‘National Model’
Or Flawed Approach?

The Post-Katrina
New Orleans Public Schools

November 2006

The first in a series of reports
by the
United Teachers of New Orleans,
Louisiana Federation of Teachers
and the
American Federation of Teachers
Workers move furniture inside a soon-to-open New Orleans public school.
‘National Model’ Or Flawed Approach?

The Post-Katrina New Orleans Public Schools

4 Executive Summary
6 Introduction
8 Our Commitment
10 Then and Now: Key Questions
26 Moving Forward, Getting It Right
28 Appendix
32 Endnotes

Abbreviations

AU – Academically Unacceptable, a rating given to any public school that falls below a minimum score on state performance measures

BESE – The state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, which manages the Recovery School District

FEMA – The Federal Emergency Management Agency

OPSB – The Orleans Parish School Board

RSD – The state-operated Recovery School District

SPS – School Performance Score, a key component of Louisiana's public school accountability system

UTNO – United Teachers of New Orleans
Executive Summary

Building a high-quality school system in New Orleans will take commitment, courage and open and honest dialogue.

- As the people of New Orleans struggle to rebuild their lives, they deserve a public school system that provides a high-quality education to all children. Initial evidence strongly suggests that the redesigned school system is unlikely to achieve this goal.

- The time for finger-pointing and political grandstanding is over. A thoughtful reassessment of the restructured school system is essential if state and local officials are to learn lessons, make necessary changes and create a high-quality public school system.

- Having the courage to ask tough questions is the only way to identify the issues that remain unaddressed, expose the gaps between policies and promises, and initiate an open and honest discussion that can generate reforms which truly serve children.

Legislators and stakeholders must closely review the post-Katrina reforms, the impact of these changes and the context in which they were made.

- Before Katrina, New Orleans’ public schools faced serious challenges that were magnified by unstable leadership and financial malfeasance. Critics paint a one-dimensional picture of the school district that overlooks the significant achievement gap that existed between the city’s highest- and lowest-performing schools.

- Two months after Katrina, the Louisiana Legislature passed Act 35, which significantly expanded the state’s authority to take over public schools and redefined “failing” in ways that appeared to be tailored specifically to New Orleans.

- Act 35 placed the vast majority of the city’s public schools in the state-run Recovery School District (RSD), which operates side by side with the handful of schools that are still overseen by the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB).

- Financial realities—not genuine, systemic “reform”—prompted the OPSB to convert roughly a dozen of its schools to charter schools after Katrina. Yet financial realities cannot excuse the failure of local school board members and BESE to reopen more schools, push for broader federal aid to schools, and put the interests of New Orleans children above their petty pursuits.

- The OPSB public schools have a higher percentage of their students in charter schools than the state-run Recovery School District. The state's low chartering rate may reflect RSD's need for a large number of “schools of last resort”—these are schools that
do not have selective admissions, can expand capacity by using mobile classrooms or raising class sizes, or can enroll other students who do not find spaces in charter schools.

The new two-district school system has confused and frustrated parents, students and other stakeholders.

- Contrary to state officials’ promises, the restructuring of the New Orleans school system has produced disarray and confusion, deeply frustrating many parents and students.

- Parents and the public have encountered a system in which schools’ registration procedures, starting dates, transportation options and other key details varied widely. The state did not provide a central location where parents and other stakeholders could obtain such information for each school.

School accessibility and teacher shortages have been significant problems.

- State and local officials have been slow to reopen additional schools. As far back as January, at least 170 students were turned away from New Orleans public schools. During his visit to New Orleans this summer, President Bush said it best: “families can't move back unless there [are] schools for the kids.”

- Across the country, millions of parents take for granted that their local public school systems will provide free transportation to and from their neighborhoods. Yet a number of New Orleans’ newly opened public schools have not offered any transportation for students.

- The RSD public schools have struggled to hire teachers, and state officials lowered qualifications in a last-ditch effort to find an adequate number of teachers. This teacher shortage underscores why the decision to fire nearly all of New Orleans’ 7,500 school employees was shortsighted.

Teachers and their unions are eager to work cooperatively to improve the schools.

- The United Teachers of New Orleans and its partners—the Louisiana Federation of Teachers and the American Federation of Teachers—are eager to work cooperatively with local, state and national officials to assess the needs of the city’s newly restructured school system and to make necessary improvements.

- This report offers recommendations for moving forward, and we hope these recommendations contribute to a constructive, inclusive and forward-looking dialogue that recognizes the stake every citizen has in building a high-quality school system.
Introduction

On Aug. 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck the nation’s Gulf Coast. Failures in the levees protecting New Orleans sent floodwaters cascading across most of the city, surging into homes, washing away cars and claiming the lives of many residents. Three months after Katrina, another storm hit New Orleans, but this storm was man-made. Like Katrina, it happened quickly. Like Katrina, its impact will be felt for many years.

“It took the storm of a lifetime,” said Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco, “to create the opportunity of a lifetime … that the state take control and re-create” the New Orleans public schools. Act 35, the state takeover bill, was approved by the Legislature and signed into law in November 2005, giving the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) authority over most of the city’s 128 public schools.

As the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina arrived, the media shined its spotlight on New Orleans’ rebuilding and recovery efforts. Yet relatively little of this coverage focused on the city’s public schools. Moreover, the limited coverage of the post-Katrina school system presented a sketchy and incomplete picture of the major structural and operational changes that state officials made to the New Orleans public schools.

In the weeks and months after Katrina, many bold promises were made to reinvigorate the city’s public schools. In November 2005, Gov. Blanco declared that a state takeover would create a “new birth of excellence and opportunity” for the city’s schoolchildren. A document by state officials promoting the takeover plan identified the mission of the state-run Recovery School District (RSD) as creating a “world-class” school system in which “every decision focuses on the best interests of the children.” In April, Leslie Jacobs, a BESE member, envisioned New Orleans as “a new national model” for urban schools.

Although it is early, initial evidence strongly suggests that the redesigned New Orleans public school system is unlikely to deliver on these and other promises. Why?

• The two-district structure created by state officials has proven confusing and cumbersome. Moreover, the confusion and disarray that were pervasive as the 2006-07 school year opened are likely to bedevil school operations for the rest of the year unless the seeds of these problems are adequately addressed.

• The state’s substantial takeover of the public school system was carried out clumsily and without fully engaging and involving parents, students, educators and other stakeholders. Any attempts at meaningful and positive change will fall short unless state and local officials reconcile their policies and practices with the concerns and needs of these stakeholders.
Over the past 15 months, the people of New Orleans have endured great personal losses and tremendous hardships. As they struggle to rebuild their lives, they need a public school system that is strong and stable—a school system that gives them reasons to believe that tomorrow can be better than today.

