Midyear Loss of High School Students: Concerns about the Same Low-Performing RSD High Schools, and About Charter Schools That Remove Students

Dr. Barbara Ferguson, Board Chair and Attorney Research on Reforms, February 2011

Research on Reforms is a nonprofit foundation, dedicated to improving New Orleans public schools through research. See www.researchonreforms.org or email: bferguson@researchonreforms.org.

At the 2009-10 midyear count in New Orleans schools, high schools decreased enrollment by 131 students. The schools with the greatest student loss continued to be John McDonogh and Joseph Clark Senior High Schools, which have been under state control for five years. Surprisingly, three charter schools, Sojourner Truth, Miller-McCoy and International High, had equally as great of a midyear loss of high school students. Education and crime are directly related. Cities with higher percentages of completers have lower percentages of crime. Losing high school students during midyear only fuels crime.

Summary of Findings:

The two findings of this research are:

- (1) The traditional high schools, under state control, have not improved within the last five years, as significant numbers of high school students continue to leave during the school year, and
- (2) The open admission charter high schools, which were designed to retain and educate the at-risk, have simply removed many of them.

Calculating Student Loss within a School Year

The LA Department of Education (DOE) collects official student enrollment data twice during a school year, on October 1st and on February 1st. ⁱ Using this data, the 2009-10 enrollment count was recorded for Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) and Recovery School District (RSD) schools containing students in grades 9, 10, 11 and/or 12. ⁱⁱ The data revealed that charter and traditional schools, collectively, lost 181 high school students between the two counts. During that same period, two alternative schools increased enrollment by fifty (50) students. ⁱⁱⁱ Thus, of the 181 students, if 50 were transferred to the alternative schools, the whereabouts of 131 students still remained dubious. Unfortunately, the DOE does not release data that can be used by researchers to determine the fate of the remaining 131 students, nor does the DOE report

this information.^{iv} Some of the 131 probably graduated midyear or moved. Still, the loss of 131 high school students during the course of the school year is significant enough to require further analysis.

During the 2009-10 school year, a total of 27 schools enrolled students in grades 9-12, or in a portion of those grades. Of those schools, 8 were OPSB schools (6 charter and 2 traditional schools), and 19 were RSD schools (10 charter and 9 traditional schools). (See Table 1 below). Each school system also had one alternative school. Additionally, the Youth Study Center, a correctional detention center, was operated by the OPSB, and the New Orleans Career Academy, a computer-based certification program, was operated by the RSD. Since these schools are distinguished from the traditional and charter schools, they are not included in this calculation. (See Appendix A)

Table 1

Schools with Grades 9,10, 11 and/or 12						
2009-10	OPSB	RSD				
Charter	6	10				
Traditional	2	9				
Total High Schools	8	19				

Ranking Schools by Loss of Students during the School Year

Of the 27 schools with grades 9, 10, 11 and/or 12, twenty (20) schools lost students during the midyear, while seven (7) schools gained students. The total loss of 229 students by the 20 schools was offset by the gain of 45 students from the other 7 schools. The schools, and the losses and gains for each, are listed below in Table 2, and are ranked in accordance with gain or loss.

Table 2

Tota	al Enrollm	ent in Grades 9,10, 11 and/or 12	2009-1	0			
No	Code	School	Oct 1,	Feb 1,	Differ-	%	Traditional
			2009	2010	ence	Change	or Charter
1	383001	Sojourner Truth Academy	183	167	-16	-9%	Charter-RSD
2	396002	Joseph S. Clark Senior High School	284	262	-22	-8%	Traditional-RSD
3	396042	International High School	100	92	-8	-8%	Charter-RSD
4	384001	Miller-McCoy Academy	197	184	-13	-7%	Charter- RSD
5	396011	John McDonogh Senior High School	545	506	-39	-7%	Traditional- RSD
6	396026	G. W. Carver High School	432	416	-16	-4%	Traditional- RSD
7	036043	Benjamin Franklin High School	609	593	-16	-3%	Charter- OPSB
8	036088	McDonogh #35 Senior High School	814	789	-25	-3%	Traditional-OPSB
9	395007	Algiers Technology Academy	347	336	-11	-3%	Charter RSD
10	036096	Eleanor McMain Secondary School	563	553	-10	-2%	Traditional-OPSB
11	389001	Abramson Science & Technology Charter Sch	88	86	-2	-2%	Charter RSD
12	395005	O.P. Walker Senior High School	857	837	-20	-2%	Charter RSD
13	396007	Fredrick A. Douglass High School	291	284	-7	-2%	Traditional- RSD
14	396016	Rabouin Career Magnet High School	295	290	-5	-2%	Traditional- RSD

