. In October 2011, the OPSB and BESE approved a revised Master Plan. The revised plan provides for 82 new, renovated, or refurbished school buildings housing between 42,000 and 47,000 students and 88 school programs by 2016. The revised plan identified savings and additional revenues of approximately $242 million by reducing the scale of some projects, using fair market labor costs, minimizing design costs by using similar design features and strategies in multiple projects, reallocating federal restart funds, and using State Historic Tax Credits and federal New Market Tax Credits.

As of May 30, 2012, eight school buildings were complete, nine schools were under construction, and nine schools were in the design or procurement stage. Stabilization projects, including demolitions and securing vacant buildings, were also in progress for a total of 66 major projects underway and $417 million in open contracts.

The Master Plan addresses the number of facilities to be built or renovated and the locations, but it does not offer any guidance about which school programs will be located in those buildings.

Many school programs continue to operate in temporary buildings or trailers, while others have short-term contracts or leases for building use. In November 2011, the RSD announced final long-term school building assignments. The assignments provide school operators and communities with increased certainty about the future.

The school building assignment process began in August 2010 when the RSD first released a draft list of building assignments. In response to community pressure, the RSD released a second draft assignment list in December 2010 and held public meetings in January 2011, but decided to postpone a final decision until revisions to the Master Plan were complete. While the process of assigning school programs to facilities has inevitable winners and losers, the final building assignments released by the RSD in November 2011 align with the Master Plan and include nearly all schools.

Figure 8: School Facilities by Master Plan Phase 1 Project Status

Source: RSD and OPSB Phase 1 Program Update, December 2011

RSD COMMITMENT
Schools in temporary homes or trailers will have a longterm home identified by the end of the 2011 calendar year.

RSD COMMITMENT
Through aggressive monitoring and adjustments in policy, the RSD will maximize the number of local businesses and local employees working on the next round of school construction and renovation projects.
With nearly $2 billion being spent on school facilities, oversight and monitoring are needed to ensure efficiency and transparency in school construction, maintenance, and renovation.

The OPSB and BESE passed resolutions in December 2008 and January 2009, respectively, to create the Master Plan Oversight Committee. The purpose of the committee is to ensure the Master Plan is being implemented on time and on budget by reviewing the annual capital projects budget, monitoring progress, and considering necessary changes to the plan. The committee met about once per month between April 2010 and September 2011, but has not met since. Its future role is unclear.

In order to protect facilities construction and rebuilding projects from fraud, the RSD is contracting with the City of New Orleans Office of Inspector General (OIG) to monitor RSD construction projects in New Orleans. The $1.2 million three-year contract, approved by BESE in April 2012, begins June 2012 and will be paid out of FEMA settlement funds. The agreement provides for the OIG to screen contractors for previous financial trouble, fraud, or failure to complete projects and to provide fraud awareness training for RSD personnel and contractors. However, the OIG is not responsible for providing technical expertise or ensuring efficient use of funds.

Managing spending and staying on budget will continue to be a challenge as the Master Plan construction moves forward.

For projects already complete or currently underway as of September 2011, cost projections were $126 million more than the original cost estimates. According to the project updates, the current budgets for schools that are in design, procurement, or construction or that are complete will cost $913 million. The original costs estimates for these projects totaled $786.6 million, a gap of 16 percent. The difference between original cost estimates and current budgets has grown since the December 2010 4th Quarterly report, which showed a gap of 11 percent. It is not uncommon for the budgets for construction projects, especially renovation projects, to increase throughout the life cycle of the project. Nevertheless, a large variance could have a major impact on the ability to complete the entire plan with currently available funds.

In addition to construction and renovation costs, dedicated and ongoing funding for facility needs is critical to ensure New Orleans schools do not deteriorate over time due to deferred maintenance.

To help identify long-term capital investment and building maintenance strategies, the OPSB and the RSD announced in March 2012 the creation of a Blue Ribbon Commission, as was called for in the Master Plan revisions. The Commission is made up of seven local community members, representing a cross section of business and industry who meet monthly in order to compile a set of recommendations to be released in the summer of 2012.

Finances

Public school reform efforts in New Orleans were buoyed by relatively high revenues in the years after Hurricane Katrina, and the sustainability of the current system rests on its ability to adapt to decreasing revenues.

Over the past few years, public school finances in New Orleans have gradually returned to a level more in line with the state average. The amount of one-time federal revenue related to hurricane recovery, and consequently the amount of expenditures from this revenue, is decreasing. Additionally, public school enrollment has stabilized, and proportionately fewer schools are in the expensive start-up phase. For all these reasons, the financial state of schools in New Orleans is becoming more representative of how it is likely to be in the coming years.
Though public school expenditures in New Orleans continue to exceed the state average, each year the gap between the two lessens. In 2009-10, average per pupil spending in New Orleans was $13,040, 21 percent higher than the state average of $10,745 per pupil. In 2008-09, New Orleans public school average per pupil expenditures were 34 percent higher than the state, and in 2007-08 New Orleans was 58 percent higher than the state. Both state and local public school expenditures are slightly higher than the national average, which was $10,591 per pupil 2008-09.

Among individual charter schools and networks, however, a wide range of revenues and expenditures are reported. For example, in the 2010-11 school year, the school at the 90th percentile in revenues per pupil ($13,870) received over $4,000 more than the school at the 10th percentile ($9,751). As a whole, per pupil revenues and expenditures for charter schools (about $10,500 per pupil in 2010-11) are lower than those reported for the OPSB and RSD (about $14,200 per pupil in 2010-11). Private contributions are often cited as an important source of charter school revenues. In 2010-11, however, though some charter schools in the city reported large contributions, the majority reported small amounts or nothing at all.

Major changes to Louisiana’s school funding formula approved in 2012 may impact New Orleans public school finances in the future.

