



A Brief Overview of Public Education in New Orleans, 1995-2009

A Picture of New Orleans Public Schools Prior to 2005:

- From 1995-2005, public school enrollment in New Orleans decreased 25%, while nonpublic school enrollment increased 5%.¹
- By 2004, 1 out of 3 students in New Orleans attended a private or parochial school – a rate 3 times higher than the national average for private school enrollment.²
- In 2004-2005, the public and private schools were divided along lines of race and class:
 - While 65% of New Orleanians were African American, 94% of NOPS students were African American.³
 - Citywide, 40% of children lived poverty line, yet 77% of NOPS students lived below the poverty line.⁴
- In 2005, the school district, New Orleans Public Schools (NOPS) operated approximately 128 schools serving about 65,000 students.⁵
- NOPS was a failing system, academically, administratively, financially, operationally:
 - On Louisiana's 2004 high school exit exams, 96% of NOPS students fell below basic proficiency in English, 94% were below basic in math.⁶
 - A 2004 study showed that 1 in 4 New Orleans citizens had not completed high school and 40% of the city's adults were unable to read beyond the elementary school level.⁷
 - The overwhelming majority of New Orleans schools were deemed "academically unacceptable" by the state of Louisiana in 2005.⁸
 - The state of Louisiana was at the bottom of national education rankings⁹
 - NOPS was \$300 million in debt and expected to be bankrupt by the start of the 2005-2006 school year.¹⁰
 - Since 2002, the FBI has indicted 24 school district leaders for fraud and corruption; and, from 2004-2005 the FBI operated a field office in NOPS headquarters.¹¹
 - From 1997-2005, NOPS was governed by 8 different superintendents.¹²

2005-2006 School Year:

- In late August 2005, Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans.
- Only 16 of 126 school buildings were undamaged. 35% of the buildings are rendered completely unusable.¹³
- Immediately following the break of the levees, NOPS laid off nearly all of its workers (~7500 employees; about 4,000 of them teachers) to prevent bankruptcy and closes all public schools for the duration of the school year.¹⁴
- Despite the layoffs and lack of facilities, public schools began to reopen in the months following the hurricane. By January of 2006, the majority of open public schools in New Orleans were charter schools.
- The wreckage of Katrina also fast-tracked the state takeover of public schools in New Orleans and created an unprecedented opportunity for district-wide change.
 - The federal government earmarked \$20.9 million to stimulate the development of charter schools in Louisiana, prompting local charter school advocates to begin making plans to build independently run public schools.¹⁵
 - Legislature passes bill in November 2005 that transfers the authority of 112 out of 128 OPSB schools to the state – creating the state-run Recovery School District (known as the RSD).¹⁶
 - This legislation does not place a cap on Type 5 charter schools—non-selective public charters that are "takeovers" of failing traditional schools.
 - What used to be a centralized system under one governing authority (OPSB) became a decentralized system overseen by several governing bodies. Louisiana Department of Education (LA DOE), Recovery School District (RSD), Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), and Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB).



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2006-2007:

- By spring 2007, over half of the city's 56 post-Katrina public schools were public charter schools, independently controlled with limited oversight by either the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB), the Recovery School District (RSD), or the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). The remaining public schools were mostly in the hands of the RSD, with just a handful of schools directly managed by the original Orleans Parish school board.¹⁷
- The two pillars of Louisiana's charter school law are accountability & autonomy. Charter schools have autonomy over everything from curriculum and operations to budget and staffing. In exchange for their autonomy, these schools are held accountable to strict performance measures.¹⁸
- At the end of the 2006 school year, there are first signs of significant progress. Charters (majority of public schools) posted higher scores at EVERY GRADE LEVEL, most showing huge improvements over their pre-Katrina, pre-charter performance under OPSB.¹⁹
- In a ranking of the city's schools by percentage of students scoring at basic or above in English and Math, 17 of the top 20 NO schools are charters.²⁰

2007-2008 School Year:

- 81 public schools in New Orleans:

School Type	# of Schools	# of Students	% Minority	%Free/Reduced Lunch
RSD Charter School	26	10,040	99.21	93.67
OBSB Charter School	12	7,089	79.18	68.35
BESE Charter School	2	782	84.14	57.29
RSD Traditional School	33 (1 alternative)	11,608	99.44	77.39
OPSB Traditional School	7 (2 alternative)	2,630	99.2	74.26

- 40 public charter schools served 56% of the student population
 - The Parish has 3 alternative schools; run by the RSD (2) and the OPSB (1)
 - Collectively, these schools served over 32,000 students²¹
- Some of these public schools are selective:
 - 3 OPSB traditional schools have selective admissions policies
 - 5 former OPSB selective "magnet" schools are now charter schools with selective admissions policies
 - 2 charter schools (1 OPSB and 1 BESE) are language schools and are selective on the basis of bilingualism
 - 0 RSD charter schools have selective admissions policies
 - There are fewer selective admissions public schools in New Orleans today than there were pre-Katrina
- School Performance and Achievement Index Scores show improvement Parish-wide:
 - **Fewer schools are failing.** The percentage of schools that are one star or higher (non-failing) has increased from 34% in 2005 to 55% in 2008.
 - **Orleans Parish grew nearly 10 points, while the state was flat.** In 2008, New Orleans' District Performance Score rose to 66.4 while the state actually dropped to 87.2.



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- **Charters outperformed traditional Schools.** Of the top 15 schools citywide, 13 were chartered, 2 were traditional. Of the bottom performing 15 schools, 10 were traditional, and only 5 were chartered.
- **Our high schools need work.** While the selective admission high schools performed well, our challenge is to have quality schools for all students. Our open admission high schools are lagging behind the open admission K-8 schools in both performance and growth.
 - The 5 open admission RSD-operated high schools are the lowest performing high schools in the state, and showed little improvement from 2007 (with scores ranging from 16.3 to 30).
 - The five open admission charter high schools did better (ranging from 48.6 to 77), but their scores still lag behind K-8.²²

2008-2009 School Year:

- There are 87 public schools in New Orleans today:

School Type	# of Schools	# of Students	% Minority	%Free/Reduced Lunch	%Special Education
RSD Charter School	34	12,177	99.2	93	6.3
OBSB Charter School	12	7,402	79.5	65.5	4.7
BESE Charter School	2	846	83.2	70	1.2
RSD Traditional School	31 (1 alternative)	12,724	99.44	87	10.5
OPSB Traditional School	7 (2 alternative)	2,806	98.9	85	9.9

- 48 schools in New Orleans are public charter schools, serving 56% of the student population
- 3 alternative schools are also run by the RSD (2) and the OPSB (1)
- Collectively, these schools serve over 35,000 students²³
- Though the number of schools in Orleans Parish has increased, the number of selective admissions schools remains flat.

¹ The Boston Consulting Group. “The State of Public Education in New Orleans.” June, 2007. Accessed online on 8/21/07 at http://www.bcg.com/impact_expertise/publications/publication_list.jsp?pubid=2327

² The Boston Consulting Group. “The State of Public Education in New Orleans.” June, 2007. Accessed online on 8/21/07 at http://www.bcg.com/impact_expertise/publications/publication_list.jsp?pubid=2327

³ The Boston Consulting Group. “The State of Public Education in New Orleans.” June, 2007. Accessed online on 8/21/07 at http://www.bcg.com/impact_expertise/publications/publication_list.jsp?pubid=2327

⁴ The Boston Consulting Group. “The State of Public Education in New Orleans.” June, 2007. Accessed online on 8/21/07 at http://www.bcg.com/impact_expertise/publications/publication_list.jsp?pubid=2327

⁵ Louisiana Department of Education, “Annual Financial and Statistical Report,” 2004-2005 School Year. Published August 2006. Page II-149. Accessed online on 8/24/07 at www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/9634.pdf.



