NEW ORLEANS-STYLE EDUCATION REFORM:

A Guide for Cities

LESSONS LEARNED 2004–2010

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PUBLIC IMPACT

Public Impact is a national education policy and management consulting firm based in Chapel Hill, NC. Public Impact is a team of researchers, thought leaders, tool-builders, and on-the-ground consultants who help education leaders and policymakers improve student learning in K–12 education. For more on Public Impact's work, please visit: www.publicimpact.com.

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TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Milestones In Education Reform

New Orleans, LA

Years 1991 to 2004 (pre-Katrina)

- 1991: First Teach For America (TFA) teachers placed in NOLA
- 1995: Louisiana's charter school law enacted (Act 192)
- 1997: Louisiana Accountability System established by Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE)
- 2001: Louisiana Practitioner Teacher Program (LPTP) by The New Teacher Project (TNTP) formed
- 2003: Recovery School District (RSD) legislation passed
- 2004: UNO opened Pierre-Capdau-UNO Charter School, the first charter takeover in Louisiana

Years 2005 & 2006

'05

- July: KIPP New Orleans Schools (KIPP Believe College Prep) opened first school
- August: Sophie B. Wright Charter School opened
- August 29: Hurricane Katrina
- November: RSD given control of most New Orleans schools
- Algiers Charter School Association founded

'06

- Middle School Advocates became Charter Management Organization (CMO) FirstLine Schools
- Leading for Excellence Training (led by Nancy Euske) brought to New Orleans
- Abacus Charter School Consulting expanded to New Orleans
- New Schools for New Orleans founded
- teachNOLA founded: first cohort placed

Years 2007 & 2008

'07

- Meeting House Solutions founded (becomes The High Bar in 2009)
- Building Excellent Schools (BES) began focus on New Orleans
- New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS) began work in New Orleans
- NSNO began charter incubation program
- Edison Learning opened first school in New Orleans
- LA Special Education Cooperative formed
- New Orleans Parent Organizing Network (NOLA PON) formed
- New Orleans College Preparatory Academies opened first school (NOCP)

'08

- Choice Foundation opened first school (Lafayette Academy)
- LA Association of Public Charter Schools founded
- Akili Academy opened
- Collegiate Academies opened first school (Sci Academy)

Years 2009 to 2011

'09

- The Achievement Network began work in New Orleans
- Step Literacy implemented in New Orleans
- Charter cap removed from Louisiana's charter school law
- NSNO began focus on Charter Management Organization (CMO) expansion

'10

- 4.0 Schools launched in New Orleans
- Match Teacher Coaching started
- NSNO-incubated CMO, ReNEW, opened first schools (Batiste Cultural Arts Academy and SciTech Academy)

'11

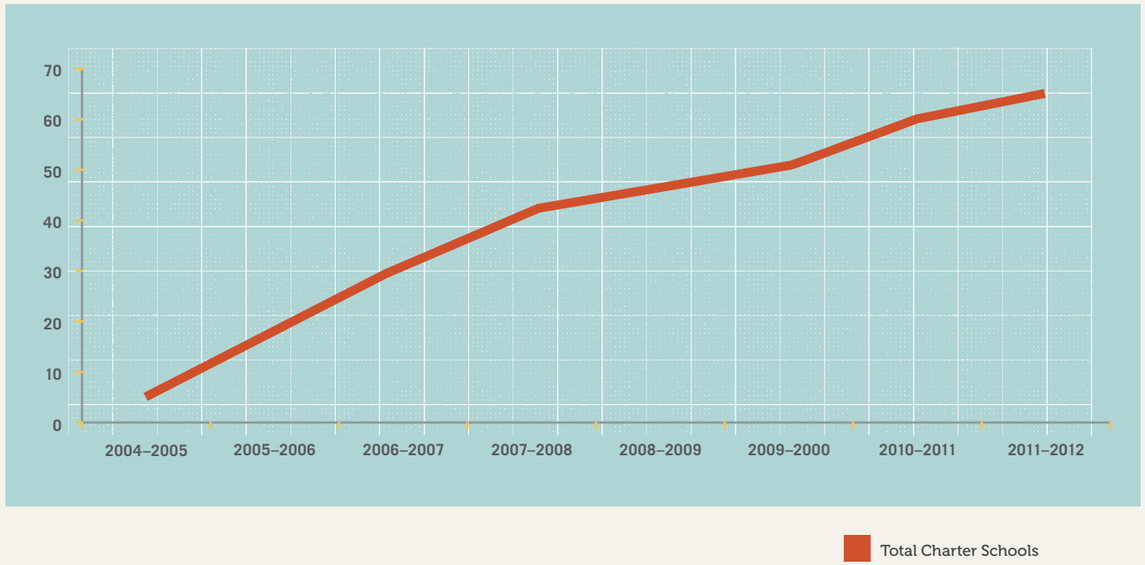
- University of New Orleans (UNO) CMO became Capital One/New Beginnings
- NSNO-incubated CMO, Crescent City Schools, opened first school (Harriet Tubman Charter School)

Number and Types of New Orleans Schools

Year	RSD Charter Schools	RSD Direct-Run Schools	OPSB Charter Schools	OPSB Direct-Run Schools	BESE Charter Schools	Total Charter Schools	Total Schools
2004-2005	1	n/a	2	122	2	5	127
2005-2006	4	3	12	4	2	18	25
2006-2007	17	24	12	5	2	31	60
2007-2008	28	34	12	5	2	42	81
2008-2009	33	33	12	5	2	47	85
2009-2010	37	33	12	4	2	51	88
2010-2011	46	23	11	6	3	60	89
2011-2012	49	16	11	6	5	65	87

RSD=Louisiana Recovery School District, OPSB=Orleans Parish School Board, BESE=Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

Total Charter Schools—Growth Over Time



Note: These numbers, except for 2011–12, represent the number of schools open at the END of each school year.
Source: Tulane University Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives

This guide's purpose

New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO) commissioned this guide, in collaboration with the Louisiana Recovery School District and the Tennessee Achievement School District, to meet the Investing in Innovation (i3) requirement that grantees disseminate the lessons of their work. To create this guide, NSNO worked with Public Impact to build on prior research and conduct interviews with people across the New Orleans education sector: school leaders, state and district officials, charter leaders, support organization leaders, education reformers and experts, reporters, community-based organization leaders, and philanthropists.

Specifically, the guide has two overarching purposes:

1. To capture the insights and lessons learned from the city's effort to develop a choice-based, predominantly charter system;
2. To aid other cities' efforts to build on New Orleans' success by providing tools and resources to guide their initial thinking, early work, and longer-term planning.

Many urban centers in the United States face similar academic crises to the one New Orleans experienced before Katrina: dismal academic results, entrenched district practices limiting opportunities for reform and innovation, and generations of students leaving school ill-prepared for college and career. New Orleans' current system of schools—unique in the country—has achieved strong academic gains and warrants a deeper look at what New Orleans-style reforms can teach other districts struggling to remedy widespread school system failure.

This guide is intended for a diverse audience, including state, district, and city leaders, policymakers, and advisors in cities considering dramatic charter-based reforms. It will also be useful for cities considering more modest charter-based school reforms focused on steadily growing the high-quality charter market share by replacing low-performing schools.

Foreword

In 2005, less than 5 percent of New Orleans public school students attended charter schools; by 2011, that figure rose to nearly 80 percent. In six years, New Orleans transformed the role of government in schooling. This structural shift—from government as school operator to school regulator—empowered thousands of excellent educators. It gave families choices. And it dramatically increased student learning.

Before Hurricane Katrina, 62 percent of public school students in New Orleans attended a school designated as "failing" by state performance standards. In contrast, in the 2011–12 school year, 13 percent of students attend a failing school based on the 2005 definition of failing schools. In 2011, Louisiana raised its standards. Under this new measure, 40 percent of students attend failing schools. Even with these higher expectations (which we applaud) we expect the percentage of students attending failing schools to be reduced to less than 5 percent by 2016.

New Orleans has also decreased its performance gaps against state averages by more than half—closing the proficiency performance gap by 13 percentage points from 2005 to 2011. In 2011, the city's schools posted the highest student performance scores to date—maintaining its number 1 ranking in growth across the state. A rigorous evaluation by CREDO (the Center for Research on Education Outcomes at Stanford University) determined that the percentage of effective open-enrollment charter schools in New Orleans is more than three times the national average.

New Orleans overhauled its school system under unique circumstances. A hurricane and the resulting levee failures ravaged the city. Schools were closed for more than six months. The district laid off every teacher, which led to a lawsuit that remains in court. Hurricane Katrina also caused more than a thousand deaths, destroyed people's homes, inflicted lasting psychological trauma on families, and caused thousands of children to miss a year of school. Yet, in the aftermath of the nation's worst natural disaster, students increased their academic performance for five years in a row. This is a testament to human resiliency.

One hurricane should be enough. The New Orleans educational system that now exists should be evaluated on its merits. If others believe what we believe—that this new system of schools will lead to continual achievement gains—then adults in other educational settings should replicate these reforms. We do not underestimate the difficulty of transformational change. But such change has occurred in our country before, and it can occur again.

If others believe what we believe—that this new system of schools will lead to continual achievement gains—then adults in other educational settings should replicate these reforms.

The New Orleans system is imperfect. Thousands of children graduate from high school unprepared for college and careers. Government has yet to fully execute on its regulatory responsibilities. Too many students are poorly served. But it is our collective belief that schools will continue to get better. We believe this because we are committed to an extremely powerful idea: Empowered educators can transform students' lives. This core idea circumvents many current debates, such as the use of value-add performance evaluations, the composition of collective bargaining contracts, or the optimal length of the school day. Our answer to these questions is to let educators decide and hold them accountable for results. If you take anything away from this guide, this should be it.

It is worth repeating: Educators, not bureaucrats, are best positioned to find the answers to our nation's most complicated educational problems. This is why we believe in autonomy and accountability generally, and charter schools specifically. Right now, charter schools are the most politically and financially viable structure for ensuring educator empowerment.

We believe that many urban districts in the nation could develop high-performing charter schools to annually transform the bottom 5 percent of schools in their system. In 10 years, this strategy would lead to a majority charter sector in a city, as well as to subsequent dramatic increases in student achievement. If numerous cities undertook this course, our urban education landscape could be transformed over the next decade. Of course, political realities make the math more complicated. But we hope this guide will serve cities who wish to begin this difficult work.

Tens of thousands of students, families, teachers, and leaders make up the New Orleans system, and we are in no position to speak for all of them. However, part of our Investing in Innovation (i3) federal grant requires us to document the recent transformation of the New Orleans school system. As such, we have worked to glean the real lessons from this collective effort so that other cities can learn from New Orleans' successes and failures. We hope this guide serves as a tribute to the immense work of New Orleans' students and educators.