15	396017	Sarah Towles Reed Senior High School	585	573	-12	-2%	Traditional- RSD
				Subtotal	-229		
16	036064	Edna Karr Secondary School	843	842	-1	0%	Charter- OPSB
17	036079	Lusher Charter School	417	415	-2	0%	Charter- OPSB
18	036163	New Orleans Charter Science and Math HS	373	372	-1	0%	Charter- OPSB
19	036035	Warren Easton Senior High School	849	846	-3	0%	Charter-OPSB
20	391001	Dr.M.L.K. Charter School For Science & Tech	64	64	0	0%	Charter -RSD
21	396036	Excel Academy	68	83	+15	+22%	Traditional- RSD
22	382001	New Orleans Charter Science & Math Academy	151	161	+10	+7%	Charter- RSD
23	396043	Greater Gentilly High School	206	212	+6	+3%	Traditional- RSD
24	397001	Sophie B. Wright Inst. Of Academic Excellence	101	104	+3	+3%	Charter-RSD
25	036073	Priestley School of Architecture/Construction	308	313	+5	+2%	Charter- OPSB
26	300003	Thurgood Marshall Early College High School	377	382	+5	+1%	Charter-RSD
27	396004	Walter L. Cohen High School	373	377	+4	+1%	Traditional- RSD
				Subtotal	+48		
Diffe	rence: 229	- 48 = 181		·	-181		

Disproportionate Decline in RSD High School Students

At both the October 1st and the February 1st student counts, 46% of the high school students were enrolled in OPBS schools and 54% were enrolled in RSD schools. Yet, the RSD schools accounted for over 71% of the decline in the high school student enrollment. Fewer high school students exited from the OPBS schools. (See Table 3)

Table 3

	Oct 1,	%of total	Feb 1,	%of total	Difference	%of total	%
	2009	enrollment	2010	enrollment		difference	Decline
OPSB Charters	3399	33%	3381	33%	-18	10%	
OPSB Traditional	1377	13%	1342	13%	-35	19%	
Total OPSB	4776		4723	46%			29%
RSD Charters	2465	24%	2413	24%	-52	29%	
RSD Traditional	3079	30%	3003	30%	-76	42%	
Total RSD	5544		5416	54%			71%
Total of OPBS and	10320		10139		-181		100%
RSD							

Five Schools with Highest High School Enrollment Loss

Traditional RSD Schools: John McDonogh, Joseph Clark

Charter RSD Schools: Sojourner Truth, Miller-McCoy, International High

Five RSD schools had the greatest loss of high school student enrollment for the 2009-10 year. Two were traditional schools and three were charter schools. (Table 4 below)

Table 4

Total Enrollment in Grades 9,10, 11 and/or 12				0 Gr	ades 9-1	L2 Only	
No	Code	School	Oct 1, 2009	Feb 1, 2010	Differ- ence	% Change	Traditional or Charter
1	383001	Sojourner Truth Academy	183	167	-16	-9%	Charter-RSD
2	396002	Joseph S. Clark Senior High School	284	262	-22	-8%	Traditional-RSD
3	396042	International High School	100	92	-8	-8%	Charter-RSD
4	384001	Miller-McCoy Academy	197	184	-13	-7%	Charter- RSD
5	396011	John McDonogh Senior High School	545	506	-39	-7%	Traditional- RSD

The Traditional Schools:

No Improvement in Joseph Clark and John McDonogh after Five Years

The traditional schools, Joseph S. Clark Sr. High and John McDonogh Sr. High, had significant midyear declines in student enrollment prior to the State Takeover. Each school continues to have among the lowest performance scores in the state. In 2004-05, Joseph S. Clark High School had a School Performance Score of 14.6, and in 2009-10 the score continued to be low at 22.8. In 2004-05, John McDonogh had a School Performance Score of 25.1, and in 2009-10, it continued to be low at 32.2. vi

The data suggests that the Recovery School District has been equally as unsuccessful as the Orleans Parish School Board with Clark and McDonogh schools. During the five years of the state takeover, the Recovery School District has tried unsuccessfully to charter these schools. Chartering the schools, though, would not have guaranteed improvement.

