

## **A Moral Imperative and a Case for Action**

Louisiana State Senator Joe Bouie     *The New Orleans Tribune* 12.26.2021



State Sen. Joe Bouie has sounded the alarm. Citing a Stanford University study and a legislative audit, the lawmaker says it is time to end the failed experiment that has gripped public education in New Orleans for nearly 16 years. Sen. Bouie has detailed his concerns in a letter to the Orleans Parish School Board. He has also laid out a plan of action and is calling on elected officials, community leaders, and the public to take a stand.

As a lifelong resident and state senator from New Orleans, I am contacting you with disturbing news about the status of the New Orleans Public School system's 15-year Charter School Experiment. Our all-Charter system experiment has not only failed, but recent audit findings confirm it is also completely flawed.

After spending \$6 billion of tax payers' money to become the only all-Charter system in the State, a staggering 73 percent of our children are not functioning at grade level, compared to 67 percent in 2005, when the State took control of over 100 of our schools. Superintendent Henderson Lewis said, "When you look across all grade levels and subjects in Orleans Parish, just 27 percent of students tested at grade level in 2019. This is the fourth year of stagnant or declining test results."

A Louisiana Legislative Audit completed earlier this year states that New Orleans Public Schools and the Louisiana Department of Education do not consider whether specific practices are responsible for positive or negative outcomes. And when determining which schools should be renewed, it is not considered whether specific practices implemented at a school are responsible for the positive academic outcomes.

In other words, elected school board members, this 15-year flawed experiment has yielded no best practices identified to improve student and school performance, no State protocol for Charter Law Compliance, and no student performance improvement. It has, however, yielded other devastating consequences for our children and our community.

According to a 72-page Stanford University report entitled "Whose Choice? Student Experiences and Outcomes in the New Orleans School experiment:"

Our schools are highly stratified by race, class, and educational advantage, operating very different types of schools to different types of children.

School closure is the primary tool for addressing school quality, causing students to lose achievement when closing schools displace them.

26,000 New Orleanians between the ages of 16 and 24 are counted by the census as "disconnected" because they are neither working nor in school.

I submit that many of those 26,000 citizens were students subjected to the New Orleans flawed and failed Charter experiment and are now victimizing the community with carjackings and various violent crimes—a condition that makes our youth both victims and perpetrators. This flawed and failed experiment has created a steroid effect on the school to jail pipeline.

Another critical consequence of the flawed and failed experiment is the destruction of our neighborhood schools. In local communities, a school is more than brick and mortar; it is a support

system for strengthening and enhancing teaching and learning and for neighborhood development as well.

And this is why you must alter the direction of our system and create a quality public school system for our children. The evidence is overwhelmingly clear and demands action from a responsible elected school board. I urge you to immediately implement the following:

- ***Demand a moratorium on chartering or re-chartering anymore of our schools.*** We must demand that our School Board and our existing and soon-to-be new Superintendent begin doing what the other 63 parishes in Louisiana do to create good schools: They run their schools! They employ a competent superintendent, certified teachers, implement an evidence-based curriculum, and create an environment of parental involvement and community support.
- ***Return to neighborhood schools.*** Stop busing our children. They are transported pass a neighborhood school to attend failing schools across town.
- ***Eliminate the ineffective One App Central Intake System.*** It has created inequities by race and class, and admissions (is) by chance (lottery) and not choice.

If you do not act now, history will reflect that you were guilty of abandoning and not protecting our children. A quality public education system is our children's primary means of realizing America's promise. That is, equal access to a quality education as a tool to support oneself, family, and the ability to positively contribute to one's community.

"Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results."

As a responsible elected school board you must respond to these data results and not ignore them. The lives of our children and community are in your hands.

In the words of John Lewis, "If not us then who, if not now, then when?"

Regards,  
State Senator Joseph Bouie, Jr., PhD

A 72-page report by Stanford University indicated that public schools in New Orleans are highly stratified by race, class, and educational advantage, operating very different types of schools to different types of children. That same report also indicates that 26,000 New Orleanians between the ages of 16 and 24 are counted by the census as "disconnected" because they are neither working nor in school. State Sen. Bouie suspects that rising crime in New Orleans, particularly involving young people, links back to some of those "disconnected" youth who have been failed by the so-called education reform movement in New Orleans. In a recent meeting with members of the local Black press, Bouie called the privatization of public education in Orleans Parish the worst thing that our government has done since the Tuskegee Experiment, adding that it has put the "school to prison pipeline on steroids".