Neerav Kingsland, Chief Strategy Officer
New Schools for New Orleans
January 2012

Sarah Newell Udsin, Founder and CEO
New Schools for New Orleans

The New Orleans system: principles, results, and history

PRINCIPLES OF THE SYSTEM

New Orleans is functionally the nation's first charter school district, with nearly 80 percent of public school students attending charter schools in the 2011–12 school year. This number is expected to rise to more than 90 percent in the coming years. The development of the New Orleans system involved a radical restructuring of the roles and responsibilities of nearly all stakeholders. NSNO identifies five overarching principles that define the New Orleans decentralized system of autonomous schools:

1. **The Role of Government:** Government should regulate and monitor, and rarely directly run, schools. Most significantly, government must ensure equity across the system.
2. **The Expansion of Great Schools:** Great schools should be given the opportunity to replicate and serve more students.
3. **The Transformation of Failing Schools:** Academically unacceptable schools should close or be transformed by new operators.
4. **Family Choice:** Families should have choices among schools for their children. Different children will thrive in different education environments, and children should not be assigned to schools without consideration of their own family's desires.
5. **Educator Choice:** Educators should have choices in employment, so each educator can work in a school that aligns with his or her educational and organizational philosophies—and so that schools must compete for the best educators.

Underpinning the entire system is the notion that empowering great educators within an effective governmental accountability regime can lead to transformational results. New Orleans is not a command-and-control district model. Moreover, the New Orleans system has also evolved away from the district-run school autonomy model—a strategy that runs the risk of significant central office interference and reduces entrepreneurial activity by keeping all activity under government management. Great entrepreneurs do not launch organizations that are directly managed by the government. If districts truly believe in autonomy, they should grant real autonomy.

Given this structure, the New Orleans system no longer relies on the strength of an individual superintendent. Rather, it relies on entrepreneurship, innovation, accountability, and empowerment to drive continual progress. In making this shift, New Orleans has moved its education system closer to the more dynamic sectors of our economy. Equally as important, the city has given power back to its educators and families.

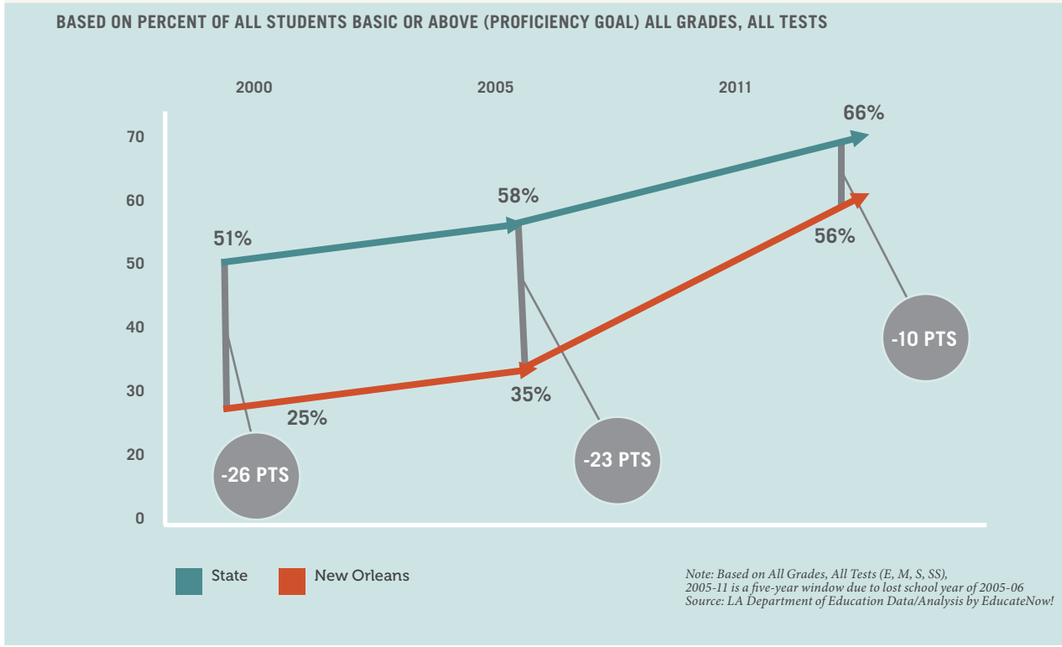
Results Through 2011

NEW ORLEANS CHARTER SCHOOLS HAVE ACHIEVED IMPRESSIVE GROWTH IN STUDENT AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE:

+ New Orleans decreased the city-state achievement gap by more than half—from 23 percentage points in 2005 to 10 percentage points in 2011 *(see Figure 1)*.
+ The District Performance Score (DPS), a measure based on student proficiency, attendance, dropout rates, and graduation rates in all New Orleans schools, increased 49 percent since the storm.*
+ Between 2005 and 2010, the dropout rate for all New Orleans schools was cut in half.**
+ The performance gap between African-American students in New Orleans and all of Louisiana was reduced by 100 percent.†
+ The rate of growth, particularly in Recovery School District (RSD) schools, far outpaced state growth averages; the percentage of students at grade level in the RSD increased by 25 percent between 2007 and 2011, compared with a 7 percent average state increase during the same period.[1]
+ The percentage of New Orleans students attending schools identified by the state as "Academically Unacceptable" reduced from 62 percent in 2005 to 10 percent in 2011 based on the 2005 definition. If the 2011 standard is used, the percentage of students attending academically unacceptable schools reduces from 78 percent in 2005 to 40 percent in 2011 *(see Figure 2)*.

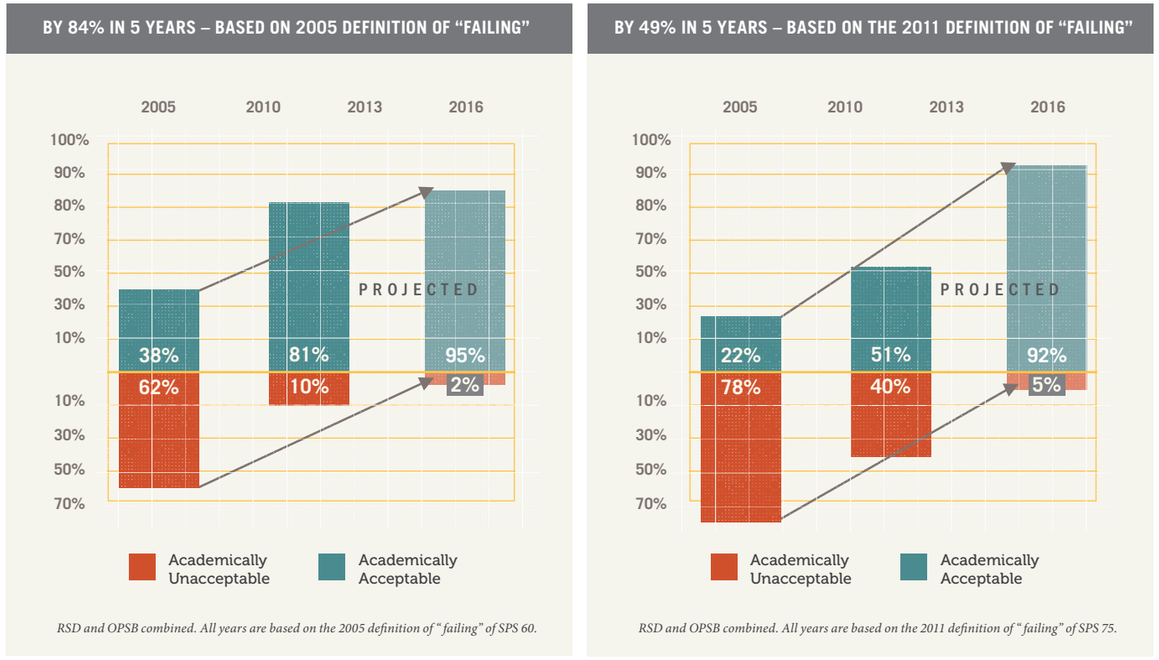
Sources:
** Jacobs, L. (2011, November 1). It's Official—The DPS for New Orleans is 83.2. Educate Now! Retrieved from: http://educatenow.net/2011/11/01/its-official-the-dps-for-new-orleans-is-83-2/*
*** Jacobs, L. (2011, April 3). New Orleans Dropout Rate Plummets 31%. Educate Now! Retrieved from: http://educatenow.net/2011/04/03/new-orleans-dropout-rate-plummets-31/*
† Vanacore, A. (2011, August 7). New Orleans public school achievement gap is narrowing. The Times-Picayune. Retrieved from: http://www.nola.com/education/index.ssf/2011/08/new_orleans_public_school_achi.html

Figure 1: New Orleans Closes City vs. State Proficiency Gap by 56% in 5 Years



1. Louisiana Department of Education. (2011). *The Recovery School District, Louisiana's turnaround zone: Answering the urgency of now.* Retrieved from http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/18099.pdf

Figure 2:
New Orleans Reduces the Percentage of Students Attending Academically Unacceptable Schools



Note: 2005-11 noted as a five-year window due to lost school year in 2005-2006. 2016 projected based on projected impact from i3 funds and historical growth trends. Not all schools were rated 2005-11.
Source: LA Department of Education Enrollment and SPS Data 2005-2011.

The improvement in New Orleans schools has been remarkable, but the work is far from done. More than half (56 percent) of New Orleans students performed proficiently or better in the 2010–11 school year. Compared with 35 percent of students at grade level before the storm, this is a strong improvement, but few should be satisfied with nearly half of the student population still struggling to meet basic proficiency standards.[2]

HISTORY: PRE-KATRINA NEW ORLEANS

In 2005, the New Orleans public school system, governed by the local Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB), was the lowest performing school district in Louisiana. Almost two-thirds of New Orleans public school students attended failing schools. Parental choice was limited. The district went through eight superintendents in eight years and was nearly bankrupt. Schools were in poor physical condition due to lack of proper maintenance. The FBI had set up an office inside the OPSB's building to investigate multiple cases of fraud.[3]

While dedicated educators worked to sow seeds of change, the city did not empower and support reform-minded educational entrepreneurs and charter operators. A dearth of private-sector industries and limited local philanthropy further hindered reform efforts. The small number of charter schools that existed before Katrina drew on talent from within Louisiana and a fledgling relationship with Teach For America (TFA), but dramatic growth seemed unlikely. The legislation that created the RSD, however, was enacted before Hurricane Katrina in 2003, and it was this legislation that allowed for the state takeover of New Orleans schools after the storm.

HISTORY: EMERGING CHARTER SECTOR (2005–2009)

Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans shortly after schools opened for the 2005–06 school year, and the storm wiped out the New Orleans school system—100 of its 127 school buildings were destroyed, and students and teachers evacuated to other cities and states. Already strapped for cash, and without a student body to serve, OPSB was forced to terminate its contracts with all teachers, effectively disbanding the teachers' union. In November 2005, the RSD's scope was expanded, and it took over nearly all schools in New Orleans to meet the needs of the returning student population.

