

**ADVANCING EDUCATIONAL**  
**EQUITY**

FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN BATON ROUGE



A REPORT BY THE  
URBAN LEAGUE  
OF LOUISIANA



## EXPLANATION AND LIMITATIONS OF THE DATA

This report provides data disaggregated by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, ability, and English proficiency where possible; other dimensions of education equity were not able to be included. The data represents a “snapshot” of performance and enrollment. The most current data available from each data source is used in the analysis. The data and analysis include data from all public schools in Baton Rouge and are not distinguished by district or governance structure.

Data includes all East Baton Rouge Parish School System (EBRPSS), Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) charter schools, Recovery School District (RSD) charter schools, and independent charter schools in the Baton Rouge geographic area.

Economically disadvantaged refers to students eligible for the free- and reduced-price lunch program. Various degrees of poverty exist but are not differentiated in this metric.

“Mastery or above” is used as the measure of student performance on assessments. The percentage of students scoring Mastery or above does not indicate the degree to which students score above Mastery and does not consider the number or percentage of students scoring “Basic” or below.

Data from groups of schools is calculated as the sum and average of the group of schools, not the average of the schools. Trend data of district and school performance is not included.

*Although we may provide research on the various causes of gaps, the analysis cannot conclude why the gaps exist.*

## SCHOOL-LEVEL, DISAGGREGATED DATA - WHY IT MATTERS:

District performance data provides insight into the ability of the local school system to educate the children in the community. At an individual school level, data allows parents and education stakeholders to understand the quality of education at a particular school.

Analyzing school-level data can help communities understand how we are collectively living up to the fundamental promise of public education – provide equity, excellence, and opportunity to all.

Improvements in local and state data systems allow data to be disaggregated and reported by subgroups. The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) reports disaggregated data by various subgroups at the state, district, and school levels. Data used in this report are publicly available from the LDOE and can be found at [www.Louisianabelieves.com](http://www.Louisianabelieves.com).

Disaggregated data allows community stakeholders to identify disparities in performance and outcomes among the various subgroups (for example by race/ethnicity or socioeconomic status). Persistent differences in academic performance are referred to as “achievement gaps.” Federal, state, and local departments of education are obligated to identify disparities and provide targeted support to implement strategies designed to close the gaps.

The top priority for education stakeholders, district leaders, policymakers, community members, and families is the quality of academics, including access to highly effective teachers; rigorous coursework; and a safe and enriching learning environment. This report provides analysis of data across three themes:

## ACADEMICS, ENVIRONMENT, AND ACCESS.

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# Foreword

**This report reflects a deep belief that every child deserves the opportunity to receive a high-quality education.**

Since 1938, the Urban League of Louisiana (ULLA) has actively worked to assist underserved communities in securing economic self-reliance, parity, power, and civil rights. In 2016, ULLA extended its range to East Baton Rouge Parish and across the state. With a statewide focus, ULLA implements programs to ensure quality education and access to information, employment, and economic inclusion.

ULLA is committed to ensuring that public schools in Baton Rouge promote equity, access, and excellence. The ULLA Baton Rouge office has been engaged in education primarily through the Parent Information Center (PIC) and Project Ready.

## Parent Information Center (PIC)

Through the Parent Information Center (PIC) in Baton Rouge, ULLA prepares and empowers parents to actively advocate for their children's academic achievement, support high-quality education opportunities and develop an informed parent constituency. Activities and initiatives provided through PIC include:

- PRIDE (Parents Ready to be Involved to Deliver Excellence) Leadership Academy: Participants in the PRIDE Academy gain the knowledge, resources, and a network to effectively support high-quality education options and policies that promote accountability, transparency, equity, and access.
- Baton Rouge Achievement Zone (BRAZ) Schools Guide: This guide provides parents and families with helpful information about the variety of public charter schools within the BRAZ community and the process for applying to school using the EnrollBR common application.
- Schools Expo: In addition to the BRAZ Schools Guide, ULLA hosts annual schools expos in partnership with EnrollBR and the Baton Rouge Achievement Zone.
- Back-to-School events: ULLA hosts a variety of back-to-school events each year, providing parents with free school supplies and other education resources.
- Education Advocacy: ULLA partners with Baton Rouge organizations and local leaders to promote policies, mobilize parents and community members, and take part in actions that support equity and excellence in public education in Baton Rouge



## Project Ready

Beginning in 2017, ULLA launched Project Ready at Scotlandville Magnet High School in Baton Rouge. Project Ready provides 9th through 12th grade students with academic, life skills, and career readiness supports to prepare them for success in college or careers.



While ULLA provides programmatic support to families and youth, systemic change is also needed to ensure equity and excellence in public education, which requires a data-driven approach.

This report examines several key metrics through an equity lens and identifies biases and gaps in outcomes and access. The results paint a sobering picture of the challenges facing non-white and economically disadvantaged students in accessing the resources that provide a foundation for academic success. As a community, we are falling short of our promise to provide a level playing field and ensure that all students have opportunities to succeed in school and beyond.

The goal of this report is to spark conversations and action – in the assemblies of the state capitol, in the hallways of local schools, and at the dinner tables in our communities – about how our public schools can improve educational equity, excellence, and opportunity for all students.

We hope this report will lead to actionable change. Informed and empowered community members are a critical force for driving improvement in our schools. Armed with data, community members can successfully advocate for their children, articulate their vision for success, and hold school leaders and policy makers accountable.

Judy Reese Morse  
**President and CEO, Urban League of Louisiana**

# Background: Public Schools in Baton Rouge

Public schools in Baton Rouge reflect a range of school types including traditional district-run schools, district-authorized charter schools, state-authorized charter schools, and charter schools within the Recovery School District (RSD) portfolio. This report analyzes data from all public schools in Baton Rouge.

During the 2018-19 school year, there were 106 public schools serving the students of Baton Rouge. Enrollment at the start of the school year (Louisiana Department of Education, October 2018 Enrollment) for public schools serving Baton Rouge students was 52,034 students; of those, East Baton Rouge Parish Public Schools enrolled 38,738 students. The state-authorized charter schools located in Baton Rouge enrolled 8,811 students. Charter schools in the RSD portfolio enrolled 2,210 students, and independent charter schools in Baton Rouge enrolled 2,275 students.

Of students enrolled in public schools (all types) in Baton Rouge (October 2018), 82.4 percent were non-white; 75.5 percent were economically disadvantaged (eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch); and 5.9 were limited English proficient (LEP).<sup>1</sup>

## ***Charter Schools in Louisiana***

Charter schools are public schools that are operated independent of the local school district. Charter schools can be authorized by the local school board, East Baton Rouge Parish Schools (EBRPSS) or by the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). Charter schools have autonomy, increased accountability, and provide families with choice.



There are six types of charter schools:

- Type 1: A new school authorized by the Local School Board
- Type 2: A new or conversion school authorized by BESE.
- Type 3: A conversion school authorized by the Local School Board
- Type 3B: A former Type 5 charter school that has been transferred from the RSD and returned to the local school district.
- Type 4: A new or conversion school authorized by the local school board and BESE.
- Type 5: A RSD school authorized by BESE

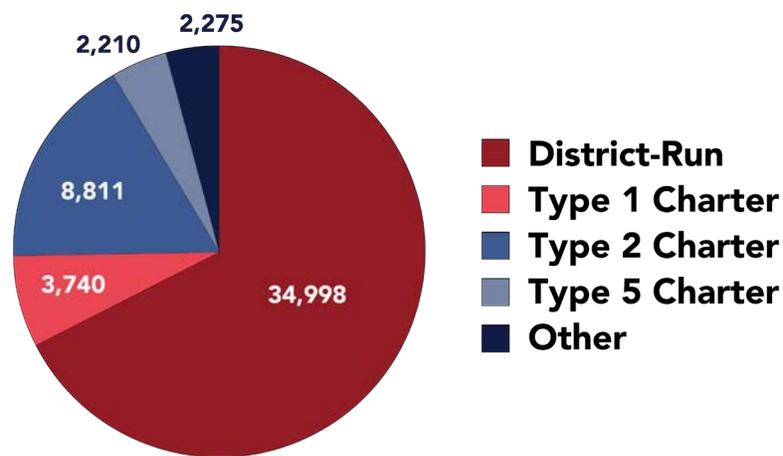
Oversight and Governance:

- Local school boards authorize Type 1 and 3 charter schools and are responsible for oversight of the charter schools they authorize. Each charter school or charter management organization (CMO) has a board of directors which governs school finances, operations, and administration.
- BESE authorized Type 2, 4, and 5 charter schools, and the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) is responsible for their oversight. Each Type 2 and 5 charter school or charter management organization (CMO) has a board of directors which governs school finances, operations, and administration. Type 4 charter schools are governed by the local school board.

## Governance

During the 2018-19 school year, there were 106 public schools in Baton Rouge (including the pre-K centers and the Emerge School for Autism). Of these, 73 schools (34,998 students) were directly run by the East Baton Rouge Parish School Board. There were 10 Type 1 charter schools (3,740 students) that have been authorized and are under the governance of the East Baton Rouge Parish School Board. There were 12 Type 2 charter schools (8,811 students) that have been authorized by the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). Seven schools fall under the RSD; these schools enrolled 2,210 students. There were two university lab schools co-located on university campuses, one virtual lab school, and one school established by legislation (ACT 672) signed by the Governor; these schools enrolled 2,275 students in October 2018. The figure below illustrates enrollment by governance type.

### Enrollment By Governance Type (2018)



### Demographic Breakdown of Enrollment By Type

	Enrollment	Non-White	Economically Disadvantaged	Limited English Proficiency
<b>EBR Direct Run</b>	34,998	88.3%	75.9%	8.0%
<b>Type 1 Charter</b>	3,740	90.9%	80.6%	5.3%
<b>Type 2 Charter</b>	8,811	62.9%	78.6%	0.3%
<b>Type 5 RSD Charter</b>	2,210	99.0%	94.7%	2.0%
<b>Other</b>	2,275	38.5%	30.3%	0.1%

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, Oct 2018 Multi-Stats, MFP by Site and School System

## 2018-19 Governance Tables

### East Baton Rouge Parish Schools (73)

Arlington Preparatory Academy	Glen Oaks Park Elementary School	Progress Elementary School
Audubon Elementary School	Glen Oaks Senior High School	Riveroaks Elementary School
Arlington Preparatory Academy	Greenbrier Elementary School	Ryan Elementary School
Audubon Elementary School	Greenville Superintendent's Academy	Scotlandville Magnet High School
B. R. Foreign Language Acad. Immersion Magnet	Highland Elementary School	Scotlandville Pre-Engineering Academy
B.R. Center for Visual and Performing Arts	Howell Park Elementary School	Sharon Hills Elementary School
Baton Rouge Magnet High School	Istrouma High School	Shenandoah Elementary School
Belaire High School	Jefferson Terrace Elementary School	Sherwood Middle Academic Academy
Belfair Montessori School	LaBelle Aire Elementary School	Southeast Middle School
Bernard Terrace Elementary School	LaSalle Elementary School	Tara High School
Broadmoor Elementary School	Lee High School	The Dufrocq School
Broadmoor Middle School	Magnolia Woods Elementary School	Twin Oaks Elementary School
Broadmoor Senior High School	Mayfair Laboratory School	University Terrace Elementary School
Brookstown Middle	McKinley Middle Magnet School	Villa del Rey Elementary School
Brownfields Elementary School	McKinley Senior High School	Wedgewood Elementary School
Buchanan Elementary School	Melrose Elementary School	Westdale Heights Academic Magnet School
Capitol Elementary School	Merrydale Elementary School	Westdale Middle School
Capitol Middle School	North Banks Middle School of Excellence	Westminster Elementary School
Cedarcrest-Southmoor Elementary School	Northdale Superintendent's Academy	White Hills Elementary School
Claiborne Elementary School	Northeast Elementary School	Wildwood Elementary School
Crestworth Elementary School	Northeast High School	Winbourne Elementary School
EBR Readiness Superintendent Academy	Park Elementary School	Woodlawn Elementary
EBR Virtual Academy	Park Forest Elementary School	Woodlawn High School
Eden Park Superintendent Academy	Park Forest Middle School	Woodlawn Middle School
Forest Heights Academy of Excellence	Parkview Elementary School	
Glasgow Middle School		

### Type 1 Charter Schools (10)

Children's Charter School	South Baton Rouge Charter Academy
Community School For Apprenticeship Learning (CSAL)	BASIS Baton Rouge
J. K. Haynes Charter Inc.	The Emerge School for Autism
Mentorship STEAM Academy	IDEA Innovation
Inspire Charter Academy (Nat'l. Heritage Acad.)	IDEA Bridge

## Type 2 Charter Schools (12)

Advantage Charter Academy	Impact Charter School
Apex Collegiate Academy Charter School	Laurel Oaks Charter School
Baton Rouge University Preparatory Elementary	Louisiana Key Academy
Collegiate Baton Rouge	Louisiana Virtual Charter Academy
GEO Prep Academy of Greater Baton Rouge	Madison Preparatory Academy
GEO Prep Mid-City of Greater Baton Rouge	University View Academy, Inc. (FRM LA Connections)

## RSD Type 5 Charter Schools Under BESE (7)

Kenilworth Science and Technology Charter School
Celerity Lanier Charter School
Celerity Crestworth Charter School
Celerity Dalton Charter School
Capitol High School
Democracy Prep Baton Rouge
Baton Rouge College Prep

## Lab Schools (3)

LSU Laboratory School
Southern University Lab School
Southern University Laboratory Virtual School
<b>Legis. Authorized (1)</b>
Thrive Academy

### ***District Performance***

The LDOE provides District Performance Scores for each public school district and the RSD. District performance scores are based on a variety of indices, including:

- Performance on K-8 and high school assessments;
- Progress (growth) on K-8 and high school assessments;
- ACT scores;
- Strength of diploma; and
- Graduation rates.

In 2018, East Baton Rouge Parish School System (EBRPSS) received a letter grade of a C; RSD-Baton Rouge schools earned a grade of D. Type 2 charter schools and lab schools located in Baton Rouge did not receive a District Performance Score. The table on the next page provides letter grades for the 2018 District Performance Scores and Indices for Louisiana, EBRPSS, and RSD-Baton Rouge.



Louisiana, EBRPSS, and RSD-Baton Rouge

# REPORT CARD

<b>Year</b> <b>2018</b>	District Performance Score	K8 & High School Assessment	K8 & High School Progress	ACT	Strength of Diploma	Graduation Rate
Louisiana Statewide	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>
East Baton Rouge Parish	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>
RSD-Baton Rouge	<b>D</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>F</b>

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2018 District Performance Scores

## How is Strength of Diploma Measured?

The calculation of the Strength of Diploma measurement gives various weights to diplomas based on the completion of rigorous courses or industry-recognized credentials.

<b>160 points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High School Diploma (four-year) PLUS passing score on AP, IB, or CLEP exams AND Advanced statewide Jump Start credential</li> <li>- High School Diploma (four-year) PLUS Associate's degree</li> </ul>
<b>150 points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High School Diploma (four-year) PLUS passing score on AP, IB, CLEP exams</li> <li>- High School Diploma (four-year) PLUS Advanced statewide Jump Start credential</li> </ul>
<b>115 points</b>	- High School Diploma (four-year) PLUS one passing score for TOPS Core Curriculum in AP, IB, college credit, or dual enrollment course AND Basic statewide Jump Start credential
<b>110 points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High School Diploma (four-year) PLUS one passing score for TOPS Core Curriculum in AP, IB, college credit, or dual enrollment course</li> <li>- High School Diploma (four year) PLUS Basic statewide Jump Start credential</li> </ul>
<b>100 points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regular High School Diploma (four-year) includes Career Diploma students with a regional Jump Start credential</li> <li>- High School Diploma earned through pathway for students assessed on the LAA1 (students with disabilities)</li> </ul>
<b>140 points</b>	Five-year graduate earning High School Diploma PLUS passing score on AP, IB, or CLEP exams AND Advanced statewide Jump Start credential
<b>75 points</b>	Regular High School Diploma (five-year)
<b>50 points</b>	Regular High School Diploma (six-year)
<b>40 points</b>	HiSet PLUS Jump Start credential
<b>25 points</b>	HiSet
<b>0 points</b>	Non-graduate without HiSet

# ACADEMICS: STUDENT OUTCOMES

Each year Louisiana public school students in grades three through high school take state tests through the **Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP)**. LEAP assessments measure students' knowledge and skills in each subject area and assess their readiness to advance to the next grade level. LEAP results are used to measure how well schools and school systems are serving the needs of their students and helping students achieve high expectations.

In 2015, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) aligned LEAP performance standards to the national standards of National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). To reflect the national standards, LDOE raised the expectation for student performance from "Basic" to "Mastery" as an indicator of grade level performance for grades three through eight.



For high school students, new five-level assessments replaced the former four-level end-of-course (EOC) exams and reflect students' college and career readiness for that course. The transition to the five-level assessments allows for a consistent measure of student performance and growth from third grade through high school. State assessments are now referred to as LEAP 2025 to reflect the shift toward higher expectations and goals set forth in LDOE's ESSA plan.

## **FIVE LEAP 2025 PERFORMANCE LEVELS:**

- 1. Advanced**
- 2. Mastery**
- 3. Basic**
- 4. Approaching Basic**
- 5. Unsatisfactory**

This section provides information on metrics related to Academic Outcomes: performance of all students on LEAP 2025; elementary and middle school performance (3rd grade English language arts and 8th grade math); high school performance (English and math, ACT, graduation rates, and college matriculation rates).

## **LEAP 2025 Assessments: 2019**

Students in grades three through eight are tested in English language arts, math, science and social studies. High school students take LEAP 2025 assessments in English I and II, Algebra I and Geometry, and U.S. History. LDOE reports assessment results of all students tested and subgroups for schools and school systems.

In 2019, 31 percent of students tested in EBRPSS and RSD-Baton Rouge schools scored at the Mastery performance level or above, representing a two-percentage point increase over the previous year. Louisiana reported an average of 36 percent of students scoring Mastery or above in 2019 on LEAP 2025 assessments.

## Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Signed into federal law in December 2015, ESSA reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and revised the provisions known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

- ESEA, enacted in 1965, is authorized to create specific, targeted support for low-income students through Title I.
- In 2002, NCLB was created and requires schools to measure student achievement by subgroup performance and holds schools and school systems accountable for closing achievement gaps between subgroups (disadvantaged students and their peers).
- ESSA requires states to measure student achievement, report the information to parents and the community, support students' academic progress, and spend federal funds.



Under ESSA, states adopt academic standards in core subjects that are aligned with indicators of college and career readiness. Like NCLB, **ESSA requires that all students in tested grades are assessed and that results are disaggregated by subgroups to address student equity gaps.** States are directed to implement a system that rates student and school performance. The rating system is used to identify schools in need of support and intervention. ESSA provides states with the ability to design specific school improvement systems and intervention programs.

In compliance with ESSA, LDOE created and submitted a plan to the U.S. Department of Education. Louisiana's plan was approved in August 2017 and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) incorporated Louisiana's ESSA plan into state policies. Louisiana's plan outlines academic expectations for students through 2025. The plan identifies the following **challenges and goals:**

- **Mastery of fundamental skills:** By 2025, schools will have the majority of students perform at or above the "Mastery" level on state assessments, achieve a high school graduation rate of 90 percent or higher, and an average ACT score of 21 or above.
- **Supporting historically disadvantaged students:** LDOE will institute an accountability model that recognizes academic improvements toward the "Mastery" level, as well as the academic growth of students relative to their peers with similar characteristics and challenges.
- **Increasing student opportunities and supporting their interests:** LDOE will establish a school quality/student success indicator that prioritizes access to the arts, world languages, physical activity, and digital literacy.
- **Strengthen the educator profession:** LDOE will provide support for teacher residency and mentorship programs.
- **Support for struggling schools:** LDOE will fund partnerships to improve schools eligible for comprehensive and targeted support and improvement.

Louisiana's ESSA Plan: [https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/louisiana-believes/louisianas-essa-state-plan.pdf?sfvrsn=f219971f\\_23](https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/louisiana-believes/louisianas-essa-state-plan.pdf?sfvrsn=f219971f_23)

## Achievement Gaps

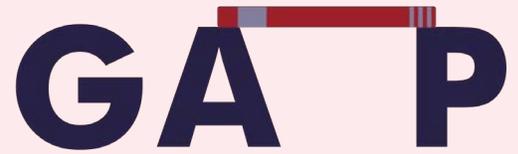
“Achievement Gap” refers to differences in the average standardized test scores of students by various subgroups. Achievement gaps are a key measure of educational equity.

Achievement Gap refers to **OUTPUTS** – the unequal or inequitable distribution of educational results.

Examples include:

- Acceptable or exceptional academic performance (scoring mastery level of above on state assessments);
- The ability to earn college credit or industry-recognized career and technical credentials during high school;
- Graduating high school within four years; and
- Matriculating to post-secondary education or securing employment in high-wage, high-growth industry sectors.

## THE ACHIEVEMENT



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

## THE OPPORTUNITY



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.

Opportunity Gap refers to **INPUTS** – the unequal or inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities provided to students and/or groups of students.

Examples include:

- Rigorous academic courses and test preparation programs;
- Highly effective instructional staff and leadership;
- Professional support staff, such as school psychologists, guidance counselors, and college advisors; and
- Computers and other types of technology.

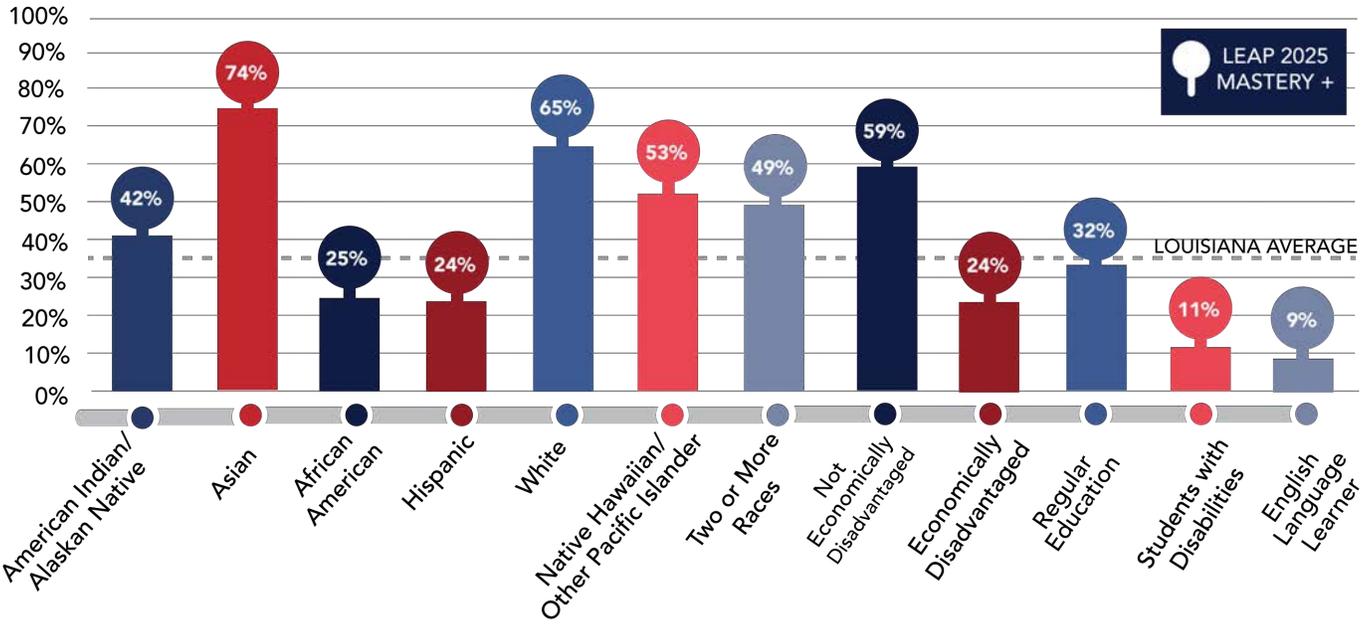
**Performance on state assessments reveal vast disparities by race and ethnicity.**

## Ethnicity/Race

Differences in academic performance by ethnicity/race for Baton Rouge students are significant. Of students tested in EBRPSS and RSD-Baton Rouge schools in 2019, two-thirds (65 percent) of White students scored Mastery or above on the LEAP 2025 assessments (grades 3 through 8 and high school).

**Only one-quarter of African-American students (25 percent) and Hispanic students (24 percent) scored Mastery or above.** This represents an Achievement Gap of 40 percentage points (African American and Hispanic students compared to performance of White students).

## Percentage of Students Scoring Mastery of Above by Subgroups: Grades 3-8 & High School, 2019



### ***Economically Disadvantaged***

Students are classified as “Economically Disadvantaged” if they are eligible for free- or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program or other public assistance. In 2019, 24 percent of economically disadvantaged students scored Mastery or above on the LEAP 2025 assessments; 59 percent of students not economically disadvantaged scored Mastery or above. **This represents a gap of 35 percentage points.**

### ***Students with Disabilities***

An achievement gap of 21 percentage points exists between students with disabilities and regular education students. In 2019, 32 percent of regular education students scored Mastery or above on the LEAP 2025 assessments, while only 11 percent of students with disabilities scored Mastery or above. Students with the most significant disabilities may be eligible to take LEAP Connect in grades 3 through 8 and 11 in English language arts and LEAP Alternative Assessment Level 1 for science in grades 4, 8, and 11 (LAA1).

## Elementary and Middle School

### ***Third Grade Reading: An Educational Milestone***

Reading at grade level by the end of third grade is a significant turning point in a child’s educational trajectory. During the first three years of elementary school, students learn to read. Beginning in fourth grade, emphasis focuses on reading to learn. Many subjects require literacy in order to progress; students use their reading skills to gain information, think critically, and solve problems.



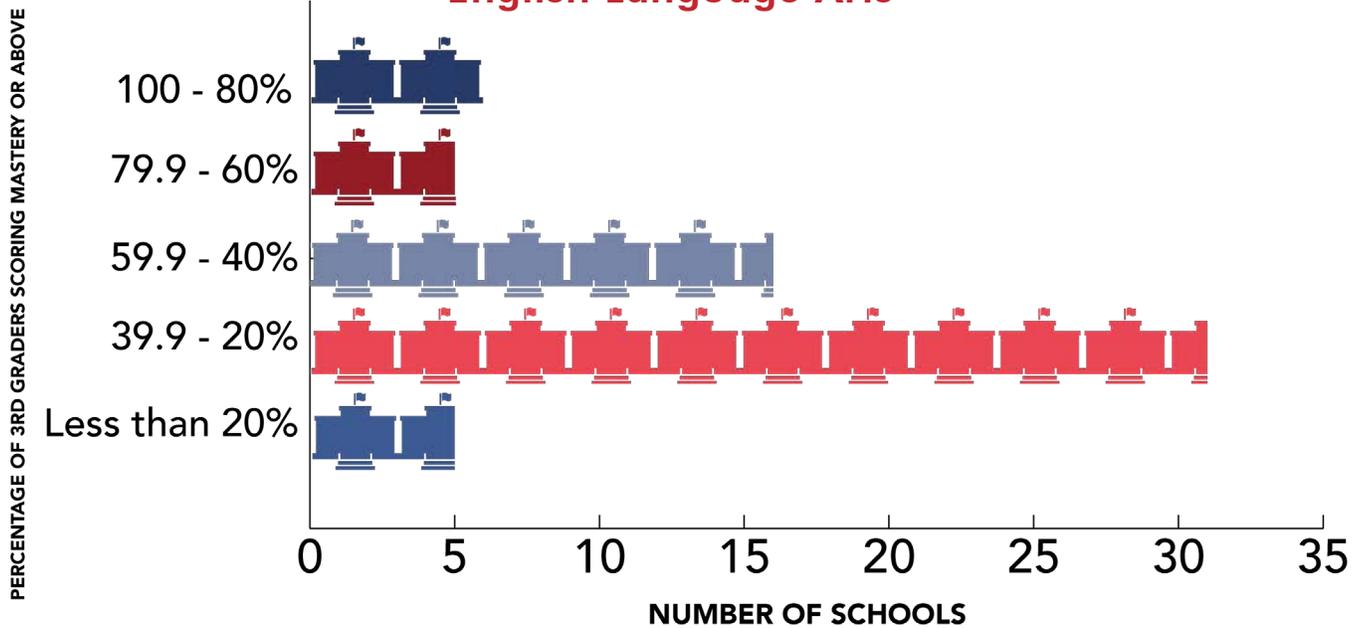
**It is essential to examine third grade literacy levels to identify and address achievement gaps that will have long-term implications on students' ability to succeed in school and life.**

In 2019, public schools in Baton Rouge (EBRPSS, and RSD, BESE-authorized, and independent charter schools combined) reported 43 percent of third graders scored Mastery or above on the LEAP 2025 English language arts assessment (the state average was 46 percent). Among schools, however, there is an extreme range in third grade reading performance levels, from a high of 100 percent to a low of less than 12 percent of students tested scoring Mastery or above.

Of schools reporting third grade LEAP 2025 scores in 2019, only 16 reported 50 percent or more of their third graders scoring Mastery or above. Distribution of schools by third grade performance quintiles in English language arts is represented in the figure below.

**School-level Performance and Demographics**

**Number of Schools by Performance Quintile: 3rd Grade English Language Arts**



Source: Louisiana Department of Education: Percent of Students at Each Achievement Level for Spring 2019 Tests - by School System and School - Grade 3.

**Top Scoring Quintile:** There were six schools in the top scoring quintile (100 to 80 percent of students scoring Mastery or above). During the 2018-19 school year, 36.8 percent of students enrolled in these schools were African American; 3.6 percent were Hispanic; 5.4 percent were Asian; and 52.1 percent were White students. Of the total enrollment of these six schools, 23.6 percent were economically disadvantaged (eligible for free- or reduced- price meals). Less than one percent (0.9 percent) of the students enrolled in these schools were English language learners.

**African-American and Hispanic students were less likely than their peers to attend a school where 80% or more 3rd graders scored Mastery or above: 7% of African-American students and 5% of Hispanic students, compared to 26% of White and 25% of Asian students.**



## Distribution by Quintile

	Top Quintile	2nd	3rd	4th	Bottom Quintile
<b>Asian</b>	25%	26%	21%	26%	1%
<b>African American</b>	7%	6%	23%	54%	8%
<b>Hispanic</b>	5%	11%	33%	42%	7%
<b>White</b>	26%	9%	9%	54%	1%
<b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>	3%	7%	22%	58%	7%
<b>Limited English Proficient</b>	2%	14%	35%	41%	8%

May not add to 100% because of rounding.



**3% of economically disadvantaged students attended schools where 80-100% of 3rd graders scored Mastery or above; 65% attended schools where less than 40% scored Mastery or above.**

**Second Quintile:** There were five schools in the second highest scoring quintile (79.9 to 60 percent of third graders scoring Mastery or above). During the 2018-19 school year, 51.4 percent of students in these five schools were African American students; 10.8 percent were Hispanic; 8.3 percent were Asian; and 26.9 percent were White students. Of the total enrollment of these five schools, 67.9 percent were economically disadvantaged (eligible for free- or reduced-price meals). And 11.2 percent of the students enrolled in these schools were English language learners.

**Third Quintile:** There were 16 schools in the third quintile (59.9 to 40 percent of third graders scoring Mastery or above). During the 2018-19 school year, 72.4 percent of the students enrolled were African American; 12.7 percent were Hispanic; 2.6 percent were Asian; and 10.2 percent were White students. Of the total enrollment of these 16 schools, 81 percent of students were economic disadvantaged (eligible for free- or reduced- price meals). And 10.8 percent of the students enrolled in these schools were English language learners.

**Fourth Quintile:** There were 31 schools in the fourth quintile (39.9 to 20 percent of third graders scoring Mastery or above). During the 2018-19 school year, 66.9 percent of the students enrolled in these schools were African American; 6.4 percent were Hispanic; 1.2 percent were Asian; and 23.2 percent were White students. Of the total enrollment of these 31 schools, 84.9 percent were economically disadvantaged (eligible for free- or reduced- price meals). And 5.1 percent of the students enrolled in these schools were English language learners.

**Lowest Scoring Quintile:** There were five schools in the lowest performing quintile (less than 20 percent of third graders scoring Mastery or above). During the 2018-19 school year, 88 percent of the students enrolled in these schools were African American; 9.1 percent were Hispanic; 0.4 percent were Asian; and 2.1 percent were White students. Of the total enrollment of these five schools, 94.6 percent were economically disadvantaged (eligible for free- or reduced-price meals). And 7.9 percent of the students enrolled in these schools were English language learners.

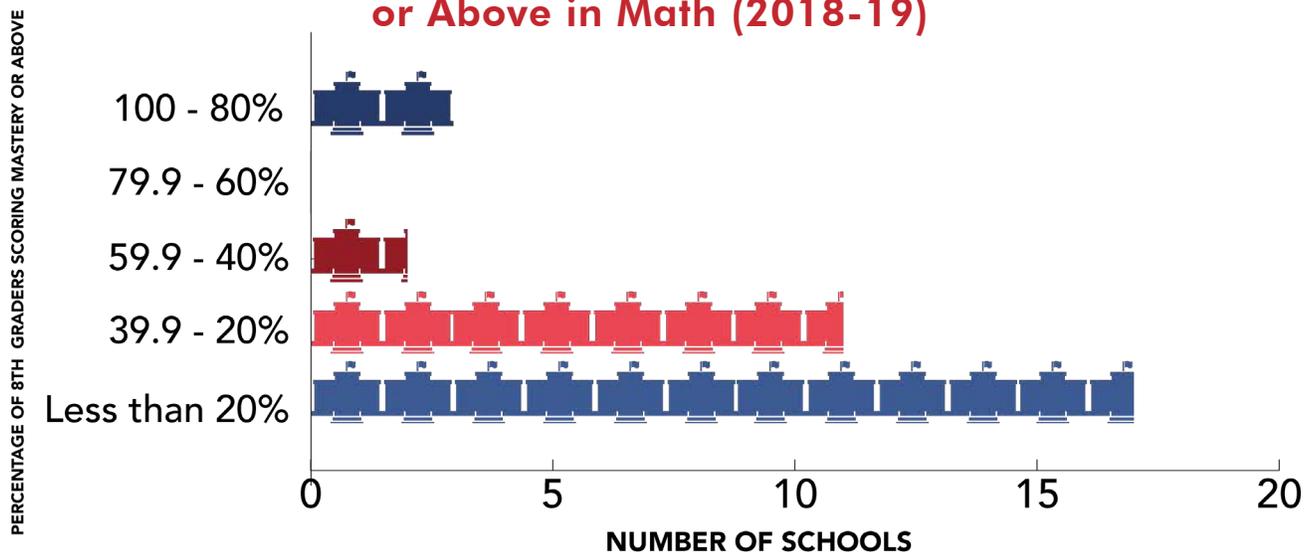
## Eighth Grade Math: A Strong Predictor of Post-Secondary Success

The level of academic achievement that students attain by eighth grade has a larger impact on their college and career readiness by the time they graduate than anything that happens academically in high school.<sup>2</sup> This is particularly true for eighth grade math. Concepts taught during eighth grade provide the foundation for understanding future math concepts.<sup>3</sup> Math prepares and develops the ability to accept, analyze, and execute complex ideas. Even more than student demographics and gender, math performance has found to be a better predictor of post-secondary success.<sup>4</sup> Because of its impact on student success in high school and beyond, it is critical to examine eighth grade proficiency levels in math to identify and address gaps. In 2019, public schools in Baton Rouge reported 31 percent of eighth graders scored Mastery or above on the LEAP 2025 math assessment (the state average was 28 percent). The range in eighth grade math proficiency levels is extreme, from a high of 100 percent to a low of 1 percent or less.

**8<sup>th</sup> grade math**  
**+ Student mastery**  
**Post-secondary SUCCESS!**

Of schools reporting eighth grade LEAP 2025 scores in 2019, only three reported 50 percent or more of their eighth graders scored Mastery or above in math. Furthermore, more than half of the public schools with eighth grade test-takers reported less than 20 percent of students scoring Mastery or above in math. Distribution of schools by eighth grade performance in math is represented in the figure on the next page.