The time for finger-pointing and political grandstanding is over. Reassessing the redesign of the city’s schools is essential if state and local officials are to learn lessons, make necessary changes and create a public school system that provides a high-quality education to all of its students.
Our Commitment

The United Teachers of New Orleans (UTNO) and its state and national partners—the Louisiana Federation of Teachers (LFT) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT)—are eager to work with local, state and national officials to assess the state’s effort to restructure the city’s public schools and to make necessary improvements.

In the pre-Katrina school system, the Center for Professional Growth and Development that UTNO created and managed was the district’s primary vehicle for teachers and other staff to receive professional development, strengthen classroom practices and develop instructional materials.

In the wake of Katrina, UTNO and the AFT have made major contributions to help families rebuild their lives, as well as urging state and local leaders to create a high-quality educational system.

UTNO’s contributions have taken many forms. UTNO leaders have assisted some school officials in finding qualified personnel to fill job vacancies. In October 2006, after a student at Pierre A. Capdau Charter School was struck by a car and injured, UTNO members responded to the community’s concerns about traffic hazards by joining with volunteers from the Association of Community Organizations for

In spring 2006, UTNO members joined other New Orleanians to rally for full voting rights for residents who had been displaced by Hurricane Katrina.
Reform Now (ACORN) to serve as crossing guards at Capdau. The city’s police department subsequently stepped in to perform this role.

Nearly 10,000 AFT members in Louisiana and other coastal states received $500 grants in the months following Katrina and other hurricanes.

The AFT has worked closely with UTNO to develop strategies for public school improvement in post-Katrina New Orleans. Linda Stelly, associate director in the AFT educational issues department, served on the education subcommittee of the Bring New Orleans Back Commission. Stelly, a former New Orleans teacher and associate superintendent, coordinates the AFT’s Redesigning Schools To Raise Achievement initiative, which currently operates in more than 30 school districts across the country.6

In the coming months, UTNO and the AFT will issue periodic reports on the New Orleans public schools. These reports will identify challenges and concerns, as well as offer suggestions as to how state and local officials can successfully address these concerns.
Maria Alexander is a native New Orleanian and the education director for ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now). The floodwaters that followed Katrina forced nearly 50 of her relatives from their New Orleans homes. She is currently living in a FEMA trailer in the New Orleans East community. She was interviewed in October 2006.

Q: As ACORN’s education director, you have had a lot of conversations with parents and community leaders in New Orleans. What have you heard out there?

ALEXANDER: Well, there has been a lot of frustration among parents. When the Labor Day weekend arrived, a lot of them didn’t even know which schools their children would be going to. The Recovery School District hadn’t made a decision. As a parent, it’s hard to make plans and start getting your life back.

Then and Now: Key Questions

Elected leaders in Louisiana—and the rest of the country—make crucial decisions that have a long-lasting impact on children and public schools. Effective policies are not an accident; they are the product of informed decisions. As state and local officials assess the new structural landscape in New Orleans, they must carefully examine the changes that were made, their impact on students, and the context in which they occurred.

The following questions can help provide this understanding. Having the courage to ask tough, no-nonsense questions is the only way to identify the issues that remain unaddressed, expose the gaps between policies and promises, and initiate an open and honest discussion that can generate constructive reforms which will benefit children.

By reviewing the past, we can inform the future and work together to build a school system that is a source of pride, not derision, for New Orleanians.

1. How troubled were the New Orleans public schools before Katrina?

New Orleans public schools faced the same challenges as other large, urban school systems, although the city’s public schools suffered from serious operational and financial problems that magnified these challenges. For example:

• **Instability at the helm:** Between 1996 and 2005, the district had nine interim or permanent superintendents, and this constant turnover undermined the ability of educators to develop and sustain school improvement strategies.7

• **Constant budgetary pressures:** The OPSB’s financial problems were intensified, but not created, by Katrina. Indeed, the district’s budget hadn’t been balanced in five years.8 Weeks before Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, a New Orleans newspaper noted that “principals and teachers [had] already put a lot of their own time and money into readying their schools for students” because the district failed to fund cleaning supplies and other needed materials.9 The severity of OPSB’s financial problems prompted the state in 2005 to appoint a fiscal administrator for the district, the firm of Alvarez & Marsal.

In light of these and other difficulties, not surprisingly, too many children were not receiving a rigorous, high-quality education. Roughly half of New Orleans public schools failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the federal No Child Left Behind Act.10

Yet the damning assessments by critics of the New Orleans school system paint a simplistic, one-dimensional picture of the school-by-school realities. Like many urban school districts, New Orleans was
a tale of two cities. Some of the Crescent City’s public schools were thriving, while others were falling far short. During the two years before Katrina, an average of 90 percent of the students at Ben Franklin Elementary Magnet School scored at or above basic on the state’s English-language arts exam. During the same two-year period, barely half of the students at Eisenhower Elementary School scored at or above basic in this subject.\textsuperscript{11}

In a 2006 article, an Associated Press reporter acknowledged the more complicated reality of school performance in pre-Katrina New Orleans, describing the city’s public schools as “rotting for decades,” but later observing that “there were outstanding public schools” in pre-Katrina New Orleans, including the top-rated school in the state.\textsuperscript{12}

Despite financial instability, constant turnover at the top and a poverty rate nearly twice the national average, educators were redoubling their efforts to raise student achievement in low-performing schools. These efforts were beginning to show promising signs of progress.\textsuperscript{13}

During the 2004-05 school year, nearly 80 percent of New Orleans public schools improved their scores on the state’s School Performance Score (SPS).\textsuperscript{14}

2. How did the Legislature restructure the New Orleans school system after Katrina?

In March 2006, a newspaper observed that “[e]xplaining who’s in charge of the (New Orleans) schools these days requires a scorecard and some background.”\textsuperscript{15} This is no understatement. Two months after Katrina struck the Gulf Coast, the Louisiana Legislature approved Act 35, a sweeping measure that was signed into law by the governor. Through Act 35, state lawmakers:

- significantly expanded the state’s authority to take over “failing” schools,
- redefined “failing” to include many New Orleans public schools that previously had not met this definition, and
- expanded a state-run Recovery School District (RSD) in New Orleans—a district that operates side by side with the district overseen by the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB).

