

RSD FAILS TO IMPROVE HIGH SCHOOLS IN NEW ORLEANS

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When the Recovery School District (RSD) gained control of the New Orleans failing schools, its greatest challenge was with the failing high schools. The strength of the high schools determines the strength of the community. When high school students graduate, the community has greater economic development; when they drop out, the community has greater crime. This is the importance of high schools in America. **Tragically, the Recovery School District (RSD) has done nothing to improve the standing of New Orleans high schools, especially the seven lowest performing high schools.**

Following the State Takeover, the seven lowest performing high schools all reopened as RSD schools. Collectively, they remain as the worst schools in New Orleans.

Part I: Comparison of the lowest performing, seven failing high schools before and after the State Takeover

Research Question: Has the RSD increased the percentage of 10th graders taking the 10th grade test in the seven lowest performing high schools since the State Takeover?

Response: No. In 2004-05, prior to the State Takeover, 85% of the 10th graders took the 10th grade test. In 2009-10, only 72 % of the 10th graders took the 10th grade test. **Thus the percentage of 10th graders taking the test has decreased from 85%, before the State Takeover, to 72%, five years later.**

	Summary Table: Comparing 2004-05 and 2009-10	2004-05			2009-10		
		Oct. 1 st 10 th Grade Count	Spring 2005 10 th grade Testers	% tested	Oct. 1st 10 th Grade Count	Spring 2010 10 th Grade Testers	% tested
1	O.P. Walker Senior High School	230	209	91%	227	187	82%
2	Joseph S. Clark Senior High School	130	138	100+%	88	47	53%
3	Walter L. Cohen High School	178	137	77%	132	84	64%
4	Fredrick A. Douglass High School	217	178	82%	75	51	68%
5	John McDonogh Senior High School	314	211	67%	149	101	68%
6	Sarah Towles Reed Senior High	321	295	92%	164	123	75%
7	G. W. Carver High School	177	171	97%	103	81	79%
	Total	1567	1339	85%	938	674	72%

**Part II: Comparison of all RSD high schools and
all non-RSD high schools in 2009-10.**

Research Question: Of the 10th graders enrolled in the fall of 2009-10, did the RSD high schools and the non-RSD high schools administer the 10th grade test, in the spring, to approximately the same percentage of 10th graders?

Response: No. Only 79% of the 10th graders in the RSD high schools were tested; whereas, 96% of the 10th graders in the non-RSD high schools were tested.

Summary Table: Comparison 2009-10 Non-RSD and RSD High Schools	Oct. 1, 2009 10 th Grade Count	Spring 2010 Initial 10 th Grade Testers	% of 10 th Graders Tested
RSD High Schools	1552	1229	79%
Non-RSD High Schools	1193	1150	96%

The number of 10th graders tested has declined significantly under RSD control. The question must be addressed as to why such a large number of 10th graders are not tested in the RSD schools.

Since test scores are a main component of the school's performance score, a school could deliberately not test its lowest performing students in order to improve its score. However, this is unthinkable and not considered herein. Thus, the only other reason for so many students not being tested would be that the students are no longer in school.

For whatever reason, there are significantly fewer 10th grade students in RSD schools taking the 10th grade test. There are fewer students when the worst performing RSD schools are compared with the same worst performing schools prior to the State Takeover. And, there are fewer students when the 2009-10 RSD schools are compared with the 2009-10 non-RSD schools. Fewer students equates to fewer graduates and to less human potential.

It is time to rethink the reform plan.

Introduction

The singular purpose of the State Takeover was to improve the performance of the failing schools.ⁱ The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) authored the takeover of the failing schools and placed them under the jurisdiction of the Recovery School District (RSD). Thus, the success of the takeover must be measured by how well the failing schools have improved.ⁱⁱ This report compares the seven failing schools, at the time of the takeover, with the same seven failing schools in 2009-10; and compares all RSD high schools with all non-RSD high schools in 2009-10. The conclusion of the research is that the Recovery School District has not improved the standing of the city's lowest performing high schools.

