

**Over the last eight years, the educators and students in Recovery School District (RSD) schools have made tremendous academic progress.** Despite the significant disadvantages our students face, they continue to outpace the rest of the state in growth on almost every metric of student achievement. Recent improvements in performance on the ACT and End of Course (EOC) exams illustrate both the tremendous improvement in our city’s high schools as well as the hard work that lies ahead.

Today, RSD schools enroll approximately half of the public high school students in New Orleans, with the remainder enrolled in schools under the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) or state authorized charter schools. Over 85 percent of RSD students are considered at-risk and are more likely than other high school students in New Orleans and statewide to be low-income, over-age, and academically behind.

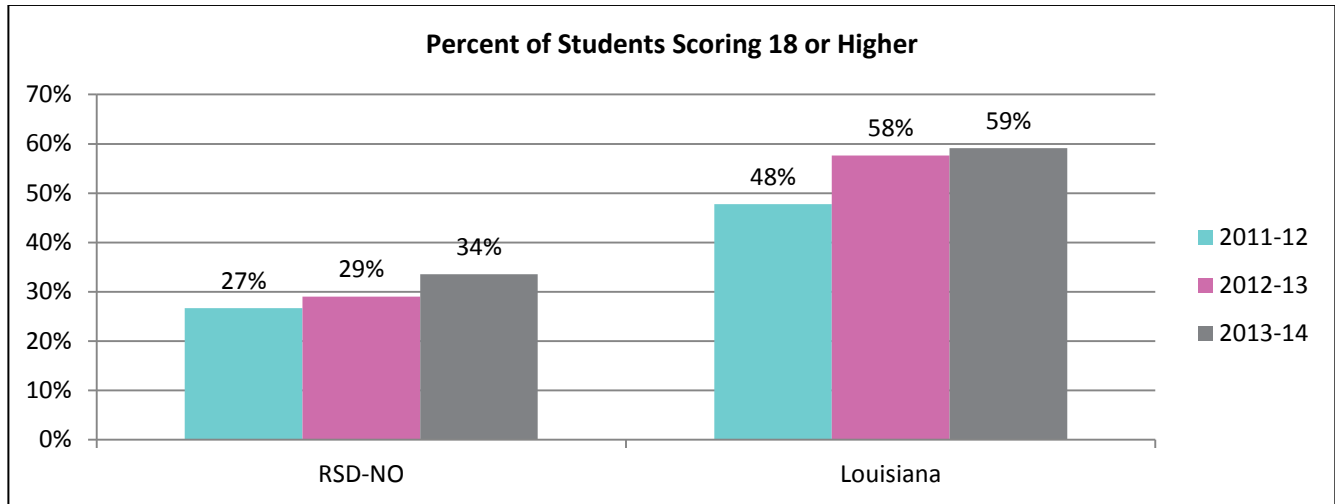
**Since 2009, the RSD has steadily improved the educational options available to our students by transforming the city’s lowest performing high schools.** The portfolio of schools available to today’s 9<sup>th</sup> grade cohort is dramatically better than that of five years ago.

**Public Schools in New Orleans Enrolling 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students**

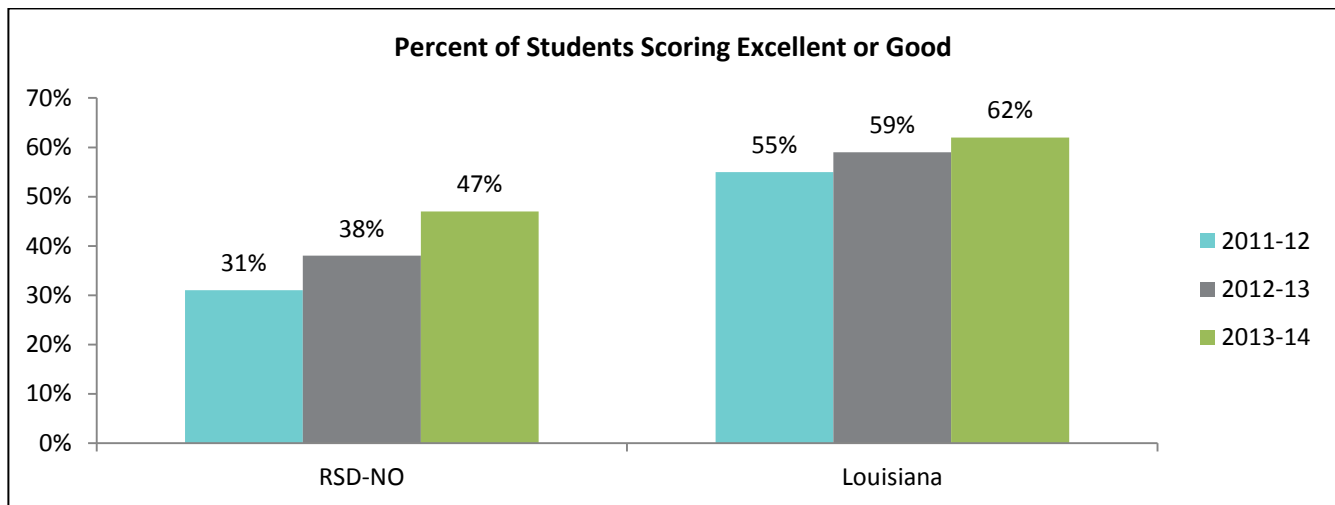
School Year	OPSB		RSD		All New Orleans	
	#	Avg. SPS (200 pt. Scale)	#	Avg. SPS (200 pt. Scale)	#	Avg. SPS (200 pt. Scale)
2007	11	N/A	13	N/A	24	N/A
2008	11	97.5	16	41.0	27	72.1
2009	10	103.3	21	48.0	31	75.6
2010	10	110.2	21	59.3	32	83.1
2011	10	130.0	20	68.2	33	97.6
2012	8	139.2	20	81.8	32	110.0
2013	8	131.1	17	87.4	29	109.1

