



Cowen Institute



TULANE  
UNIVERSITY

# THE STATE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN NEW ORLEANS

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2025



# THE COWEN INSTITUTE

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**Our mission: *The Cowen Institute equips leaders and practitioners with skills and resources to increase educational and postsecondary success among New Orleans students.***

The Cowen Institute was established in 2007 to monitor, chronicle, and analyze the significant changes occurring in New Orleans' public education system after Hurricane Katrina. The institute is named after Scott Cowen, President Emeritus of Tulane University, who served as a leader in New Orleans' recovery and in transforming its education system. Since then, our work has expanded beyond research and policy. Today, the Cowen Institute fulfills its mission through two strategic pillars: **contextualizing data and providing thought leadership, and building practitioners' capacity.**

## THE REPORT

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The *State of Public Education in New Orleans (SPENO)* report has evolved since its initial publication by the Cowen Institute in 2007. Originally, *SPENO* documented the sweeping changes to New Orleans' public education system following Hurricane Katrina, particularly the shift to a charter school dominated landscape. It also emphasized comparisons between governance structures and academic performance before and after these reforms. Over time, we have expanded the report's scope by incorporating more publicly available data, mainly from the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) and New Orleans Public Schools (NOLA-PS), and shifting our focus to include insights into students' postsecondary outcomes. The report remains a snapshot of public education during the current academic year, utilizing aggregated public data to inform a broad audience — including educators, families, students, policymakers, and the general public.

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# INTRODUCTION

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The Cowen Institute last published our flagship report, *The State of Public Education in New Orleans (SPENO)*, in February 2023. More than two years later, public schools, along with educators, parents, and students, continue to recover from the unprecedented environment of school closures and reopenings, masking, and virtual learning that marked the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year's report comes nearly 20 years after Hurricane Katrina. The devastation that storm wrought on New Orleans led in part to the dramatic changes that reshaped public education in the city. New Orleans now has the most decentralized public education system in the country — all but one of the public schools in the city are public charter schools, rather than schools run directly by the school district, as is the case in most of the U.S. The 2015 *SPENO* attempted to comprehensively look back at the first ten years of public education in the city post-Katrina. This 2025 report draws on that report, but does not repeat it. Instead, the focus is on the past ten years generally, and the past two years since the last *SPENO* report specifically. It does, however, include a section on the progress of New Orleans public education over the past 20 years.

This report is not meant to serve as an exhaustive analysis of every facet of public education in New Orleans. This is a deliberate choice. Addressing complex topics such as enrollment, school performance, and transportation with the necessary depth, nuance, and context would require extensive research and additional data collection and is beyond the scope of this publication. Instead, we see value in compiling and summarizing publicly available data on New Orleans' education landscape into a single, cohesive report. Doing so consistently enables us to track broad trends over time while serving as a historical reference in an ever-evolving system.

As always, we rely on substantial external input from government officials, educators, state agencies, nonprofit organizations, community members, and researchers to refine and validate the data and information in our reports. This feedback is crucial to ensure accuracy, particularly in a system characterized by frequent changes. It also allows stakeholders to contribute their perspectives on how key issues are framed. Through this process, we recognize that there are multiple ways to present the story of public education in New Orleans — one that is complex, often divisive, and deeply personal. In some sections, we include historical data to illustrate trends over time.

For this year's report, we also asked reviewers to share their perspectives on what they are most optimistic about regarding public education in the city and what they see as the greatest challenges facing the system. Many reviewers provided responses and they are included throughout this report.

SPENO does not attempt to capture the full breadth of public education in New Orleans. Tens of thousands of families have children enrolled in public schools, and countless individuals in schools, districts, and community organizations work daily to enhance educational outcomes. We acknowledge that perspectives on the state of public education vary widely and are shaped by personal experiences. Our hope is that this report serves as a starting point for deeper exploration of these intricate issues and provides a foundation for informed, meaningful discussions among stakeholders.



*“New Orleans’ education system has made meaningful progress thanks to the incredible efforts of students, educators, leaders, and community members. Still, we know the work isn’t finished. To continue delivering on our commitment to ensuring that all young people have access to an excellent education, we must keep supporting educators and the system as a whole — providing the data, resources, and partnerships needed to drive progress. At the same time, we must stay focused on expanding opportunity and support so that every student can thrive — now and into the future.”*

**Dr. Amanda Kruger Hill**

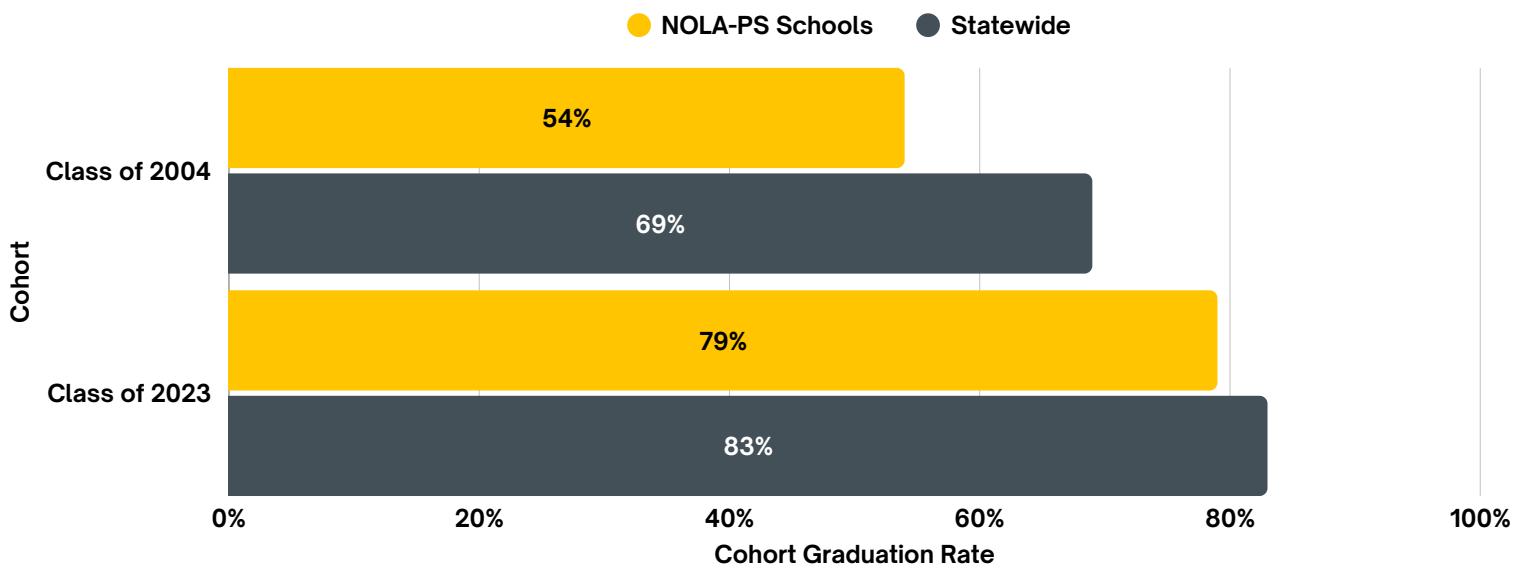
**Executive Director, Cowen Institute & Professor of Practice, Tulane**

# 20-YEAR RETROSPECTIVE

2025 marks the 20-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina and the devastating impact it had on New Orleans. In those 20 years, New Orleans' public education system transitioned from a traditional district-run school system to one in which now, 73 of the city's 74 public schools are charter schools. The changes that occurred to public education in the city over the past 20 years have led to notable improvements, including:

- **Academic performance:** While the academic performance of students in New Orleans still trails the statewide average, the academic performance of city students has increased significantly in both ELA and math since 2004. In 2024, 54% of NOLA-PS 4th graders and 65% of 8th graders achieved Basic or Above on statewide LEAP ELA tests, up from 44% and 26% in 2004, respectively. Math scores are also higher, with 49% of 4th graders and 42% of 8th graders reaching Basic or Above in 2024, compared to 41% and 30% in 2004, respectively. Due to increasing state standards, LEAP tests have also become more rigorous over the past 20 years, suggesting the increase in performance reflects academic growth.
- **Graduation rate:** The NOLA-PS graduation rate increased by approximately 25 percentage points, which outpaces the statewide improvement of 14 percentage points over the same period. However, as we note in our postsecondary section, New Orleans' overall graduation rate still trails the state's rate.

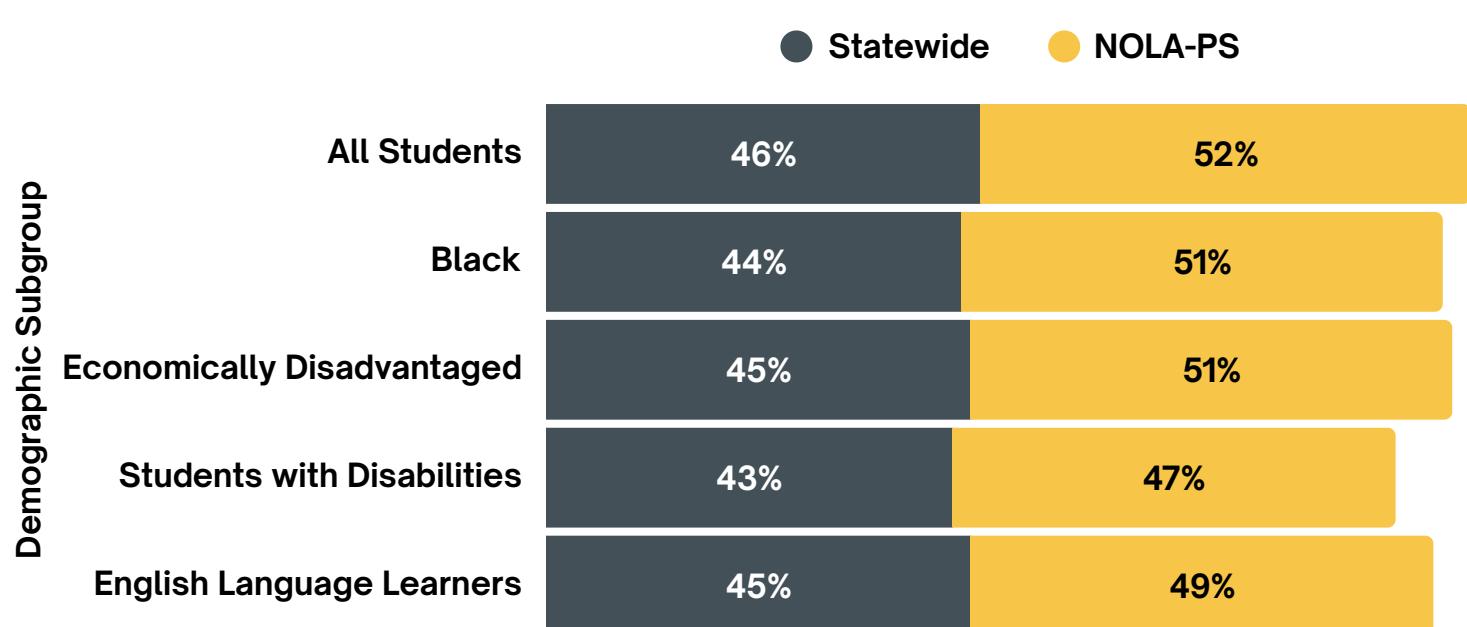
## Cohort Graduation Rate: 2004 and 2023



**Source:** All data cited on the page comes from NOLA-PS & New Schools for New Orleans, *New Orleans by the Numbers 2025*.

- **Student growth:** The academic growth of New Orleans students exceeds that of students statewide overall, and in key demographic subgroups such as Black, Economically Disadvantaged, Students with Disabilities, and English Language Learner students.
- **Failing schools:** Prior to Hurricane Katrina, 61% of public schools in New Orleans were deemed failing under state metrics. Today, there are no “F” rated or failing NOLA-PS public schools operating in New Orleans.
- **College enrollment:** In 2004, 37% of New Orleans OPSB and the Recovery School District (RSD) high school graduates enrolled in college, which was 10% lower than statewide. In 2023, 65% of NOLA-PS public high school graduates enrolled in college, which exceeded the statewide rate by 8%.

## 2023-2024 LEAP Top Growth in ELA and Math (All Grades)



### Total Students: LEAP (All Grades)

**Source:** All data cited on the pages comes from NOLA-PS & New Schools for New Orleans, *New Orleans by the Numbers 2025*

**Note:** The LDOE measures 'Top Growth' as the percentage of students making rapid progress or outperforming peers with similar demographic and prior performance backgrounds.

*"Reflecting on the past 20 years, New Orleans' public education system has undergone a remarkable transformation, rising from the challenges of Hurricane Katrina to become a model of innovation and resilience. While we've made strides in improving outcomes, our best is still to come. Looking forward, I'm inspired by our community's unwavering commitment — educators, families, leaders, partners, and students uniting to shape a future where every child grows, achieves, and thrives in our schools."*

**Dr. Fateama Fulmore**  
**Superintendent, NOLA Public Schools**

# THE ROAD TO NEW ORLEANS'

Amid widespread low performance, an amendment to the Louisiana State Constitution (Act 9) allowed for BESE to take over chronically low performing schools and directly run them or contract them out to charters.

Schools began reopening in 2006. By the 2007-08 school year, there were 80 schools open in the city. OPSB retained control of seven of the highest performing schools.

2003

2007

1998  
-2005

2005

2012

During these years, the OPSB and New Orleans public schools struggled with corruption, low academic performance, federal investigations and charges, and bankruptcy.

Following Hurricane Katrina, Act 35 was approved by the Louisiana Legislature, expanding the ability of the Recovery School District (RSD) to take over low-performing and failing schools. The bill had an immediate effect on New Orleans. Facing insolvency, the OPSB terminated the contracts of more than 7,000 employees and teachers.

OneApp, the city's first unified common application enrollment system launched. With OneApp, families could apply to attend most schools in the city using a single application, no matter where they lived.

# PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

A federal consent decree went into effect over special education in New Orleans public schools. The decree was the result of a settlement between the Southern Poverty Law Center and the LDOE, OPSB, and RSD. The consent judgment mandated both targeted and random monitoring of schools twice a year to ensure compliance with special education law.

All RSD schools in New Orleans officially returned to local control under the OPSB. Almost all schools remained charter-operated, making New Orleans the first U.S. city with a nearly 100% charter school district under local governance.

New Orleans Public Schools and the OPSB opened their first direct-run school since schools returned to local control in 2018.



The Louisiana Legislature approved Act 91, unifying all New Orleans RSD schools under OPSB oversight by 2018-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused schools to physically shut down a few months before the end of the 2019-2020 school year. Charter leaders and NOLA-PS supported families so students could attend school virtually. Schools began to reopen during the 2020-2021 school year.

# CURRENT EVENTS

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The move to a near all-charter system has impacted educators, students, and families over the past 20 years. In our 2015 *SPENO* report, we examined the legacy of those changes extensively and therefore, will not rehash all of the issues again. However, it is worth noting some of the challenges the city's public education system still faces. This section examines current events affecting public education in New Orleans.