Under the expanded powers of Act 35, the RSD assumed control over

to normal when that issue is unsettled. Many parents are concerned about the limited transportation that has been made available for their children to get to school. Some of the pick-up points for school buses are in the middle of nowhere. It’s strange.

**Q**: If parents were able to overcome these obstacles and get their kids into a school, then what? What have they faced?

**ALEXANDER**: In the last week of August, the state-run Recovery School District was saying it was still 200 teachers short of the number it needed. School officials fired all of these teachers, janitors, cafeteria workers and other employees, and now they’re saying, “We need these people.” Then why did they fire them all? We need accountability for teachers, and if some of them aren’t meeting the expectations, then the system should take appropriate action. But firing 4,000 teachers was a terrible decision that has backfired.
the majority of New Orleans public schools. In addition to authorizing and overseeing charter schools, it became a direct operator of regular schools. In effect, the RSD became a second—and larger—school district with exactly the same geographic boundaries as the locally-run school district. The RSD has authority over 112 of the 128 public schools in New Orleans, but many of these 112 buildings are believed to be beyond repair.

Roughly 54 public schools were open in the city by September 2006 to accommodate an estimated 22,000 students. Public school enrollment in New Orleans is projected to increase to as many as 34,000 by January 2007, and most of these students will be left with no choice but to attend the RSD’s non-selective schools because nearly all charter schools are full and turning away students.

The Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) is the governing authority for 13 charter schools and five non-charter, selective-admission schools. OPSB’s regular and charter schools scored above the average of the state’s School Performance Score (SPS) in 2004-05.

- **Regular schools**: All staff in the five regular schools work for the OPSB and are under the authority of OPSB’s superintendent.

- **Charter schools**: These schools are authorized and overseen by the OPSB, which owns the buildings, but each of the 13 schools is run by an individual board, selects its own leadership and staff, and determines its academic and operational policies. Some regular public schools converted to charter status after Katrina because it was the most expedient way to reopen schools. In 2005-06, the federal government awarded approximately $21 million to Louisiana for development of charter schools and will follow this with another $24 million in 2006-07.

- All public schools under OPSB authority have been reopened.
The Recovery School District (RSD) is the governing authority for 17 non-selective regular schools and 18 charter schools. Schools are placed under the jurisdiction of the RSD when they fail to meet state performance standards.

- **RSD-run regular schools**: These public schools are operated directly by the state of Louisiana under the oversight of a superintendent. The actual schools are owned by Orleans Parish, but all academic and operational decisions are made by the state under the provisions of Act 35. Staff hiring is centrally managed, and employees are paid on a common salary schedule.

- **RSD charter schools**: These schools, previously identified as failing, are operated by different groups, each with its own board, leadership and staff. The RSD is responsible for oversight. While the RSD converted some schools to charter status after Katrina, a majority of them had been chartered by the OPSB before the hurricane.

There are two additional charter schools in New Orleans that are overseen by the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), independent of both the OPSB and the RSD.

3. **How did Act 35 change the standards for defining school failure in New Orleans?**

By passing Act 35 in November 2005, the Legislature changed the criteria under which a school was labeled as failing and expanded the state RSD’s takeover authority. To many observers, the new criteria appear to have been tailored for OPSB schools.

In Louisiana, a public school is determined to be “academically unacceptable” (AU) — based on its School Performance Score (SPS). A school’s SPS is a composite score that is based on one of three student performance exams, the school’s dropout rate and its student attendance rate.

Before Act 35, a public school was labeled as AU if it didn’t achieve a minimum SPS of 45. The minimum SPS score was raised to 60 for the 2004-05 school year. Any school in Louisiana that is designated as AU for four consecutive years is classified as “failing,” a status that makes the school eligible for a state takeover via RSD. Before Act 35, a “failing” school was only moved into the RSD if a chartering organization formally requested to assume management of the school. This explains why New Orleans had five RSD schools prior to the passage of Act 35.

However, Act 35 changed the rules significantly, allowing the state to take control of schools with SPS scores below the state average (87.4 in 2004-05) even if these schools had not been AU for four straight years. Act 35 expanded the state’s takeover authority so that it applied to school districts.
with more than 30 “failing” schools,

- with at least 50 percent of their student population in AU schools, or

- that are declared to be “academically in crisis.”

The 30-school threshold provision meant that Act 35 had a unique impact on Orleans Parish, the state's largest school district. Given the fact that 50 of Louisiana's 64 parish school districts have fewer than 30 schools, the vast majority of parishes will never be affected by the 30-school threshold provision.

When Act 35 was written, only seven parishes had more than 40 schools, and Orleans Parish had far more public schools than any other district—47 more than the next-largest district.

Overnight, the new lines drawn by Act 35 intensified the appearance of school failure in New Orleans. If Louisiana officials had applied pre-Act 35 standards to Orleans Parish, the state could have assumed control of only 13 schools in New Orleans—far below the number of schools that are currently in the state-run RSD.

The changes in the SPS standard, the addition of a 30-school threshold provision and the timing of this change strongly suggest that state officials were intent on assuming control of most OPSB public schools. This view is also supported by the fact that although there are “failing” schools in three other Louisiana school districts, state officials have not initiated a takeover of any of those schools.

4. Did the state create a ‘charterized’ public school system in New Orleans?

No. Soon after Act 35 was signed into law by the governor, the word floating around education policy circles was that New Orleans had become “charterized.” This term has created the false impression that state officials: 1) created a citywide system of charter schools, and 2) that all schools converted to charter status were in need of serious reform or improvement.

This myth was advanced by the headline “Charter Changeover,” which was used by one magazine to summarize the state's restructuring. This term has created the false impression that state officials: 1) created a citywide system of charter schools, and 2) that all schools converted to charter status were in need of serious reform or improvement.

In fact, Warren Easton is a pre-existing public school that was converted to a charter school. Easton's conversion to a charter school was an administrative decision that had nothing to do with officials.
“thinking differently” vis-à-vis school reform. Before Katrina, Easton was a selective-admissions public high school that performed well on state and national achievement measures. Its conversion to a charter was in no way linked to its academic reputation, which is excellent. Like Easton, most of the charter schools under the OPSB’s jurisdiction enjoyed a good reputation before Katrina.

First, the New Orleans public school system is far from “charterized.” In fact, regular public schools still account for 45 percent of the total student seats. Nor was it the Legislature’s intention to make New Orleans a “charterized” school system. Indeed, during the same session in which legislators approved Act 35, they also voted to maintain a statewide cap on the number of charter schools.

Second, nearly all of the charter schools under the jurisdiction of either OPSB or RSD were charter schools before Katrina or are simply regular public schools that were converted to charter status to expedite their reopening after the hurricane.