The Charter Schools:

<u>Sojourner Truth, Miller McCoy and International High - Removed Numerous</u> <u>At- Risk Students</u>

The three charter schools that lost numerous high school students at midyear were: Sojourner Truth, Miller-McCoy, and International High. The significant midyear loss of high school students from these charter schools is contrary to the purpose for which charter schools were authorized under Louisiana law. A primary purpose, with regard to both state and federal law, is to educate at-risk students who would otherwise fail and drop-out.

Sojourner Truth:

Sojourner Truth opened in the 2008-09 school year and had no SPS that year, as scores are not generally given in the first year. The School Performance Score for Sojourner Truth was 53.5 in 2009-10.

Sojourner Truth opened with a 9^{th} grade class only. In October 2008, 108 students were in the 9^{th} grade class, by February 2009, the number had declined to 103 students. All of the 103 9^{th}

grade students did not make it to 10th grade in the fall of 2009, as there were only 96 students for the October 2009 count. Again the number was reduced to 73 by the February 2010 count. Then again, these 73 10th graders did not all make it to 11th grade in the fall of 2010, as there were only 66 students in the count for October 2010. (See Table 5.)

Table 5

Sojourner Truth	9 th Grade	Of the 103 9 th	10 th Grade	Of the 83 10 th	11 th Grade
	2008-09	graders only	2009-10	graders, only	2010-11
Oct 1 st Count	108	87 made it to	87	66 made it to	66
Feb 1 st Count	103	10 th grade	83	11 th grade.	
Loss	-5		-4		

Students entering Sojourner Truth the following year, in 2009-10, experienced the same fate. Ninety-six (96) students entered the 9th grade and by the February count, there were only 94 students. Of the 94 students, only 88 entered the 11th grade in October 2010. ix

These calculations assume that the 103 9th graders in school at the end of the year were the same 9th graders who entered 10th grade the following year. Since there were only 87 10th graders that following year, 16 of the 9th graders did not make it to 10th grade. Similarly, of the 83 10th graders at the end of the following year, only 66 were in the 11th grade the next year. Perhaps, the students could have failed rather than dropped out. If this were the case, it would be equally alarming. Until the LA Department of Education decides to release this site level "exit reason" data, an accurate rendering will never be determined.

In summary, the entering 108 **9**th**graders** in 2008-09 diminished, within two years, to 66 **11**th **graders** in 2010-11.

Sojourner Truth school, as several other charter schools, has extended its authority to expel students, which could account for the loss of so many students. State law establishes the reasons for expulsion, or permanent removal, of students. Expulsions are authorized by state law for extreme behaviors, such as, drugs, weapons and gang fighting. However, Sojourner Truth has extended its authority regarding expulsions, allowing students to be expelled for such behaviors as "cheating for the third time." Xi

In addition, Sojourner Truth has granted itself the authority to remove students from school for reasons not cited by the LA Department of Education in their identification of "exit code reasons." For example, Sojourner Truth has granted itself the authority to remove students if their parents do not attend the parents meetings scheduled by the school. xii

Miller-McCoy

For its opening 2008-09 school year, Miller-McCoy actually had a School Performance Score of 67.7. Most schools are not given a SPS in their first year of operation. The School Performance Score increased to 69.5 in 2009-10.

In its first year, Miller McCoy had 6th grade students and 9th grade students only. In the following year, the school added the 7th and 10th grades, and then, in the next year, added the 8th and 11th grades. This article focuses on the high school grades.

