



NEW ORLEANS EXPULSION RATE NEARLY 20 PERCENT BELOW STATE AVERAGE, LOW RATE DRIVEN BY COORDINATION OF POLICY AND PROCESS AMONG SCHOOLS

NEW ORLEANS, LA (August 9, 2013) – The Recovery School District (RSD) today announced that the percentage of students being expelled from New Orleans public schools was nearly 20 percent below the state average. Beginning in 2012-13, charter and traditional school leaders across the RSD, Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB), and Type 2 charter schools worked together to establish a joint policy and coordinate a centralized process for student expulsions. Schools came together in response to feedback from parents, community members, and school staff that reform of discipline practices was needed.

“By facilitating the development of the centralized expulsion process, the RSD is proving its commitment to ensuring equity for our most underserved students in New Orleans,” said RSD Superintendent Patrick Dobard. “New Orleans’ system of autonomous schools came together voluntarily to develop a policy to address expulsions in a meaningful way. As a result, we now have an expulsion rate lower than the state. This successful effort to address excessive expulsions shows how effective we can be when the RSD, OPSB, and schools work together collaboratively to guarantee equity for students.”

This last school year, 90 of the 91 public schools in New Orleans developed and implemented a common expulsion policy and a process administered by the Recovery School District’s Student Hearing Office. Schools have increased their use of school-based interventions for behavioral issues rather than expelling students for minor offenses like uniform violations, for the vague offense of “willful disobedience,” or for simply being suspended multiple times. This policy change has resulted in most discipline concerns being addressed through school-based interventions rather than expulsions.

For the 2012-13 school year, only 272 students, or .57 percent, were expelled from New Orleans public schools compared to 0.7 percent statewide. This represents a difference of nearly 20 percent.

“Through the collaborative efforts of the RSD and OPSB we have developed a program that treats all students in a consistent and equitable manner,” said OPSB Superintendent Stan Smith. “Most importantly, we need to recognize the efforts of our teachers and school leaders who are creating a challenging learning environment for our students, distracting them from activities that could lead to discipline and expulsions.”

The Student Hearing Office also conducted 192 conference hearings with students, parents, the hearing officer, and school representatives. A conference hearing is a way for schools to proactively address significant challenging behaviors, including both expellable and non-expellable offenses, in an effort to avoid an expulsion at that time or in the future. Of these 192 students who received a conference hearing, only 3 were later expelled, demonstrating that the practice is an effective intervention that leads to reduced rates of expulsion.

“The community of educators in New Orleans continues to set an example for the rest of the country with the establishment of our centralized expulsion process,” said Ben Kleban, Founder and CEO of New Orleans College Preparatory Academies. “This new system increases the accountability for all schools to follow consistent expulsion policies with integrity, resulting in an expulsion rate that is lower than the state average and remarkable for a large urban school system. Once again, our education leaders have proven that we are focused on results above all else – and we’ll do whatever it takes to reach our goal of a high quality education for every child in New Orleans.”

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