

# ADVANCING EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

## FOR BATON ROUGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### What is educational equity?

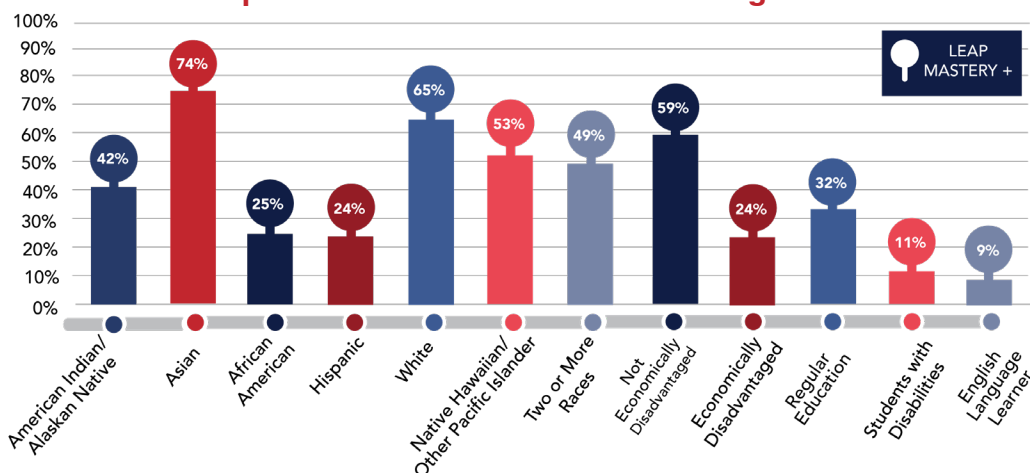
Educational equity is ensuring the equitable distribution of resources, supports and opportunities based on students' degree of need.

This report examines several key metrics through an equity lens and identifies biases and gaps in outcomes and access and utilizes publicly available data, accessible from [www.Louisianabelieves.com](http://www.Louisianabelieves.com). All metrics represent the aggregate or sum of **all public schools in Baton Rouge** (EBRPSS, BESE and RSD, and others). Data is disaggregated and analyzed by subgroups to identify disparities in academic outcomes. Persistent differences among various subgroups are referred to as "achievement gaps." Enrollment at the start of the school year, October 2018, for all public schools serving Baton Rouge students was 52,034 students; of those, East Baton Rouge Parish Public School System (EBRPSS) enrolled 38,738 students; BESE charter schools enrolled 8,811 students, RSD charter schools enrolled 2,210 students and university lab schools or other enrolled 2,275 students. 82.4% were non-white, 75.5% were economically disadvantaged and 5.9% were limited English proficient.

## 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). The five performance levels are: Advanced, Mastery, Basic, Approaching Basic, and Unsatisfactory. To assess academic outcomes we look at **LEAP 2025, 3rd grade reading, 8th grade math, High School ACT scores, graduation rates, and Advanced Placement**.

#### Percentage of Students in EBRPSS and RSD-BR Schools Scoring Mastery or Above in All Subjects on LEAP: Grades 3-8 and High School 2019



**HIGHLIGHTS:** In 2019, there was a gap of **35 percentage points** between students classified as economically disadvantaged and not economically disadvantaged.

In 2019, there was an **achievement gap** of **20 percentage points** between students with disabilities and regular education students.

#### THE ACHIEVEMENT

# GAP

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



Since 1938, the Urban League has actively worked to assist underserved communities in securing economic self-reliance, parity, power, and civil rights in the Greater New Orleans area. In 2016, the Urban League became the Urban League of Louisiana (ULLA) extending 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.

## 3rd Grade Reading and 8th Grade Math

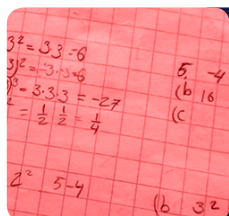
**Third Grade Reading: An Educational Milestone** - Reading at grade level (Mastery level or above) by the end of third grade is a significant turning point in a child's educational trajectory. During the first three years of elementary school, students learn to read. Beginning in fourth grade, emphasis 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.