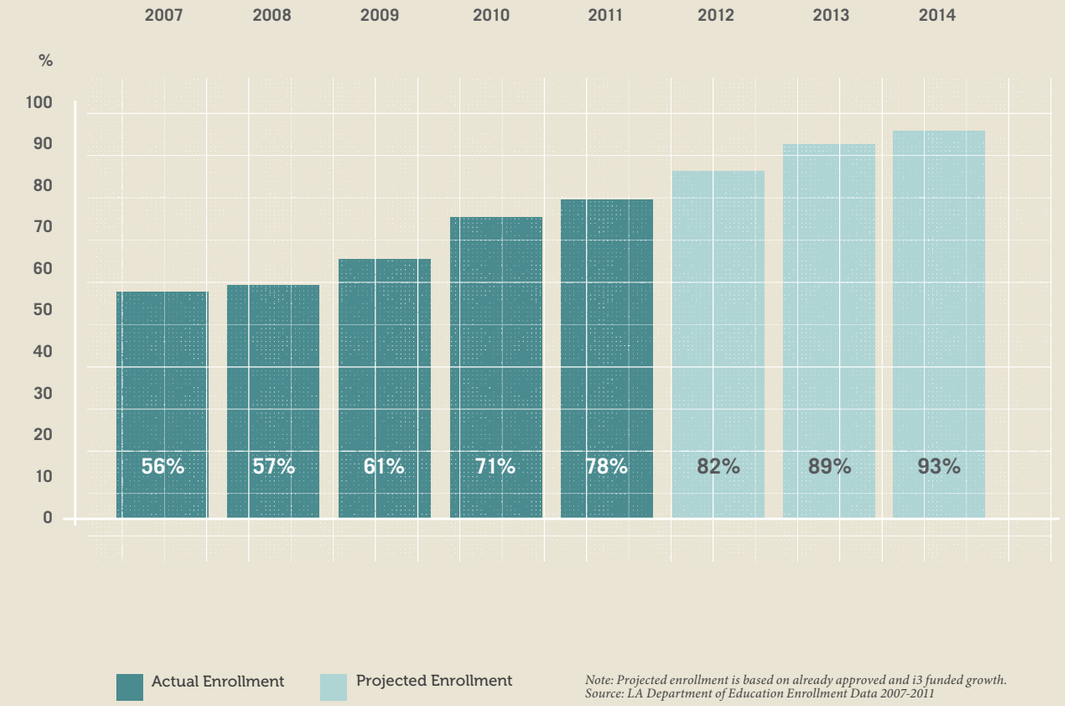
The RSD's primary aim was to charter as many of these schools as possible. In the initial chartering process, however, the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) approved only six operators out of 44 applicants to open RSD charter schools. The remainder of the schools opened in the 2005–06 school year were "direct-run schools" operated by the RSD. Of the schools remaining under OPSB's control, the majority chose to convert to charter schools, ultimately reducing the number of schools directly operated by OPSB to only five. Across the city, neighborhood attendance zones were abolished, and parents began to choose which schools their children attended.

Quickly, the New Orleans educational system became a magnet for educational entrepreneurs, both locally and nationally. Veteran New Orleans educators led the first wave of turnaround charter schools. Today, many of the city's best charter schools boast experienced leadership, and the city's early gains were driven in large part by their work, as well as by the other veteran educators they attracted back to the city. As the reform work progressed, additional school leaders, teachers, and entrepreneurs moved to the city. In New Orleans, educators had choices about where to work. Most important, they had control over how to work. Such total freedom existed in no other public education system in the United States.

2. Louisiana Department of Education. (2011). *The Recovery School District, Louisiana's turnaround zone: Answering the urgency of now.* Retrieved from http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/18099.pdf
3. Horne, J. (2011, spring). *New Schools in New Orleans. Education Next.* 11(2). Retrieved from http://educationnext.org/new-schools-in-new-orleans/

Figure 3: Nearly 80% of Students in New Orleans Attend Charter Schools

AVERAGE YEARLY CHARTER MARKET GROWTH OF 5.6 PERCENTAGE POINTS SINCE 2007



Note: Projected enrollment is based on already approved and i3 funded growth.
Source: LA Department of Education Enrollment Data 2007-2011

Alternative certification organizations such as TFA and The New Teacher Project (TNTP) recruited annual cohorts of highly motivated teachers. TFA was fundamental in supporting New Orleans' leadership needs. Today, numerous schools, nonprofits, and governmental offices are led by TFA alumni, including John White, RSD Superintendent.

Individual schools and networks became magnets for leaders and teachers as well. Well-run charter school operators attracted talent due to mission-driven leadership, and they retained talent through sound management. "In 2011, now that we've had success, the talent comes to us," one charter school leader noted. "They self-identify. It gets easier every year."

4. The Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives at Tulane University. (2008). *The state of public education in New Orleans: 2008 report executive summary.* New Orleans: Author. Retrieved from http://www.coweninstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/2008State-of-Public-Ed-ExecSummary.pdf4.

The number of charter schools grew steadily over the next four years. By the 2008–09 school year, just three years after the storm, 61 percent of the city's public school students attended charter schools. Certain charter schools, such as those operated by the KIPP network, achieved breakthrough results and raised the standard for all schools. Though the early years were chaotic—with families still recovering from the storm, and school resources and staff in short supply—early gains in student achievement bolstered efforts to continue the chartering of RSD schools.[4]

Sarah Usdin, the founder and CEO of NSNO, described the early reform effort after the storm: "There was a broad spectrum of deep commitment to ensuring public education would be done differently. There was no one person who drove what happened here, there were many people taking roles in setting high standards." Perhaps most striking was the political alignment maintained through the efforts: Both Democratic and Republican officials championed the need for reforms.

HISTORY: MATURE MARKET (2009–PRESENT)

In 2010, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute ranked New Orleans as the most reform-friendly city in the country.

Figure 4: Thomas B. Fordham Institute Ranked New Orleans #1 of 30 Major Cities

BASED ON 6 CRITICAL REFORM CATEGORIES

City	Final Rank	Human Capital	Financial Capital	Charter Environment	Quality Control	District Environment	Municipal Environment
New Orleans, LA	1	2	1	1	8	2	18
Washington, D.C.	2	1	2	2	5	5	19
New York City, NY	3	3	8	10	2	8	13
Denver, CO	4	5	7	8	14	10	4
Jacksonville, FL	5	14	21	11	1	3	8

Source: "America's Best (and Worst) Cities for School Reform: Attracting Entrepreneurs and Change Agents" on www.edexcellence.net

The innovations in government, human capital, and charter schools worked, albeit imperfectly. In a nation that suffers from mixed charter school quality, relative charter school quality in New Orleans is strong, as measured by a rigorous evaluation by CREDO (the Center for Research on Education Outcomes at Stanford University).

Figure 5:
CREDO Assessment of New Orleans Open-Enrollment Charters Demonstrates Significant Results

2009–2011 ASSESSMENT COMPARED TO NATIONAL AVERAGES IN 2009 STUDY

Note: New Orleans data based on open-enrollment charter school achievement data only.
Source: LA Department of Education Data/Analysis by Center for Education Outcomes at Stanford University (CREDO)

Yet the systems to support quality schools are incomplete. New Orleans policymakers are now, and perhaps belatedly, building comprehensive citywide systems to effectively govern schools. Furthermore, the charter sector as a whole has yet to build the human capital and instructional capacity to achieve citywide college and career readiness for all students. Although the structural reform is nearly fully developed, neither excellence nor equity has been achieved.

Specifically, New Orleans faces the following significant challenges:

1. **Human Capital:** New Orleans must maintain a sustainable supply of high-quality educators while increasing its focus on educator development. Achievement gains will plateau if educator skill does not increase. Education leaders at the city, charter management organization, and school levels must rethink educator roles, career paths, and development to promote both retention and growth.

2. **School Development:** New Orleans must both transform the remaining low-performing direct-run and charter schools, and increase the number of college and career preparatory operators. Overall charter sector quality is relatively strong compared with traditional public school performance, but absolute student achievement remains low. Additionally, the city needs diverse school options—including career and technical opportunities with high academic standards—to meet the needs of all students.

3. **Citywide Structures:** New Orleans must establish a long-term governance model to effectively support a decentralized system, with a greater focus on charter oversight and equity assurance. All students must be served at the highest levels to ensure equity and access. Families need support to navigate the decentralized system, and communities must be engaged to build citywide support for continued growth of high-quality charters.

The Role of New Schools for New Orleans

In a decentralized system, nongovernmental entities serve a critical role. New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO) formed after the storm to accelerate and support the city's educational reforms. NSNO—with other citywide and statewide organizations, such as the Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools, Educate Now, the Cowen Institute, and the Urban League—has assumed many government-related functions, including resource coordination, policy development, and system-level strategic visioning.

NSNO works across three areas: strategic leadership, school development, and human capital support organizations. The Investing in Innovation (i3) award, which brought $33.6 million ($28 million in federal funds and $5.6 million in private matching funds) to New Orleans and Tennessee, provides a strong example of how NSNO has influenced the reform efforts. The New Orleans i3 Project, which was developed with the RSD, lays out a charter strategy in which the lowest performing 5 percent of schools will be transformed each year by charter operators. All told, the bottom quarter of New Orleans schools will be turned around over the course of the five-year grant. The i3 model aligns government, the nonprofit sector, and charter schools to execute an aggressive strategy to serve the city's most at-risk students.

NSNO's strategy, while remaining broadly consistent since its inception, has changed as the city's context has evolved and is detailed below:

Key Strategy	Phase 1 (2006–2010)	Phase 2 (2010–present)
STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP	+ Supported a high bar for charter authorization, including failing school closure + Promoted charter school development as a key strategy	+ Support RSD in building system-wide processes to ensure equity + Promote citywide focus on academic excellence to prevent settling for "better than before"
SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT	+ Incubated 10 stand-alone schools to increase number of quality operators in the city	+ Primarily invest in existing operators with a proven track record to expand their reach + Incubate limited number of new operators to continue innovation + Support the community engagement process for transforming underperforming schools
HUMAN CAPITAL SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS	+ Invested primarily in teacher and leader recruitment organizations	+ Increase investment in educator development organizations + Maintain reduced levels of recruitment investment support

As policymakers consider adopting New Orleans-style reforms, they should devote significant attention to building a comprehensive, nongovernmental system of organizations that support charter school quality and growth. Government should not have sole responsibility for all policy, investment, and strategy functions.

Key steps to building a choice-based, predominantly charter system

The remainder of this report will focus on how city policymakers can build a choice-based, predominantly charter system. Note that execution often trumps strategy when making significant change to major city structures; thus, this guide should not be interpreted as a simple checklist. Rather, it details overarching principles and strategies. Implementation will drive the results. The importance of strong leadership at all levels should not be underestimated: These efforts require deep educational and management expertise, plus significant doses of grit and determination.

Key lessons from New Orleans will be highlighted throughout with a fleur-de-lis symbol (⚜).

Developing and maintaining a high-performing charter sector demands three critical components. Other components follow later in this guide, but a charter-based strategy must have these three, detailed below:

1. **Governance and accountability:** Governmental oversight, strict accountability systems, and sound charter authorization form the foundation of the New Orleans system.

2. **Human capital:** Educators' skill will determine how much students learn. School systems must build and sustain a consistent supply of high-quality teachers, leaders, board members, and entrepreneurs.

3. **Charter school development:** Great educators will thrive in well-managed and innovative institutions. The development of effective charter operators will impact the long-term performance gains of the system.

KEY STRATEGY #1: GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Governance and Accountability: Action Steps

- Create transparent systems for accountability with a clear threshold for the takeover of failing schools;
- Publicize these systems in a manner by which families can easily understand school quality;
- Establish the mechanism (an RSD or other recovery-like structure) for replacing low-performing schools with high-potential charters;
- Establish and protect a strong state charter law; and
- Use objective and independent authorizing standards and processes to ensure quality control.

Charter districts must have effective governance. A charter district is a highly regulated market in which governments approve new entrants' business plans and set performance metrics for those new entrants to continue operating. Well-designed charter school markets are built upon sound authorizing, governance, and accountability systems. Reform advocates must ensure that these systems have high standards for school quality and incorporate mechanisms that allow for failing schools to be turned over to high-quality charter operators.

