



ADVANCING EDUCATIONAL
EQUITY
IN NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC SCHOOLS



AN URBAN LEAGUE REPORT ON EQUITY IN UNIFICATION

Core Issues, Responses and Recommendations

BACKGROUND

Educational equity is a central priority of the Urban League of Louisiana (ULLA). Educational equity focuses on distributing resources, supports and opportunities to students based on their degree of need in order to prepare all students for success in college and career. Likewise, equity focuses on the equitable *impact* of policies and interventions on students. For over a decade, ULLA has been a leader in advocacy efforts to advance an educational equity agenda in New Orleans and across Louisiana, and has



made strides towards that aim. However, there still remain significant equity issues that must be addressed to achieve parity in educational outcomes for all children.

In the spring of 2016, State Senator Karen Carter Peterson sponsored Senate Bill 432 that would unify schools in the Recovery School District-New Orleans with those under the auspices of Orleans Parish School Board by 2019. Senate Bill 432 was signed into law as Act 91 by Governor Jon Bel Edwards on May 12, 2016, part of which required the establishment of an advisory committee to generate a unification plan for New Orleans Public Schools (NOPS). As part of this process, ULLA has been a key partner to the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) in the unification process through its representation on the unification advisory committee, in its support of OPSB's community outreach activities and by providing information on the unification to its own constituents including families, parent advocates, the business community and other key stakeholders. Additionally, ULLA works to hold OPSB accountable for the promise it makes to provide a quality education to all students.

As part of its ongoing work, ULLA actively advocates for policies and practices in NOPS¹ and across the state that expand access for children and youth to high quality, public schools. ULLA is also particularly interested in how children of color, students who are economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, and English language learners are faring in New Orleans public schools. This includes their matriculation through school, their interface with school discipline systems, and their performance on state standardized tests. These indicators help to illuminate the ways in which young people are navigating this system and call to question the factors influencing these outcomes. Such an examination also helps to inform how the district can develop targeted supports to improve outcomes for underserved NOPS students as required by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

OVERVIEW

As part of ULLA's commitment to ensuring that NOPS are advancing strategies that promote equity, this report will examine several key equity issues, particularly as they relate to the unification of schools under OPSB.

In addition, this report will raise questions regarding outstanding equity issues to be addressed in the unification process and offer recommendations to strengthen New Orleans Public School policies and practices to support the success of all its students, particularly those who are underserved.

EDUCATIONAL EQUITY: THE FRAMEWORK

Six different categories of indicators are used in this report to examine core education equity issues facing New Orleans Public Schools as they transition into one unified system of autonomous schools.

These areas are:

① STUDENT OUTCOMES

② SCHOOL CHOICE & ENROLLMENT

③ HIGH LEVEL CURRICULUM

④ TEACHER QUALITY

⑤ FUNDING

⑥ DISCIPLINE

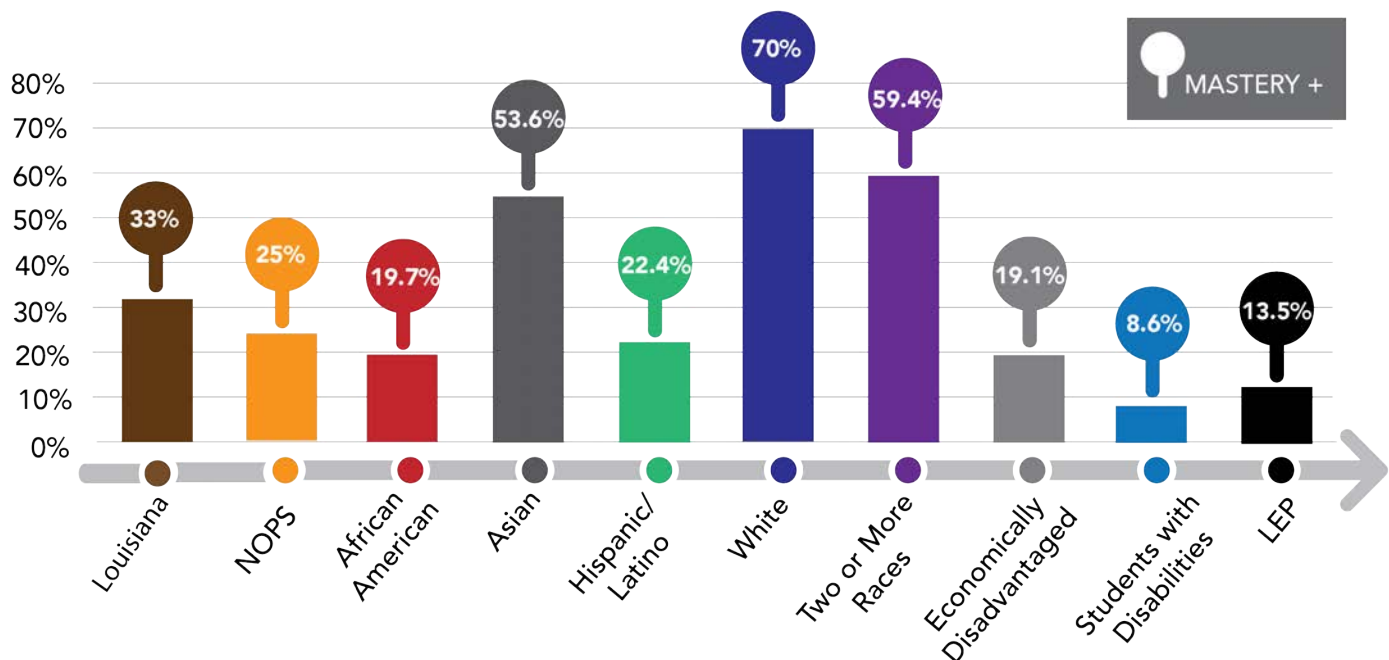
For each of these areas, data will be presented alongside an analysis of existing challenges related to these equity indicators.

1 STUDENT OUTCOMES

The achievement gap, which refers to the *persistent disparities in academic performance measures (usually standardized tests) between various subgroups* (e.g., race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, etc.), is one of the more common educational equity issues discussed nationally.² Disparities in academic performance often impact students' life trajectory, posing a long-term economic impact that can effect their quality of life.³ One of the goals of ESSA and of the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) is to close the achievement gap, in part by providing data on subgroup performance and outcomes, and by providing targeted support for schools to implement strategies to assist these populations in improving their academic performance.

In 2015, LDOE took steps to modify its performance standards to better align them with national performance standards. The State's previous use of "basic" as the benchmark for grade level performance was below national performance standards (on the National Assessment of Educational Progress [NEAP] and American College Test [ACT]). As such, LDOE raised the expectation for student performance to the "mastery" level. Figure 1 presents the percentage of NOPS students by subgroup performing at Mastery or above on the LEAP (Louisiana Educational Assessment Program), all subjects combined (English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies) for grades third through eighth.

Figure 1- Percent of NOPS Students Performing at Mastery+ on LEAP 3rd-8th Grade, All Subjects Combined, by Subgroup (2016-2017)



Source: LDOE, 2016-17 LEAP Percent Mastery or Above for All Grades for English, Math, Science Tests Combined. LDOE, 2015-2017 LEAP Assessment Results---Percent of Students Scored Mastery and Above Combining ELA, Math and Science

THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

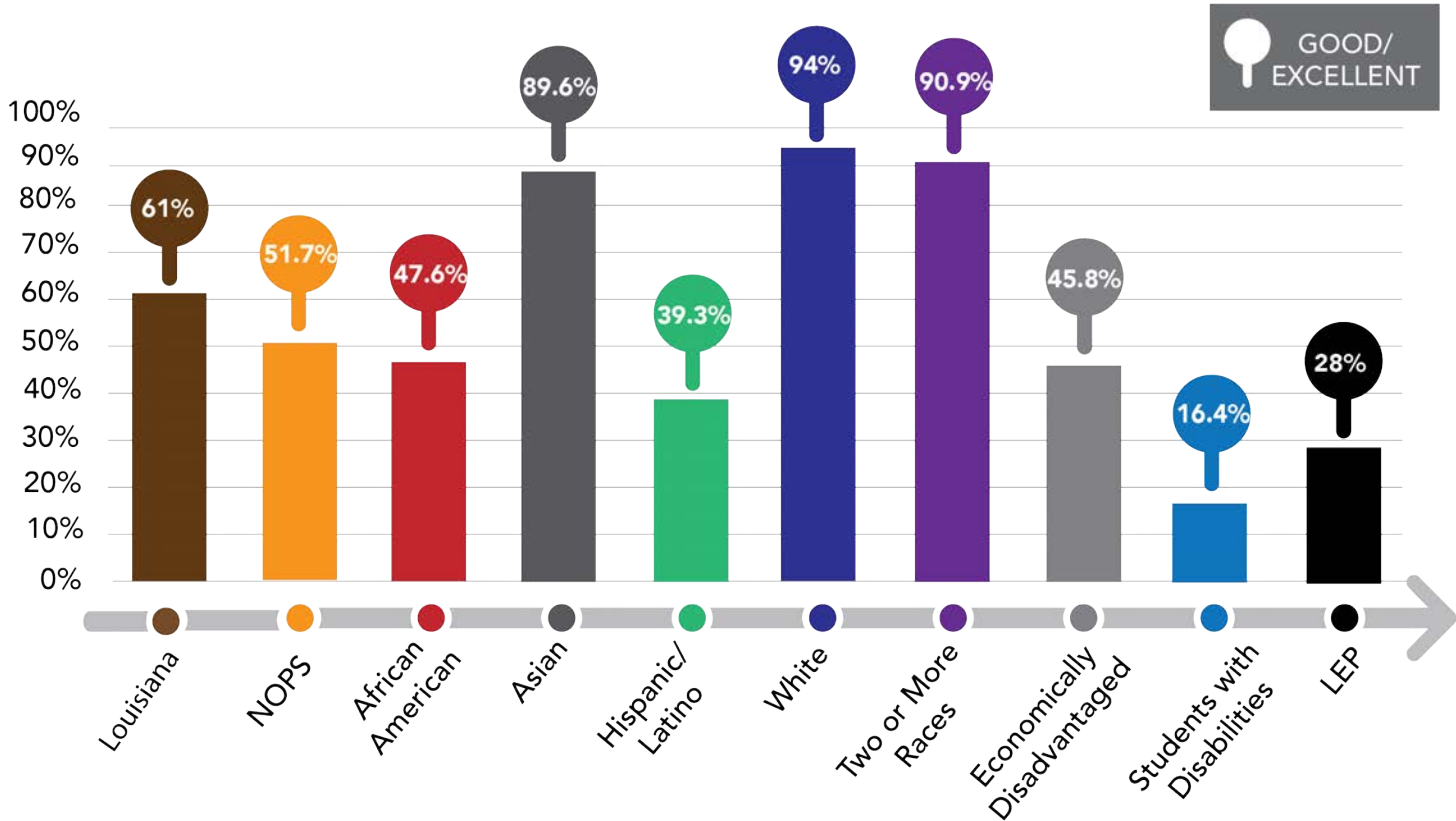


refers to the persistent disparities in academic performance measures between various subgroups (such as race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, etc.).

Disparities in academic performance are significant in NOPS. The achievement gap between African Americans and White learners is approximately 50 percentage points (See Figure 1). Similarly, limited English proficient (LEP) students and students with disabilities also lag behind. On the same measure, almost 87% and 91% of LEP students and students with disabilities, respectively, scored below mastery on the LEAP. But, does this achievement gap persist on End of Course Exams in grades nine through 12?

