

New Orleans by the Numbers

20 Years After Hurricane Katrina



NEW SCHOOLS
FOR NEW ORLEANS

New Orleans public schools have made significant progress over the past 20 years.

After Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans undertook the massive and years-long process of recovery and rebuilding. During this time, many shifts and reforms were made that fundamentally changed public education in our city. Comparing today's academic outcomes with the outcomes before these changes helps us better understand progress that may be a result of these efforts.

We make comparisons between New Orleans and the State of Louisiana to better put into context the progress New Orleans has made.¹

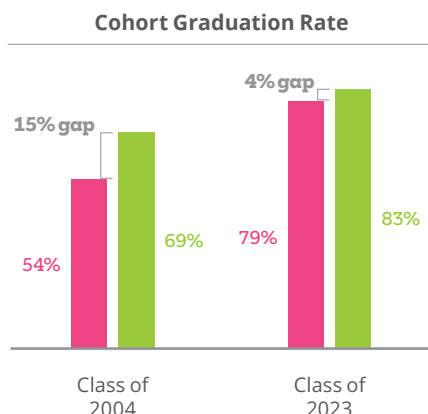


New Orleans students are better prepared for lifelong success.

More New Orleans public school students are graduating on-time.

New Orleans students increased graduation rates by 25 percentage points, closing the gap with the state by 11 points.

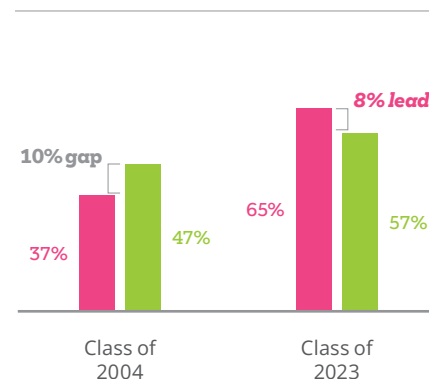
■ New Orleans
■ Louisiana



New Orleans public school graduates are also more likely today to enroll in college directly after graduating high school compared to graduates across the state.

New Orleans students improved college entry rates by 28 percentage points, surpassing the state average for college enrollment.

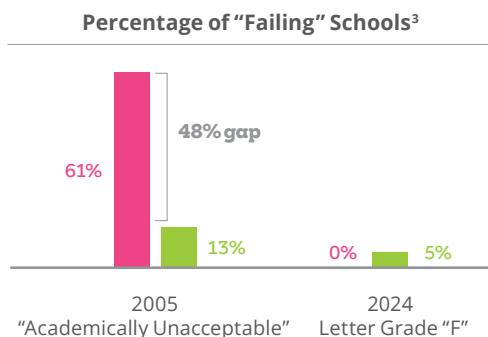
College Enrollment Rate²



In 2024–25, there are no failing schools in New Orleans.

New Orleans decreased the percentage of failing schools by 61 percentage points, compared to the state's improvement of 8 percentage points over the same time.