Third, financial realities—not genuine, systemic “reform”—prompted the OPSB to convert roughly a dozen of its schools to charter schools after Katrina. Converting to charters was the quickest way for the OPSB to gain access to federal funds so these schools could reopen. This is why the Bring New Orleans Back Commission called charter school conversion the “expedient way” to open schools after Katrina.19 Paraphrasing the words of OPSB vice president Lourdes Moran, the Times-Picayune described the charter school movement in New Orleans as “primarily motivated … by a desire to access part of a $20.9 million federal grant.”20

Even these financial realities, however, cannot excuse the decisions—or, in some cases, indecision—of local school board members and BESE after Katrina. Both of these boards could have done much more to reopen schools, forcefully advocate for additional Title I and other emergency aid, and put the interests of New Orleans children above their petty and self-promotional pursuits.

In the 10 months following Katrina, the U.S. Department of Education provided Louisiana with grants of nearly $45 million specifically to plan, expand, repair or create charter schools.21

The post-Katrina charter conversions were made possible by two executive orders from the governor—one order waived timelines that existed in state law, and the other suspended the law’s requirement that parents and school staff approve a conversion.

Although the president referred during his New Orleans visit to a new “innovative charter school system,” it remains to be seen whether the city schools that were converted...
to charters have markedly changed their curricula, instructional strategies and other practices.

5. How did the political environment shape the sweeping redesign of the city’s school system?

Only days after Katrina hit the Gulf Coast and before the floodwaters had receded, leading conservative think tanks and spokespersons were moving quickly to seize on reconstruction efforts as a means to advance their agenda.

On Sept. 7, 2005, the Heritage Foundation, perhaps the most influential conservative think tank in Washington D.C., released a memorandum on Gulf Coast recovery urging Congress to suspend the law requiring federal contractors to pay their workers the prevailing wage, repeal or waive portions of the Clean Air Act, eliminate or postpone various taxes and promote “new educational options,” including “charter schools, as well as private and religious schools.”

Although President Bush acknowledged the connection between the Gulf Coast region’s “deep, persistent poverty” and the ability of its citizens to rebuild after Katrina, the word “poverty” doesn’t appear anywhere in Heritage’s 1,916-word memorandum.

Even before Katrina floodwaters had subsided, the Wall Street Journal’s Brendan Miniter wrote a column headlined: “A Silver Lining?” Miniter wrote that Katrina “presents New Orleans officials with an opportunity … for rebuilding New Orleans’s school system.” Miniter urged officials to downplay teacher “certification requirements” and promote charter schools.

In September 2005, congressional leaders and the White House offered a variety of proposals, many of which resembled the Heritage recommendations. The president issued an executive order that suspended the prevailing-wage law, and bills were introduced in Congress to fund private school vouchers and other conservative priorities.

In the weeks after Katrina struck the Gulf Coast, the Washington Post reported that “New Orleans has emerged as the chief target of angst” among Congressional Republicans, and noted that a Georgia congressman claimed there was “a building hostility toward New Orleans” among voters in his district. Conservative groups and members of Congress generally resisted calls for massive aid to the hurricane-ravaged region and reinforced the Bush administration’s desire to encourage and fund alternatives to the public school system.

Although much of the agenda was shaped from outside of the state, the pivotal push for restructuring the New Orleans school system came from within Louisiana. Paul Pastorek, a former member of BESE, noted that “there were many people who got involved in the politics post-Katrina who had not been energized or hopeful enough...
before” the hurricane. This intensified effort capitalized on long-standing, anti-New Orleans feelings among many state legislators.

On Nov. 22, 2005, the Louisiana Legislature approved the state takeover plan: Act 35. Eleven of the 20 Orleans Parish legislators voted to oppose the takeover plan. In the weeks that preceded the plan’s passage, minimal effort was made by state officials to seriously engage New Orleans’ diverse communities. In fact, at the time Act 35 was signed into law, BESE hadn’t held a meeting in the city of New Orleans in nearly a decade.

Even five months later, Ora Watson, the interim superintendent for Orleans Parish, said, “Some people are being left out of the conversation. I’m talking about poor people, people who populated the schools, the African-American community.”

6. Why does the OPSB have a higher percentage of its students in charter schools than the state-run RSD?

As mentioned earlier, the OPSB made reopening schools a higher priority, and the school board saw charters as the financial vehicle for facilitating this effort. One reason for the state’s low chartering rate appears to be the RSD’s need for a large number of “schools of last resort”—meaning schools that:

- do not have selective admissions,
- can operate on double shifts,
- can expand capacity by adding mobile classrooms,
- can raise class sizes,
- can enroll students who do not find spaces in charter schools, and
- can enroll special needs students who may be turned down by charter and/or selective-admissions schools.

There are additional reasons to worry that RSD schools might function as “schools of last resort” which fail to provide a rigorous, high-quality education to their students.

First, the RSD schools have struggled to hire an adequate number of teachers, and state officials lowered qualifications in a last-ditch effort to find enough teachers. Obviously, the quality and stability of teaching staff should be a priority for any urban school system.

Second, a comparison of pre-Katrina poverty rates reveals that students in the RSD schools are nearly twice as likely to be low-income as those in OPSB schools. A high density of low-income students, of course, does not preclude achievement, but it does create additional challenges for such schools. And it should be the goal of state and local officials to ensure that every neighborhood school is a good school.
right decision. Ray Charles once said, “I was born with music inside me. Music was one of my parts—like my ribs, my kidneys, my heart.” That’s what teaching felt like to me. It’s what I was meant to be.

We had a stable and close-knit faculty at Harney Elementary. I taught fourth grade there. Our school wasn’t perfect, but we live in an imperfect world. Every child who entered our school was accepted and embraced. And we worked hard to help [our students] learn, grow and achieve.

... Many of our critics have never stepped foot in our schools. And many of them supported quick fixes over long-term reform and resources. But one of the biggest secrets about the New Orleans public schools is the genuine progress that we were starting to make.

... Harney Elementary improved its test scores last school year and had met the growth target set by the state.

The children who went to our school felt loved and valued. Parents felt welcomed. I had a reputation as a stern disciplinarian, and perhaps that’s why so many parents wanted their children in my class. They knew I was tough, but they knew I cared deeply about their children. In some cases, I have taught the children and grandchildren of these parents.

... It’s true that most New Orleans schools were heavily damaged by Katrina, but a number of public schools in neighboring parishes were

In a recent report, the Center for Community Change observed, “Troubled as the New Orleans Public School system was before Katrina, what has taken its place promises only to further segregate the city’s students.” Equal educational opportunity is not merely a goal—it is a right of all children. It must not be compromised by the post-Katrina, two-district system.