Data on 2016-2017 End of Course Exam performance shows similar patterns. The difference in End of Course Exam performance between African American and Hispanic learners, and White learners in 2016-2017 is significant, at 46 percentage points and 55 percentage points, respectively (See Figure 2). Students with disabilities and LEP students also persistently under perform, with almost 84% and 72%, respectively, of students in these subgroups scoring below “Good and Excellent” on end of course exams.

Figure 2- Percent of NOPS Students Scoring Good/Excellent on End of Course Exams (All subjects) by Subgroup (2016-2017)

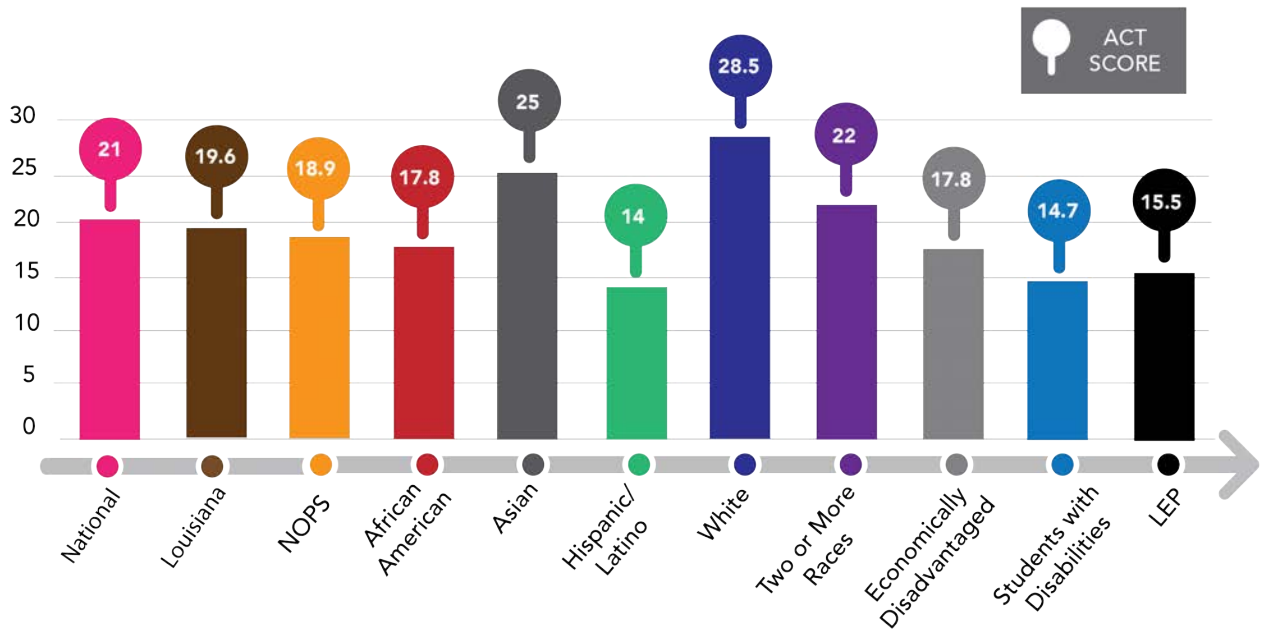


Source: LDOE, 2016-17 EOC Percent Good or Excellent Across All Tests Taken (English II, English III, Algebra I, Biology, Geometry, US History). LDOE, End-of-Course Tests - 2013–2017 Comparison of Percent of Tests Scoring Good or Excellent for All Subjects

Another key student achievement indicator is ACT composite scores. The ACT is one of two frequently used and reliable college admission exams used to predict first year college performance. ACT composite scores are used to gauge students' college readiness, to determine eligibility for certain dual enrollment courses and TOPS (Taylor Opportunity Program for Students) eligibility (a state scholarship program), and are factored into school performance scores. As such, low scores on the ACT can prevent students from gaining access to important educational opportunities including scholarships, college access, and even career and technical education courses.





According to available data from 2017, White students are out pacing their peers significantly, with White learners, on average, surpassing the NOPS average by almost 10 points which surpasses the ACT eligibility requirement for TOPS Honors (See Figure 3 and Table 1). The composite scores for Latino students, limited English proficient students, and students with disabilities fall short of any TOPS eligibility or college readiness benchmarks (See Figure 3, Table 1 and Table 2). In contrast, African Americans are below the NOPS average by approximately one point, which meets the ACT requirements for TOPS Tech, but falls short of other TOPS awards or college readiness benchmarks established by the ACT.

Figure 3- ACT Composite Scores By Subgroup (2016-2017)







Source: LDOE, ACT 12th Graders Subgroup Average Composite (Pre Appeal), 2016-2017. Add citation: LDOE, 2012-2017 State-LEA-School ACT Summary. ACT, Average ACT Scores by State Graduating Class 2017

Table 1: TOPS Minimum ACT Requirements⁴

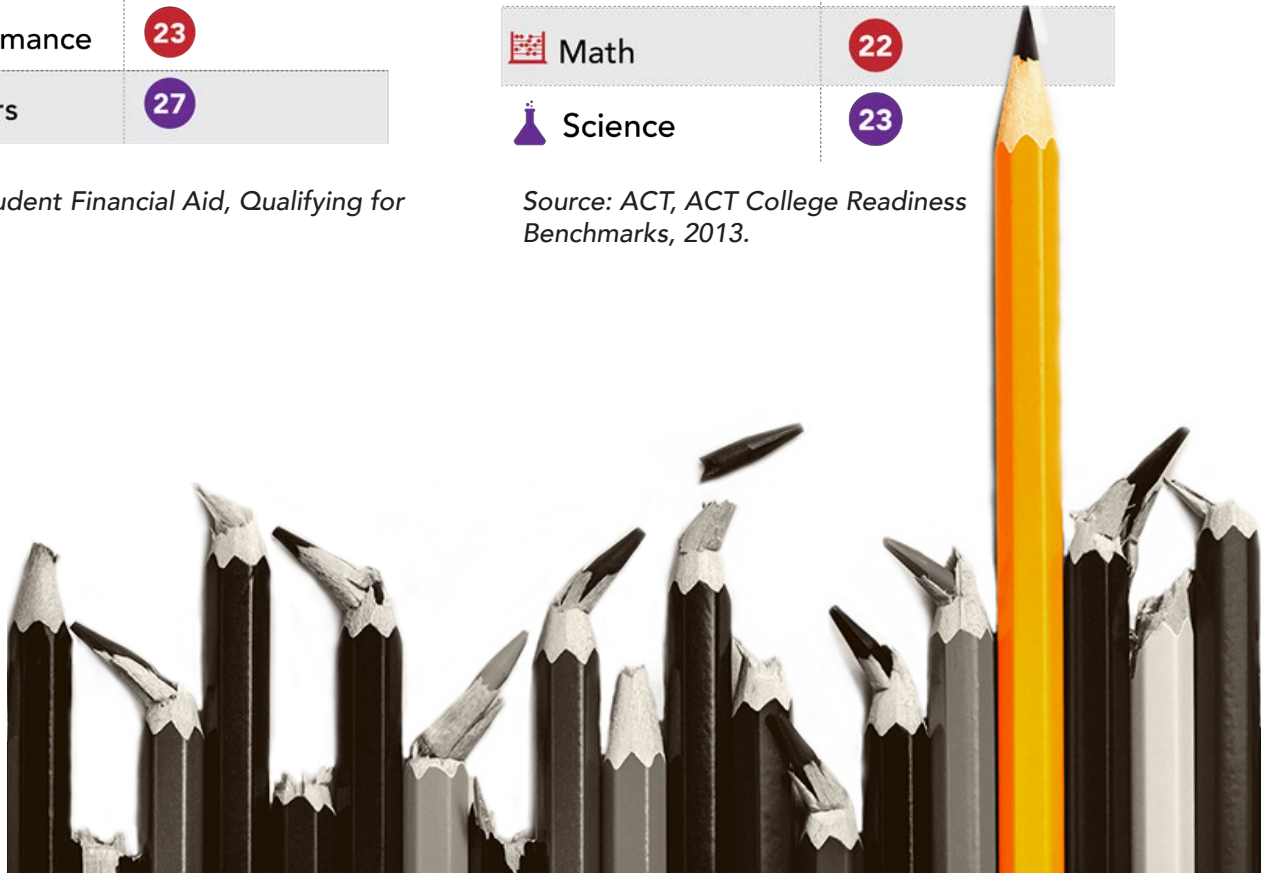
TOPS Award Type	ACT Requirement
 TOPS Tech	17
 TOPS Opportunity	20
 TOPS Performance	23
 TOPS Honors	27

Source: Office of Student Financial Aid, Qualifying for TOPS, n.d.

Table 2: ACT College Readiness Benchmark⁵

ACT Subject Area Test	ACT Benchmark
 English	18
 Reading	22
 Math	22
 Science	23

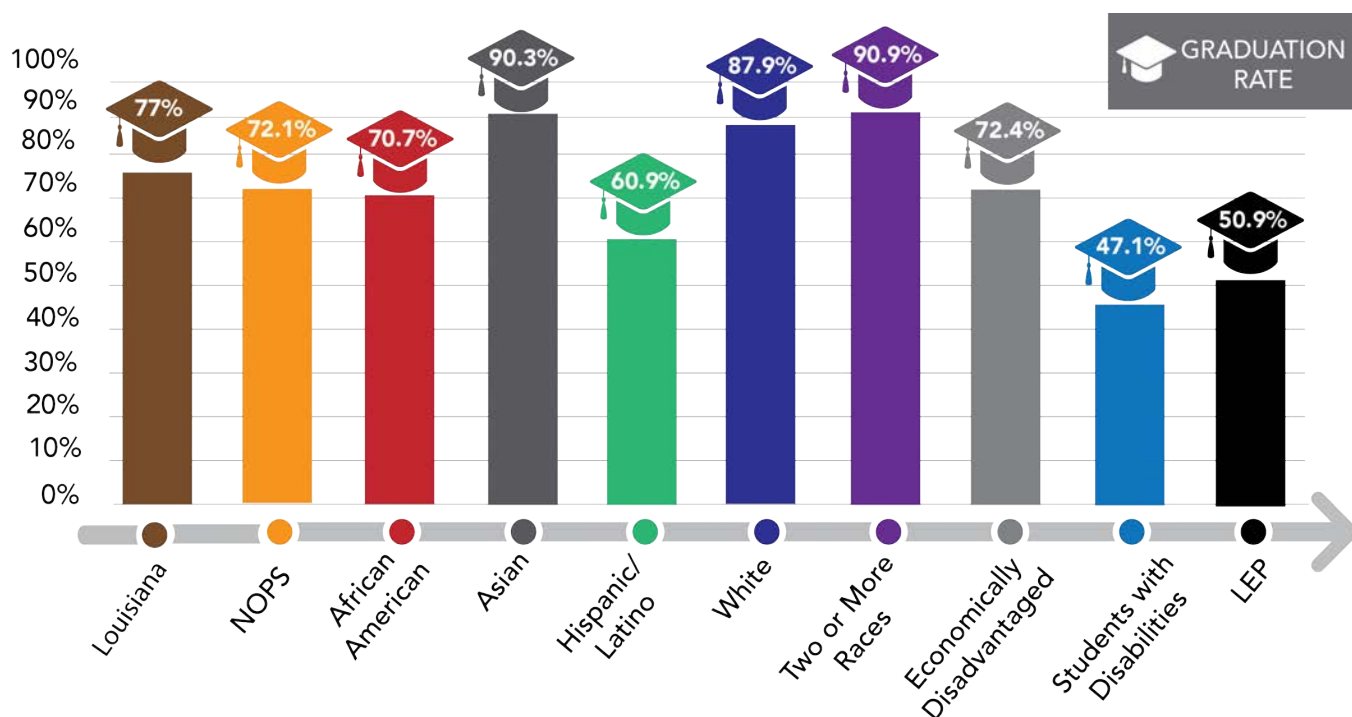
Source: ACT, ACT College Readiness Benchmarks, 2013.



