



School Discipline and Pushout

Fact Sheet for the Recovery School District

In New Orleans and across the state of Louisiana, an alarming number of students are being denied educational opportunities as they are pushed out of school by degrading environments, harsh suspensions, over-policing, and other harmful policies. Excessive suspensions and expulsions do not reduce misbehavior but put students at greater risk of failing classes, dropping out and being pushed down the school to prison pipeline.

FFLIC recommends that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) reject Superintendent Pastorek's plan and develop a new plan to return the publicly funded schools to the local governing Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB). The "Return New Orleans Public Schools Transition Plan" should be developed by January 2011 and implemented starting in June 2011. Stakeholders should be a part of the process, including BESE, OPSB, leaders of the RSD, the State Superintendent, parents and community representatives.

Harsh and Excessive Suspensions and Expulsions

Suspensions:

- In the RSD schools, **1 out of every 4** students is suspended at least once a year, more than twice the statewide rate and **four times** the national rate.ⁱ
- During the 2008-2009 school year, the 33 RSD direct-run schools issued an average of **186** out-of-school suspensions each week.ⁱⁱ

Expulsions:

- During the 2007-2008 school year, RSD schools expelled **2.6 percent** of their student population, a rate that is twice that of Louisiana as a whole and **ten times** the national rate.ⁱⁱⁱ
- During the same time period, **6.5 percent** of RSD students were recommended for expulsion by their principals and missed days, weeks and even months of schools waiting for their hearing.^{iv}

Policing and Criminalization

RSD schools suffer from an extreme prison-like and criminalizing environment.

The RSD spent **\$690 per student** on security during the 2008-2009 school year, **15 times** the pre-Katrina spending on school security.^v

56 percent of students surveyed said that security guards never or rarely make students feel more safe in school. 17 percent said they sometimes make students feel more safe and only 17 percent said they always make students feel more safe.^{vi}

Charter Schools and Pushout

- Reports indicate that RSD charter schools are underreporting suspensions and expulsions. One practice involves encouraging parents to transfer their child to a traditional public school rather than accept a suspension or expulsion on the child's – or the school's – record.^{vii}
- Charter schools also exclude students with special needs by not providing special education services and discouraging parents from enrolling their children. Special education students make up 12 percent of the student population in traditional New Orleans public schools, but only 8 percent of students in the charter schools.^{viii}

Additional Sources:

ⁱ Louisiana State Department of Education, District Composite Report 2007-2008.

ⁱⁱ Data obtained from the Recovery School District, RSD District-Run Schools, 2008-2009. Calculation based on a school year of 36 weeks.

ⁱⁱⁱ Data obtained from the Recovery School District, Recommended Expulsions/Upheld Expulsions/Transferred Expulsions, 2007-2008.

^{iv} Id.

^v Recovery School District, FY 2009 Operating Budget, June 18, 2008,

http://www.rsdl.net/Libraries/Budget_Finance/FY_2009-RSD_OPERATING_BUDGET.sflb.ashx. Spending per student calculated by dividing 8.7 million by the total student population in RSD direct-run schools (12,700).

^{vi} Based on the results of 95 surveys collected by FFLIC from middle and high school students in 15 RSD public schools.

^{vii} Sarah Carr, "Students expelled from RSD charter schools disappear in state records," The Times-Picayune, February 09, 2009.

^{viii} Louisiana State Department of Education, District Composite Reports, 2007-2008. PBS News Hour, May 6, 2009.