Research Question 1:

Has the RSD increased the percentage of 10th graders taking the 10th grade test in the seven lowest performing high schools since the State Takeover?

Response: No. In 2004-05, prior to the State Takeover, 85% of the 10th graders took the 10th grade test. In 2009-10, only 72 % of the 10th graders took the 10th grade test. Thus the percentage of 10th graders taking the test has decreased from 85%, before the State Takeover, to 72%, five years later.

The seven lowest performing high schools at the time of the State Takeover are listed below.ⁱⁱⁱ These remain as the lowest performing high schools.

At the time of the State Takeover, 85% of the 10th graders took the 10th grade test in the spring.^{iv} (Table 1)

Table 1: 2004-05 Seven Failing High Schools: October 1st count and initial testers.

No.	Code	School Name	Oct. 1, 2004 10 th Grade Count	Spring 2005 Initial 10 th Grade Testers	Percent tested
1	036173	O.P. Walker Senior High School	230	209	91%
2	036020	Joseph S. Clark Senior High School	130	138	100+%
3	036022	Walter L. Cohen High School	178	137	77%
4	036102	Fredrick A. Douglass High School	217	178	82%
5	036095	John McDonogh Senior High School	314	211	67%
6	036152	Sarah Towles Reed Senior High School	321	295	92%
7	036172	G. W. Carver High School	177	171	97%
		Total	1567	1339	85%

For the past five years, all seven of the lowest performing high schools have been under the jurisdiction of the Recovery School District. In 2009-10, only 72% of the 10th graders in the RSD took the 10th grade test. (Table 2)

Table 2: 2009-10 Seven Failing High Schools: October 1st count and initial testers.

No.	Code*	School Name	Oct. 1, 2009 10 th Grade Count	Spring 2010 Initial 10 th Grade Testers	Percent tested
1	395005	O.P. Walker Senior High School	227	187	82%
2	396002	Joseph S. Clark Senior High School	88	47	53%
3	396004	Walter L. Cohen High School	132	84	64%
4	396007	Fredrick A. Douglass High School	75	51	68%
5	396011	John McDonogh Senior High School	149	101	68%
6	396017	Sarah Towles Reed Senior HS	164	123	75%
7	396026	G. W. Carver High School	103	81	79%
		Total	938	674	72%

For the seven lowest performing high schools, the findings show that 85% of 10th graders, before the State Takeover, took the 10th grade test while only 72% of 2009-10 RSD 10th graders took the test. (Table 3)

Table 3: Summary Table Comparing 2004-05 and 2009-10

	Summary Table: Comparing 2004-05 and 2009-10	2004-05 Percent Tested	2009-10 Percent Tested
1	O.P. Walker Senior High School	91%	82%
2	Joseph S. Clark Senior High School	100+%	53%
3	Walter L. Cohen High School	77%	64%
4	Fredrick A. Douglass High School	82%	68%
5	John McDonogh Senior High School	67%	68%
6	Sarah Towles Reed Senior High	92%	75%
7	G. W. Carver High School	97%	79%
	Total	85%	72%

The differences in the percentage of students taking the 10th grade test, for each of the seven lowest performing schools, before the State Takeover and five years later are given in Table 4.

Table 4: Differences in percentages between 2004-05 and 2009-10

No.	School Name	2004-05 % of 10 th graders tested	2009-10 % of 10 th graders tested	Increase/decrease in percentage tested
1	O.P. Walker Senior High School	91%	82%	-9%
2	Joseph S. Clark Senior High School	100+%	53%	-47%
3	Walter L. Cohen High School	77%	64%	-13%
4	Fredrick A. Douglass High School	82%	68%	-14%
5	John McDonogh Senior High School	67%	68%	+1%
6	Sarah Towles Reed Senior HS	92%	75%	-17%
7	G. W. Carver High School	97%	79%	-18%