STUDENT OUTCOMES: Graduation and Dropout Rates

Graduation and dropout rates provide us with additional insight into the experiences of students in NOPS. According to 2016 graduation rates by subgroup (See Figure 4), the graduation rate in NOPS was 72%, up from 54% in 2004.⁶ According to this data, just over 70% of African American students graduated on-time in NOPS in 2016, while just over half of limited English proficient students graduated on-time. Similarly, Latino students had the lowest graduation rate of all racial/ethnic groups in NOPS with a 61% graduation rate. Students with disabilities had the lowest graduation rates at 47%, a startling data point that illuminates the need for NOPS to investigate new and more effective strategies to support this population in graduating on time. These trends persist in dropout rates for NOPS as well.

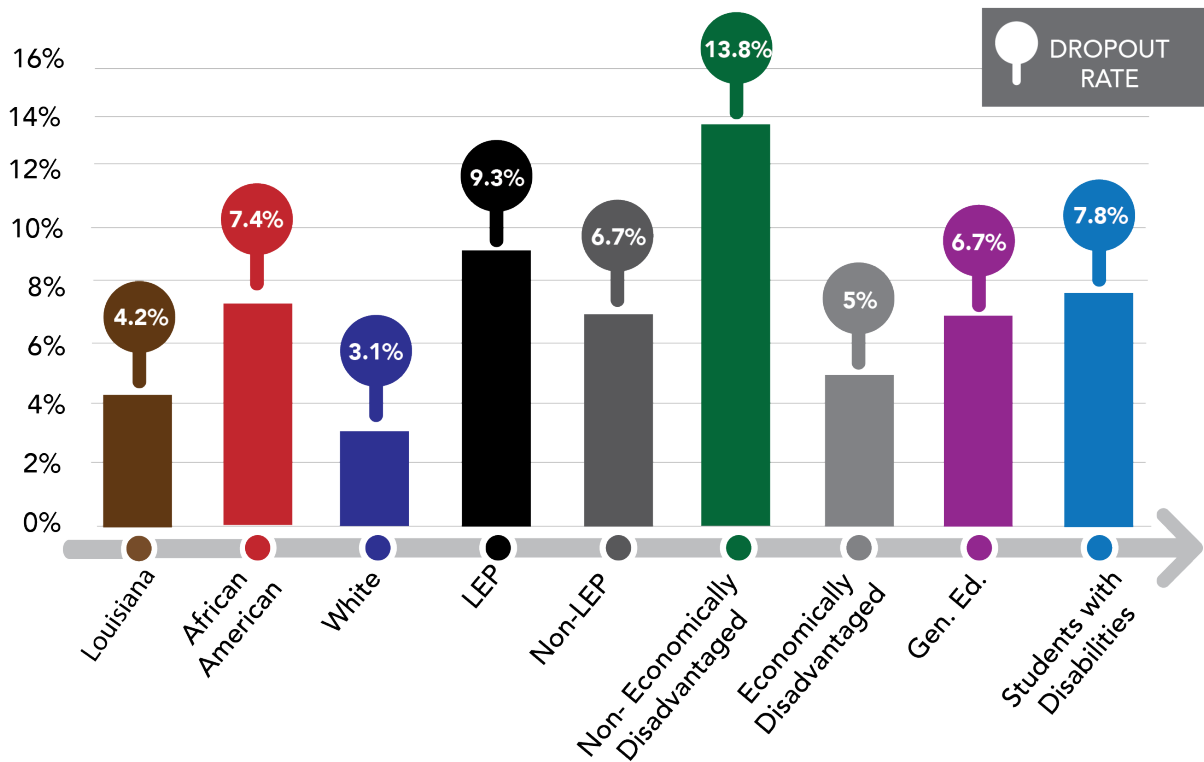
Figure 4- Graduation Rates By Subgroup (2015-2016)



Source: LDOE, Cohort Grad Rate, 2015-2016. LDOE, District and State Graduation Rates (2005-2006 to 2015-2016)

Latino students, limited English proficient students, and students with disabilities have among the lowest graduation rates and highest dropout rates in NOPS (See Figure 4 and Figure 5). With a growing Latino youth population in New Orleans and a historically underserved population of students with disabilities, New Orleans stands to lose some of its best talent if NOPS and key stakeholders do not find strategies to improve outcomes for these populations. Individuals with a high school diploma or less have high unemployment rates and lack the skills to compete in the knowledge-based economy. Already half of jobs in Louisiana require some postsecondary education.⁷ According to the State's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) plan, approximately two-thirds of jobs in Louisiana will require postsecondary education in the next five years.⁸ Students struggling to graduate on time or who dropout altogether face an uphill battle to participate successfully in today's Louisiana workforce.

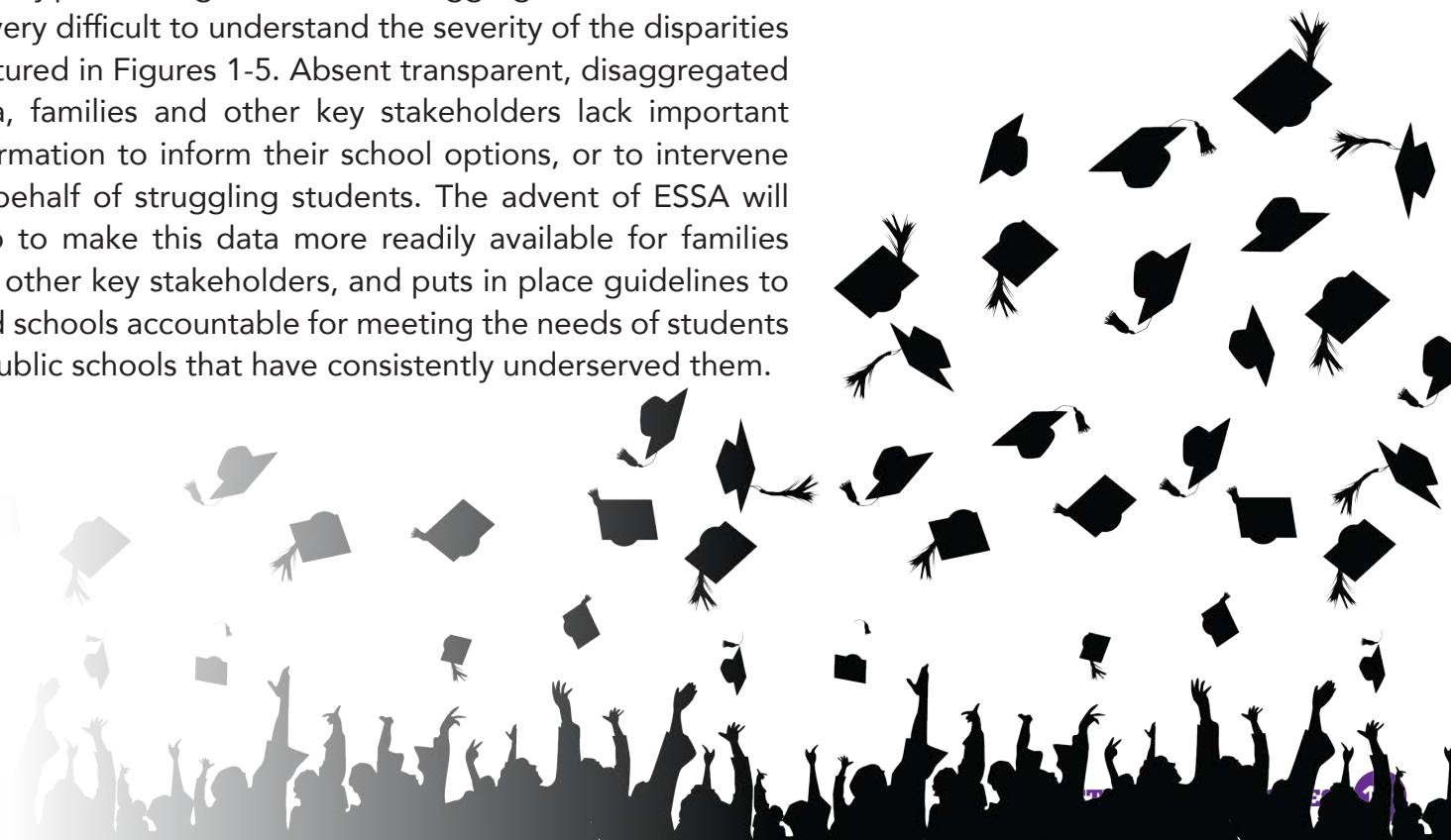
Figure 5- Dropout Rates By Subgroup, Grades 9-12 (2015-2016)



Note: Data on the Latino/Hispanic and Asian Subgroups were not available. Source: LDOE, New Orleans Rates by District, Subgroup, 2015-2016. LDOE, Dropouts by State and District Percent and Number of Students (2011-2015)

**Note- Louisiana dropout rate reflects 2015-2016 school year*

While these trends are startling, these data points provide educators, families and other stakeholders with valuable information about how well specific groups of students are actually performing. Absent this disaggregated data, it would be very difficult to understand the severity of the disparities captured in Figures 1-5. Absent transparent, disaggregated data, families and other key stakeholders lack important information to inform their school options, or to intervene on behalf of struggling students. The advent of ESSA will help to make this data more readily available for families and other key stakeholders, and puts in place guidelines to hold schools accountable for meeting the needs of students in public schools that have consistently underserved them.



Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap

As previously noted, the achievement gap has economic implications for students of color and other underserved students and their families well beyond college. The achievement gap in NOPS subgroup performance on state standardized tests (Figures 1 and 2) and on the ACT (Figure 3) is also reflected in poverty rates, unemployment rates and college completion rates in New Orleans. In New Orleans, 35% of African Americans live in poverty, and African American families make up 60% of asset-limited, income-constrained, employed households, also known as the “working poor” (do not make enough to afford the basic cost of living).⁹ Comparatively, the poverty rate for Whites in New Orleans is 8% with only 29% of Whites living below the ALICE threshold.¹⁰ Similarly, the African American unemployment rate was 9.3% as compared to 3.1% for Whites.¹¹ Additionally, only 17% of African Americans have a bachelor’s degree or higher, while 64% of Whites have a bachelor’s degree or higher.¹² These disparities play out in tangible ways for African American households, where the median income is only \$25,347, as compared to White’s, whose median income is \$65,465 in New Orleans.¹³

Table 3- Economic Disparities Between African American and White Families in New Orleans

	Poverty Rate	Below ALICE (working poor)	Unemployment Rate	Bachelor’s Degree	Median Household Income
African American Families	35%	60%	9.3%	17%	\$25,347
White Families	8%	29%	3.1%	64%	\$65,465

Source: See endnotes 9-13

While the achievement gap can be used to explain some of the disparities in economic outcomes experienced by Black and Brown people in New Orleans, it is important to note that there are historic and contemporary forces that contribute to the disparities outlined in this report. One of the major critiques about the achievement gap framework is that it measures the success of non-White students’ performance against the performance of White learners, or low-income students against their wealthier counterparts, suggesting that White learners and affluent learners are the standard of success.¹⁴ As such, disparities can be best understood as *opportunity gaps* rather than achievement gaps, and they have existed for centuries in this country.¹⁵

From unequal spending in the development of school facilities and the property tax structure that pays for much of school spending, to the limited access to high level courses, high performing schools, and experienced teachers, these student populations face an uphill battle in accessing opportunities important for their long-term success. These and other structural inequities, including housing discrimination and redlining, and the prison industrial complex, contribute to the cycle of poverty and low achievement experienced by some students of color and low-income students. As such, the “achievement gap” should actually be interpreted as a gap in the opportunity structure and a direct reflection of persistent social inequities faced by students of color and low-income students. The sections following hone in on indicators related to students’ “opportunity to learn” and how NOPS is doing at expanding these opportunities to propel students’ academic achievement and overall success.