■ New Orleans
■ Louisiana

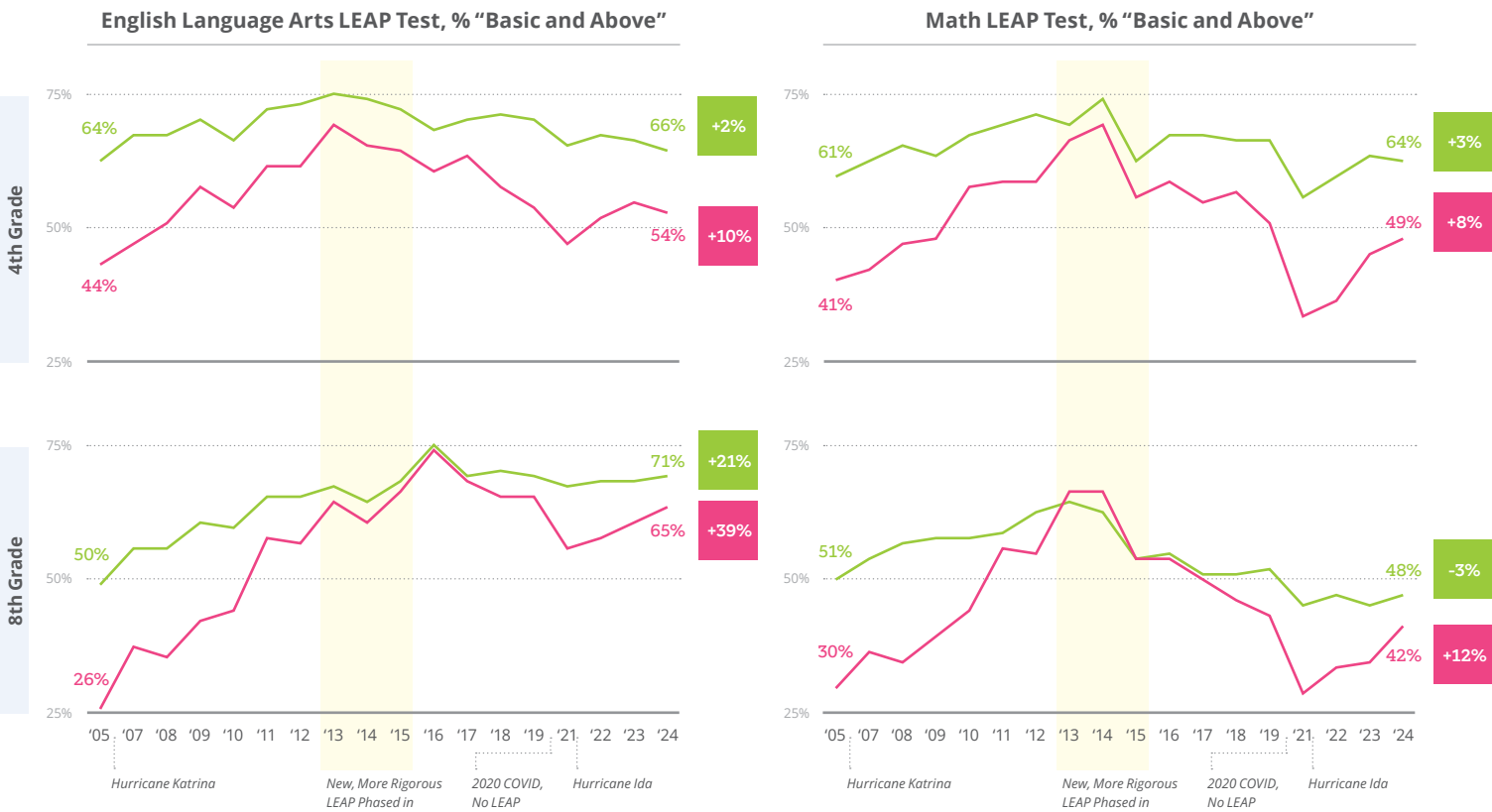


We are not aware of any other districts that have made such large improvements in such a short time.

Doug Harris, Founding Director, Education Research Alliance for New Orleans at Tulane University⁴

New Orleans students have outpaced the state in LEAP improvement.

Louisiana’s state standardized tests have changed in multiple ways over the past twenty years. But looking across time at New Orleans public schools, we can see a story of incredible growth in achievement over the years.



LEAP (Louisiana Educational Assessment Program) tests are administered each year to students in all public schools across the state. These tests measure knowledge and skills in each subject area or course and readiness for the next level of study. In 2004–05, LEAP tests were only administered in 4th and 8th grade, but now, LEAP tests are administered in Grades 3 through high school.

Impacts on student achievement over the years

2005

2006

2007

2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

2023

2024

In **August 2005**, Category 5 storm Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans, causing unprecedented damage and destruction. In the 2005–06 school year, the State Recovery School District took over the majority of New Orleans public schools, beginning a multi-year process to rebuild and reform public education in New Orleans.

