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# **Should the Educational Reforms in New Orleans Serve as a National Model for Other Cities?**

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On March 1<sup>st</sup>, Senator Mary Landrieu held a roundtable discussion in Washington D.C. with her colleagues and staffers to tout the improvements in New Orleans Public Schools since Hurricane Katrina. She was recently quoted in *The Times Picayune* as saying that because of the "...charter school development; New Orleans has become a national leader in education reform."<sup>1</sup> The focus of this roundtable discussion was a recent report issued by New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO) and a research group called Public Impact from North Carolina titled "New Orleans-Style Education Reform: A Guide for Cities."<sup>2</sup> Among the many conclusions on achievement presented in this report, three of the most salient are that New Orleans has experienced significant achievement gains since Katrina in 2005; New Orleans has decreased the achievement gap between its students and the state's average; and New Orleans has decreased the number of students attending failing schools.

The report does not assess individual school achievement results using the current letter grade classifications implemented for the 2011-12 school year.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the achievement results presented were combined for the three separate and distinct governing entities in New Orleans: Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB), Recovery School District (RSD), and the schools that are run directly by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). The aggregation of achievement data in this manner makes it impossible to determine whether, and to what extent, the RSD has provided the poor, disadvantaged, and public school students with the quality education originally promised as justification by the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) to dismantle the Orleans Public School System. Thus the purpose of this critique is to present another perspective on the achievement progress made by the RSD after 6 years of direct control by the LDOE. This critique counters the major achievement conclusions presented in the report by utilizing the following methods:

- a. Examining the current school achievement levels in terms of the new letter grade policy of the LDOE the 2011-12 school year (See Appendix A);

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<sup>1</sup> "Sen. Mary Landrieu to showcase New Orleans school system" *The Times Picayune*, Bruce Alpert, 6/27/2011.

<sup>2</sup> Brinson, D., Boast, L., Hassel, B. C., & Kingsland, N. (2011). *New Orleans-style education reform: A guide for cities: Lessons Learned, 2004-2010*. New Orleans, LA: New Schools for New Orleans. Retrieved from [www.newschoolsforneworleans.org/guide](http://www.newschoolsforneworleans.org/guide).

<http://landrieu.senate.gov/mediacenter/upload/03012012NOLAstylereform.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> "... The letter grades policy was enacted by lawmakers in the 2010 Legislative Session. The legislation was sponsored by the House Education Chairman, Austin Badon, with the express intent to give parents and others a clearer measure of how a school is performing. The legislation was signed by Governor Bobby Jindal and became Act 718."

LDOE – *Letter Grades for Schools*, 2010, [www.doe.state.la.us/topics/lettergrades.html](http://www.doe.state.la.us/topics/lettergrades.html)

- b. Disaggregating the current achievement status of each school separately for each the three separate, governing entities in New Orleans; and
- c. Disaggregating student enrollment as a function of type of school and its assigned letter grade.

Contrary to the questionable significance of the achievement gains reported by NSNO and Public Impact, the 2011-12 letter grades assigned to RSD charter and traditional schools demonstrate the very low level of academic performance that still exists in these schools after 6 years of direct control by the LDOE. Appendix B presents the 2011-12 student enrollments for all of the public schools in New Orleans with the associated letter grade assigned to each school by the LDOE. A cursory examination of the RSD schools clearly shows that the general achievement level of the vast majority of RSD schools, as measured by the assigned letter grades, is pathetic at best. Some of the major highlights that can be observed from the tables with respect to the current achievement levels of the RSD after 6 years are as follows:

- 100% of the 15 direct-run RSD schools assigned a letter grade received a “D” or “F” as compared to 20% of the 5 OPSB direct-run schools graded;
- 79% of the 42 charter RSD schools assigned a letter grade received a “D” or “F” as compared to 0% of the 11 OPSB charter schools graded;
- Of the RSD students attending direct-run schools with letter grades, 100%, or 5,422, are attending schools with assigned letter grades of either “D” or “F;”
- Of the RSD students attending charter schools assigned a letter grade, 76% ,or 15,040, are attending schools with assigned grades of either “D” or “F”;
- Schools that were just opened or opened for less than three years were not assigned a letter grade at this time;
- Although the RSD’s public relations machine glorifies the tremendous gains made over 6 years, the overall performance of the RSD in New Orleans remains at or near the bottom in Louisiana, i.e., RSD received an overall letter grade of “D” as compared to the overall letter grade of “B” received by the OPSB;
- The state will raise the failing bar from a SPS below 65 to SPS below 75 for the 2011-12 school years. Unless there is significant improvement among the current “D” and “F” and “C” schools, there will be a significant increase in the number of failing and poor performing RSD charter and direct run schools.

