New Orleans Schools Decline Following State's 'Double Standard' Takeover

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In 2005, the state manipulated the "takeover score" for New Orleans, allowing for the takeover of some of the city's finest schools. Of the takeover schools that reopened by the 2008-09 year, the majority have declined. This double standard "takeover score" has negatively impacted the New Orleans schools.

### Part 1: About "School Performance Scores"

Think of the School Performance Score (SPS) as a test score. Just like a teacher makes up a test for students, the Board of Elementary and Secondary (BESE) makes up the test for the schools. Just like a teacher, or the school, determines the score by which a student fails, BESE determines the score by which a school fails. When a student fails, he/she usually repeats the course; when a school fails, BESE takes over the operation of the school.

If BESE's goal were to take over as many schools as possible, BESE could do this in two ways. First, BESE could manipulate the test components; or, BESE could manipulate the score that determines failure. For example, BESE could make the components unrealistically difficult, or BESE could set the score so high that the test would be difficult to pass.

### 1. The Components on the Test.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandates the major components of the test, but allows states to choose other components. For example, NCLB requires testing in three subjects, but, BESE requires testing in four subjects. NCLB requires each state to measure a school's progress, using other components, such as attendance and dropout rates. Then, NCLB allows each state to select "one other component." Where Louisiana differs, from all other states, is on the "one other component."

In Louisiana, the other component is *iLEAP*, which includes norm-referenced items. Recall that norm-referenced always means that half the students are above average and the other half below. Using norm-referenced test items negatively biases New Orleans, whose students historically score lowest because of New Orleans' large disadvantaged population. NCLB discourages use of norm-referenced test items simply because norm-referenced is not a measure of achievement, but is a measure of one's standing in a group. Louisiana is the only state that uses norm-referenced test items as one of the components that determines a school's progress.

### 2. The "Failing" Score: A Double Standard in Louisiana

BESE is able to take over as many schools as it desires by setting the "failing score" to suit its purpose. At one time, BESE set the failing score at 45; any school scoring 45 or below was taken over by BESE. Over the past several years and currently, the failing score is 60; any school scoring 60 or below is taken-over by BESE. Now BESE has upped the failing score to 65 for 2011, and to 75 for 2012. "

However, the most devious way to use failing scores is by setting a double standard. And, that is the case for New Orleans, where the takeover score was higher than in any other parish. This is blatantly discriminatory. BESE cannot takeover a school with a score above 60 in any other parish. Yet, in 2005, when New Orleans was ravaged by Hurricane Katrina, BESE developed a way to takeover many of New Orleans schools with scores well above 60. These were some of New Orleans finest schools, some with scores in the 80s. Now, four years after the takeover of these schools, the majority of these schools have not only failed to improve, but have declined.

### Part II: Analyzing Takeover Schools with Scores Above 60

Below is an analysis of the schools that were taken-over in 2005 with SPS scores above 60. Half of the schools that reopened by 2008 remained as traditional schools, and are now operated by the RSD. The other half of the schools that reopened became charter schools.

The analysis reveals that:

- SPS scores declined in all of the schools that reopened as traditional RSD operated schools.
- SPS scores declined in eighty percent (80%) of the schools that reopened as charter schools.

Table 1 lists all of the schools, with scores above 60, which were taken-over by BESE in 2005. Had these schools been in any other parish, they could not have been taken-over by BESE.

Table 1: New Orleans Schools with SPS Scores Above 60, Which were "Taken-Over" by BESE in 2005: 

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(Source: 2004-05 District Composite Report, La. Dept. of Educ.)

