

Recovery School District

Frequently Asked Questions

Source: <http://www.rsdla.net/InfoGlance/FAQs.aspx>

What is the Recovery School District?

The Recovery School District (RSD) is a special state school district administered by the Louisiana Department of Education. Created by legislation passed in 2003, the RSD is dedicated to turning underperforming schools into successful schools.

How does a state intervention work?

Schools that fail to meet state minimum academic standards for at least four consecutive years are eligible for state intervention. These schools can be placed into the RSD or retained by the local school board under the terms of a supervisory Memorandum of Understanding and related School Recovery Plan.

What is a Memorandum of Understanding?

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is a binding agreement between a local school district and the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) that outlines necessary actions that must be implemented at a failing school in order for it to avoid placement in the Recovery School District (RSD). If the district fails to comply with the terms of the MOU or fails to make progress toward the implementation of the school recovery plan during the first year of the agreement, the Department may exercise the option of placing the school in the RSD. The degree of oversight involved in each school's MOU will vary and will be based on the level of intervention Department officials deem necessary for the school to succeed.

What is receivership?

Receivership is a term often used to describe the outside management of a corporation during reorganization. In this situation, with approval from BESE, the Department will place 23 schools into a kind of receivership and the RSD will manage or supervise the schools while the local school districts are still the operators of the schools.

What is a School Recovery Plan?

A School Recovery Plan indicates how a district plans to turn around an academically unacceptable school. The plan describes what reorganization will occur at the school and how it will be implemented. The plan also describes how and why the proposed changes will lead to improved student performance.

Does the Recovery School District serve only New Orleans?

No. While the majority of the schools that have been placed in the RSD are in New Orleans, the district has responsibility for schools elsewhere in the state.

How many RSD schools are there?

In New Orleans, a total of 112 schools have been placed in the RSD. Five New Orleans schools were placed in the RSD in prior to Hurricane Katrina. As a result of legislation passed in November 2005, another 107 low-performing schools in New Orleans were transferred to the RSD. As the city repopulates and recovers from Katrina, schools are being repaired, rebuilt and reopened. Currently, 66 RSD schools are open in New Orleans, including 33 traditional public schools and 33 public charter schools. In February 2008, five schools -- four schools in East Baton Rouge Parish and one in Point Coupee Parish -- were placed into the RSD. Five other schools outside New Orleans were placed under MOUs. In January 2009, the state Board of Elementary Education voted to transfer an additional eight schools in East Baton Rouge Parish and two in Caddo Parish to the RSD, effective July 2009. Twenty three other RSD-eligible schools will be placed under MOUs.

Who oversees the RSD?

The State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) serves as the oversight board for the RSD.

How is the RSD funded?

The Recovery School District receives both the state and local portions of the Minimum Foundation Program funding and any federal funding that would follow the children who attend the schools in the district. In addition, grant funding and the support of national foundations further support the efforts to reform the schools in this district.

What happened to the existing local school board in Orleans Parish?

The Orleans Parish School Board has 17 public schools, including 12 charter schools. It also owns the school buildings and other assets of all the public schools in Orleans Parish. The RSD is working collaboratively with the OPSB in the rebuilding process.

How many public schools are open in New Orleans?

There are 85 public schools currently open in New Orleans, serving approximately 34,000 students. These schools are a mix of traditional public schools and public charter schools, primarily under the authority of the RSD and OPSB.

How long will schools be part of the Recovery School District?

Schools are placed in the Recovery School District for a minimum of five years. This length of time will allow the schools to fully establish the instructional practices and expectations necessary for success prior to re-entry in to the local school board. National research shows that it takes about 5 years to turn around a failing school.

What is the RSD doing to improve student achievement in its schools?

Superintendent Paul Vallas has implemented a number of reforms to improve student achievement, including an extended school day to provide more instructional time on task, a managed curriculum to ensure that students are taught to grade-level standards, and a sweeping classroom modernization program to create learning environments on par with more affluent districts. This includes interactive white boards in all core classrooms for grades 4 through 12, more than 4,000 laptop computers to high school students, and technology-based interventions, such as READ 180, for students who are struggling. In the first year of Superintendent Vallas' reforms, students in district-run schools showed across-the-board improvements at all grade levels tested.