**Percentage of 8th Graders Scoring mastery or Above in Math (2018-19)**



2 "The Forgotten Middle." ACT. 2008.

3 "Thinking Algebraically: Promoting Rigorous Mathematics for All Students." NEA Policy Brief. (2008)

4 Dougherty, S., Goodman, J., Hill, D., Litke, E., and Page, L. (2014). "Middle School Math Acceleration and Equitable Access to 8th Grade Algebra: Evidence from the Wake County Public School System." HKS Faculty Research, Working Paper. Harvard University.

**Top Scoring Quintile:** There were three schools in the top scoring quintile (100 to 80 percent of eighth graders scoring Mastery or above in math). During the 2018-19 school year, 24.9 percent of students enrolled in these schools were African American; 4.8 percent were Hispanic; 8.7 percent were Asian; and 60.1 percent were White students. Of the total enrollment of these three schools, 20 percent were economically disadvantaged (eligible for free- or reduced-price meals). Less than one percent (0.7 percent) of the students enrolled in these schools were English language learners.

**Second Quintile:** No school ranked in the second highest scoring quintile (79.9 to 60 percent of students scoring Mastery or above).

**Third Quintile:** There were two schools in the third quintile (59.9 to 40 percent of eighth graders scoring Mastery or above). During the 2018-19 school year, 89.7 percent of students enrolled in these schools were African American; 3.5 percent were Hispanic; 0.5 percent were Asian; and 5.7 percent were White students. Of the total enrollment of these two schools, 72.9 percent were economically disadvantaged (eligible for free- or reduced-price meals). And 4.5 percent of the students enrolled in these schools were English language learners.

**Fourth Quintile:** There were 11 schools in the fourth quintile (39.9 to 20 percent of eighth graders scoring Mastery or above). During the 2018-19 school year, 63.1 percent of the students enrolled in these schools were African American; 8.9 percent were Hispanic; 2.3 percent were Asian; and 24.3 percent were White students. Of the total enrollment of these 11 schools, 82.4 percent were economically disadvantaged (eligible for free- or reduced-price meals). And 5.9 percent the students enrolled in these schools were English language learners.

**Lowest Scoring Quintile:** There were 17 schools in the lowest performing quintile (less than 20 percent of eighth graders scoring Mastery or above in math). During the 2018-19 school year, 67.6 percent of students enrolled in these schools were African American; 3.9 percent were Hispanic; 0.5 percent were Asian; and 25.3 percent were White students. Of the total enrollment of these 17 schools, 79.6 percent were economically disadvantaged (eligible for free- or reduced-price meals). And 2.1 percent the students enrolled in these schools were English language learners.

### **IMPLICATIONS: Elementary and Middle School Performance**

Academic performance in elementary and middle school has a real impact on life outcomes. Reading at the Mastery level by the end of third grade is essential for future academic success. The inability to read well by the end of third grade has life-changing consequences. According to research by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, children who are not proficient readers in third grade are less likely to graduate high school.<sup>5</sup>

In Baton Rouge, 43 percent of public school third graders scored at the Mastery level or above. In other words, less than half of third graders advanced to fourth grade ready to learn. As those students progress through school, their lack of literacy skills is magnified; the impact escalates.

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<sup>5</sup> Hernandez, Donald J. "Double Jeopardy: How Third Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation." (2012). The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Similarly, eighth grade math performance, a strong predictor of post-secondary success, has serious long-run implications. In eighth grade, students learn concepts that provide the foundation for future learning and develop critical thinking skills that are necessary throughout their lifetime. Because math proficiency has greater influence on student success than demographics, math can serve as “the great equalizer.”



In Baton Rouge, however, only 31 percent of public school eighth graders scored at the Mastery level or above in math. As a result, more than two-third of students began high school at a distinct disadvantage. They were not equipped with the foundational skills needed to succeed in high school math and college or career training.

Across the country, student achievement is closely tied to family socioeconomic status. In Baton Rouge, this is evidenced by the stark difference in school-level performance. Baton Rouge public schools where more students scored at Mastery or above enrolled relatively fewer non-white students and fewer economically disadvantaged students. The lowest performing schools enrolled a majority of African American and Hispanic students and economically disadvantaged students.

### ***Many factors associated with poverty can contribute to low academic performance.***

**Stressors Associated with Family Poverty:** Poverty and lower socioeconomic status can contribute to level of familial support, nutrition habits, quality of healthcare, and other factors that tend to contribute to higher academic performance.

**Lack of School Readiness:** Achievement gaps exist even before students enter school. Nationally there is a difference by income in kindergarten students’ basic literacy, pre-literacy skills, and pre-numeracy skills. Students who do not have access to high quality pre-K programs begin school behind their peers.

**Summer Learning Loss:** Summer learning loss refers to the loss of academic skills over the course of the summer. Although the loss varies across age, subject and by individual, research estimates that on average students lose an equivalent of one month during the summer; the estimated loss is greater for math at 2.6 month, which is equivalent to about 25 percent of the school year.<sup>6</sup> Summer learning loss in reading is highly correlated to socioeconomic status; economically disadvantaged students are at a greater risk than their peers.

**Concentration of High-Poverty, Minority Students in Low-performing Schools:** Enrollment patterns and selective admissions policies lead to disproportionate representation of minority and economically disadvantaged students in the lowest achieving schools. Furthermore, students in high-poverty schools may experience lower-level academic classes and courses taught by the least experienced or effective teachers.

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<sup>6</sup> Quinn, David M. and Morgan Polikoff. “Summer Learning Loss: What is it and what can we do about it?” (September 14, 2017). Brookings.

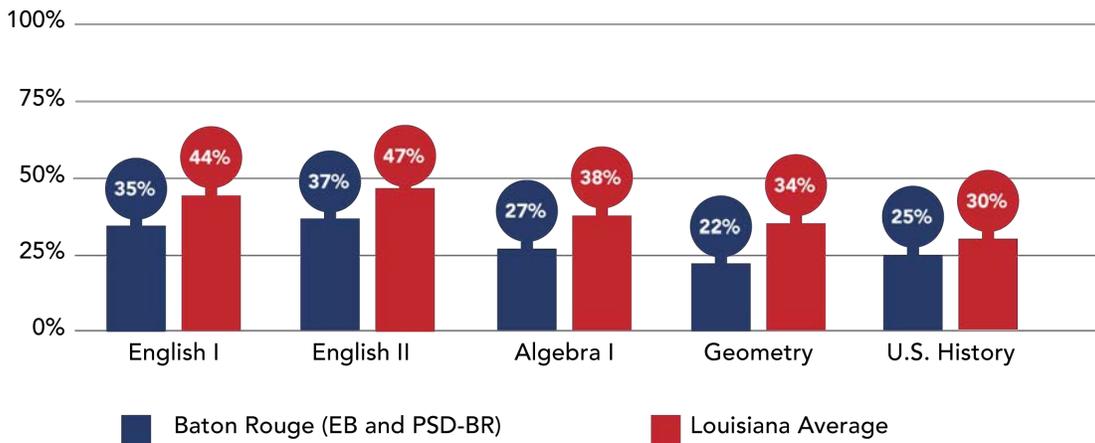
# High School

**High School Performance:** High school students take LEAP 2025 assessments in English I and II, Algebra I, Geometry, and U.S. History and end-of-course exams in Biology and English III. In eleventh grade, students also take the ACT exam; students in the Jump Start diploma pathway may take the WorkKeys exam.

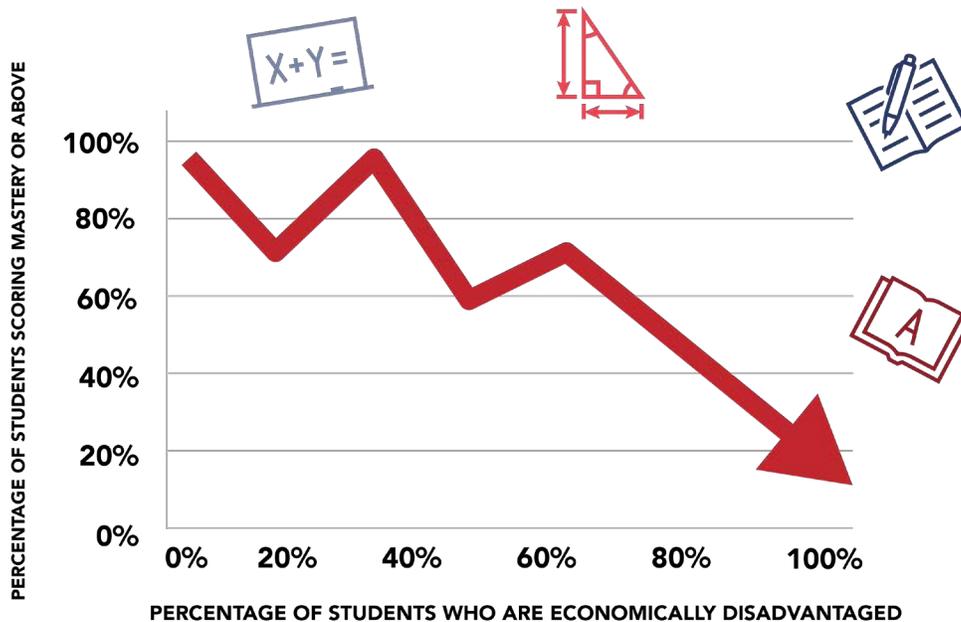
## LEAP 2025 Performance

High school students in Baton Rouge public schools perform at levels below the state average. The figure below shows the percentage of students scoring Mastery and or above on the LEAP 2025 assessments – Baton Rouge and Louisiana averages.

### Percentage of Students Scoring Mastery of Above 2019



LEAP 2025 performance in high school varied by school. This variance tended to align with the percentage of economically disadvantaged students enrolled at the school. The figures below illustrate the relationship between student poverty and LEAP 2025 high school students' performance in English and math.<sup>7</sup> As the percentage of the school's students who are economically disadvantaged increased the percentage of students scoring Mastery or above decreased.



## ACT Performance

Students take the ACT exam in the eleventh grade. The ACT exam is a national test that measures academic readiness for college and careers and evaluates what students learn in high school courses of English, math, reading, and science. ACT composite scores range from 1 -36.

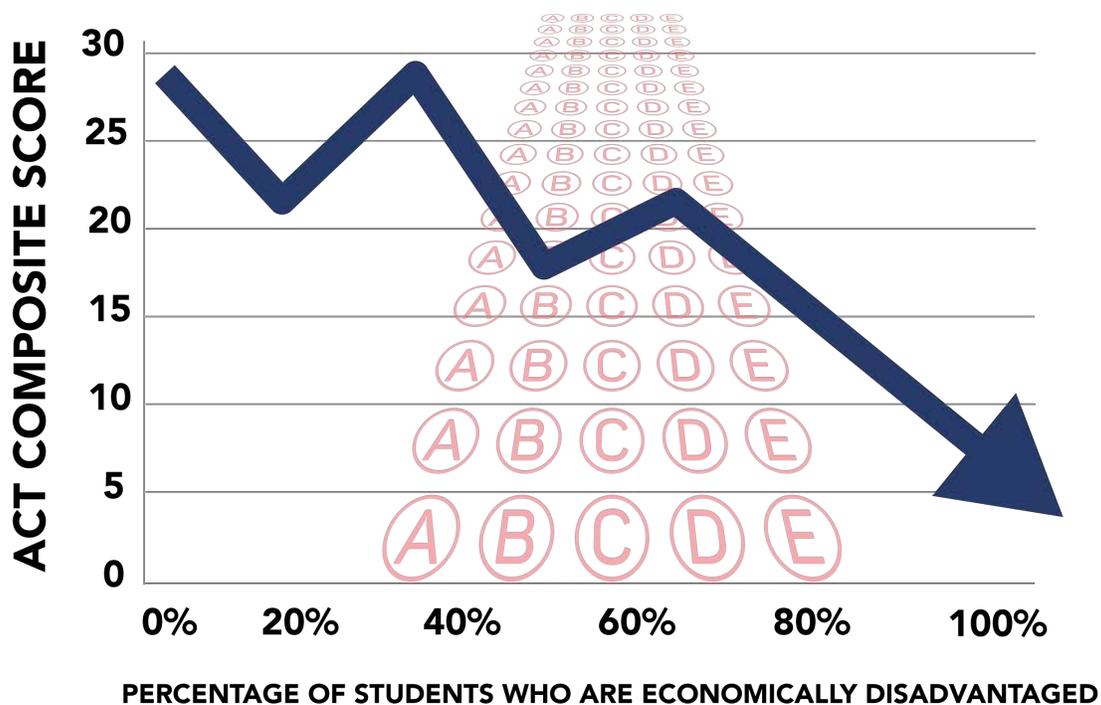
The LDOE reports ACT composite scores for seniors using Best Score methodology (uses the student's highest score not the most recent score). The state average ACT composite score was 19.3. For Baton Rouge, data from the Class of 2018 considered scores of 2,401 public school students.<sup>8</sup> The average ACT composite score for all students tested was 18.3. African American students reported an average ACT score of 17.1; students with disabilities reported an average score of 14.2. Students considered economically disadvantaged reported an average score of 17.3.

The average composite scores by school ranged from a high of 26.7 to a low of 14.6.<sup>9</sup> Student income was highly correlated to the school's ACT composite score average.

## WorkKeys

WorkKeys exam is part of the ACT program to measure the foundational skills required for success in the workplace. WorkKeys measures students' mastery of both hard and soft skills. Students who successfully complete the WorkKeys assessment can earn a National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC), a credential that is recognized by employers across the country.

**As the percentage of economically disadvantaged students at the school increased the average ACT composite score decreased.**



<sup>8</sup> Excludes the Louisiana Virtual Charter Academy  
<sup>9</sup> Excludes scores from the Superintendent Academies and alternative programs

## ACT: A Gateway to Opportunities

In addition to gauging school performance and students' academic readiness for college or careers, ACT scores are often used to determine students' eligibility for dual enrollment courses. Each course has a specific set of prerequisites that must be met, including a minimum ACT score. Low ACT composite scores prevent students from accessing dual enrollment courses.

ACT Subject Area Test	ACT Benchmark (indicating College readiness)
 English	18
 Reading	22
 Math	22
 Science	23

Colleges and universities use ACT composite scores as a factor in admissions decision-making. For example, the minimum ACT composite score for students considered for admissions at Southern University is 20.<sup>10</sup> The ACT composite cut-score for guaranteed admissions at University of Louisiana at Lafayette (ULL) is 23.<sup>11</sup> ACT math and English subtest scores are also used in admissions decision making.

For many Baton Rouge public school school seniors, opportunities are limited due to low ACT scores. For example, the average composite scores for African American students (17.1) and economically disadvantaged students (17.3) are well below the ACT minimum for admissions to many four-year colleges.

The figure on the next page illustrates the relationship between the percentage of students who are economically disadvantaged in the school and the percentage of test takers who meet or exceed an average ACT composite score of 18 and 21.

## As school poverty rates increased the percentage of students who meet or exceed ACT benchmarks decrease

### Average ACT composite scores by subgroup, Class of 2018

	Average Composite Score	# of Students Scoring 18+	# of Students Scoring 21+
<b>African American</b>	17.1	713	356
<b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>	17.3	767	403
<b>Students with Disabilities</b>	14.2	16	10
<b>All Students</b>	18.3	1098	670

Source: Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance, [https://www.osfa.la.gov/tops\\_mainlink.html](https://www.osfa.la.gov/tops_mainlink.html)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.subr.edu/assets/subr/UndergraduateAdmissions/Undergraduate-Admission-Requirements.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://louisiana.edu/admissions/first-time-freshmen/requirements/guaranteed-admission>

In addition to dual enrollment eligibility and college admissions, scholarships and federal grants use ACT scores when considering awards for financial assistance. ACT composite scores are used to determine eligibility for the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), a state scholarship for Louisiana residents who attend an in-state college or university. Students are eligible based on ACT scores and high school GPA. Payments of TOPS awards are contingent upon appropriations by the Louisiana Legislature.

TOPS Award Type	ACT Requirements +
 <b>TOPS Tech</b>	 <b>17</b> + 2.5 GPA; Jump Start Core
 <b>TOPS Opportunity</b>	 <b>20</b> + 2.5 GPA; College Core
 <b>TOPS Performance</b>	 <b>23</b> + 3.0 GPA; College Core
 <b>TOPS Honors</b>	 <b>27</b> + 3.0 GPA; College Core

Of 2,388 Baton Rouge 2018 graduates, 1,195 students (50 percent) met the eligibility requirements for a TOPS scholarship: Honors Award – 263 students (11 percent); Performance Award – 226 students (9.5 percent); Opportunity Award – 411 students (17.2 percent); and Tech Award – 295 students (12.4 percent).

The percentage of eligible graduates varied by school. Two schools reported over 90 percent of graduates were eligible for TOPS scholarships. These schools enrolled a majority White (58.8 percent) and non-economically disadvantaged (82.7 percent) population. African American (25.2 percent) and Hispanic (3.9 percent) students were under-represented in these schools.

Four schools reported less than 25 percent of their graduates were eligible. These four schools served predominantly economically disadvantaged students and African American students. Eighty-five percent of students were economically disadvantaged; 86.6 percent were African American and 8.5 percent were Hispanic students. Only 3.2 percent of students attending these schools were White.

TOPS Honor scholarship eligibility by type is correlated to school poverty rates and high school admissions policies. Of the 263 students in Baton Rouge eligible for the TOPS Honor Award, 212 (82 percent) were graduates of selective admissions high schools with the lowest percentage of economically disadvantaged students enrolled. TOPS Honor Award provides the highest amount of financial assistance.

The TOPS Performance Award provides students with less financial assistance than TOPS Honor Award but more than TOPS Opportunity Award. Slightly more than half (55 percent) of the graduates eligible for the TOPS Performance Award graduated from the three schools with the lowest poverty rates. TOPS Opportunity Award eligibility was more evenly distributed; 39 percent of eligible students graduated from schools with the lowest poverty rates.

The majority (85.6 percent) of students eligible for the TOPS Tech Award graduated from high-poverty schools – with 70 percent or more of students who were economically disadvantaged. The TOPS Tech Award provides financial assistance to students who enroll in skills or occupational training programs at technical colleges and universities that do not offer a baccalaureate degree. The award amounts differ by the type of post-secondary institution attended.