| No. | Code   | Name                            | Grades | Baseline SPS |
|-----|--------|---------------------------------|--------|--------------|
|     |        |                                 |        | 04-05        |
| 1   | 036003 | Henry W. Allen Elem             | Pk-7   | 65.6         |
| 2   | 036007 | Thurgood Marshall               | 7-8    | 77.6         |
| 3   | 036014 | Stuart R. Bradley Elem          | Pk-6   | 78.5         |
| 4   | 036019 | Parkview Fundamental Magnet     | Pk-6   | 85.7         |
| 5   | 036021 | Mary D. Coghill                 | Pk-6   | 76.6         |
| 6   | 036032 | John Dibert Elem                | Pk-6   | 65.8         |
| 7   | 036038 | Dwight D. Eisenhower Elem       | Pk-6   | 67.6         |
| 8   | 036040 | William J. Fischer Elem         | Pk-6   | 73.8         |
| 9   | 036048 | Gentilly Terrace Elem           | Pk-6   | 65.5         |
| 10  | 036052 | William J. Guste Elem           | Pk-6   | 66.2         |
| 11  | 036053 | Paul B. Habans Elem             | k-6    | 64.2         |
| 12  | 036068 | Thomy Lafon                     | Pk-6   | 61.5         |
| 13  | 036073 | Ronald G. McNair Elem           | Pk-6   | 70.6         |
| 14  | 036082 | McDonogh15 Creative Arts Magnet | Pk-6   | 63.5         |
| 15  | 036094 | McDonogh #07 Elem               | Pk-6   | 64.6         |
| 16  | 03097  | Harriet Tubman Elem             | Pk-6   | 73.3         |
| 17  | 036104 | Mildred Osborne                 | Pk-8   | 62.6         |
| 18  | 036110 | Rabouin Career Magnet HS        | 8-12   | 61.1         |
| 19  | 036114 | H.C. Schaumburg Elem            | Pk-8   | 72.1         |
| 20  | 036117 | Sherwood Forest Elem            | Pk-6   | 64.5         |
| 21  | 036135 | N.O. Free School                | k-8    | 63.6         |
| 22  | 036164 | Dr.MLKElemSchForSciAndTech      | Pk-6   | 81.8         |
| 23  | 036167 | NO Charter Middle               | 6-8    | 70.5         |
| 24  | 036176 | Lake Area Middle                | 7-8    | 63.0         |
| 25  | 036178 | N.O. Technology High            | 9      | 61.7         |

Of the schools in Table 1, eleven (11) reopened by 2008-09. The following analysis excludes one of the schools, the previous McDonogh #15 Creative Arts Magnet, which is now KIPP McDonogh #15.

KIPP McDonogh #15 is not included in this analysis because, unlike all of the other schools, KIPP did not maintain the open initial and continued enrollment policies. All other schools had, and have, open initial and continued enrollment policies. For KIPP, continued enrollment is conditional. It is conditioned upon the parents desire to support the rigorous, time-consuming demands of the curriculum. This condition works extremely well for the KIPP schools. However, KIPP schools cannot be compared with the other schools, which allow continued enrollment regardless of parent support.

# SPS SCORES DECLINED IN ALL OF THE SCHOOLS THAT REOPENED AS TRADITIONAL RSD OPERATED SCHOOLS

Five of the Takeover Schools reopened as traditional RSD schools. Before the takeover these were traditional OPSB (Orleans Parish School Board) schools. The traditional model means that the schools are operated through a centralized system.

The schools that reopened as traditional schools are listed in Table 2. The decline in SPS scores, between 2005 and 2009, is significant for each. vii The New Orleans school system always had a mobile student population. Thus, an argument that the scores of schools cannot be compared because the students differ is not valid. It is obvious that the schools have not improved performance; in fact, they have declined since the takeover.

Table 2: REOPENED AS TRADITIONAL SCHOOLS OPERATED BY THE RSD

|   | 2004-05 |                             |        |                       | 2008-09 |          |        |                       | Change |
|---|---------|-----------------------------|--------|-----------------------|---------|----------|--------|-----------------------|--------|
|   | Code    | Name                        | Grades | Baseline<br>SPS 04-05 | Code    | New Name | Grades | Baseline<br>SPS 08-09 |        |
| 1 | 036021  | Mary D. Coghill Elem        | Pk-6   | 76.6                  | 396037  | Same     | PK-8   | 53.4                  | -23.2  |
| 2 | 036032  | John Dibert Elem            | Pk-6   | 65.8                  | 396005  | Same     | PK-8   | 56.7                  | -9.1   |
| 3 | 036053  | Paul B. Habans Elem         | k-6    | 64.2                  | 396009  | Same     | PK-8   | 56.1                  | -8.1   |
| 4 | 036110  | Rabouin Career Magnet<br>HS | 8-12   | 61.1                  | 396016  | Same     | 11-12  | 22.6                  | -38.5  |
| 5 | 036114  | H.C. Schaumburg Elem        | Pk-8   | 72.1                  | 396034  | Same     | PK-8   | 61.8                  | -10.3  |

## SPS SCORES DECLINED IN EIGHTY PERCENT (80%) OF THE SCHOOLS THAT REOPENED AS CHARTER SCHOOLS

Five of the takeover schools reopened as charter schools. (See Table 3)