## Federal Education Funding Uncertainty

On March 20, 2025, President Donald Trump issued an executive order titled 'Improving Education Outcomes by Empowering Parents, States, and Communities,' directing the Secretary of Education to initiate the closure of the U.S. Department of Education. The order outlines the transfer of key responsibilities, including student loan management to the Small Business Administration and special education programs to the Department of Health and Human Services. Legally, however, the actual dissolution of the Department requires congressional approval. Though the administration stated that essential programs like federal student loans and special education funding would persist, a significant portion of the Department's staff has been cut, which could lead to problems for public schools nationwide, including in New Orleans. While only about 10% of all public education funding nationally comes from the federal level, programs such as those supported by the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, as well as Pell Grants, and funding and oversight for Title I and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) could all be impacted. On March 25, 2025, teachers' unions and civil rights advocates, including the NAACP, filed a lawsuit against the Trump administration to block efforts to dismantle the Department of Education. This legal action could have significant implications for charter schools nationwide, including those in New Orleans.<sup>1</sup>

## Leadership Transition In NOLA Public Schools

In November 2024, Dr. Avis Williams departed as Superintendent of NOLA Public Schools (NOLA-PS), effective December 1, 2024. Dr. Williams, who took over the role in July 2022, left following a controversy around a significant budget gap that first came to light publicly in 2024. During her tenure, the district saw improvements in academic outcomes and established significant community partnerships. Following her departure, Deputy Superintendent Dr. Fateama Fulmore was appointed as interim superintendent. The Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) led a search for a new superintendent, which emphasized community engagement through an online survey to gather public input on desired qualities and priorities for the district's next leader. The search also included a public hearing, community town hall event, and partner engagements. Ultimately, the Board named Fulmore as the permanent superintendent in April 2025.<sup>2,3,4</sup>

## Tax Revenue Dispute Between The City And School Board

In 2019, the OPSB filed suit against the City of New Orleans regarding the city's practice of retaining 2% of all ad valorem tax revenue and 1.6% of all sales tax revenue, which the OPSB believes should be directed to schools. As of publication, the parties were still in active litigation.<sup>5</sup>

## National Legal Developments Affecting Charter Schools

In 2025, the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments in *Oklahoma Statewide Charter School Board v. Drummond* and *St. Isidore of Seville Catholic Virtual School v. Drummond*, cases that could significantly impact the relationship between public funding, religious education, and charter schools in the United States. In June 2023, the Oklahoma Statewide Virtual Charter School Board approved the application for St. Isidore of Seville Catholic Virtual School, positioning it to become the nation's first publicly funded religious charter school. This decision was met with controversy, leading Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond to file a lawsuit challenging the approval, asserting that it violated both the U.S. Constitution's Establishment Clause and the Oklahoma state constitution. The central issues before the Supreme Court include the legality of religiously run charter schools that receive public education funding. The Supreme Court heard the case in May and deadlocked over religious charter schools, meaning a lower court's ruling against the operation of such schools was upheld. Federal decisions of this nature could still impact charter school operations in New Orleans in the future.<sup>6,7</sup>

## LA Gator Program

Scheduled to launch in the 2025-2026 school year, the LA GATOR program introduces Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) for eligible students in Louisiana. Under the program, parents can use public education dollars to send their children to private schools in Louisiana. The program could have consequences for public education in New Orleans and across the state, as it will directly fund private schools with public funding even though those private schools will not be held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Schools participating in LA GATOR will not be required to administer the LEAP as they were with the state's previous voucher program. Charter schools in New Orleans could see additional decreased enrollment as a result, which would lead to a loss of funding. As of May 2025, 40,000 Louisiana families had applied to the program.<sup>8</sup>

## Continued Declining Enrollment

New Orleans public schools have experienced a significant decline in student enrollment over recent years. In October 2019, all public schools in the city reported 51,230 students, but decreased to under 48,000 in 2024. The decline has been particularly evident in Kindergarten through fifth grade, with Kindergarten enrollment dropping nearly 13% since 2017. This sharp decline in the lower grades is due to declining birth rates, as well as the exiting of an exceptionally large cohort of students as they matriculated into the upper grades. Now, that same large cohort is graduating high school, which means grades 9-12 will likely begin to decline in future years, while enrollment in K-8 will become more stable, experiencing smaller, steadier declines.

High schools currently have more excess capacity, or open seats, than grades K-8. Because schools are funded on a per-pupil basis, each open seat represents a loss of roughly \$10,000+ to the school. The financial implications of already under-enrolled high schools experiencing additional enrollment declines in the future pose challenges for school leaders and the district, necessitating difficult decisions regarding resource allocation and potential school closures.<sup>9,10</sup>

## Teacher Shortages

Concurrently, New Orleans, like many districts and states across the country, is grappling with a teacher shortage. These issues contribute to difficulties in both recruiting and retaining qualified educators. Recent federal cuts to teacher training programs could impact the ability of New Orleans' schools to hire and train teachers. Addressing both declining enrollment and the teacher shortage is critical for the future of public education in New Orleans, requiring coordinated efforts from district officials, educators, and the community.<sup>11</sup>

## Transportation

Due to the city's open enrollment model in which students can attend almost any school in the city, no matter where they live, for many families, travel times for students have increased dramatically compared to pre-Katrina. Transportation costs for New Orleans public schools also exceed averages for schools nationwide. Starting in 2023, charter schools were required to provide transportation for students through eighth grade.<sup>12</sup>

## Socioeconomic And Racial Differences

Wealthier and White students attend the city's selective enrollment and higher performing schools at disproportionately high rates compared to their overall enrollment in public schools. As we've noted in our public opinion polls of parents, these differences mean that the race and socioeconomic status of a student can greatly impact what schools they attend and the type of education they receive in New Orleans.

*“I am excited about the future of public education in New Orleans — a future built on the hard work of fearless students, educators, and community leaders. The Orleans Parish School Board will continue to support every student, every school, and every community through the next generation and beyond.”*

**Katherine Baudouin**  
**OPSB President and Board Member District 5**

*“The last 20 years of working in New Orleans has taught me that our students are capable of meeting any expectation we set for them, so the responsibility for the ongoing success of the system lies with us adults who must refuse to place limits on our students and instead work to innovate to create the conditions for their continuous achievement. I can't wait to see what our students accomplish in the next 20 years.”*

**Kate Mehok**  
**Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Crescent City Schools**

*“I’m deeply optimistic about the future of public education in New Orleans because of the unwavering commitment of our educators, families, and students. Over the past two decades, we’ve seen what’s possible when communities come together to build a system that puts students first. Looking ahead, I’m most energized by the growing focus on equity, innovation, and whole-child support. We’re also seeing a real shift toward valuing and investing in the people who make great schools possible — our teachers. If we want to build on the progress of the last 20 years, we must ensure educators have the resources, compensation, and professional growth opportunities they need to build lasting, fulfilling careers in our city. That’s how we create a future where every child has access to an excellent, enriching education — and every educator has the support they deserve to sustain that work.”*

**Dana Peterson**  
**CEO, New Schools for New Orleans**

*“The bottom line is that our educators and students have accomplished so much, yet we all understand that more must be done. My wish is that policymakers find the resources schools need to deliver on their promise to educate all children and that the kitchen table of people and organizations working on public education issues continues to grow.”*

**Caroline Roemer**  
**Executive Director, Louisiana Association for Public Charter Schools**

# GOVERNANCE

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## What Is School Governance?

Governance is a vital issue in the New Orleans public education system. The term school governance refers to which entity oversees and holds schools accountable. Since the major changes to New Orleans public education in 2005, governance has assumed a crucial, and, at times, contentious, role in the city.

New Orleans' public education system is unique compared to the rest of the U.S. in that almost all public schools in the city are charter schools run by independent non-profit charter organizations, often called "charter operators." Charter operators are responsible for the operations, hiring, and administration of the schools. The local district, New Orleans Public Schools (NOLA-PS), oversees the vast majority of these charter operators. NOLA-PS is led by a superintendent who is selected by the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB), a seven-member, publicly elected board that governs NOLA-PS. The OPSB can authorize new schools to open or approve the closure of failing schools, but they are not involved in the day-to-day running of charter schools (for instance, they do not hire or fire teachers or principals, or handle in-school budgets). By contrast, in most districts in the U.S., the central district directly runs schools and has control over issues like hiring and administration that charter operators oversee on their own in New Orleans.

In New Orleans, it can be argued that the governing entity of a school matters less than the charter operator, as the charter operator has more control over the day-to-day decisions of most schools. There are 31 separate charter operators running schools in NOLA-PS in 2024-2025.

Each charter operator also has its own board which is tasked with holding school leaders accountable. Charter board members are not publicly elected, but are private citizens who volunteer their time. They are required to follow open meeting laws and make certain financial disclosure requirements. These charter boards are responsible for:

- Ensuring the financial good standing of the school;
- Assessing the performance of school and charter leadership;
- Confirming the school is meeting the requirements of its charter.

Adding to the complexity of governance in New Orleans, in addition to charter boards, public schools authorized by the OPSB are also under the Board's oversight, along with that of NOLA-PS's central administration. The OPSB has oversight of charter schools authorized under NOLA-PS and the NOLA-PS Superintendent, and can ultimately vote to authorize new charter schools or shut down existing ones based on the Superintendent's recommendations. The OPSB also has responsibility over the Leah Chase School, the one school in the city directly run by NOLA-PS.

For the 2024-2025 school year, there were a total of 74 public schools in the city, of which, 67 were overseen by NOLA-PS, six by the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), and one by the State Legislature. The total number of public schools in New Orleans has declined each of the past two years since the last *SPENO* report, from 78 total schools in 2022-2023, to 75 in 2023-2024, to 74 in 2024-2025. This decline is partly due to decreasing enrollment and school closures resulting from low academic performance.

The 2024-2025 school year was notable in that NOLA-PS launched its first direct-run school in more than five years with the opening of the Leah Chase School. The rest of the schools authorized and governed by the OPSB and NOLA-PS were operated by independent non-profit charter operators.

As stated previously, there were six charter schools located in the city overseen by the BESE and one school governed by the Louisiana State Legislature. Students from anywhere in Louisiana can attend the BESE and Louisiana State Legislature schools, whereas students attending NOLA-PS schools must live in Orleans Parish. It is important to note that unlike in other places in the U.S., there are no for-profit charter schools in the city.

The chart on page 16 illustrates the governance structure of New Orleans' 74 schools, highlighting both the entity that is responsible for overseeing the schools (NOLA-PS, BESE, or the State Legislature), as well as the charter operator that runs each school.

## Why Does Governance Matter In New Orleans?

Governance plays an especially important role in New Orleans' public education ecosystem. The governing body of a school, whether OPSB, BESE, or the State Legislature, holds schools and charter operators accountable, from both an academic and a financial performance perspective, and decides which charter schools can open and operate. A charter school takes its name from the fact that the leaders of a school sign a contract, or charter, with a governing entity that delineates the terms that school must follow and the benchmarks it must meet in order to stay open. If a school does not meet the requirements established in its charter contract, the governing entity can impose new guidelines or shut the school down completely if standards are not met for an extended number of years. Last year, there were three school changes and three school closures in the city.

Understanding governance of New Orleans' schools is far more complicated than in most other U.S. cities. Families and stakeholders in New Orleans might engage with any of three layers of oversight — the charter board, the authorizing entity (OPSB, BESE, or the Legislature), or the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE).

# NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC SCHOOLS GOVERNANCE CHART 2024-2025

## NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC SCHOOLS (NOLA-PS): 67 SCHOOLS

Advocates for Academic Excellence in Education, Inc.	Community Academies of New Orleans	Hynes Charter School Corporation	ReNEW-Reinventing Education	NOLA-PS Direct Run
1 SCHOOL • Benjamin Franklin High School: 9-12	2 SCHOOLS • Esperanza Charter School: PK4-8 • Foundation Preparatory Charter: K-8	3 SCHOOLS • Hynes Lakeview: PK3-8 • Hynes Parkview: K-8 • Hynes UNO: K-5	4 SCHOOLS • ReNEW Dolores T. Aaron Academy: PK4-8 • ReNEW Laurel Elementary: PK-8 • ReNEW Robert Russa Moton Lakefront: PK4-8 • ReNEW Schaumburg Elementary: PK4-8	NOLA-PS
Advocates for Arts-Based Education Corporation	Community Leaders Advocating Student Success	InspireNOLA Charter Schools	Rooted School	NOLA-PS LEA
1 SCHOOL • The Willow School: K-12	1 SCHOOL • Fannie C. Williams Charter School: PK4-8	7 SCHOOLS • Alice M. Harte Charter School: PK4-8 • Andrew H. Wilson Charter School: PK4-8 • Capdau S.T.E.A.M.: PK4-8 • Dwight D. Eisenhower Charter School: PK4-8 • Edna Karr High School: 9-12 • Eleanor McMain Secondary School: 9-12 • McDonogh 35 Senior High School: 9-12	1 SCHOOL • Rooted School: 9-12	Travis Hill NOLA
Advocates for Science and Mathematics Education, Inc.	Crescent City Schools	Institute for Academic Excellence	Success Preparatory Academy	Elan Academy, Inc.
1 SCHOOL • New Orleans Charter Science and Math High School (Sci High): 9-12	3 SCHOOLS • Dorothy Height Charter School: PK4-8 • Harriet Tubman Charter School: PK4-8 • Mildred Osborne Charter School: PK4-8	1 SCHOOL • Sophie B. Wright High School: 9-12	1 SCHOOL • Success at Thurgood Marshall: PK-8	Legacy of Excellence, Inc.
Algiers Charter School Association, Inc.	Edutors for Quality Alternatives	KIPP New Orleans, Inc.	The Einstein Group, Inc.	Lyceum Schools, Inc.
2 SCHOOLS • L.B. Landry High School: 9-12 • Martin Behrman Charter School Academy of Creative Arts and Sciences: PK4-8	3 SCHOOLS • The NET Charter High School: Central City: 8-12 • The NET Charter High School: East: 8-12 • The NET Charter High School: Gentilly: 8-12	8 SCHOOLS • Booker T. Washington High School (KIPP): 9-12 • Frederick A. Douglass High School (KIPP): 9-12 • John F. Kennedy High School (KIPP): 9-12 • KIPP Believe: PK4-8 • KIPP Central City: PK4-8 • KIPP East: PK4-8 • KIPP Leadership: PK4-8 • KIPP Mortar: PK4-8	4 SCHOOLS • Einstein: Sarah Towles Reed High School: 9-12 • Einstein Charter Middle School at Sarah Towles Reed: 5-8 • Einstein Charter School at Sherwood Forest: PK4-5 • Einstein Charter School at Village de l'Est: PK4-5	1 SCHOOL • Benjamin Franklin Elementary Mathematics and Science School: PK4-8
Bricolage Academy	FirstLine Schools, Inc.	Lake Forest Elementary Charter School Corporation	Warren Easton Senior High School Foundation, Inc.	Significant Educators, Inc.
1 SCHOOL • Bricolage Academy: PK4-8	4 SCHOOLS • Arthur Ashe Charter School: K-8 • Langston Hughes Academy: PK4-8 • Phillis Wheatley Community School: PK4-8 • Samuel J. Green Charter School: PK4-8	1 SCHOOL • Lake Forest Elementary Charter School: K-8	1 SCHOOL • Warren Easton High School: 9-12	1 SCHOOL • Delores Taylor Arthur School for Young Men: 8-12
Citizens' Committee For Education	French and Montessori Education, Inc.	Morris Jeff Community School	Young Audiences Charter Association	
1 SCHOOL • Homer A. Plessy Community School: PK-8	2 SCHOOLS • Audubon Gentilly: K-8 • Audubon Uptown Montessori and French: K-8	1 SCHOOL • Morris Jeff Community School: PK4-12	1 SCHOOL • YACS at Lawrence D. Crocker: PK4-8	
Collegiate Academies	Friends of King			
5 SCHOOLS • CA: Abramson Sci Academy: 9-12 • CA: G.W. Carver High School: 9-12 • CA: Livingston Collegiate Academy: 9-12 • CA: Opportunities Academy: 12 • CA: Walter L. Cohen High School: 9-12	1 SCHOOL • Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Charter School: PK4-12			

NOTE: All schools listed above align with official site codes from the state. A single site code equates to a single school. However, many schools with a single site code serve students across multiple campuses (such as Willow School).

