

Over 1500 Failing New Orleans Public High School Students Not Retested

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The Center for Action Research on New Orleans School Reforms is a nonprofit foundation committed to improving New Orleans schools through research.

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Test results are always higher when failing students are not included in the results. On the English/Language Arts section of the GEE, only 474 students were retested, out of the 2,055 who had previously failed. What happened to the remaining 1,581 students? When failing students are not retested because they are not in school, scores improve; but, these students and the community face the lifelong negative impacts associated with dropouts.

Initial Testers and Retesters

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) reports scores by school district and/or by school level on "Initial Testers" and "Retesters." The Initial Testers are the students taking the test for the first time. The Retesters are those who failed the test and are taking it again. For example, if a student fails the English/Language Arts part of the Graduate Exit Exam (GEE), the student gets to repeat the test in anticipation that he will pass.

In the Spring Test Report on its website, the LDE lists by school the number of Initial Test takers who passed and failed, and the number of Retesters who passed and failed. Often, the number who take the Retest are as many as the number of Initial Testers. For example, in Spring 2008-09, at Douglass High school, there were 58 Initial Testers and 66 Retesters for English/ Language Arts. At John McDonogh, there were 67 Initial Testers and 57 Retesters.

While the LDE lists the test results separately for Initial Testers and Retesters on its website, when the LDE reports the results to the public, it reports results only on Initial Testers.

Retest Dates

The students who fail at the Spring test cycle are given three times to retest before the next Spring test cycle. If a student failed the English/LA GEE in Spring 2008, he is given the

opportunity to retest in the Summer 2008 and the Fall 2008. And, if the student is in 12th grade, he is given the opportunity to test again in February 2009. Then by Spring 2009, all who did not pass during the retest dates, are supposed to be tested again.

In Spring 2008, 2,227 students failed the English/LA portion of the GEE; and, 222 students passed it during one of the three retest dates. This left 2,055 students to retest in Spring 2009. Yet, in Spring 2009, there were only 474 Retesters. The question is "Where are the other 1,581 students who failed and did not retest?"

Obviously, they were not retested because they are not in school. While some might have moved out of the city, it is reasonable to assume that the majority did not. They are simply not in school, which creates havoc in our city.

Retest Data Summary

New Orleans High School Retesters: Summary

A. Total No. of Students Who Failed <u>English GEE</u> in Spring 2007-08:	<u>2, 227</u>
B. Total No. of Retesters Who Passed at one of Retest Dates:	<u>222</u>
C. Total No. Who Still Needed to be Retested in Spring 2008-09: (A minus B)	<u>2,055</u>
D. Total No. Who Were Retested in Spring 2008-09:	<u>474</u>

**Difference
(C minus D) 1,581**

These are the students who are unaccounted for -- they either moved out of the parish, were expelled or dropped out.

The Endnotes contain the Charts with the specific numbers of Retesters by school. The school level data on Retesters is given by the LDE for the Spring testing cycles. For the other three retest dates (Summer, Fall and February), the LDE provides only district level data. In addition to the attached charts, the data can be located on the LDE website at <http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/saa/773.html>.

The 10th Grade GEE as a Benchmark for Dropouts

Calculating Dropout Data is an elusive activity for the Louisiana Department of Education.

When a student leaves the system, the reason the student left is to be entered into the Student Information System (SIS). The reasons for leaving are codified; each reason has an Exit Code number. There are 28 Exit Codes, with one that specifically says "dropout." However, there is another Exit Code that says the reason for leaving is "Unknown." Using this code for students who drop out, rather than using the Drop Out code, helps the school avoid increasing its dropout rate, which is viewed negatively.

For example, in the 2006-07 year, John McDonogh High School used the Exit Code of "Unknown" for 144 students. In the SIS files, John McDonogh recorded the following number of students with the Exit Code of 97, which means the reason for leaving is "Unknown."

Grade	Number of Students Coded "Unknown" as reason for leaving school
9 th Grade	46
10 th Grade	16
11 th Grade	35
12 th Grade	47
<u>Total:</u>	<u>144</u>

Thus, calculating the dropout rate is elusive. However, by calculating the numbers of students who fail a portion of the GEE, then fail to retest, a plausible measure of the number of students who do not complete high school can be gauged.

In 10th grade, students are administered the English/ Language Arts and Mathematics sections of the GEE. When a student fails one of these sections at the end of 10th grade, which is the Spring testing cycle, he can retest in the Summer and again in the Fall. Even if he did not pass those two retests, he hopefully returns to school in the Fall of the year, either as an 11th grader or as a repeating 10th grader. The natural progression would mean that the student would then be retested again in the Spring. When the student is not in school in the Spring and cannot be retested, there should be alarm.

In Spring 2009, 1,581 students did not return to be retested in English/ Language Arts. Assuming a few hundred moved out of the city, still over 1,000 teenage students are unaccounted for.

Selective Accountability

The accountability demanded by No Child Left Behind is not selective accountability. The Louisiana Department of Education cannot select to be accountable only for the Initial Testers. Accountability pertains to all of the students, including those who fail and become the

Retesters.

The students who fail the test and must be retested are just as important as those who pass on the first attempt. In crediting themselves with higher scores, the Louisiana Department of Education reports scores of Initial Test takers. A report on the Retesters is equally as important, but nowhere to be found.

The May 6, 2009 press release on "Test Scores Rebound" by the LDE cited test scores of the Initial test takers. The public is deceived to think that the LDE is reporting all of the test scores. By omitting the Retesters, the scores are better, but are skewed.