7. Has the new, two-district school system lived up to its advocates’ promises?

During a visit to New Orleans marking the one-year anniversary of Katrina, President Bush said, “It’s good for New Orleans to have competing school systems.” The president might offer a very different assessment if he had actually tried to navigate this new, two-district system.

In declaring her support for a state takeover of the New Orleans public schools, Gov. Kathleen Blanco promised that the takeover would be implemented “in a thoughtful manner, taking into consideration the needs of the community.” However, the disarray and confusion that have reigned in recent months indicate that this promise has not been fulfilled.

Although some glitches were to be expected, the profound and pervasive confusion that has existed under the new, two-district system has deeply frustrated many parents and students, and it has cast a cloud over the school year. News reports and personal stories from parents, students, teachers and community organizations have detailed the confusion:

- Soon before the 2006-07 school year began, the *Times-Picayune*, Louisiana’s largest newspaper, used the word “nightmare” to describe the situation. One month into the school year, the

---

**RSD Students: Nearly Twice As Likely to Be Low-Income**

![Bar chart showing percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch prior to Katrina.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPSB Schools</th>
<th>RSD Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>47%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
newspaper cited a list of problems, including a severe shortage of textbooks, unreliable transportation, vacant teaching positions and overcrowded classrooms.\textsuperscript{35}

- In late August, the \textit{New York Times} reported on a school registration center “teeming with confused and angry parents” and noted the “labyrinthine system of state, city and charter-operated schools, each with its own rules, applications and starting dates.”\textsuperscript{36}

- The \textit{Christian Science Monitor} interviewed parents as the school year began and reported that the new, two-district system presented parents with “potentially bewildering choices.”\textsuperscript{37}

- Lance Hill, director of the Southern Institute for Education and Research at Tulane University, called the newly created, two-district system in New Orleans “the most balkanized school system in North America. The average parent is mystified.”\textsuperscript{38}

- The Web log Schools Matter called the new, two-district system “a chaotic mess.”\textsuperscript{39}

- Phyllis Landrieu, president of the Orleans Parish School Board, told \textit{Education Week}, “If anyone wanted to establish a very complicated system, this would be the one to do.”\textsuperscript{40}

- Even the Center for Education Reform, which applauded the state’s takeover, reported that officials are “having trouble managing the abundance of students coming back to the city. There are teacher shortages, and many parents don’t know where to turn.”\textsuperscript{41}

Many parents issued a similar verdict. In a newspaper interview, the mother of one high school student summed it up bluntly: “They weren’t ready.”\textsuperscript{41} Debra Smith voiced frustration as she tried—for the third time—to register her younger sister for high school. “Why am I still sitting here begging to get a child into school?” she asked.\textsuperscript{43}

In September, a report by the Center for Community Change observed that “parents are still crisscrossing the city trying to navigate a system that barely qualifies as ‘public.’”\textsuperscript{44}

As troubled as the school system was during the years before Katrina, it is already evident that tighter control at the state level is not a surefire recipe for success. Unlike the OPSB, the state fumbled when it came to hiring an adequate number of credentialed teachers by the start of the 2006-07 school year. The start of school was marked by numerous false starts and decisions that left parents befuddled—a sharp contrast with the start of the 2005-06 school year which one education reporter called “the smoothest in years.”\textsuperscript{45}

8. Why have parents and other stakeholders experienced so much confusion under the new, two-district system?
There were a host of problems that afflicted the pre-Katrina public schools in New Orleans, but at least there was one central location where the public could go for information. The current confusion is due largely to the lack of coordination. As a result, parents, teachers and other stakeholders have been forced to navigate their way through two separate school districts—as well as multiple charter school networks within both the OPSB and the RSD—whose enrollment procedures, transportation, rules and other guidelines differ significantly.

The need to create one place where parents and others could go for information on the schools was identified in January 2006 by the mayor's Bring New Orleans Back Commission, which recommended the creation of a “central source of information about the status of Orleans Parish schools.” Four months later, Cecil Picard, the state superintendent for education, expressed his desire to create "a one-stop shop" by August.

Despite Picard's publicly expressed intention, today there still is no single place in New Orleans where parents can go to enroll their children, residents can obtain updates on building conditions, and teachers can view and apply for positions.

Much of the confusion is due to the overlapping layers of authority that have been built into the post-Katrina school system. The Algiers Charter School Association is a case in point. The association was granted a charter by OPSB to convert about a dozen public schools on the west bank of the Mississippi River to charter schools. Soon after the Association was created, a number of its charter schools were placed under the jurisdiction of the RSD. So how is a parent to know whether the governing authority for her child's school is the OPSB, the Algiers Charter School Association or the RSD?

Parents, students and teachers aren't the only people whose patience has been severely tested by the new two-district system. Soon before his charter school was scheduled to open in August, principal Adam Meinig voiced frustration at the state's lack of planning.

“We're a little behind the eight ball on this when we knew way ahead of time things needed to get done,” Meinig said. Only a few weeks before students were set to arrive, the school's business manager was instructed to attend a training session in Baton Rouge to learn how to use a new student information system for all RSD-run schools. According to Meinig, the short notice forced the school's business manager to leave another training conference she was attending.

9. Why haven't officials opened more public schools?

This is a question many parents have asked. The condition and status of public schools continue to influence many residents' decisions on whether to return and rebuild their homes. During a recent visit to New Orleans, even President Bush noted that “families can't move back unless there [are] schools for the kids.” In January 2006, a
report by the Urban Institute agreed that “schools and teachers must come back into service if families are to return.”\textsuperscript{51}

The availability of schools not only influences adults with school-age children, but it is also a factor for other residents who see reopened schools as a bellwether that their neighborhood is on the mend and regaining its stride—a feeling that would hasten their return. That memorable phrase from the movie “Field of Dreams” rings true for public schools: If you build it, they will come.

Yet state and local officials have been slow to make the reopening of additional schools a priority. The need was expressed in January 2006 when the mayor’s Bring New Orleans Back Commission reported, “Schools are not opening as fast as parents would like them to, and, at some schools, there are more families who want to enroll their children than the schools can accommodate.”\textsuperscript{52}

In early 2006, teachers and parents were ready to return to McDonogh 15, a school in the heart of the French Quarter that suffered little or no damage from Katrina. But officials delayed opening McDonogh 15, and the school was eventually turned over to a charter school operator. Rabouin High School suffered no measurable wind or flood damage, but its opening was also delayed.