**New Orleans High School Outcomes**

**More students are graduating from RSD high schools today prepared for success in college and careers than ever before.** Students scoring 18 or higher on the ACT increased five percentage points from 2013 to 2014 (29% to 34%). Furthermore, the percentage of RSD students scoring 17 or higher is up by six percentage points, from 35% to 41%. Seventeen is the minimum score to receive the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), a state scholarship program for Louisiana residents set to attend approved Louisiana institutions of higher education.



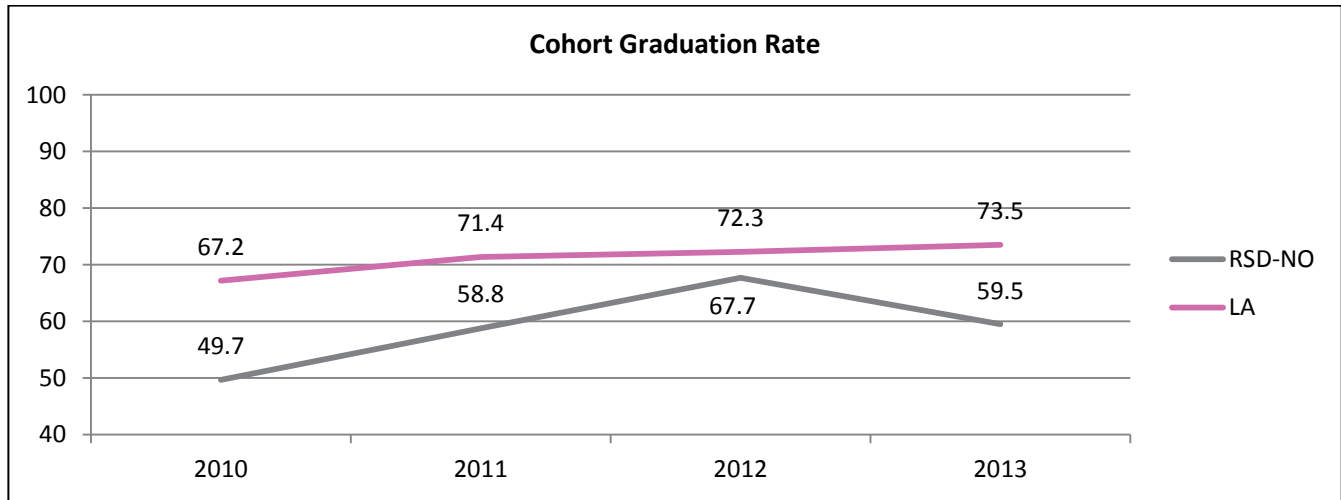
Student performance on the state’s End of Course exams similarly reflects our students’ continued progress. **The percentage of RSD high school students scoring Good or Excellent on EOCs grew 16 points from 2012 to 2014, more than double the 7 points of growth seen statewide.**