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- ⁶ Kinnan, Chris. "Vouchers for New Orleans: Children need to be rescued from their failing schools," *National Review Online*, September 15, 2005. Accessed online on 5/7/07 at www.nationalreview.com/comment/kinnan200509150849.asp
- ⁷ Final Recovery School District Plan ("Recovery School District Legislatively Required Plan"). June 7, 2006. Available at www.nolapublicschools.net (accessed May 4, 2007), pages 9-10.
- ⁸ Final Recovery School District Plan ("Recovery School District Legislatively Required Plan"). June 7, 2006. Accessed online on 5/4/07 at www.nolapublicschools.net (Page 8).
- ⁹ "Which State is Smartest? Prior Years Rankings," *Morgan Quinto Press*, publisher of annual education rankings. Rankings available online (accessed May 4, 2007) at <http://www.morganquinto.com/edpri06.htm>
- ¹⁰ Newmark, Kathryn, and Veronique De Rugy. "Hope After Katrina: Will New Orleans become the new city of choice?" *Education Next* (Hoover Institution – Stanford University), 2006, Issue No. 4. Accessed 4/30/07: <http://www.hoover.org/publications/ednext/3853057.html>. (Page 4).
- ¹¹ "New Orleans Schools Before And After Katrina," *News Hour with Jim Lehrer Transcript*, Online News Hour, November 1, 2005. Accessed 5/5/07: www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/education/july-dec05/neworleans_11-01.html,
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- ¹² Newmark, Kathryn, and Veronique De Rugy. "Hope After Katrina: Will New Orleans become the new city of choice?" *Education Next* (Hoover Institution – Stanford University), 2006, Issue No. 4. Accessed 4/30/07: <http://www.hoover.org/publications/ednext/3853057.html>, (Page 4).
- ¹³ "New Orleans Schools Before And After Katrina," *News Hour with Jim Lehrer Transcript*, Online News Hour, November 1, 2005. Accessed 5/5/07: www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/education/july-dec05/neworleans_11-01.html
- ¹⁴ Written testimony of Phyllis Landrieu, OPSB President, to the United States Senate Subcommittee on Education and Early Childhood Development. July 14, 2006. Accessed online on 8/24/07 at help.senate.gov/Hearings/2006_07_14_a/Landrieu.pdf.
- ¹⁵ Newmark, Kathryn, and Veronique De Rugy. "Hope After Katrina: Will New Orleans become the new city of choice?" *Education Next* (Hoover Institution – Stanford University), 2006, Issue No. 4. Accessed 4/30/07: <http://www.hoover.org/publications/ednext/3853057.html>. (Page 6).
- ¹⁶ Written testimony of Phyllis Landrieu, OPSB President, to the United States Senate Subcommittee on Education and Early Childhood Development. July 14, 2006. Accessed online on 8/24/07 at help.senate.gov/Hearings/2006_07_14_a/Landrieu.pdf.
- ¹⁷ "List of Available Public Schools 2006-2007," New Orleans Public Schools website, Spring 2007, accessed online on 5/5/07 at www.nolapublicschools.net.
- ¹⁸ "Charter School Overview," Louisiana Board of Secondary and Elementary Education. Accessed online on 8/24/07 at <http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/bese/1611.html>.



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¹⁹ Simon, Darran. "Charter Schools Lead Way on LEAP," *Times-Picayune*, August 1, 2007. Available at www.nola.com (accessed August 1, 2007).

²⁰ Simon, Darran. "Charter Schools Lead Way on LEAP," *Times-Picayune*, August 1, 2007. Available at www.nola.com (accessed August 1, 2007).

²¹ Louisiana Department of Education, "Planning, Analysis, and Information Resources: Student Data as of 2007-2008: (Oct)", October 1, 2007. Available at: <http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/pair/1489.html>. (accessed November 1, 2007).

²² Educate Now!, "Analysis of the 2008 School Performance Scores", Available at: <http://www.educatenow.net/>. (accessed February 15, 2009).

²³ Louisiana Department of Education, "Planning, Analysis, and Information Resources: Student Data as of 2008-2009: (Oct)", October 1, 2008. Available at: <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/pair/1489.html>. (accessed November 1, 2008).