**African-American and Hispanic students were less likely than their peers to attend a school where 80 percent or more 3rd graders scored Mastery or above: 7 percent of African-American students and 5.2 percent of Hispanic students, compared to 26.2 percent of White and 24.6 percent of Asian students.**



In 2019, 43 percent of 3rd graders in public schools in Baton Rouge scored Mastery or above on the LEAP 2025 English language arts assessment (the state average was 46 percent). In 2019, only 16 public schools reported 50 percent or more of their third graders scoring Mastery or above.

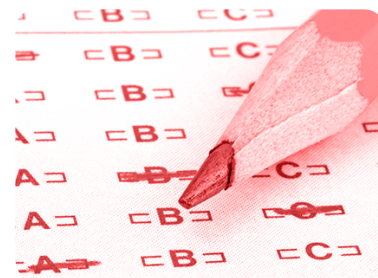
**Eighth Grade Math: A Strong Predictor of Post-Secondary Success** - According to research, **"the level of academic achievement that students attain by eighth grade has a larger impact on their college and career readiness by the time they graduate than anything that happens academically in high school"** This is particularly true for eighth grade math. Even more than student demographics and gender, math performance has been found to be a better predictor of post-secondary success. In 2019, only three public middle schools in Baton Rouge reported 50 percent or more of their eighth graders scoring 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.



**African-American and Hispanic students were less likely than their peers to attend a school where 80% or more 8th graders scored Mastery or above: 5.2% of African-American students and 10.5% of Hispanic students, compared to 50.9% of White and 27.6% of Asian students.**

## High School

**ACT: A Gateway to Opportunities**- In addition to gauging school performance and students' academic readiness for college or careers, ACT scores (which can range from 1-36) 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. Colleges and universities often use ACT composite scores as a factor for admissions decision-making. In addition, 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.



For many Baton Rouge public school high 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 Forgotten Middle." ACT. 2008.

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

	Average Composite Score
African American	17.1
Economically Disadvantaged	17.3
Students with Disabilities	14.2
All Students	18.3

### HIGHLIGHTS:

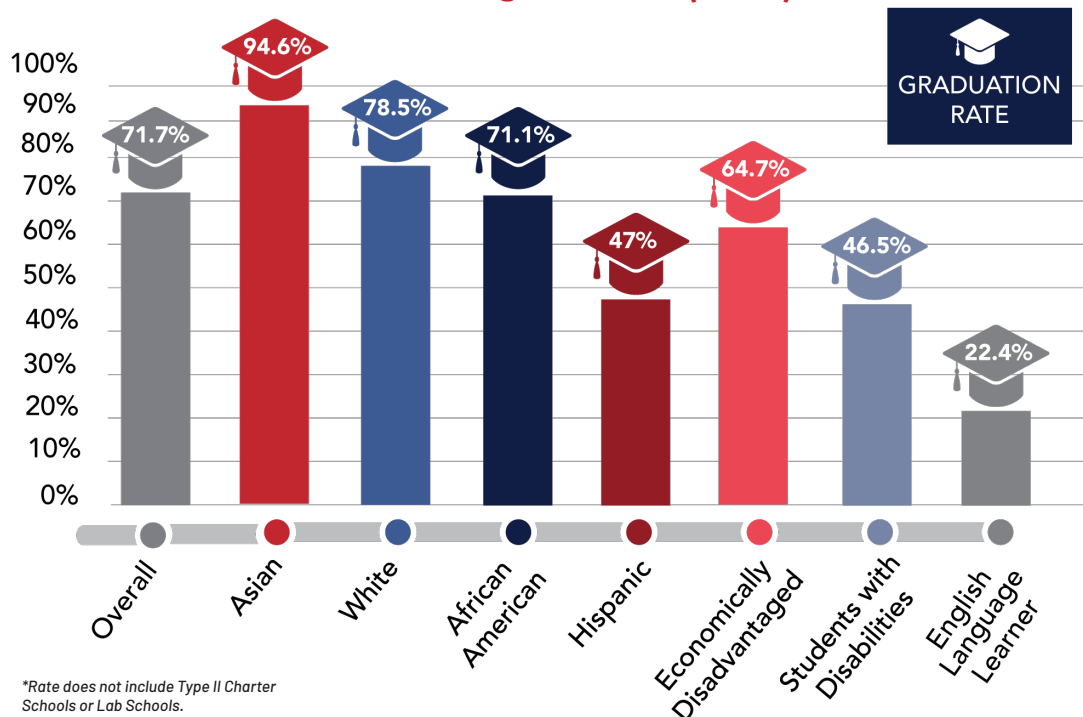
As school poverty rates increase, the percentage of students who meet or exceed ACT benchmarks decreases.