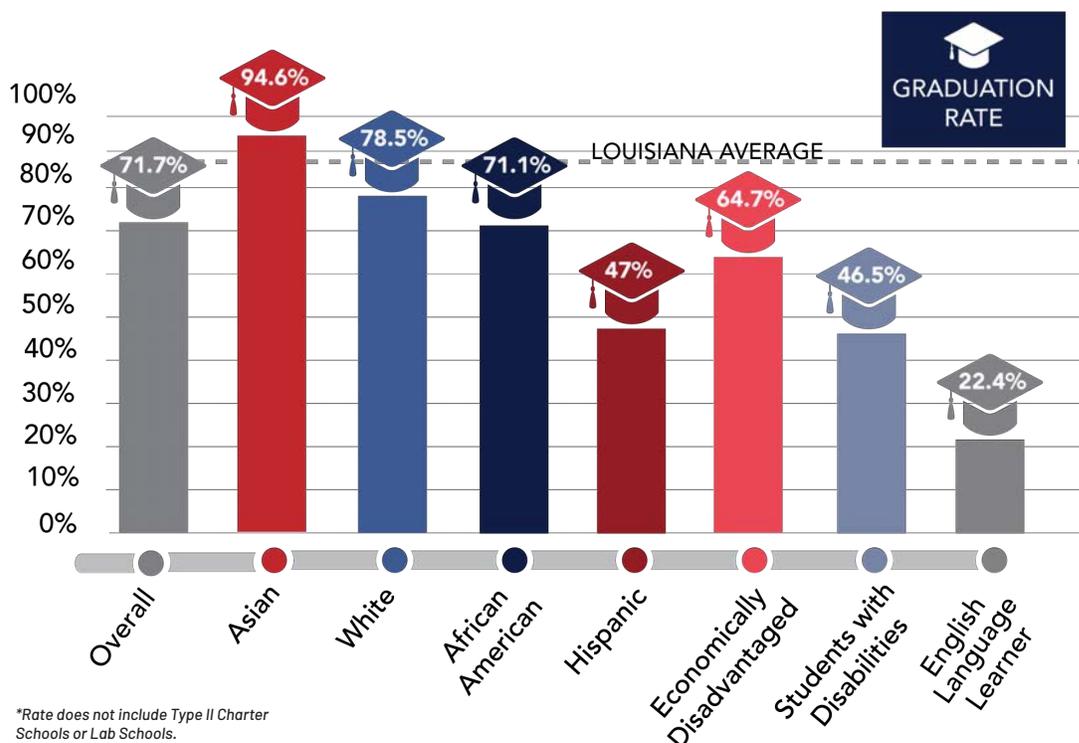
### Graduation Rates: Diplomas and Credentials

Louisiana uses a four-year cohort graduation rate as a measure of high school performance. Students who graduate within four years after beginning ninth grade are included in the cohort rate.<sup>12</sup> There are two types of graduation pathways: University Pathway and Jump Start Career Pathway. Graduation requirements differ based on the diploma track.



In 2018, the state reported a cohort graduation rate of 81.4 percent, nearly ten percentage points higher than that of Baton Rouge (71.7 percent).<sup>13</sup> The figure below shows the cohort graduation rates by subgroup for Baton Rouge (EBRPSS and RSD-BR) and illustrates substantial gaps in performance. A 7.4 percentage point gap exists between White (78.5 percent) and African American (71.1 percent) students. Economically disadvantaged students reported a cohort graduation rate of 64.7 percent.<sup>14</sup>

**Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate in EBRPSS and RSD-BR High Schools (2018)\***



**Less than half of Hispanic high school students (47 percent) graduate in four-years. Only 22.4 percent of English language learners graduate on time.**

12 Exceptions are made for students with disabilities.  
 13 This rate does not include graduates of Type 2 or independent charter schools.  
 14 Data from Type 2 or independent charter schools are not included.

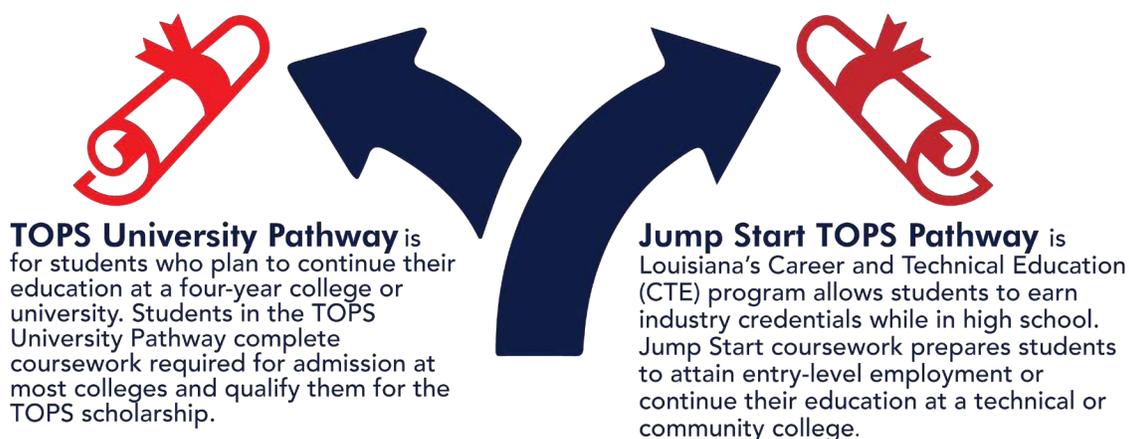
Five schools reported a cohort graduation rate 95 percent or higher. Four of the five have academically selective admissions requirements. Just over one-third (35.3 percent) of the students enrolled at these schools are economically disadvantaged.

In seven high schools, less than two-thirds of ninth graders graduated in four years. High schools reporting a cohort graduation rate of less than 66 percent (excludes Superintendent Academies and alternative education programs) were high-poverty schools.

### **Diploma Tracks/Pathways**

During their first two years in high school, students take core academic courses. After tenth grade, students choose their diploma track.

### **Louisiana has two diploma pathways:**



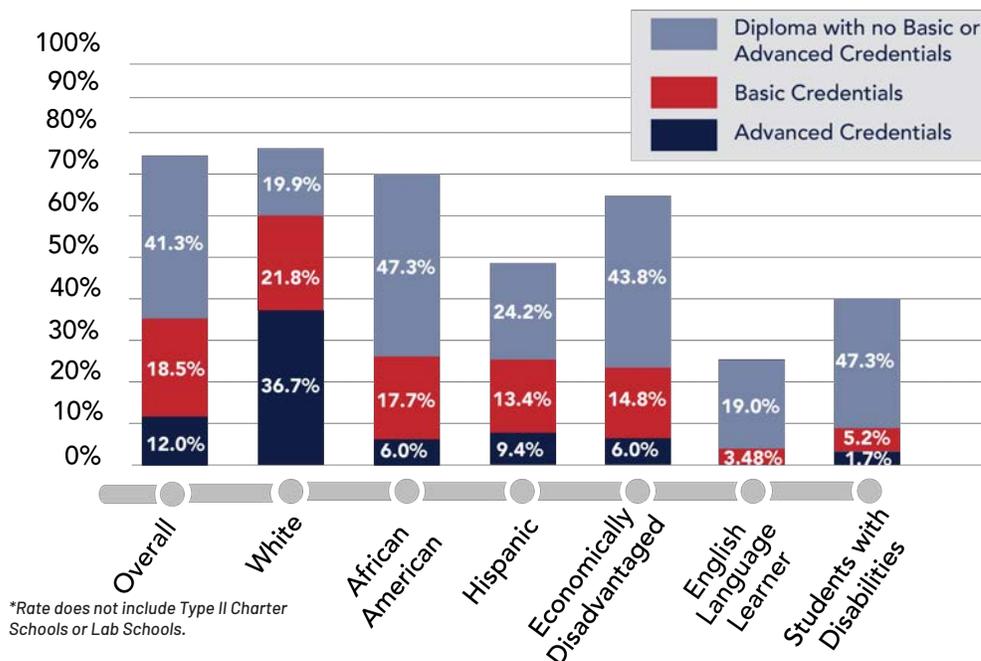
The state of Louisiana offers three levels of diplomas based on the credentials students earn. Students can graduate with a standard diploma – completing all the required high school coursework. Students can graduate with Basic credentials – earn a Basic Jump Start credential (attained proficiency with an industry-valued skill set recognized by the Workforce Investment Council) or pass a college-level course. Students who earn an Advanced Jump Start credential or pass a college-level exam graduate with an Advanced credential.

Earning a diploma with Basic or Advanced credentials provides students with a head start in a successful future. For example, a student earning a Basic credential can leave high school with his/her NCCER Welding Level 1 certificate or experience with rigorous college-level curriculum. A student earning an Advanced credential can leave high school with his/her NCCER Welding Level 2 certificate or receive college credit by passing a college-level exam.

**Students receive different levels of academic preparation based on their racial or economic groups.**

This figure shows the percent of students graduating with and without additional credentials. Significant achievement gaps exist: 36.7 percent of White students earned a diploma with an Advanced credential, compared to 6 percent for African American students and 9.4 percent for Hispanic students. Economically disadvantaged students were also less likely to earn a diploma with Advanced or Basic credentials.

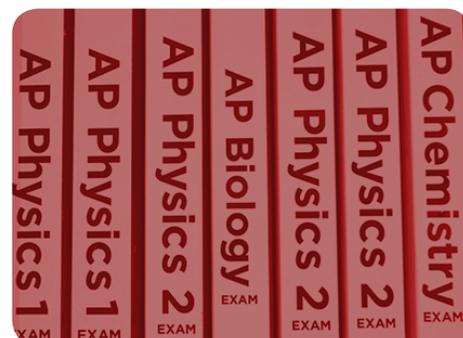
### Percentage of Students in EBRPSS and RSD-BR High Schools Graduating with Basic and Advanced Credentials by Subgroups, Class of 2018\*



Access to and success in meeting the requirements for Basic or Advanced credentials is unevenly distributed by high school in Baton Rouge. The percentage of graduates earning a diploma with Advanced or Basic credentials ranged from 90.9 percent in one school to less than 5 percent in another school (excludes Superintendent Academies and alternative education programs). Four schools reported more than 50 percent of their students earned Advanced or Basic credentials; eight schools reported less than 25 percent. Students at lower poverty schools were more likely to have access to and success in achieving Advanced and Basic credentials.

### Advanced Placement: A Head Start for Post-Secondary Success

The Advanced Placement (AP) is a program offered by the College Board and gives students the opportunity to take rigorous, college-level courses and earn college credit and placement while in high school. Research cited by the Louisiana Department of Education shows that students who complete AP courses are better prepared for college work, have higher college persistence rates, and are more likely to graduate college in four or five years.<sup>15</sup> Enrolling in an AP course can also increase access to college; students who take AP courses are favored in the college admissions process, and are more competitive in qualifying for scholarships.



In 2018-19, just over 2,400 Baton Rouge high school students took AP tests. Differences in the percentage of test-takers and student populations indicate that some subgroups are under-represented in AP courses.

Passage rates on AP tests also vary by subgroups. AP scores range from one to five. Students earning a score of three or higher may receive college credit. In Baton Rouge, about 32 percent of AP test-takers scored 3 or higher on at least one AP test in 2018-19.<sup>16</sup>

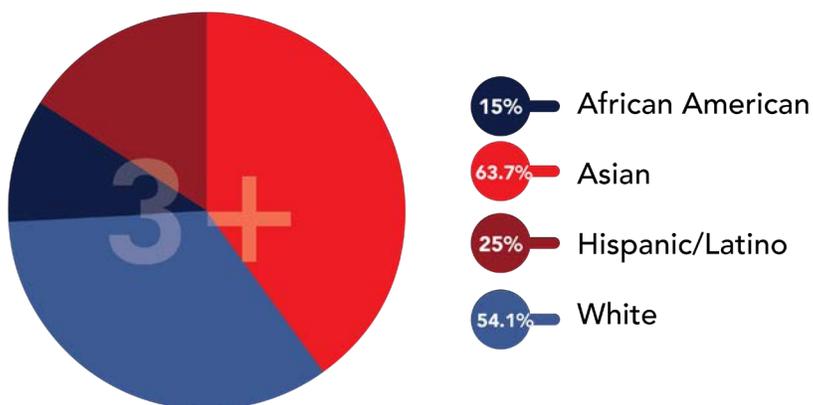
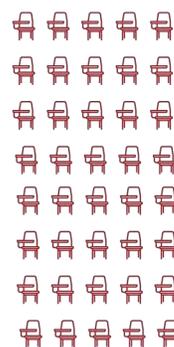
African-American students are under-represented in AP courses. 48 percent of AP test-takers were African American, while 76.6 percent of the students in the schools were African American. Number of African American students who enrolled in AP was about 1,525 of the 2,400 test-takers. If 76.6 percent were African American, then 1,830 students would have taken AP. This represents a difference of approximately 300 seats.

Hispanic students are under-represented in AP courses. Of AP test-takers, 4.8 percent were Hispanic, but 7.6 percent of the students in the schools were Hispanic. This represents a difference of approximately 40 seats.

**MISSING SEATS FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS**



**MISSING SEATS FOR HISPANIC STUDENTS**

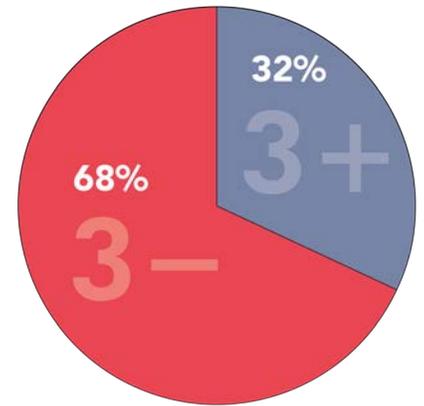


Economically disadvantaged student were half as likely to score a three or higher; 16.5 percent of economically disadvantage students scored a three or higher. Of Asian test-takers, 63.7 percent scored a three or higher; 54.1 percent of White students scored a three or higher. One-quarter of Hispanic students scored a three or higher. Only 15.7 percent of African American students scored a three or higher on AP tests.

<sup>16</sup> Some students take more than one test but are counted only once in this data, representing unduplicated counts of students.

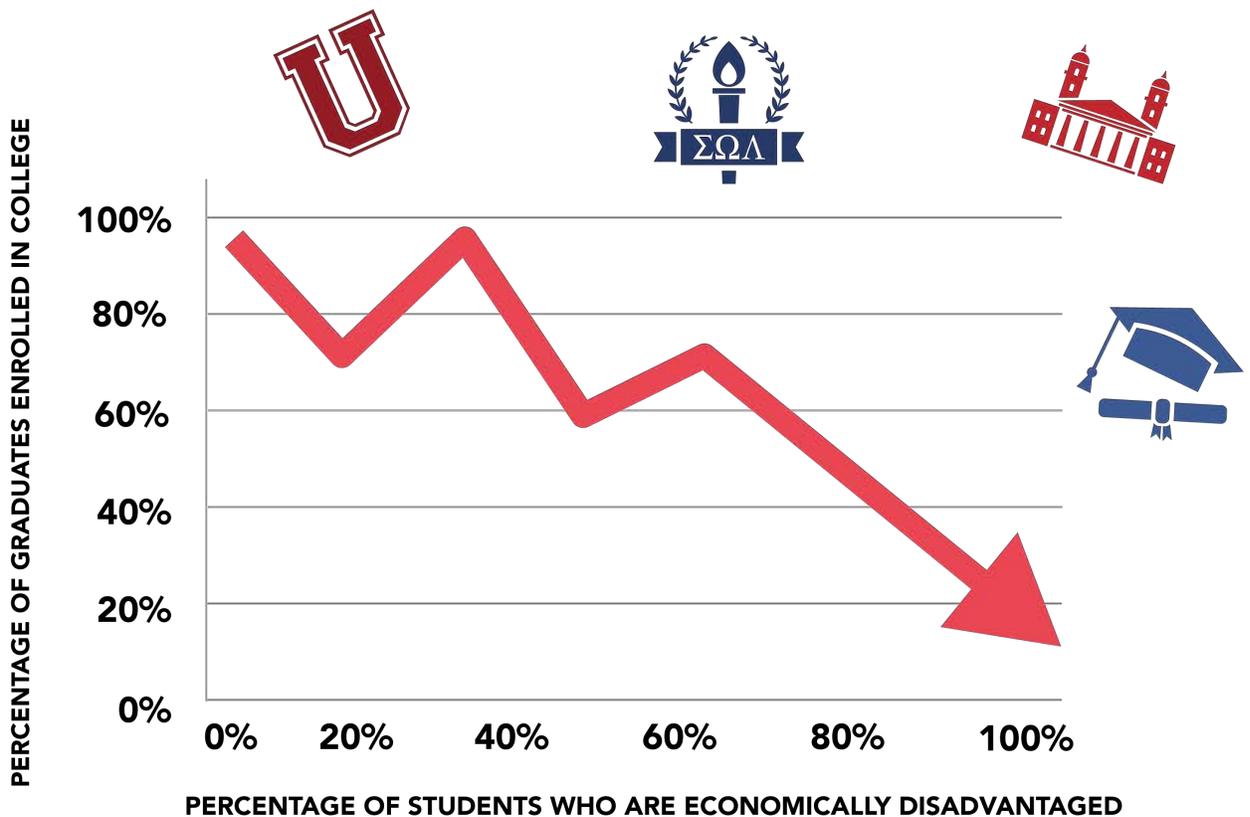
The number and percentage of students taking AP courses also varies by school. Six high schools reported more than half of their students enrolled in AP courses. There were seven schools with 25 percent or less of their students enrolled in AP courses.

Most schools offer five or six AP courses. Schools with relatively fewer African American students and economically disadvantaged students offer more than fifteen (high of 30) AP courses, including Calculus and Physics. Non-white students and economically disadvantaged students are less likely than their peers to attend schools where a diverse variety of AP courses are offered.



### College Enrollment and Persistence Rates

The LDOE collects college enrollment data on high school graduates through the Louisiana Board of Regents and the National Student Clearinghouse. The National Student Clearinghouse is a nonprofit organization that collects and verifies college enrollment in 99 percent of colleges and universities, (public and private, two- and four-year) in the United States.