THE OPPORTUNITY GAP

refers to the ways in which race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, community wealth, familial situations, or other factors contribute to or perpetuate lower educational aspirations, achievement, and attainment for certain groups of students. Moreover, the opportunity gap refers not to outcomes but to access.

2 SCHOOL CHOICE: ENROLLMENT

One of the finer points of the education landscape in New Orleans is the principle of school choice. Providing families with access to schools beyond their neighborhood boundaries theoretically means that families can enroll their children in a high performing school should the school in their neighborhood be low performing or not meet the criteria most important to the family. Furthermore, in theory, a choice landscape offers families the benefit of diverse school models from which to choose to find the “best fit” option for their children.

We examine the following questions in this report:

Has the ‘choice’ landscape actually democratized the school enrollment process for families? Are children from low-income families who have been historically relegated to failing schools better able to access high quality school options for their children?

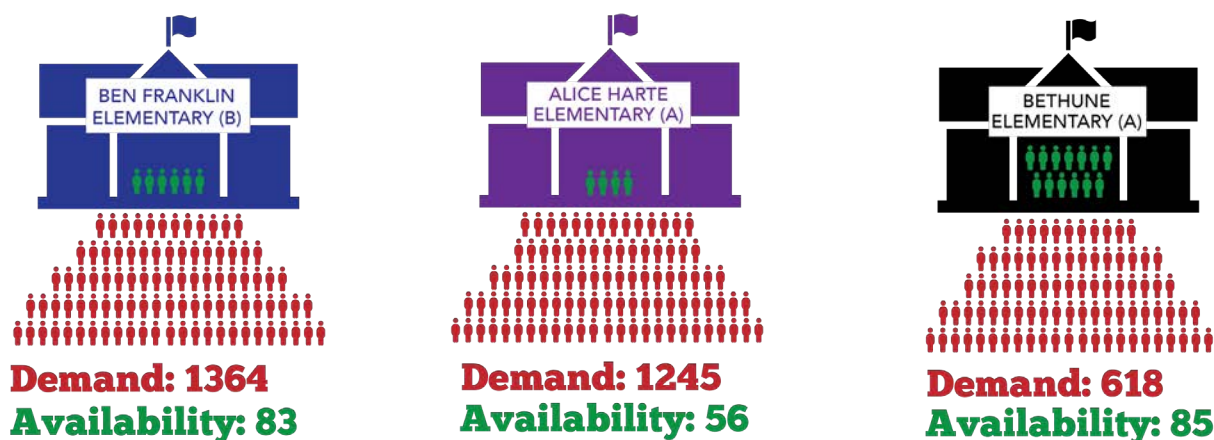


These questions and data are critical to understand as the public school system in New Orleans undergoes the unification process. So, what does the data tell us about the effectiveness of school choice in mitigating inequities in New Orleans Public Schools?

NOPS uses a centralized enrollment system through which families can submit applications to enroll in all New Orleans public schools (with the exception of a handful of selective admissions schools that will enter the enrollment system upon renewal of their charters), area BESE charter schools (e.g., International High School, New Orleans Military and Maritime Academy, Lycée Français de la Nouvelle-Orleans, etc.), and private/parochial schools participating in the state scholarship program. The most highly sought after schools are those in OPSB, where demand for these schools is as much as 16 times their availability (See Table 4).

Table 4- OneApp Demand vs. Availability (March 2017)¹⁶

Most In-Demand K-8 Schools



Source: EnrollNOLA Report, March 2017.

Most In-Demand High Schools



Source: EnrollNOLA Report, March 2017.

Although seats at NOPS remained available after the first round of the OneApp process, many of the available seats were at D and F schools or in grades that have typically low demand, and where students are usually already enrolled or would need to transfer. According to the EnrollNOLA Annual report, 92% of students did not apply to transfer schools (i.e., relative high level of student stability in NOPS), which in turn results in lower demand for seats at grade levels outside of kindergarten and grade 9.¹⁷ Regardless, the EnrollNOLA report indicates that 77.5% of students in the OneApp process were enrolled in one of their top three matches, with an overall match rate of 82.5% for OneApp applicants. While the OneApp is still the source of much criticism, these data indicate that the process is democratizing access to open enrollment in New Orleans public schools.

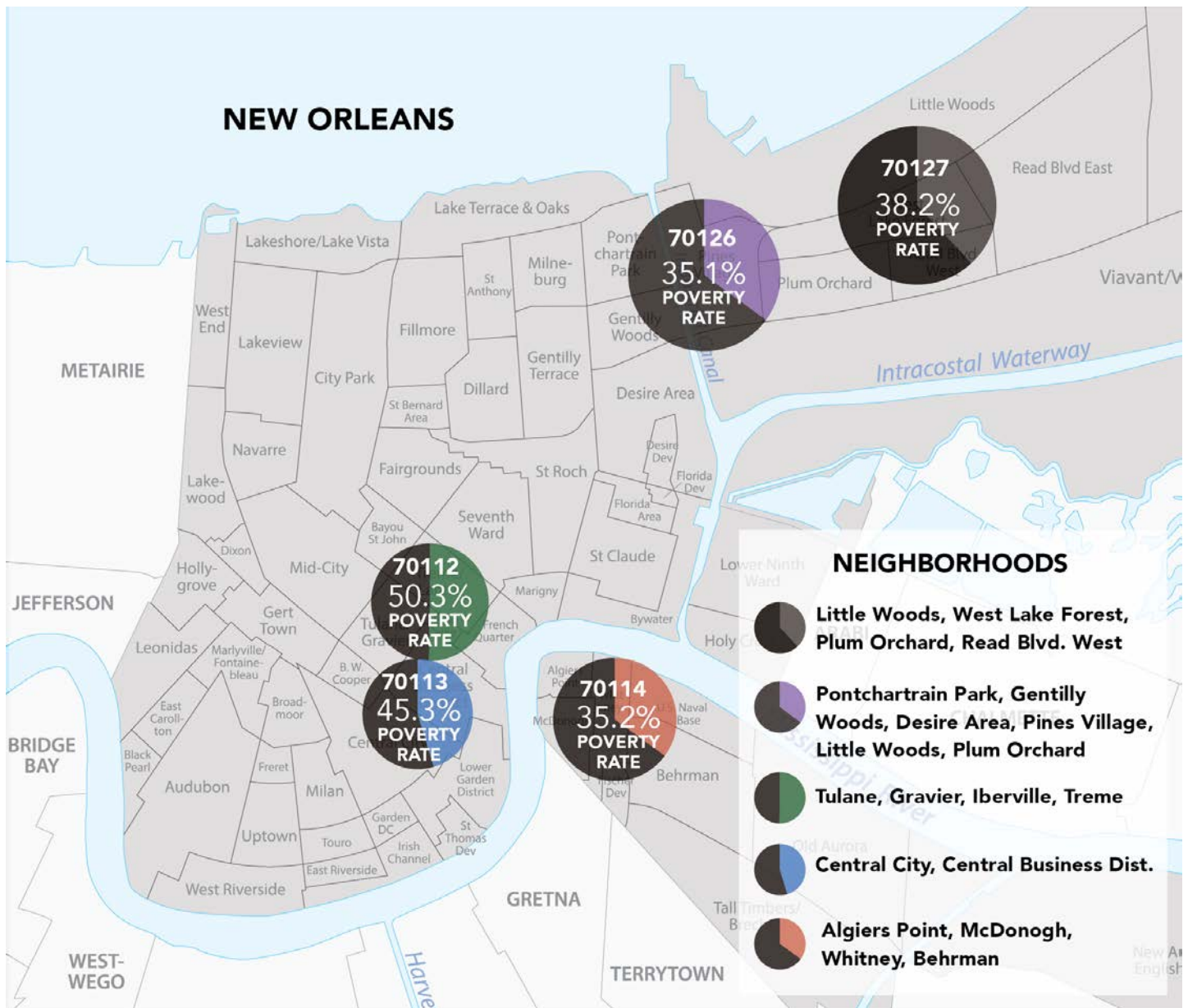
Access to Schools by Letter Grade and Zip Code

Another key question regarding equity in school choice is: **Do all students have a fair chance to access high quality schools?**



To answer this question, enrollment comparisons are presented examining enrollment trends for students from the highest poverty zip codes versus those from all zip codes combined. Highest poverty zip codes were determined by examining US Census Bureau data for each New Orleans zip code. The five zip codes with the highest poverty rates in 2015 were used for this analysis (See Table 5). Table 6 shows the percent of children from the highest poverty zip codes attending schools in each letter grade. The last column in Table 6 shows the percent of children across all zip codes combined attending A-F schools (and those without an assigned letter grade).

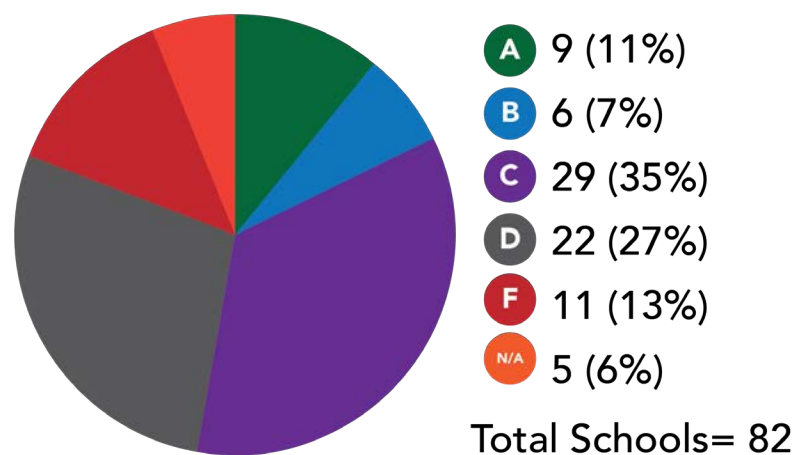
Table 5- Five Highest Poverty Zip Codes in New Orleans



Source: US Census Bureau, Poverty Status in the Last 12 Months, 2011-2015, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies (2012). Place matters for health in Orleans Parish: Ensuring opportunities for good health for all. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from <http://jointcenter.org/docs/New%20Orleans%20CHERReport.pdf>

To frame the analysis, Figure 6 illuminates the percentage of school letter grade distribution in New Orleans. The November 2017 release of school performance scores provides more information that raises new questions about the availability of high quality schools. According to these data, although approximately 18% of schools are rated an “A” or “B,” 40% of NOPS are rated a “D” or “F” (encompassing almost 17,000 students). This new data highlights the challenge for OPSB to support struggling schools and improve the quality of school options for families in New Orleans.