In February 2012, BESE approved the annual public school funding formula resolution with revisions that would allow public school dollars to be used to pay private school tuition through a voucher program, to pay for courses taken through private education providers, and to provide college tuition and fee assistance to students who graduate from high school early. The resolution was approved by the Louisiana Legislature during the 2012 legislative session. District and school officials are still in the process of determining what the impact of the funding formula changes will be on school revenues.
**Human Capital**

In the decentralized public school system in New Orleans, school leaders have flexibility in personnel decision-making, which leads to variation by school in teacher experience, salaries and benefits, and recruitment and retention strategies.

Charter schools and RSD direct-run schools are not subject to the OPSB’s employment policies or state tenure laws. Teachers at OPSB and RSD direct-run schools have tenure eligibility, though in the RSD tenure is limited to only those teachers who were previously employed under the OPSB before Hurricane Katrina. Charter operators hire their employees according to their own processes and procedures.

Many school operators use national recruitment programs to hire new teachers who are either recent college graduates or professionals looking for a career change. As a result, public school teachers in New Orleans have, on average, fewer years of experience than state and national averages.

In 2010-11, the most recent year of data available, 62 percent of teachers in New Orleans had four or more years of experience, compared to 80 percent of teachers in Louisiana and 81 percent nationally. Furthermore, 11 percent of New Orleans teachers are in their first year teaching, twice the Louisiana average of 5 percent and six times the national average of 2 percent.

Teacher experience levels have stabilized and have become increasingly balanced in the years since Hurricane Katrina. In 2007-08, more than half of all teachers had three or fewer years of teaching experience. In 2009-10, this proportion declined to less than 40 percent and stayed about the same in 2010-11.

Among school districts and operators in New Orleans, a wide range of teacher experience levels exist. In the 2010-11 school year, BESE charter schools had the highest percentage (61 percent) of teachers with three or fewer years of teaching experience, followed by RSD charter and

![Figure 11: Teachers by Years of Experience, 2010-2011 School Year](image-url)

*Includes three RSD direct-run schools located outside Orleans Parish.

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2011
direct-run schools (41 percent) and OPSB charter and direct-run schools (27 percent). Among RSD charter operators, the percentage of teachers with three or fewer years of experience ranged from a low of 21 percent to a high of 100 percent. Similarly, while many school operators had no teachers with 20 or more years of experience, one operator, the Algiers Charter School Association, had 55 percent of its teachers in that range.

Teacher salaries can and do vary significantly among school districts and operators, though teacher pay has remained similar to state averages. In 2010-11, the most recent year of data available, the average teacher salary at public schools in New Orleans was $47,878, just below the state average of $49,246 but a quite a bit lower than the national average of $55,350. However, taking into account that teachers in New Orleans have on average fewer years of experience than across the state, teacher salaries in New Orleans are comparatively higher.

Among New Orleans school districts and operators in 2010-11, average teacher salaries ranged from about $40,000 to over $54,000. Average salaries tend to align with teacher experience levels, with the schools that employ a higher percentage of novice teachers also having a relatively low average salary.

Flexibility in staffing decisions has provided the opportunity for some charter operators to implement practices that were difficult to establish under district control. For example, the Algiers Charter School Association participates in the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), which includes a performance-based compensation program. Additionally, the RSD and local nonprofit New Schools for New Orleans received a $13.2 million federal grant from the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) in 2010 to fund performance-based bonuses at charter schools in New Orleans. FirstLine Schools, ReNEW Charter Schools, and KIPP New Orleans Schools are currently participating in the NOLA TIF incentive program, and additional charter schools can apply to participate from 2012-13 to 2014-2015.

Figure 12: Average Public School Teacher Salaries Over Time

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2003-2011
Recruiting and retaining high quality teachers and school leaders is an ongoing challenge for urban school districts, including New Orleans.

Staff diversity and teacher turnover rates are major concerns, especially for schools that employ a high percentage of young, novice teachers recruited through national programs. While some turnover should be expected and even desired, very high turnover is costly for schools and districts as they lose the investments they made in training and mentoring. Anecdotal evidence suggests that teacher recruitment needs have leveled off in recent years after spiking post-Katrina, while issues with teacher retention vary by school. The average teacher turnover rate at public schools in New Orleans from 2010 to 2011 was approximately 27 percent, with turnover rates at individual schools ranging from a low of 6.7 percent to a high of 72.7 percent.

School Choice

The post-Katrina public school landscape in New Orleans is uniquely characterized by the system of open enrollment and citywide school choice, which allows parents to enroll their children in any school across the city regardless of neighborhood.

Every RSD public school, charter or direct-run, can be attended by any student residing in the City of New Orleans, regardless of where in New Orleans they live, provided the school has capacity. The same is true for charter and direct-run schools under the OPSB and BESE, though some have admissions requirements which can include auditions, parental involvement, standardized testing, or a certain level of academic achievement. Nonetheless, these schools are available to qualifying students on a citywide basis. Additionally, BESE charter schools are open to students in nearby parishes, though they are not required to provide transportation.

Citywide access to all schools and the absence of neighborhood catchment zones has financial implications for schools. One of the most significant is the cost of transportation. RSD direct-run and charter schools are required to provide transportation to their students regardless of where they live. Bus routes can span the boundaries of the city.
In the 2010-11 school year, just 13 percent of students attended school in the neighborhood in which they resided, while about 10 percent lived within half a mile from their school site. Busing students from areas across the city has led to an increase in the cost of transportation overall, from less than 4 percent of expenditures before Hurricane Katrina to approximately 6 percent in 2009-10, the most recent year available, with some individual schools spending as much as 12 percent. Greater distance and travel time as a result of school choice, charter school policies regarding student transportation, and the lack of economies of scale influence school-level transportation costs.

While parents can enroll their children in any school in the city, public schools in New Orleans lack a single, unified application or enrollment process. Due to New Orleans’ decentralized governance system, no single entity is responsible for managing the enrollment process, assigning students to schools, overseeing lotteries and waitlists, or providing information to parents.

In the 2011-12 school year, the RSD took a major step towards streamlining and simplifying the enrollment process for schools and families.