Of the 2,860 graduates of Baton Rouge public schools (Class of 2018), 1,725 (60.3 percent) enrolled in a post-secondary institution for the fall semester following their graduation. Of these students, 87 percent enrolled in an in-state college or university. Sixty-nine percent of students enrolled in a four-year institution and 31 percent enrolled in a two-year institution.

The percentage of graduates who enroll in college varies by high school. Generally, college enrollment was inversely correlated to school poverty rates. The figure below shows the percentage of graduates who enrolled in college as a function of the schools' poverty rates and includes a trend line for emphasis. Schools located above the trend line are "outliers" and perform better than the trend, based on their percentage of economically disadvantaged students.

### **Persistence Rates**

Using data provided by the Board of Regents and the National Student Clearinghouse, the state tracks the persistence rates of graduates who enroll in college. Persistence is defined as those students who enrolled in fall 2017 and were still enrolled in a college or university in fall 2018. The average persistence rate for Baton Rouge public school graduates is 66 percent. The range among Baton Rouge public schools is from a high of 96.4 percent to a low of 22.2 percent. School-level persistence rates were less likely to be correlated to the percentage of economically disadvantaged students.

### **IMPLICATIONS: High School Performance**

Economically disadvantaged students, as well as African American and Hispanic students, are systemically denied opportunities to experience rigorous instruction and preparation for college and careers. Lower ACT scores prevent students from accessing dual enrollment in high school, limit their ability to gain admissions into college, and secure TOPS Awards and other scholarships. Economically disadvantaged students and African American and Hispanic students are less likely than their peers to graduate high school with a Basic or Advanced credential.

Economically disadvantaged students, as well as African American and Hispanic students, are under-represented in AP courses; economically disadvantaged students are less likely to attend schools that offer a variety of AP courses. Limiting their chance to access and succeed in rigorous coursework is a root cause of the achievement and opportunity gaps that youth face after high school.

Other factors that influence high school outcomes include:

### **Family Poverty and Limited Resources**

- Poverty and limited income can restrict access to educational opportunities. Students with limited resources may not have the means to enroll in ACT-prep courses. Although the state funds three tests for low-income students (free of charge), students benefit from taking the ACT exam multiple times. Best score methodology or super-scoring take the best scores among tests for a combined composite score.

- Parent and family factors such as low educational attainment, unemployment, or familial instability can contribute to reduced academic motivation, disrupted education, or lower educational and career aspirations.
- First-generation college students may not have the support or know-how to navigate the college application process, financial aid and FASFA documents, and the activities associated with college matriculation.

### ***Concentration of High-poverty, Minority Students in Low-performing Schools***

- The disproportionate representation of minority and economically disadvantaged students in the lowest achieving schools limits students' opportunities for high-quality, rigorous coursework.
- High-poverty schools tend to offer lower-level academic classes and courses taught by the least experienced teachers.
- There is a tendency in schools to lower academic expectations for minority or economically disadvantaged students or enroll them in less-challenging courses. This has a negative affect educational achievement.

### ***Test Bias***

Flawed testing and assessment tools may inadvertently skew test scores in favor of certain subgroups of students. Tests written with a "cultural bias" may include terms or concepts that are less relevant or familiar to specific subgroups.



# ENVIRONMENT: SCHOOL CLIMATE

A positive school climate is vital for learning. It contributes to academic achievement, improves outcomes for youth, especially economically disadvantaged students, and influences teacher effectiveness. Research shows that a positive school climate has more influence on school success (high academic achievement and graduation rates) than increased resources and can negate the impact associated with high-poverty rates.<sup>17</sup> A positive school climate is evidenced by a supportive, caring staff; a sense of safety from violence and bullying; student connectedness and engagement in school; and parental and community involvement.

## Positive School Climate

National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments defines a positive school climate as: A school environment that fosters social and physical safety, provides support so that students and staff reach high behavioral and academic standards, and encourages and maintains respectful, trusting, and caring relationships. ([www.safesupportivelearning.ed.gov](http://www.safesupportivelearning.ed.gov))

As school climate improves, students are more likely to be engaged, resulting in increased student performance on assessments, increased graduation rates, and increased attendance rates. A positive school climate impacts teacher satisfaction and the ability to attract and retain high-quality staff. Conversely, a negative or disorderly school environment is associated with reductions in attendance, student learning, and participation in school activities.



## Engagement

Engaged students are active in their learning, interested in the subject matter, and come to school eager to learn. Student engagement is different from student participation. Students can be attentive and participating in class – answering questions, completing assignments – but still not engaged in their own learning. Engaged students are attracted to their work, persist in their work despite challenges and obstacles, and take visible delight in accomplishing their work.<sup>18</sup> Student engagement creates the motivation to learn, to explore, and to master topics, leading to academic success.

### Student Attendance

Students cannot succeed if they are not in school and learning in a positive environment. In Louisiana, students are required to attend school from the age of seven to 18 years, or until they graduate. In order to earn credit and progress to the next grade, students must attend 167 (of the minimum 177) days.<sup>19</sup>

There are four categories of absences that impact student attendance rates.<sup>20</sup>

- **Exempt and Excused Absence:** The absence is allowed and not counted against the attendance requirement. Students submit an authorized document (or for a religious holiday) and make up work they missed.

<sup>17</sup> Voight, A., Austin, G., and Hanson, T (2013). A climate for academic success: How school climate distinguishes schools that are beating the odds (Report Summary). San Francisco: West Ed.

<sup>18</sup> Schlecty, P. (January 1994). "Increasing Student Engagement." Missouri Leadership Academy.

<sup>19</sup> Districts and schools can include more than 177 instructional days in their calendar; 177 days is the state minimum.

<sup>20</sup> Louisiana Department of Education. "Attendance Requirements." <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/courses/attendance-requirements>

- **Non-Exempt and Excused Absence:** Students can make up missed work but the absence is counted against the attendance requirement. Students submit an “unofficial notice” (like a note from a parent) and make up missed work.
- **Unexcused Absence:** The student is not allowed to make up missed work and the absence is counted against the attendance requirement. An example of an unexcused absence is skipping school.
- **Suspensions:** The student is required to miss school due to a disciplinary action and can make up missed work. The absence is counted against the attendance requirement.

In Baton Rouge, student attendance rates vary by school and by grade level. For public elementary schools in Baton Rouge, the average attendance rate was 95 percent, with a high of 98.7 percent and a low of 89.2 percent during the 2017-18 school year (the most recent available data). The middle school/junior high average was 93 percent, with high of 98.1 percent and a low of 85.7 percent. For high schools, the average attendance rate was 88.6 percent, with a high of 98.6 percent and a low of 70.7 percent.

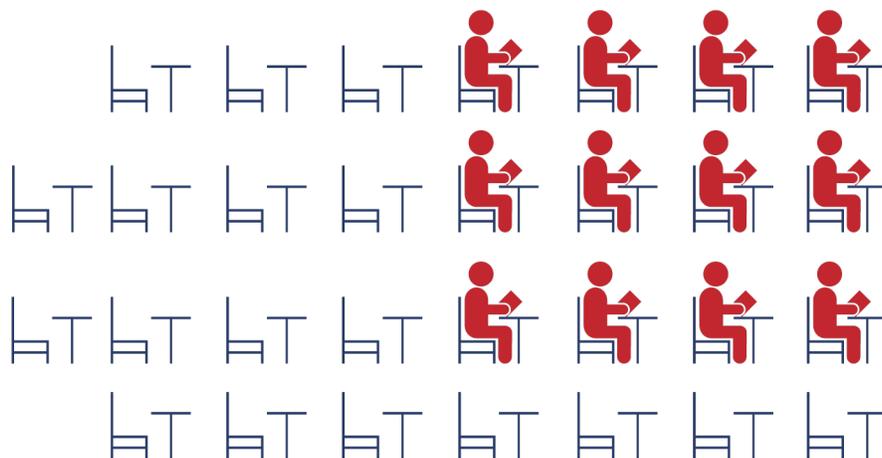
Attendance rates are more correlated to grade level than family income. High schools tend to have lower student attendance rates than middle or elementary schools, regardless of the levels of poverty in the school.

### Truancy

Students who are chronically absent – miss more than 10 percent of the school year – are considered truant. Truancy has significant consequences for youth, from falling behind academically, dropping out, to incarceration. During the 2017-18 school year, 47.8 percent of public-school students statewide were considered truant.

For Baton Rouge public schools, approximately 63 percent of students were considered truant – more than 26,736 students missed 10 percent or more school days during the 2017-18 school year. Days missed due to disciplinary incidents are included as an absence.

### Impact of Truancy:

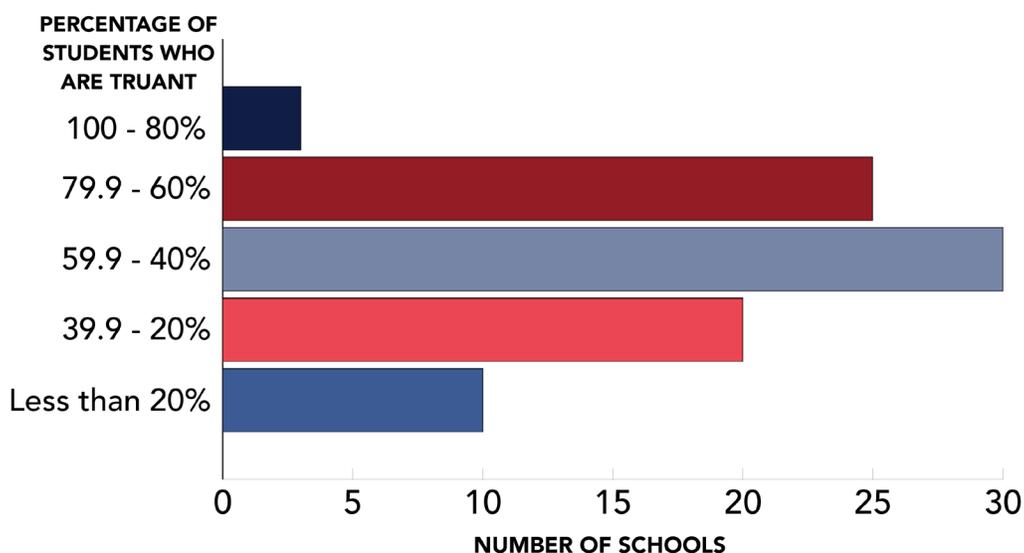


**Of a classroom of 30 students, 18 desks are empty at least 10 percent or more days during the school year.**

In 2017-18:

- Three schools reported more than 80 percent of their students were truant. The average percentage of economically disadvantaged students in these schools was 80.6 percent.
- Twenty-five schools reported between 79 and 60 percent of their students were truant. The average percentage of economically disadvantaged students in these schools was 85.9 percent, with a high of 96.6 percent and a low of 65.9 percent.
- Thirty-seven schools reported between 59 and 40 percent of their students were truant. The average percentage of economically disadvantaged students in these schools was 81 percent, with a high of 100 percent and a low of 37.9 percent.
- Twenty schools reported between 39 and 20 percent of their students were truant – missed more than 10 percent of instructional school days. The average percentage of economically disadvantaged students in these schools was 71.2 percent, with a high of 97.5 percent and a low of 24.8 percent.
- Ten schools reported between 20 percent or fewer of their students were truant – missed more than 10 percent of instructional school days. The average percentage of economically disadvantaged students in these schools was 83 percent, with a high of 100 percent and a low of 33.3 percent.

### Number of Schools at Truancy Rate Quintiles (2017-18)



Nationally, poverty has been linked to truancy. Economically disadvantaged students may have unstable housing, problems connecting to transportation, or familial responsibilities (especially for older youth who have need to look after their younger siblings or other family members). Older students may have conflicts associated with employment. Youth may have physical health issues, mental health issues, or be suffering from substance abuse. Students who are court-involved and dealing with juvenile justice issues are often truant.

#### East Baton Rouge Truancy Center

The Truancy Center provides prevention and intervention services to students who are at risk of becoming truants or dropouts. Students are referred to the Center in the following ways:

- Parent/guardian reports a student as truant.
- Schools report the truant student to the Center or the school's Child Welfare and Attendance Worker.
- Police officers pick up students who are not in school during school hours; the student can be returned to school or taken to the Center.
- Once processed by the Center, the student is turned over to his/her parents or returned to the school.

Although many causes of truancy are beyond the student’s control, in some cases causes of truancy can be controlled or corrected. When students are behind in their schoolwork, make bad grades, or bored, they may skip school. Students who are bullied or feel threatened at school may choose to stay home. Students are truant when they are not engaged or feel like a part of the school community. Discipline issues, expulsions, and out-of-school suspensions also affect truancy rates.

## Student Discipline

Students serving suspensions or who are expelled miss valuable instructional days. The Louisiana Department of Education reports the numbers and percentage of students who serve in-school or out-of-school suspensions, in-school or out-of-school expulsions, or serve suspensions or expulsions in an alternative site.

Discipline rates can vary by school and district for many reasons. School climate can set a positive tone in the school and contribute to low discipline rates. Instructional quality and the levels of student engagement play an important role. School and board policies also impact discipline rates and cause variance. Oftentimes schools have discretion on when and how to issue disciplinary actions. For example, one school may issue a suspension for a particular action, while another school assigns the student to detention or an in-school Time Out Center (TOC) for the same action.

### Percentage of Students by Disciplinary Action

	Baton Rouge	Louisiana
<b>In-School Suspensions</b>	13.3% (8,167)	9.6%
<b>Out-of-School Suspensions</b>	1.5% (918)	8.1%
<b>In-School Expulsions</b>	1.1% (671)	0.7%
<b>Out-of-School Expulsions</b>	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Alternative Site Suspensions</b>	10.9% (6,701)	1.3%
<b>Alternative Site Expulsions</b>	1.1% (670)	0.6%

Source: Louisiana Department of Education. 2017-18 State Discipline Rates by Site.

#### HIGHLIGHTS

14% were in elementary schools (94 students).

28% of expulsions were students in middle schools (190 students).

47% of expulsions were students in high schools (318 students).

## Suspensions

During the 2017-18 school year, there were 918 public school students (out of a cumulative enrollment of 61,446 students)<sup>21</sup> in Baton Rouge with at least one out-of-school (OOS) suspension. In Baton Rouge, of the 44 schools reporting at least one OSS, 11 schools (10 charter schools and one district-run middle school) reported more than 10 students serving OOS suspensions at least one time during the 2017-18 school year. Five schools reported more than 25 percent of students served at least one OSS. But in 59 schools, no students were asked to serve an OSS.



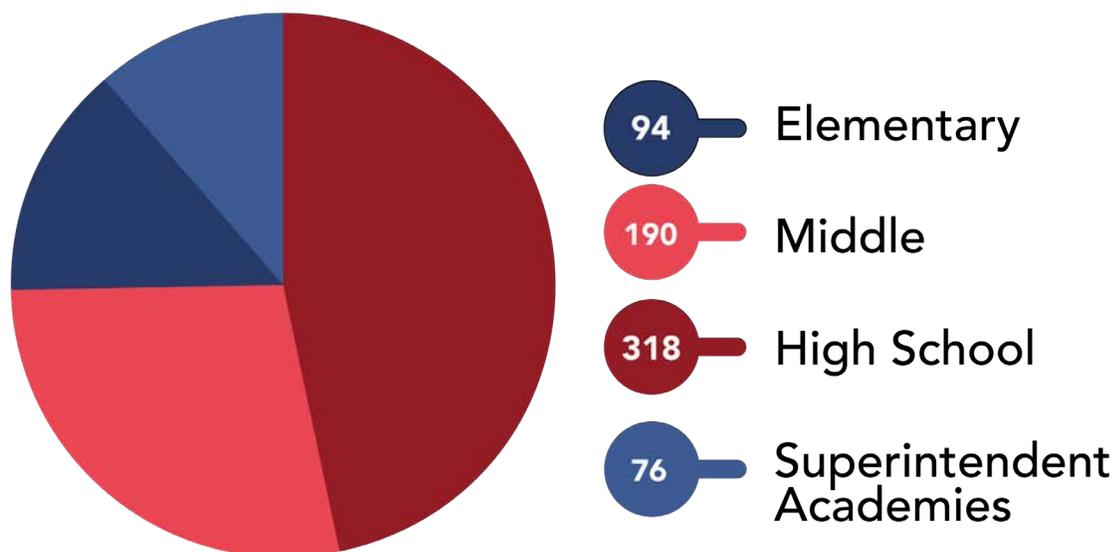
21 Cumulative enrollment includes students who are or were in the school at any time during the year. Students who transfer from one school to another during the school year are counted for each school. Cumulative enrollment is used to calculate school-level suspensions and expulsions. The total does not include Delmont Pre-K and Kindergarten Center or Southdowns.

## Expulsions

During the 2017-18 school year, 678 students in Baton Rouge public schools were expelled (671 in-school expulsions and seven out-of-school expulsions). In Baton Rouge, 56 schools reported at least one expulsion and 46 reported no expulsions during the year.<sup>22</sup>

Of students expelled, 13.9 percent were in elementary schools (94 students). Twenty-eight percent of expulsions were students in middle schools (190 students). Forty-seven percent of expulsions were students in high schools (318 students). Eleven percent of students expelled attended a Superintendent Academy.

### Number of Students Expelled, 2017-18



Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2017-18 Statewide Discipline Rates by Site.

There was not a significant relationship between the percentage of expulsions and the percentage of economically disadvantaged students or percentage of non-white students enrolled at the school.

## Alternative Site Placement

According to the East Baton Rouge Parish School Board policy manual, students suspended for more than 10 days will continue their education through an alternative site placement (alternative school or program). Students who are expelled are placed in an alternative school or alternative educational placement. Charter school board policies vary.

During the 2017-18 school year, 6,701 students (11.5 percent of public school students) in Baton Rouge served an alternative site suspension and 670 students (1.1 percent of public school students) served an alternative site expulsion.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Louisiana Department of Education. 2017-18 Statewide Discipline Rates by Site Louisiana Department of Education. 2017-18

<sup>23</sup> Louisiana Department of Education. 2017-18 Statewide Discipline Rates by Site.