The remainder of this section, while detailing governmental strategies, does not provide significant guidance on how to build initial political support for charter reforms. Such support is vital, but because the politics of school reform vary across the nation, this guide provides little advice on navigating local politics. That said, the growth of charter schools is perhaps the only significant educational reform strategy that garners bipartisan support. A recent federal charter school bill passed the House of Representatives by a 365-to-54 vote. The powerful idea of educator empowerment, it seems, can gain support from both major political parties.

⚜ To date, New Orleans reforms have received strong backing from a Republican and a Democratic president, a Republican and a Democratic governor, and Louisiana Republican and Democratic U.S. senators. While numerous political threats remain at both the state and local level, both supporters and skeptics of the reforms have embraced the general idea of educator empowerment. Few politicians publicly call for a complete return to the former system. However, the education reforms have not developed into a full-fledged political movement, and the reforms would be on a sturdier foundation had political organizing taken place at the outset.

CREATE TRANSPARENT SYSTEMS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY WITH A CLEAR BAR FOR TAKEOVER OF FAILING SCHOOLS

A statewide accountability system with clear performance benchmarks should set the rules for all school operators, district and charter alike. With clearly communicated standards, communities and parents can assess schools based on student achievement. Letter grades and other easily understandable labels can inform parent choice. When measures of school quality are clearly publicized, they become the basis for all school improvement.

Systems must also be built to track individual student growth, which provides additional information to schools and policymakers. Government, rather than individual schools, is in the best position to collect, aggregate, and report on school system-wide data.

No matter the accountability system, this effort requires a clear bar to measure acceptable performance and to communicate that schools that fail to meet the bar in a reasonable period will be taken over, closed, or turned over to a charter operator.

ESTABLISH THE MECHANISM FOR REPLACING LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS WITH HIGH-POTENTIAL CHARTERS

Political and constituent pressures make turning around failing schools difficult. A superintendent reporting to an elected board will generally be in the weakest position to force change and may preside over a lethargic bureaucracy. Instead, an outside entity authorized by the state to take over schools has the best position to break long-standing patterns of failure,[5] especially given that this entity can build a new governmental culture.

RSD-type entities are crucial, but these state-run turnaround entities are still new—especially those that take over individual schools rather than whole districts. In Louisiana, the RSD was established in 2003 to take over or "recover" failing schools across the state. Entities modeled off the RSD exist in Michigan and Tennessee, but numerous design questions remain. Regardless of the local approach, the creation of an entity to take over failing schools across the state is an extremely important structural innovation that should be replicated in some fashion.

When developing an RSD-like structure, Louisiana's experience suggests several questions to consider (see box "Questions to Consider When Creating An RSD-like Entity").

Another option for cities or states considering an RSD-like entity is to create the RSD as an entity under executive control. Executive control, under a mayor's office or governor's office, may provide more autonomy and flexibility to the agency, but also leaves it more vulnerable to political shifts and dependent on a supportive elected official.

- Numerous interviewees noted that in hindsight they would not have had the RSD direct-run any schools, but would instead have had the RSD focus exclusively on charters. They questioned the assumption that a state takeover entity will ever be a better operator of schools than any other bureaucracy, especially given the difference in performance between RSD charter and direct-run schools. However, others noted that the RSD's willingness to directly operate schools in the early stage of the reforms gave time for the charter market to develop. Leaders in Michigan and Tennessee are grappling with this question now; their direct-run strategies will provide more insights.

ESTABLISH AND PROTECT A STRONG STATE CHARTER LAW

A strong charter law must be a top priority in any charter strategy. The law should include provisions for charter autonomy and set provisions for strong authorizing practices; should not establish caps on high-quality charter growth; and should provide equitable funding, including facilities for charter schools.

State charter associations can support a proactive legislative agenda to strengthen existing charter laws and protect them from efforts to chip away at charter autonomies. Associations can successfully advocate for removal of charter caps, defend charter school autonomies, and increase awareness and support of charter schools among legislators and other influencers.

- The Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools, led by Caroline Roemer Shirley, has been a key advocate for charters. The association's education and outreach efforts have been instrumental in eliminating the charter cap, maintaining supportive finance laws, and generally protecting charter autonomies.

IMPLEMENT HIGH CHARTER AUTHORIZING STANDARDS AND OVERSIGHT

Substandard authorizing will render charter reforms ineffectual. Authorizing agencies must set high standards at all stages, from the initial granting of a charter, to monitoring and renewal procedures, to the closing of charter schools that fail to perform to high standards. Low-quality charters can scuttle efforts to build demand for new charter schools. Authorizers benefit by developing a committed staff aligned with the principles of having strong authorizing practices, communicating a clear mission, collaborating with other authorizers, and having the willingness to close failing charter schools[6] (see "Recommended practices for charter oversight").

Questions to Consider When Creating An RSD-like Entity:

- What is the long-term governance plan for schools under the RSD? Should schools return to the local district?
- Should the RSD be under legislative or executive control, or under a nongovernmental organization or other third party?
- Will the RSD directly authorize charter schools? If not, who will?
- Will the RSD charter all schools, or will some be direct-run?
- Does the RSD have the resources to directly operate schools, especially if they are spread out across a large geographic area?
- How will resources such as facilities be allocated to schools?

- In Louisiana, the state board of education contracted with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) to help design and conduct the charter application review process immediately after Hurricane Katrina. As evidence of the strong authorizing standards put in place, in the first year after Hurricane Katrina, only six of 44 charter applications were approved.[7] Since Katrina, five low-performing charter schools have closed and been turned over to new operators.

Recommended Practices for Charter Oversight:

- Create a clear and high bar for evaluating a charter application. Perform rigorous evaluations of charter applications: Applicants should prove themselves before receiving a charter, not after.
- Establish clear performance requirements and include them in charter contracts.
- Perform regular assessments of school performance, governance, and finance; employ a variety of review methods including stress tests, spot checks, internal and external reviews, and specific monitoring of special education.
- Establish transparent procedures for identifying low-performing schools and closing those schools that fail to improve

Source: NACSA Principles and Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing

5. For more on Louisiana's RSD structure and lessons for other states, see: Hill, P., & Murphy, P. (2011). *On recovery school districts and stronger state education agencies: Lessons from Louisiana.* Seattle: Center on Reinventing Public Education, University of Washington, Bothell. Retrieved from http://www.crpe.org/cs/crpe/download/csr_files/WP_States_Recovery_Jun11.pdf
6. Supporting charter school excellence through quality authorizing. (2007). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/choice/charter/authorizing/authorizing.pdf
7. Vallas, P. G., & Jacobs, L. R. (2009, September 2)."*Race to the Top" lessons from New Orleans.* Education Week. Retrieved from http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/09/02/02vallas_ep.h29.html

KEY STRATEGY #2: HUMAN CAPITAL

Strong charter growth requires high-quality teachers and leaders. Empowering underprepared educators is a dismal strategy. The autonomy granted to charter schools necessitates leadership teams that can make broad decisions affecting finance, curriculum, facilities, and management. To effectively scale up a charter sector, cities must make themselves magnets for innovative talent; empower existing talent; attract adequate numbers of high-potential or high-quality teachers and leaders; provide ongoing development opportunities; and build strong charter boards.

MAKE YOUR CITY A MAGNET FOR INNOVATIVE TALENT

To hold onto existing talent and attract new talent, a city needs a "buzz" created by a community of committed people working toward a common goal. A city's reputation will affect its ability to attract national talent organizations, such as Teach For America (TFA) or The New Teacher Project (TNTP), so it should market itself as one that embraces bold reforms. Recruitment organizations should develop unified messages, and tout early successes and opportunities.

- In the early years of the reform efforts, New Orleans nonprofits scoured the nation for talent. Organizations such as NSNO continually sent leadership to key conferences put on by leaders in the sector, including Teach For America, New Schools Venture Fund, and the National Association of Public Charter Schools. Professionals and educators with New Orleans ties were called to return home. Charter school leaders toured urban areas to recruit high-performing teachers and leaders who were eager to trade overly bureaucratic systems for the autonomies granted to charters.

EMPOWER EXISTING TALENT

Highly effective, experienced leaders and teachers can thrive in charter schools. An expanding charter sector will do well to recruit these talented individuals to their schools, as well as empower them to launch and lead their own schools (see "Charter School Staffing," page 26).

Effective, experienced teachers possess the knowledge and expertise honed through their years of teaching. They bring strong classroom management skills and deep experience in instruction, a boon to a young charter staff. As one charter advocate said: "It is important to have a school leader who can manage and integrate both experienced and new teachers. … Every city will have some great school leaders who can lead teachers through a change."

Human Capital: Action Steps

- Make your city a magnet for innovative talent
- Empower existing talent
- Recruit new teachers and leaders
- Provide ongoing opportunities for training and development
- Build strong charter boards

Finding charter school principals from within traditional systems requires significant outreach. Veteran educators may be skeptical of charter reforms. But in most districts, the best educators form close social and professional networks, and when key leaders launch their own schools, talent often follows. Additionally, in districts that have pushed many decisions down to the school level in areas such as curriculum, budget, and hiring, high-performing principals in the existing system will likely be prepared for and motivated by the entrepreneurial role of leading charter schools. Moreover, leaders functioning within CMO networks need not manage every component of the school. Many of the highest performing charters schools in New Orleans are led by veteran educators, and the results achieved to date would not have been possible without their leadership.

RECRUIT NEW TEACHERS AND LEADERS

Cities should also use alternative certification organizations such as TFA and TNTP to staff their growing charter sector's schools. TFA can be a significant pipeline for leadership. TFA is increasingly a market requirement: Many high-quality charter operators will not enter a market without a TFA presence, making clear the deep connection between human capital and charter growth.

- In New Orleans, 30 percent of the city's teachers come from either TFA or TNTP, and TFA corps members and alumni currently reach more than 50 percent of the city's students. This strategy will likely disrupt the traditional educator career ladder, and it carries some risk: If New Orleans cannot retain its educators, performance will likely stagnate. Charter schools are beginning to respond by developing diverse teacher and leader pathways, but many organization-specific human capital systems are in their early stages of development.

Sources for New Charter Leaders:

- Mine existing talent in local school district
- Recruit through charter school incubation programs
- Contract with organizations such as Building Excellent Schools and 4.0 Schools
- Look within expanding CMOs and high-performing charter schools

States should also consider reforming their education schools, as these remain the dominant supplier of teachers. States should evaluate these programs based on the performance of the teachers they produce, and apply incentives and regulatory penalties. Further, states should encourage entrepreneurship in post-secondary preparation of teachers and school leaders and reduce barriers that limit development of new universities. New university institutions that focus more on practice than theory—such as Relay Graduate School of Education—could best drive future innovation. Higher education can learn much from the entrepreneurship evident in the charter sector, and states should develop regulatory regimes that encourage this development.

- Louisiana evaluates all teacher certification institutions, both university and alternative alike, on the academic results of their graduates. This accountability system provides clear data on the performance of teacher preparation programs and allows for policymakers to expand or close programs based on student achievement data.

