

EDUCATION WEEK

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Foundations Donate Millions to Help New Orleans Schools' Recovery

By [Lesli A. Maxwell](#)

Three major foundations today will announce a gift of nearly \$18 million for the recovery of public schooling in New Orleans, in what will be the first large-scale infusion of funding from national philanthropic organizations for the city's education system since Hurricane Katrina struck more than two years ago.

The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, the Doris and Donald Fisher Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation together are donating \$17.5 million to [New Schools for New Orleans](#), [Teach For America](#), and [New Leaders for New Schools](#). The three nonprofit groups will use the funding for recruiting and training teachers and principals, and to support the creation and operation of charter schools in the city.

Education and city officials are scheduled to join leaders of the foundations and the nonprofit organizations this morning at a news conference at a New Orleans charter school.

"This is huge for New Orleans," said Shannon L. Jones, the executive director of the Scott S. Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives at Tulane University. "There has been concern about sustaining the momentum that has emerged here; ... this money will help create sustainable changes and put in place a pipeline for future school leaders, classroom leaders, and district leaders."

Nearly \$10 million will go to New Schools for New Orleans over three years, roughly doubling its annual budget of \$3 million. The organization, founded six months after Katrina hit in August 2005, has had a large role in reshaping New Orleans' education landscape. Of the roughly 40 charter schools that have opened in the city since the storm, New Schools for New Orleans has been involved with most of them, either by assisting the schools' founders in their developmental stages or providing financial and operational support once they opened.

Most funding for New Schools for New Orleans, so far, has come from local sources such as the Greater New Orleans Foundation, though it did receive \$1 million from the Bush-Clinton

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Katrina Fund chaired by former Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton.

"We think having that core of local support has been a huge driver for this new, national funding," said Morgan Carter, the communications director for New Schools for New Orleans.

Track Records

Teach For America will receive \$6.5 million to use for the recruitment and training of recent college graduates for teaching jobs in both charter and regular public schools that have opened in New Orleans. The New York City-based group was a major source of new faculty members for the city's schools this year, bringing in more than 100 teachers.

New Leaders for New Schools—a 7-year-old principal-training program in urban school districts around the country—will get the remaining \$1 million to use toward its pledge to recruit, select, and train 40 new principals over the next three years.

In addition to using the grant money for charter school development and support, New Schools for New Orleans will direct some of it to TeachNOLA, a joint effort with the New Teacher Project to train career professionals to become classroom teachers. TeachNOLA helped recruit, train, and place 100 teachers in the city's schools this year.

About This Project

Education Week's 2007-08 project on the New Orleans schools includes many online-only features, including archives, feature stories, photo galleries, Q&As, and more. [Learn more about the series.](#)



Track records like that helped bring the national foundations to New Orleans, said Paul G. Vallas, the superintendent of the Recovery School District, the state-run entity given responsibility for more than 100 failing schools in New Orleans.

"I think this is a reflection of the confidence that these foundations have that the school reform movement here is going to be real," Mr. Vallas said in an interview.

Mr. Vallas, who was hired last summer by Paul G. Pastorek, Louisiana's state schools chief, said the foundation grants will fit well with what he believes post-Katrina public schooling in New Orleans ought to feature: a variety of charter schools for parents and students to choose from, along with traditional public schools that operate with charter-like autonomy.

"I see a blurring of the distinction between charter and traditional schools here," Mr. Vallas said. "I see the central office shrinking its role to things like support, accountability, and intervention, and I see these nonprofits like New Schools for New Orleans evolving into quasi public-private organizations that can provide services to both charter schools and traditional public schools."