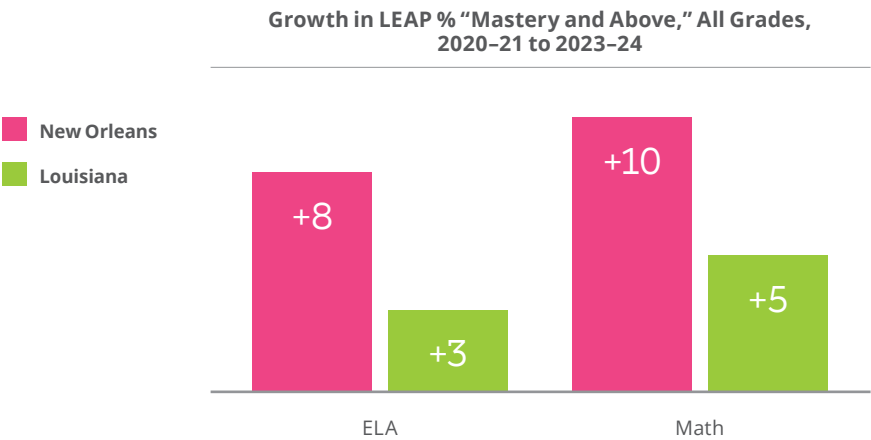
	2005	2015–current
Scores Considered Meeting Expectations	“Basic and Above”	“Mastery and Above”
✓ Advanced	✓ Advanced	✓ Advanced
✓ Mastery	✓ Mastery	✓ Mastery
✓ Basic	✓ Basic	✗ Basic
✗ Approaching Basic	✗ Approaching Basic	✗ Approaching Basic
✗ Unsatisfactory	✗ Unsatisfactory	✗ Unsatisfactory

In **2013–14** and **2014–15**, Louisiana began the transition to new, more rigorous LEAP tests aligned with nationwide standards. In addition, in 2014–15, Louisiana began raising the bar for what is considered “on grade-level” or “meeting expectations” for students.

In **March 2020**, schools in Louisiana and across the country shut down due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. In New Orleans, charter school leaders quickly transitioned to ensure students were healthy and connected by distributing laptops, internet hotspots, and meals, and pivoting to virtual learning. There were no LEAP tests administered in spring 2020, and New Orleans public schools reopened safely in the 2020–21 school year.

In **August 2021**, Hurricane Ida struck New Orleans, causing the closure of all New Orleans schools for a minimum of two weeks while the city's infrastructure and utilities were repaired. Although the 2021–22 school year started with tragedy, New Orleans students have since demonstrated significant academic recovery.

New Orleans has improved at double the rate of the state since the first post-Covid LEAP tests in 2021.



New Orleans drives statewide gains.

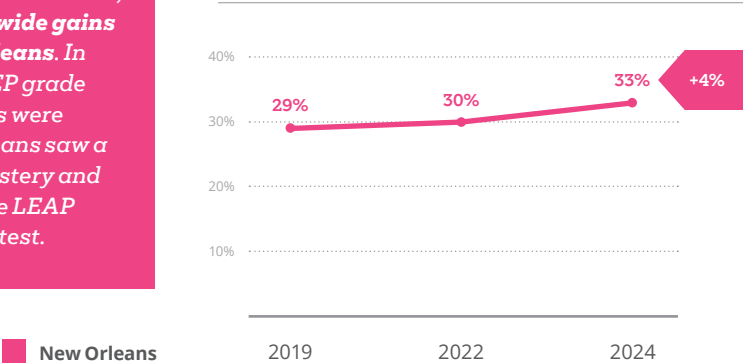
In 2024, Louisiana earned national recognition for the highest improvement of any state in the country in 4th grade reading scores on The Nation's Report Card (NAEP). This improvement led to Louisiana being one of only two states where 2024 4th grade reading scores exceeded pre-pandemic 2019 scores.

NAEP Scores, 4th Grade Reading

	2019	2022	2024
Louisiana	210	212	216
National Average	220	217	215

Looking at LEAP assessment data, we see that **these statewide gains were driven by New Orleans**. In the same years the NAEP grade 4th Grade Reading tests were administered, New Orleans saw a 4 point increase on "Mastery and Above" on the 4th Grade LEAP English Language Arts test.

4th Grade LEAP % "Mastery or Above" English Language Arts



New Orleans students continue to improve.