### **A Case for action: how are NOLA public schools performing?**

Based on 2019 School Performance data, 49 of the 66 charter schools operating under the Orleans Parish School System (NOLA Public Schools) earned letter grades of C, D or F (essentially, mediocre to failing). We chose to examine the 2019 data to avoid concerns over the impact of virtual learning and the pandemic on school performance. NOLA Public Schools dares to brag that fewer schools are failing when compared to 2005. But it's just smoke and mirrors as state leaders define and redefine "passing" and "failing" to muddy the narrative surrounding this so-called reform. Nearly 30 of schools have SPS scores lower than 60—scores that would have gotten them taken over by the Recovery School District 16 years ago. Before Hurricane Katrina, only five Orleans Parish Public Schools had SPS scores of lower than 60. But to facilitate the wholesale takeover of public education here, the minimum passing SPS was raised to 87.4. It has since been lowered again—now down to 49.9 In order to mask the failure of the charter school experiment. Keep that in mind when you check out NOLA Public Schools 2019 SPS standings on the page below.

# 2019 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SCORES FOR NOLA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

NOLA PUBLIC SCHOOL	2019 LETTER GRADE	2019 SCHOOL PERFORMANC SCORE
Mary Bethune Elementary Literature/Technology	C	68.9
Warren Easton Senior High School	A	92.9
Edward Hynes Charter School	A	95.3
McDonogh #35 College Preparatory School	D	58.3
Benjamin Franklin Elem. Math and Science	C	71.2
Homer A. Plessy Community School	C	61
Foundation Preparatory	D	56.6
Rooted School	C	65
Pierre A. Capdau Charter School at Avery Alexander	D	54.5
John F. Kennedy High School	C	65.2
Harriet Tubman Charter School	D	55.7
Paul Habans Charter School	C	62.4
Fannie C. Williams Charter School	D	55.3
Morris Jeff Community School	C	73.6
ReNEW SciTech Academy at Laurel	D	51.2
ReNEW Dolores T. Aaron Elementary	D	57.6
ReNEW Schaumburg Elementary	F	48.8
Arise Academy	F	47.3
Mildred Osborne Charter School	D	58.6
Success Preparatory Academy	D	54.5
Akili Academy of New Orleans	D	57
Abramson Sci Academy	B	79.3
G W Carver High School	C	66.1
Livingston Collegiate Academy	C	68.4
Walter L. Cohen College Prep	F	43.7
Lawrence D. Crocker College Prep	F	43
James M. Singleton Charter School	F	35.3
Lafayette Academy	F	47.9
Esperanza Charter School	C	64.9
Martin Behrman Charter Acad of Creative Arts & Sci	C	63.7
Lord Beaconsfield Landry-Oliver Perry Walker High	C	60.4
Sophie B. Wright Institute of Academic Excellence	B	78.4
KIPP Believe	C	60.5
KIPP Morial	C	64.6
KIPP Central City	C	67.4
KIPP Renaissance	B	79.3
KIPP Leadership	D	59
KIPP East Community	C	60.9
KIPP Booker T Washington	D	59.4
Samuel J. Green Charter School	C	63.9
Arthur Ashe Charter School	C	64.4
Phillis Wheatley Community School	D	58.4
Langston Hughes Charter Academy	D	58.4
FirstLine Live Oak	D	50.9
Mary D. Coghill Charter School	F	44
Dr. Martin Luther King Charter School for Sci Tech	D	58.8
Joseph A. Craig Charter School	F	38.8
Audubon Charter School	B	86.7
Einstein Charter School at Village De L'Est	D	54.7
Benjamin Franklin High School	A	135.5
Alice M Harte Elementary Charter School	B	83.5
Edna Karr High School	A	92
Lusher Charter School	A	123.1
Eleanor McMain Secondary School	B	80.1
Robert Russa Moton Charter School	D	56.4
Lake Forest Elementary Charter School	A	117.2
New Orleans Charter Science and Mathematics HS	B	83.5
ENCORE Academy	D	57.5
Bricolage Academy	B	77.6
Wilson Charter School	C	68.4
Einstein Charter High School at Sarah Towles Reed	C	71
Einstein Charter Middle Sch at Sarah Towles Reed	D	56.5
Einstein Charter at Sherwood Forest	D	50.8
McDonogh 42 Charter School	T	60.9
Rosenwald Collegiate Academy	B	84.5
Dwight D. Eisenhower Charter School	C	63.8





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