**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\*. 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 Baton Rouge (71.7 percent). 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. 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.



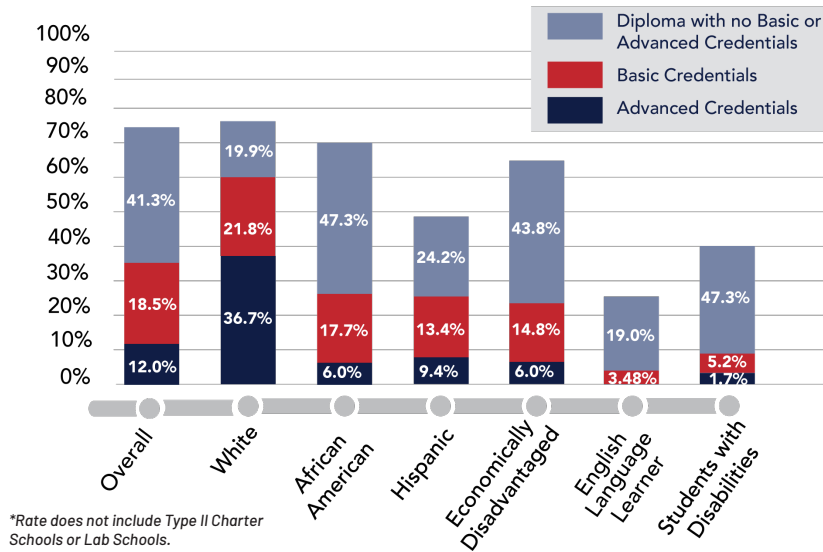
### Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate in EBRPSS and RSD-BR High Schools (2018)\*



Public school graduates can earn Basic or Advanced credentials along with their diploma. Significant achievement gaps exist: 36.7 percent of White students earned a diploma with an Advanced credential, compared to 6.1 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.

\* Exceptions are made for students with disabilities.

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



### HIGHLIGHT:

This graph illustrates that 70% of all African-American students have a diploma or credential, whereas less than 50% of Hispanic students earn any form of diploma or credential. Significant achievement gaps exist: 36.7% of White students earned a diploma with an Advanced credential, compared to 6.1 percent for African-American students.

**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. 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.

In 2018-19, economically disadvantaged students, African-American, and Hispanic students were under-represented in AP courses. Of AP test-takers, 41 percent were economically disadvantaged, while 71 percent of the students in the schools were economically disadvantaged; 48 percent were African American, while 76.6 percent of students were African American; 7.6 percent of high school students are Hispanic but only 4.8 percent of test-takers were Hispanic. AP scores range from one to five. Economically disadvantaged students were half as likely to score a three or higher (which is considered passing); 16.5 percent of economically disadvantaged 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.

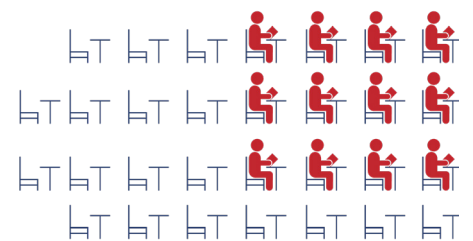
## SCHOOL CLIMATE

A positive school climate is vital for learning. It contributes to academic achievement, improves outcomes for youth, especially economically disadvantaged and minority 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.

**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.

**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, and incarceration. During the 2017-18 school year, 47.8 percent of public school students statewide were considered truant. For Baton Rouge public schools, approximately 61 percent of students were considered truant; more than 26,736 of 44,275 students missed 10 percent or more school days during the 2017-18 school year.

### Impact of Truancy:



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

\* 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.