## BESE: 6 SCHOOLS

### The Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

6 SCHOOLS  
• International High School of New Orleans: 9-12  
• International School of Louisiana: K-8  
• Lycée Français de la Nouvelle-Orléans (LFNO): PK4-12  
• New Harmony High: 9-12  
• New Orleans Military and Maritime Academy (NOMMA): 8-12  
• Noble Minds Institute for Whole Child Learning: K-8

## STATE LEGISLATURE: 1 SCHOOL

### The Louisiana State Legislature

1 SCHOOL  
• New Orleans Center for Creative Arts: 9-12

## OVERVIEW AND CHANGES FOR 2024-2025

### 74 TOTAL SCHOOLS

THIS IS ONE FEWER THAN THERE WAS IN 2023-2024

### 3 SCHOOL CHANGES

- Lafayette Academy closed and reopened as Leah Chase School operated by NOLA-PS
- Robert Russa Moton Charter closed and reopened as ReNEW Moton Lakefront operated by ReNEW Schools
- Lake Forest Charter School's non-profit charter board changed its name from The Council for Quality Education to Lake Forest Elementary Charter School Corporation

### 3 SCHOOL CLOSURES

- Lafayette Academy (Community Academies of New Orleans)
- Robert Russa Moton Charter School (Advocates for Innovative Schools)
- Living School (Living School, Inc.)

### 4 GRADE CHANGES

- Audubon Gentilly (Added 8th grade)
- CA: Opportunities Academy (No longer offering 11th grade)
- Delores Taylor Arthur School for Young Men (Added 12th grade)
- Hynes UNO (Added 5th grade)

### 31 TOTAL NON-PROFIT CHARTER ORGANIZATIONS

THIS IS TWO FEWER THAN THERE WERE IN 2023-2024

Non-profit charter organizations are groups that oversee individual or networks of charter schools. Each organization has its own board. They are responsible for the operations, staffing, finances, and administration of the schools under their purview. They have a contract (or charter) with NOLA-PS, which ensures they are meeting accountability standards. A notable change for 2024-2025 is that NOLA-PS is now operating a school directly.

## How Has Governance Changed Over Time?

The evolution of New Orleans' governance to this unique system began in 2005 due to the state's takeover of most city public schools. Following that takeover, governance of the city's public charter schools was split between the state-run Recovery School District (RSD) and the OPSB for much of the past 15 years.

In 2018, that changed, when state law unified all RSD schools in the city under NOLA-PS governance. That has led to the current state of public education, in which all but one of the city's public schools are charter schools run by non-profit organizations. This unique governance structure has led to constant change in the public education landscape in the city.



*“YouthForce NOLA works to help young people fulfill their potential in work and life. We do this by expanding career-connected learning – an essential investment that we will continue to prioritize in the next ten years and beyond – so that public school graduates are supported on their path to career.”*

**Cate Swinburn**

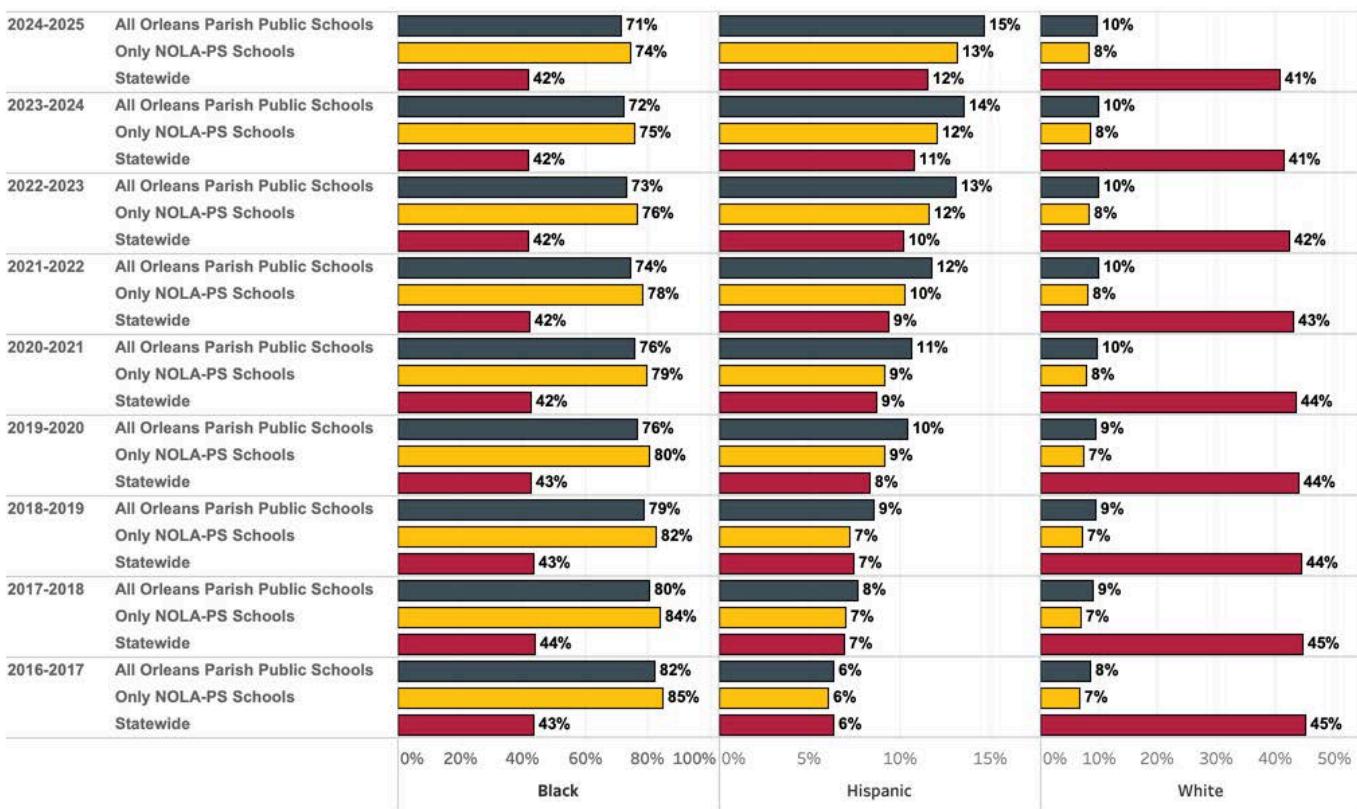
*Co-founder, President & CEO, YouthForce NOLA*

# ENROLLMENT

## Enrollment Demographics

As of October 2024, there were 47,667 PreK-12 students enrolled in all public schools in New Orleans, including NOLA-PS, BESE, and Legislature authorized. The vast majority of those students, 43,664 or 92%, attended NOLA-PS schools.

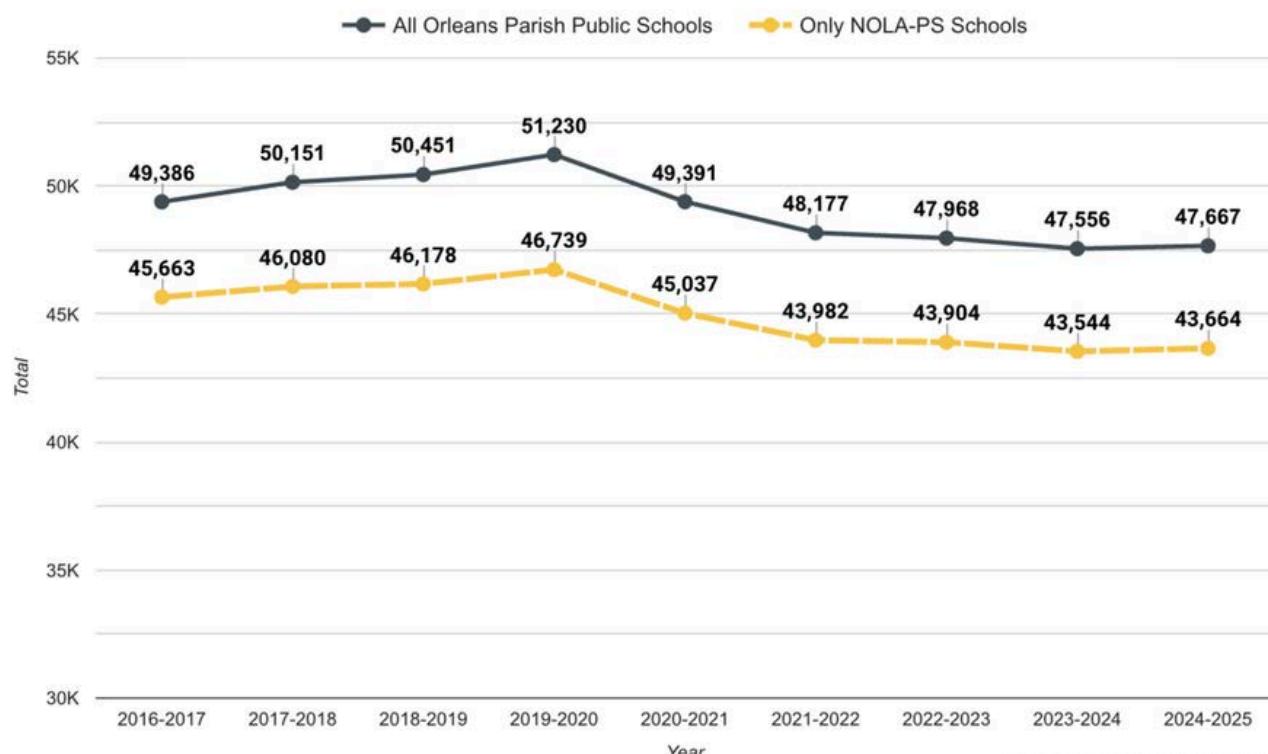
## Public School Enrollment By Race Over Time



Source: Louisiana Department of Education, Data Library, Date & Reports, October 2016-2024 Multi-Stats by Site and School System

New Orleans' public school student population has become more racially diverse over the last decade due to an increase in the Hispanic student population. The percentage of Hispanic students has more than doubled since 2016-2017. Overall, in 2024-2025, 90% of students in New Orleans' public schools are students of color, compared to 59% of public school students statewide. The vast majority of public school students in New Orleans are Black, though the percentage of Black students has dropped from 76% in 2019-2020 to 71% in 2024-2025. Conversely, the percentage of Hispanic students has risen from 10% in 2019-2020 to 15% in 2024-2025. The percentage of White students has remained around 10% over that time. Comparatively, 41% of students statewide were White in the 2024-2025 school year.

## Total Enrollment: PreK - Grade 12 Orleans Parish Public Schools

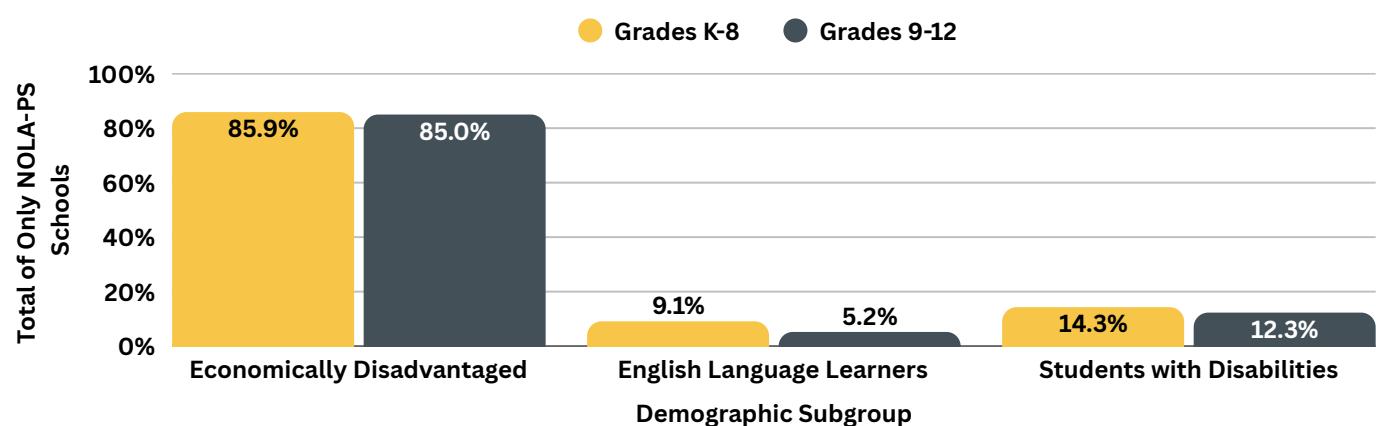


Source: Louisiana Department of Education, Data Library, Date & Reports, October 2016-2024 Multi-Stats by Site

New Orleans has high levels of poverty compared to the rest of the United States. As a result, most students in New Orleans public schools qualify as economically disadvantaged (ED): in 2023-2024, 86% of students in grades K-8 and 85% of students in grades 9-12 were considered economically disadvantaged.

New Orleans also has high rates of special education and English Language Learners compared to the rest of Louisiana. In NOLA-PS in 2023-2024, 14% of K-8 students and 12% of 9-12 students were identified as receiving special education services; 9% of K-8 and 5% of 9-12 students have English Language Learner status.

## 2023-2024 Enrollment: NOLA-PS Schools by English Language Learners, Economically Disadvantaged, and Students with Disabilities

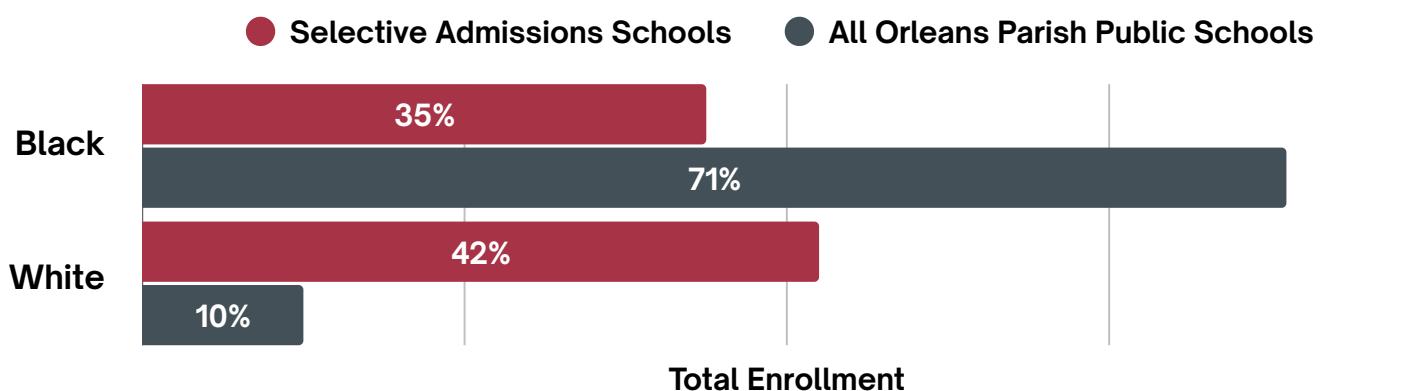


Source: NOLA-PS & New Schools for New Orleans Data Dashboard

The Cowen Institute | 19

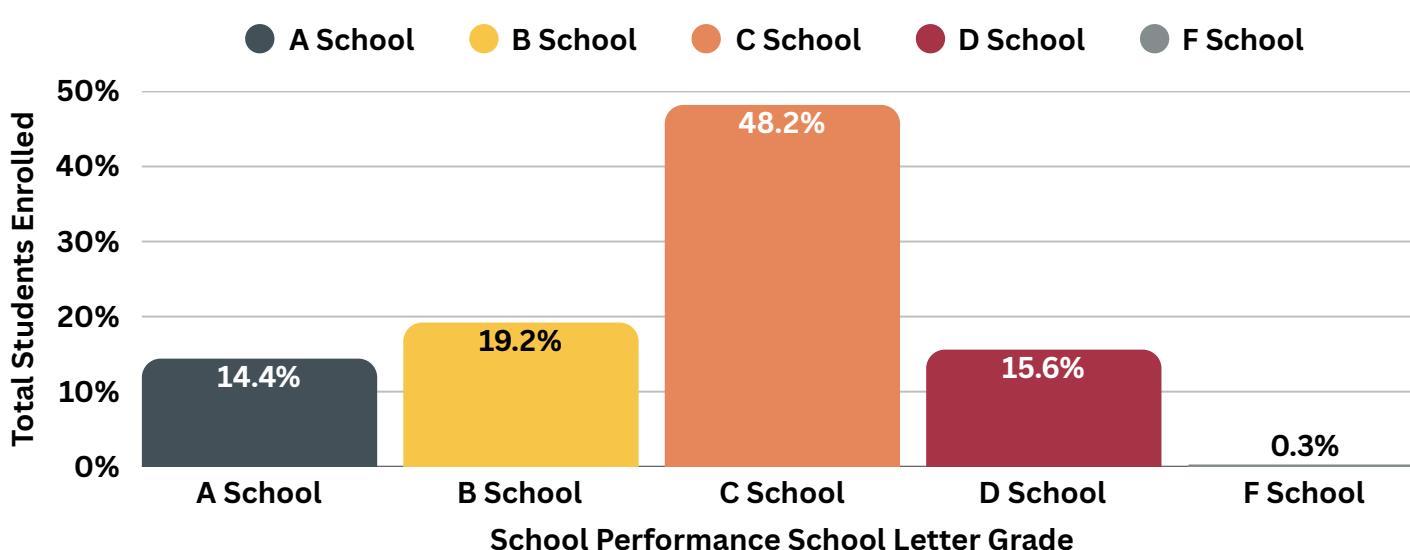
Enrollment in New Orleans public schools also continues to be stratified along racial and socioeconomic lines. White students are overrepresented in the city's selective admissions schools. These schools require an admissions test and have higher academic performance than most non-selective admissions schools in the city. In 2024-2025, White students made up 42% of the enrollment at selective admissions schools, compared to 10% in all public schools. The percentage of Black students in selective admissions schools was half that of the ratio of Black students in all public schools — 35% of selective admissions students were Black, compared to 71% in all city public schools. These racial disparities are also reflected in the average school performance of students of different racial backgrounds.