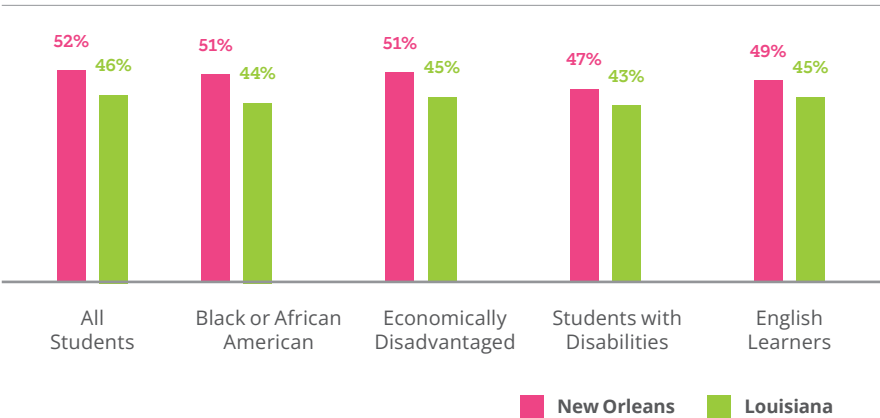
The Louisiana Department of Education provides data for each school and district on the percentage of students demonstrating "Top Growth."

Students meeting Top Growth are those who have not yet reached their individual goals of Mastery or Advanced on the LEAP tests, but have made significant progress—so much so that they are expected to reach those goals in future years. Top Growth also includes students who significantly outperform students with similar characteristics across the state.

These data are important because they help us understand the trajectory for growth in the future.

New Orleans schools demonstrated strong Top Growth last school year, surpassing the statewide average for all students and major subgroups, and earning the highest Top Growth for Economically Disadvantaged students among all districts statewide.

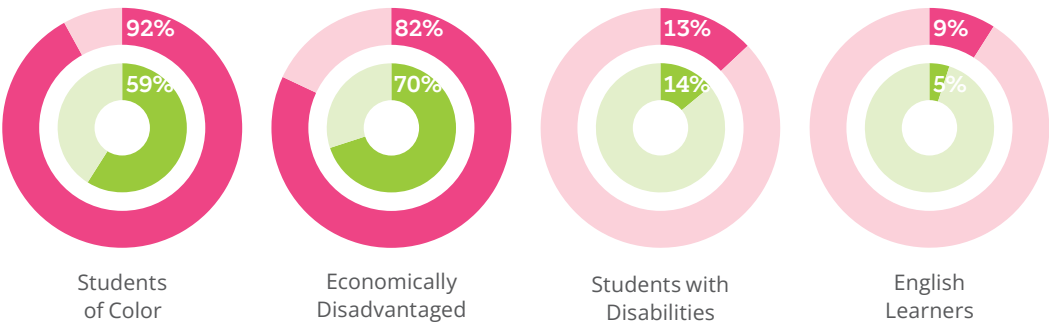
2023-24 LEAP "Top Growth" in English and Math, All Grades



New Orleans Public Schools: 2024–25 Enrollment⁵

43,664 Students
67 NOLA-PS schools

New Orleans Louisiana



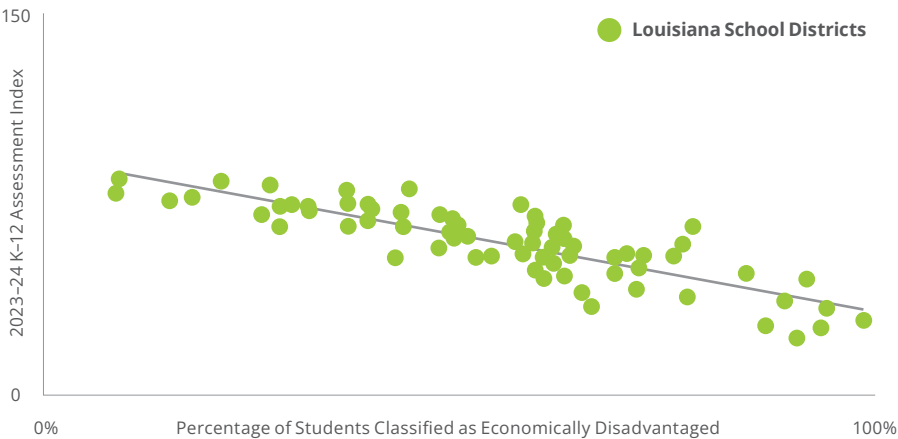
Our students are brilliant and determined, and our students in poverty are beating the odds.