Table 3: TAKEOVER SCHOOLS THAT REOPENED AS CHARTER SCHOOLS

|     | 2004-05 |                                                     |            |                       | 2008-09 |                                                         |        |                       | Change |
|-----|---------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------------------|--------|
| No. | Code    | Name                                                | Grad<br>es | Baseline<br>SPS 04-05 | Code    | New Name                                                | Grades | Baseline<br>SPS 08-09 |        |
| 1   | 036038  | Dwight D. Eisenhower<br>Elem                        | Pk-6       | 67.6                  | 395002  | Same                                                    | K-8    | 69.5                  | +1.9   |
| 2   | 036040  | William J. Fischer Elem                             | Pk-6       | 73.8                  | 395003  | Same                                                    | PK-8   | 60.4                  | -13.4  |
| 3   | 036048  | Gentilly Terrace Elem                               | Pk-6       | 65.5                  | 396040  | Same                                                    | PK-8   | 61.8                  | -3.7   |
| 4   | 03097   | Harriet Tubman Elem                                 | Pk-6       | 73.3                  | 395006  | Same                                                    | Pk-8   | 53.7                  | -19.6  |
| 5   | 036164  | Dr.MLK Elem School<br>for Science and<br>Technology | Pk-6       | 81.8                  | 391001  | Dr. MLK Charter<br>School for Science<br>and Technology | PK-8   | 91.4                  | +9.6   |

### Part III: Accountability or Abuse of Power?

Accountability is one thing, and abuse of power is another. State boards should create accountability standards, but the standards should apply equally to all schools. BESE's rule was a minimum score of 60 for taking-over schools in 2005; but, BESE carved out a separate rule for taking-over New Orleans schools.

BESE's desire to control the majority of New Orleans schools had to be motivated by control of funds, rather than control of teaching and learning as BESE had not even devised a new curriculum or instructional design. Controlling the revenues of the New Orleans public schools was a powerful motivator as the 2004-05 New Orleans public school revenues were nearly \$600 million. VIII (Specifically, Orleans parish school district revenues were \$564,695,710 in 2004-05. Source: Annual Financial and Statistical Report-La. Department of Education.)

By various counts, there were 107, 104, or 102 schools in the takeover. Since there was a total of 127 schools in Orleans parish that year, approximately 80% of the schools were taken-over. With the takeover of 80% of the schools came the takeover of approximately \$450 million in revenues. (*Specifically*, \$451,756,568 or 80% of \$564,695,710.)

BESE's lack of accountability caused the decline in the schools following the takeover. What did BESE intend to do with the schools to ensure that they would improve? Obviously, there was not a master plan, other than to open the Recovery School District and to charter all of the takeover schools. Since charter operators did not come forward for all of the schools, the RSD operated some schools without a vision or master plan. The results are evidence that the takeover of some of New Orleans finest schools was not successful. Rather, it was tragic.

#### **Conclusions:**

BESE used a double standard in order to takeover the above New Orleans schools and the results were disastrous. Therefore:

- The state should return the above schools to the operation of the Orleans Parish School Board, or to a newly-constituted other form of local governance; and
- The state should, henceforth, apply a uniform standard to the takeover of schools.

It is both immoral and unconscionable for the children and youth of New Orleans to continue to be the experimental subjects of BESE.

#### **Endnotes**

No Child Left Behind, Public Law 107-110, 20USC6311. Sec. 1111(b)(3)(v)(I) . . . "Measure the proficiency of students in, at a minimum, mathematics and reading or language arts, and be administered not less than once during grades 3 through 5; grades 6 through 9; and grades 10 through 12." Sec. 1111(b)(3)(v)(II)" Beginning not later than school year 2007-08, measure the proficiency of all students in science and be administered not less than one time during (aa) grades 3 through 5; (bb) grades 6 through 9; and (cc) grades 10 through 12."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Accountability at a Glance," published by LA Department of Education. "the iLEAP is referred to as an 'integrated' LEAP because it combines a norm-referenced test, which compares a student's test results to the performance of students in a national sample. . . "

<sup>&</sup>quot;BESE Raises Takeover Score," Associated Press, January 13, 2010. "The minimum score required for public schools to avoid state takeovers will rise by 25 percent in the next two years. . . . The new rules raise the minimum score to 65 in 2011 and 75 in 2012."

Act 35 of 2005. La.R.S.17:10.7 A.(1) "Each school that. . has a baseline score school performance score below the state average. . . shall be transferred to the Recovery School District. . "

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>v</sup> Louisiana Department of Education, District Composite Report, Orleans Parish, 2004-05.

vi Green, Elizabeth: Gotham Schools-Daily Independent Reporting on NYC Schools, February 2, 2009. Green reports on Jay Mathews' book on KIPP Charter schools and concludes that KIPP does not kick out misbehaving or low-performing students, but describes "student attrition that stems from parents who do not want their children to continue with the rigorous, time-consuming demands."

vii Louisiana Department of Education, Baseline School Performance Scores, 2008-09.

viii Louisiana Department of Education, Annual Financial and Statistical Report, 2004-05.