As they must with teachers, cities and states should look to a variety of sources for charter school and CMO leaders—especially considering that a leadership shortage is the primary limiting factor of charter school growth. Leaders can be developed through local incubation programs, and through national organizations such as New Leaders for New Schools, KIPP Fisher Fellowship, Building Excellent Schools, and 4.0 Schools. In the long term, leadership pipelines will likely develop within charter organizations themselves. Great talent retains and develops great talent: High-performing teachers desire to work with like-minded and skilled coworkers and leaders. Thus, supporting CMO capacity-building will be key to building leadership pipelines (see "Scaling Up High-Performing Charters Into Homegrown CMOs" on page 32). Given the constant and high demand for new charter leaders, however, additional leader recruitment from outside of charter schools is necessary, especially early in a city's process of building a charter market.

PROVIDE ONGOING OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Recruitment strategies hit a performance ceiling: Schools can achieve only so much without developing teachers and leaders. Districts traditionally fail in providing professional development that dramatically improves teaching and learning outcomes. In a decentralized system, charter schools and external support organizations must lead in building the skills of teachers and leaders and in leveraging the talents of excellent teachers.[8]

Charter School Staffing: Empower Existing Talent and Hire for Potential

After Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, people scattered to cities across the south. With few students to teach and buildings unsafe to teach in, the Orleans Parish School Board laid off all of its teachers, and the union was essentially disbanded. Schools opened one by one to accommodate families as they returned to the city to rebuild. Given the power vacuum at the district level, and the organizational flexibility of charter schools, charters provided a vehicle for committed educators to get a school up and running relatively quickly. Two charter schools, Sophie B. Wright and Akili Academy of New Orleans, opened up after the storm and used different approaches to building staffs that could bring better educational options to children than the district provided before the storm.

Empower existing talent

Sophie B. Wright Charter School converted to charter status and opened its doors just before Katrina hit in August 2005. Principal Sharon Clark—a veteran of the Orleans Parish school district who led Wright as a district school and applied for the charter—staffed the school with teachers who had worked for the district. Wright continues to fill openings with new or experienced teachers from the locally available pool. "I don't use programs like Teach For America. I don't have anything against them, but if I'm going to put in the effort of finding and developing teachers, I want them to stay longer than two years," she says.

Greater control over staffing has helped Clark build a team of educators and support staff who understand and support the school's mission. "With a district and a union, there is a level of protection that doesn't help students. At a charter, we all have to perform to keep our jobs. If teachers at Wright do not perform, I can free up their future to do something else," Clark says. Despite greater freedom to remove non-performing teachers, Clark boasts low teacher turnover. "I have teachers on staff who have been here since I arrived in 2001. We have very low teacher turnover because teachers want to work here," she says.

Hire for Potential

Sean Gallagher, of Akili Academy of New Orleans, went another route in his staffing. When Gallagher opened Akili in the fall of 2008, he intended to hire a diverse teaching staff. He sought local teachers who had worked in Orleans Parish before the storm, teachers from elsewhere in the country, a mix of new and experienced teachers, and people from diverse backgrounds. The majority of teachers he ultimately hired, though, were inexperienced, nearly all from beyond New Orleans, and from Teach For America or other alternative routes.

Gallagher has hired mostly first-year TFA teachers because other schools did not have the same work and time demands on teachers. "I really do believe there are experienced teachers in the city who would be successful in our school, but we just haven't found them yet," Gallagher notes. "Conversations with prospective applicants who had worked in the parish before typically lasted less than a minute when they found out we had a 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. contracted work day. We need folks to work whatever hours it takes, and that has tended to be young teachers early in their careers."

Despite his teachers' limited experience, Gallagher has been able to put together a staff that gets academic results for students. To do so, Gallagher hires people with the necessary mission alignment and work ethic, folks who believe in the work. To capitalize on these qualities, he and his administrative team have developed strong summer training and programmatic components that support first-year teachers.

"We have built an intentional focus on lesson planning, a really specific scope and sequence, and detailed course plans," Gallagher says. "Our teachers write lesson plans that are 50 times better than the ones I wrote in my tenth year of teaching. So even if they are not yet excellent at the execution of those plans because they're new to teaching, their lessons are still going somewhere, and students are learning."

As Gallagher's school continues to rank as the highest performing open-enrollment charter school in the city, he is planning to expand his school into a charter network. He is developing some of his existing staff to become leaders of the new schools, the first of which he plans to open in fall 2013. "If you learn from other organizations that have scaled—pretty much universally, they say that whether you're opening your second, third, or fifteenth school, the leaders need to have taught in the network and know the culture inside out."

Nationally, as CMOs grow they tend to pull more of their development in-house. However, stand-alone schools often cannot afford to develop and administer intensive training programs on their own. Charter support organizations should create programs to train leaders and teachers, or bring in national organizations to provide this development.

The nation is in a nascent phase of effective and results-driven educator development. Only increased entrepreneurship and greater accountability of existing institutions will improve the situation. There is much room for innovation, which will likely occur in more decentralized educational systems, where providers can work outside of existing systems that have historically achieved limited results.

- NSNO provides direct services and invests in organizations such as the Achievement Network, Leading Educators, and MATCH to provide external training to teachers and leaders. It also contracts with Nancy Euske, an organizational behavior professor at the University of California at Berkeley's Haas School of Business, to provide ongoing leadership and CMO-level training. NSNO is considering additional investments aimed at helping New Orleans transform educator development just as it has transformed city-based charter strategies.

BUILD STRONG CHARTER BOARDS

Charter boards must effectively govern charter leaders. Without effective school site governance, quality will not be sustained, and malfeasance may occur. Charter networks and support organizations must pay attention to the quality and quantity of charter board members.

A strong board includes members with a variety of skills and backgrounds. Boards with only school leaders and teachers will not be equipped to meet their schools' diverse challenges. Instead, board members should be recruited with a blend of educational, financial, legal, management, and public relations expertise. In addition, a strong board includes community members to keep the school connected to the realities and needs of its students.

To strengthen boards, charter networks and support organizations can increase awareness of charter schools, expand the search for qualified board members, and provide board orientation and training. Training can properly orient board members and clarify their role of oversight and governance, as opposed to direct operational management.[9] Training should address the legal compliance issues related to charter schools, as well as guidance on how to effectively monitor student achievement with data-driven methods. Support organizations such as The High Bar can be brought in to provide resources and training to charter school boards.

Additionally, regulations will affect the number of people needed to spur charter school growth. States or cities that require an individual board for each school will be at a disadvantage in recruiting and developing multiple-site school operators. Moreover, as the national operators expand across state lines, states that do not require local boards at all will likely attract more national operators. In this environment, states that still provide robust local authorization and public transparency will be best situated to ensure that these national operators serve their students well.

8. For more on why strengthened recruitment, development, and retention are not enough, and why education systems must leverage the country's strongest teachers to reach more students, see: Hassel, E. A., & Hassel B. C. (2010). *3X for all: Extending the reach of education's best.* Chapel Hill, NC: Author. Retrieved from http://opportunityculture.org/images/stories/3x_for_all-public_impact.pdf. For the policy and practice implications of extending the reach of America's best teachers, see: Hassel, B. C., & Hassel, E. A. (2011). *Seizing opportunity at the top: How the U.S. can reach every student with an excellent teacher.* Chapel Hill, NC: Author. Retrieved from http://opportunityculture.org/seizing_opportunity_fullreport-public_impact.pdf
9. *Developing training programs for charter school governing board members.* National Resource Center on Charter School Finance and Governance. Retrieved from http://www.charterresource.org/files/Developing_Training_Programs-CharterSTAR.pdf

KEY STRATEGY #3: CHARTER SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

Nationally, charter school quality is mixed. However, research confirms that New Orleans charter schools outperform their national counterparts in terms of the percentages of charter schools outperforming statewide traditional schools. Yet among the three key strategies for building a decentralized system of schools, charter school development is the easiest to get wrong. Even in New Orleans, some charter schools have failed. But without charter school development—purposeful incubating of both strong stand-alone schools and networks that scale successful models—educators will at best be limited and at worst be undermined by district bureaucracies. Decades of marginal and interrupted district reform provide ample evidence for the need for high-quality charter schools. Warehouses could be filled with the remains of unexecuted district strategic plans.

High-Quality Charter School and Network Growth: Action Steps

- Convert existing traditional schools
  - · Identify high-performing, entrepreneurial leaders
  - · Provide supports to ensure successful conversion
- Incubate new charter schools
  - · Recruit and develop charter founders
  - · Connect with supports locally and nationally
  - · Recruit board members
  - · Secure funding and facilities
- Encourage and support growth of high-quality charter networks (CMOs)
  - · Attract proven networks from elsewhere
  - · Support expansion of high-performing charters into "home-grown" networks

To execute a successful charter school strategy, everyone involved must maintain a focus on quality. External nonprofits and advocacy groups must play a pivotal role in monitoring charter school performance. Failing charters must be closed early on, preferably within three to four years of existence. Great schools must expand thoughtfully, and significant resources must be at their disposal during growth. Executing a citywide charter strategy without a deep culture of accountability is irresponsible: Charter schools will perform worse than traditional schools, and children will undergo structural upheaval for nothing.

Cities can execute three key strategies for scaling up charter schools: converting existing traditional schools, incubating promising new charter schools, and supporting the growth of proven charter programs into networks led by CMOs. All avenues should be encouraged, as none alone is likely to ensure the dramatic citywide growth of a high-quality sector. Additionally, pursuing all options can reduce the time required for a charter market to go to scale. While CMOs are easiest to scale, relying solely on this strategy can limit innovation and program options for families and students. In addition, most networks begin as stand-alone schools that prove their value and then expand. If other industries are indicative, however, large CMOs may become the dominant operator of charter schools. This will especially be true if technology brings down labor costs and creates better operating margins. As such, CMO development and support is essential.

Lastly, be wary of operators that promise significant growth without a track record of success. Like any industry, ineffective operators exist, and they will take advantage of favorable market conditions to increase their market share with little attention to quality.

CONVERT EXISTING TRADITIONAL SCHOOLS

A city's charter market can take time to develop if charter growth relies solely on new-start schools or focuses solely on the takeover of the lowest performing schools. Cities typically demonstrate much more willingness to turn over persistently low-performing schools to charter operators than to convert excellent district schools into charter schools. If one believes that the best educators will increase their performance when empowered, this is a poor strategy. Converting a portion of a city's best schools early in the process can quickly open the local market and increase the performance of already-successful educators. In certain cases, operators may need financial and operational support to accelerate these conversions.

INCUBATE NEW CHARTER SCHOOLS

A successful charter school incubation initiative can provide resources for entrepreneurs to develop the capacity to open a high-quality charter school. Incubation programs provide a range of support services, including recruiting and training school leaders and staff; building community support for new schools; and providing technical and financial support during the years surrounding the school's opening. Incubation is especially critical in early-stage charter markets, when CMOs are less established.

Recruit and develop school leaders for incubation. Incubation programs live and die by their ability to recruit and select high-quality founders. Unfortunately, not enough research exists on what makes an excellent charter founder. Although KIPP and others have honed their selection models to meet their own organizational needs, the lack of numerous long-standing national charter incubators has hampered learning in this area. Building Excellent Schools (BES) is the largest national incubator, and it usually launches fewer than 10 schools a year. Ideally, with the continuation of BES and the advent of 4.0 Schools and other regional incubators, more incubation research will come—and more incubators can develop into long-standing successful institutions. The lack of high-quality incubators limits regional charter growth. Philanthropists would do well to invest more in this area, especially while the CMO sector remains limited.