The insufficient number of open schools caught Washington’s attention. According to a recent report requested by U.S. Rep. George Miller (D. Calif.), ranking member of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, “The number of school-age children seeking to return to the area’s elementary and secondary schools is outstripping capacity.”\textsuperscript{53}

Concerns about school capacity are not new. In late January, state officials were presented with a list of 170 students who had been turned away from New Orleans public schools.\textsuperscript{54}

Melvin Smith, a resident of the Gert Town neighborhood, was recently standing outside of the now-closed Mary Church Terrell Elementary School. Referring to state and local officials, Smith said, “They should be cleaning it up. They need a school in the neighborhood. There are some kids back, and others won’t come back until they have a job, a place to live, and a clean school.”\textsuperscript{55}

Unfortunately, the vast majority of the public schools that have been opened are located in more affluent areas, far from communities of color. Although many schools in predominantly minority neighborhoods were heavily damaged by winds and floodwaters, some of these schools suffered relatively minor damage.

When officials announced that the Superdome would be opened in time to host the New Orleans Saints’ Sept. 25 football game, a number of community leaders noticed the irony.\textsuperscript{56}

“How is it that our state cannot open Colton (Elementary) on time,
Jim Randels is a literature and writing lab instructor at Eleanor McMain Secondary School and Douglas High School. He grew up in New Orleans and attended the city’s public schools. In recent years, Randels had served on the Teaching and Learning Task Force, a joint committee comprising teachers and school administrators. He had just begun his 19th year of teaching when Hurricane Katrina struck the area. He was interviewed in September 2006.

**Q:** In addition to McMain, you also teach a few classes at Douglas High School, right?

**RANDELS:** Yes, but those classes have had to be relocated to another campus because Douglas is still closed.

**Q:** How severe was the storm and flood damage at Douglas?

**RANDELS:** That’s what I can’t understand. The damage at Douglas from Katrina was very minimal. I know because I walked through the building but it’s able to open the Superdome on time for football season?” asked Danatus King, president of the New Orleans branch of the NAACP. “There’s a difference between not having the resources and not having the will.”

Has the slow pace of school openings in predominantly poor African-American neighborhoods been driven by realities on the ground or by a political agenda? This question is fueled by a number of statements that have preceded and accompanied the state takeover. For example, Paul Hill, a policy analyst who has advised Louisiana officials on its school takeover plan, co-wrote an article urging the state to base its policy decisions on four standards, one of which declares that the school system “will not invest in (school) buildings in the wrong places (emphasis added).” The precise meaning of such a statement is unclear, but the term “wrong places” resembles hurtful code language that suggests to black residents that the new New Orleans school system is redlining their neighborhoods.

This perception is also strengthened by OPSB’s decision in October 2005 to allow a second campus of Lusher Charter School to occupy the Alcee Fortier High School building. Fortier had previously served a student body that was overwhelmingly African-American. The new Lusher Charter School occupying Fortier’s building is a selective-admission school that is designed to serve the children of faculty and staff at Tulane and other universities in the city.

City residents of all races and income levels must be reassured—both by words and deeds—that school rebuilding and school improvement will not bypass their neighborhoods.

**10. What role is transportation playing in the school accessibility problem?**

Across the country, millions of parents take for granted the fact that their local public school systems will provide free transportation to and from their neighborhoods. Yet a number of New Orleans’ newly opened public schools have not offered any transportation for students. In mid-September, an informal survey of 20 public schools in the city revealed that:

- Eight public schools were not offering any transportation for their students. An office employee at one such school said the school might explore transportation “options.”

- An employee at one charter school said the school provided transportation, but that service in the east side of New Orleans was “not as good.”

- Transportation policies from one school to the next were as different and unpredictable as enrollment policies and other procedures. Some schools were providing transportation only for students who live more than one mile from campus, while others had no distance limit. Some schools were charging parents a
transportation fee, while others charged nothing.

- One school reported that it was providing transportation only on a first-come, first-served basis.

With so many schools closed due to Katrina-related damage, many students have had to enroll in public schools that are located miles from their homes—a fact that makes transportation even more critical.

Obviously, low-income families are placed at the greatest disadvantage when schools don’t provide transportation. The parent of a Lusher Charter School student said she was stunned to receive a letter one week before classes informing her that transportation was her responsibility. “How can the state permit a public school to deny transportation to my child?” she asked.60

The fact that some New Orleans public school students are not being provided with free transportation to and from school may violate Louisiana law. The law requires school districts to “provide free transportation for any student attending a school of suitable grade … if the student resides more than one mile from such school.”61

The failure to provide transportation for all public school students is shocking and unacceptable, especially considering that a Louisiana statute requires local public school districts to provide free transportation to private school students.62

11. Has the new, two-district system been able to recruit a sufficient number of qualified teachers and staff?

This is a serious concern because the public schools operated by the RSD have struggled to hire an adequate number of teachers, and state officials lowered qualifications in a last-ditch effort to find enough teachers by the start of the school year.63

- By mid-July, the RSD schools had not hired a single teacher.64

- On Sept. 6, the day before classes at RSD schools were originally scheduled to begin, these schools were short by 175 teachers.65

- In mid-September, the Associated Press reported that these schools “are having trouble attracting specialized teachers certified in math, science, foreign languages and special education.”66

soon after the storm. I can understand the delay getting Douglas opened by January (2006), but it’s inexcusable to not have had that building ready for teachers to return in July and for students to arrive in August (2006). To me, it shows a lack of value for the young people of this community, especially the young people of a certain socioeconomic class.

Q: State officials have said that the reason Douglas can’t be reopened is because there are problems with mold.

RANDELS: Right, but I was inside that building right after the storm, and I didn’t see any mold then. The problem is what happened after the storm and after the floodwaters receded. Douglas wasn’t properly maintained after Katrina. The doors were left wide open for days. The building wasn’t properly secured. We’ve been paying a company millions of dollars to ensure that our school buildings get the maintenance they need. How can something like this happen?
In July, when RSD officials projected they would need to recruit 500 teachers, it was yet another sign that state officials had failed to develop an effective recruiting plan. Commenting on the 500-teacher shortfall, Bruce Villineau, a recruiting specialist for the New Teacher Project, said, “It’s late in the game to be looking for vast numbers of teachers.”