\*\*Districts and schools can include more than 177 instructional days in their calendar; 177 days is the state minimum.

**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.

Percentage of Students by Disciplinary Action

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

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).



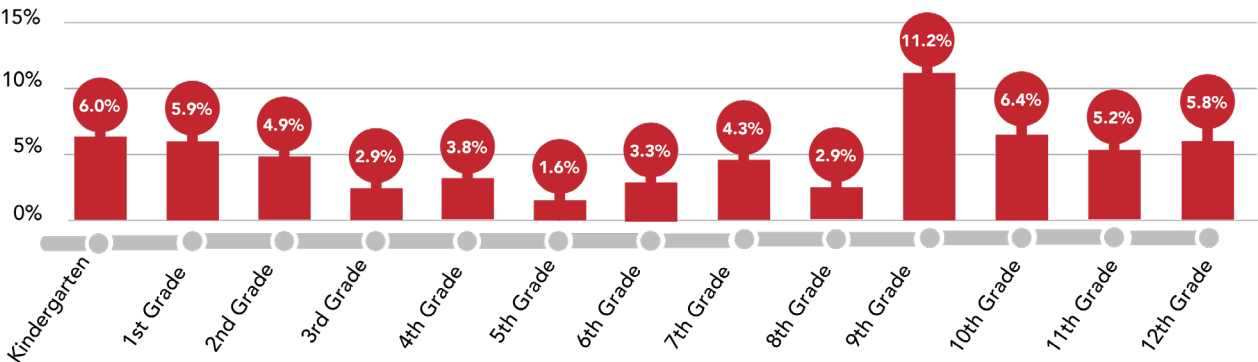
**Suspensions:** During the 2017-18 school year, there were 918 students, out of a cumulative enrollment of 61,446 students in Baton Rouge public schools, with at least one out-of-school (OOS) suspension. 11 percent (76) were in Superintendent Academies. We do not have this data disaggregated by race.

**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).

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 or emotional immaturity may also be reasons for students to repeat a grade, particularly in the early grade levels.