## 2024-2025 Total Enrollment: Selective Admission Demographic Enrollment Compared To All NOLA-PS Schools



Source: Louisiana Department of Education, Data Library, Date & Reports, October 2024 Multi-Stats by Site and School System

## 2023-2024: Total Students Enrolled in All Orleans Parish Public Schools By School Performance Letter Grade

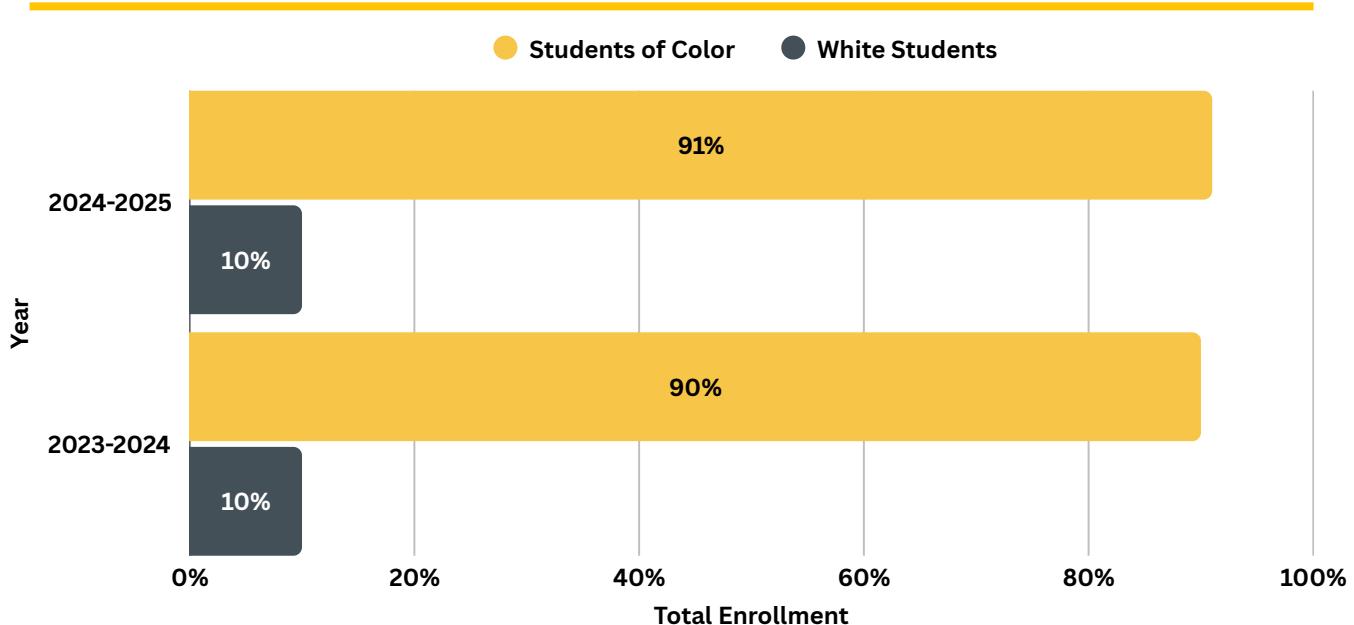


Source: Louisiana Department of Education, Data Library, Date & Reports, 2024 School Performance Scores Subgroup

**Note:** Currently, there are no F schools operating under NOLA-PS and the OPSB. There is one Type 2 F School in operation. This chart matches enrollment for 2023-2024 to 2023-2024 performance data.

As we noted in the 2023 SPENO, for decades, New Orleans public schools have been divided along racial and socioeconomic lines. One key factor contributing to ongoing stratification is the presence of high-performing, selective-admissions schools that require students to pass an academic test for enrollment. These schools have historically enrolled a disproportionately high percentage of White and higher-income students, a trend that persists today. Demographic data shows that most White students in the city attend a small number of these higher-performing public schools, while those who do not may opt for private education. This suggests that many White parents choose to forgo the public school system unless their child gains admission to one of their preferred schools. New Orleans also has a private school enrollment rate that is more than twice the national average: a projected 26% of the city's students enrolled in private schools compared to 10% nationally.<sup>13</sup> A number of the city's more affluent families send their children to private schools, further contributing to the over-representation of students from low-income households in New Orleans' public schools.

## 2024-2025: All Orleans Parish Public Schools Student Enrollment By Race



**Source:** Louisiana Department of Education, Data Library, Date & Reports, October 2024 Multi-Stats by Site and School System

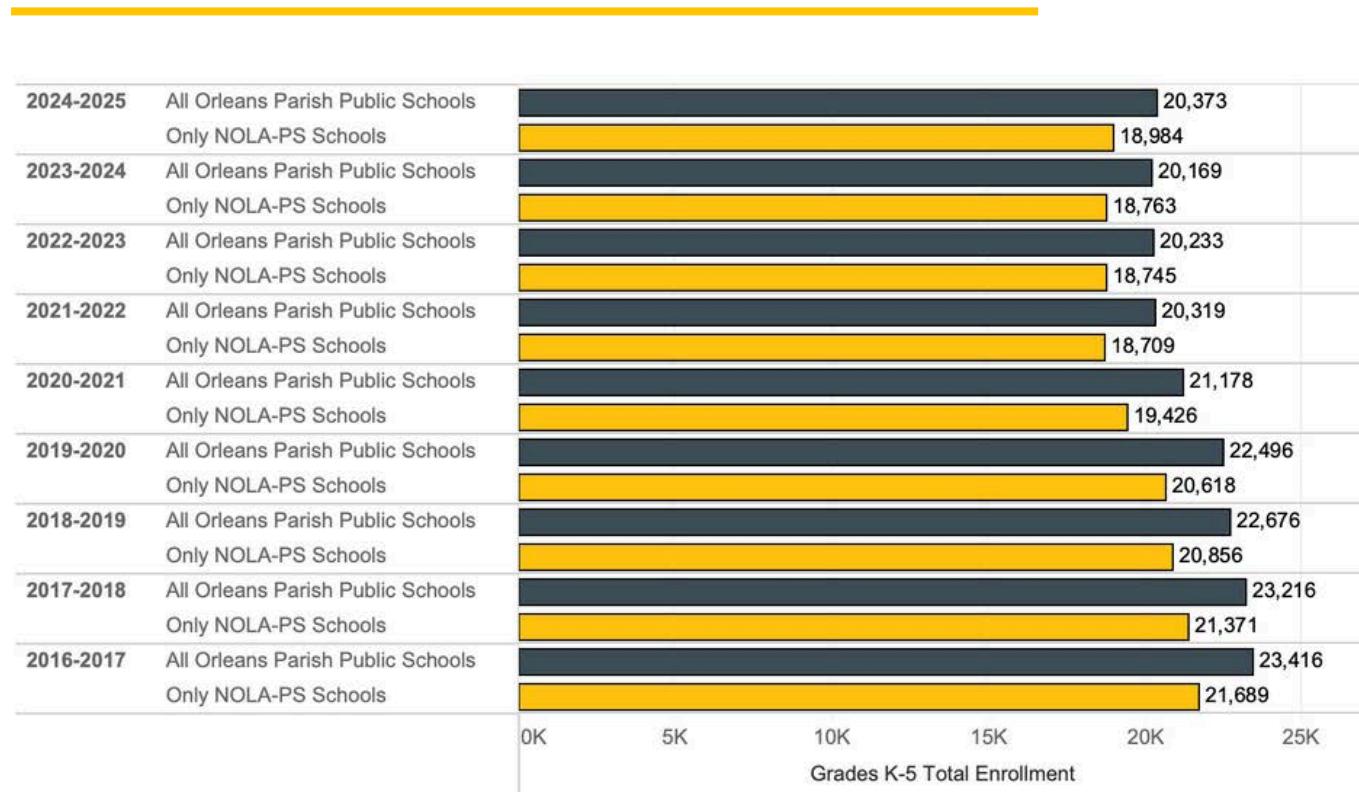
**Note:** Percentages total more than 100% due to rounding.

## Changes to Enrollment

Total enrollment in all public schools in New Orleans has dropped by 7% from 2019-2020 to 2024-2025. This represents a drop of around 3,500 students, from 51,230 to 47,667 total students enrolled in city public schools. The enrollment drop has occurred mainly in grades K-8 due largely to declining birth rates. (The COVID-19 pandemic also likely had an impact, as public school enrollment has declined nationally over the past five years.) In grades K-5, total enrollment has dropped by more than 3,000 students since the 2016-2017 school year, a decline of around 13%.

However, going forward, K-8 enrollment will likely stabilize (it is worth noting that Kindergarten enrollment increased in 2024-2025 compared to 2023-2024). While enrollment in grades 9-12 increased over the past five years, high school enrollment is projected to drop in the coming years as the smaller cohorts from the lower grades move into high school. As a result, many high schools, which are already reporting excess capacity now, will likely have even more excess capacity in the near future. Overall, if current population trends continue, Orleans Parish public schools will have smaller cohorts over the next five years compared to a decade ago.

## Total Enrollment for Grades K-5 Over Time



Source: Louisiana Department of Education, Data Library, Date & Reports, October 2024 Multi-Stats by Site and School System

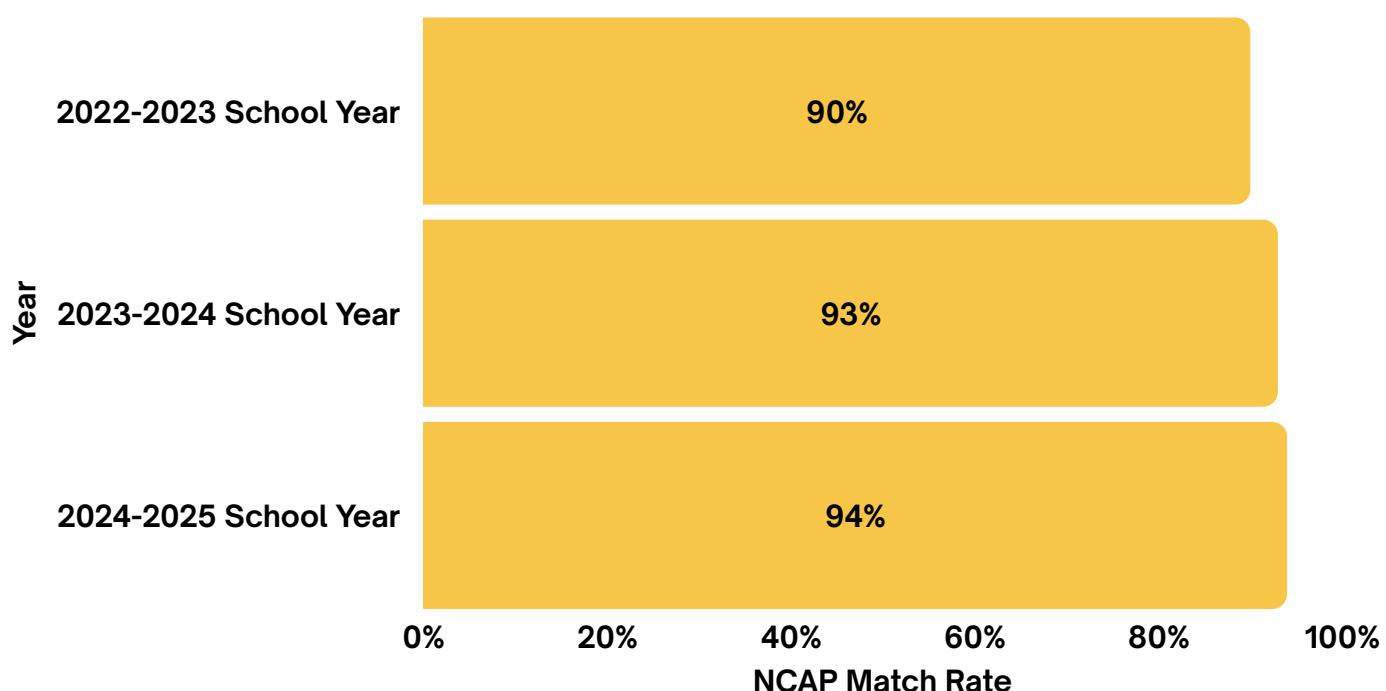
## New Orleans Common Application Process

As we noted in the last SPENO report, the 2022-2023 school year saw the rebranding of the New Orleans Common Application Process (NCAP), the citywide enrollment system formerly known as OneApp. New Orleans has a one-of-a-kind open enrollment system. Unlike in most U.S. cities, where students are assigned schools based on their home address, New Orleans families have the freedom to apply to any school in the city. By filling out the NCAP, families can rank up to eight early childhood programs and twelve K-12 schools. An algorithm then helps match students to schools based on factors like sibling enrollment and geographic proximity. The goal of this system is to provide families with more choices and flexibility in finding the best fit for their child's education.

Due to changes in charter contracts for some selective admissions schools, the NCAP now includes selective admissions schools that were previously unavailable. For the 2023-2024 school year, approximately 7,856 families applied for a seat in a New Orleans public school, down from approximately 8,423 families in 2022-2023. Overall, 83% of students matched into one of their top three choices, which was a slight uptick from the 80% rate for 2023-2024.

Of students applying for a spot in Kindergarten or 9th grade, the two biggest entry points to New Orleans public schools, the match rates were higher — 94% got into one of their top three choices, which continues a steady increase from 90% in 2022-2023 and 93% in 2023-2024.