In October 2008, 117 students were in the 9th grade class, and by February 2009, the number was reduced to 113 students. These 113 9th grade students did not all make it to 10th grade in the fall of 2009, as there were only 100 students for the October 2009 count. Again, the number was reduced to 95 by the February 2010 count. And again, these 95 10th graders did not all make it to 11th grade in the fall of 2010, as there were only 82 students in the count for October 2010. (See Table 6.)

Table 6

Miller McCoy	9 th Grade	Of the 113 9 th	10 th Grade	Of the 95 10 th	11 th Grade
	2008-09	graders, only	2009-10	graders, only	2010-11
Oct 1 st Count	117	100 made it to	100	82 made it to	82
Feb 1 st Count	113	10 th grade	95	11 th grade.	
Lost	-4		-5		

In summary, the entering 117 **9**th **graders** in 2008-09 diminished, within two years, to 82 **11**th **graders** in 2010-11.

Miller-McCoy has extended its authority to remove students through expulsion. State law establishes the causes of student behavior that warrant expulsion, or permanent removal from school. Such causes are for extreme behaviors, such as, drugs, weapons and gang fighting. However, Miller-McCoy has granted itself authority to expel students for such behaviors as cutting class or detention, disrupting class, cheating, being disrespectful, and misbehaving inside or outside of class. XIII

Again, the reasons for the decline in the student enrollment cannot be fully determined until the DOE releases "exit reason" data from its Student Information System (SIS). However, Miller-McCoy is a charter school, with an explicit purpose to educate, not to remove, at-risk youth.

International High School

During its first year of operation, 2009-10, the International High school went from 100 9th grade students in October, 2009 to 92 students in February, 2010. For the current 2010-11 school year, the DOE has recorded only the Oct 1st count and has not yet recorded the February 1st count to determine if the loss of students midyear has continued. Also, the DOE has changed the school code of the International High School for the years 2009-10 and 2010-11.^{xiv}

Conclusions and Observations

Prior to the State Takeover, traditional high schools experienced significant midyear losses of high school students. These losses have continued in two of New Orleans' most troubled high schools, even with the five-year intervention of the state through the Recovery School District. The two traditional high schools cited herein were not converted to charter schools, the reform plan of the RSD. However, three RSD schools, which were converted to charters, still experienced significant midyear high school student losses. These charter schools have granted themselves authority to expel students for causes not authorized by state law, which could be reason for decreased enrollment. In addition, at least one charter school authorizes the removal of students for parent failure to participate in meetings. Whatever the causes for midyear high school student losses, these causes deserve to be studied and the trend reversed. Midyear loss not only contributes to lower high school completion rates, but contributes to increased crime in the community.

APPENDIX A

OPS	B High Scl	nools (Schools with Grades 9,10, 11 and/o	r 12) 200	9-10 GR	ADES 9	-12 ONLY	REPORTED
No	Code	School	Oct 1, 2009	Feb 1, 2010	Differ- ence	% Change	Traditional or Charter
1	036035	Warren Easton Senior High School	849	846	-3	0%	Charter
2	036043	Benjamin Franklin High School	609	593	-16	-3%	Charter
3	036064	Edna Karr Secondary School	843	842	-1	0	Charter
4	036073	Priestley School of Architecture/Construction	308	313	+5	+2%	Charter
5	036079	Lusher Charter School	417	415	-2	0	Charter
6	036088	McDonogh #35 Senior High School	814	789	-25	-3%	Traditional
7	036096	Eleanor McMain Secondary School	563	553	-10	-2%	Traditional
8	036132	Youth Study Center	14	11	-3	-21%	Traditional
9	036157	The Alternative Learning Institute	69	100	+31	+45%	Traditional
10	036163	New Orleans Charter Science and Math HS	373	372	-1	0	Charter