# Progressing in School

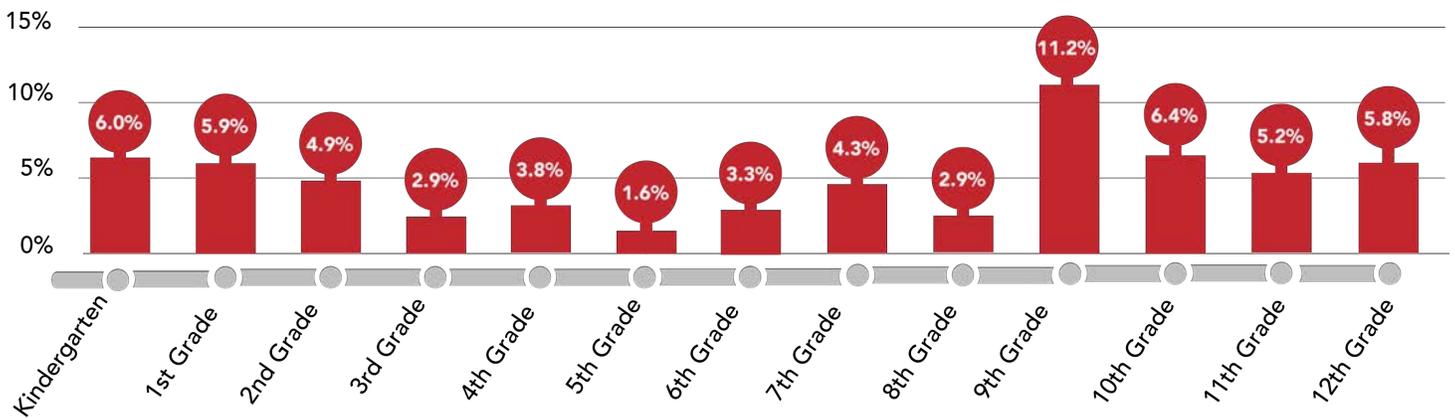
## Grade Retention Rates

Students are held back a grade level when they don't meet the requirements for promotion, have not mastered the skills needed to be successful in the next grade level, or have excessive absences. Developmental immaturity and emotional immaturity may also be reasons for students to repeat a grade, particularly in the early grades levels.

Schools retain students with the hope that, by repeating the previous year's instruction, the student will "catch up" and be better prepared for the next grade level. Many studies, however, have found that grade retention is often counter-productive. Students who are retained, even in elementary school, are more likely to drop out in high school.<sup>24</sup>

The figure below shows the percentage of students who are retained by grade level in Baton Rouge public schools. In 2017-18, 11.2 percent of ninth graders were repeaters causing the "ninth grade bulge" for public schools in Baton Rouge.

### Percentage of Students Retained by Grade Level (2017-18)



Source: Louisiana Department of Education. 2017-2018 School District State Student Retention Rates

Ninth grade is a critical year because students who are not successful often drop out. Students who repeat ninth grade are not included as a graduate in the school's cohort graduation rate. Unfortunately by the time students reach the ninth grade, districts and school intervention may be too late.

**HIGHLIGHT:** The grade level where students are most likely to repeat is ninth grade. This causes what is often referred to as the "ninth grade bulge" since ninth graders tend to bottleneck in ninth grade, making enrollment unusually higher than the other grades. In 2017-18, 13.3 percent of ninth graders were repeaters causing the "ninth grade bulge" for public schools in Baton Rouge.

## Dropout Rates

Although dropping out of school is thought of as a single event in time, the process of dropping out occurs over time. It is a culmination of a series of events or circumstances.<sup>25</sup> When students are not well prepared for middle and high school curricula, fall behind, and fail their classes, they are likely to drop out. Students who have excessive absences or experience disciplinary incidents (are suspended or expelled) are more likely to drop out. Students who are considered over-aged and under-credited often drop out of high school. When students are not connected or have a sense of belonging, they are more likely to drop out.



### **A student's decision to drop out of high school has a lifelong impact.**

- **Income:** High school dropouts earn an average of \$8,000 less than a high school graduate and \$26,500 less than a college graduate per year.
- **Employment:** The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that 65 percent of jobs in the U.S. will require some post-secondary education. Furthermore high school dropouts are three times more likely to be unemployed than college graduates.
- **Health:** High school graduates are healthier, require less medical care, and live longer.

### **High school dropouts also impact their communities.**

- **Crime:** The majority of inmates in federal, state, and local jails and prisons are dropouts. Reducing the nation's male dropout rate by 5 percent would save taxpayers \$18.5 billion in annual crime costs.
- **Health:** Cutting the high school dropout rate in half would save approximately \$7.3 billion in annual Medicare spending.
- **Economy:** Reducing the dropout rate and increasing the nation's graduation rate to 90 percent would create 65,700 new jobs and boost the national economy by \$10.9 billion.<sup>26</sup>

Sometimes students drop out of school based on personal circumstances. For example, students may have family obligations that prevent them from completing school. Caring for family members or employment may cause a student to drop out of school. Regardless of the reasons, failure to complete high school has lifelong consequences.

The LDOE collects dropout data for students in grades seven through 12. A dropout is a student who leaves school before graduation without transferring to another school. Statewide, 2.7 percent of students in seventh through 12th grade dropped out of school; for high school, the percentage is 3.7 statewide (2017-18 school year). In Baton Rouge, 6.4 percent of students in seventh through 12th grade dropped out (1,348 students); 8.1 percent of high school students (1,161) dropped out during the 2017-18 school year.

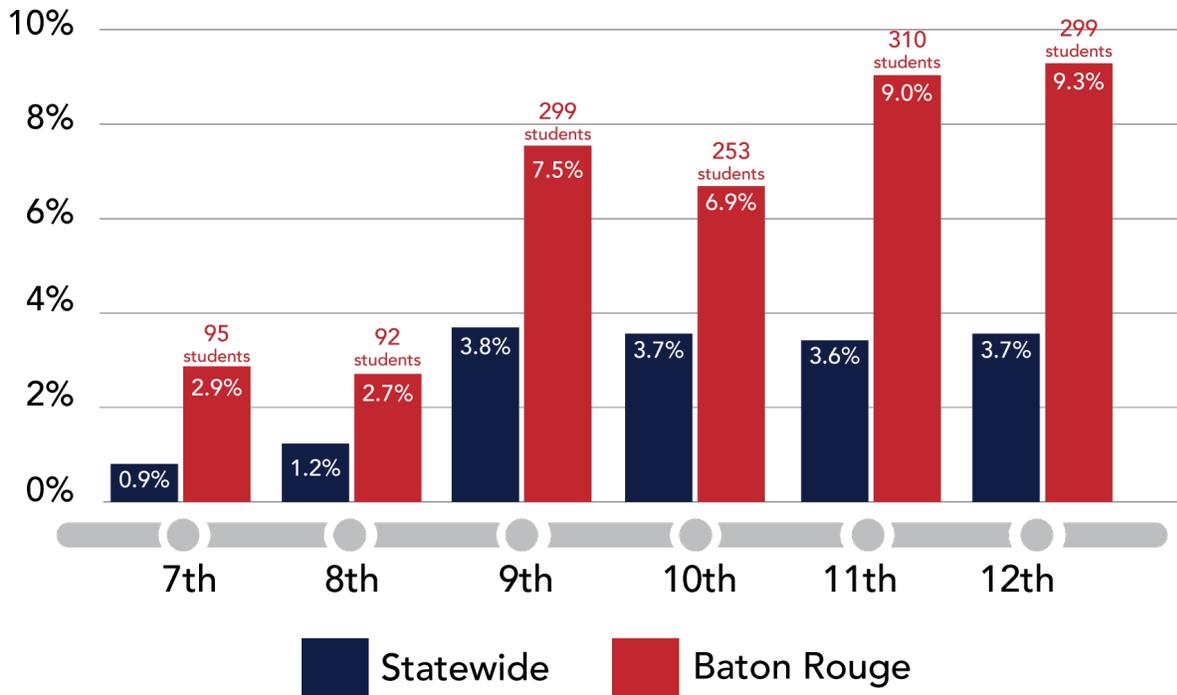
### **In Baton Rouge, students are more likely to dropout than their peers across the state.**

<sup>25</sup> Doll, J.J., Eslami, Z. and Walters, L. (2013). "Understanding Why Students Drop Out of High School, According to Their Own Reports." SAGE Open 3. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2158244013503834>

<sup>26</sup> Source: Alliance for Excellent Education. "The High Cost of High School Dropouts: The Economic Case for Reducing the High School Dropout Rate" <https://all4ed.org/take-action/action-academy/the-economic-case-for-reducing-the-high-school-dropout-rate/>

The figure below shows dropout rates by grade level in Baton Rouge and statewide.

### Dropout Rates by Grade Level (2017-18)



Before they even entered high school, 187 students dropped out of Baton Rouge public schools (2017-18). During each grade level of high school, around 300 students dropped out (1,161 high school students per year). There is no distinct relationship between the dropout rate and school-level subgroup percentages. Although, Baton Rouge’s virtual schools had the highest percentage of students who were reported as dropouts. Generally high schools reported the most dropouts, but varied in terms of the percentage of dropouts.

#### **IMPLICATIONS: School Climate**

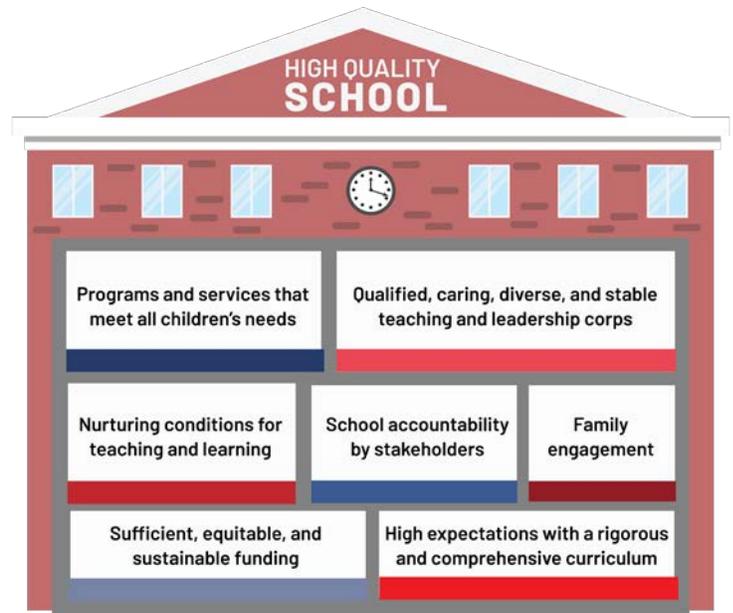
When schools foster a supportive, safe, and engaging climate, students can be successful. Engaged students are more likely to attend and behave in school, are motivated to learn, and have the grit to persevere despite the challenges they may face.

Truancy, disciplinary incidents, grade retentions, and ultimately dropping out can be alleviated with a positive school climate. Moving toward a more positive school climate is intentional and deliberate – at the district, school, and classroom levels. Efforts must be made to improve the school climate, particularly in high-poverty and low-performing schools.

# ACCESS: HIGH QUALITY SCHOOLS

According to the National Education Association, quality public schools “close achievement gaps, prepare all students for the future with 21st century skills, and create enthusiasm for lifelong learning.” Based on NEA’s Great Public Schools criteria, quality schools are schools that have the qualities listed in the graph.<sup>27</sup>

Beginning in 1999, the LDOE calculates and issues School Performance Scores (SPS) as a measure of the quality of schools. The SPS is converted to a letter grade (A to F), similar to the grades students receive, to “clearly communicate the quality of school performance to families and the public.”<sup>28</sup>



## School Performance

The LDOE calculates School Performance Scores (SPS) for schools; scores range from 0 to 150. A school’s letter grade is based on their SPS.

### Elementary School Performance Scores

Schools are assessed based on the absolute performance of students on the state LEAP 2025 exams, as well as a progress index that measures how much students have learned during the school year. Seventy-five percent of an elementary school’s SPS is based on their students’ performance on state assessments in English language arts, math, science, and social studies. Twenty-five percent of the SPS is based on the student progress index. The progress index measures gains toward Mastery regardless of where students start at the beginning of the school year.

### Middle School Performance Scores

For schools serving middle school students, including students in 8th grade, 70 percent of the SPS is based on student performance on the LEAP 2025 assessments in English language arts, math, science, and social studies. Twenty-five percent of the SPS is based on the student progress index. And 5 percent of the SPS is based on the Credit Accumulation Index. This index is determined by the high school credits their students earn as a freshman in high school.

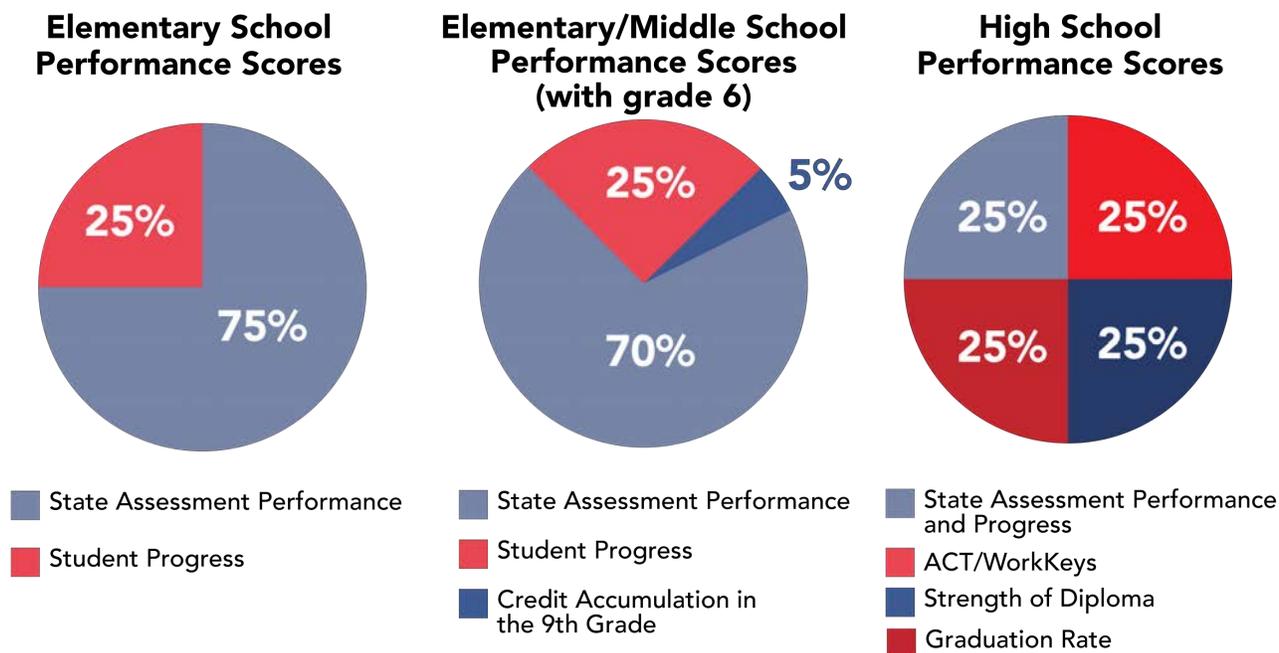
<sup>27</sup> “Great Public Schools Criteria.” NEA. <http://www.nea.org/gpsindicators#GPSC>

<sup>28</sup> “School and Early Childhood Program Performance.” Louisiana Department of Education. <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/measuringresults/school-and-center-performance>

## High School Performance Scores

For schools serving high school students, 25 percent of the SPS is based on student performance on state assessments in English, Algebra, Geometry, U.S. History, and Biology High schools and on student progress in English language arts and math. Twenty-five percent is based on how well the school is preparing students for success in college or the workforce and is based student performance on the ACT or WorkKeys tests. Twenty-five percent is based on the Strength of Diploma index, which weights diplomas with Advanced or Basic levels of college credit and industry-recognized credentials.

## 2017-2018 School Accountability Formula



## 2018 School Performance Scores: Letter Grades

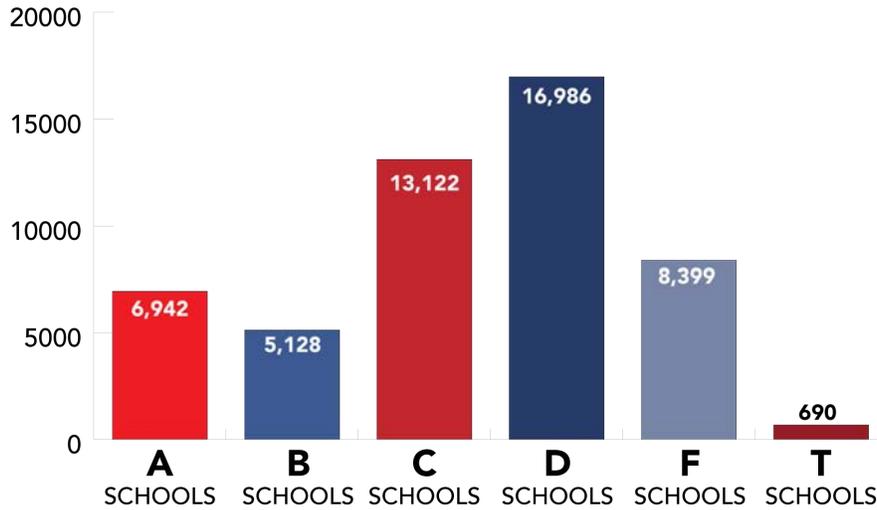
In Baton Rouge, 100 public schools received a SPS for the 2017-18 school year (76 elementary/middle schools, 8 combination schools, and 16 high schools). Nine schools earned a grade of A, 11 schools earned a B, 25 schools earned a C, 30 schools earned a D, and 24 schools earned an F. One school received a grade of T, indicating that an SPS was calculated but no letter grade given.

## 2018 Letter Grades (based on SPS)

	A	B	C	D	F	T
<b>Elementary/Middle Schools</b>	6	10	19	24	16	1
<b>Combination Schools</b>	1	0	2	3	1	-
<b>High Schools</b>	2	1	4	2	7	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	9	11	25	30	24	1

Source: Louisiana Department of Education. 2018 School Performance Scores and Letter Grades. Updated 12/10/2018.