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

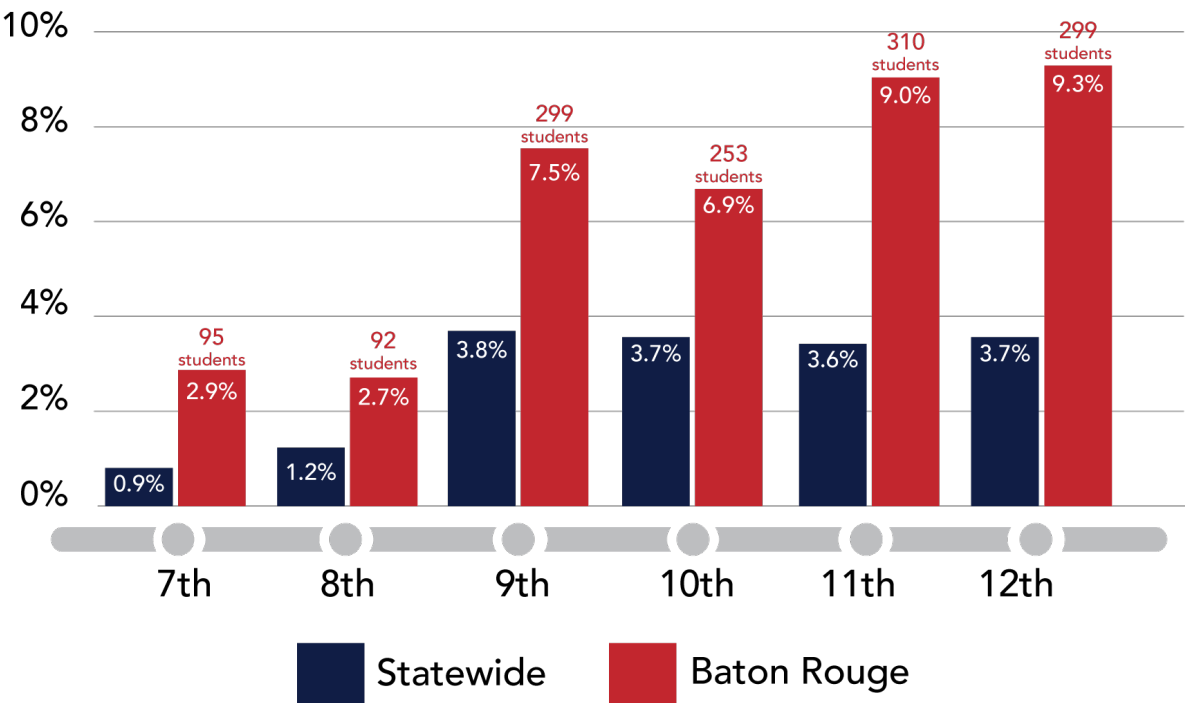


**HIGHLIGHT:** The grade level where students are most likely to repeat is ninth grade. This causes what is often referred to as the “ninth grade bulge” since ninth graders tend to bottleneck in ninth grade, making enrollment unusually higher than the other grades. In 2017-18, 13.3 percent of ninth graders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



**Dropout Rates** - Students enrolled in Baton Rouge schools are more likely to dropout than their peers across the state. The figure below shows dropout rates by grade level in Baton Rouge and statewide.

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



**ACCESS**

**2018 School Performance Scores: Letter Grades** - The Louisiana Department of Education calculates School Performance Scores (SPS) to schools and assigns letter grades based on a variety of indicators of student performance.

In Baton Rouge, 99 public schools received a SPS for the 2017-18 school year. Nine schools earned a grade of A, 11 schools earned a B, 25 schools earned a C, 29 schools earned a D, and 24 schools earned an F. One school received a grade of T, indicating that the school is in transition or has a new charter operator; an SPS was calculated but no letter grade given.

**2018 Letter Grades (based on SPS)**

	A	B	C	D	F	T
Elementary/Middle Schools	6	10	19	24	16	1
Combination Schools	1	0	2	3	1	-
High Schools	2	1	4	2	7	-
TOTAL	9	11	25	29	24	1

African-American students are underrepresented in “A” schools. More than half (52%) of African-American students enrolled in public schools in Baton Rouge attend “D” or “F” rated schools.



## 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%

**Proportional Representation** - The “A” schools enrollment included 40 percent African-American students, and 5 percent Hispanic students, compared to the Baton Rouge averages of 72 percent and 8 percent respectively. White students were overrepresented (by three times) in the “A” schools: 42 percent of students were White in the “A” schools compared to 15 percent in the Baton Rouge public schools. Asian students were overrepresented as well; 11 percent of “A” school students were Asian, compared to 3 percent in Baton Rouge.

Economically disadvantaged students and students with limited English proficiency (LEP) 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 students would be economically disadvantaged; 2,933 economically disadvantaged students are “crowded out” of “A” schools. Similarly, economically disadvantaged students are overrepresented in “D” and “F” schools by 2,629 seats. 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 students would be LEP; 273 students are “crowded out” of “A” schools.

**Teacher Quality** - The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) implemented an 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, which is a quantitative measure of the academic gains students make during the school year, and professional practice - which is 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 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

In Baton Rouge schools, 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. 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); 45.9 percent were African American (compared to 72 percent total). White and Asian students are overrepresented; 33.9 percent were White (compared to 15.3 total) and 10.2 percent were Asian (compared to 3.2 total).

**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.**



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

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

#### **Demographics for Schools with Less than 20% of Teachers Rated Highly Effective**

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

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

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

## **CONCLUSION:**

*Inequities in access, quality, and excellence exist in Baton Rouge public education.*

Economically disadvantaged students and students of color (African American and Hispanic)

- are systemically excluded from rigorous, high-quality curricula and instruction.
- are underrepresented in the highest performing schools, in dedicated 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.
- perform poorly on standardized state assessments (LEAP 2015) and national (ACT) assessments.
- attend an elementary school where the majority of 3rd graders are not reading at grade level
- attend a middle school where 8th graders are not prepared to succeed in high school, especially in math.

The first step in addressing these inequities is recognizing that they exist and the effects that they have on our youth and therefore the greater community. The data and analysis in this report provides 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 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 findings in this report to work toward building an education system that serves all students equitably.*