No	Code	School	Oct 1, 2009	Feb 1, 2010	Differ- ence	% Change	Traditional or Charter
1	300003	Thurgood Marshall Early College High School	377	382	+5	+1%	Charter
2	382001	New Orleans Charter Science & Math Academy	151	161	+10	+7%	Charter
3	383001	Sojourner Truth Academy	183	167	-16	-9%	Charter
4	384001	Miller-McCoy Academy	197	184	-13	-7%	Charter
5	389001	Abramson Science & Technology Charter School	197	86	-2	-2%	Charter
6	391001	Dr.M.L.K. Charter School For Science & Tech	64	64	0	0	Charter
7	395005	O.P. Walker Senior High School	857	837	-20	-2%	Charter
8	395007	Algiers Technology Academy	347	336	-11	-3%	Charter
9	396002	Joseph S. Clark Senior High School	284	262	-22	-8%	Traditional
10	396004	Walter L. Cohen High School	373	377	+4	+1%	Traditional
11	396007	Fredrick A. Douglass High School	291	284	-7	-2%	Traditional
12	396011	John McDonogh Senior High School	545	506	-39	-7%	Traditional
13	396016	Rabouin Career Magnet High School	295	290	-5	-2%	Traditional
14	396017	Sarah Towles Reed Senior High School	585	573	-12	-2%	Traditional
15	396022	Schwarz Alternative School	54	73	+19	+35%	Traditional
16	396026	G. W. Carver High School	432	416	-16	-4%	Traditional
17	396036	Excel Academy	68	83	+15	+22	Traditional
18	396042	International High School	100	92	-8	-8%	Charter
19	396043	Greater Gentilly High School	206	212	+6	+3%	Traditional
20	396045	New Orleans Career Academy	59	69	+10	+17%	Traditional
21	397001	Sophie B. Wright Inst. Of Academic Excellence	101	104	+3	+3%	Charter

APPENDIX B

OPBS Charters Only

OPS	OPSB High Schools (Schools with Grades 9,10, 11 and/or 12) 2009-10 GRADES 9-12 ONLY REPORTED									
No	Code	School	Oct 1, 2009	Feb 1, 2010	Differ- ence	% Change	Traditional or Charter			
1	036035	Warren Easton Senior High School	849	846	-3	0%	Charter			
2	036043	Benjamin Franklin High School	609	593	-16	-3%	Charter			
3	036064	Edna Karr Secondary School	843	842	-1	0	Charter			
4	036073	Priestley School of Architecture/Construction	308	313	+5	+2%	Charter			
5	036079	Lusher Charter School	417	415	-2	0	Charter			
6	036163	New Orleans Charter Science and Math HS	373	372	-1	0	Charter			

OPBS Traditional Only

OPS	OPSB High Schools (Schools with Grades 9,10, 11 and/or 12) 2009-10 GRADES 9-12 ONLY REPORTED									
No	Code	School	Oct 1,	Feb 1,	Differ-	%	Traditional or			
			2009	2010	ence	Change	Charter			
1	036088	McDonogh #35 Senior High School	814	789	-25	-3%	Traditional			
2	036096	Eleanor McMain Secondary School	563	553	-10	-2%	Traditional			

OPBS Alternative

OPS	OPSB High Schools (Schools with Grades 9,10, 11 and/or 12) 2009-10 GRADES 9-12 ONLY REPORTED								
No	Code	School	Oct 1, 2009	Feb 1, 2010	Differ-	% Change	Traditional or Charter		
			2009	2010	ence	Change			
1	036157	The Alternative Learning Institute	69	100	+31	+45%	Traditional		

Juvenile Detention: Youth Study Center

OPS	OPSB High Schools (Schools with Grades 9,10, 11 and/or 12) 2009-10 GRADES 9-12 ONLY REPORTED								
No	Code	School	Oct 1,	Feb 1,	Differ-	%	Traditional or		
			2009	2010	ence	Change	Charter		
1	036132	Youth Study Center	14	11	-3	-21%	Traditional		

RSD Charter Only

RSD	RSD High Schools (Schools with Grades 9,10, 11 and/or 12) 2009-10 GRADES 9-12 ONLY REPORTED									
No	Code	School	Oct 1,	Feb 1,	Differ-	%	Traditional or			
			2009	2010	ence	Change	Charter			
1	300003	Thurgood Marshall Early College High School	377	382	+5	+1%	Charter			
2	382001	New Orleans Charter Science & Math Academy	151	161	+10	+7%	Charter			
3	383001	Sojourner Truth Academy	183	167	-16	-9%	Charter			
4	384001	Miller-McCoy Academy	197	184	-13	-7%	Charter			
5	389001	Abramson Science & Technology Charter School	88	86	-2	-2%	Charter			
6	391001	Dr.M.L.K. Charter School For Science & Tech	64	64	0	0	Charter			
7	395005	O.P. Walker Senior High School	857	837	-20	-2%	Charter			
8	395007	Algiers Technology Academy	347	336	-11	-3%	Charter			
9	396042	International High School	100	92	-8	-8%	Charter			
10	397001	Sophie B. Wright Inst. Of Academic Excellence	101	104	+3	+3%	Charter			
			2465	2413						

