

## **RSD High School Test Scores Remain Below State Average**

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In New Orleans, 47% of high school students in the Recovery School District scored “good” or “excellent” – as opposed to “needs improvement” or “fair” – on the end-of-course tests. The Louisiana average is 62%. The RSD is well below the state average.

Nine years ago, 107 New Orleans public schools were taken-over because they were below the state performance score average, which is calculated mainly using test scores. Since the schools were taken-over and placed into the RSD because they were below average, it seems appropriate that some entity should now take-over the RSD high schools since their test scores continue to be well below average. There was no doubt that New Orleans high schools needed improvement. Now, there is no doubt that RSD cannot improve them. Failing high schools need more than just change in governance. What is needed are new, innovative methods for teaching the difficult-to-teach. This, in fact, was the primary purpose of the state take-over.

At one time, each parish was a local school district with all schools in the parish governed by the elected school board. Now in some parishes, schools are divided into two districts: one district with schools still governed by the local board, and the other district with schools governed by the state-run Recovery School District. Now, when the Louisiana Department of Education releases test scores, the scores are released by district so that, in New Orleans, two results are published: one for the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) and one for the Recovery School District (RSD).

Thus, in 2014, of its high schools that scored “good” or “excellent,” OPBS had 71% and RSD had 47%. Overall, the state average was 62%. Then, in order to deceive the public, the LDOE combined the OPBS and RSD districts, stating that together 59% of students in New Orleans scored “good” or “excellent.” (Note that even when combined the RSD pulled New Orleans down to below the state average of 62%) [End of Course Test Results](#)

Combining the districts in New Orleans, when one district has the clear and legislatively mandated obligation to improve, is nothing but deception. The OPBS stands alone as a successful school district. Upon the RSD lies the burden of improving, haven taken-over the failing schools. The combined percentage does nothing but mislead the public.

While all school districts work to improve, the onerous task of raising test scores in New Orleans lies with the Recovery School District, which was given this task by the Louisiana legislature in its mandate following the state take-over. The schools governed by the OPSB were the successful schools that escaped the state take-over. They were not failing then and they are still not failing. Thus, it is misleading for the LDOE to report a percentage for the combined OPBS and RSD schools, alleging that New Orleans has improved.

It is noticeable that among the worst performing high schools taken-over by the RSD, three have limited test results reported. The three schools (Cohen, Carver and Reed) do not have results for the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade tests because these grade levels have been phased out, and eventually so will the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. The buildings of Carver, Cohen and Reed house charter schools, and, on different floors of the building, are housed the traditional students that were in the failing take-over schools. The charter schools were not required to enroll the failing students who were already in those buildings.

*Research on Reforms, Inc.* will continue to analyze data as our goal is to work to improve public schools in New Orleans. Once successful RSD schools are identified, the next step is to isolate the factors contributing to that success. Out of this great reform initiative should come innovative methods to teach the difficult-to-teach. That has not happened yet.

References (See articles below on *Research on Reforms* website)

- *State Takeover Not Working for New Orleans High Schools, November 2008*
- *RSD Fails to Improve High Schools in New Orleans, June 2010*
- *Mid-Year Loss of High School Students, February 2011*
- *RSD's Continuing Failure: High Schools and Crime in New Orleans, January 2012*
- *NO College Prep Charter Takes-over Cohen Building Without Taking-over Failing Cohen Students, January 2013*