In February 2012 the RSD launched “One App,” a single application for all RSD charter and direct-run schools in New Orleans. The application allows parents to rank up to eight RSD direct-run or charter schools on a single application. Using an assignment formula, the district then assigns students to schools based on the students’ ranked order, giving some preference to siblings of currently enrolled students and to students living in close geographic proximity. Geographic proximity is based on six geographic catchment areas in which elementary school students

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**One App Catchment Areas**

Source: www.gcrdata.com/RSDschools
receive priority for up to 50 percent of the seats available in schools in their community. The catchment areas were created by the RSD in an effort to balance school choice with access to neighborhood schools.

Previously, the OPSB, the RSD, and individual charter school operators each managed their enrollment process separately, requiring parents to complete multiple applications, sometimes with varying requirements and deadlines. Though the RSD’s new enrollment system does not include OPSB charter and direct-run schools or most BESE charter schools, it represents a significant improvement from the past. The RSD’s centralized enrollment system simplifies the application process for parents and families. It also increases the level of transparency and accountability for RSD schools by ensuring they all follow the same enrollment process and rules.

During the RSD’s spring 2012 enrollment process, over 25,000 students submitted an application seeking a seat at an RSD school for the 2012-13 school year, including students electing to stay in their current school. Of the 21,152 applications received from current RSD students, 80 percent were “intent to return” applications. Of kindergarten and ninth grade applicants, 76 percent were assigned their first choice school, and 84 percent were assigned one of their top three choices; of applicants for other grades, 59 percent were assigned their first choice school and 73 percent received one of their top three choices.

The outcomes of the RSD’s enrollment system this first year are generally positive in terms of meeting parent and student preferences. However, the results also suggested that there may not be enough high quality public school options in the city. On average, families ranked only 2.6 elementary schools and 2.4 high schools. The most popular schools—those that were most frequently listed on applications—were generally among those with the highest state-assigned School Performance Scores in the RSD.

The results of the Cowen Institute’s October 2011 public school parent opinion poll suggest overall support for school choice.

Nine in ten public school parents surveyed (90 percent) strongly agreed that it is important to be able to choose their child’s school, up from 81 percent in 2009. Additionally, the overwhelming majority (95 percent) of parents said their children attend their first or second choice school, up from 85 percent in 2009. In order for a choice-based enrollment system to function effectively, it is vital that parents have easy access to accurate information on schools to inform their decisions. Most parents (86 percent) agreed that information on different school options was readily available to them. This is up significantly from 62 percent in 2009. Parents surveyed in 2011 indicated that the most common sources of information were school visits (94 percent), principals or teachers (86 percent), and friends or relatives (79 percent). The majority of parents surveyed first heard of their child’s school through relatives and neighbors, 30 percent, with another 21 percent hearing about the school through word of mouth.

Though school choice and the open enrollment system gives parents access to multiple schools, 68 percent of those surveyed in 2011 reported applying to just one school and another 25 percent applied to two to four schools. This finding aligns with the outcome of the new RSD centralized application process, in which parents, on average, listed just two to three schools. The survey also found that parents of students with special education needs were nearly twice as likely as other parents to apply to more than one school (43 percent versus 24 percent).

While school choice is clearly important to parents, it can also hamper some parents’ ability to enroll their children in neighborhood schools. The cost of transportation and parent and community engagement in schools are particular challenges. The majority of parents surveyed in 2011 (82 percent) felt it was important that their child be able to attend their neighborhood school, up slightly from 75 percent in 2009. However, just 27 percent said that their child’s school is less than one mile from home. Furthermore, while only a third of parents (36 percent) said a school’s distance from home or work was an important factor in selecting their child’s school, transportation was noted as an important factor for 64 percent of parents and 91 percent of parents reporting an annual income below $15,000. The RSD’s new geographic catchment areas are intended to strike a balance between school choice and access to neighborhood schools, though their impact has not yet been measured.
### Table 1: Most Popular Schools in the Recovery School District 2012-2013 School Application Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Popular Elementary Schools</th>
<th>Year Opened</th>
<th>Grades Served (2012-2013)</th>
<th>2011 School Performance Score (SPS)</th>
<th>2011 Letter Grade</th>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Catchment Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Martin Luther King Charter School</td>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>PK-12</td>
<td>94.2</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>Lower Nith Ward</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lafayette Academy</td>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>PK-8</td>
<td>88.5</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>Uptown</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Behrman Charter School</td>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>PK-8</td>
<td>107.5</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Algiers</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Popular Among Those Entering Kindergarten</th>
<th>Year Opened</th>
<th>Grades Served (2012-2013)</th>
<th>2011 School Performance Score (SPS)</th>
<th>2011 Letter Grade</th>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Catchment Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KIPP Central City Primary</td>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>K-4</td>
<td>105.6</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>Central City</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIPP McDonogh 15</td>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>K-4</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Vieux Carre</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIPP Believe</td>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>K-1, 5-8</td>
<td>111.6</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Uptown</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lake Area New Tech Early College High School</td>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Gentilly</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophie B. Wright Charter School</td>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>6-12</td>
<td>86.1</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Uptown</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci Academy</td>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>96.4</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>New Orleans East</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Popular Among Those Entering High School</th>
<th>Year Opened</th>
<th>Grades Served (2012-2013)</th>
<th>2011 School Performance Score (SPS)</th>
<th>2011 Letter Grade</th>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Catchment Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lake Area New Tech Early College High School</td>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Gentilly</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci Academy</td>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>96.4</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>New Orleans East</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIPP Renaissance High School</td>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>9-11</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Bywater</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the years since Hurricane Katrina, public schools in New Orleans have seen standardized test performance improve, fewer students attend failing schools, and more students graduate from high school prepared for college and the workplace. This progress extends to all school types and all performance measures. Many claims have been put forward about how resources, staffing models, particular student populations, and different school types might affect school performance in New Orleans, but few have been proven by the available data.