In Louisiana and across the nation, school districts with higher percentages of economically disadvantaged students have lower test scores.⁶

New Orleans has a greater share of students who are economically disadvantaged than the state at large, and our students’ scores tend to be lower than the state average. But over the years, our academic outcomes have improved, and our students in poverty are beating the odds. This is a reflection of the hard work our students, teachers, and schools are doing every day.

“Economic Disadvantage” and Test Scores are Linked in Louisiana

Percentage of Economically Disadvantaged Students and K–12 Assessment Index—Statewide



This graphic representation shows the relationship between poverty and academic outcomes for public schools across Louisiana in 2023–24. Each dot represents a district’s percentage of students who are economically disadvantaged and their 2023–24 Assessment Index. The Assessment Index represents student scaled scores on the LEAP tests in all subjects across all grades.

NSNO is proud of what our students, educators, and schools have accomplished over the past 20 years. We look forward to continuing to meet their needs and support their continued improvement in the years ahead.

End Notes

1. All data included in this report represents public schools in New Orleans that are governed by the Orleans Parish School Board (NOLA-PS) in recent years, as well as the Recovery School District schools in past years. These data are based on Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) published data.
2. The College Enrollment Rate represents students who enroll in college the fall semester following high school graduation.
3. Schools designated as “failing” in 2005 are those that earned a designation of “Academically Unacceptable.” Schools designated as “failing” in 2024 are those that earned an “F” letter grade. Percentages exclude schools closed in each year.
4. See <https://www.educationnext.org/good-news-new-orleans-evidence-reform-student-achievement/>
5. Enrollment totals and demographic percentages are based on October 1, 2024 Multi-stat enrollment data from LDOE, with the exception of Students with Disabilities data, which is based on October 1, 2023 data from LDOE. At the time of printing LDOE had not yet published October 1, 2024 data for Students with Disabilities.
6. In early 2023, the Louisiana Legislative Auditor published an informational brief, “Student Racial Demographics, Louisiana Elementary and Secondary Public and Private Schools,” providing data and national research to demonstrate that “... the economically disadvantaged enrollment rate has a negative correlation with academic performance” and that “racially and economically diverse schools are associated with stronger academic performance for students.” Brief available at [https://app2.la.state.la.us/publicreports.aspx/0/a4fa835e5738df42862589420071c04c/\\$file/00000951.pdf?openelement&7773098](https://app2.la.state.la.us/publicreports.aspx/0/a4fa835e5738df42862589420071c04c/$file/00000951.pdf?openelement&7773098). See also Reardon, S.F., Weathers, E.S., Fahle, E.M., Jang, H., & Kalogrides, D. (2022). *Is Separate Still Unequal? New Evidence on School Segregation and Racial Academic Achievement Gaps.* (CEPA Working Paper No.19-06). Retrieved from Stanford Center for Education Policy Analysis: <http://cepa.stanford.edu/wp19-06>

New Orleans Public Schools: 20 Years Later

A timeline of recovery, transformation, and growth

Post Katrina Recovery

2004-05

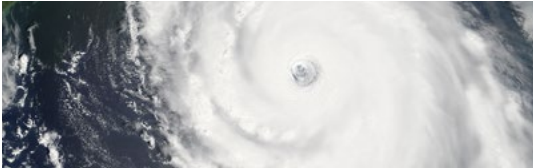
New Orleans is ranked as the second-lowest performing school district in Louisiana. The majority of New Orleans Public School students attend schools labeled “failing” by the state.

New Orleans public school facilities are in fragile condition. Many aren’t up to fire or electrical codes and lack appropriate facilities for students with disabilities.

In order to support struggling districts statewide, the Louisiana Legislature created the Recovery School District (RSD).