RSD- Traditional Only

RSD	RSD High Schools (Schools with Grades 9,10, 11 and/or 12) 2009-10 GRADES 9-12 ONLY REPORTED									
No	Code	School	Oct 1, 2009	Feb 1, 2010	Differ- ence	% Change	Traditional or Charter			
1	396002	Joseph S. Clark Senior High School	284	262	-22	-8%	Traditional			
2	396004	Walter L. Cohen High School	373	377	+4	+1%	Traditional			
3	396007	Fredrick A. Douglass High School	291	284	-7	-2%	Traditional			
4	396011	John McDonogh Senior High School	545	506	-39	-7%	Traditional			
5	396016	Rabouin Career Magnet High School	295	290	-5	-2%	Traditional			
6	396017	Sarah Towles Reed Senior High School	585	573	-12	-2%	Traditional			
7	396026	G. W. Carver High School	432	416	-16	-4%	Traditional			
8	396036	Excel Academy	68	83	+15	+22%	Traditional			
9	396043	Greater Gentilly High School	206	212	+6	+3%	Traditional			

	3079	3003		

RSD- Alternative School

RSD	RSD High Schools (Schools with Grades 9,10, 11 and/or 12) 2009-10 GRADES 9-12 ONLY REPORTED								
No	Code	School	Oct 1, 2009	Feb 1, 2010	Differ- ence	% Change	Traditional or Charter		
1	396022	Schwarz Alternative School	54	73	+19	+35%	Traditional		

RSD-Other

RSD High Schools (Schools with Grades 9,10, 11 and/or 12) 2009-10 GRADES 9-12 ONLY REPORTED								
No	Code	School	Oct 1, 2009	Feb 1, 2010	Differ- ence	% Change	Traditional or Charter	
1	396045	New Orleans Career Academy	59	69	+10	+17%	Traditional	

Endnotes

ⁱ La Dept of Education website, Data and Reports, Student Information System.

ⁱⁱ DOE, Student Enrollment Data, Zipped Excel: Multiple Statistics, Oct. 1, 2009, by site, Grades K-12 only. DOE, Student Enrollment Data, Zipped Excel: Multiple Statistics, Feb. 1, 2009, by site, Grades K-12 only. See, also, Appendix A.

iii *Ibid*. See, also, Appendix B.

^{iv} LA Department of Education: Data Collections Systems, Student Information System, SIS User Guide 2010-11 version 10.7, Element Name: Exit Reason Code, Code Values.

^v Appendices A and B

vi Graduation rates and assessment scores determine each high school's SPS (School Performance Scores). See LA DOE website, Data and Reports.

vii La.R.S.17:3971 et.seq. "It is the intention of the legislature that the best interests of at-risk pupils shall be the overriding consideration in implementing the provisions of this Chapter (on charter schools)." La. R.S. 17:3972(A) viii No Child Left Behind: Public Law 107-110, Part B, Public Charter Schools

^{ix} For 2010-11, only the Oct 1st count has been released by the LA Department of Education.

^x La.R.S.17:416; Discipline of Pupils: Suspension, Expulsion.

xi Sojourner Truth Academy Student Handbook: "social Justice and College Preparation for Youth and Community Empowerment, see: consequences for "Cheating Violations" and "Parent/ Guardian Contract: Parent Meetings." xii Ibid.

Miller McCoy Academy for Mathematics and Business: College Preparatory Charter School: Family Handbook 2010-11, Disciplinary Policies.

xiv International High School – Change of School Code. 2009-10 School Code: 396042. 2010-11 School Code: 344001. School Codes are assigned by the LA Department of Education.