## Enrollment by SPS Letter Grade (2018)



## Demographics by School Letter Grade

SCHOOL GRADE	Number of Students	% of Students	Econ Disad.	African American	Hispanic	White	Asian	English Proficient
A	6942	14.1%	32%	40%	5%	42%	11%	2.2%
B	5128	10.4%	66%	73%	7%	15%	4%	6%
C	13122	26.6%	78%	75%	12%	10%	2%	9%
D	15069	30.5%	83%	76%	7.6%	14.2%	1%	5.9%
F	8399	17.0%	88%	84%	8%	6%	1%	6.6%

## WHAT DOES IT TAKE FOR A SCHOOL TO EARN AN "A" IN LOUISIANA?

<b>Student Performance on State Assessment</b>	Students are achieving "Mastery" or higher on state assessments		<b>ACT</b>	Students average a score of 21 or higher on the ACT	
<b>Student Progress</b>	Regardless of where a student starts at the beginning of the year, they progress throughout the year and are on track to achieve "Mastery"		<b>Strength of Diploma</b>	Students graduate on time in four years and schools earn additional points for students in college-level classes or earning Jump Start credentials.	
<b>Dropout Credit Accumulation Index</b>	Students earn six or more credits by 9th grade signaling a successful transition from middle school.		<b>Cohort Graduation Rate:</b>	Nine out of 10 students in each high school cohort graduate in four years.	

## Profiles of Schools by Letter Grade

### "A" Schools

Of the nine schools earning the letter grade of "A," eight were dedicated magnet schools and one was a traditional, neighborhood-zoned school. Magnet schools are public schools that offer specialized courses or curricula. Unlike traditional, neighborhood-zoned schools, magnet schools do not have a specific attendance boundary and draw students from across the Parish or state. Many magnet schools have selective admissions policies based on test scores, language proficiency, or parental involvement.

**African-American students are under-represented in "A" schools. More than half (52%) of African-American students enrolled in public schools in Baton Rouge attend "D" or "F" rated schools.**



In February 2018, the "A" schools enrolled 6,942 students, 13.5 percent of all public school students in Baton Rouge. Students in "A" schools were less likely to be eligible for the free- and reduced-price lunch program: 31.7 percent of students in "A" schools were economically disadvantaged, compared to the Baton Rouge average of 74 percent. Of students enrolled in "A" schools, 2.2 percent were limited English proficient, compared to 6 percent in Baton Rouge.

Students in "A" schools were also less likely to be African American or Hispanic. The "A" schools enrollment included 40.1 percent African American students, and 5.1 Hispanic students, compared to the Baton Rouge averages of 70.4 percent and 7.7 percent respectively. White students were over-represented in the "A" schools: 42.4 percent of students were White in the "A" schools compared to 17.4 percent in the Baton Rouge public schools. Asian students were over-represented as well; 10.7 percent of "A" school students were Asian, compared to 3 percent in Baton Rouge, based on February 2018 enrollment.

### "B" Schools

Eleven public schools in Baton Rouge earning a letter grade of "B" enrolled 5,128 students or 10 percent of Baton Rouge public school students. "B" schools included three magnet schools, one Type 2 charter high school, and seven traditional neighborhood-zoned schools. Students in "B" schools were less likely to be economically disadvantaged; 66.3 percent of students enrolled in "B" schools were economically disadvantaged, compared to 74 percent average in Baton Rouge public schools.

The student population demographics in "B" schools more closely match that of the Baton Rouge average: 73.1 percent of students were African American, compared to 70.4 percent in Baton Rouge; 6.7 percent of "B" school students were Hispanic, compared to an overall average of 7.7 percent. White and Asian students were closely represented: 14.7 percent of students in the "B" schools were White, compared to an overall average of 17.4 percent and 3.9 percent were Asian compared to 3 percent of all students. In "B" schools, 5.5 percent of students were limited English proficient, compared to 6 percent in Baton Rouge, based on February 2018 enrollment.

### **“C” Schools**

Twenty-five schools earned a letter grade of “C,” enrolling 25.6 percent of Baton Rouge public school students (13,122 students) in February 2018. These schools included 20 elementary/middle schools, four high schools and one combination school. Of these, two were magnet schools, eight were charter schools (2: Type 1, 2: Type 2, and 2: Type 5), and 17 were traditional neighborhood-zoned schools. Of the 13,122 students enrolled in “C” schools, 78.2 were economically disadvantaged, slightly higher than the average for Baton Rouge (74 percent).

The percentage of African American students enrolled in “C” schools closely mirrors the average for Baton Rouge, 75.4 percent in “C” schools compared to 70.4 percent overall in February 2018. Hispanic students and students with limited English proficiency are slightly over-represented in “C” schools, 11.5 percent are Hispanic compared to 7.7 percent in Baton Rouge and 9 percent are limited English proficient compared to 6 in Baton Rouge. Of students in “C” schools, 2.3 percent were Asian, compared to 3 percent in Baton Rouge and 9.5 percent were White students compared to 17.4 percent in Baton Rouge, in February 2018.

### **“D” Schools**

One-third (33.1 percent) of public school students in Baton Rouge attended a “D” school. Thirty schools earned a letter grade of “D” and enrolled 16,986 students. Of students in “D” schools, 73.7 percent were economically disadvantaged, compared to 70.4 percent overall, in February 2018.



70.2 percent of students attending “D” schools were African American, mirroring the Baton Rouge average of 70.4 percent. Asian students were less likely to attend “D” schools, 1.2 percent of students were Asian, compared to 3 overall. The percentages of Hispanic students in “D” schools are similar to the Baton Rouge average, 6.3 percent enrolled in “D” schools compared to 7.7 percent Hispanic students in Baton Rouge. 20.4 percent White students were enrolled in “D” schools in February 2018, of compared to 17.4 percent in Baton Rouge. White students; 88 percent of the White students in “D” schools were enrolled at the two virtual academies.

### **“F” Schools**

Twenty-four public schools in Baton Rouge received a letter grade of “F”. These schools enrolled 8,399 students (16.4 percent) and included 15 elementary/middle schools, seven high schools, and one combination school. Five of these schools were alternative schools. Economically disadvantaged and African American students were over-represented in “F” rated schools: 88.8 percent of students enrolled in these schools were economically disadvantaged (compared to the average of 74 percent) and 84 percent were African American students (compared to 70.4 percent). Only 6.4 percent of students were White and 1.2 percent were Asian, compared to the averages of 17.4 percent and 3 percent respectively.

	Total	A schools	B schools	C schools	D schools	F schools
<b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>	74.0%	31.7%	66.3%	78.2%	73.7%	88.8%
<b>Asian</b>	3.0%	10.7%	3.9%	2.3%	1.2%	1.2%
<b>African American</b>	70.4%	40.1%	73.1%	75.4%	70.2%	84.0%
<b>Hispanic</b>	7.7%	5.1%	6.7%	11.5%	6.3%	7.7%
<b>White</b>	17.4%	42.4%	14.7%	9.5%	20.4%	6.4%
<b>LEP</b>	6.0%	2.2%	5.5%	9.0%	5.3%	6.6%

Source: Louisiana Department of Education. 2018 School Performance Scores and Letter Grades, Updated 12/10/2018. And February 2018 Multi-Stats Total by Site and School System.

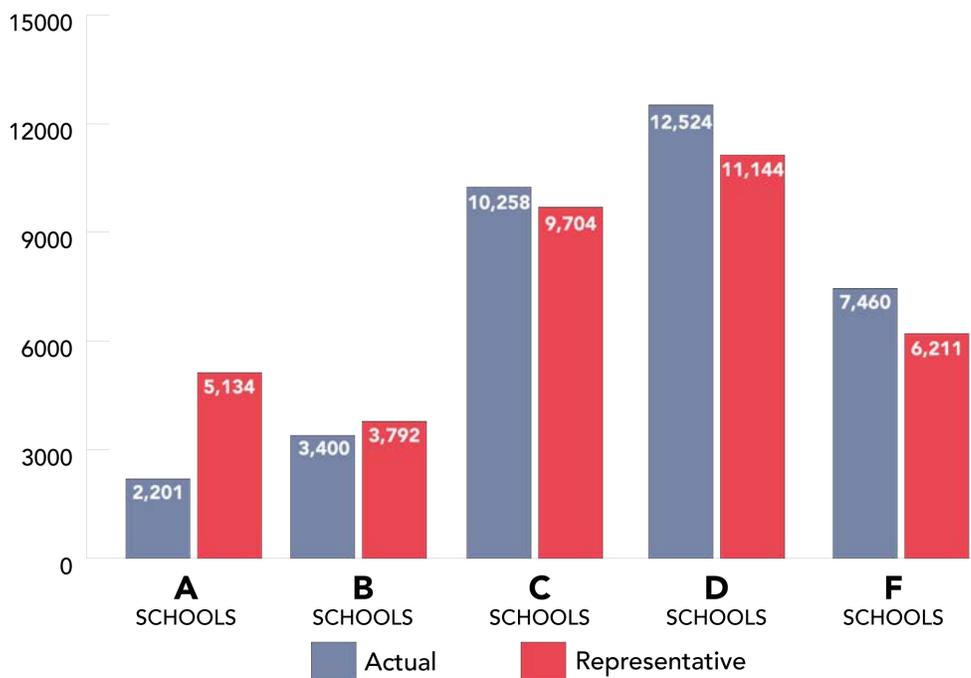
## More than half (52 percent) of African American students enrolled in public schools in Baton Rouge attend D or F rated schools.

### Proportional Representation

#### Economically Disadvantaged Students

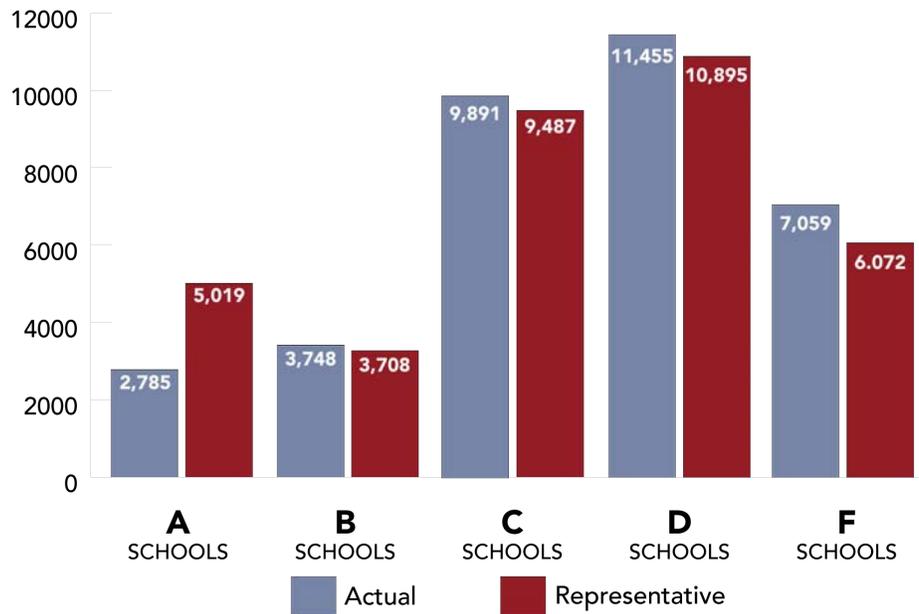
Economically disadvantaged students are “crowded out” of “A” schools. In February 2018, there were 6,942 students enrolled in “A” schools, 2,201 of these were economically disadvantaged (31.7 percent). If the enrollment of economically disadvantaged students were proportional to their representation in Baton Rouge public schools, 5,134 economically disadvantaged students would be enrolled in “A” schools; thus 2,933 economically disadvantaged students are “crowded out.”

## Number of Economically Disadvantaged Students Enrolled by SPS Letter Grade, 2018



**African American Students:** African American students are “crowded out” of “A” schools. In February 2018, of the 6,942 students enrolled in “A” schools, 2,785 were African American (40.1 percent). If the enrollment of African American students were proportional to their representation in Baton Rouge public schools, 5,019 African American students would be enrolled in “A” schools; thus 2,234 students are “crowded out.”

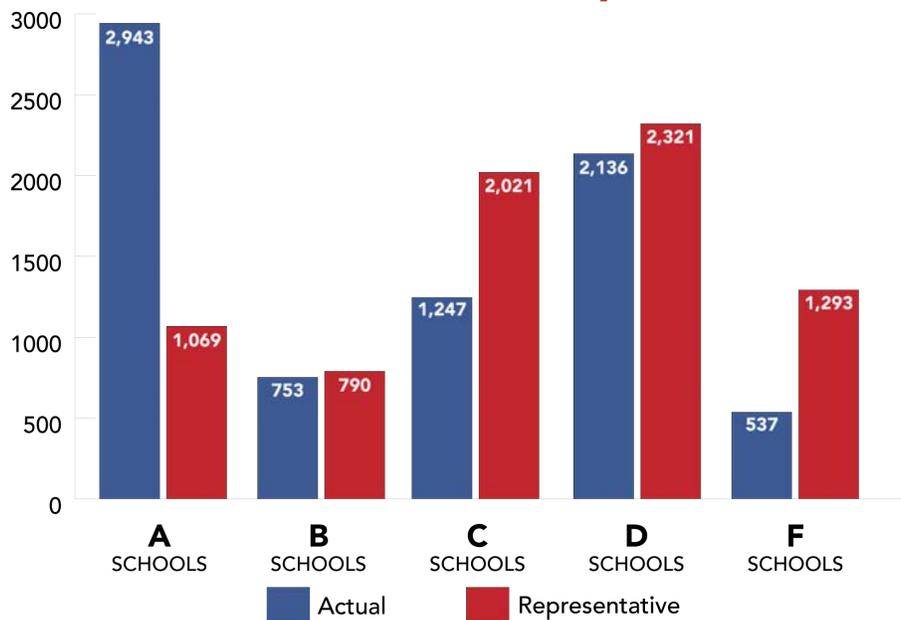
### Number of African American Students Enrolled by SPS Letter Grade, 2018



**Economically disadvantaged students and African American students are “crowded out” of high-performing (A) schools.**

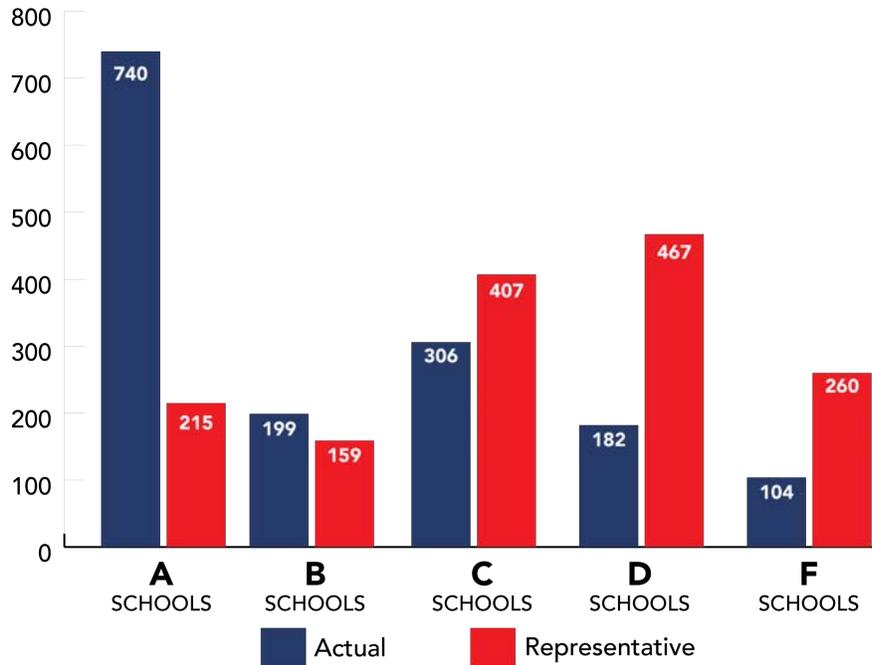
**White Students:** Of the 6,942 students enrolled in “A” schools, 2,943 were (42.4 percent). If the enrollment of White students were proportional to their representation in Baton Rouge public schools, 1,069 students in “A” schools would be White, an over-representation of 1,874 students.

### Number of White Students Enrolled by SPS Letter Grade, 2018



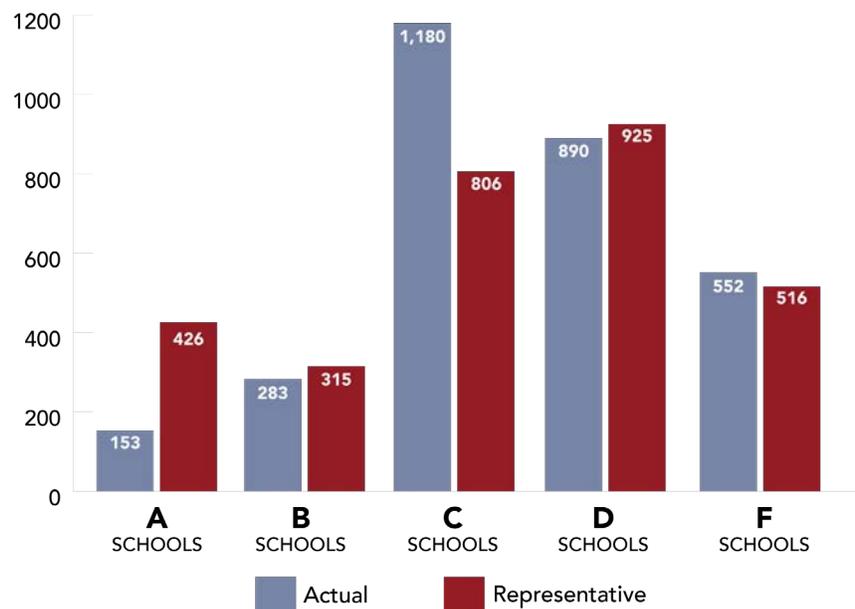
**Asian Students:** Asian students are also over-represented in “A” schools. Of the 6,942 students enrolled in “A” schools, 740 were Asian (10.7 percent). If the enrollment of Asian students were proportional to their representation in Baton Rouge public schools, 215 students enrolled in “A” schools would be Asian, an overrepresentation of 525 students.

## Number of Asian Students Enrolled by SPS Letter Grade, 2018



**Students with Limited English Proficiency:** Students with limited English proficiency (LEP) are also “crowded out” of “A” schools. Of the 6,942 students enrolled in “A” schools, 153 were LEP (2.2 percent). If the enrollment of LEP students were proportional to their representation in Baton Rouge public schools, 426 LEP students would be enrolled in “A” schools; thus 273 LEP students are “crowded out.”

