



2005

Recovery School District in New Orleans: National Model for Reform or District in Academic Crisis

Charles J. Hatfield, M.S.

Hatfield and Associates, LLC

Co-Founder of Research on Reforms

Email: cjhatfield@researchonreforms.org

11/5/2012



2012

On October 23, 2012 the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) released the 2012 Baseline School Performance Scores (SPS) and letter grades for public schools in Louisiana.¹ These baseline scores were calculated by the LDOE based upon two years of School Performance Scores (SPS).² This is the second year that letter grades have been assigned to schools. In 2010-11, an SPS score of 65 or below was assigned a letter grade of “F” by the LDOE. The SPS failing bar was raised to 75 in 2012. The historical increases in the failing bar for SPS make it very difficult to accurately compare annual school progress within the context of failing schools. Appendix A depicts the changes that the LDOE has made to the SPS criterion for a failing school since 1998 to 2012. It also presents the letter grades associated with each SPS score range for 2011 and 2012.

In 2010, Research on Reforms (ROR) reported that the Recovery District was a “District in Academic Crisis”.³ Nothing has changed significantly since that paper was published to warrant a change in ROR’s conclusions in that paper. This paper will address RSD-NO’s performance in 2012 from three perspectives: overall district performance, individual school performance, and current status within the context of the state legislation that created it in 2004.

District Performance: When the 2012 SPS/letter grades were released, the RSD-NO was quick to respond with the spin that 2012 results again supported the claim that that the LDOE’s model for turning around failing schools had been extremely successful.⁴ They claimed that their schools had made incredible gains in New Orleans for 2012 in spite of the fact that the failing bar had been raised from 65 to 75. The RSD’s District Performance Score (DPS)⁵ increased from an “F” (69.2) to slightly above the new “F” cutoff score of 75. Its new DPS was 76.7 which is equivalent to a “D”. ROR’s position is that a label of “D” hardly qualifies any school district to rejoice. While not indicating failure, it does indicate that a district is performing very poorly academically.

Did the RSD-NO’s DPS gain represent significant progress in 2012? When viewed in the context of the most important annual growth indicator of the LDOE, (i.e., the SPS Growth Target), it is not.⁶ Sixty-seven percent of the 60 RSD-NO schools failed to achieve their growth target for 2012.⁷ When viewed in this context, one would hardly consider the 7.5 point DPS growth of the RSD significant considering the performance of the majority of its schools. Also note that the RSD’s public relations spinners have rarely, or never, addressed the significance of this extremely crucial school indicator when assessing gains or growth.

Another clever spin used by the RSD and its supporters such as *Educate Now!*⁸ to mislead the public is to mask the actual achievement performance of the RSD-NO by combining the low performing RSD results with those of a second, independent and historically higher performing school district since Katrina in

New Orleans; e.g. the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) . They use the aggregated results to claim that the reforms in New Orleans should be used as a national model. In ROR's opinion, these spurious claims don't address the central question of what significant progress has the RSD, not OPSB, made in 7 years in turning "failing" schools around. Aggregating the SPS results from the two differently managed school districts only serves to obfuscate the true picture of progress. After 7 years of operation, the RSD-NO's 2012 DPS ranked among the lowest of the 71 school districts in the State while OPSB's DPS ranked among the highest.

Individual School Performance: This section assesses RSD-NO's SPS/letter grade results and student attendance profiles for the 2011-12 school year. They are based on the results of 60 of the 67 schools that were assigned a 2012 Baseline SPS by the LDOE.⁹ The reader is referred to APPENDIX B for a detailed listing of these schools, the letter grades assigned and student enrollment profiles. The information presented below is based upon the data obtained in the six tables (i.e., Tables S1, S2, S3, G1, G2 and G3) that are presented in APPENDIX C. The information in Appendix B and in Appendix C were obtained and revised from the 2012 SPS/letter grades files released by the LDOE in October 23, 2012 and the official 2011-12 enrollment files (MFP) for October 1st, 2011.^{10,11}

The results presented below are very similar to those reported earlier by Research on Reforms (ROR) from the analysis the RSD-NO performance 2011.¹² For purposes of this paper, an "F" and "D" respectively refer to either failing schools or very poor performing schools. After 7 years of existence as an independent and separate school district that answers, not to the public, but to state government, the following facts are presented in order to refute the RSD's claims of significant progress for the 2011-12 school year:

- 100% of the 12 RSD-NO direct-run schools were assigned a 2012 Baseline SPS that was equaled to a "D" or "F".
- 79% of the 48 RSD-NO charter schools were assigned a 2012 Baseline SPS that was equaled to a "D" or "F".
- 83% of all 60 RSD-NO schools were assigned a 2012 Baseline SPSs that was equaled to a "D" or "F".
- 100% of the students who attended RSD-NO direct-run schools attended schools whose 2012 Baseline SPS was equal to a "D" or "F".