Figure 6- Percentage of School Letter Grade Distribution in New Orleans, Nov. 2017



LDOE, 2017 School Performance Score Summary

Table 6- Percent of Students Enrolled in A-F Schools by Zip Codes (OneApp Schools Only) 2017

One App Schools- Letter Grade	Poorest Zip Codes Combined	All New Orleans Zip Codes
A	10%	11%
B	11%	12%
C	43%	43%
D	25%	23%
F	8%	7%
N/A	10%	4%

Table 7- Percent of Students Enrolled in A-F Schools by Zip Codes (OneApp and Non- OneApp Schools) 2017

Schools- Letter Grade	Poorest Zip Codes Combined	All New Orleans Zip Codes
A	14%	21%
B	11%	11%
C	41%	38%
D	23%	21%
F	8%	6%
N/A	3%	4%

Source: OPSB, Internal Enrollment Report, August 18, 2017. Source: OPSB, Internal Enrollment Report, August 18, 2017.
Includes Type 2 charters Includes Type 2 charters

The data in Table 6 shows that the distribution of students, regardless of zip code, is fairly consistent at participating OneApp schools with the majority accessing mid-range, “C” schools. When examining enrollment patterns by zip code for OneApp and non-OneApp schools (i.e., selective admissions schools), distribution of students is fairly similar (See Table 7). However, the disparities widen for enrollment at “A” schools. Only 14% of students from the poorest zip codes are enrolled at “A” schools as compared to 21% for all zip codes combined.

It is also worth noting that one zip code in particular is overrepresented at “A” schools. Of those students enrolled in NOPS from 70124, 81% are enrolled at “A” schools.¹⁸ This is almost four times the average representation of children from all New Orleans zip codes at “A” schools in NOPS. Based on the fact that a significant amount of school-aged children (more than two-thirds) from 70124 are not enrolled in NOPS, it can be argued that families from this more affluent and White zip code are unwilling to send their children to NOPS unless they can access its “A” schools.¹⁹ This reflects a consistent challenge faced by NOPS leaders to enroll more affluent and White children from New Orleans in its public schools.

Another equity issue that may contribute to 70124 families’ increased access to “A” schools is Hynes Charter School’s admissions priority for students from 70124. Hynes Charter is an “A” school in 70124 that reserved the overwhelming majority of seats at its school for children from 70124. In 2016, OPSB required Hynes to set aside no more than 66% of its seats for children from 70124, down from its previous practice. This is noteworthy because, for most schools, the set aside for students from the geographic priority area is 50%. Zip code 70124 has a poverty rate of 6.5%, and is 90% White, with 65% of its residents ages 25 and over having a bachelor’s degree or higher.²⁰ Reserving 66% of its seats for 70124 will likely do little to expand access to this school for children of color and low income children. This is especially true since Hynes’ other admission priorities (e.g., selective admissions Pre-K, selective admissions language immersion program, and a second tier priority for children of UNO faculty/staff living in Orleans Parish) will inevitably keep the school’s student demographics overwhelmingly White and affluent.

In the early years after Hurricane Katrina, Hynes Charter School educated children from across the city, many from the Gentilly area where the school had its temporary site. In 2010-2011, Hynes had a letter grade of B+ and had a student population that was approximately 72% minority (65.8% African American) and 66% economically disadvantaged.²¹ The shift to a geographic priority area of only 70124 dramatically changed the demographics of the school, which is now 48% minority and 38% economically disadvantaged. The unfortunate practice of priority admissions layers is creating inequities that contribute to adverse, unintended and exclusionary consequences.

Can OPSB encourage Hynes to expand its geographic priority area so that it expands access to more diverse zip codes beyond 70124? Can OPSB reduce Hynes’ 70124 set aside to 50% down from 66% to expand access to this high performing school? Could Hynes Charter School’s admissions priorities be making this ‘open-enrollment’ school ‘selective’ in nature?



This indicator is helpful in examining how accessible the highest quality schools are for low income students. However, zip codes are sometimes an imperfect unit of analysis since zip codes across the city are not economically homogeneous. This means that high poverty neighborhoods and more affluent neighborhoods can both occupy the same zip code. To address this challenge, ULLA employed another indicator to examine access to high quality schools.

Demographics at Highest Rated and Lowest Rated Schools

By examining the demographics of students at “A”, “D” and “F” schools, the ULLA was able to unveil another enrollment pattern across New Orleans public schools that raises alarms about inequities. Students in high performing, selective admissions, New Orleans public schools are less likely to be economically disadvantaged or minorities as compared to the overall district. In fact, more than half of White students in NOPS attend selective admissions schools. Comparatively, open enrollment “A” schools in the district are more reflective of the district’s demographics. The consistency of demographic distribution amongst open enrollment schools indicates that the OneApp process is helping to make access to quality schools more equitable for all students in NOPS. However, selective admissions schools and the policies associated with their admission criteria are likely maintaining existing inequities in school enrollment and choice. Still, it is worth noting that 69% of White students are accessing “A” schools in NOPS whether they are selective or open admissions.

In consideration of the foregoing, the OPSB policy requiring all New Orleans public schools to participate in the OneApp may help to open up access to some of these special schools. However, entry requirements, geographic priorities, lack of transportation and other set-aside factors may continue to keep low income students and students of color at bay.

Are selective admissions policies undermining the equity goals of the New Orleans’ school choice landscape? What is the responsibility of Orleans Parish School Board to address or modify policies that contribute to school segregation and that limit economically disadvantaged students’ access to high quality schools?



Table 8- Percent of Minority/Economically Disadvantaged Students in “A” Schools (2016-2017)

School/District	% Minority	% Economically Disadvantaged
NOPS	93%	84%
Audubon Charter School	60%	43%
Benjamin Franklin H.S.	60%	32%
<i>Edward Hynes Charter School</i>	48%	38%
Lusher Charter School	44%	20%
Lake Forest Elementary C.S.	99%	65%
Alice Harte Elementary C.S.	98%	80%
Warren Easton Senior H.S.	99%	82%
Edna Karr High School	99%	80%
Livingston Collegiate Academy	95%	93%

Note: Schools in bold are selective admission schools. School in italics has selective admission Pre-K and language immersion programs.
Source: LDOE, Multiple Statistics by LEA for Total Public Students, October 1, 2016. LDOE, 2017 School Performance Scores/Letter Grades.

In contrast, “D” and “F” schools in NOPS (with the exception of Homer A. Plessy Community School) have higher percentages of minorities and economically disadvantaged students than NOPS combined (See Table 8). Of the 33 “D” and “F” schools in the district, all but one has minority enrollment of 96%-100% and all but three have a student population that is 90% or higher economically disadvantaged. **Thus, the worst performing schools in New Orleans have higher concentrations of Black and Brown youth and the highest concentration of poverty in NOPS.** According to recently released SPS scores, approximately 37% of students in NOPS attend “D” or “F” schools, which equates to roughly 16,987 students across NOPS. **There are virtually no white students enrolled in “D” or “F” schools in NOPS (less than 1% total), with the exception of a small cadre of students at Homer A. Plessy Community School.** In contrast, 77% of White students in NOPS are enrolled in “A” and “B” schools, which further substantiates the idea that White families invest in NOPS (primarily) when they are able to access the city’s top performing schools.

These enrollment patterns generally illustrate the “privilege” of choice available to affluent, White families, and the limitations of “choice” for families of color, and those restricted by income. For families who rely on the public school system to access educational opportunities for their children, are the options available giving them equitable access to a high quality education? **The resounding answer is “no.”** What is OPSB’s plan to support failing schools, and what are its policies related to closing failing schools? OPSB is faced with the challenge of expanding high quality school options for children and families in New Orleans, for whom a significant number of students still have yet to access high quality school options.

The following questions require further exploration:

- **What is OPSB’s plan to expand its portfolio of schools to increase the number of high quality school options for children and families in New Orleans?**
- **How will the District ensure that more economically disadvantaged students gain access to selective admissions schools in the District?**
- **What strategies will OPSB implement to improve failing schools and what, if any, is its approach to remediating or closing failing schools?**



Table 9- Percent of Minority/Economically Disadvantaged Students in “D” and “F” Schools (2016-2017)

School/District	% Minority	% Economically Disadvantaged
NOPS	93%	84%
Arise Academy	99.8%	96%
Dwight D. Eisenhower Academy of Global St.	98.6%	92%
Einstein Charter School-Village de Lest	98.7%	92%
George W. Carver Collegiate Academy	97.4%	89%
Gentilly Terrace Charter School	99.8%	91%
Homer A. Plessy Community School	75.8%	78%
Joseph A. Craig Charter School	100%	91%
Joseph S. Clark Preparatory High School	99.5%	94%
Lawrence D. Crocker College Prep	99.1%	95%
Lake Area New Tech Early College High School	99.4%	87%
L.B. Landry-O.P. Walker College & Career Prep H.S.	99.8%	90.2%
Mahalia Jackson Elementary School	97.45%	94%
Mary D. Coghill Charter School	99.67%	91%
McDonogh #35 College Preparatory School	99.8%	93%
Mildred Osborne Charter School	99.4%	92.3%
Paul Habans Charter School	98.9%	93.8%
Pierre A. Capdau Learning Academy	99.2%	95.4%
ReNew Cultural Arts Academy	97.7%	94.6%
ReNew Dolores T. Aaron Elementary	99.4%	96.6%
ReNew Schaumburg Elementary	99.8%	93.3%
ReNew Sci Tech Academy at Laurel	99.4%	94.9%
Success Preparatory	98.5%	95.6%
Algiers Tech Academy	95.5%	91%
Crescent Leadership Academy	100%	95%
McDonogh #32 Literacy Academy	99.8%	95%
McDonogh #42 Charter Academy	100%	98%
Medard Nelson Elementary School	99.6%	91%
ReNEW Accelerated High School	98.8%	92%
ReNEW McDonogh City Park	96.4%	91%
Sylvanie Williams College Prep	99.5%	96%
The Net Charter High School	98.8%	94%
William J. Fischer Accelerated Academy	100%	97%
Youth Study Center	97%	82%

NOTE: Schools with letter grade “F” are in bold and schools in red are alternative settings. The Youth Study Center is the juvenile detention Center. Source: LDOE, Multiple Statistics by LEA for Total Public Students, October 1, 2016. LDOE, 2017 School Performance Scores/Letter Grades.