Definition of Terms and Data Calculation

Terms:

- **October 1st count:** The traditional fall enrollment count is taken on October 1st of each school year by the State Department of Education for use in determining each school district's funding per the Minimum Foundation Program.^v
- **10th Grade Test:** "10th grade test" refers to the Graduate Exit Exam (GEE), which is first administered in 10th grade. There are four sections of the exam. The English/Language Arts and Mathematics sections are administered to 10th grade students. The Science and Social Studies sections are administered to 11th grade students. Students who fail any section are given retake opportunities. For this research article, "10th grade test" refers to the English/Language Arts portion of the exam, which is taken initially by 10th grade students.^{vi}
- **Failing High School:** A failing high school is defined as a school that received an unacceptable rating for four consecutive years and that was transferred to the Recovery School District.^{vii}
- **High School:** In this research, "high school" refers to any school that had a 10th grade enrollment count on the specified year. Some are four-year high schools; others are combination schools, or schools with a mixture of grades thereof.

Data Calculation

The "percentage (%) of 10th graders tested" for each school, was calculated as follows:

1. For the specified year and for each school, the school's October 1st membership count was recorded from the Department of Education's website, as acquired from the Minimum Foundation Report, which collects statewide student enrollment data for funding purposes.
2. For the specified year and for each school, the Department of Education's website was used to record the number of initial 10th grade testers in the Language Arts/ English section of the GEE. Specifically, the data is from the spring results of the initial GEE testers.
3. The percentage of 10th graders tested was determined by dividing the number of 10th grade initial testers by the number of 10th graders enrolled on October 1st.

In addition to the specific citations provided in the Endnotes, Appendix A outlines the process for readers to use in order to access information from the Department of Education's website. See also, Appendix B, for the listing of all of the takeover schools that had a 10th grade enrollment count in 2004-05.

Research Question II:

Of the 10th graders enrolled in fall of 2009-10, did the RSD high schools and the non-RSD high schools administer the 10th grade test, in the spring, to approximately the same percentage of 10th graders?

Response: No, only 79% of the 10th graders were tested in the RSD high schools; whereas, 96% of the 10th graders were tested in the non-RSD high schools.

On October 1, 2009, there were eight (8) non-RSD high schools that had 10th graders enrolled, and there were eighteen (18) RSD high schools that had 10th graders enrolled. The eight (8) non-RSD high schools had a total of 1,219 10th grade students, and the eighteen (18) RSD high schools had a total of 1,552 10th grade students.^{viii}

A few alternative schools are excluded from this analysis and from the state database for confidentiality purposes because the number of 10th grade testers was under ten (10). All of the schools referred to as high schools have 10th grade enrollment. Some are four year high schools; some are combination schools; and, some have a variety of grades.

RSD High Schools: 79% Tested

In the RSD high schools, seventy-nine percent (79%) of the 10th graders were tested. (Table 5)

Table 5: 2009-10 RSD High Schools: Percent Tested

No.	School Name	Oct. 1, 2009 10 th Grade Count	Spring 2010 Initial 10 th Grade Testers	% Tested
1	Thurgood Marshall Early College High School*	107	104	97%
2	New Orleans Charter Science and Math Academy*	63	61	97%
3	Sojourner Truth Academy*	87	73	84%
4	Miller-McCoy Academy*	100	84	84%
5	Abramson Science & Technology Charter School	20	21	100+%
6	Dr. M.L.K. Charter School for Science and Technology*	27	26	96%
7	O.P. Walker Senior High School	227	187	82%
8	Algiers Technology Academy	88	69	78%
9	Joseph S. Clark Senior High School	88	47	53%
10	Walter L. Cohen High School	132	84	64%
11	Fredrick A. Douglass High School	75	51	68%
12	John McDonogh Senior High School	149	101	68%
13	Sarah Towles Reed Senior HS	164	123	75%
14	Schwarz Alternative School	17	14	82%
15	G. W. Carver High School	103	81	79%
16	Excel Academy*	28	21	75%
17	Greater Gentilly High School*	64	65	100+%
18	Sophie B. Wright Inst. Of Academic Excellence*	13	17	100+%
	Total	1552	1229	79%

* New schools in 2009-10, or new to administering the 10th grade exam.