- 74% of the students who attended RSD-NO charter schools attended schools whose 2012 Baseline SPS was equal to a “D” or “F”.
- 79% of the students who attended all RSD-NO schools attended schools whose 2012 Baseline SPS was equal to a “D” or “F”.
- 2,809 RSD-NO students attended schools that were not assigned a 2012 Baseline SPS or letter grades--leaving these student in limbo.
- Sixty-seven percent the RSD-NO schools analyzed in this report failed to gain their SPS growth target for 2012.¹³

The above clearly demonstrates the disconnect between the RSD’s achievement progress spin and reality.

District in Academic Crisis: What is a “failing school” has remained unclear since 2005. The LDOE has continuously revised its definition and labels of “failing” schools to the extent that it is difficult to follow the real progress of any school historically. It is imperative that the reader revisit the historical state legislative actions that resulted in the creation of the RSD-NO and the disenfranchisement of the citizens in New Orleans in order to determine whether or not the RSD has failed in its commitment to public school students in New Orleans. The following facts are offered for consideration:

- Using the current 2012 failing SPS of 75 as the reference, at least 13, or 20%, of the 60 schools in RSD-NO have had failing SPS scores for at least 4 consecutive years.¹⁴ The legislation justifying this was passed statewide by the LDOE as justification for the state’s takeover of failing schools in Louisiana, but it soon morphed into a power grab after Hurricane Katrina to take over the majority of New Public Schools.¹⁵
- For the 2011-12 school year, more than 30 RSD-NO schools were labeled as “failing” and more than 50% of its student body attended these failing schools. For those familiar with the history of the State’s strategy in its takeover of most of Orleans schools in 2005, the above results clearly qualify the RSD-NO to be a district that is in academic crisis as defined by the State in 2004.
- In 2011-12, approximately 90% of the 60 RSD-NO schools had a baseline SPS less than the State’s average of 100.5. Therefore, the RSD qualified as a district in academic crisis as defined in the legislation cited above. In addition, over 50% of its schools were also labeled as failing. These are the same conditions that the LDOE used to arbitrarily redefine what a failing school was in order to justify the takeover and transfer of most of the schools in Orleans Parish to the RSD in 2005 through ACT 35.¹⁶

Given the above, it is difficult to understand why the RSD-NO could possibly praise the results of its schools and its students considering the fact that its academic performance to date qualifies it for its immediate demise. To rave about the meager progress that has occurred over the past 7 years is an insult to the intelligence of the general public. It is imperative that Louisiana legislators, particularly those from New Orleans and other areas of the State where the control of the RSD has or will spread, revisit and reassess the decisions that resulted in disenfranchisement of New Orleans citizens.

Do the facts presented above warrant the aggressive promotion by the RSD-NO and its educational and political supporters that it should be used as a model for national reform in other cities? ROR thinks not. After 7 years, the RSD-NO is a district in academic crisis with the majority of its schools failing or substandard with the respect to achievement. Considering the data presented, should the citizens of New Orleans eradicate this travesty of educational reform and enfranchise themselves again? ROR definitely thinks that they should.