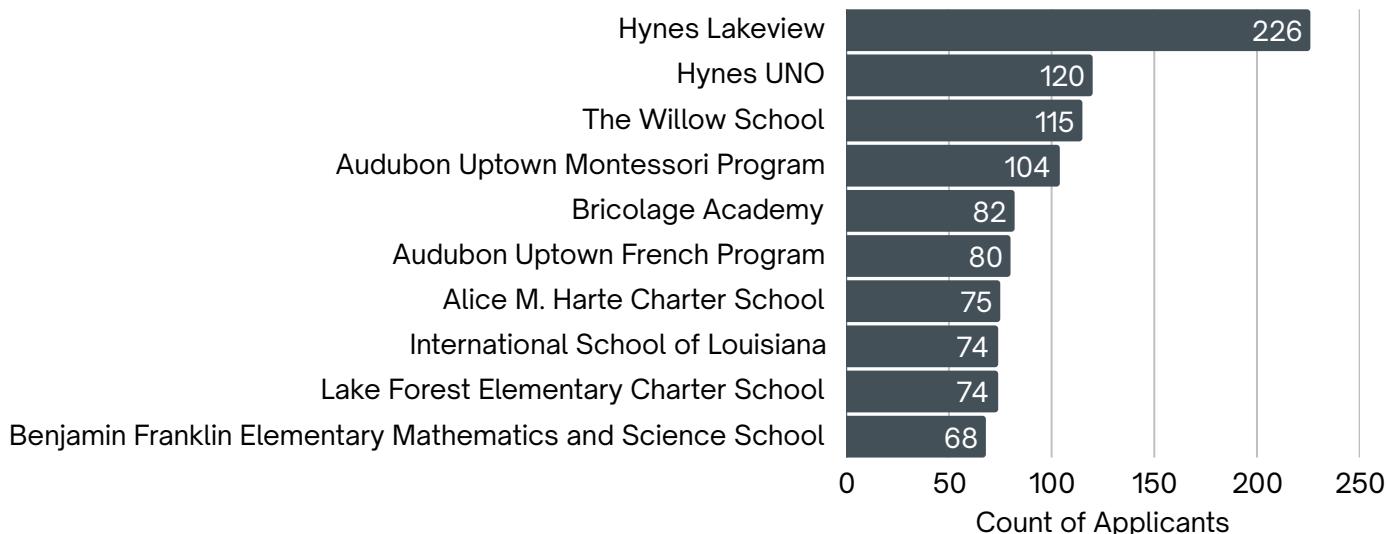
### NCAP Match Rate For Top-3 Choices: Kindergarten & Grade 9



Source: NOLA-PS NCAP Data

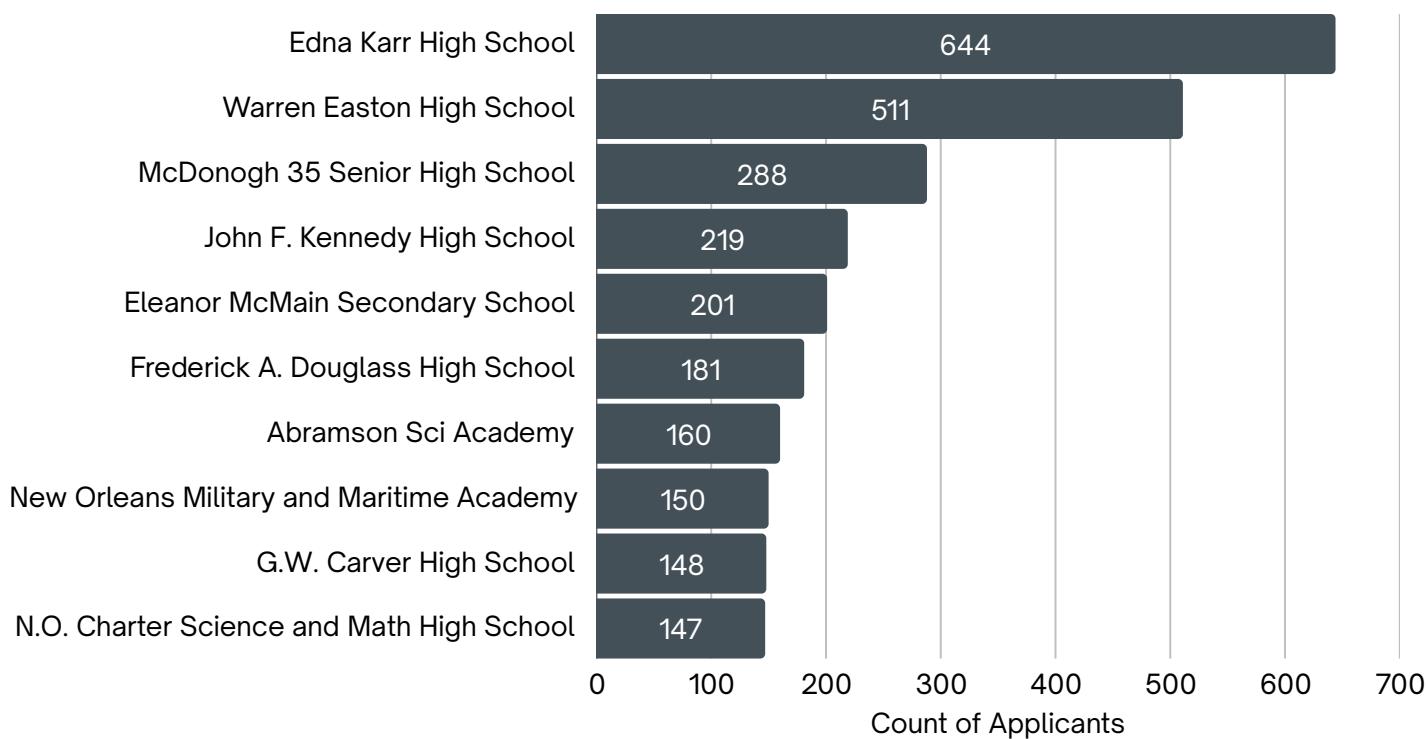
Based on the number of applications received, the most in-demand schools for Kindergarten and Grade 9, along with their match rates, are outlined in the charts below.

## NCAP Most In-Demand Schools: Kindergarten



Source: NOLA-PS NCAP Data

## NCAP Most In-Demand Schools: Grade 9



Source: NOLA-PS NCAP Data

**Note:** Ben Franklin High School is not included in NOLA-PS NCAP metrics because it accepts every student who qualifies for acceptance and therefore does not have an enrollment target.



*“Over the next decade, public schools have a powerful opportunity to harness AI to personalize learning, open new doors to college and career pathways, and reimagine what’s possible in the classroom. But to get there, we need bold investment and visionary leadership. Additionally, great teachers remain the heart of great public schools. If we want to deliver on the promise of public education, we must prioritize the funding, respect, and support that keep exceptional educators in our classrooms.”*

**Alex Jarrell**  
**Chief Executive Officer, Benjamin Franklin High School**

*“As we stand at the crossroads of this next decade, the future of public education in New Orleans is bound to the future of our children — and that future demands more than just progress. It demands that we keep the main thing the main thing: the work of educators, unburdened and unhindered, as they fight for a world where our children are not just taught, but seen, heard, and given what they deserve. Too many of our kids are left unsupported beyond the classroom — carrying burdens no child should bear — making it impossible for schools to do what they were meant to do. We must be the ones to dismantle the systems that keep them from thriving, breaking down the walls that trap families in cycles of poverty, instability, and neglect. We must ensure that every child — every one of them — has the resources, the stability, and the opportunities to be free in this world, free to learn, free to grow, and free to reach for what was always meant to be theirs. In the words of Ta-Nehisi Coates, ‘The work ahead is not easy, but it is the only work worth doing.’ With continued innovation, investment, and collaboration, New Orleans can build a future where every student can reach their fullest potential.”*

**Ethan Ashley**  
**Former OPSB President**

# ACCOUNTABILITY

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The term **accountability** frequently arises when discussing public schools, especially since the No Child Left Behind law was passed in 2001. But in New Orleans and Louisiana, accountability has a very specific meaning. It refers to how schools are held responsible for a variety of student outcomes. Both on a national and state level, schools must ensure their students meet certain established standards.

Another key term tied to accountability is **school performance** – schools are judged based on how well they perform in helping students reach established growth and proficiency goals.

In New Orleans, the governing authorizing body of each charter school has responsibility for holding individual charter schools accountable for the terms agreed to in the schools' charter contract. As previously mentioned, the OPSB is the authorizer for the vast majority of charter schools in New Orleans, meaning that it has the most direct responsibility for holding those schools accountable for their academic, financial, and overall performance, with recommendations from NOLA-PS staff.

## How Are Public Schools Held Accountable?

Starting in the 2025-2026 school year, Louisiana will implement a revised accountability system entitled “Grow. Achieve. Thrive.” According to the LDOE, the purpose of the revised system is that “Louisiana expects all students to grow academically year-over-year, achieve proficiency on key content, and thrive beyond high school.” The revised system will focus on promoting greater simplicity and transparency than the previous system to ensure the public can accurately assess how schools and students are performing, alongside a goal of high expectations for student performance.

“Grow. Achieve. Thrive.” will measure student performance and progress in the following ways:

- **Grow:** Schools will be measured by the number of students showing growth in math and English, with special attention paid to the performance of the lowest achieving students.
- **Achieve:** Schools will be measured by the number of students who are proficient in math, English, science, and social studies.
- **Thrive:** High schools will be measured by the number of students graduating on time, showing readiness on a nationally recognized exam, and prepared to accelerate.\*

**Note:** According to the LDOE, college and career readiness will be assessed using the following definition adopted by BESE: Career and college ready means that individuals graduate from high school prepared for university, community college, or technical college programming without need for remediation or corequisite support and/or graduate prepared for employment with the foundational skills required for entry into career pathways. See: <https://doe.louisiana.gov/school-system-leaders/measuring-results/accountability>.

The new model will be accompanied by a simplified accountability scorecard designed to increase transparency (the LDOE's scorecard is included below). For elementary and middle schools, that will include the "Grow" and "Achieve" sections of the scorecard. These will measure the percentage of students who are showing progress in math and English, as well as the growth for the bottom 25% of students in those subjects. The progress of ELL students will also be factored into the "Grow" score.

For the "Achieve" calculations, schools will be measured on the percentage of students who reach proficiency in math, English, science, and social studies.

High schools will also be assessed on the "Thrive" criteria of the scorecard, which looks at the schools' graduation rate, percentage of students who are deemed ready on a nationally recognized exam (like the ACT), and the percentage of students in college coursework, career training, or service.

For elementary and middle schools, 54% of their total score will come from the "Grow" factors, and 46% from the "Achieve" factors. For high schools, 42% will come from "Grow", 33% from "Achieve", and 25% from "Thrive" when calculating the school's overall score.

## LDOE New Accountability Scorecard

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### Louisiana's Accountability Scorecard

% of Students GROWING		% of Students Who Are PROFICIENT		% of High School Students THRIVING	
Math		Math		Graduation Rate	
English		English		Ready based on a nationally recognized exam	
Math growth for lowest 25% of students		Science		Accelerated into college coursework, career training, or service	
English growth for lowest 25% of students		Social Studies			
English Language Acquisition (ELL)					
AVERAGE:					

Image courtesy of the LDOE: <https://doe.louisiana.gov/school-system-leaders/measuring-results/accountability>

This is a notable change from Louisiana's previous accountability system. In Louisiana, schools have been held accountable through a scoring system known as school performance scores (SPS). A school's SPS is calculated using a number of factors and the formula varies between elementary, middle, high, and combination schools. All schools are assessed along the lines of academic achievement (how many students achieve a certain score on an end-of-year standardized test) and academic growth (how many students perform better on an end-of-year standardized test than expected).

Currently, schools are assessed on a 150-point scale and then assigned a letter grade from an A to an F based on their cumulative score (the new system will use a 100-point scale). Assessment scores in grades 3-8 (students in grades K-2 are not tested) are based on student growth and proficiency levels on standardized tests, of which there are five: Advanced, Mastery, Basic, Approaching Basic, and Unsatisfactory. The state shifted the bar for proficiency from an expectation of Basic to Mastery in 2015.

In high school, all public school students take End-of-Course (EOC/LEAP 2025) exams and the ACT. Levels of proficiency are divided into four bands (Excellent, Good, Fair, and Needs Improvement). High school scores also take into account student growth and graduation rates. Following the disruption caused by the pandemic, the LDOE, with approval from the U.S. Department of Education, decided to pause assigning school letter grades for the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years. This was a common strategy in states across the country, with nearly every state agreeing to suspend the assignment of school performance scores temporarily. Instead, districts and school leaders were provided with estimated school performance scores so they could gauge where their students were in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic.

The new accountability system could have negative impacts on SPS rankings for New Orleans' public schools given that the new standards will measure growth in a different way than in the past. The LDOE currently uses a value-added model (VAM) to measure students' success compared to similar peers year-to-year based on their performance and demographics. New Orleans' schools have historically had strong value added growth scores which has helped increase their overall SPS scores. According to the LDOE, going forward, students' growth scores will be determined based solely upon their improved absolute performance which may result in growth scores correlating to socio-economic status. As New Orleans serves a high percentage of ED students, growth scores will most likely decrease significantly in the new system which will lower overall SPS scores. The new accountability system will also introduce new letter grade scales that curve grades based on the relative performance of a school compared to schools statewide. Based on projections by New Schools for New Orleans, this will likely lead to many more schools in New Orleans, along with schools across the state, receiving more D or F letter grades in the near-term.

*"I believe one of the biggest challenges we're facing is the financial outlook for our district. With the future of federal funding uncertain, the state's MFP remaining largely stagnant, and ongoing funding disputes at the local level, we are confronting significant roadblocks to providing the full range of services our schools need. Additionally, the LA Gator Program may further divert students from public schools. I believe we must meaningfully engage our community so they understand the stakes and can help ensure both tax and political support to adequately fund our schools. I'm hopeful that this twentieth anniversary marks an inflection point for the district. From my conversations on the campaign trail, it's clear that the public is thoughtfully considering what a 21st-century education should look like. Most community members aren't looking to return to older models, they're seeking a meaningful transformation in how we approach education. I believe my family represents an emerging trend I see in my cohort of parents, we are transplants to New Orleans who are committed to public education and want our child to attend a school that reflects the full diversity of the city across all demographics."*

**Gabriela Biro**  
**OPSB Board Member, District 2**

*"It is undeniable that there has been significant academic progress in New Orleans in the last 20 years. There is so much to be proud of — and so much work still to be done to build the system our students and families deserve."*

**Olin Parker**  
**OPSB Board Member, District 3**

*"As the Orleans Parish School Board Member for District 4, I believe the next ten years must be grounded in two essential priorities: addressing deep-rooted inequities and strengthening long-term sustainability in public education. What requires our most urgent attention is ensuring that every student — regardless of zip code, race, or family income — has access to a high-quality, supportive, and equitable education. I remain deeply hopeful about the resilience, innovation, and community-driven momentum that defines New Orleans. I'm optimistic about: The growing commitment to career and technical education pathways; the potential of the revised state accountability system to better reflect student growth; and the increased voice of families, students, and educators in shaping policy. As a board member, I'm committed to centering students and families in every decision, working toward a system where every child in every neighborhood not only learns — but thrives."*

**KaTrina Chantelle Griffin**  
**OPSB Board Member, District 4**

*"As we reach the 20th anniversary milestone of our post-Katrina education reforms, there is a lot to celebrate. Our students are experiencing higher rates of success across academic areas. And nearly all of our students attend school in far better facilities than they did before the storm. But while we celebrate, we also face significant challenges. As our student population declines we will need to make strategic decisions with far-reaching implications for the future of the district. Additionally, there is important work to be done to improve special education delivery for many of our most vulnerable students. This is particularly true for our emerging English learners and recently arrived students."*

**Carlos Luis Zervigón**  
**OPSB Board Member, District 6**

# SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

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The LDOE uses many different indicators of school achievement to calculate a performance score or grade for all schools in Louisiana and Orleans Parish.