Though public school student achievement in New Orleans is readily catching up to the rest of the state, it remains well below national averages. Additionally, school performance and student academic achievement, as indicated on the available metrics, vary widely among schools and school types creating a stratified system that includes both the highest performing and lowest performing schools in the state.

Student Achievement

Each year Louisiana administers tests for students in 3rd grade to 10th grade. High-stakes standardized tests, which students must pass in order to move on to the next grade level or to graduate, have been given in the 4th grade, 8th grade, and 10th grade for nearly a decade in Louisiana. The 4th and 8th grade tests are called Louisiana Educational Assessment Program tests, or LEAP tests, while the high school test is called the Graduate Exit Exam or GEE. Beginning with the 2010-11 freshman class, the GEE is being replaced with End-Of-Course (EOC) tests. However, EOC test results for the 2011-12 school year will not be released until July 2012.

RSD COMMITMENT

Direct-run RSD schools will improve significantly in 2011-12, achieving greater progress in students achieving basic on LEAP, tLEAP and GEE tests than the rest of the state.

Passage rates on English Language Arts (ELA) and math high-stakes tests have improved over the past few years. However, gains from 2011 to 2012 were smaller than in previous years.
About 63 percent of RSD students in New Orleans taking the 4th grade LEAP test for the first time scored Basic or above, or “passed,” down a percentage point from 2011.80 About 61 percent of 8th grade students in the RSD passed the test, a gain of one percentage point.81 In OPSB schools, the percentage of 4th grade students passing the LEAP held steady at 95 percent, while the percentage of eighth grade students passing dropped six percentage points to 85 percent.82

In addition to gains in overall passage rates, public schools in New Orleans have increased the percentage of students scoring Advanced and Mastery on LEAP tests. While a score of Basic means students performed at grade level, scores of Advanced and Mastery mean students performed above grade level.

In addition to the state’s high-stakes tests, interim standardized tests, referred to as the iLEAP, are taken by every Louisiana public school student in the grades 3, 5, 6, 7, and 9. Though the iLEAP does not carry high stakes for students, they do factor into a school’s school performance score.
School Performance

Though standardized test scores and school performance scores indicate improved performance in public schools in New Orleans, wide disparity exists among schools in both their absolute performance and in their performance growth over time.

While the average state-assigned School Performance Score (SPS) for all public schools in New Orleans in 2010-11 was 87.0, or a D, individual school scores ranged from 6.2 to 186.2. In fact, New Orleans is home to both the highest performing school in the state and the lowest.

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) annually assigns public schools an SPS. The SPS ranges from 0 to approximately 200 and is based on state assessments, dropout rates, attendance, and, for high schools, a graduation index. Schools are assigned a letter grade from A to F based on their SPS. In 2011, schools receiving an SPS below 65 were given an “F” and deemed Academically Unacceptable or failing. The minimum score at which a school is considered failing, however, has increased over time and will increase to 75 for the 2011-12 school year. Based on 2011 scores, nearly a quarter of public schools in New Orleans will have to show dramatic growth in order to avoid receiving an F when the bar is raised. (2012 scores will be released in Fall 2012.)

Table 2: School Performance Score Range

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>School Performance Score (SPS) Range</th>
<th>Approximate % of Students Below Basic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>120.0 or above</td>
<td>0-12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>105.0 – 119.9</td>
<td>13-24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>90.0 – 104.9</td>
<td>25-36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>65.0 – 89.9*</td>
<td>37-61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0 – 64.9*</td>
<td>62-100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Scale will change in 2012

Based on the 2011 letter grade scale, a lower proportion of public school students attended failing schools in the 2010-11 school year than in previous years. Based on October 1st student counts, of all students attending public schools in New Orleans in the 2010-11 school year, 21 percent of students attended failing schools. This represents an improvement of 5 percentage points from 2009-10. It is less than half the percentage of students that attended failing schools in 2008-09. The percentage of students attending “A” schools also increased from 7 percent in 2008-09 to 11 percent in 2010-11.

Schools do not receive an SPS if they have been open only one year, are not reopening the following fall, or do not yet have students in tested grades.

Each school type on average showed improvement in SPS from previous years, though the rate of improvement varied by school type and individual school. OPSB charter schools reported the largest gains, increasing 16.4 points from 2008-09 to 2010-11, while RSD direct-run schools grew at the fastest rate of 27 percent, starting from a low baseline. A wide range of growth or decline exists among individual schools, from -9.0 to 39.2 points. On average, schools in New Orleans increased 17 points, or 24 percent, from 2008-09 to 2010-11, more than three times the state average of 4.5 points or 5 percent.

Performance also varies by the number of years a school has been open. In general, new schools or schools that recently changed operators tend to have lower scores. OPSB charter and direct-run schools were not taken over by the state for low performance and are among the schools that have been open the longest in New Orleans. These schools continue to be the highest performing in the city. On the other
The State of Public Education in New Orleans: 2012 Report

RSD COMMITMENT

RSD will employ clear, strong accountability for both direct-run and charter schools starting Fall 2011.

Hand, the RSD’s school turnaround strategy has focused on closing poor performing schools and recruiting new charter operators, meaning many RSD charter schools are among the newest in New Orleans. The 14 RSD charter schools receiving an SPS for the first time in 2011 received an average SPS of 65.0 compared to an average SPS of 84.8 for RSD charter schools that are four or more years old. Nonetheless, RSD charter schools on average outperformed RSD direct-run schools. The RSD announced in November 2011 that it will charter, close, or phase out its failing direct-run schools.83

Table 3: 2008-09 and 2010-11 School Performance Scores by School Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008-09</th>
<th></th>
<th>2010-11</th>
<th></th>
<th>2009 to 2011 Rate of Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lowest SPS</td>
<td>Average SPS</td>
<td>Highest SPS</td>
<td>Lowest SPS</td>
<td>Average SPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BESE Charter Schools</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>91.4</td>
<td>102.7</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>97.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPSB Direct-Run Schools</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>93.7</td>
<td>117.6</td>
<td>103.2</td>
<td>108.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPSB Charter Schools</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>107.0</td>
<td>167.5</td>
<td>96.1</td>
<td>130.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSD Direct-Run Schools</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>53.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSD Charter Schools</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>114.6</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>77.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Orleans</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>167.5</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>87.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>89.4</td>
<td>167.5</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2009-2011

It is clear that despite gains on academic performance measures, public schools in New Orleans have a long way to go to provide a quality education for all students. Though New Orleans public schools are improving at a faster rate than the state average, absolute academic performance continues to lag considerably behind the rest of the state. Furthermore, Louisiana is outperformed by the rest of the country, ranking near the bottom on most national measures of academic performance.