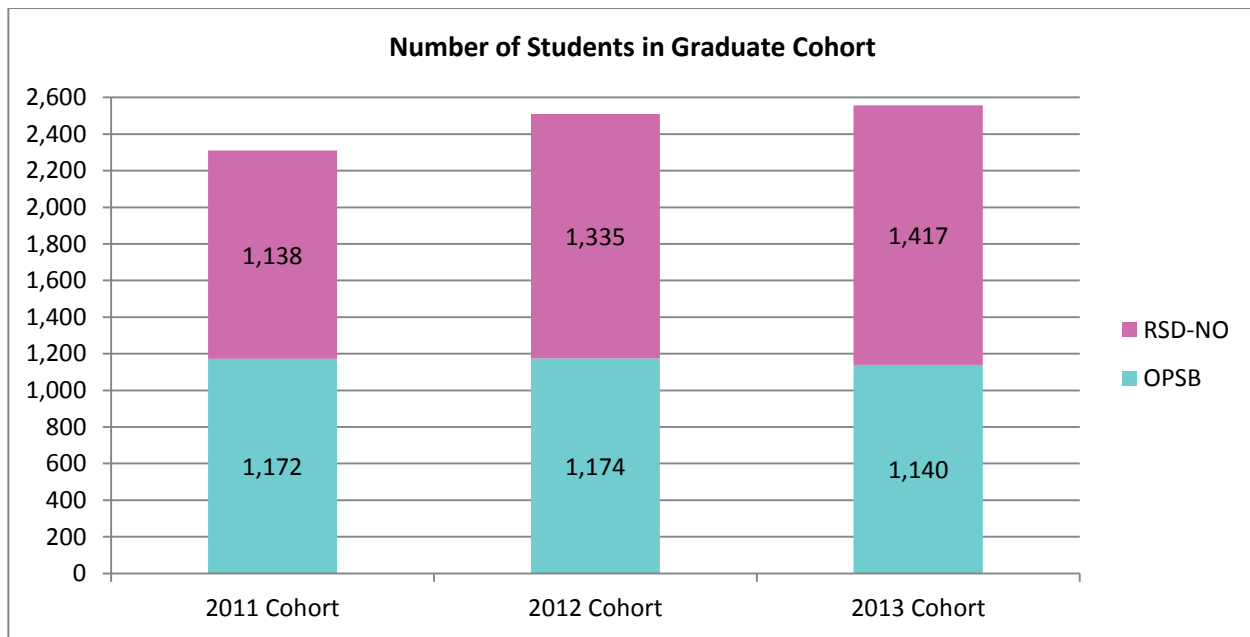
Though we have made significant progress in preparing our students for college and careers, we know we are still far from achieving our goal of every high school student graduating prepared for a college degree or a professional career. **While we have seen significant gains in the number of students graduating high school**

within four years, those gains have not been as consistent as other metrics of student academic achievement.

While the RSD has seen growth of 10 points in cohort graduation rate in only three years, from 50% in 2010 to 60% in 2013, the 2013<sup>1</sup> rate is down from 2012. The RSD's decline from 2012 to 2013 equates to approximately 140 fewer students completing high school within four years in 2013 than in 2012.



The RSD's high school population, and its percentage share of the city's high school population, have both grown over time. As the cohort size has increased, our schools are serving an increasing number of predominately low income, over-age, and academically behind students.



<sup>1</sup> The 2013 cohort graduation rate accounts for students who entered high school in 2009.

Consistent and substantial gains on the ACT and End of Course exams illustrate the improvement in our high school portfolio. **This leads us to ask a simple question: what changed over the course of these students' high school careers that contributed to a rise last year and a decline this year in the proportion of students graduating within four years?**

In 2008, the RSD enrolled a number of high school age students that were academically behind its on direct-run high school campuses, allowing them to take 8<sup>th</sup> grade-level courses in a school with students closer to their age. The RSD made this change in order to decrease the likelihood that the approximately 270 students would drop out of school. In effect, this led to the inclusion of some struggling students in the 2013 cohort graduation rate rather than 2012 rate. This shift likely resulted in an increase in the 2012 rate at the expense of the 2013 rate.

<b>RSD Direct-Run High Schools</b>	<b>2008 8<sup>th</sup> grade Enrollment</b>
Fredrick A. Douglass High School	56
G.W. Carver High School	46
John McDonogh Senior High School	26
Joseph S. Clark Senior High School	51
Sarah Towles Reed Senior High School	44
Walter L. Cohen High School	48
Total	271

### **Moving Forward: Strategies to Continue Gains**

**The RSD's strategy of transforming low-performing high schools by empowering high-quality charter operators has resulted in gains in academic achievement for our students.** This is despite an increase in the size and challenges of the student population served by our schools. We remain committed to this strategy while also continuing to launch new initiatives in support of continued improvement. We expect our high school results to continue to improve in the future due to the hard work of our schools and partners, including the specific efforts identified below:

1. **We are expanding our portfolio of high school options for students most at-risk of dropping out.** Two of our charter school organizations, ReNEW and The NET, serve approximately 600 such students across three schools. Despite taking in students who are years behind and systematically disadvantaged, these schools graduated 24-33% of their 2013 cohort within four years, with another third of the cohort still enrolled. We are actively recruiting operators to open or scale programs that support the needs of these students.

2. **We are expanding opportunities for high school students to prepare for high wage, high growth job specialties aligned to local industry demand.** Through participation in Louisiana's JumpStart program, the RSD is working with charter schools, local institutions of higher education, and industry partners to ensure that every student in a New Orleans public high school has access to the training necessary to secure entry into locally relevant, rewarding careers. We are confident this expansion of career and technical education offerings will serve as a catalyst to keep more students in school and graduating on time.
  
3. **We are working in partnership with New Schools for New Orleans and the charter school community to launch and expand access to specialized settings for students with significant and low-incidence disabilities.** These schools and programs will provide our students with the supports they need to graduate prepared for life after high school, regardless of their needs. Programs will launch and expand beginning with the 2014-15 school year.
  
4. **Finally, our continuous improvement in our elementary and middle schools ensures students arrive in high school better prepared for success.** Since 2008, RSD has doubled the percentage of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students scoring at or above grade level, from 23% in 2007 to 58% in 2014.