State officials missed the boat largely because they seriously miscalculated. RSD officials told the *Times-Picayune* that initially they “were expecting to find outside groups to charter or run most, if not all, of their schools and thus be in charge of their own hiring.” In other words, state officials were working under the false assumption that an outside group could quickly identify a school site, convert the physical space inside, develop a rich and rigorous curriculum, and hire qualified teachers and other staff. These are not easy tasks—nor should they be.

As a result of these shortages, RSD officials have had to rely heavily on substitute teachers, including those without teaching certificates. This practice undermines RSD’s self-identified goal to hire “qualified, competent, and skilled teachers and other staff members for instructional positions in RSD-operated schools.”

The teacher shortage in RSD schools is easier to understand when one recalls the unfair and ill-fated decision to fire nearly all of New Orleans’ 7,500 teachers and other school staff. The OPSB had stopped paying teachers and other employees in September 2005, when the school board voted to place district employees on leave without pay.

Not surprisingly, many of these fired employees sought and found jobs in other Louisiana school districts or in school systems in other states, and this deprived the RSD of access to a pool of talented teachers and other experienced staff for 2006-07.

This is another instance in which the priorities of state and local officials were clearly out of sync. Only a few weeks after Katrina, state Education Superintendent Cecil Picard said of New Orleans school employees: “Keeping educational staff is critical. We want them to return to Louisiana.” Yet, at the same time that Picard was voicing this desire, the *Times-Picayune* reported that OPSB officials “advised their employees to look for new jobs elsewhere.”
Moving Forward, Getting It Right

The children and families of New Orleans are still recovering from the trauma of Hurricane Katrina. The public schools must provide these children with a stable and caring environment, and a high-quality education. Doing so requires the involvement of all stakeholders. The United Teachers of New Orleans (UTNO), the Louisiana Federation of Teachers (LFT) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) want to work as partners with state and local officials to address these challenges.

In August, UTNO and AFT volunteers knocked on more than 3,000 doors throughout the city, seeking to reconnect with our members and their families, and learning how they were coping with the rebuilding process.

Over the past several months, UTNO leaders and members have convened or attended dozens of meetings with parents, community groups and other stakeholders. We have heard the concerns of New Orleanians, and we share many of these concerns.

UTNO and the AFT see the rebuilding and reinvigoration of public education as an essential step to help New Orleans heal and prosper. We believe that a constructive, inclusive and forward-looking dialogue is needed. With this in mind, we offer these recommendations for moving forward, and we welcome the comments of elected officials and the people of New Orleans:

1. **Create a central coordinating body to lessen the confusion that has reigned in recent months.** Now that the school year is in full swing, this might seem like a water-under-the-bridge issue. Yet the seeds of this confusion — unless they are addressed — are likely to undermine ongoing school operations. A central coordinating body would help ensure that parents, students, teachers and other stakeholders have one entity from which they can obtain information on the conditions, enrollment procedures, transportation and other policies of every single public school in the city. This recommendation was backed by the education committee of the mayor’s Bring New Orleans Back Commission, which called for creating a “single, aligned” governance structure to ensure effective oversight, coordination and accountability.
2. Identify public schools that can be reopened with minimal repairs and make the reopening of these schools a top priority. In planning and opening RSD schools, state education officials pledged to ensure that “[each] school is the center of community life.” This is a laudable goal, but where does this leave communities in New Orleans where no elementary or secondary school has been reopened? The only way to advance the Bring New Orleans Back Commission’s vision for “equitable access to high quality school options” is to open more schools as expeditiously as possible, especially in underserved neighborhoods.

3. Reaffirm the public school system’s commitment to democracy, shared decision-making and regular engagement of all stakeholders. Parents, students, teachers and other city residents cannot be reduced to props on a reform stage. Improving the quality of education requires that these stakeholders be heard, respected and consulted.

4. Provide equal support for all public schools. No matter which public school their children attend, parents deserve to know that their school is receiving the funding and resources it needs to succeed. In pre-Katrina New Orleans, there were considerable gaps in the support that different schools received. As state and local officials look ahead, they should guard against disparities between charter schools and regular schools. Our ongoing efforts to improve education should never pit charter schools against regular public schools, nor should these efforts be allowed to create hostility or rivalry among teachers and staff at these schools. There is a place for both types of public schools in New Orleans’ future. Across the country, one can find both charter schools and regular public schools that are doing an excellent job of educating their students. Accordingly, one can find both charter schools and regular public schools that are struggling to help students achieve at high levels. Teachers and administrators at both types of schools can (and should) learn valuable lessons from each other.
Appendix

Schools Open in 2006-07
(as of Sept. 20)

The four tables in this appendix list New Orleans schools open in 2006-07 according to their status as an OPSB regular school (Table 1), OPSB charter school (Table 2), RSD charter school (Table 3), or RSD regular school (Table 4). The school profile includes the following characteristics:

**Reopened in 2005-06:** This column is checked if the school was reopened at any time prior to June 2006.

**Selectivity:** This column describes a regular or charter school with selective admissions requirements, which may include academic criteria, work/internship requirements outside school hours or parent contracts.

**Student capacity:** As calculated by the consulting firm of Alvarez & Marsal, building capacity applies to fully repaired schools with conventional pupil-teacher ratios. Actual enrollment in September 2006 is below capacity in many schools largely because some schools opened late or portions of these schools remain in need of renovation. Some charter schools also have smaller than average class sizes, which result in buildings operating at less than full capacity.

**Low-income students in 2004-05:** Although imperfect, the pre-Katrina data for students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch is the best available measure of socioeconomic status.

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPSB Regular Schools Open in 2006-07</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reopened 2005-06</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethune Accelerated Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDonogh 35 HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McMain Magnet Secondary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orleans Parish PM School at McMain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total/Average</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a Has work/internship requirement.

*b This average is weighted on the basis of each school's student capacity.