In the coming years, new standards and assessments will be implemented in public schools in New Orleans and across the state of Louisiana.

BESE adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in July 2010, joining 43 other states and D.C. in a state-led initiative to create national education standards.84 Along with CCSS’s new standards and curriculum, Louisiana is one of 24 states participating in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), a common set of K-12 English Language Arts and math assessments. The assessments, set to be ready in time for the 2014-15 school year, will ultimately replace current state assessments. CCSS and PARCC provide an important opportunity for Louisiana to ensure all students are prepared for success in college and the workforce through more rigorous and relevant standards and assessments.

Standardized test performance and school performance scores, however, only reflect one aspect of school quality and success.

A value-added school accountability model, which measures and rewards individual student-level growth, would highlight those schools that are making the biggest gains no matter the level at which their students started. Student and teacher surveys, in-person school evaluations, and other data indicators can also contribute to more comprehensive school quality measurements.

In February 2012, the RSD for the first time released school equity reports. Created in part due to concerns that charter schools “counsel out” students with special needs or behavioral issues, the equity reports are intended to ensure all students have access and that schools keep even
the most challenging students. The 2012 Equity Report includes a school’s admissions rate for students with special needs; academic progress of students with special needs; student attendance rate; and the rate of students staying in school rather than being expelled, suspended, or dropping out. The reports show that between the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years, about 66 percent of RSD students returned to their schools (excluding students in terminal grades). Additionally, about 10 percent of students entered RSD schools in 2010-11 with a previously identified disability and about 5 percent had a disability identified for the first time or increased the level of services during the 2010-11 school year. The RSD’s equity reports provide a more transparent picture of the RSD and its schools by allowing for comparison against these metrics. Nonetheless, New Orleans continues to have limited data and tools to truly measure school quality, academic growth, and the success of the reform model.

**College and Career Readiness**

At public schools in New Orleans, academic performance at the elementary school level has outpaced that of high schools in the years since Hurricane Katrina.

In particular, every RSD direct-run high school was failing in 2010-11, and they are collectively the lowest performing schools in the state. These seven schools enrolled over 17 percent of all public high school students in New Orleans in the 2011-12 school year. Though high schools are not improving at the rate of elementary schools in New Orleans, a number of indicators suggest each year more public school students in New Orleans graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

The graduation cohort rate, which measures the percentage of ninth grade students who graduate from high school in four years, is one measure of high school performance. In 2010-11, RSD charter and direct-run high schools reported a cohort graduation rate of 57.3. This represents an improvement over the previous year’s 49.7 cohort graduation rate but is still one of the lowest in the state. On the other hand, OPSB charter and direct-run high schools had the highest cohort graduation rate in the state in both 2010-11 (93.5) and 2009-10 (90.3).

The ACT college admissions test, which students generally take in the 11th or 12th grade, is intended to measure high school students’ general educational development and their capability to complete college-level work. In New Orleans, public school students in the graduating class of 2011 scored a mean composite score of 18.0 (out of a possible 36) on the ACT, an increase of 0.5 points from 2010. The number of total test-takers at public schools in New Orleans has gradually increased over the past three years. However, scores varied by school and school type. New Orleans public schools reported both the highest average ACT
score in the state (27.4) and the lowest (14.8). At RSD direct-run and charter schools, 70 percent of 12th grade students in 2010-11 had taken the ACT at some point in their high school career, an increase from 63 percent in 2009-10. The OPSB does not report the percentage of students who have taken the ACT.

The Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) provides two- and four-year merit-based scholarships to students to attend Louisiana colleges and universities. Two-year technical or occupational scholarships require at least a 2.5 GPA, mandatory high school coursework, and an ACT score of 17 or higher. Four-year scholarships are available at three different levels, but the minimum requirement is at least a 2.5 GPA, mandatory high school coursework, and an ACT score of 20 or higher. The percentage of graduates who qualify for TOPS scholarships (two- or four-year) is an important benchmark to measure college and career preparedness.

During the 2011-12 school year, both state and local education leaders have launched initiatives focused on improving high schools and preparing students for success in postsecondary education and the workplace.

The percentage of New Orleans public school graduates who meet the academic qualifications for TOPS scholarships (two- or four-year) has grown from 33 percent in 2008 to 37 percent in 2011. During this time, the state TOPS eligibility rate grew less than 1 percent, from 42 percent in 2008 to 43 percent in 2011. The majority (65 percent) of New Orleans public school graduates who qualified for a TOPS scholarship were eligible for a four-year award. However, eligibility rates varied by school and school type.

In April 2012, the LDOE announced that, beginning in the 2012-13 school year, all 8th-12th grade public school students in Louisiana will participate in the EXPLORE/PLAN ACT series, which will be funded by the state. Additionally, the LDOE is providing funding for Advanced Placement (AP) teacher training and reduced-tuition postsecondary courses for high school students. Locally, the RSD announced in January 2012 collaboration with industry and higher education partners to develop courses geared toward job certification; provide adjunct faculty, industry tools, and resources; and guarantee internships and job interviews. Efforts to charter or phase out chronically failing RSD direct-run high schools are also intended to improve opportunities at the secondary school level.