Under the new letter grade system, Louisiana's accountability goal now states that all schools will achieve a School Performance Score (SPS)<sup>4</sup> of 120 or a letter grade of A by the spring of 2014. There are only about 2 ½ years left to achieve this goal. Studies by ROR have continued to document the achievement failure of the RSD based on the expectations of Louisiana's accountability program.<sup>5,6,7,8,9</sup> Yet, the public continues to be fed the propaganda by the LDOE, RSD and various support advocacy groups such as *Educate Now!* and New Schools for New Orleans as to the tremendous progress made by this reform movement.<sup>10, 11</sup> Based upon the results presented in Appendix B, it is rather ridiculous for anyone to claim that New Orleans has become a national leader in education reform and thereby should serve as a national model to other cities.

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<sup>4</sup> School Performance Scores are based on the following calculations: K-5 Schools – Attendance Index (10%), Assessment Index (90%); K-8, 7-8 Schools – Attendance Index (5%), Dropout Index (5%), and Assessment Index (90%); 9-12 Schools - Graduation Index (30%) and Assessment Index (70%)

[http://doe.louisiana.gov/data/school\\_accountability\\_reports.aspxSchool](http://doe.louisiana.gov/data/school_accountability_reports.aspxSchool)

<sup>5</sup> Ferguson, Barbara, *New Orleans Schools Decline Following State's 'Double Standard Takeover*, February 20, 2010, [www.researchonreforms.org](http://www.researchonreforms.org)

<sup>6</sup> Ferguson, Barbara, *RSD High School Test Results Show Alarming Trend*, May 20, 2010, [www.researchonreforms.org](http://www.researchonreforms.org)

<sup>7</sup> Hatfield, Charles, *Recovery School District's Myth of Educational Turnaround in New Orleans*, June, 2010. [www.researchonreforms.org](http://www.researchonreforms.org)

<sup>8</sup> Hatfield, Charles, *RSD and NOPS after 4 Years*, October 13, 2009. [www.researchonreforms.org](http://www.researchonreforms.org)

<sup>9</sup> Hatfield, Charles, *The Recovery School District is a "District in Academic Crisis"*, 9/30.2010, [www.researchonreforms.org](http://www.researchonreforms.org)

<sup>10</sup> Leslie's Notebook: Edition 3, May 2009, Analysis of the Spring 2009 Test Scores, [www.educatenow.net](http://www.educatenow.net); [http://www.educatenow.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=232%3Aleslies-notebook-spring-2009-test-scores&catid=1%3Acurrent-news&Itemid=55](http://www.educatenow.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=232%3Aleslies-notebook-spring-2009-test-scores&catid=1%3Acurrent-news&Itemid=55)

<sup>11</sup> RSD Press Release 10/14/2009 "Collective Scores for New Orleans Schools Improve Dramatically Over Four Year Period" [www.rsdl.net/Media/Press/Release.aspx?PR=1340](http://www.rsdl.net/Media/Press/Release.aspx?PR=1340)

## APPENDIX A

Table B2		
Revised Performance Labels for 2011 and 2012		
Letter Grades Schools will be Given in 2011 and 2012 Based on Their SPS		
Performance Labels	SPS Range (2010-11)	SPS Range (2011-12)
A	120.0-200.0	120.0-200.0
B	105.0-119.9	105.0-119.9
C	90.0-104.9	90.0-104.9
D	65.0-89.9	75.0-89.9
F (Academically Unacceptable)	0-64.9	0-74.9

**Note:** In 2011-2012 and beyond, the **F** range will be 0-74.9 and the **D** range will be 75.0-89.9

**Source:** *Accountability At A Glance*, Louisiana State Department of Education, December, 2010

## APPENDIX B

### 2011-12 School Enrollment and Achievement Levels

#### Key to Tables

OPSB Direct-Run: Schools not taken over by the state and directly run by the  
**Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB)**

OPSB Charter: Schools chartered by OPSB

RSD Direct-Run: **Recovery School District (RSD)** directly run schools.  
These are schools taken over by the state in 2005 and still directly operated by RSD (not charters)

RSD-Charter: Charter schools created by the state RSD agency

BESE Charter: Charter schools created by the **Board of Elementary and Secondary Schools (BESE)**

ACSA: Charter schools operated by the largest charter management organization, the  
**Algiers Charter School Association (ACSA)**