APPENDIX A

Table A1

LDOE Changes in SPS Failing Cutoff Scores Since 1998

Failing School SPS	Years in Force
Less Than SPS of 30	1998 to 2001
Less Than SPS of 45	2002 to 2003
Less Than SPS of 60 – <i>All Parishes Except Orleans Where Failing Was Less than State Average (87.4) (ACT 35)</i>	2004 to 2010 2005-2006
Less Than SPS of 65	2010-2011
Less Than SPS of 75	2011-2012

Source: Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE)

Table A2

LDOE Letter Grade Categories for 2011 and 2012

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

Note: In 2011-2012 and beyond, the F range will be 0-74.9 and the D range will be 75.0-89.9
Source: *Accountability At A Glance*, Louisiana State Department of Education, December, 2010

APPENDIX B

2012 Letter Grades and Enrollment for RSD Schools

Prepared by

Charles Hatfield

Research on Reforms

School	Oct 1st 2011 MFP	2012 Letter Grade
RSD Direct-Run		
A.P. Turead Elementary School	266	D
Abramson Science and Technology School	549	F
Benjamin Banneker Elementary School	466	F
Dr. Charles Richard Drew Elementary School	186	**
G.W. Carver High School	335	F
H.C. Schaumburg Elementary School	576	F
James Weldon Johnson School	250	F
John McDonogh Senior High School	271	**
Joseph A. Craig School	500	**
L. B. Landry High School	736	F
Mary D. Coghill Elementary School	572	D
Murray Henderson Elementary School	202	F
Paul B. Habans Elementary School	312	D
Sarah Towles Reed Senior High School	453	F
Schwarz Alternative School	40	**
Walter L. Cohen High School	257	F

APPENDIX B con't

RSD Charter

Akili Academy of New Orleans	307	C
Andrew H. Wilson Charter School	556	D
Arise Academy	311	D
Arthur Ashe Charter School	426	D
Batiste Cultural Arts Academy at Live Oak Elem	568	F*
Benjamin E. Mays Preparatory School	313	F
Crocker Arts and Technology School	206	F
Dr. M.L.K. Charter School for Science & Tech.	640	C
E. P. Harney Spirit of Excellence Academy	366	F*
Esperanza Charter School	421	F
Gentilly Terrace School	415	F*
James M. Singleton Charter School	674	F
Joseph S. Clark Preparatory High School	436	F*
John Dibert Community School	421	F*
KIPP Believe College Prep (Philips)	478	B
KIPP Central City Primary	421	D
KIPP Central Academy	397	B
KIPP McDonogh 15 School for the Creative Arts	557	C
KIPP New Orleans Leadership Academy	313	D
KIPP Renaissance High School	296	D
Lafayette Academy of New Orleans	779	C
Lagniappe Academies of New Orleans	115	F
Lake Area High School	603	C
Langston Hughes Academy Charter School	617	**
McDonogh #28 City Park Academy	400	F
McDonogh #42 Elementary Charter School	488	**

APPENDIX B con't**RSD Charter**

Morris Jeff Community School	201	D
Nelson Elementary School	445	D
P. A. Capdau School	340	D
Pride College Preparatory Academy	248	F
ReNEW Accelerated High School #1	155	F
ReNEW Accelerated High School #2	137	F
ReNEW at Reed Elementary	590	F*
Samuel J. Green Charter School	518	D
SciTech Academy at Laurel Elementary	581	F*
Sylvanie Williams College Prep	817	D
SCI Academy	334	B
Sojourner Truth Academy	251	**
Sophie B. Wright Inst. of Academic Excellence	476	D
Success Preparatory Academy	380	F
The Intercultural Charter School	419	F
Algiers Technology Academy	290	D
Dwight D. Eisenhower Elementary School	607	D
Fannie C. Williams Charter School	464	F
Harriet Tubman Charter School	520	F*
Martin Behrman Elementary School	642	B
McDonogh #32 Elementary School	488	F
O.P. Walker Senior High School	890	B
William J. Fischer Elementary School	626	F*
John Dibert Community School	421	F*

APPENDIX B con't

SUMMARY

School Type	# Students	# Schools
RSD Charter	22,926	51
RSD Charter with Letter Grades	21,570	48
RSD Direct-Run	5971	16
RSD Direct-Run with Letter Grades	4974	12
-----	-----	--
Total RSD with Letter Grades	26,544	60

NOTE:

* School transformed for 2012-13 Baseline SPS included in calculating RSD's DPSS

**Letter grades were not assigned for 2012. School was either closed ,converted or transformed.

Key:

RSD Direct-Run: Recovery School District (RSD) directly run schools.