Non-RSD High Schools: 96% Tested

In the non-RSD high schools, ninety-six percent (96%) of the 10th graders were tested. (Table 6)

Table 6: 2009-10 Non-RSD High Schools: Percent Tested

No.	School Name	Oct. 1, 2009 10 th Grade Count	Spring 2010 Initial 10 th Grade Testers	% Tested
1	Warren Easton Senior High School	204	198	97%
2	Benjamin Franklin High School	172	168	98%
3	Edna Karr Secondary School	215	210	98%
4	Priestley School of Architecture/ Construction	88	78	89%
5	Lusher Charter School	92	97	100+%
6	McDonogh #35 Senior High School	203	187	92%
7	Eleanor McMain Secondary School	125	124	99%
8	N.O. Charter Science and Mathematics High School	94	88	94%
	Total	1193	1150	96%

Thus, in 2009-10, 79% of the 10th graders in RSD schools were tested; whereas, 96% of the 10th graders in non-RSD schools were tested. (Table 7)

Table 7: Summary Table: Comparison 2009-10 Non-RSD and RSD High Schools

Comparison 2009-10 Non-RSD and RSD High Schools	Oct. 1, 2009 10 th Grade Count	Spring 2010 Initial 10 th Grade Testers	% of 10 th Graders Tested
RSD High Schools	1552	1229	79%
Non-RSD High Schools	1193	1150	96%

Implications and Recommendations

The difference between the October 1st count and the number of spring testers is an important indicator of the effectiveness of a school. Schools with performance scores of 60 or below are “failing schools.” Failing schools have significantly fewer 10th graders taking the 10th grade test when compared with successful schools. (Appendix C)

Of the seven failing schools researched, all but one, had less than 80% of their 10th graders tested. (Table 6)

The low percentage of 10th graders, who do not take the spring 10th grade test, is yet another indicator that the Recovery School District has failed to improve New Orleans’ high schools, especially the seven lowest performing high schools.

Table 6: School Performance Scores of RSD High Schools with less than 80% of 10th graders tested.

No.	School Name	2009-10 percent of 10 th graders tested	2008-09 Baseline SPS*
1	Joseph S. Clark Senior High School	53%	22.1
2	Walter L. Cohen High School	64%	20.0
3	Fredrick A. Douglass High School	68%	17.1
4	John McDonogh Senior High School	68%	23.2
5	Sarah Towles Reed Senior HS	75%	33.6
6	G. W. Carver High School	79%	29.5

*Latest year for SPS given on LDE website.

O.P. Walker High School is the only one of the seven lowest performing schools that did improve its percentage of 10th graders tested, to over 80% tested. Its school performance score also improved to 55.8, even though this is still considered “failing.”

The significance here is that O.P. Walker is the only one of the seven schools that is not directly operated by the Recovery School District. Rather, O.P. Walker is part of the west-bank charter school initiative that includes all schools on the west-bank, both takeover schools and non-takeover schools.^{ix}

Each state is provided the option in No Child Left Behind of either authorizing a State Takeover, or of dividing the one large school district into smaller school districts.^x The west-bank initiative is an example of the latter option and it has proven to be more successful than the State Takeover’s operation through the Recovery School District.