Urban high school reform is challenging, and few models of success exist. In New Orleans, high schools before Hurricane Katrina were some of the worst in the nation. Though it is clear that there is much work to be done, the improvement seen over the last few years is encouraging. Continued commitment and investment is critical for success.
Impact of the 2012 Louisiana Legislative Session

Recent state-level decisions by Governor Jindal and the Louisiana Legislature will likely have a major impact on the public education landscape both across the state and in New Orleans going forward.

During the 2012 Louisiana legislative session, Governor Jindal made education reform his top priority and proposed a massive overhaul of the state’s education system. HB 974, the “Tenure Bill,” and HB 976, the “Choice Bill,” were signed into law as Acts 1 and 2, respectively, within the first 24 days of the session. Limiting teacher tenure and expanding school choice in the state, the reforms outlined in these bills are modeled on, but go well beyond, those employed in New Orleans in recent years.

Act 1 will have little impact on New Orleans because the majority of teachers are employed at charter schools that are not subject to state tenure laws. Among the changes most likely to impact public schools in New Orleans, Act 2 creates a statewide school voucher program. Like the pilot program existing in New Orleans since 2008, the new statewide voucher program will be available to students attending low performing schools and whose family has an annual income less than 250 percent of the federal poverty line. However, the new law changes the definition of low performing to include schools rated a C, D, or F, rather than F schools only. Priority for participation in the statewide voucher program will be given to students in F and D schools. Approximately 63 percent of all public school students in New Orleans attended low performing schools in 2010-11 by this definition, compared to 21 percent attending F schools. Private schools and public schools receiving an A or B in the state’s school accountability system can elect to participate in the voucher program. Approximately 7,400 seats at 125 schools statewide (only one of which is public) could be available to students participating in the voucher program in the 2012-13 school year. Of those available seats, about 2,300 are at 26 private schools located in New Orleans.

The statewide voucher program will be funded differently than the New Orleans pilot program, which was funded by an appropriation from the state general fund. Instead, the statewide voucher program will be paid for through changes to the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) formula that were approved by BESE and the state legislature. The MFP formula determines the cost of a minimum foundation program of education in public elementary and secondary schools and helps to allocate the funds to parish and city school systems. The changes to the MFP formula allow state public school funding to follow the student to the private school through a scholarship or voucher.

The revisions to the MFP formula not only accommodate the new voucher program, but generally allow public school dollars to be used to fund private education options. Specifically, the MFP can now be used to pay for courses taken through private education providers. The goal is for funding to follow the student in order to allow access to more education options. However, accountability for private education providers, including those participating in the voucher program, is limited.

Act 2 also made important changes to existing charter school law that could have an impact in New Orleans because of its high concentration of charter schools. In an effort to increase the number of charter schools authorized throughout the state, Act 2 allows BESE to authorize five non-profits or state agencies in each of the eight regional labor market areas in Louisiana to be local charter school authorizers. Act 2 sets high standards for such local charter authorizers, as they will only be allowed to authorize more charter schools if their schools average a letter grade of B or higher and will lose their authority if the average is a D or less. The legislation also allows successful charter operators to open additional schools through a streamlined process.
Conclusion

The 2011-12 school year marked the beginning of a new era of leadership and strategy in New Orleans’ public education landscape.

The reform model has continued, as both state and local leaders remain committed to the central principles of school autonomy, choice, and accountability. At the same time, school and district leadership, particularly the RSD, have intensified efforts to address some of the unintended consequences of reform and to increase transparency and community engagement. Recent gains in academic achievement are substantial, though the pace of improvement is showing signs of slowing. While it is clear that more work must be done to ensure all students in New Orleans have access to a quality public school, the system of public schools in New Orleans is moving in a positive direction.
Conclusion

Increased transparency and communication in decision-making by the RSD

The Recovery School District’s three-year strategic plan adopted in September 2011 promised to take a number of specific steps to improve communication to parents, students, and school administrations, and to be transparent in the decision-making process. In the 2011-12 school year, the RSD worked to achieve these commitments by opening Parent-Family Resource Centers and holding numerous and regular community meetings. Important decisions regarding school transformations, school closures, and facility assignments were made in a timely manner and followed previously established rubrics.

More needs to be done to incorporate community and stakeholder input and to ensure meaningful community engagement, but the RSD has demonstrated an increased commitment to transparency and communication, an important first step and an improvement from the past. Though the system of multiple school districts and operators continues to make information access and community engagement difficult, transparency can go a long way to building public trust over the long term.

Efforts to intervene in chronically failing high schools

The RSD’s direct-run high schools have been academically failing New Orleans’ students for years. These schools, which in 2011-12 enrolled over 17 percent of all public high school students in New Orleans, have been the lowest performing schools in the state for every year they have received a School Performance Score. This year, the RSD announced plans to charter, close, or phase out these remaining chronically failing high schools. Since announcing its intention to transform these high schools, the RSD has begun efforts to streamline the transformation process. Community meetings were held at each school to discuss the plans. The RSD worked with New Schools for New Orleans to identify quality charter operators for as many of the high schools as possible, and facilitated conversations between charter operators and school communities to help provide a smooth transition.

Unfortunately, some students will remain in chronically failing high schools next year. The RSD was unable to identify a charter operator for two of its direct-run high schools, and so they will remain open but no longer take new students. Additionally, the new charter operator taking over at one RSD direct-run high school will begin by enrolling only 9th grade students, adding a grade each year. Students in upper grades (10th, 11th, and 12th) will attend the failing direct-run school next year. The RSD worked to provide options for students in schools or grades that will not be immediately taken over by a new charter operator by giving priority in the admissions process.

More support is needed for students affected by the school closure and chartering process. Furthermore, the success of the RSD’s high school turnaround efforts hinge on the success of the new charter operators, which is not guaranteed. Nonetheless, the RSD’s efforts over the 2011-12 school year to begin transforming its failing direct-run high schools are an important first step towards improving educational opportunities for New Orleans’ high school students.