③ HIGH LEVEL CURRICULUM

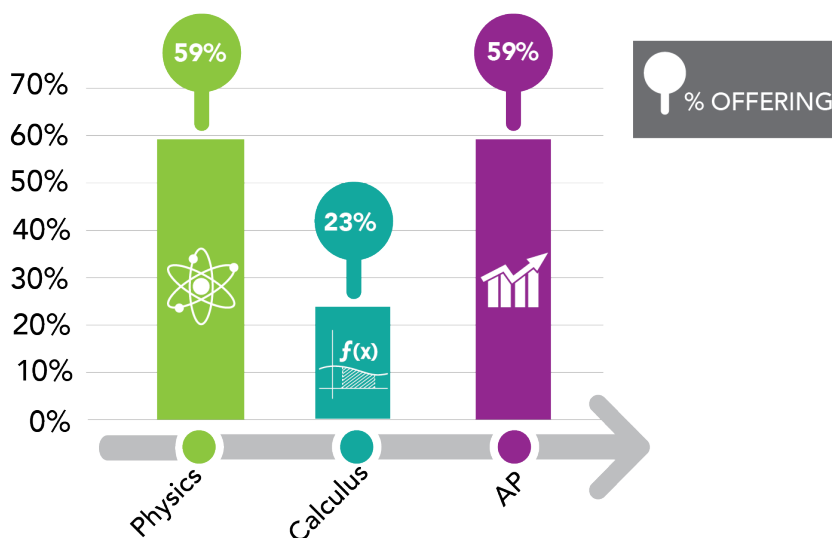
Access to high level curriculum is an important component of students' opportunity to learn that promotes academic achievement and further prepares them for college and beyond. Courses like calculus and physics as well as advanced placement (AP) are among the classes positively correlated with higher ACT scores and are important courses that create pathways to college readiness.²² According to the LDOE, of the Louisiana schools that are predominately African American, 70% do not offer advanced mathematics courses like calculus, and 90% do not offer advanced science courses, such as physics (LDOE, 2017).²³ This is a prime example of how the achievement gap is more aptly described as an opportunity gap.

Are NOPS providing equitable access to high level curriculum for its students?



NOPS seems to be faring better than other, high minority, high poverty districts in Louisiana in some regards. Of NOPS 24 schools educating students in grades 9-12 (includes combination schools, high schools and the Youth Study Center), 83% were majority African American. Almost 60% of majority African American high schools in NOPS offered physics and AP courses. Unfortunately, very few offered calculus (23%), an advantageous curriculum that can prepare students to excel in postsecondary mathematics and on college admissions exams (See Figure 7). In contrast, the two New Orleans high schools that are not majority African American (i.e., Lusher Charter School and Benjamin Franklin High School) are selective admissions high schools that offer high level curriculum including the most diverse range of AP courses of all NOPS high schools. Only five of the 24 high schools in New Orleans (including the Youth Study Center) do not offer any of the high level curriculum examined in this report. Of those five schools, two of the schools are alternative schools, one was the Youth Study Center (the local juvenile detention center) and two are newer high schools serving only ninth and tenth graders.

Figure 7- Percent of Majority Minority, New Orleans High Schools Offering Calculus, AP and Physics (2016-2017)



Source: LDOE, Site Level High School Course Offerings, All New Orleans Schools (RSD & OPSB), 2016-2017.

Based on available data, NOPS, like other high minority public school districts, has few schools offering high level math courses like calculus. In fact, more than 77% of high schools do not offer calculus in comparison to the state average of 70%. However, NOPS are providing more opportunities for students to learn based on the percentage of schools offering physics and AP courses. However, access to these high level curriculum should be available to all students, illustrating why the “achievement gap” should be interpreted as an opportunity gap.

Continued analysis of 2017 data on high level curriculum illuminates access to high level curriculum for students by race/ethnicity.

What is the racial/ethnic makeup of students enrolled in physics, calculus and AP courses in New Orleans?



If enrollment in these courses were equitable, it would mimic that of the total NOPS enrollment. In 2017, 85% of NOPS students were African American, 2% were Asian, 7% were White and 1% were two or more races (See Figure 8).

Was enrollment in high level science and math courses and AP courses representative of NOPS students?

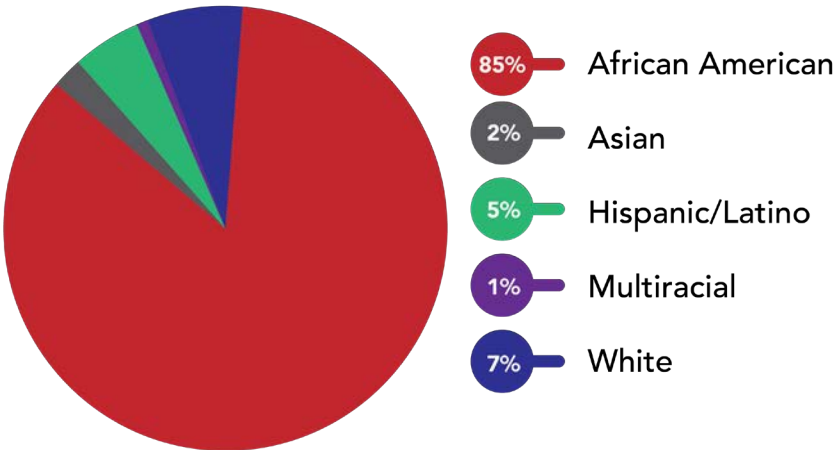


Based on 2017 data from the Louisiana Department of Education, African American students in New Orleans public schools are underrepresented in physics, calculus and AP courses. African Americans make up 71% of students in physics, 74% in calculus, and 65% in AP courses, while they represent 85% of the NOPS student population (See Figures 8-11). Limited access to high level courses may be contributing to disparities in ACT composite scores between African American and White learners.

What are the factors impacting African American students’ access to high level curriculum? What steps are being taken to improve access to high level curriculum for African American students? How will OPSB support schools in expanding access to high level courses for underrepresented students?

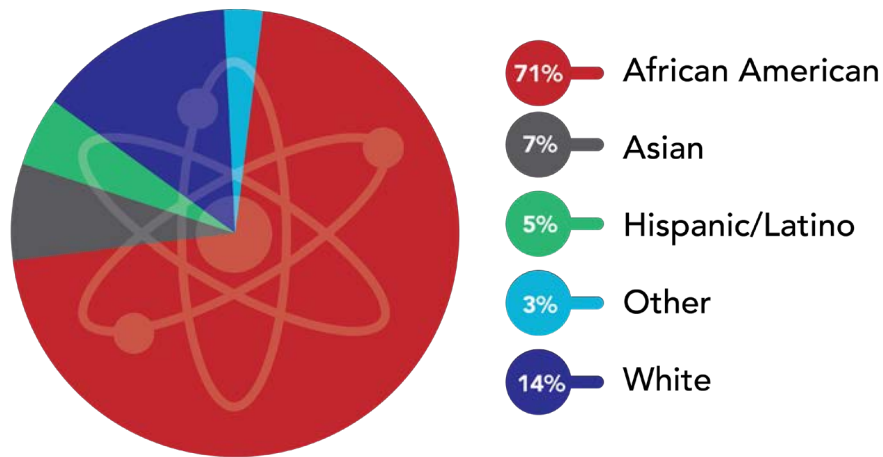


Figure 8- New Orleans Public Schools Demographics (2016-2017)



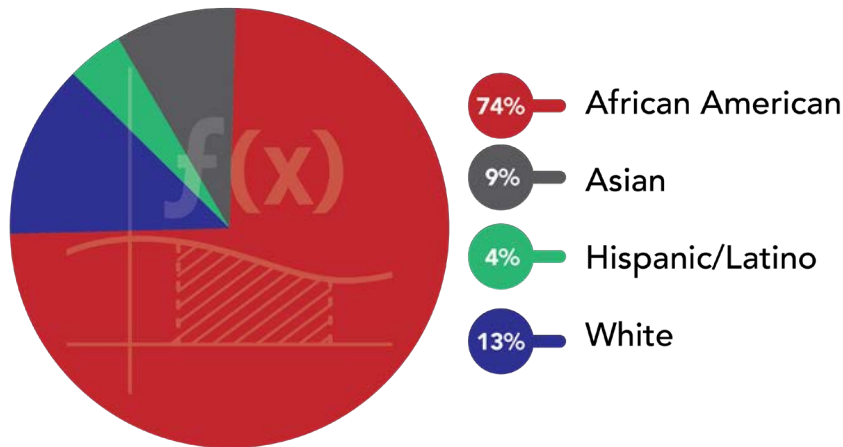
Source: LDOE, Multiple Statistics by Site for Total Public School Students, October 1, 2016.

Figure 9- Race/Ethnicity of Students Enrolled in Physics (2016-2017)



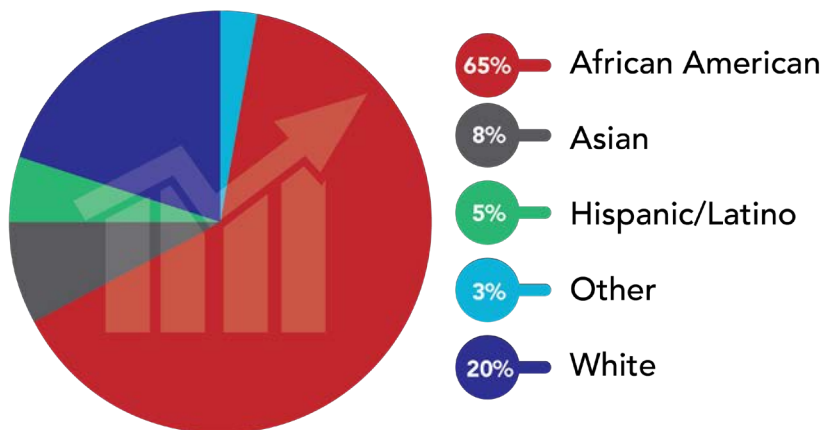
Source: LDOE, Site Level Course Student Enrollment by Subgroup_Orleans Schools, 2016-2017.

Figure 10- Race/Ethnicity of Students Enrolled in Calculus (2016-2017)



Source: LDOE, Site Level Course Student Enrollment by Subgroup_Orleans Schools, 2016-2017.

Figure 11- Race/Ethnicity of Students Enrolled in AP Courses (2016-2017)



Source: LDOE, Site Level Course Student Enrollment by Subgroup_Orleans Schools, 2016-2017.

4 TEACHER QUALITY

One of the single, most significant in-school variables impacting student achievement is the teacher instructing students.²⁴ Yet African Americans and low-income students are more likely to be taught by inexperienced teachers and out-of-field teachers (i.e., teachers who do not have a degree or certification in the discipline in which they are teaching) than their White and more affluent peers.²⁵ As such, teacher placement is a structural issue that is inequitably impacting low-income students and students of color.

According to a regional educator workforce report, public schools in the Southeast face the challenge of providing experienced and qualified teachers for some underserved students in the region.²⁶ For instance, 21% of teachers at “F” schools in the region are out-of-field teachers as compared to 11% at “A” schools (See Table 10). In fact, there is a negative correlation between schools’ letter grade and the percentage of out-of-field teachers they have (with the exception of uncertified teachers at “F” schools where the percentage of teachers in this category are the same as those at “D” schools).

Table 10- Teacher Certification by School Letter Grade in Southeast Louisiana (2016-2017)

Schools- Letter Grade	Out-of-Field	Uncertified
A	11%	3%
B	14%	5%
C	17%	9%
D	19%	11%
F	21%	11%

Source: LDOE. Southeast Region 2016-2017 Educator Workforce Report

Continued examination of trends in teacher characteristics in the region reveal that students with special needs have the highest percentage of out-of-field teachers instructing them. According to the workforce report, 24% of special education courses are taught by out-of-field teachers. This is reflective of the national critical shortage of special educators.²⁷ According to a report by the US Department of Education, Louisiana cites special education, middle and secondary subject areas (i.e., mathematics, English, foreign languages, science and social studies), elementary education (i.e., grades 1-5), arts and early childhood education (Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten) as its current teacher shortage areas.²⁸ According to this report, the federal government has special financial aid programs to encourage people to pursue training in those teacher shortage areas, including scholarships and loan forgiveness programs. Despite these initiatives, it appears that districts in the region continue to struggle to attract special educators who can meet the needs of its students (LDOE, 2017).