When only 79% of the 10th grade RSD students take the 10th grade test, the question becomes “Where are those students who were not tested?” The data reporting system of the State Department of Education is not a helpful source for answering this question. For example, when a student simply stops coming to school, the school is allowed to code the reason for the student’s disappearance as simply “unknown” or “no show.” If the school uses the code “dropout,” it would receive negative points toward its performance score. By using “unknown,” or other dubious state Department of Education codes, the school avoids having to code the disappearing student as a dropout.^{xi}

Further research on the positives of the west-bank initiative, along with a more accurate system of determining why so many RSD 10th grade students are no longer in school at the end of the year, will go a long way to improving New Orleans high schools. Whatever is done will certainly be a better alternative than continuing the operation of the schools under the Recovery School District.

Endnotes:

ⁱ The Louisiana “State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. . . shall have the power to supervise, manage, and operate or provide for the supervision, management and operation of a public elementary or secondary school which has determined to be failing.” Louisiana State Constitution, Article VIII, Section 3.

ⁱⁱ “The State. . . shall take corrective action with respect to any local educational agency that fails to make adequate yearly progress, as defined by the State, by the end of the second full school year after the identification of the local education agency.” No Child Left Behind; P.L. 107-110, 20 USC 6311, Title I, Sect. 1116 (c) (10)(B).

ⁱⁱⁱ See Appendix B for the seven lowest performing high schools in 2004-05. Appendix B data was obtained from the 2004-05 District Composite Report for Orleans Parish, State Department of Education.

^{iv} Louisiana Department of Education, Planning, Analysis and Information Resources, LEA and School Level; Public School Counts: “The documents are prepared from student information submitted as of October. . . each year by the parish/city school district. “

^v “The Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) formula adopted by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and approved by the Legislature determines the cost of a minimum foundation program of education in public elementary and secondary schools and helps allocate the funds equitably to parish and city school systems.” Louisiana Department of Education, Education Finance, MFP Administration, 2010.

^{vi} “The Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) and the Graduation Exit Examination (GEE) are part of Louisiana’s criterion-reference testing (CRT) program. The GEE English Language Arts and Mathematics tests were (first) administered for grade 10 in spring 2002.” Louisiana Educational Assessment Program.

^{vii} Louisiana Administrative Code, Title 28, Education, Chapter 16: Academically Unacceptable Schools and Subgroup Component Failure. “Beginning in 2007, schools with Baseline School Performance Scores of less than 60.0 points shall be labeled “Academically Unacceptable Schools.” LAC, Title 28, Recovery School District: “The Louisiana Legislature established the recovery school district with the passage of R.S. 17:1990. A school is eligible for the recovery school district under any of the following conditions. . . 4) a school is labeled academically unacceptable for four consecutive years.”

^{viii} Louisiana Department of Education, Education Finance, MFP Administration, 2010.

^{ix} The Algiers Charter School Association (ACSA) was authorized to charter all New Orleans west-bank schools under the collaborative name of ACSA following the 2005 Hurricane Katrina. The schools consist of both academically failing schools, that were part of the State Takeover, and schools that were not part of the State Takeover. See ACSA website.

^x “In the case of a local education agency identified for corrective action, The State education agency shall take at least one of the following corrective actions. . . (iv) removing particular schools from the local education agency and establishing alternative arrangements for public school governance (i.e., state takeover). . . (vi) . . . restructuring the local education agency.” No Child Left Behind; P.L. 107-110, 20 USC 6311, Title I, Sect. 1116 (c) (10)(C).

^{xi} SIS User Guide, 2010-11 Version 10.2: “The Student Information System (SIS) database consists of records of information about individual students enrolled in Louisiana Public Schools.” “Exit Reason Codes: 02: Dropped Out; 18: No Show; 97: Unknown.” (Page 33, SIS User Guide)

Appendices

Appendix A

Process for locating data on Department of Education website:

For each inquiry, begin by accessing the Department of Education website, then clicking on "Accountability."

- **For School Enrollment Data:**
Click on "LAMFP Accountability," then click on "Data and Reports." Look to the left of screen and click on "Public School Enrollment," then click on "Student Count" (select year) and click on "Zipped Excel by Site Elementary/Secondary."
- **For GEE test data:**
Click on "Test Results GEE." Enter year desired and click to download the results. Scroll to bottom of page to retrieve specific data, such as, "GEE Initial testers."
- **For SPS data:**
Click on "District Composite Report." Enter District and year.