After selecting leaders, incubators often run fellowship programs, providing a salary for a year or more while offering intensive training in leadership, management, and finance. School leaders develop school plans and receive feedback as part of the planning process. They learn what works, and visit or work in successful schools. In the year before the school opens, leaders identify and hire management teams that can plan together. Incubators may help find leaders and teachers, because they are usually well-connected with human capital pipelines. After this hiring, training programs can shift to a team-based approach. Feedback and evaluation ideally continue through the opening of the leaders' charter schools.

Connect with supports locally and nationally. Nationwide, incubation programs have typically been carried out by city-based charter support organizations. These work to establish relationships and collaboration with a broad range of entities to support the incubation of new charter schools. The Cities for Education Entrepreneurship Trust (CEE-Trust) is an emerging collaborative that supports city-based charter school incubation initiatives around the country. Drawing on these types of collaboration, and depending on the internal resources available, city-based incubation programs can develop services "in-house" or can contract with incubation service providers. Incubation efforts require significant funding – estimates range from $200,000 to $500,000 per school, so connecting with financial supports is critical to fund the incubation process.

Additionally, strong incubation efforts introduce and connect future school leaders to key community members and groups through formal residencies in existing schools or support organizations, organized community engagement, charter board recruitment, and informal relationship-building. Initial charter school development is inherently a local effort, and city-based organizations must assist charter leaders in navigating the system.

Recruit board members. City-based organizations can also work to recruit board members with a breadth of experience, expertise, and influence, as well as a commitment to improving schools. Strong charter school boards bring accountability and stability to fledgling charter schools. This service is especially important for school founders who lack local community connections.

Secure funding and facilities. With school leadership in place, the challenge of navigating the charter application process and securing funding and facilities remains. Incubation efforts should help applicants navigate and understand the local process for applying for a charter, and assist in securing facilities or facilities financing. Facilities constraints vary greatly among cities; incubation programs can help steer new charter school operators toward philanthropic funding or low-cost loans if the city does not offer facilities.

Use both fresh starts and turnarounds to build the charter sector. Nationwide, city-based incubation efforts have tended to focus on fresh starts, or schools that start with one grade and add an additional grade each year.[10] An aggressive citywide chartering program needs both fresh starts as well as full turnarounds. However, full school turnarounds often require more experienced management and therefore may be a less readily available strategy in an early-stage charter market.

How Quickly Should You Grow the Charter Sector?

This is perhaps the key question facing city leaders, who have two basic options for achieving dramatic charter growth in a school reform strategy. Both options can be accomplished in roughly a five-year window, and achieve either a 15 to 30 or a 35 to 50 percent market share.

START SMALL AND BUILD ON SUCCESS

Focus resources and people on building an initial high-quality charter market share—perhaps 20 percent. Build on the successes of the 20 percent to secure support for future growth, and continue chartering aggressively to replace low-performing district schools. This will likely involve opening three to six schools a year for a mid-size system (100 to 150 schools).

- Pros: Less political pushback; fewer human capital demands initially
- Cons: May take more time for reforms to take hold; less disruptive to the failing district system
- Preconditions or first steps: Strong authorizing and governance components; existing human capital pipelines to leverage; start-up funding from public or private sources

GO BIG EARLY AND BUILD SYSTEM SUPPORTS FOR LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

Establish the goal of chartering a large majority of a city's failing schools early in the process to signal bold reform and a willingness to look beyond the school district for a solution to persistent and pervasive low performance. This will likely involve opening eight to 12 schools a year for a mid-size system (100 to 150 schools).

- Pros: Focuses initially on total system transformation; provides impetus to establish supports for a system of decentralized schools before challenges arise
- Cons: Greater potential for political backlash; acute pressure on building human capital pipelines early; greater difficulty balancing chartering a large number of schools while maintaining a focus on quality
- Preconditions or first steps: Strong political will; strong authorizing and governance components; significant supply of high-quality talent with pipeline in place (including mechanism for bringing traditional leaders and teachers to new system); and multiple funding streams—public and private

10. Ableidinger, J., & Steiner, L. (Public Impact). (2011). *Incubating high-quality charter schools: Innovations in city-based organizations.* Washington, D.C.: National Charter School Resource Center. Retrieved from http://www.charterschoolcenter.org/sites/default/files/1043%20NCS%20WtPaper_Incubating%20final_0.pdf

- Incubation strategies can result in high variations in performance. NSNO's incubation program launched both the RSD's highest performing charter high school and charter elementary school, as well as its lowest performing charter school. Leader inexperience makes it difficult to predict school success, though those leaders with some experience in high-performing schools often achieved superior results. Additionally, incubation allows for reinvestment in the highest performing schools, which will lead to the formation of locally operated CMOs.

ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT GROWTH OF HIGH-QUALITY CMOs

Aggressive charter growth cannot be achieved solely through the opening of stand-alone charter schools. Mature school operators can open multiple new schools each year, drawing on their expertise and human capital to serve more students.[11] A citywide charter system can simultaneously attract proven CMOs from other cities and provide supports and encouragement for high-performing local school operators to develop into networks. Ideally, this strategy reduces long-term risk, because a greater percentage of investments are made in proven models.

Attract high-performing charter operators. Enticing proven operators to a new area is difficult. High-performing CMOs hesitate to open schools in cities outside of their established support networks. In cases where proven operators are willing to expand, they understandably demand ideal situations such as guaranteed autonomy, free facilities, clear governance structures, strong financial support for charters, and access to highly qualified human capital. Even in the best of circumstances, established CMOs enter new markets cautiously, so cities cannot rely too heavily on this strategy now. However, as the national charter school movement grows—and if regulatory environments are conducive—more regional and national CMOs will emerge. Some CMOs, such as Rocketship, have formed with the explicit intention of operating hundreds of schools. Creating market conditions that attract these operators will therefore become increasingly important.

Grow your own networks. As a local charter sector matures, focus attention on incubating new CMOs and expanding local networks to empower local educators. Charter support organizations can encourage CMO growth by recruiting and training leaders, creating a human capital pipeline of quality teachers, and connecting CMO founders with necessary funding (see "Scaling Up High-Performing Charters into Homegrown CMOs," page 32).

Many of the supports needed to incubate a new CMO are similar to those required to start a stand-alone school—such as recruiting leaders and teachers, developing operational plans, and securing financial funding and facilities. But starting a CMO poses additional challenges. A CMO requires a sound management system for running a portfolio of schools. CMO leaders manage multiple facility sites, have expanded back-office and legal requirements, and must coordinate instructional and human capital initiatives across schools. If stand-alone leaders face all the perils of small business owners, CMO leaders must manage the difficulties of operating a high-growth corporation.

Given the operational hurdles of operating a CMO, the dearth of technical assistance available to emerging CMOs will hamper growth unless corrected. Organizations such as Charter School Growth Fund and New Schools Venture Fund play leading roles in CMO development, but additional supporters are needed to develop more CMOs, especially in local markets. If the market for charter incubators is immature, the market for CMO development technical assistance is close to nonexistent. This is another area ripe for innovation. And without advancement in this area, it will take much longer to achieve scale.

- Although New Orleans has drawn high-caliber, national CMOs to the city, less than 10 percent of the charter schools are run by national CMOs. The city has developed some of its strongest charters and experienced turnaround organizations into burgeoning networks, including Collegiate Academics, FirstLine Schools, Algiers Charter School Association, Capital One/New Beginnings, Choice Foundation, Crescent City Schools, Friends of King, and ReNEW.

11. Hassel, E. A., Hassel, B. C., & Ableidinger, J. (2011). *Going exponential: Growing the charter school sector's best.* Washington, D.C.: Progressive Policy Institute. Retrieved from http://www.progressivefix.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/2.2011_Hassel_Going-Exponential_WEB1.pdf

Scaling Up High-Performing Charters Into Homegrown CMOs

Ben Marcovitz, a founder of Collegiate Academies and principal at Sci Academy, has done what few others have. He started an open-admissions charter high school serving an economically disadvantaged student population, and proved that it is possible to take incoming freshmen reading at the fourth-grade level and achieve three-and-a-half grade levels of growth in one year. Sci Academy, without having a high-performing feeder school to send in students on grade level, is one of the highest performing, nonselective high schools in New Orleans. "I wanted to create a high school model that was relentlessly focused on closing the achievement gap for our scholars, a school that flips the academic trajectories of our scholars from being four or five grade levels behind when they entered to being ready for college when they graduate," Marcovitz says.

Based on the success of Sci Academy, Marcovitz began considering scaling up the school model to serve more students; the city sorely needs more high-performing high schools. With support from NSNO and several other national and community organizations, Marcovitz plans to open two new charter high schools in fall 2012.

NSNO has provided several important supports for the scale-up process, including:

+ Funding, including a federal Investing in Innovation (i3) grant, to support leadership development, CMO central office staff salaries during a planning year, and other scale-up costs
+ A one-on-one leadership mentor for Marcovitz
+ Networking opportunities with other CMO leaders to share lessons learned
+ A quality review process of the entire organization to ensure that the network starts out strong

In addition to NSNO, Marcovitz has reached out to other community organizations to support the scale-up process. He noted, "There's a lot to be said for being in a small town with a strong shared community among charter schools. There are organizations out there—TFA, New Orleans Outreach, and other nonprofits—that do great work to support charter schools in ways we couldn't on our own. And I have developed relationships with every [kind of] entity in our community—churches, the parks association, the hospital, the city council and others—so we have a lot of support for our current school and our plans to grow."

Additional components for building a choice-based, predominantly charter system

Governance and accountability, human capital, and charter school development are the three primary strategies for building a high-performing, decentralized system. However, to build a sustainable system of schools other key strategies should be executed, including: engaging the community around charter reforms, accessing short- and long-term sources of funding, and planning to meet the challenges raised by a decentralized system of schools.

BUILD COMMUNITY DEMAND FOR DRAMATIC REFORMS

The quality of community engagement can make or break an education reform effort. Community backing can build demand and support for charters and help withstand political pushback against chartering. Ideally, the demand for change from families and communities will support education reform efforts over time.[12]

Many charter schools avoid the difficult task of community engagement efforts in lieu of "letting results speak for themselves," hoping that support for charters will grow as student outcomes improve. However, failing to inform and engage communities can hobble the citywide effort to scale charters. Charters must ultimately demonstrate strong performance, but early community engagement, including parent education, can build an environment in which they can thrive.

12. Steiner, L., & Brinson, D. (2011). *Fixing failing schools: Building family and community demand for dramatic change.* Chapel Hill, NC: Public Impact. Retrieved from http://publicimpact.com/images/stories/building_demand_for_change_in_failing_schools-Public_Impact.pdf

Community Engagement Practices:

- Meet with community leaders, alumni groups, parents, and teachers before school openings
- Establish ongoing communication with community groups and leaders
- Recruit community leaders to serve on charter school boards
- Educate communities about what defines a great school and what defines a "failing school"
- Establish transparent procedures for how, when, and why a school will be closed
- Involve community and parents in the closing procedures.
- Support families in finding new school placements when a school closes
- Publicize progress in student achievement at the new schools
- Mobilize charter school parents in support of broader charter school reforms

To increase community engagement and local support of charter schools, educational organizations and the government must implement a plan for closing schools and choosing new school sites that includes the community early in the process. Developing a transparent and consistent annual cycle of school openings and closures can change the cultural norms and expectations of all stakeholders—as well as provide families with clear data and rationales for change. The system must institutionalize change while minimizing the impact on families and communities.