How will OPSB help schools respond to this specific shortage area given the low performance of students with disabilities on standardized tests and their low graduation rates (See Figures 1-4)?



On the issue of equitable access to high quality teachers, the Southeast region and the state face issues in placing high quality teachers in all schools. In the Southeast region, 45% of classes at schools with the Title I designation (high poverty schools) are taught by out-of-field or uncertified teachers.²⁹ At the state level, that figure stands at 41%. In contrast, 32% of classes at non-Title I schools are taught by out-of-field or uncertified teachers.³⁰ At the state level, that figure lies at 34%. In the Southeast region, inequities between majority-minority schools and majority white schools hold up as well, with 50% of classes at majority-minority schools being taught by out-of-field and uncertified teachers, versus 34% at majority white schools. Similarly, students at high poverty schools and majority-minority schools are more likely to have inexperienced teachers (i.e., first year teachers) than their counterparts.³¹

According to the regional education workforce report, 25% and 27% of classes at high poverty and majority-minority schools in the Southeast region respectively, are taught by inexperienced teachers.³² In contrast, inexperienced teachers teach only 19% of classes at predominately white and more affluent schools. This trend does not hold up, however, with ineffective teachers where teacher effectiveness is determined using value-added measures. At minority and high poverty schools, 31% of courses are taught by ineffective teachers, as compared to 38% of majority White and more affluent schools.³³ Overall, students from majority-minority and high poverty schools are more likely to be taught by out-of-field and inexperienced teachers than their counterparts at majority White and more affluent schools. However, across the region, all schools are facing the challenge of approximately one-third of classes being taught by ineffective teachers. *But how are NOPS faring specifically?*

Teacher Quality: New Orleans Public Schools

To examine equity in teacher quality in NOPS, we examined three factors: The percent of teachers teaching at least one out-of-field class, the percent of inexperienced teachers and the percent of uncertified teachers teaching in NOPS' most affluent/low-minority schools in comparison to high poverty/high minority schools. Table 11 outlines the related findings.



Table 11: Teacher Characteristics by School Type in NOPS (2017)

School Type	Inexperienced	Uncertified	Out-of-Field
High Poverty/High Minority	22%	34%	14%
Low Poverty/Low Minority	15%	16%	22%

Source: LDOE, *Teacher Count by Site, Orleans and Charters and Number and Percent of Certified and Uncertified, or Out-of-Field Teachers*, 2017.

Based on the aforementioned data, inequities do exist in teacher characteristics between high poverty/high minority schools and low poverty/low minority schools in New Orleans. As Table 11 outlines, students in high poverty/high minority schools are more likely to be taught by inexperienced and uncertified teachers than their counterparts at low poverty/low minority schools. For clarity, only five schools in NOPS qualify as low poverty/low minority schools (i.e., Audubon Charter School, Benjamin Franklin High School, Edward Hynes Charter School, Lusher Charter School, and Bricolage Academy). Three of the five schools have selective admissions policies, one has policies that limit access for families outside of a more affluent and White neighborhood, and one has admission guidelines that generate a more diverse student population by design.

As far as out-of-field teachers are concerned, low poverty/low minority schools had a higher percentage of teachers teaching at least one out-of-field course. Courses primarily taught by out-of-field teachers at low poverty/low minority schools include elementary classes, math, science and social studies classes.

Since the majority of NOPS are charter schools, they have autonomy with regards to personnel decisions.

What are charter management organizations' (CMO) commitments to addressing the existing inequities in teacher quality in their schools, and what role can OPSB play in encouraging CMOs to address these inequities in their networks?



As previously mentioned, teachers are the most significant, school-based factor influencing student achievement. The opportunity to have an effective, high quality teacher is essential to students' academic achievement, and yet another factor related to their opportunity to learn.

6 FUNDING

Access to resources is a key driver of educational outcomes for students of color who have historically been underserved.³⁴ Unequal access to high quality curriculum, teachers and facilities is often a function of education inequities in funding. A study by the US Department of Education indicates that 45% of high poverty schools receive less state and local funding than more affluent schools in their district.³⁵ Fortunately, Louisiana's school funding has shifted from a regressive funding model, in which schools with a high concentration of low-income students receive less funding, to a progressive model, in which more funding is provided to schools with higher poverty levels.³⁶ This shift is reflected in the approximately 20% increase in funding in high poverty schools in Louisiana, versus flat investment in wealthier districts across the state. This is significant, since the state typically accounts for 38% of public school funding, while 15% comes from federal allocations and 47% comes from local tax revenue.³⁷ However, in Orleans and Jefferson Parishes, the split between the state and local government is about 50/50 to account for gaps left by lower local tax revenue.³⁸

According to a July 2017 article, the average per pupil spending, including only local and state taxes for Louisiana, was about \$10,888, roughly 10% less than the national average of \$12,148.³⁹ Based on a review of *School-Level Per Pupil Expenditures (State, Local & Federal Funds), Enrollment Data, and Staffing Data* reports, the average per pupil expenditures in OPSB (charters and direct run), are \$13,346, as compared to the state average of \$11,185 in 2015-16.⁴⁰ Comparatively, the RSD charters' per pupil expenditures ranged from \$8,934 (Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Charter School) to \$24,966 (Crescent Leadership Academy). Without more details on the characteristics of students enrolled at those schools (e.g., degree of needs of students within the population including over-age students, students with disabilities, limited English proficient students, etc.) it is difficult to determine the reasons for the variance. NOPS differentiated funding formula may provide some insight as to the degree of variance between schools' per pupil expenditures.



Differentiated Funding Formula

Differentiated funding is a national best practice in school funding that takes an equitable approach to allocating resources to schools based on the needs of their students and the cost to meet those needs. The Recovery School District instituted a differentiated funding formula in 2014 and more recently (2016), OPSB has adopted a differentiated funding formula to provide for greater funding equity across New Orleans Public Schools.⁴¹ The differentiated funding formula is designed to adjust the minimum foundation program (MFP) allocation up or down to meet the needs of the individual student. For instance, student needs are categorized into tiers based on their diagnosed need and the cost to meet those needs. As an example, a school with a student who has a tier 2 diagnosis, such as a developmental delay, may be awarded an additional \$8,000 for that student to provide for the services and resources needed to meet the student's needs. Below is a figure that provides examples of how differentiated funding may be applied in NOPS.

**Table 12- NOPS Differentiated Funding Formula (2016-2017)
with Projected Dollar Amount**

Category	Weight	Projected Amount Per Pupil
Elementary Base	1.000	\$7,495
High School Base	1.050	\$7,870
Special Education Tier 1	0.200	\$1,499
Special Education Tier 2	1.175	\$8,807
Special Education Tier 3	1.875	\$14,053
Special Education Tier 4	2.175	\$16,302
Special Education Tier 5	3.000	\$22,486
English Language Learners	0.300	\$2,249
Over Age	0.225	\$1,686
Gifted and Talented	0.050	\$375
TOTAL OPSB + RSD MFP		\$390,640,000

Source: Citywide school funding formula, 2016-2017.

A Note About School Funding

Education finance remains an opaque topic in educational equity dialogues, given that a basic examination of current school funding cannot adequately uncover the financial inequities experienced by students of color and low-income students in U.S. public schools. Historical inequities in public school funding dating back before “separate but (un)equal” policies in Jim Crow era public education still plague communities of color today, as evidenced by older, less resourced schools in high poverty communities and communities of color. The use of property taxes to fund schools in itself is an inequitable funding structure that breeds inequities, given that the valuation of properties in communities of color is often less than properties in majority White communities. Less affluent communities by design will have less funding available to support public education. Communities in which families enroll their children in private and parochial schools at higher rates often translates to less support for increasing investments in public education.⁴²



Various states across the country have been the target of lawsuits claiming the funding structure is both unconstitutional and inequitable (e.g., Kansas, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, etc.).⁴³ While differentiated and progressive funding formulas are helpful in mitigating existing inequities, this strategy cannot adequately remedy the impact of decades of public school underfunding. Furthermore, overall investments in public education in Louisiana have remained relatively stagnant, meaning that schools are still operating with limited resources to address significant challenges.⁴⁴ It also must be underscored that income disparities also impact the learning experiences of young people outside of the classroom. The wealthiest 10% of US families spend three times as much as they did in the 1970s on educational and co-curricular activities and resources, while all other families' spending on education and co-curricular activities remained stagnant.⁴⁵ These inequities in education investments impact opportunities to learn for under-resourced students.

⑥ DISCIPLINE

The U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights reports that African Americans are three times more likely than their White peers to be suspended/expelled.⁴⁶ Similarly, students with disabilities are also disproportionately suspended, with a suspension rate twice that of students without disabilities. These disparities have far-reaching consequences for youth, since students who are suspended or expelled are more likely to drop out of high school, experience grade retention, and be involved with the criminal justice system.⁴⁷ It has also been reported that schools with higher suspension rates also have lower school-wide, standardized test scores.⁴⁸

What do we know about suspensions in NOPS? Consistent with national trends, African American students are disproportionately suspended in NOPS. Approximately 12% of African American students have had at least one out-of-school suspension as compared to Whites, Hispanics, and Asians, all of whom have suspension rates of less than 5%. Likewise, the suspension rates for students with disabilities was highest at almost 15%. Expulsion data for NOPS is slightly less transparent as they do not report on race/ethnicity of students referred to the Student Hearing Office. Based on available data, however, of the 281 students referred to the Hearing Office who were recommended for expulsion, 29% were found not guilty.⁴⁹ The overwhelming majority of students recommended for expulsion were male (65%) and most expulsion recommendations were made of students in grades 7-12.⁵⁰

Alternative education settings that have been developed to respond to the needs of students who have been suspended or expelled from their home schools are wrought with issues.⁵¹ African American students, who represent 45% of Louisiana public school enrollment, are overrepresented in these settings at 85%, also comprising 67% of students *suspended* to alternative schools and 70% *expelled* to these sites.⁵²