How can I apply for a teaching position in an RSD school?

To apply for certified positions, you must complete the on-line job application at www.teachlouisiana.net. You must first create an account by completing the registration form found at <http://www.teachlouisiana.net/signup.asp>.

Once you have created an account login with your username and password, click Job Seekers. A link to the Online Job Application can be found on the menu on the left of the page. Complete the application and submit it to the Recovery School District.

To apply for other positions, obtain a Civil Service Pre-employment Application (Form SF10) by clicking on the link above. Forms also are available at the RSD office at 1641 Poland Avenue, New Orleans. Complete the application, include a letter of interest and resume and mail to:

Recovery School District
Attention: RSD Recruiting Team
1641 Poland Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70117-4529

What is the difference between a charter school and a traditional public school?

Charter schools are independent public schools that are operated under an initial 5-year charter granted by a local school board or by the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), subject to a third-year review. A charter school is required to meet student achievement and other results or have its charter revoked. Charter schools

also are required to participate in the state's accountability program, including high-stakes testing.

Charter types are:
Type 1 – Charter with a local school board (new start-up)
Type 2 – Charter with BESE (new start-up or conversion)
Type 3 – Charter with a local school board (conversion)
Type 4 – School Board Charter with BESE (new start-up or conversion)
Type 5 – Charter with BESE (pre-existing public school under the jurisdiction of the RSD)

How are charter schools funded?

RSD charter schools (Type 5) receive funding from the Minimum Foundation Program, which flows through the Recovery School District.

How many charter schools were operating in Orleans Parish before Hurricane Katrina?

Prior to Hurricane Katrina there were nine charter schools operating in Orleans Parish. Two were state charters: Milestone-Sabis Charter School and the International School; two were Type 1 charter (Orleans Parish School Board): Jim Singleton Charter School and New Orleans Charter Middle School; and five were Type 5 charters (Recovery School District): Pierre Capdau Charter School, Medard Nelson Charter School, Phillips (KIPP) College Prep, Sophie B. Wright Charter Middle, and Samuel Green Charter Middle School.

What is being done to rebuild public school facilities in New Orleans?

The recently approved School Facilities Master Plan for Orleans Parish, a joint effort of the Recovery School District and the Orleans Parish School Board, calls for the construction of 22 new and the renovation of 10 pre-k-8 and high schools in Phase One, to be implemented from now through approximately 2014. Phase one is a \$700 million initiative that is currently fully funded through a combination of recovery funds from FEMA and Community Development Block Grants. Through the Quick Start initiative, launched to jump start school construction in advance of the master plan, RSD has a number of rebuilding projects currently underway, including the construction of Langston Hughes Elementary, Andrew H. Wilson Elementary, Greater Gentilly High School and L.B. Landry High School. Upcoming projects include construction of a new Fannie C. Williams Elementary School and the renovation of Joseph A. Craig Elementary School.

By the end of phase one, nearly 75% of high school students and approximately 50% of PK-8 grade students will be in superior, 21st

Century facilities—phase one is the largest capital improvement program for schools in the city’s history

How were schools prioritized for re-building or repair?

Hurricane Katrina and the flooding that followed damaged more than 120 school buildings, some of them beyond repair. In the initial phase of recovery and reconstruction, schools that were the least damaged were repaired quickly to receive the number of children expected to return to public schools in New Orleans. For the 2007-2008 school year, 11 additional buildings were repaired and 10 temporary educational facilities (funded by FEMA) were built in order to provide additional student seats. The School Facilities Master Plan calls for new schools to replace temporary modular schools. It also recognizes that before Katrina, the city had more schools than the student population justified, and “right-sizes” the number of school buildings to meet student population projections.

Where can vendors and contractors learn of opportunities to bid on upcoming projects?

Louisiana Department of Education requests for proposals are available online on the State of Louisiana Procurement and Contract Network.