#### Source of Public School Student Enrollment Data (Multiple Statistics)

[http://www.louisianaschools.net/offices/infomanagement/student\\_enrollment\\_data.html](http://www.louisianaschools.net/offices/infomanagement/student_enrollment_data.html)

#### Source of Letter Grades by School:

[http://www.louisianaschools.net/offices/publicaffairs/press\\_release.aspx?PR=1566](http://www.louisianaschools.net/offices/publicaffairs/press_release.aspx?PR=1566)

		<b>Oct. 2011 Multi-Stats by Site</b> <b>Compiled by</b> <b>Charles Hatfield</b> <b>Research on Reforms</b>  <b>Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB)</b>	
Management Type	School	2011-12 MFP Oct1 Total Funded School Enrollment	2011 School Letter Grade
OPSB Direct-Run	Architecture, Design & Engineering High School	195	
OPSB Direct-Run	Benjamin Franklin Elem. Math and Science	551	B-
OPSB Direct-Run	Eleanor McMain Secondary School	741	B+
OPSB Direct-Run	Mahalia Jackson Elementary School	58	
OPSB Direct-Run	Mary Bethune Elementary Literature/Technology	336	B-
OPSB Direct-Run	McDonogh #35 Senior High School	869	C
OPSB Direct-Run	The Alternative Learning Institute	106	F
OPSB Direct-Run	Youth Study Center	22	
	<b>OPSB Direct-Run Total</b>	<b>2,878</b>	
OPSB Charter	Audubon Charter School	710	A+
OPSB Charter	Benjamin Franklin High School	730	A
OPSB Charter	Edward Hynes Charter School	583	B+
OPSB Charter	Einstein Charter School	443	C+
OPSB Charter	Lake Forest Elementary Charter School	478	A+
OPSB Charter	Lusher Charter School	1709	A+
OPSB Charter	New Orleans Charter Science and Mathematics HS	370	B+
OPSB Charter	Robert Russa Moton Charter School	268	B-
OPSB Charter	Warren Easton Senior High School	881	A+
OPSB Charter (ACSA)	Alice Harte Elementary Charter School	648	C+
OPSB Charter (ACSA)	Edna Karr Secondary School	928	B+
	<b>OPSB Charter Total</b>	<b>7,748</b>	

**Oct. 2011 Multi-Stats by Site  
Modified by  
Charles Hatfield  
Research on Reforms  
Recovery School District (RSD)**

Management Type	School	2011-12 MFP Oct1 Total Funded Enrollment	2011 Letter Grade
RSD Direct-Run	A.P. Tureaud Elementary School	266	D
RSD Direct-Run	Abramson Science and Technology School	549	
RSD Direct-Run	Benjamin Banneker Elementary School	466	D+
RSD Direct-Run	Dr. Charles Richard Drew Elementary School	186	F
RSD Direct-Run	F.W. Gregory Elementary School	11	
RSD Direct-Run	G.W. Carver High School	335	F+
RSD Direct-Run	H.C. Schaumburg Elementary School	576	D-
RSD Direct-Run	James Weldon Johnson School	250	D+
RSD Direct-Run	John McDonogh Senior High School	271	F+
RSD Direct-Run	Joseph A. Craig School	500	F
RSD Direct-Run	L. B. Landry High School	736	F
RSD Direct-Run	Mary D. Coghill Elementary School	572	D+
RSD Direct-Run	Murray Henderson Elementary School	202	F-
RSD Direct-Run	Paul B. Habans Elementary School	312	F-
RSD Direct-Run	Sarah Towles Reed Senior High School	453	F
RSD Direct-Run	Schwarz Alternative School	40	F-
RSD Direct-Run	Walter L. Cohen High School	257	F+
	<b>RSD Direct-Run</b>	<b>5,982</b>	



**Oct. 2011 Multi-Stats by Site  
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**Recovery School District (RSD)  
(Continued)**