Appendix B:

All 2004-05 New Orleans Public Schools with 10th grade students. Information provided: 10th grade October 1st count, initial spring GEE testers, and school's 2004-05 baseline School Performance Score.

No.	Code	School Name	Oct. 1, 2004 10 th Grade Count	Spring 2005 Initial GEE Testers	2004-05 Baseline SPS
1	036002	Marion Abramson Senior High School	370	377	31.2
2	036020	Joseph S. Clark Senior High School	130	138	14.6
3	036022	Walter L. Cohen High School	178	137	21.4
4	036035	Warren Easton Fundamental Sr. High School	324	313	93.6
5	036042	Alcee Fortier High School	200	188	17.0
6	036043	Benjamin Franklin Senior High School	225	225	200.5
7	036051	F.W. Gregory Junior High School	91	88	44.6
8	036064	Edna Karr Magnet School	174	179	127.2
9	036065	John F. Kennedy Senior High School	139	145	26.1
10	036069	L. B. Landry High School	147	126	36.2
11	036072	Lawless High School	135	126	30.0
12	036088	McDonogh #35 Senior High School	286	286	115.8
13	036095	John McDonogh Senior High School	314	211	25.1
14	036096	McMain Magnet Secondary School	196	193	121.3
15	036102	Fredrick A. Douglass High School	217	178	15.0
16	036110	Rabouin Career Magnet High School	140	126	61.1
17	036120	Urban League Street Academy	4	11	~
18	036122	Booker T. Washington School	62	54	~
19	036132	Youth Study Center	5	~	~
20	036137	East New Orleans Educational Center	19	~	~
21	036152	Sarah Towles Reed Senior High School	321	295	42.7
22	036157	Juvenile Alternative School	16	~	~
23	036163	New Orleans Science and Mathematics HS	3	~	~
24	036170	N.O. Public Schools Alternative High School	16	~	~
25	036172	G. W. Carver High School	177	171	26.5
26	036173	O.P. Walker Senior High School	230	209	41.1
27	036177	New Orleans High School Signature Centers	269	257	49.4
		Total	4388	4033	

Appendix C:

These are schools with a 10th grade in 2008-09, which continued to have a 10th grade in 2009-10. The data is from the 2008-09 year, which is the most recent year for which the LDE provides School Performance Scores. The schools are listed in ascending order by percentage of 10th graders tested. The schools are both OPSB and RSD schools.

(A failing school has a School Performance Score (SPS) below 60.0.)

No.	School Name	% of 10 th graders tested	2008-09 Baseline SPS	
1	Benjamin Franklin High School	100+%	167.5	Above 90% of 10 th graders tested, all had SPS greater than 60, except Priestley.
2	Lusher Charter School	100+%	139.4	
3	Eleanor McMain Secondary School	100+%	84.8	
4	Warren Easton Senior High School	100+%	84.1	
5	McDonogh #35 Senior High School	100+%	82.5	
6	Edna Karr Secondary School	100%	83.0	
7	Priestley School of Architecture/ Construction	99%	51.1	
8	New Orleans Charter Science and Mathematics High School	95%	76.7	
9	Abramson Science & Technology Charter School	93%	66.2	
10	Algiers Technology Academy	88%	49.9	Below 90% to 10 th graders tested, all had SPS less than 60.
11	O.P. Walker Senior High School	82%	55.9	
12	G. W. Carver High School	79%	29.5	
13	Walter L. Cohen High School	74%	20.0	
14	Joseph S. Clark Senior High School	73%	22.1	
15	Sarah Towles Reed Senior HS	71%	33.6	
16	John McDonogh Senior High School	65%	23.2	
17	Fredrick A. Douglass High School	56%	17.1	

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