*c The Orleans Parish PM School offers evening classes for at-risk students who work during the school day and are trying to earn credits to achieve their diplomas.
Table 2
OPSB Charter Schools Open in 2006-07

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School/Municipality</th>
<th>Reopened 2005-06</th>
<th>Selective</th>
<th>Student Capacity</th>
<th>Low-Income % 2004-05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Converted to Charters in 2005-06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audubon Montessori School</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>40.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben Franklin HS</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hynes Elementary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>495</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harte Elementary</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>750</td>
<td>33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karr Magnet H5</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Forest Montessori School</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>78.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusher Elementary</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusher Middle and HS</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moton Elementary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>300</td>
<td>98.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Orleans Science and Math HS</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>250</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren Easton Fundamental HS</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,350</td>
<td>54.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chartered as start-ups in 2005-06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Einstein Charter School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>787</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priestley HS of Architecture and Construction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total/Average</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8,627</td>
<td>42.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Partnered with University of New Orleans.
b Operated by the Algiers Charter School Association.
c After reopening as a charter school, Lusher expanded from a K-5 school to a K-12 charter when it was given a second building (Fortier High School). It operates under one charter and is affiliated with Tulane University.
d Affiliated with Tulane University.
e This average is weighted on the basis of each school’s student capacity.
Table 3
RSD Charter Schools Open in 2006-07

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Algiers Charter School Association</th>
<th>Reopened 2005-06</th>
<th>Pre-Katrina Charters</th>
<th>Student Capacity</th>
<th>Low-Income % 2004-05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behrman Elementary a</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>750</td>
<td>94.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eisenhower Elementary a</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>756</td>
<td>80.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fischer Elementary a</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>734</td>
<td>94.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDonogh 32 Elementary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>744</td>
<td>93.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tubman Elementary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>691</td>
<td>96.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walker High School a</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>69.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Orleans Charter Foundation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Elementary b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>310</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDonogh 28 Elementary b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>560</td>
<td>95.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnered with the University of New Orleans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capdau Elementary</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>78.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Elementary</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>88.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson Elementary</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>646</td>
<td>93.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Associations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lafayette Academy c</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>650</td>
<td>81.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDonogh 15 (KIPP: New Orleans) d</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>460</td>
<td>91.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McNair Elementary (KIPP: Believe) d</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>335</td>
<td>95.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLK School for Sci. &amp; Tech.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>715</td>
<td>94.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singleton Charter Middle School e</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>810</td>
<td>88.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wright Middle School f</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total/Average</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10,961</td>
<td>87.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( ^{a}\) Authorized by OPSB but transferred to RSD authority for 2006-07 due to poor academic performance.

\( ^{b}\) Contracted to the Leona Group, a for-profit management company.

\( ^{c}\) Located at Lafayette Elementary, the school is contracted to Mosaica, a for-profit management company.

\( ^{d}\) Start-up charter school operated by the nonprofit KIPP Foundation.

\( ^{e}\) Start-up school chartered to the Dryades YMCA in 1999 by OPSB.

\( ^{f}\) Affiliated with Southern University of New Orleans.

\( ^{g}\) This average is weighted on the basis of each school’s student capacity.

\( ^{h}\) These schools were converted to charter schools before Hurricane Katrina.
Table 4
RSD Regular Schools Open in 2006-07

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Reopened 2005-06</th>
<th>Student Capacity</th>
<th>Low-Income % 2004-05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Banneker Elementary</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>96.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark HS</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>63.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig Elementary</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>92.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dibert Elementary</td>
<td></td>
<td>414</td>
<td>84.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglass HS</td>
<td></td>
<td>650</td>
<td>75.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drew Elementary</td>
<td></td>
<td>681</td>
<td>96.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habans Elementary</td>
<td></td>
<td>516</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henderson Elementary</td>
<td></td>
<td>566</td>
<td>91.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson Elementary</td>
<td></td>
<td>650</td>
<td>96.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurel Elementary</td>
<td></td>
<td>650</td>
<td>94.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.O. Center for Creative Arts</td>
<td></td>
<td>400</td>
<td>91.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDonogh HS</td>
<td></td>
<td>900</td>
<td>63.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabouin Career Magnet HS</td>
<td></td>
<td>650</td>
<td>69.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reed Elementary</td>
<td></td>
<td>650</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reed 9-12</td>
<td></td>
<td>650</td>
<td>53.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tureaud Elementary</td>
<td></td>
<td>390</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wicker Elementary</td>
<td></td>
<td>705</td>
<td>96.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total/Average</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>10,089</strong></td>
<td><strong>82.3</strong>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: None of the RSD regular schools has selective admissions.

*This average is weighted on the basis of each school’s student capacity.
Endnotes

6 More information on AFT’s Redesigning Schools To Raise Achievement is accessible at: www.aft.org/topics/school-improvement/.
8 ibid.
11 The English-language arts portion of the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program for the 21st Century (LEAP 21) was administered to fourth-graders at Orleans Parish Public Schools. For more information on Louisiana’s standards-based assessment examinations, see: www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/1703.pdf. For more information on public school test scores, see: www.greatschools.net.
16 The School Performance Scores are derived from the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program for the 21st Century (LEAP 21), the Graduate Exit Examination for the 21st Century (GEE 21), the Iowa Tests, and attendance and dropout data. For more information on Louisiana's SPS system, see: www.doe.state.la.us/lde/comm/pressrelease.aspx?PR=687.
21 The U.S. Department of Education’s first grant (September 2005) was for $20.9 million and its second grant (June 2006) was for $23.9 million. See: Allen Powell II, “New Charter Schools Get Help From Grant,” Times-Picayune, June 13, 2006.
23 President George W. Bush, televised address to the nation from New Orleans,

25 ibid.
27 ibid.
31 Transcript of WVUE-TV (Fox) Channel 8 newscast, 9:00 p.m. (CDT), Sept. 6, 2006.
50 President Bush’s remarks at Warren Easton Senior High School in New Orleans, Aug. 29, 2006 (11:35 a.m. CDT), see: www.whitehouse.gov.
Opportunity and Equity into the New New Orleans, The Urban Institute, January 2006.
53 “Schools After Katrina: A Look at New Orleans Area Schools and Colleges One Year Later,” an issue brief prepared by the Democratic Staff of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, Honorable George Miller, Senior Democratic Member, August 2006.
57 Paul Hill and Jane Hannaway, “The Future of Public Education in New Orleans,” After Katrina: Rebuilding Opportunity and Equity into the New New Orleans, The Urban Institute, January 2006. (Note: Hill is director of the Center on Reinventing Public Education, which is based at the University of Washington's Evans School of Public Affairs.)
59 The informal telephone survey of transportation services was conducted by the American Federation of Teachers, Sept. 12-20, 2006.
61 Louisiana Revised Statutes, Annotated § 17:158.
62 ibid; this specific language is also cited in a U.S. Department of Education summary of Louisiana's education-related law. For more information, see: www.ed.gov/pubs/RegPrivSchl/louisian.html.
63 Transcript of WVUE-TV (Fox) Channel 8 newscast, 9:00 p.m. (CDT), Sept. 6, 2006.
65 Transcript of WVUE-TV (Fox) Channel 8 newscast, 9:00 p.m. (CDT), Sept. 6, 2006.
69 ibid.
70 Goal 2c is one of several goals identified in the Recovery School District Legislatively Required Plan, released on June 7, 2006.