The current accountability system measures school performance under the following rubric:

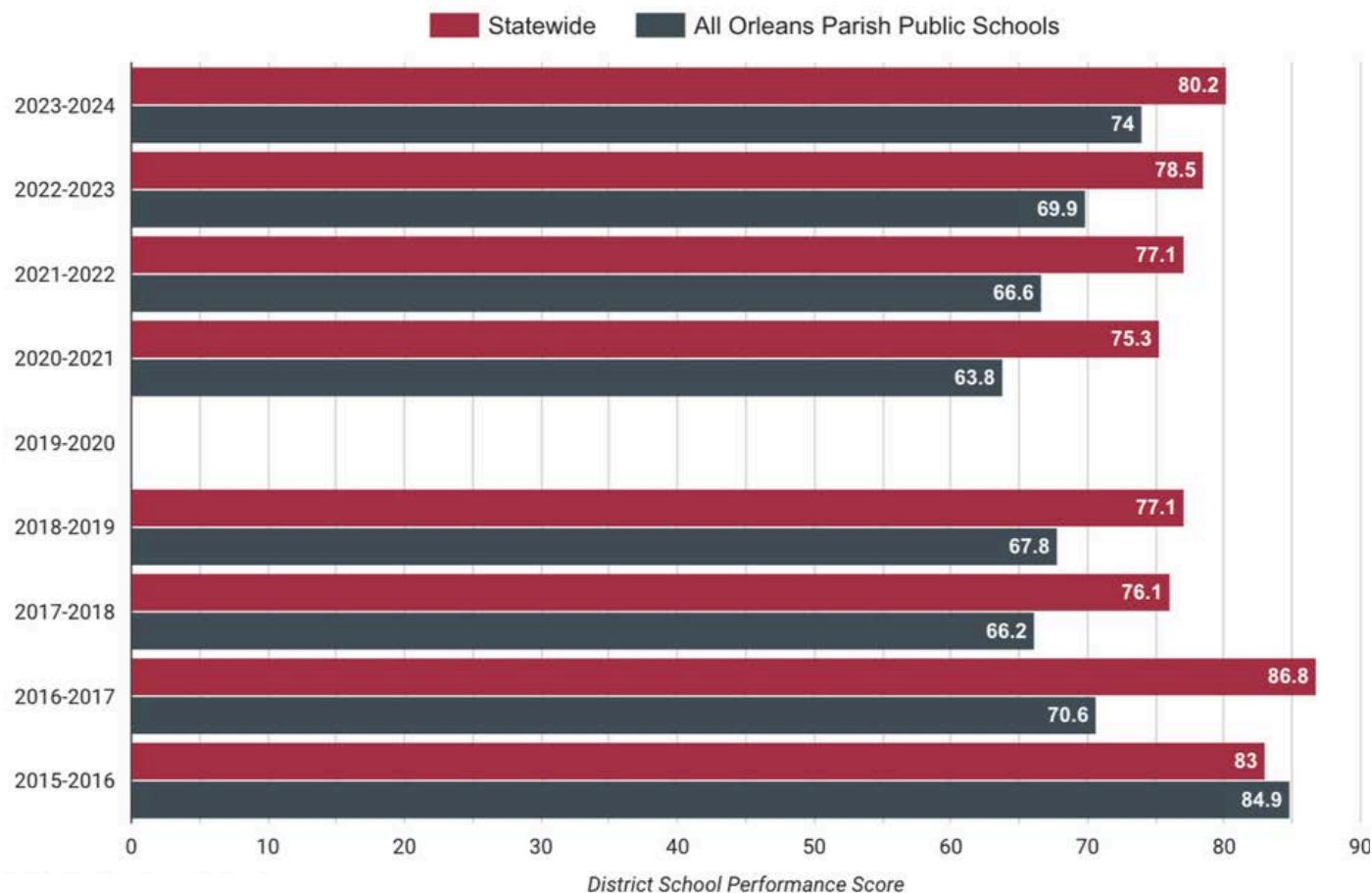
- **Elementary:** Assessment index (70%), growth index (25%), interests and opportunities (5%).
- **Elementary/Middle (with grade 8):** Assessment index (65%), growth index (25%), interests and opportunities (5%), dropout credit accumulation index (5%).
- **High School:** ACT/WorkKeys (25%), strength of diploma (25%), cohort graduation rate (20%), assessment index (12.5%), growth index (12.5%), interests and opportunities (5%).

As noted in the Accountability section, the way performance scores are calculated will be changing in 2025-2026. Please note the performance scores outlined in this section reflect assessments measured under the current system.

## Overall School Performance

Student performance in Orleans Parish public schools has long trailed behind that of students statewide and continues to do so currently. In 2023-2024, the overall SPS score for all Orleans Parish schools was 74, or a C letter grade, compared to 80.2, or a B letter grade for the state. However, there was more growth in New Orleans than in the state over the past two years: the 2023-2024 SPS for New Orleans public schools was an increase of four points over 2022-2023, compared to less than two points statewide. The SPS for all Orleans Parish public schools placed them in the bottom third of parishes statewide.

## School Performance Scores Over Time: Orleans Parish Versus Statewide



**Source:** Louisiana Department of Education, Data Library, Date & Reports, 2016-2024 District Performance Scores

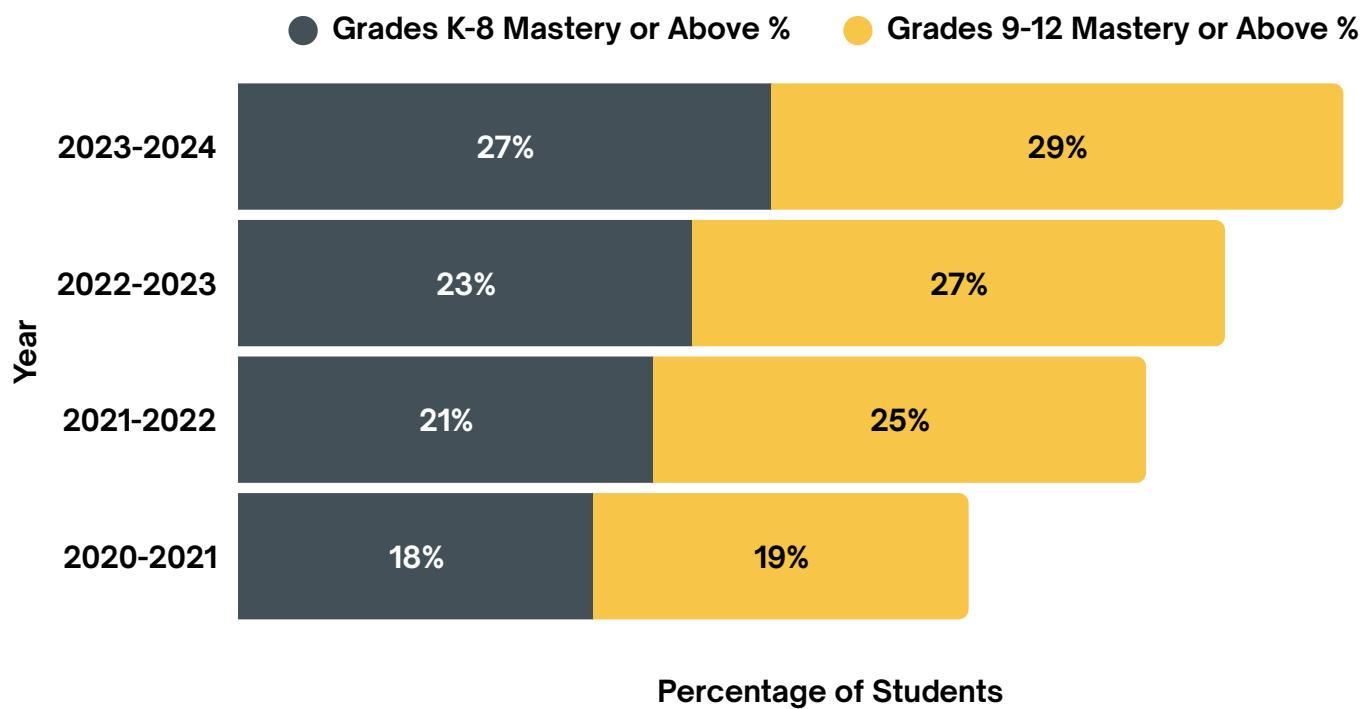
**Note:** The state did not publish SPS scores for the 2019-2020 year due to the COVID pandemic.

Despite Orleans Parish public schools' overall lower performance compared to schools statewide, the growth rate at all public schools was an A for grades K-8 and a B for grades 9-12 in 2023-2024. This indicates city schools are supporting students in making significant academic progress in reading and math. **Overall, Louisiana has experienced some of the highest rates of academic growth in the nation from 2019 to 2024.**

Another way in which the state assesses student performance is how students perform on the LEAP statewide tests. Based on LEAP results, student performance in NOLA-PS schools has steadily increased over the past four years: 27% of NOLA-PS K-8 students achieved Mastery and above in 2023-2024, up from 18% in 2020-2021, and 29% of NOLA-PS 9-12 students achieved Mastery last year, compared to 19% in 2020-2021. A majority of NOLA-PS students also achieved Basic level on LEAP tests in both grades K-8 and 9-12 in 2023-2024. See the accompanying chart for a complete breakdown of the percentage of students achieving Basic and Mastery and above in NOLA-PS schools.

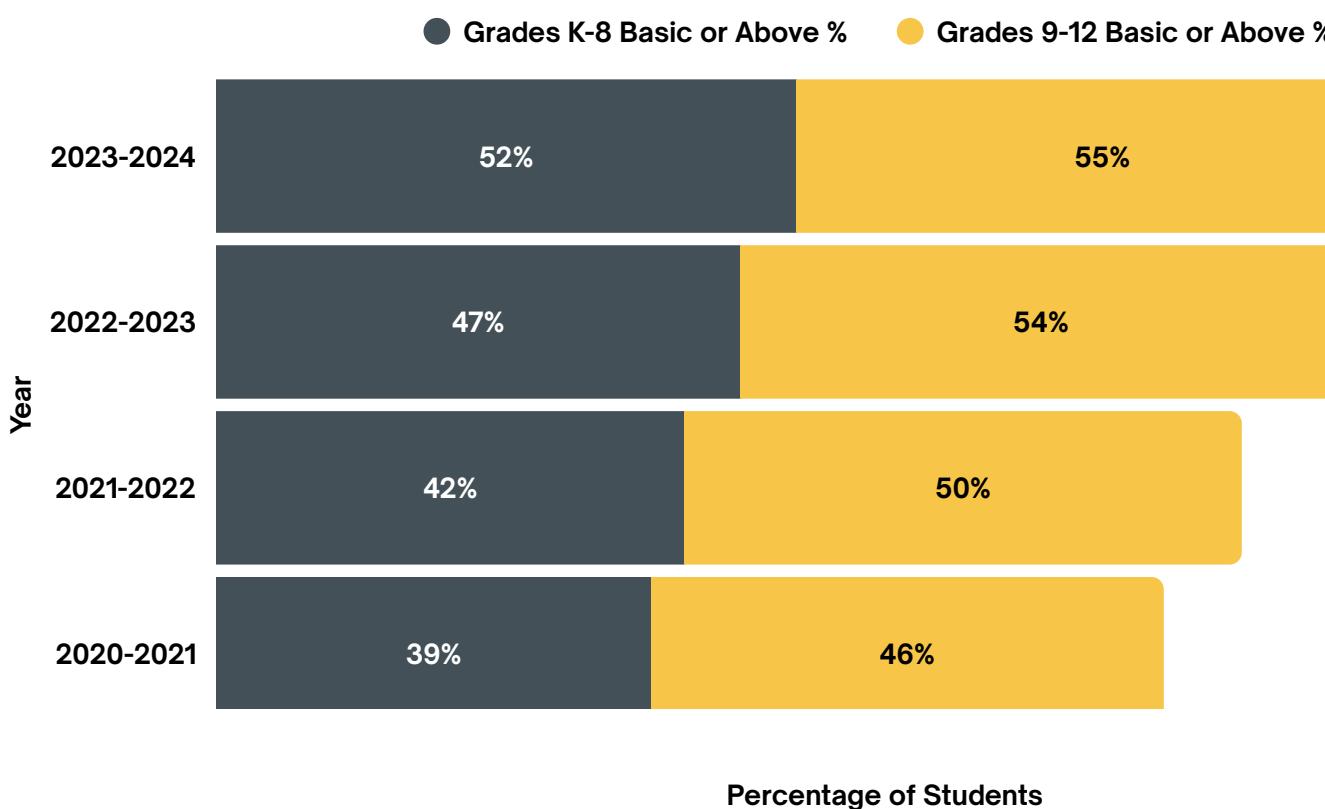
## NOLA-PS: LEAP Mastery or Above Over Time: Grades K-8 and Grades 9-12

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## NOLA-PS: LEAP Basic or Above Over Time: Grades K-8 and Grades 9-12

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## Student Performance By Subgroup Demographics

While New Orleans public schools saw improved overall student performance in 2023-2024, long-time trends continued that indicate disparities in student performance based on the race, socioeconomic status, or special education status of students.

White and Asian students had far higher performance scores than Black, Hispanic, ED, SPED, and ELL students. Overall, both White and Asian students had average A SPS grades, compared to C grades for Black, Hispanic, and ED students, and D grades for SPED and ELL students. This mirrored performance scores statewide, where Asian and White students had average A grades, while Black, Hispanic, ED, and SPED students had C grades, and ELL students had D grades. These disparities in school performance by student demographics have existed in the state over the long term and have increased over the past three years.<sup>14</sup>

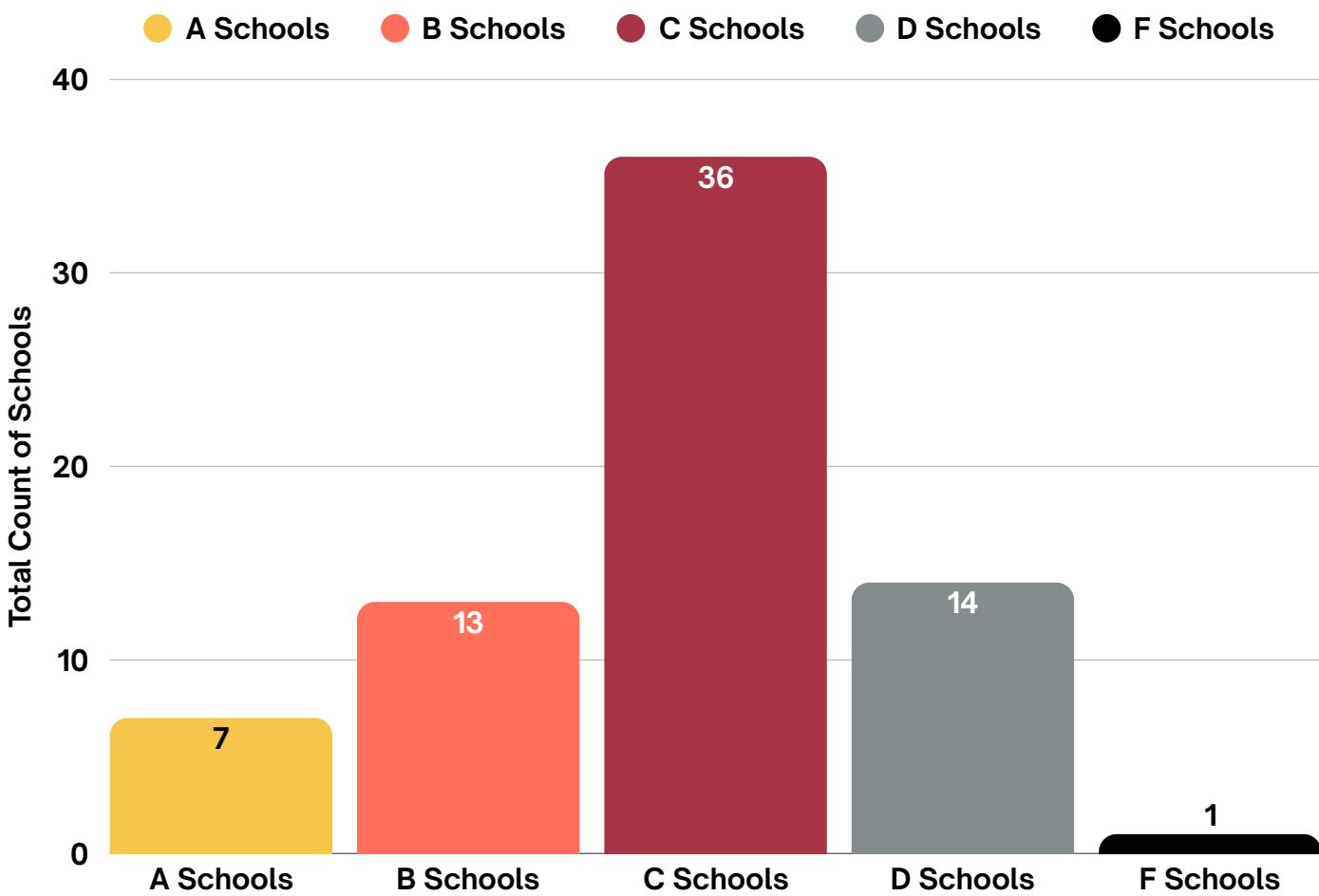
Yet, it is important to note that city schools have seen higher rates for student growth across subgroups. In grades K-8, all student subgroups but SPED and homeless students had A grade growth in 2023-2024, while in grades 9-12, student growth for most subgroups was at an A or B grade. The percentage of Orleans Parish students reaching top growth in LEAP for ELA and math, both in total, and across a variety of subgroups, exceeds statewide rates.