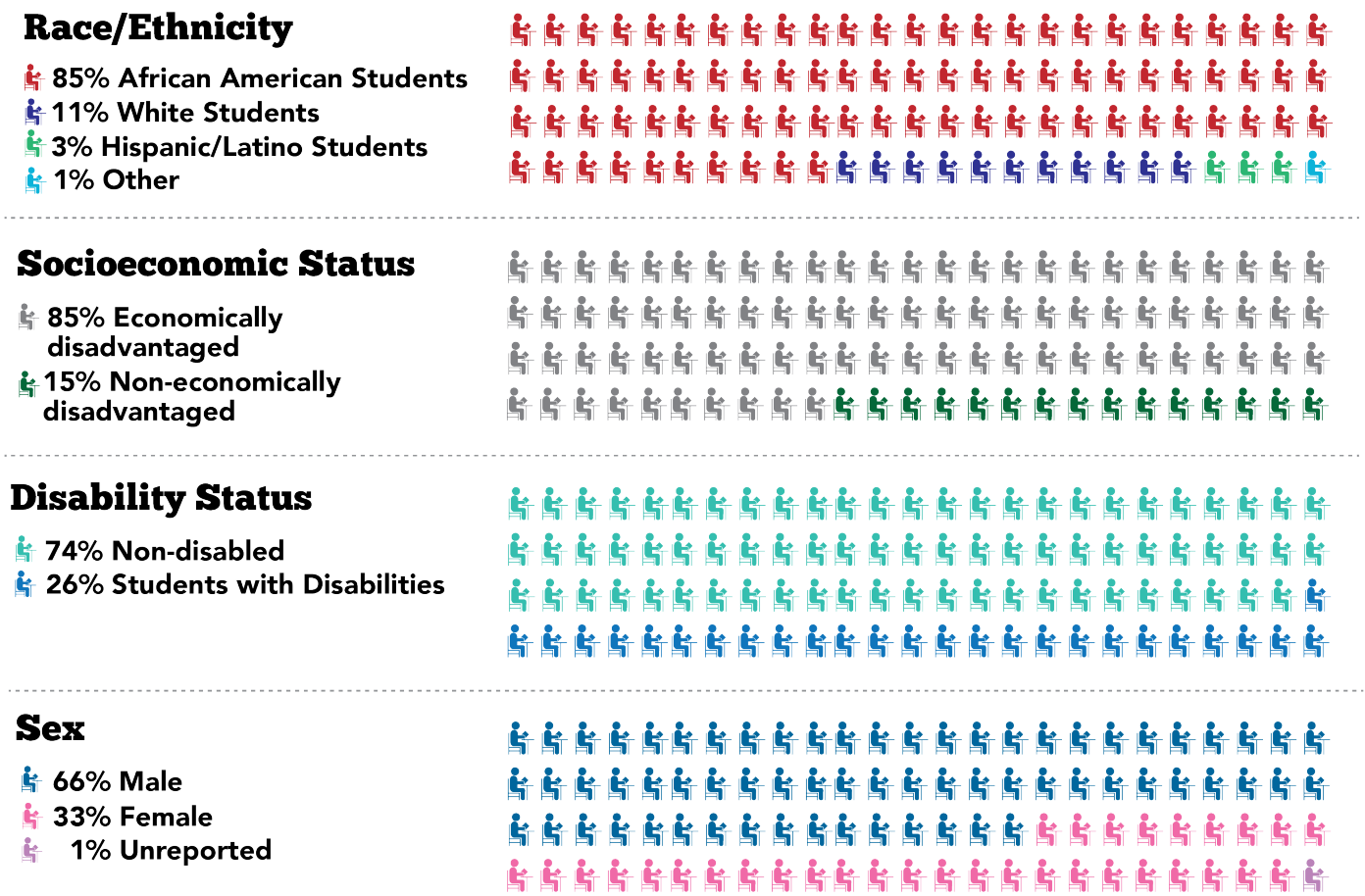
**African American students in NOPS
are at least three times more likely to
be suspended than students of other
races/ethnicities.**



According to the Alternative Education Study Group Report, African American students in Louisiana are 3.25 times and 7.8 times more likely to be suspended and expelled, respectively. Students with disabilities, who represent 11% of Louisiana public school students, are also overrepresented in these settings at 26%.

Similarly, economically disadvantaged students who represent 69% of the states’ public school student population, represent 85% of students in alternative settings. Males are also overrepresented in these settings at 66%.⁵³ (See Figure 12)

Figure 12 - Demographics at Alternative Education Settings in Louisiana (2016-2017)



Source: LDOE, Alternative Education Study Group Report, p.5, October 2017.

Ultimately, inequities in discipline data are reflective of disparities in student outcome trends examined in this report. New Orleans public schools, as well as public schools in Louisiana, at large are struggling to serve these student populations well. Unfortunately, data from the 2017 report on alternative settings indicates that these settings are failing to support students' needs as well. The dropout rate for students in this setting is 19% as compared to the state's overall dropout rate of 4%.⁵⁴ And according to the 2017 report, alternative settings often lack the resources, supports and systems required to adequately educate and respond to the needs of its students.⁵⁵ Accordingly, the State's call to action to address issues in alternative education settings provides a road map to mitigate these issues. OPSB will need to partner with community agencies and organizations, and CMOs managing alternative education settings to pave a path forward to address these issues locally.

What are the underlying issues contributing to student disciplinary issues? Do the schools from where suspensions to alternative sites and expulsion recommendations emerge have adequate mental health and counseling services? How can schools develop specialized programming to address the needs of their male students (who are overrepresented in these settings) to counter such disciplinary issues?



It would be prudent to make available, data on gender and racial/ethnic breakdowns for both suspensions and expulsions so that specialized interventions can be developed.

Curtailing student discipline issues should be a priority, given the impact of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions. Likewise, restorative practices, comprehensive mental health services and improvements to school culture, including cultural competence, implicit bias training for educators and wraparound services for families, could be interventions worth pursuing to address student discipline issues in school. Additionally, it may be helpful for the OPSB to work closely with juvenile justice advocates to learn more about the disposition of students admitted to the Youth Study Center to see if there is a role that schools can play to mitigate circumstances that facilitate youth involvement in the system. Overall, the disproportionate representation of African Americans, males and students with disabilities in out-of-school suspensions and expulsions requires a great deal more investigation by OPSB and other concerned advocates to reduce inequities in school discipline.

CONCLUSION

Educational equity issues remain in New Orleans public schools, as do the expectations that they be addressed by OPSB and CMO's, regardless of their governance structure. Transitioning oversight of all New Orleans public schools to OPSB requires that the district develop a strong plan to address the educational equity issues outlined in this report. Yet, the district faces a unique challenge, given that its oversight is limited with regard to the day-to-day functions of autonomous schools.

Although educational equity issues such as school choice, student performance, course offerings, teacher quality, school discipline and funding are systemic issues, strategies to address these inequities are often school-based (or CMO-based) within a decentralized system. The unification of schools under the existing plan does not solve for that, making it far more challenging to make sweeping changes. However, OPSB should not absolve itself from leading in those areas where its ability to leverage large-scale change and impact can be made. For example, hiring decisions are made at the school/CMO level, making it difficult for the district to ensure that students at high poverty schools have the same access to experienced teachers. However, promoting citywide incentive programs for teachers is a role that the district should play. Additionally, decisions like the differentiated funding formula are district-level strategies that have "leveled the playing field," making funding more equitable and needs-driven.

Despite the unique governance challenge before OPSB, there are system level strategies it can implement to improve equity in the system. On the issue of student achievement, OPSB has already begun strategic planning to address struggling schools. As OPSB continues to "right-size" its organization to prepare for the unification of schools, it will need to consider cost-effective strategies to support struggling schools such as contracting expert consultants, establishing an intervention team, closing failing schools, or any number of strategies. Regardless of the path(s) it takes, OPSB will need to ensure that students, especially the most underserved, are not unintentionally burdened by these interventions. For instance, school closures disproportionately impact economically disadvantaged students, thus OPSB must make sure that the interventions it implements for struggling schools also protects and benefits underserved students.

Likewise, OPSB must expand access to high performing schools, and implement policies ensuring that access to high performing schools is equitable. CMOs also have a significant role to play in ensuring educational equity in NOPS, and all CMOs should be committed to expanding access to high quality schools. OPSB should work with local organizations, colleges and universities, CMOs and others to either attract new schools to the district, or create what is needed in the district. Additionally, OPSB should encourage selective admissions schools to work towards a school population that is reflective of the city's demographics. Similarly, OPSB should ensure that all schools' geographic priorities promote access by ensuring that these areas are diverse economically and racially. To that end, schools, selective admissions or not, should work to establish policies and practices that promote equitable access. The provision of transportation is among the practices that help expand access to schools, as well as establishing admissions priorities that expand access rather than diminish it.

School funding is chiefly a system-level issue, and there is more work to be done to make these systems and policies more transparent to understand the actual cost of educating a child. Without such knowledge, it is difficult to appreciate the nuances of education finance due to the lack of perspective of these real costs. Continued support for differentiated funding is important to support all students. CMOs are encouraged to continue to partner with advocates, communities and families to rally for increased funding for NOPS.

School discipline should be an issue that the District, as well as CMOs, elevates in its educational equity focus, to ensure that the school-to-prison pipeline is dismantled. Increasing community partnerships and expending resources to expand counseling services, introducing professional development opportunities, implementing trauma-informed interventions and restorative justice practices, and increasing youth development programs in schools (e.g., mentoring), may help to provide alternatives to out-of-school suspensions in NOPS. Transparency is also critical in ensuring equity in school discipline. It is imperative that OPSB investigate the disproportionate number of African Americans with out-of-school suspensions, given that the rate is at least three times higher for this population than almost all other populations in NOPS. This calls for a more in-depth study to examine discipline practices across NOPS. Additionally, the overrepresentation of males recommended for expulsion suggests that specialized interventions should be considered for these students. Finally, OPSB should work with the Louisiana Center for Children's Rights to examine the core challenges faced by students from NOPS who enter the juvenile justice system in order to identify preventive measures that can be taken by the school system to reduce these risks.

Ensuring equitable access to rigorous curriculum will also be required to ensure that students are prepared for post-secondary success. As reflected in this report, all students do not have access to the type of high level curriculum associated with college readiness and other opportunities. Thus, CMOs should work at expanding access to this type of coursework. In addition, CMOs should examine the reasons for the underrepresentation of African Americans in these courses. Measures should be taken to ensure that all students are proportionately represented in rigorous, high level courses.

With regard to teacher quality, the responsibility for staffing schools with effective teachers falls on CMOs. CMOs should work to recruit a committed and diverse educator workforce that better reflects the children they serve. Establishing partnerships with local, historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU) to train and recruit teachers may be a thoughtful strategy. Likewise, OPSB and CMOs should investigate effective strategies to attract and retain more experienced teachers, especially at high poverty schools. Similarly, CMOs may want to consider alternative strategies to prepare out-of-field teachers to teach in disciplines where there are teacher shortages, while investigating new strategies to fill critical teacher shortages.

The unique features of the New Orleans public school system(s) requires intentional collaboration between OPSB, CMOs, and the community at-large to solve these problems, bringing educators, administrators, non-profits, and business and civic leaders to the table together and distributing the responsibility for educational equity across the system. Soon, the buck will stop with OPSB. Students and their families are relying on the district to provide leadership that will advance this unique system of schools to new heights, and improve learning outcomes for ALL children. Since NOPS has recently experienced a decrease in graduation rates and lower school performance scores, OPSB and CMOs alike must be accountable for expeditiously and intentionally working to address the inequities directly tied to student outcomes. Simultaneously, the City of New Orleans and the education ecosystem must value the long-term investments of quality early childhood education and care, youth development and job readiness options, since improving these systems promote a better quality of life in New Orleans.

In sum, educational equity is essential to securing a bright future for our children and the future of New Orleans.

ENDNOTES

1 New Orleans Public Schools or NOPS is used to describe all public schools, both direct run and charter, that are or will be under the auspices of Orleans Parish School Board. This term does not include Type 2 charters, which are not examined in this report.

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THANK YOU

Thank you to the following for providing support in the development of this report:

Amber Davis-Prince
Gabriella Fighetti
Thomas Lambert
Arielle McConduit
Erika McConduit
Danielle Mitchell
Colleston Morgan
Kunjan Narechania
Sara Strickland
Cate Swinburn
Cathy Washington
Jill Zimmerman
Louisiana Department of Education
Orleans Parish School Board
Recovery School District

This report was made possible with generous support from the Laura and John Arnold Foundation and the Walton Family Foundation.

This report was prepared by Rashida H. Govan, Ph.D. for the Urban League of Louisiana. Layout, design and infographics by Ginger LeBlanc.



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