

THE CURRENT STATE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN NEW ORLEANS

Offered by New Schools for New Orleans

BACKGROUND

Pre Katrina:

- The New Orleans school district academically performed the worst in the entire state and as one of the worst districts in the entire country
- As a result of financial disorder, the FBI opened an office in the district to investigate widespread fraud and corruption

Post Katrina:

- Due to the extreme disarray of the Orleans Parish school district, the situation demanded intervention
- The State took control of more than 100 schools, leaving 17 schools with the local Orleans Parish School Board

Louisiana's Immediate Post-Katrina Challenges:

- 1. Build.** In a few months, the State had to build from scratch a system of schools and prepare to educate thousands of students.
 - There were no pre-existing policies, procedures or personnel
- 2. Rebuild** a devastated infrastructure
 - Buildings, school buses, books and supplies
 - Deal with an incredible shortage of educators due the post-Katrina diaspora
- 3. Reform** the schools to overcome decades of poor academic performance and civic neglect

CURRENT STATUS

Success: Louisiana is transforming public education in New Orleans

- While other states have attempted to address the failure of urban school districts with mayoral or state takeover, no state has successfully transformed a low performing urban school district. They maintained a top down, centralized school district.
- Public education in New Orleans has undergone significant, systematic change with the decentralization of the previous system
- In the next five years, New Orleans will be a national model for urban education

Reasons for Success:

1. A majority of New Orleans students now attend public charter schools
 - a. Local public charter school boards have re-engaged the larger New Orleans community
 - b. They have attracted some new, talented educators to the city and empowered some existing educators to build better schools

2. Orleans Parish parents have more choices for educating their children
 - a. Schools must provide transportation
3. Educators also have more choices
 - a. Elimination of collective bargaining and tenure
 - b. Increases in teacher salaries
4. Smaller schools; smaller class sizes and more money to the classroom
5. The state has established a strong chartering process combined with transparency and strong accountability measures
6. Increased civic engagement including local universities and nonprofits
 - University of New Orleans and Southern University at New Orleans now operate public charter schools
 - Xavier University is exploring the creation of a math and science professional development center
 - Tulane University opened the Scott Cowen Institute for Public Education to support the system of schools
 - Newly created and existing nonprofit groups are mobilizing to help schools, teachers and parents
 - Examples include: New Schools for New Orleans, New Leaders for New Schools and the School Leadership Center

CONTINUING CHALLENGES AHEAD

- Shortage of educators including teachers, principals, social workers and guidance counselors
- Due to decades of neglect, the facilities still suffer
- Educating the media, parents and the larger public on the new decentralized model for urban education
- Post-Katrina, many students did not attend school, attended multiple schools and continue to suffer from significant mental health needs

THE ESSENTIAL MESSAGE

- More schools are better; therefore, more students are attending better schools