<b>Management Type</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>2011-12 MFP Oct1 Total Funded Enrollment</b>	<b>2011 Letter Grade</b>
RSD - Charter	Akili Academy of New Orleans	307	B
RSD - Charter	Andrew H. Wilson Charter School	556	D+
RSD - Charter	Arise Academy	311	D
RSD - Charter	Arthur Ashe Charter School	426	D-
RSD - Charter	Batiste Cultural Arts Academy at Live Oak Elem	568	F
RSD - Charter	Benjamin E. Mays Preparatory School	313	F
RSD - Charter	Crocker Arts and Technology School	206	D-
RSD - Charter	Dr. M.L.K. Charter School for Science & Tech.	640	C+
RSD - Charter	E. P. Harney Spirit of Excellence Academy	366	D
RSD - Charter	Esperanza Charter School	421	F
RSD - Charter	Gentilly Terrace School	415	D
RSD - Charter	International High School	296	
RSD - Charter	James M. Singleton Charter School	674	D-
RSD - Charter	John Dibert Community School	421	F
RSD - Charter	Joseph S. Clark Preparatory High School	436	
RSD - Charter	KIPP Believe College Prep (Phillips)	478	B+
RSD - Charter	KIPP Central City Academy	397	B+
RSD - Charter	KIPP Central City Primary	421	B-
RSD - Charter	KIPP McDonogh 15 School for the Creative Arts	557	C
RSD - Charter	KIPP New Orleans Leadership Academy	313	D
RSD - Charter	KIPP Renaissance High School	296	
RSD - Charter	Lafayette Academy of New Orleans	779	D+
RSD - Charter	Lagniappe Academies of New Orleans	115	F
RSD - Charter	Lake Area High School	603	D
RSD - Charter	Langston Hughes Academy Charter School	617	D+
RSD - Charter	McDonogh #28 City Park Academy	400	D-
RSD - Charter	McDonogh #42 Elementary Charter School	488	F-
RSD - Charter	Miller-McCoy Academy	562	D
RSD - Charter	Morris Jeff Community School	201	
RSD - Charter	Nelson Elementary School	445	D
RSD - Charter	New Orleans Charter Science and Math Academy	334	C

<b>Oct. 2011 Multi-Stats by Site</b> <b>Compiled by</b> <b>Charles Hatfield</b> <b>Research on Reforms</b>  <b>Recovery School District (RSD)</b> <b>(Continued)</b>			
<b>Management Type</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>2011-12 MFP Oct1 Total Funded Enrollment</b>	<b>2011 Letter Grade</b>
RSD - Charter	NOLA College Prep Charter School	817	D-
RSD - Charter	P. A. Capdau School	340	D-
RSD - Charter	Pride College Preparatory Academy	248	F
RSD - Charter	ReNEW Accelerated High School #1	155	
RSD - Charter	ReNEW Accelerated High School #2	137	
RSD - Charter	ReNEW at Reed Elementary	590	
RSD - Charter	Samuel J. Green Charter School	518	D
RSD - Charter	SciTech Academy at Laurel Elementary	581	F
RSD - Charter	Sojourner Truth Academy	251	F-
RSD - Charter	Sophie B. Wright Inst. of Academic Excellence	476	D
RSD - Charter	Success Preparatory Academy	380	F
RSD - Charter	The Intercultural Charter School	419	D
RSD Charter (ACSA)	Algiers Technology Academy	290	D+
RSD Charter (ACSA)	Dwight D. Eisenhower Elementary School	607	D
RSD Charter (ACSA)	Fannie C. Williams Charter School	464	
RSD Charter (ACSA)	Harriet Tubman Charter School	520	
RSD Charter (ACSA)	Martin Behrman Elementary School	642	B+
RSD Charter (ACSA)	McDonogh #32 Elementary School	488	F
RSD Charter (ACSA)	O.P. Walker Senior High School	890	C+
RSD Charter (ACSA)	William J. Fischer Elementary School	626	D+
	<b>RSD Charter Total</b>	<b>22,801</b>	

		<b>Oct. 2011 Multi-Stats by Site</b> <b>Compiled by</b> <b>Charles Hatfield</b> <b>Research on Reforms</b>  <b>Board of Elementary Education (BESE)</b>	
Management Type	School	2011-12 MFP Oct1 Total Funded Enrollment	2011 Letter Grade
BESE Charter	International School of Louisiana	627	B+
BESE Charter	Louisiana Virtual Charter Academy	1246	
BESE Charter	Lycee Francais de la Nouvelle-Orleans	53	
BESE Charter	Milestone SABIS Academy of New Orleans	395	D
BESE Charter	New Orleans Military and Maritime Academy	102	
<b>BESE Charter Total</b>		<b>2,423</b>	

District SUMMARY	2011-12 MFP Oct1 Total Funded Enrollment	2011 District Letter Grade
OPSB Total	10,626	B
RSD Total	28,783	D
BESE Total	2,423	*
Total Orleans Parish Public School Enrollment:	41,832	
Total Charter School Enrollment in Orleans Parish:	32,972 (79%)	
* Too few schools with letter grades to be meaningful		