## Students Attending High Performing Schools

The 2023-2024 school year saw a notable increase in the number of students in New Orleans public schools who attended A or B ranked schools, and a concurrent drop in the number of students attending F schools. In 2023-2024, 34% of all students at an Orleans Parish public school attended an A or B school, compared to 23% in 2022-2023, while the rate of students attending an F school dropped from 11% to none. The improvement was even more pronounced at NOLA-PS schools: 27% of students at a NOLA-PS authorized school attended an A or B school in 2023-2024, compared to 19% in 2022-2023.

## 2024-2025: All Orleans Parish Public Schools By SPS Letter Grade

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**Source:** Louisiana Department of Education, Data Library, Date & Reports, 2024 School Performance Scores Subgroup

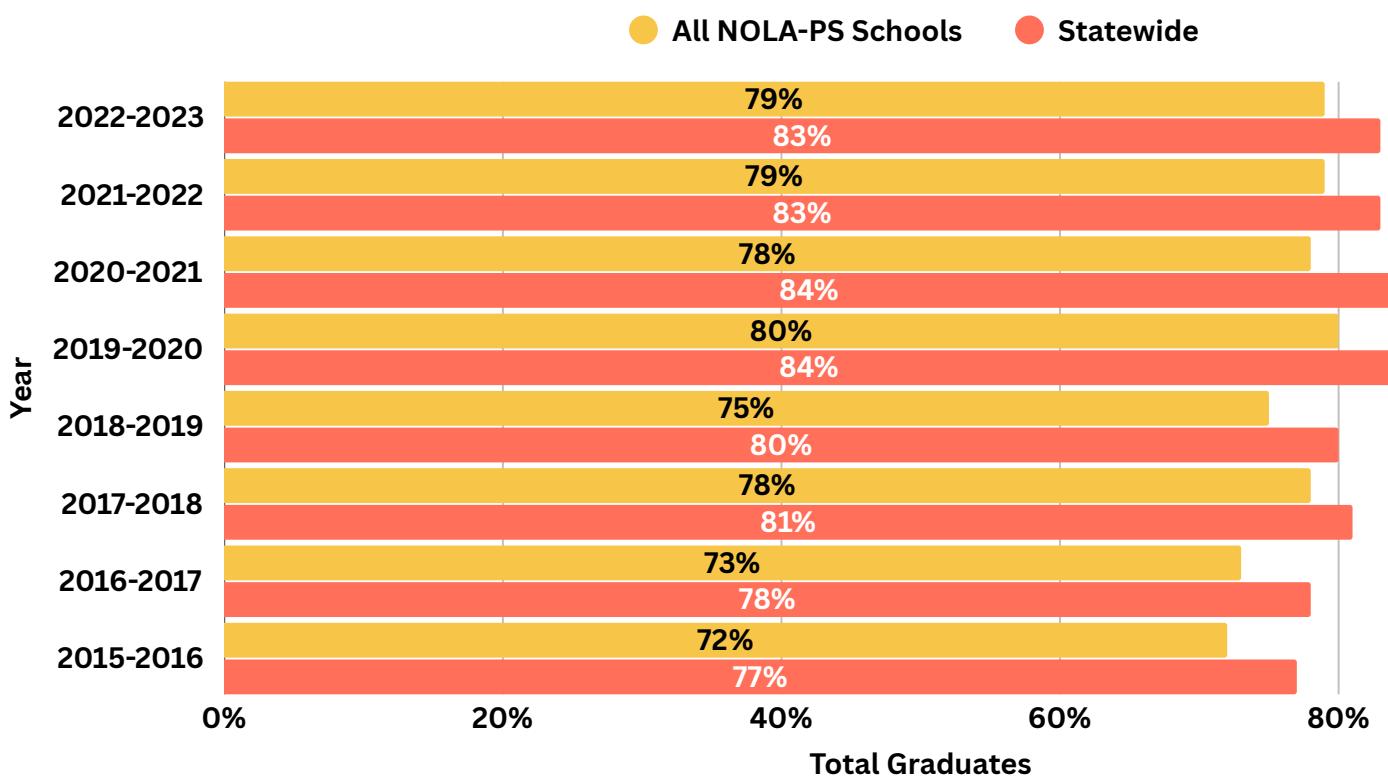
**Note:** Though there are 74 public schools operating in Orleans Parish 2024-2025, this chart shows the SPS scores for only 71. Not shown are Collegiate Academies: Opportunities Academy, ReNEW Robert Russa Moton: Lakefront, and The Leah Chase School because they do not have SPS scores. As noted earlier, there are no NOLA-PS F schools operating in 2024-2025. The only F school here is Noble Minds, a Type-2 Charter overseen by BESE.

## Graduation Rates And ACT

The current graduation rate of all NOLA-PS high schools has increased compared to 2015-2016, but the rate has stagnated over the past four years. In 2022-2023, the rate was 79%, which was nearly one percentage point lower than in 2019-2020. The NOLA-PS graduation rate has trailed the statewide rate by 4% to 8% each year for the past decade.

For demographic subgroups, in 2022-2023, the graduation rate was 80% for Black students in NOLA-PS, which was the same rate statewide, and graduation rates for ED students were approximately 78% both in NOLA-PS and statewide. 91% of White students graduated in NOLA-PS, which exceeded the statewide rate of 88%. However, NOLA-PS graduation rates for Hispanic, special education, and English Language Learner students trailed state rates.<sup>15</sup>

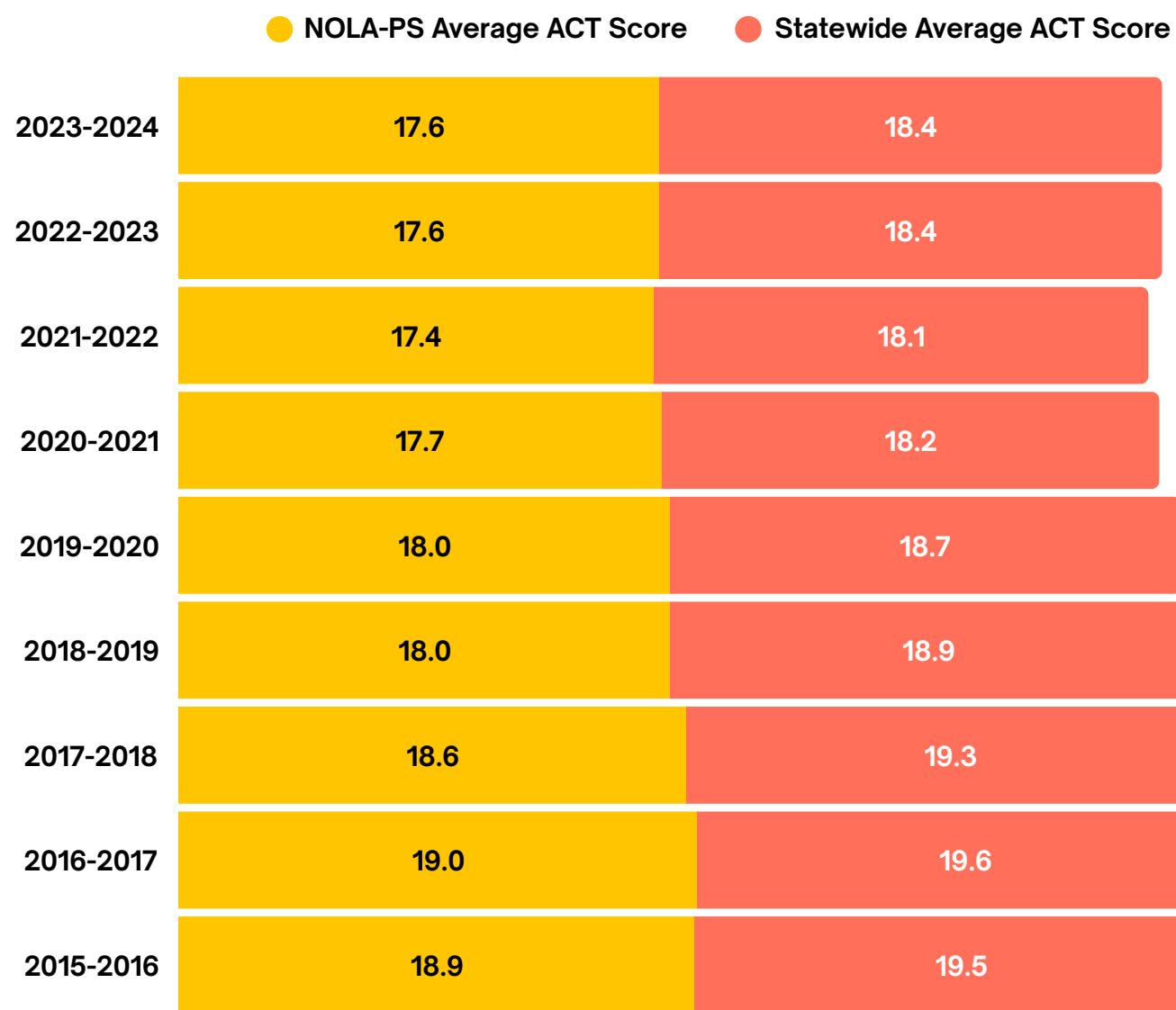
## Cohort Graduation Rate Over Time



**Source:** Louisiana Department of Education, Data Library, Date & Reports, High School Performance, Cohort Graduation Rates, 2005-2023  
State School System Cohort Graduation and Credential Rate

ACT scores of NOLA-PS students also trail those of students statewide. The average ACT score for all students in 2023-2024 was 17.6, while the statewide average was 18.4. Average ACT scores in NOLA-PS schools have decreased by more than a point over the past decade, though it is worth noting the state average score has also declined comparably over that same period. Part of the reason for the decline in scores over the past five years was due to the fact that all public school students were required to take the ACT in Louisiana except for those on the career path diploma (as of 2024).

## ACT Scores Over Time



Source: Louisiana Department of Education, Data Library, Date & Reports, High School Performance, ACT Scores (2016-2024)

**Note:** These ACT findings represent the average ACT composite score and include all students with access to the test. The chart only includes data for NOLA-PS students.

*The SPENO report illuminates how far New Orleans education has come since 2005, in particular students' growth in reading, math, and college readiness. As we look ahead, it's clear that top-down stabilization as well as financially sound management will benefit our students, teachers, and the entire education ecosystem of this amazing city."*

**Caitlin Meehan-Draper**  
**Middle School Principal, Bricolage Academy**

*"The last twenty years have been characterized by innovation, hard work, and collaboration. The next twenty years require more of the same – schools are better, definitely, but many of our children's realities in this city are far from what they deserve – so this is not the time to slow down. My biggest fear is that we will start to slip into bureaucracy, into complacency, and into petty competition either because we are tired, or because we think we are 'good enough.' We have a long way to go before every child is thriving which means we need to work as hard, as innovatively, and as collaboratively as we ever have."*

**Elizabeth Ostberg-Davis**  
**Co-Founder & CEO, Educators for Quality Alternatives, CMO for The Net**

*"The achievements mapped in this report did not happen overnight, nor were they the result of chance. They stemmed from a collective commitment within our community — a belief that our students are capable of greater success. There is, indeed, much to celebrate, but there are many challenges to tackle as we approach the 20-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, including ensuring the district's long-term financial solvency, stable leadership that seeks an innovative vision for the next phase of educational excellence, and a renewed commitment to improving student outcomes over litigating adult conflicts. Our organization remains committed to working alongside partners toward these solutions. We simply can't afford to let our progress slip away."*

**Terrence Lockett**  
**Executive Director, Democrats for Education Reform Louisiana**

*As the district works to enhance long-term sustainability and improve student outcomes, it is important to consistently monitor enrollment trends and long-range projections. Additionally, understanding the evolving focus areas at both the state and federal levels is essential. More specific to our students, recognizing annual growth, graduation rates, and college and career resiliency rates - all of which are vital to the district's success and development of our broader community are also paramount. I remain optimistic about NOLA-PS's progress in advancing student achievement and improving our schools overall. The district's strategic use of key performance metrics to inform decision-making while balancing immediate needs and long-term goals continues to fuel my optimism.*

**Jené Liggins**  
**Public Education Advocate, Director of Talent, Pahara Institute**

# POSTSECONDARY

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One of the major changes to the public education system in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina was an increased emphasis from educators on increasing college access and matriculation for all students in the city, frequently referred to as “college for all.” Twenty years later, as students navigate pathways to higher education, workforce training, and beyond, disparities persist alongside progress. This section explores where the city’s public school graduates stand in terms of college enrollment, affordability, and career readiness.

## College Matriculation And Persistence

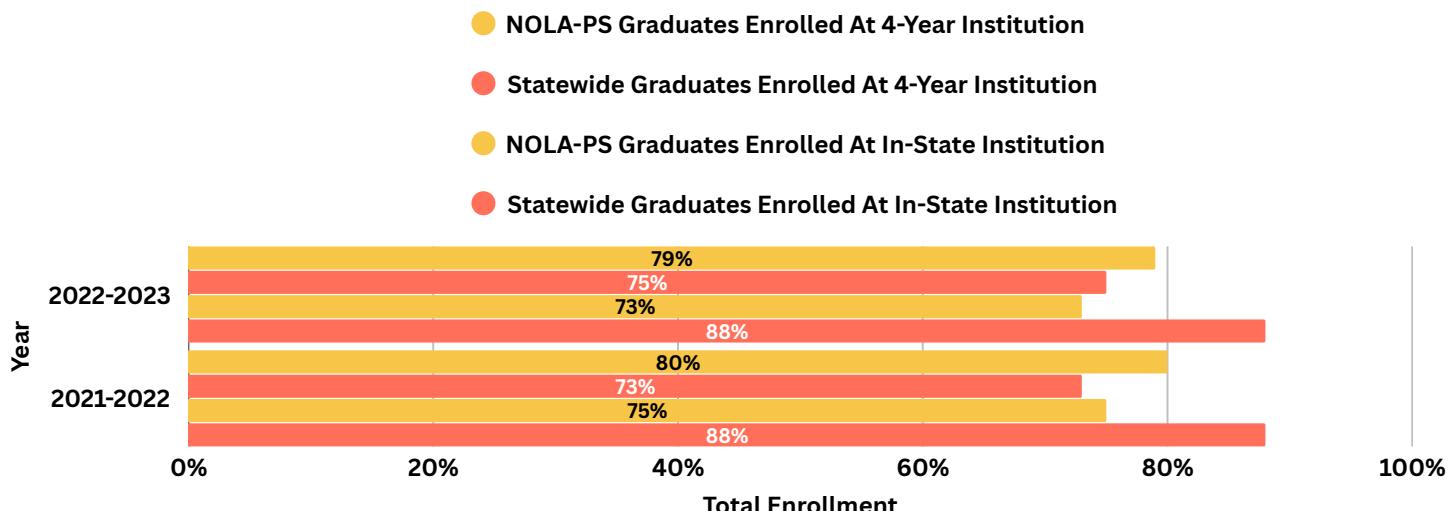
As noted in the school performance section of this report, high school graduation rates in New Orleans saw an overall increase during the past decade but have stagnated in recent years and continue to lag statewide rates. Despite a drop during COVID, college enrollment has increased since 2015-2016, and exceeds the enrollment of high school graduates statewide.