August 29, 2005

Hurricane Katrina strikes New Orleans at the very start of the 2005-06 school year. The subsequent failure of the levee system causes flooding to 80% of New Orleans and kills nearly 1,400 people. Over one million people in the Gulf Coast region are displaced. The majority of New Orleans’ public school buildings are damaged or destroyed; fewer than 20 of the roughly 120 public school buildings citywide are usable.



2005-06

Schools cannot reopen at the beginning of the school year, and, without students to teach or a tax base to fund schools, the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) places the city’s educators on “disaster leave,” before laying them off later.

The Louisiana Legislature passes Act 35, which transfers 100 low-performing New Orleans schools to the RSD. This leaves the city’s 17 remaining public schools with the OPSB. The RSD and OPSB begin authorizing charter schools to serve students as soon as possible.

2006-07

The RSD and OPSB open 52 schools in 2006

Parents are allowed to enroll their students in any open-enrollment school citywide.

2008-09

In order to repair and rebuild New Orleans schools, OPSB and the RSD create a School Facilities Master Plan (SFMP).

2009-10

FEMA, RSD, and OPSB officials negotiate a historic lump sum settlement of \$1.8 billion to repair and rebuild New Orleans public school facilities through the SFMP.



Transforming Systems to Serve All Students

2011-12

The SFMP is amended to impact 55,000 students through 28 refurbishments, 18 renovations, and 35 new schools.

RSD creates a common application, eventually called OneApp—a new process for applying to all of the RSD’s schools.

2012-13

The RSD creates a citywide student expulsion policy and Student Hearing Office, aiming to ensure that students are uniformly given due process and only expelled for the most serious offenses.

2013-14

OPSB direct-run schools join the OneApp.

The RSD and OPSB sign a comprehensive Cooperative Endeavor Agreement, which allows them to better collaborate to serve all students more equitably.

2014-15

The RSD and OPSB work collaboratively to pass new legislation to create a School Facilities Preservation Program to provide for on-going care of New Orleans school buildings.



2015-16

RSD and OPSB create a citywide differentiated funding formula which ensures that all public schools are funded equitably, according to the needs of their students.

RSD and OPSB work together with key stakeholders to develop legislation to “unify” New Orleans public schools by returning all RSD schools to OPSB oversight by the beginning of the 2018-19 school year. The Louisiana State Legislature passes this legislation, and it is signed into law as Act 91.

2016-17

OPSB approves a Unification Plan to support New Orleans’ schools transition into a unified district.

2017-18

OPSB approves the Charter School Accountability Framework.



Growth of a Unified System

2018-19

The school year begins with a unified district, with all former RSD schools joining the school district governed by the OPSB.

The unified school district works with stakeholders to pass legislation to create a System-Wide Needs Program, an ongoing fund to address critical district-wide issues.

March 30, 2020

Governor John Bel Edwards orders all public schools to close in-person operations as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency; this emergency closure is quickly extended through the end of the school year.



2020-21

Due to continued high rates of COVID-19 in New Orleans, all New Orleans schools begin the 2020-2021 school year with virtual learning. By mid-fall, in-person classes are offered once more, with schools observing careful COVID-19 safety protocol.

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) receives \$4 billion in federal stimulus pandemic recovery funding to help schools address the academic impact of the pandemic.

In 2020, OPSB adopts a revised policy stating the board’s opposition to retaining school building names tied to enslavers, confederate officials, and segregation supporters. As a result, OPSB approves the renaming of more than twenty school buildings.

2021-22

On August 27th, the district announces schools will close in anticipation of Hurricane Ida, which makes landfall on August 29th. Most school buildings weather the storm well, but some have minimal to moderate damage. Students return to school by mid-September, some learning virtually given damage to their buildings.

2022-23

NOLA Public Schools and the RSD celebrate the completion of the post-Katrina SFMP; 89 public school buildings have been built, renovated, or refurbished.

2023-24

New Orleans voters approve the continuation of the School Facilities Preservation millage, renewing the portion of property tax used for ongoing maintenance, repair, and preservation of NOLA Public Schools.

2024-25

For the first time since the LDOE began rating schools, there are no failing schools in the Orleans Parish school district.