- The early stages of reform in New Orleans were not—to the city's detriment—driven by grassroots efforts. This was likely the result of chaotic post-Katrina conditions and poor outreach and engagement efforts. In response to legitimate concerns about a lack of community voice, the RSD, numerous community groups, and NSNO are testing a new community engagement process for charter openings in 2011–12. The RSD notified existing families, neighborhood associations, school alumni associations, and other interested parties of a proposed school transformation at the start of the 2011-12 school year. NSNO, working with community facilitators, is coordinating meetings, tours of high-performing schools, and trainings for stakeholders to develop a vision for what a successful school will look like in their neighborhood. Communities, led by committees of community members and parents, will engage with charter operators to negotiate the most effective way to serve their community. After the school opens, these same stakeholders will work with the school to maintain a connection to the community and hold the school accountable for results.

RAISE EXPECTATIONS AND EMPOWER PARENTS

Parents and communities need to understand accountability measures, be clear when schools are failing, and demand that something be done to dramatically improve student performance. They should be exposed to the best charter schools in the city. External organizations such as the Urban League, faith-based associations, and others are necessary to mobilize parents, as many families have neither the time nor the resources to plan and develop advocacy campaigns. These can be existing local groups that take on the task, or new organizations launched for this purpose. In addition, national, pro-reform advocacy groups such as Stand for Children or 50CAN can bring experience in organizing parents and promoting education reform. Institutions, systems, and processes must be built to ensure that parents can demand the outcomes they desire for their children.

- Dr. Andrea Thomas-Reynolds, the CEO of the Algiers Charter Schools Association, launched a campaign targeted at parents and school staff to raise expectations for school performance. Many had believed than a state-assigned School Performance Score (SPS) of at least 60 was the goal for their schools. But a 60 was simply the minimum score for a school to avoid the label of "failing." Adding to the confusion, the SPS is calculated on a scale of 200, not 100 as most assumed. Over several months, Dr. Thomas-Reynolds held community meetings to educate families about how Louisiana evaluates school performance. She hoped to raise everyone's expectations for their own schools beyond a minimum level and toward a goal of college readiness for all students.

EDUCATE THE PUBLIC ABOUT CHARTER SCHOOLS

In addition to raising community expectations of schools, the public needs to learn basic facts about charter schools. Parents may not know that charter schools are tuition-free public schools open to all children. Communications strategies should stress the benefits of a high-quality public school to the community in terms of safety, property values, business growth, and quality of life. Community engagement efforts should target all levels of stakeholders: elected officials, community leaders, business leaders, teachers, and parents.

- Charter schools in New Orleans serving traditionally underserved communities have often found that engaging parents in their children's schools requires overcoming the parents' own negative experiences with school. "The best thing we've done to improve parent engagement is to survey parents and find out what they needed from us," said Dr. Vera Triplett, CEO of New Beginnings. "We learned that the vast majority of our students' parents had not finished high school themselves. To help parents recognize the value of education and better support their childrens' schooling, we provide adult education classes, hold meetings during times they can attend, and provide services like daycare during parent events to ensure greater participation."

ESTABLISH FUNDING FOR LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF CHARTER SCHOOLS

Leaders must seek multiple funding sources—federal grants, equitable funding from states, private philanthropy to support incubation, and either direct access to, or sources of funding for, facilities. Key policies are noted below.

GUARANTEE EQUITABLE FUNDING FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS

A charter school strategy must set equitable funding for charter schools as a primary goal. Charter schools should be funded at the same rate as traditional district schools, using a "funding follows the child" model. This guide lacks the space to detail all the components of effective funding streams and formulas, but it is extremely important to ensure that the funding model is student-based.

PROVIDE START-UP FUNDS FOR NEW CHARTER SCHOOLS

In a well-designed system, money for starting up would be provided by public dollars as an assumed cost of operating a charter district. In most cities, however, federal funds and philanthropy have been the primary sources of start-up capital. States must do more to allocate resources to support results-based entrepreneurial activity. The current funding levels for research, development, and start-up costs for new ventures are minuscule.

Both turnarounds and fresh starts need substantial funding in the first few years. Fresh starts grow one grade at a time, adding an additional grade each year until they reach the full span of grades served. During the first few years, the costs of running a school cannot always be covered by the per-pupil funding generated by the smaller student populations. Start-up funding can supplement schools during this period. Turnaround charter schools, which take over an entire academically unacceptable school at once, face different challenges; they may also need additional funding to meet greater staffing needs in the first few years to improve student performance across grade levels.

GIVE ACCESS TO FACILITIES

Charter schools in many cities lack access to district school buildings, and they receive no capital funding with which to purchase, renovate, or rent facilities. Facilities remain one of the most difficult hurdles for charters to overcome.

Ideally, districts should provide facilities to charter schools as they take over low-performing district schools. Further, aligning the assignment of facilities with the provision of charters for both turnaround and fresh-start schools can smooth the transition from obtaining a charter to opening the school's doors to students.

If the district does not provide facilities, supporters must rally financial support for charters through such mechanisms as "credit enhancement," which allow charters to obtain facilities financing at competitive rates. Although schools can get private financing for facilities, this is typically not sustainable as the number of charter schools grows.

ATTRACT PHILANTHROPIC FUNDING

Although philanthropic investment is not a precondition to charter growth, it often is essential in putting necessary infrastructures and supports into place. Public funding can support the ongoing operation of schools, but certain vital activities may not happen without outside funding.

Funding estimates for a mid-size city are $5 million to $10 million per year for the first five years. Of course, local conditions will dictate the actual best allocation of dollars, but these amounts provide a starting point when deciding how to allocate resources.

Early-Stage Charter Market, Rough Allocation Amounts:

- 50 percent of the funds to human capital recruitment
- 20 percent to charter incubation
- 20 percent to developing and growing charter networks
- 10 percent to advocacy and community engagement

PLAN AHEAD FOR THE ISSUES OF A DECENTRALIZED DISTRICT

The rules of the system must evolve as charters become a majority of the schools in a city. When there are just a few charters in a district, the charter schools can operate completely independently of the traditional schools and do not affect, for the most part, district functions such as enrollment policies, administration of special education services, and transportation.

As charter schools become the majority, however, certain services and functions must be administered across the decentralized system of schools. At the tipping point, charter schools need to shift from being outside of the system to being an autonomous part of a decentralized system, which includes added responsibilities. When responding to the challenges of a decentralized system, the benefits of creating shared services may be in tension with their potential to limit charter school autonomies. Focusing on how decisions affect students and learning may justify limiting autonomies in certain cases, such as a centralized enrollment process, but each city—in conversation with school operators, families, and other stakeholders—must find solutions that work within their own contexts. That said, issues such as enrollment (including withdrawal and expulsions) and special education will present significant equity issues if not addressed in a citywide manner.

DEVELOP AN ONGOING GOVERNANCE PLAN FOR SCHOOLS

Cities considering decentralization reforms should take time to chart the long-term course of governance for schools that are taken over by an RSD-like entity. The critical feature of this governance arrangement must be that high-performing charter schools remain as charter schools, operating autonomously and held accountable for student results. Many different institutional structures could provide for this. The RSD-like entity could be a permanent, rather than just an emergency, governance body for the schools. If practical or political realities make this impossible, then high-performing charter schools need a way to transfer their charters to a new authorizer when their time in the RSD-like entity has run out. While that new authorizer could, in principle, be the local school board, high-performing charters may be understandably reluctant to come under school board governance, even with the legal protection of a charter. Ideally, high-performing charters would have the option to transfer their charters to some other entity, such as a special-purpose city or state charter board or state board of education. The local school board could still "win the schools back," but only by offering terms attractive enough to pull schools away from other alternatives.

Regardless, charter autonomies that support strong academic growth must be protected to ensure continued strong performance. One charter school leader said, "As long as the accountability standards are high and enforced fairly across the board, I don't care who my authorizer is." However, the more authorizers that exist, the more difficult it can be to coordinate citywide efforts. As such, multiple city-based authorizers should be avoided.

PROVIDE ASSISTANCE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Nationally, questions have been raised about charter schools' ability to provide adequate special education services or, worse, whether schools actively discourage students with disabilities from attending their schools. For charters to effectively replace low-performing district schools and make up a large portion of any city's public schools, they must collectively provide appropriate services to all students, including students with disabilities.

Special Education Services Recommendations:

- Allow charters to develop specialized programs for certain disabilities so that parents have choices that include programs tailored to their children's needs—and so economies of scale can be captured in program delivery
- Create a cooperative for charter schools to develop a service delivery system based on their needs
- Create mandatory training for charter school leaders, board members, and special education coordinators before the school opens
- Emphasize focus on student academic outcomes, not simply compliance with special education regulations
- Create clear guidelines on discipline so schools do not impinge on the rights of children with special needs
- Monitor and publish data on special education enrollment at charter schools to ensure that schools are adequately enrolling and retaining special education students
- Establish community partnerships with healthcare providers that cover a continuum of services
- Create risk pools that individual schools can participate in to cover the potential costs of serving students with high needs

Special education cannot be an afterthought when building a decentralized system of schools. It is a critical component for providing all students and families with school choice.

CREATE CENTRALIZED ENROLLMENT SYSTEMS

Enrollment issues confront the tension between allowing charter schools to act autonomously and balancing the needs of the whole system. However, given the potential for individual school enrollment violations, as well as the ease-of-use issues for families, a decentralized school system will likely require a centralized enrollment structure to ensure equity—especially if charter schools become dominant in a market.

Possible Enrollment Solutions for Cities Creating a Decentralized District:

- A common application for all charter schools
- Creation of system-wide enrollment system
- Even distribution of new and mid-year enrollments across schools
- Tracking and publishing all data for withdrawals and expulsions

The New Orleans schools have been hampered by the lack of a centralized enrollment system, confusing parents and leading to limited allegations of improper enrollment practices by certain charter schools. The RSD, in coordination with charter operators and nonprofits, is building a centralized enrollment process in New Orleans. The RSD is also developing "equity reports" for schools to provide transparency on issues such as special education enrollment by level of severity, withdrawal and expulsion data, and overall student achievement data.

COORDINATE TRANSPORTATION

A citywide system of charter schools lacks a central office to coordinate and handle transportation—typically the second-highest line item in a charter school budget. Coordinating transportation more efficiently across schools and the city could provide significant cost savings, limit ride time for students, and reduce traffic and environmental impacts. The benefits of coordinated transportation must also be weighed against the limitations on autonomy that result from requiring all schools to participate. Some charters may want to provide transportation so they can closely control school culture beginning on the bus ride, and readily establish the length of school days and years. Organized transportation services may be worth the trade-off for some charters.

ESTABLISH AN OMBUDSMAN

A decentralized system needs some place for students and parents to go to resolve conflict. In a traditional system, the ultimate authority is the district administration. In a decentralized system, parents may struggle to see where they should take complaints about their children's school; they need an authority to address parents' and students' rights. Additionally, a centralized ombudsman allows themes or patterns of concerns about a school to be tracked and made visible.

DEVELOP A MARKET OF SERVICES FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS

In a decentralized system, schools will need services that the school district traditionally provides, such as public data-sharing, professional development, accounting and auditing, curriculum development, and food. City-based organizations can fill an important role by identifying what services charter schools need and either filling those needs or bringing in outside providers. Often this involves an initial funding commitment with the intention that the service will reach fee-based sustainability.