Successes

Public education in New Orleans continues to adapt and adjust to the unintended consequences of a decentralized system. Many of the changes over the 2011-12 school year have contributed greatly to a more efficient and effective system of schools.
3 Improved relationships between the RSD and the OPSB

Relationships between officials from the RSD and the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) have been frequently strained in the past. Though tension still exists, particularly with relation to financial issues, relationships have begun to improve. Most notably, the two districts negotiated the settlement of a longstanding dispute over flood insurance proceeds and maintained effective coordination to revise the School Facilities Master Plan. RSD staff attended and engaged in OPSB business and committee meetings and worked with OPSB staff on projects, including identifying funding opportunities for the School Facilities Master Plan.

4 Progress on facilities planning and construction

With the $1.8 billion FEMA settlement, New Orleans has a historic opportunity to provide a modern school facility for all students. The revised School Facilities Master Plan approved in October 2011 goes a long way toward providing every New Orleans student with a physical environment conducive to learning, is more cost effective, and lays the groundwork to fund repair and maintenance costs in the future. However, continued oversight is needed to ensure facilities money is being used efficiently and effectively.

Additionally, the RSD’s long-term school building assignments, issued in November 2011, align with the Master Plan and include nearly all schools. Long-term building assignments give school leaders and communities increased certainty and stability, allowing for long-term planning and investment.

5 Creation of a centralized enrollment system

The centralized enrollment system created and implemented by the RSD in 2012 addresses one of the biggest challenges of New Orleans’ decentralized system of public schools. The new system is more equitable and accessible, simplifying the application and enrollment process for parents and families. The centralized enrollment system also increases the level of transparency and accountability for RSD schools by ensuring they all follow the same enrollment process and rules. The school assignment outcomes this first year generally met parent and student preferences. However, a unified enrollment process that includes all public school options, including all OPSB charter and direct-run schools, is necessary to truly ensure equitable access to all schools for all students.
Challenges

Despite the marked successes of 2011-12, public education in New Orleans continues to face challenges.

1 Governance of the system of schools

With multiple governing bodies and a lack of clarity in district roles and responsibilities, it is difficult to ensure that all students have access to a high quality education. In the decentralized system, there is no one entity that is ultimately responsible for ensuring that all students are educated in New Orleans. For example, without a citywide, coordinated discipline and expulsion policy it is often unclear who is responsible for the education of a child expelled from a school. Additionally, no organization currently has the authority to create and police a single enrollment system, meaning that school choice remains an incomplete part of school reform. The RSD’s centralized enrollment system streamlines enrollment information for RSD schools and the single BESE charter school that is participating; however, the system is not used by OPSB schools, which have their own enrollment policies. Many other systems and policies fall into similar gray areas.

At the same time, no single entity is responsible for long-term planning, leaving a number of critical questions unanswered about the future of the school system in New Orleans. While the RSD continues to have jurisdiction over the majority of public schools in New Orleans, it was not meant to be a permanent fixture in the New Orleans public school governance landscape. RSD schools that are relatively high performing are allowed, at the conclusion of their initial five-year term under the RSD, to elect to return to the OPSB. The OPSB is working to create a more concrete plan to help schools return to local control, but so far no schools have elected to take that step and the process remains generally undefined.

Identifying a governance framework that addresses the current problems plaguing the system of schools and promotes high quality schools for all is critical to the long term success of the education system in New Orleans.

2 Community distrust of public school reform

Public school reform cannot succeed without buy-in from the students, families, teachers, and leaders who are most affected. Transparency and communication improved over the 2011-12 school year. However, a deeply-rooted distrust amid the rapid changes threatens to undermine school turnaround efforts. Much of this distrust is focused on the state-run RSD and charter schools, often perceived as outsiders of the New Orleans community.

The Cowen Institute’s October 2011 opinion poll found that the majority of public school parents (66 percent) felt that schools are better today than they were before Hurricane Katrina. Nonetheless, events and public commentary over the past school year make clear that frustration, suspicion, and misunderstanding exists. Neighborhood and alumni groups, eager to remain engaged in their schools, have fought charter operators interested in taking over failing schools. Local organizations that have been denied charters by the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) argue that the process unfairly favors national groups. Parents and other stakeholders have expressed frustration high expulsion and suspension rates at some New Orleans schools.

These and other issues, too often framed as an “us versus them” or “insiders versus outsiders” argument, plague the New Orleans public education landscape and foster divisiveness. Meaningful community dialogue is critical to create positive, sustainable reform. Leaders at the district and school level can and must do more to communicate openly and to engage parents and other education stakeholders in their decision-making processes.
3 Transitions in leadership at the state and local levels

Nationally, the average urban superintendent tenure is only about two years. Between 1998 and 2005, eight different superintendents served at the helm of the New Orleans Public Schools. From 2007 to 2011, however, the RSD, OPSB, and the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) all had stable leadership. With RSD Superintendent Paul Vallas and State Superintendent Paul Pastorek’s departures at the end of the 2010-11 school year, New Orleans lost two key education reform leaders. The leadership transition, with John White first appointed as head of the RSD and then promoted to state superintendent, has been relatively smooth. Patrick Dobard, who replaced White at the head of the RSD, has committed to continuing the strategy put in place under White. Nonetheless, changes in leadership can be challenging as it takes time to establish trust and to enact long-lasting reform.

4 Financial sustainability of public education

Though school and district finances have stabilized in recent years, the overall financial sustainability of the current system of schools is an ongoing concern. Non-recurring funding allowed school districts to spend more than their regular per-pupil revenues in order to restart schools after Hurricane Katrina, but those funds are largely spent. At the same time, Louisiana has kept per-pupil school funding flat for the last four years, and may cut funding in the coming years. Charter schools have also benefited from private philanthropy and federal start up grants that may eventually decline or disappear. Additionally, many charter schools are small, growing one grade at a time, and operate outside of a larger network, meaning that they lose some of the economies of scale that larger schools and districts have.