These are schools taken over by the state in 2005 and still directly operated by RSD

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

Sources for SPS, and Assigned Letter Grades:

LDOE Press Release: RECORD NUMBER OF LOUISIANA SCHOOLS EARN AN "A"

Links are provided at end of report to appropriate Excel data files.

http://www.louisianaschools.net/offices/publicaffairs/press_release.aspx?PR=1697

Source for 2011-12 Enrollment Figures:

Multiple Statistics October 1st 2011-12 Official enrollment count- MFP)

http://www.louisianaschools.net/offices/infomanagement/student_enrollment_data.html

APPENDIX C

Table S1		
All RSD-NO Schools in 2011-12		
Student Distribution		
Letter Grade	Num of Students Who Attended RSD Schools During 2011-12	Percent of Students
A	0	0
B	2,741	10
C	2,886	11
D	7,167	27
F	13,750	52
Total	26,544	

Table G1		
All RSD-NO Schools in 2011-12		
Letter Grade Distribution		
Letter Grade	School Letter Grade Distribution	Percent Distribution of Letter Grades
A	0	0
B	5	8
C	5	8
D	17	28
F	33	55
Total	60	

Table S2		
All RSD-NO Charter Schools in 2011-12		
Student Distribution		
Letter Grade	Num of Students Who Attended RSD Schools During 2011-12	Percent of Students
A	0	0
B	2,741	13
C	2,886	13
D	6,017	28
F	9,926	46
Total	21,570	

Table LG2		
All RSD-NO Charter Schools in 2011-12		
Letter Grade Distribution		
Grade	School Letter Grade Distribution	Percent Distribution of Letter Grades
A	0	0
B	5	10
C	5	10
D	14	29
F	24	50
Total	48	

Table S3		
All RSD-NO Direct-Run Schools in 2011-12		
Student Distribution		
Letter Grade	Num of Students Who Attended RSD Schools During 2011-12	Percent of Students
A	0	0
B	0	0
C	0	0
D	1,150	23
F	3,824	77
Total	4,974	

Table LG3		
All RSD-NO Direct-Run Schools		
Letter Grade Distribution		
Grade	School Letter Grade Distribution	Percent Distribution of Letter Grades
A	0	0
B	0	0
C	0	0
D	3	25
F	9	75
Total	12	

END NOTES

¹ "... The letter grades policy was enacted by lawmakers in the 2010 Legislative Session. The legislation was sponsored by the House Education Chairman, Austin Badon, with the express intent to give parents and others a clearer measure of how a school is performing. The legislation was signed by Governor Bobby Jindal and became Act 718." LDOE – Letter Grades for Schools, 2010, www.doe.state.la.us/topics/lettergrades.html

² School Performance Scores (SPS) consist of two years of SPS data and are based on the following calculations: K-5 Schools – Attendance Index (10%), Assessment Index (90%); K-8, 7-8 Schools – Attendance Index (5%), Dropout Index (5%), and Assessment Index (90%); 9-12 Schools - Graduation Index (30%) and Assessment Index (70%). For a detailed discussion of these and other terms of the Louisiana Accountability Program, the reader is referred to Title 28 – Education - Part LXXXIII. Bulletin 111—The Louisiana School, District and State Accountability System (Bulletin 111—The Louisiana School, District and State Accountability System, www.doe.state.la.us/lde/saa/2343.html)

³ Hatfield, Charles, *The Recovery School District is a "District in Academic Crisis"*, 9/30/2010, www.researchonreforms.org

⁴ LDOE Press Release: "RECOVERY SCHOOL DISTRICT STUDENTS MAKE INCREDIBLE GAINS IN NEW ORLEANS" -10/23/2012
http://www.louisianaschools.net/offices/publicaffairs/press_release.aspx?PR=1698

⁵ BESE Bulletin 111: The Louisiana school District Accountability System – "A district performance score (DPS) shall be calculated in the same manner as a SPS, aggregating all of the students in the district...Assessment data from students enrolled in a district for a full academic year shall be used to calculate the DPS...The DPS shall be reported as a numeric value and a letter grade shall be assigned based on the numeric value." Page 30
<http://doe.louisiana.gov/bese/policies.html>