Too little attention has been focused on the students who fail the test and who, subsequently, drop out of school. For the school system and the city to improve, reporting on the number of Retesters must become equally as important as reporting on the number of Initial Testers. This would include not only reporting the scores of the Retesters, but reporting the number of students who have dropped out and are not in school to be retested.

To report on only the Initial Testers and omit the Retesters avoids confronting the major issues that intertwine schools and communities. New Orleans basks in the increasing number of high school students who are in school and who passed the test on their first attempt. But the students who have previously failed the test, and dropped out of school are the ones who will reap anguish on the city.

It is also a moral concern. Not recognizing and not counting the scores of the Retesters gives the impression that some of our youth are disposable. None are; and, we should all stand up for all of them.

Endnotes:

The data below is taken from the Louisiana Department of Education website. Please refer to

<http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/saa/773.html>.

Chart 1: RSD: Total No. of Students Who Failed English GEE in Spring 2007-08

2007-08 RSD High Schools		
	School	Total No. of Students Who Failed English GEE in Spring 2007-08
1	Capdau	43
2	Walker	205
3	Clark	191
4	Douglass	187
5	John McDonogh	195
6	Rabouin	246
7	Reed	216
8	Schwartz	28
9	Algiers Tech	48
10	Cohen	215
11	Carver	111
12	Livingston	70
	Total	1755

Chart 2: RSD: Total no. of Retesters who Passed English GEE at 3 Retest Dates

	Retest Date	Total No. who Passed English GEE Retest
1	Summer 2008	30
2	Fall 2008	111
3	February 2009	22
	Total Passers	163

Chart 3: RSD: Total No. of Students Who Still Need to be Retested in Spring 2008-09

Number Who Failed English GEE in Spring 2007-08	1755
Number Who Passed English GEE during one of Retests	163
Difference: Number Who Must Still Be Retested in Spring 2008-09	1,592

Chart 4: RSD: Total No. of Students Who Were Retested in Spring 2008-09

2008-09 RSD High Schools		
	School	Total No. of Students Retested in English GEE in Spring 2008-09
1	Capdau	nr
2	Walker	24
3	Clark	42
4	Douglass	66
5	John McDonogh	57
6	Rabouin	66
7	Reed	68
8	Schwartz	nr
9	Algiers Tech	13
10	Cohen	44
11	Carver	49
12	Livingston	Closed
13	Abramson	0
	Total	429

Recovery School District: RSD Summary : Charts 1-4

Chart 1: Total No. of Students Who Failed English GEE in Spring 2007-08: 1,755

Chart 2: Total No. of Retesters who Passed English GEE at 3 Retest Dates: 163

Chart 3: Total No. of Students Who Still Need to be Retested in Spring 2008-09: 1,592

Chart 4: Total No. of Students Who Were Retested in Spring 2008-09: 429

Difference (Students Unaccounted For) 1,163

1,163 RSD high school students, who failed the English portion of the GEE in 2007-08 never retested

Charts 5-8: Orleans Parish School Board

Chart 5: OPBS: Total No. of Students Who Failed English GEE in Spring 2007-08

2007-08 OPBS High Schools

	School	Total No. of Students Who Failed English GEE in Spring 2007-08
1	Easton	111
2	Franklin	1
3	Karr	95
4	Priestley	85
5	Lusher	13
6	McDonogh 35	91
7	McMain	67
8	NO Science&Math	45
9	Orleans PM	14
	Total	522

Chart 6: OPBS: Total No. of Retesters who Passed English GEE at 3 Retest Dates

	Retest Date	Total No. who Passed English GEE Retest
1	Summer 2008	15
2	Fall 2008	38
3	February 2009	6
	Total Passers	59

Chart 7: OPBS: Total No. of Students Who Still Need to be Retested in Spring 2008-09

Number Who Failed English GEE in Spring 2007-08	522
Number Who Passed English GEE during one of Retests	59
Difference: Number Who Must Still Be Retested in Spring 2008-09	463

Chart 8: OPBS: Total Number of Students Retested in Spring 2008-09

2008-09 OPBS High Schools		
	School	Total Number of Students Retested in English GEE in Spring 2008-09
1	Easton	nr
2	Franklin	0
3	Karr	12
4	Priestley	13
5	Lusher	0
6	McDonogh 35	10
7	McMain	10
8	NO Science&Math	nr
9	Orleans PM	nr
	Total	45

Chart 5: Total Number of Students Who Failed English GEE in Spring 2007-08:	<u>522</u>
Chart 6: Total number of Retesters who Passed English GEE at 3 Retest Dates:	<u>59</u>
Chart 7: Total Number of Students Who Still Need to be Retested in Spring 2008-09:	<u>463</u>
Chart 8: Total Number of Students Retested in Spring 2008-09:	<u>45</u>
Difference (Students Unaccounted For)	<u>418</u>

418 OPSB high school students, who failed the English portion of the GEE in 2007-08, never retested.

Combined Total of 1,581 students did not retest

New Orleans High School Retesters:

Summary of Combined RDS and OPSB

A. Total No. of Students Who Failed <u>English GEE</u> in Spring 2007-08:	2, 227
B. Total No. of Retesters Who Passed at one of Retest Dates:	222
C. Total No. Who Still Need to be Retested in Spring 2008-09: (A-B)	2,055
D. Total No. Who Were Retested in Spring 2008-09:	474

Difference (C-D) 1,581

These are the students who are unaccounted for -- they either moved out of the parish, were expelled or dropped out.

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