In the short term, budgets will be tight as revenues stay flat or decrease. Many schools will have to look for cost savings and try to produce economies of scale by coordinating more services with other schools. Some new or expanding charter schools may be forced to add grades more quickly in order to support their programs. Over the long term, the state and the city will need to finance schools on a more sustainable basis. Schools can help this process 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.

5 Data access and transparency

In New Orleans’ decentralized system of public schools, no single entity is responsible for data collection and analysis. 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 the kind of longitudinal student-level data collected by the state. Though Louisiana is lauded for its statewide data system, access to that data for program evaluation and research remains difficult. Anecdotes fuel many theories about what is happening across the system of schools in New Orleans; only allowing for the sharing of meaningful data and analysis will help distinguish the reality from the rumors.
## Appendix: School Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Name</th>
<th>Grades Offered</th>
<th>Total Students Reported</th>
<th>% African American</th>
<th>% Free and Reduced Lunch</th>
<th>2011 Baseline SPS</th>
<th>2011 Letter Grade</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>OPSB Direct-Run Schools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture, Design &amp; Engineering High School</td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>78%</td>
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<td>NA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benjamin Franklin Elem. Math and Science</td>
<td>PK-6</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>111.5</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eleanor McMain Secondary School</td>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>82%</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>McDonogh #35 Senior High School</td>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>869</td>
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<td>Mahalia Jackson Elementary School</td>
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<td>The Alternative Learning Institute</td>
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<td>106</td>
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<td>100%</td>
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<td>Youth Study Center</td>
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<td>22</td>
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<td>100%</td>
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<td>NA</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total/Average</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>3,047</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>108.6</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td><strong>OPSB Charter Schools</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>70%</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audubon Charter School</td>
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<td>A+</td>
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<td>Benjamin Franklin High School</td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>186.2</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>Edna Karr Secondary School</td>
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<td>Edward Hytes Charter School</td>
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<td>Lusher Charter School</td>
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<td>New Orleans Charter Science and Mathematics HS</td>
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<td>Robert Russa Moton Charter School</td>
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<td>99%</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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<td>Warren Easton Senior High School</td>
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<td>881</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>86%</td>
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<td><strong>Total/Average</strong></td>
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<td>60%</td>
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<td><strong>RSD Direct-Run Schools</strong></td>
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<td>88%</td>
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<td>Dr. Charles Richard Drew Elementary School</td>
<td>4-8</td>
<td>186</td>
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<td>91%</td>
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<td>F.W. Gregory Elementary School</td>
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<td>93%</td>
<td>69.8</td>
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<td>James Weldon Johnson School</td>
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<td>308</td>
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<td>100%</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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<td>John McDonogh Senior High School</td>
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<td>99%</td>
<td>95%</td>
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<td>95%</td>
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<td>87%</td>
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<td>F-</td>
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<td>Sarah Towles Reed Senior High School</td>
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<td>453</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>76%</td>
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<td>Schwarz Alternative School</td>
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<td>100%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>6.2</td>
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<td>2011 Baseline SPS</td>
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<td>KIPP Believe College Prep (Phillips)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>K-1, 5-6</td>
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<td>% African American</td>
<td>% Free and Reduced Lunch</td>
<td>2011 Baseline SPS</td>
<td>2011 Letter Grade</td>
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<td>Sophie B. Wright Inst. of Academic Excellence</td>
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<td>William J. Fischer Elementary School</td>
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<td>90%</td>
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<td><strong>77.5</strong></td>
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**BESCE Charter Schools**

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<tr>
<th>School Name</th>
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<th>Total Students Reported</th>
<th>% African American</th>
<th>% Free and Reduced Lunch</th>
<th>2011 Baseline SPS</th>
<th>2011 Letter Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>International High School</td>
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<td>International School of Louisiana</td>
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<td>Lycee Francais de la Nouvelle-Orleans</td>
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<td>New Orleans Military and Maritime Academy</td>
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<td><strong>Total/Average</strong></td>
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<td><strong>72%</strong></td>
<td><strong>97.5</strong></td>
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End Notes


16. Ibid.


26. Andrew Vanacore. “RSD schedules public meetings to get input on schools slated to close or become charters.”

27. Ibid.


31. Ibid.


34. Andrew Vanacore. “Screening of charter school operators will be opened up, state agency promises,” Times-Picayune. April 18, 2012.

35. Ibid.


37. Ibid.

38. “Department to Recommend Approval of 18 Charter Applications.”


44. Ibid.

45. National Center for Education Statistics. Number and percent of students in city, suburban, town, and rural regular public elementary and secondary schools with membership who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, by state or jurisdiction: School year 2009–10.


49. Ibid.


51. Ibid.


53. Ibid.


55. Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. “Consideration of RSD contracts of $50,000 and under approved by the State Superintendent of Education,” Administration and Finance Committee. April 17, 2012.


59. Ibid.

60. National Center for Education Statistics. Student membership and current expenditures per pupil for public elementary and secondary education, by function, subfunction, and state or jurisdiction: Fiscal year 2009.


63. National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey. Number and percentage distribution of teachers by years of teaching experience, stayer/mover/leaver status and selected school characteristics in the base year: 2008-09.

64. Ibid.


68. New Schools for New Orleans. “NOLA Teacher Incentive Fund (NOLA TIF) Project: Background and Overview, Fall 2012- Spring 2015.”


76. Louisiana Department of Education. “RSD’s New Enrollment System Matches 84 percent of Kindergarten and 9th Grade Applicants to Top School Choices.” May 9, 2012.

77. “Recovery School District says new pupil enrollment system is getting the job done.”

78. Ibid.

79. Ibid.


81. Ibid.

82. Ibid.

83. Vanacore. “RSD schedules public meetings to get input on schools slated to be close or become charters.”

84. Louisiana Department of Education, Common Core State Standards.


88. Louisiana Department of Education. “Education leaders advance initiatives to expand college and career ready opportunities for high school students.” April 17, 2012.

89. Ibid.


93. Ibid.


98. Ibid.