## Number of Students with Limited English Proficiency by SPS Letter Grade, 2018



## **Magnet Schools**

Many public school districts, particularly urban districts, developed magnet schools to provide school choice and as a tool for desegregation by attracting students of different races, ethnicities, and neighborhoods into magnet schools. Magnet school enrollment is not restricted by neighborhood attendance zones; enrollment is open to eligible students no matter where they live. Students and their families elect to attend magnet schools. Many magnet schools offer a specialized curriculum or instructional approach.



Despite the promise of equity and increased access to high-quality curriculum, national research has found that magnet schools can actually increase the degree of segregation in a district and create a two-tiered public education system. Many magnet schools have restrictive admissions requirements or other exclusionary eligibility practices that create significant barriers for disadvantaged students seeking to attain enrollment. The act of “creaming” results in a two-tiered public school system where magnet schools disproportionately enroll students who are “easiest to teach,” while the remaining neighborhood schools become “places of last resort.”<sup>29</sup> Students who need the most academic support (economically disadvantaged students, and minority - African American and Hispanic students) attend their neighborhood-zoned schools. Some opponents of the magnet school system contend that magnet schools attract the better students and draw resources from schools in less advantaged neighborhoods.<sup>30</sup>

Magnet schools may exclude students based on their selective admissions practices. These may include:

- Setting test scores, GPA, attendance and behavior expectations, etc. for admissions, and continued admissions is contingent on a similar criteria;
- Requiring students to meet a minimum level of English (or other language) proficiency;
- Requiring students and/or parents to submit an essay or other burdensome requirement; or
- Requiring parents to actively volunteer at the school.

### **Magnet School offerings in Baton Rouge**

Baton Rouge offers various magnet school options. Ten schools are dedicated magnet schools and operate on their own campus. Baton Rouge also offers magnet programs co-located within traditional, neighborhood-zoned schools.

To enroll in a dedicated magnet school or magnet school program, parents must submit the application for admissions through an online process. Once the application process begins, families have only three calendar days to gather all supporting documents and submit the application. The application signature page must be delivered to the student’s first choice school within seven days after the process began (4 days after submission). In addition, all applicants must provide two documents as proof of residency. The process can seem onerous for families with limited resources, such as transportation, secure housing, and inflexible work schedules.

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29 Price, J. and Stern, J. (1986). “Magnet Schools as a Strategy for Integration and School Reform,” Yale Law and Policy Review: Vol. 5, Iss. 2, Article 4.

30 Ibid

Because the number of applications for admissions into a magnet school often exceeds the number of available seats in the school, the district may use a lottery during the selection process. The lottery process allows for a set of considerations that foster a more diverse student body. The Lottery Diversity Factors include:

- Magnet progression: prioritizes a specific feeder pattern from one school level to the next;
- Sibling preference: preference is given to sibling(s) of the same household;
- Proximity zone: prioritizes students who live within 2 miles of the school (some schools are exempt);
- Attendance zones: preference is given to students living in the prior attendance zone (for some schools); and
- Socioeconomic status: the district goal for each magnet school is 45 percent economically disadvantaged students.



### ***Dedicated Magnet Schools***

In Baton Rouge, there are ten dedicated, selective admissions magnet schools (four elementary schools, two K-8 schools, two middle schools, and two high schools). For most elementary schools, eligibility for enrollment is determined by a school-administered screening process. The middle and high schools have minimum academic requirements for enrollment. All magnet school applicants must follow the application timeline and protocols.

### ***Selective Admissions Policies***

Selective admissions schools (magnet and lab schools) in Baton Rouge are high-performing schools. Their academic admissions criteria ensure that students who enroll are prepared for the rigorous, specialized curriculum each magnet offers.

## **Selective admissions policies often restrict access to economically disadvantaged and African American students.**

Of the selective admissions magnet schools, seven schools earned an SPS letter grade of "A" and three earned a grade of "B." Of the lab schools, one earned an "A" and one earned a grade of "C". Eight of the nine schools in Baton Rouge reporting an SPS letter grade of "A" were selective admissions schools.

Magnet and lab school enrollment demographics are not representative of the public school population in Baton Rouge. Economically disadvantaged students are under-represented (by 3,156 students). African American students are under-represented (by 1,497 students). Hispanic students are under-represented (by 289 students). Students with limited English proficiency are under-represented (by 449 students). White and Asian students are over-represented.

	Percentage Enrolled in Magnet Schools	Percentage in Enrolled in All Schools	Number Enrolled in Magnet Schools	Number if Representative of Population
Economically Disadvantaged Students	37.9%	74.0%	3320	6476
Asian Students	8.0%	3.0%	702	263
African American Students	53.3%	70.4%	4664	6161
Hispanic Students	4.4%	7.7%	385	674
White Students	33.0%	17.4%	2886	1523
Students with Limited English Proficiency	0.9%	6.0%	76	525

Source: Louisiana Department of Education. 2018 School Performance Scores and Letter Grades, Updated 12/10/2018. And February 2018 Multi-Stats Total by Site and School System.

Elementary students who enroll in a magnet school have a distinct advantage over non-magnet school students in gaining admissions into a secondary magnet school. According to the Secondary Magnet School Guide, students enrolled in a dedicated magnet school will progress to the next magnet level and receive priority admissions, if they are eligible and apply.

Students who do not meet the academic requirements, behavior requirements, or adhere to the onerous application process are excluded. The data show that economically disadvantaged and students of color are most often left behind.

### Academic Growth

Measuring schools based on the percentage of students who score Mastery or above masks the hard work and progress that students make during the school year. High levels of performance may be attributed to the achievement levels students bring into the school, a result of their economic status, and admissions policies that attract and retain the highest performing students. Absolute academic performance alone does not capture the quality of instruction and the academic growth of students during the school year.



To measure and recognize the academic gains that students make from year to year, the LDOE incorporated a measure of progress into the SPS. Schools earn an “A” in progress if their students are “on track” to reach Mastery or above by the end of 8th grade (or 10th grade for high schools) or earn scores that are “higher than expected” based on the scores of peers of similar characteristics: previous three year academic performance, attendance, behavior (discipline history), student mobility, and socioeconomic status.

In 2018, 100 schools in Baton Rouge received a progress letter grade. Thirty-two schools earned an “A” in progress. Of these schools, 8 were magnet schools, 5 were charter schools, and 19 were traditional district-run schools. The SPS letter grades for these schools ranged from “A” to “T” (A=9; B=7; C=9; D=6; F=0; T=1). In the majority of these schools (19), 80 percent or more of their students were economically disadvantaged.

## High-poverty schools in Baton Rouge are working hard to have their students “on track” to reach Mastery.

Thirty-eight schools earned a “B” rating for progress. These schools included three magnet schools, nine charter schools, one alternative school, and 25 traditional district-run schools. The SPS letter grades for these schools ranged from “B” to “F” (A=0; B=3; C=11; D=18; F=6). In the majority of these schools (26), 80 percent or more of their students were economically disadvantaged.

Twenty-five schools earned a “C” rating for progress. These schools included three magnet schools, eight charter schools, two alternative schools, and 12 traditional district-run schools. The SPS letter grades for these schools ranged from “B” to “F” (A=0; B=2; C=5; D=6; F=12). In the majority of these schools (16), 80 percent or more of their students were economically disadvantaged.

Three schools earned a “D” rating for progress and two schools earned an “F”. These schools included two non-selective magnet schools, two alternative schools, and one traditional district-run school. All of these schools earned an SPS letter grade of “F.” Four of the five school populations had 80 percent or more economically disadvantaged students.

### ***IMPLICATIONS: Access to High-Quality Schools***

Providing all students the opportunity to learn in a high quality school is essential. High quality schools are student-centric and provide all students with the personalized programs and services to meet their needs. High quality schools are staffed with qualified, caring, and diverse teachers; school leaders are instructional leaders. The philosophy of high quality schools is that all students can learn at high levels and succeed in rigorous courses with appropriate resources and support.

The LDOE assesses school quality based on a school performance score (SPS), a calculation that includes indicators of student performance and progress, as well as student outcome metrics. Schools receive a letter grade based on the SPS. Letter grades (A to F) help families and the public recognize the quality of schools in their communities. In 2018, only 13.5 percent of public school students in Baton Rouge attended an “A” rated school. The demographics of the students enrolled in the nine “A” rated schools were not representative of those of all public school students. Economically disadvantaged students, African American and Hispanic students were under-represented. Unfortunately economically disadvantaged students and African American and Hispanic students are more likely to attend schools that received a “D” or “F” rating.

Oftentimes, school assignment policies (neighborhood attendance zones and academic admissions standards) fail to improve equitable access to high quality schools, particularly for economically disadvantaged students, and can actually escalate the inequities among students.



Eight of the nine “A” rated schools in Baton Rouge have academically selective admissions policies. Academic criteria, along with the onerous application processes, make it hard for families with the fewest options. Filing an online application, hand-delivering the signature page, providing supporting documents (including proof of residency), and meeting application deadlines can present genuine barriers to families who are seeking to secure the best educational options for their children.

# Teacher Quality

## **Effective teaching matters.**

The most influential school-related factor of student learning is the quality of the teacher. More than race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, class size, and school funding, the effectiveness of the teacher is the major determinant in student academic growth.

Research has found that students taught by a highly effective teacher for one year outperform their peers, even in subsequent years. Furthermore, the effect of quality teaching is both additive and cumulative; the more often students are taught by a highly effective teacher, the greater their growth, relative to their peers.<sup>31</sup>



Unfortunately, the opposite is true as well. The effect of being taught by an ineffective teacher is also additive and cumulative and has a major impact of students' current and future learning potential. Economically disadvantaged and African American students are more likely to be taught by an ineffective teacher.<sup>32</sup>

## **COMPASS: Louisiana's Teacher Evaluation System**

In 2010, the Louisiana Legislature passed , and the Governor signed into law, Act 54, mandating a system to evaluate teacher effectiveness. After a series of pilot tests, the LDOE implemented the evaluation and development system called COMPASS to assess the quality and effectiveness of instructional and administrative positions.

The COMPASS evaluation consists of two components:

- Student Growth – a quantitative measure of the academic gains students make during the school year.
- Professional Practice – measured by classroom observations and other qualitative evaluation techniques.

Teachers and school leaders are evaluated annually and receive a COMPASS rating. The LDOE provides school-level data on the percentage of teaching staff at each level of teacher effectiveness: Highly Effective; Effective: Proficient; Effective: Emerging; and Ineffective. Schools with less than 10 teachers do not receive a rating

## **Teacher Effectiveness Ratings**

In Baton Rouge, teacher effectiveness ratings for 86 schools were reported. Teacher quality at the school-level ranged from a high of 92.7 percent of teachers rated Highly Effective to a low of less than 1 percent of teachers rated Highly Effective.

<sup>31</sup> Sanders, W. and Rivers, J. (November, 1996). "Cumulative and Residual Effects of Teachers on Future Student Academic Achievement." University of Tennessee Value Added Assessment Center. <https://www.beteronderwijsnederland.nl/files/cumulative%20and%20residual%20effects%20of%20teachers.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> Sanders, W. and Horn, S. (1998). "Research Findings for the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) Database: Implications for Educational Evaluation and Research." University of Tennessee Value Added Research and Assessment Center. [https://www.sas.com/govedu/edu/ed\\_eval.pdf](https://www.sas.com/govedu/edu/ed_eval.pdf)

## Teacher Quality Quintiles

Percentage of Teachers Rated Highly Effective	Number of Schools	Number of Students
100-80	7	4,814
79-60	20	10,312
59-40	25	14,063
39-20	16	9,894
19-0	17	6,839

Source: Louisiana Department of Education. 2017-2018 COMPASS Teacher Results by District and School. And February 2018 Multi-Stats Total by Site and School System.

**Of African-American public school students, 6% attended a school with 80 or more teachers rated Highly Effective; 17% attended a school where fewer than 20% are rated Highly Effective.**



Of the seven schools where 80 percent or more of the teachers were rated Highly Effective, four are dedicated magnet schools. Of students enrolled in these seven schools, only 42.2 percent were economically disadvantaged (compared to 73.5 percent total for schools with teacher effectiveness ratings); 45.9 percent were African American (compared to 72 percent total). White and Asian students are over-represented; 33.9 percent were White (compared to 15.3 total) and 10.2 percent were Asian (compared to 3.2 total).

### Demographics for Schools with 80% or More Teachers Rated Highly Effective

	Number of Students	Percentage
<b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>	2030	42.2%
<b>Asian</b>	493	10.2%
<b>African American</b>	2210	45.9%
<b>Hispanic</b>	362	7.5%
<b>White</b>	1631	33.9%
<b>Limited English Proficient</b>	182	3.8%

Source: Louisiana Department of Education. 2017-2018 COMPASS Teacher Results by District and School. And February 2018 Multi-Stats Total by Site and School System.

**Demographics for Schools with 60-79% of Teachers Rated Highly Effective (20 Schools)**

	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>	7263	70.4%
<b>Asian</b>	467	4.5%
<b>African American</b>	7723	74.9%
<b>Hispanic</b>	823	8.0%
<b>White</b>	1153	11.2%
<b>Limited English Proficient</b>	667	6.5%

**Economically Disadvantaged students and African-American students are more likely to attend schools with the least effective teachers.**

**Demographics for Schools with 40-50% of Teachers Rated Highly Effective (25 Schools)**

	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>	10,299	73.2%
<b>Asian</b>	311	2.2%
<b>African American</b>	10,360	73.7%
<b>Hispanic</b>	1,167	8.3%
<b>White</b>	2,087	14.8%
<b>Limited English Proficient</b>	955	6.8%

**Demographics for Schools with 20 - 39% of Teachers Rated Highly Effective (16 Schools)**

	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>	7,722	78.1%
<b>Asian</b>	216	2.2%
<b>African American</b>	6,440	65.1%
<b>Hispanic</b>	763	7.7%
<b>White</b>	2,220	22.4%
<b>Limited English Proficient</b>	676	6.8%

There were 17 schools where fewer than 20 percent of teachers were rated Highly Effective. Economically disadvantaged students, African American and Hispanic students were over-represented in schools where fewer than 20 percent of the teachers were rated Highly Effective.

## Demographics for Schools with less than 20% Teachers Rated Highly Effective

	Number of Students	Percentage
<b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>	6,183	90.4%
<b>Asian</b>	39	0.6%
<b>African American</b>	5,851	85.6%
<b>Hispanic</b>	688	10.1%
<b>White</b>	212	3.1%
<b>Limited English Proficient</b>	572	8.4%

### **IMPLICATIONS: Teacher Quality**

Although many factors influence a student's academic success, no school-related factor has more impact than teacher quality. Across the country, and in Baton Rouge, too many economically disadvantaged and African American and Hispanic students do not have access to the one resource that will help them reach their potential – a highly effective teacher.

The data show that when it comes to the distribution of the best teachers, economically disadvantaged students and African American students do not get their fair share. In Baton Rouge, only 6 percent of African American students attended schools where 80 percent or more of the teachers were rated "highly effective" and 17 percent attended schools where less than 20 percent of teachers were rated "highly effective."

Inequitable distribution of highly effective teachers is a complex problem and will require honest conversations with a broad range of stakeholders. Attracting, developing, and retaining highly effective teachers must be a priority.



# Conclusion and Call to Action

Inequities in access, quality, and excellence exist in public education in Baton Rouge. Economically disadvantaged students and African American and Hispanic students are systemically excluded from rigorous, high-quality curricula and instruction. Economically disadvantaged students and African American and Hispanic students are under-represented in the highest performing schools, in dedicated, academically selective magnet schools, and in rigorous, college-level courses that would level the academic playing field and place them on track to succeed in school and in life.

As a result of the failure to provide equitable access to high-quality education opportunities, economically disadvantaged students and African American and Hispanic students are faced with disadvantages leading to underperformance on standardized state assessments (LEAP 2025) and national assessments (ACT). The majority of economically disadvantaged students and African American and Hispanic students attend an elementary school where the majority of 3rd graders are not reading at grade level and are not prepared to advance to the 4th grade. The majority of economically disadvantaged students and African American and Hispanic students attend a middle school where 8th graders are not prepared to succeed in high school, especially in math.

Too many economically disadvantaged students and African American and Hispanic students attend schools with a less-than-ideal climate for learning and engagement. Unfair and inequitable school discipline policies lead to a toxic school climate. Truancy and disciplinary issues plague these schools and disproportionately impact high-poverty, high-minority populations. As a culmination of the disparities they face, economically disadvantaged students and African American and Hispanic students are more likely to drop out or often “pushed out” of high school. Those that do graduate are less likely to earn Basic or Advanced diploma credentials. As high school graduates, they are less likely to enroll and persist in college. The inability to provide all students with the resources and opportunities to be successful has long-lasting consequences on the student, as well as the community.

Baton Rouge is home to some of the highest performing schools in the state. Yet the highest performing schools and schools that have selective admissions policies often exclude disadvantaged students and African American and Hispanic students and do not consider the disproportionate impact that policies and practices have on families with low-income, unstable housing, and transportation challenges, in addition to a number of other factors that can keep a family from being able to access high quality schools.

And although many high-poverty, high-minority schools have “A” ratings for their students’ academic progress, this is a start – but not enough.

As a community, we cannot accept inequities in our public school system. We must be committed to creating an equitable system that has the potential to “be the great equalizer.”

The first step in addressing these inequities is recognizing that they exist and understanding the effects that they have on our youth and therefore the greater community. The data and analysis in this report provide a look at important metrics to inform an honest and unbiased evaluation of public education and its ability to provide equity, access, and excellence to the students and families of Baton Rouge and empower the community to demand better for all students.

The data included in this report is intended to provide all stakeholders with information to begin asking why inequities exist and identify how to systematically address them. While there is significant work to be done, the Urban League of Louisiana believes that the issues revealed in this report can be addressed through determination and dedicated action. We encourage policy makers and community members to use the finding in this report to work toward building an education system that serves all students equitably.

**As a community, we cannot accept inequities in our public school system. We must be committed to creating an equitable system that has the potential to “be the great equalizer.”**

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