In the 2022-2023 school year (the last year for which there is data available), 65% of all NOLA-PS high school graduates were enrolled in a postsecondary education institution in the fall after their graduation. This surpassed the statewide rate of 57%. However, the college persistence rate for all Orleans Parish public high school graduates in 2021-2022 (the last year for which data was available) was 69%, which was below the statewide rate of 77% for 2021-2022. Over the past five years, though college matriculation rates of NOLA-PS graduates dipped from 2019-2021, they consistently were higher than the rest of the state. Yet, over that same period, persistence has remained below state averages for NOLA-PS high school graduates.

In 2022-2023, the vast majority, 79%, of NOLA-PS high school graduates at a postsecondary education institution were enrolled at a four-year university or college. 73% of enrolled graduates attended an in-state institution.

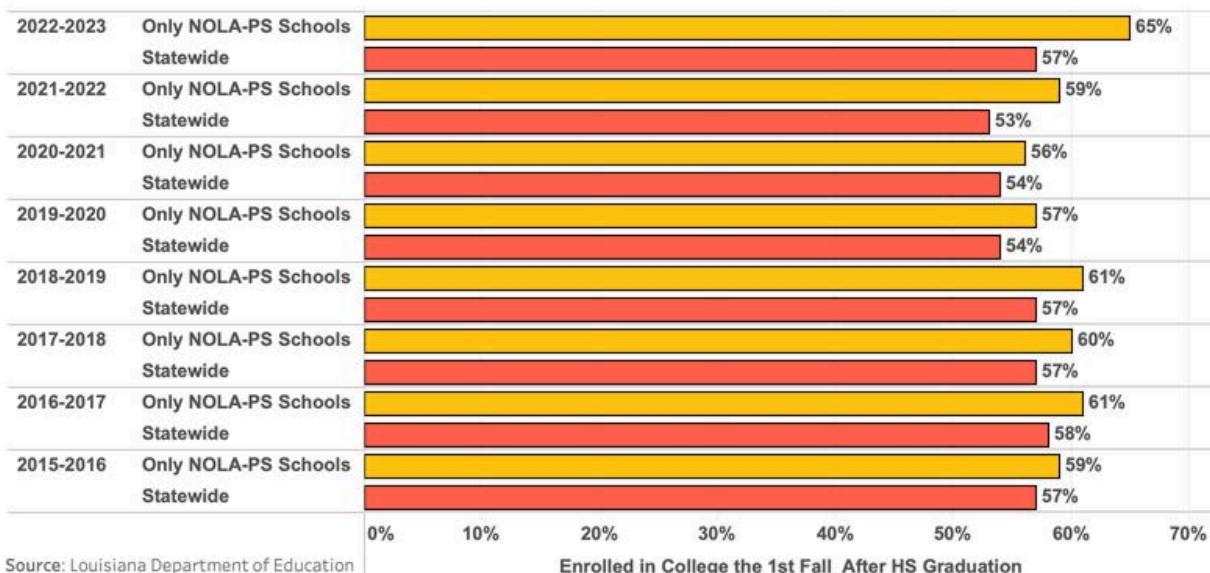
It is worth noting that Black NOLA-PS high school graduates were more likely to matriculate to college than their peers statewide: in 2022-2023, 64% of all Black NOLA-PS high school graduates enrolled in college the fall after graduation, compared to 53% of Black students statewide. The percentages of SPED and ED NOLA-PS graduates also were higher than statewide rates.<sup>16</sup>

## College Enrollment Rate: 4-Year Colleges and In-State Colleges



Source: Louisiana Department of Education, Data Library, Date & Reports, High School Performance, Louisiana College Enrollment Reports- State Reports, College Enrollment Reports (2021-2023)

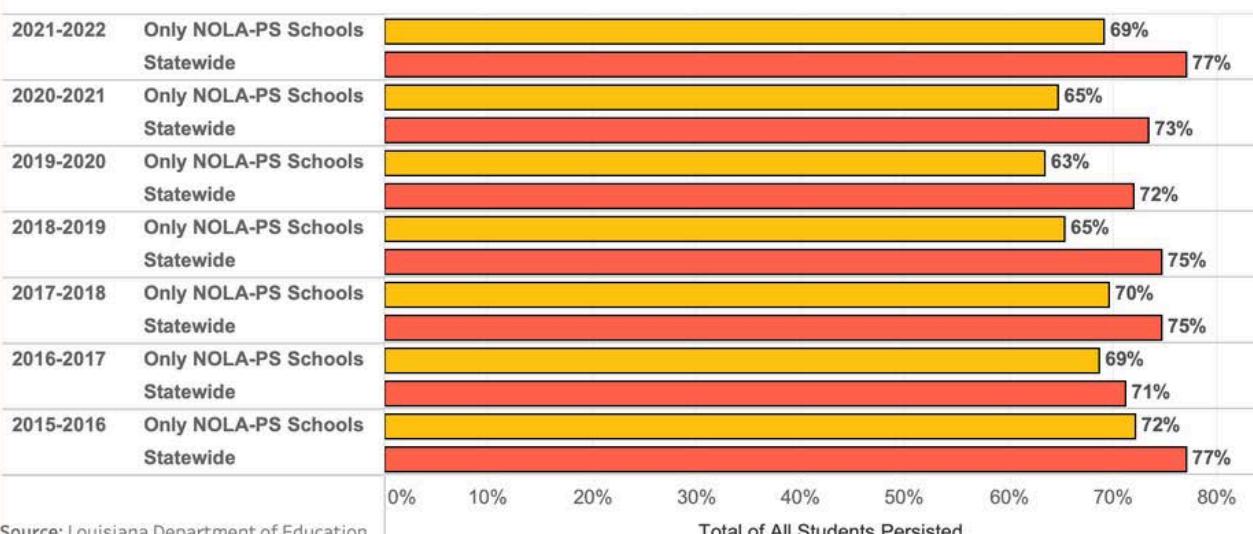
## College Enrollment Rate Over Time



Source: Louisiana Department of Education

Enrolled in College the 1st Fall After HS Graduation

## College Persistence Rate Over Time



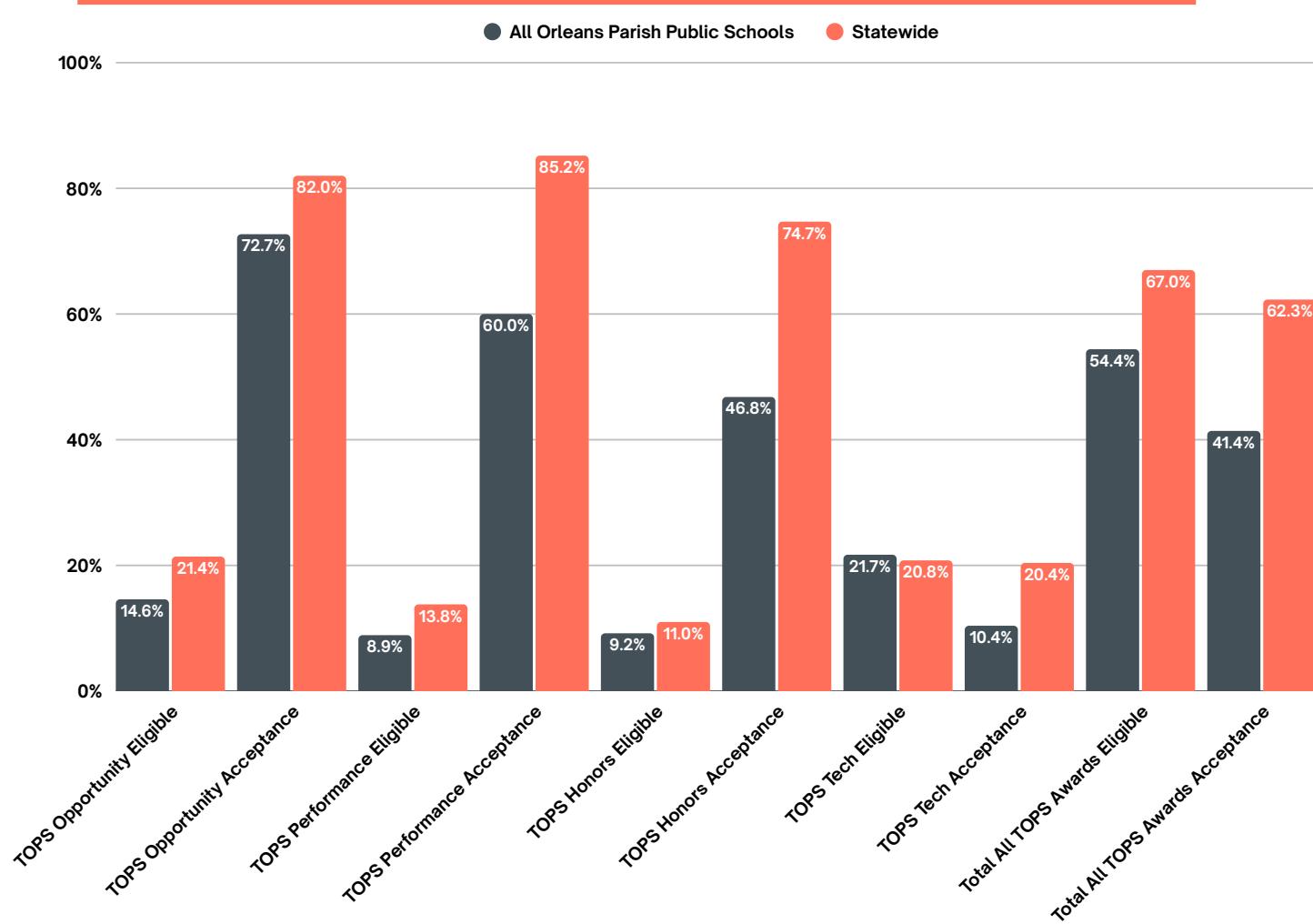
Source: Louisiana Department of Education

Total of All Students Persisted

As echoed in national data, college persistence in New Orleans varied greatly based on the race of students: in 2021-2022 (the last year for which persistence data is available), 92% of White NOLA-PS graduates returned to college in the fall of their second year, compared to 63% of Black graduates. The rate of Black graduates from New Orleans who persisted in college was lower than the statewide rate of 69%.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, college persistence rates for ED, SPED, and ELL NOLA-PS high school graduates were lower than those for each demographic group statewide. These persistence numbers indicate that while NOLA-PS schools have been successful at ensuring high school graduates make it to college, students are not able to persist and graduate at the same rates as students statewide.

The most common schools that New Orleans public high school graduates enrolled in were LSU, Delgado Community College, University of New Orleans, Nunez Community College, Southern University (all locations), and the University of Louisiana-Lafayette.<sup>18</sup>

## TOPS Awards Eligibility and Acceptance Rates 2023-2024: Orleans Parish Public Schools and Statewide



Source: Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance

## College Affordability

The Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), is the state's main scholarship program for Louisiana students to attend in-state higher education institutions. TOPS is a merit-based program — students must reach academic benchmarks in high school and then meet performance standards while enrolled in higher education to receive and then maintain one of the state's four types of TOPS scholarships. TOPS eligibility is therefore one way to measure the readiness of high school students to attend postsecondary institutions.

Overall, 54% of all Orleans Parish public high school graduates were eligible for a TOPS award of some kind in 2023-2024. Comparatively, statewide, 67% of all high school graduates qualified. The acceptance rate for Orleans Parish graduates was 41% for a TOPS Award of any kind, while the statewide rate was 62%. This indicates that far fewer Orleans Parish graduates are accepting TOPS awards and using them to fund their postsecondary education than those who are eligible for the support. The highest rate of acceptance was for the TOPS Opportunity Award. In 2023-2024, 73% of all public high school graduates in Orleans Parish who applied were accepted for the TOPS Opportunity Award, which requires high school graduates to have a 2.5 GPA, a minimum ACT score of 20, and completion of 19 units of TOPS curriculum. Yet, this was still lower than the rate of 82% for high school graduates statewide.<sup>19</sup>

The fact that New Orleans graduates had lower TOPS eligibility and acceptance than graduates statewide matters due to the growing costs of postsecondary education both in Louisiana and nationwide. According to the National College Attainment Network, Louisiana has far fewer affordable community colleges and four-year institutions for students from low- to moderate-income families than compared to states across the country: just 33% of the state's community colleges and 29% of the bachelor-granting institutions were deemed affordable, compared to 49% and 33%, respectively, nationwide. Due in part to the high level of poverty in the state, the amount of federal aid Louisiana students received to attend a four-year institution was nearly twice the average of students across the U.S. Recently, Louisiana had one of the highest rates of completion for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in the country because the state mandated all high school seniors fill out the form. However, that requirement was overturned last year by BESE. Given that students must complete the FAFSA to be eligible to receive federal aid and that more than 97,000 Louisiana students received over \$430 million in Pell Grants in 2021-2022 (the most recent year for which we have data), it will be worth monitoring whether Louisiana students continue to access the same levels of federal aid now without the FAFSA requirement in place and in light of ongoing changes by the Trump Administration.<sup>20</sup>

# LOOKING AHEAD

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As we reflect on the state of public education in New Orleans in 2025, it is clear that over the past 20 years, significant progress has been made. College enrollment and graduation rates, along with student performance scores, are far higher than they were at the time of Hurricane Katrina. It is also notable that in 2024-2025, there is not a single failing school in operation in the city.

But the work for educators and all those concerned about public education in the city is far from over. Students across the city continue to show academic improvement, yet persistent challenges highlight the need for a sustained focus on their long-term success beyond high school. Strengthening postsecondary outcomes must remain a top priority, ensuring every student has the opportunity, financial assistance, and support to thrive in college, career, and life.

Equally critical is the need for continued stability and effective leadership within the OPSB, NOLA-PS, and charter operator leaders. A steady, collaborative governance structure will be essential in guiding the system forward and maintaining public trust. At the same time, improving overall school performance remains an urgent goal. While student growth in the city continues to be high, overall student performance has stagnated over the past decade – though it is worth recognizing the impact COVID-19 had on that reality. It took years for schools to rebound from the pandemic, here and nationally. Going forward, elevating academic quality across all schools will require targeted investment, innovation, and accountability in an increasingly uncertain fiscal environment.

The future of New Orleans depends on the success of its students. By centering on excellence and access, maintaining strong oversight, and committing to continuous improvement, the city can build an educational system that delivers on the promise of opportunity for all.

# ENDNOTES & SOURCES

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## Other Sources

Most of the data in this report comes from the publicly accessible data repository at the Louisiana Department of Education’s site: <https://doe.louisiana.gov/data-and-reports>. Additional data comes from the following sources:

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- New Orleans Public Schools Data Dashboard: <https://data.nolapublicschools.com/>
- Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance: <https://mylosfa.la.gov/>



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