⁶ BESE Bulletin 111: The Louisiana school District Accountability System – "Each school shall receive a growth target that represents the amount of progress it must make every year to reach the state's 2014 goal of 120.0...The maximum amount of growth that a school shall be required to attain is 10.0 points. The minimum amount of growth required shall be 2.0 points". Page 6 and 12. Thus, the 2012 Growth School Performance Score represents a school's actual performance during the 2011-2012 academic year. <http://doe.louisiana.gov/bese/policies.html>

⁷ LDOE Press Release: "RECORD NUMBER OF LOUISIANA SCHOOLS EARN AN 'A' "
Contains links to major LDOE SPS/letter grade files used in this paper:
• 2012 School Performance Scores/Letter (2012 Growth SPS)
http://www.louisianaschools.net/offices/publicaffairs/press_release.aspx?PR=1697

⁸ Educate Now! *2012 School Performance Scores Released*, Oct. 23, 2012, www.educatenow.net

⁹ Seven schools did not receive a 2012 baseline SPS or letter grade although they did operate during the 2011-12 school year. One can only assume that these schools would have had a failing 2012 baseline SPS. They were closed, converted or transformed at the end of the 2011-12 school year. This has become an annual pattern with the RSD reporting in order to inflate their annual DPS. Nine other schools within this 60 operated during the 2011-12 school year and did receive a 2012 Baseline SPS. However, the LDOE did not assign these schools a letter grade. Each school had 2012 Baseline SPS scores that were equivalent to an "F". However, no letter grade was assigned. Instead they were assigned the letter "T" to indicate that the school would be "transformed" for the 2012-13 school year. Since these "T" schools did operate during the school year, it is only logical for ROR to include them in the analysis of the RSD's performance, especially since the LDOE did include their baseline failing SPS scores in

the calculation of the RSD's DPS. Therefore, these schools' 2012 Baseline SPSs were assigned the equivalent letter grade of "F" for the purpose of ROR's analysis.

¹⁰ Multiple Statistics October 1st 2011-12 Official enrollment count- MFP
http://www.louisianaschools.net/offices/infomanagement/student_enrollment_data.html

¹¹ LDOE Press Release: "RECORD NUMBER OF LOUISIANA SCHOOLS EARN AN 'A' "

Contains links to major LDOE SPS/letter grade files used in this paper:

- 2012 State Performance Summary
- DISTRICT PERFORMANCE SCORES (DPS) SUMMARY
- 2012 District Performance Scores/Letter Grades
- SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SCORES (SPS) SUMMARY
- 2012 School Performance Scores/Letter transferred to the RSD.

http://www.louisianaschools.net/offices/publicaffairs/press_release.aspx?PR=1697

¹² Hatfield, Charles *Should the Educational Reforms in New Orleans Serve as a National Model for Other Cities?* 3/06/2012, www.researchonreforms.org

¹³ LDOE Press Release: "RECORD NUMBER OF LOUISIANA SCHOOLS EARN AN 'A' "

Contains links to major LDOE SPS/letter grade files used in this paper:

- 2012 School Performance Scores/Letter (2012 Growth SPS)

http://www.louisianaschools.net/offices/publicaffairs/press_release.aspx?PR=1697

¹⁴ Sarah Towels Reed, Mc32, McDonogh City Park, James Weldon Johnson, Benjamin Banneker, James M Singleton, Murray Henderson, William J Fischer, Intercultural Charter School, Miller McCoy, Walter Cohen, G.W> Carver High School, and H.C. Schaumburg

¹⁵ In 2003, Louisiana Revised Statue 1990 (R.S. 1990) created the Recovery School District (RSD). Louisiana Revised Statue 17:10.5 (R.S. 17:10.5) established the definition of a "failed school: and established the conditions under which it could be transferred to the RSD. One of which was that if the school had been labeled as academically unacceptable for four consecutive years, would be transferred to the RSD. By the end of 2004, four only four schools had been transferred to the RSD.

¹⁶ In 2005 after Katrina, Louisiana Revised Statue 17:10.7 (R.S. 17:10.7 - ACT 35) established the criterion that if a school fell below the State's average; was in a school district in "academic crisis" as per R.S. 17:10.6 as Stated above; and at least one school was eligible to be transferred to the RSD, was declared a failing school and was transferred to the RSD. It should also be emphasized that Orleans Parish was the only parish where the criterion for failing was below the state's average. Schools in all other parishes were deemed failing only if they had an SPS of below 60.