TAKE A 30,000-FOOT VIEW OF THE CITYWIDE SECTOR

A decentralized system of schools can suffer from a lack of coordinated vision. This is not a terrible outcome in and of itself. With individual schools and networks focused intently on their own day-to-day organizational challenges, charter leaders and support organizations concentrate on what matters most: student outcomes. However, somebody should focus on the strategic issues facing the whole charter sector (see "A 30,000-Foot View," below). City-based organizations can regularly assess the necessary components of the charter growth strategy and provide a supportive blend of advocacy, investments, and programming. This role may reside with an elected official, a decentralized district board, support organizations, other entities, or a combination.

A 30,000-Foot View: Questions to Consider

Any city with a large charter market should have individuals or organizations that are able to step back and view the system from a strategic vantage point to regularly ask such questions as:

- Are we growing too quickly or too slowly? How well are we managing the tension between growing quickly and keeping an eye on quality? Do we have an emerging high-performing CMO sector?
- Are our quality standards high enough?
- How can we strengthen the educator quality in the city and sector? Is it balanced with teachers and leaders, experienced and fresh perspectives?
- What supports—instructional, professional development, etc.—can be coordinated across charters?
- Do families know how to access and navigate the choice-based education system?
- Are all schools serving students in special education effectively?
- Is the larger community familiar with the fact that charters are tuition-free, public schools? What community messaging is necessary to build long-term support for this system of schools?
- Is there sufficient financial funding for charters? Are there untapped resources? Will existing resources wane?
- How might the political landscape change over the next few years? How can we respond as a sector?
- Are there any national support organizations or networks we can attract to our city?
- Which operators need strategic support to thrive, and which are ready to scale up?
- How can charter schools take advantage of coordinated services such as legal support or transportation?

Conclusion

This guide is only a starting point for any city considering a charter-based approach to education reform. It shares the key components of New Orleans' system and lessons learned since 2005, as the city rebuilt its stagnant public education system into a performance-driven decentralized system of schools. Appendix A provides a "Preparedness Checklist" to help other cities' education, political, and nonprofit leaders identify areas of strength, areas for growth, and any challenges that could hamper the development of a high-quality charter sector. This checklist is also only a tool to support initial planning of the multiple components of citywide charter supports. Each component will require significant planning, coordination, funding, and persistence to implement effectively. The concepts, tools, and resources provided in this guide offer a place to start.

What has occurred in New Orleans may or may not transform how our country serves its most at-risk children. But we believe the principles of the New Orleans system are sound: Government should delegate school operations to nonprofits, then hold these organizations accountable. Great schools should expand. Failing schools should close. Parents should have choices in where to send their children to school. Educators should have choices in where they work. By themselves, none of these principles are particularly radical. Together, however, they provide a potential roadmap to transform urban education systems across our nation.

Resources for implementing key components of the New Orleans system

HUMAN CAPITAL PIPELINE:

+ Steiner, L., Hassel E. A., & Hassel, B. C. (2008). *School turnaround leaders: Competencies for success.* Chicago, IL: The Chicago Public Education Fund. Available: http://publicimpact.com/images/stories/publicimpact/documents/Turnaround_Leader_Competencies.pdf
+ Auguste, B., Kihn, P., & Miller, M. (2010). *Closing the talent gap: Attracting and retaining top-third graduates to a career in teaching. McKinsey & Company.* Available: http://mckinseyonsociety.com/downloads/reports/Education/Closing_the_talent_gap.pdf
+ The New Teacher Project. (2006). *Improved principal hiring: The New Teacher Project's findings and recommendations for urban schools.* Available: http://www.50can.org/50can-university/article/improved-principal-hiring-the-new-teacher-project%E2%80%99s-findings-and
+ Gross, B., & DeArmond, M. (2011, March). *Issue brief: How do charter schools get the teachers they want?* Washington, D.C.: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Available: http://www.publiccharters.org/data/files/Publication_docs/NAPCS_TeacherBrief_March2011_20110330T164201.pdf
+ Chadwick, C., & Kowal, J. (2011). *Preparing for growth: Human capital innovations in charter public schools.* Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress. Available: http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/05/pdf/human_capital.pdf
+ Kowal, J., & Hassel, E. A. (Public Impact). (2011). *Importing leaders for school turnarounds: Lessons and opportunities.* Charlottesville: University of Virginia's Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education. Available: http://www.darden.virginia.edu/web/uploadedFiles/Darden/Darden_Curry_PLE/UVA_School_Turnaround/Importing_Leaders_for_School_Turnarounds.PDF
+ Doyle, D., & Steiner, L. (2011). *Developing education talent pipelines for charter schools: A citywide approach.* Chicago, IL: National Charter School Resource Center. Available: http://www.charterschoolcenter.org/sites/default/files/1044%20NCS%20WtPaper_DevEdTalent%20final.pdf

CHARTER GROWTH AND INCUBATION:

+ Hassel, E. A., Hassel, B. C., & Ableidinger, J. (2011). *Going exponential: Growing the charter school sector's best.* Washington, D.C.: Progressive Policy Institute. Available: http://www.progressivefix.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/2.2011_Hassel_Going-Exponential_WEB1.pdf

+ Kania, J., Kutash, J., Obbard, J., & Albright, R. (2011, April). *The promise of citywide charter strategies.* Washington, D.C.: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Available: http://www.publiccharters.org/data/files/Publication_docs/2011_Final_The%20Promise%20of%20Citywide%20Charter%20Strategies_20110517T143333.pdf

+ Ableidinger, J., & Steiner, L. (2011). *Incubating high-quality charter schools: Innovations in city-based organizations.* Chicago: National Charter School Resource Center. Available: http://www.charterschoolcenter.org/sites/default/files/1043%20NCS%20WtPaper_Incubating%20final_0.pdf

+ Ableidinger, J., & Kowal, J. (Public Impact). (2011). *Better choices: Charter incubation as a strategy for improving the charter school sector.* Indianapolis, IN: Cities for Education Entrepreneurship Trust, and Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Institute. Retrieved from http://edexcellencemedia.net/publications/2011/20111207-Better-Choices/20111207-Better-Choices.pdf

STRONG AUTHORIZING PRACTICES:

+ National Association of Charter School Authorizers. (2010). *Principles and standards for quality charter school authorizing.* Chicago: Author. http://www.qualitycharters.org/images/stories/publications/Principles_and_Standards_2010.pdf

+ Petrilli, M. J., & Eberhardt, T. (2011). *The charter school quality agenda: What comes next?* 2011 PIE Network Summit Policy Briefs. Available: http://www.pie-network.org/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=84659b13-e8ba-4fd1-a51a-ebe37832dc63&groupId=10457

+ National Association of Charter School Authorizers. (2009). *Charter school performance accountability.* Chicago: Author. Available: http://www.qualitycharters.org/images/stories/Performance_Accountability.pdf

+ Hassel, B. C., & Hassel E. A. (2009). *Try, try again.* Chapel Hill, NC: Public Impact. http://www.publicimpact.com/publications/Public_Impact_Try_Try_Again_Slide_August_2009.pdf

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

+ Steiner, L., & Brinson, D. (2011). *Fixing failing schools: Building family and community demand for dramatic change.* Available: http://publicimpact.com/images/stories/building_demand_for_change_in_failing_schools-Public_Impact.pdf

ADDITIONAL GENERAL RESOURCES:

+ Kowal, J., & Ableidinger, J. (2011). *Leading indicators of school turnarounds: How to know when dramatic change is on track.* Charlottesville: University of Virginia's Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education. Available: http://www.darden.virginia.edu/web/uploadedFiles/Darden/Darden_Curry_PLE/UVA_School_Turnaround/Leading_Indicators_of_School_Turnarounds.pdf

+ Building Charter School Quality: www.charterschoolquality.org

+ National Charter School Resource Center: www.charterschoolcenter.org

Appendix A: Preparedness Checklist

This checklist provides a concise summary of the key issues presented in this guide. The checklist can help you organize your strategic planning efforts for implementing New Orleans-style, charter-based education reforms. Use it to determine your city's existing or potential resources for supporting the dramatic growth of high-quality charter schools and networks. Ideally, your city will have many components of the checklist already in place, with the remaining critical components a strong possibility within the first year or two of using chartering to replace the district's lowest performing schools, and reward the best performing district schools with greater autonomies and flexibility for innovation.

	Already in place, strong	Already in place, needs improvement	Strong possibility in years 1-2	Unlikely for 3 or more years
SYSTEM COMPONENTS				
Strong charter law				
State accountability system assigns performance rating for each school and has clear bar for acceptable performance				
Entity with legislative or executive power to take over failing district schools and replace with charters				
Political support for using charter schools as a critical component of school reform efforts – especially to annually take over and charter the bottom 5-7 percent of failing schools				
Charter schools exempt from existing collective bargaining agreements or teacher contracts				
Strong state charter office that monitors the performance and health of the charter school sector				
State charter association able to provide active advocacy at state and/or city level				
No restrictive cap on the number of charters that can be opened in the city				
HUMAN CAPITAL				
Relationship with national providers like Teach For America or The New Teacher Project				
Local teacher preparation program prepares teachers for working in charter school setting				
Alternative certification programs provide additional routes into teaching				
Flexibility for teachers to move from district to charter schools with relative ease				
Interest from human capital development organizations like High Bar, MATCH teacher coaching, Relay Graduate School of Education				
Companies and organizations in the region could provide a source of strong leaders, teachers, and charter board members from other sectors				
Organizations/collaborative entities support charter schools in matching their school staffing needs with appropriate applicants				

	Already in place, strong	Already in place, needs improvement	Strong possibility in years 1-2	Unlikely for 3 or more years
CHARTER INCUBATION & CMO GROWTH				
Organization with capability to incubate new schools, support development of strong schools, scale up high performers into networks, and encourage low performers to close				
Organization/group of entities to assess needs of charter system, foster new services to meet these needs				
Strategies in place to convert existing schools—both high performers and persistently low-performing schools—to charter status				
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT				
Strong community-based organizations (CBOs) work in education and support charter efforts				
Existing CBOs willing to support communication efforts to introduce charter concepts to community and/or support grassroots advocacy for charter efforts				
National organizations—like 50CAN or Stand for Children—engaged in the city				
FUNDING & FACILITIES				
Per-pupil funding follows child to charters				
Per-pupil funding adequate to run competitive schools				
Charter schools have access to public school facilities, free or at low cost				
Facilities financing options exist (philanthropic credit enhancement, local support organization, etc.)				
Local philanthropic foundations exist and support charter schools				
Large local businesses support education/charters				
National foundations currently support or have expressed interest in supporting charters in city				
Funding sources adequate to support charter and network incubation, facilities, and human capital development necessary for growth of high-quality charters				

	Already in place, strong	Already in place, needs improvement	Strong possibility in years 1-2	Unlikely for 3 or more years
PLANNING FOR DECENTRALIZED SYSTEM OF SCHOOLS				
Plan for ongoing governance and oversight system that provides and protects autonomies of high performers, and takes decisive and fair action when schools fall short				
Plan for centralized application process or enrollment system that can be phased in as number of charters grows				
Options for special education supports for charter schools				
Ombudsman for charter schools				
Transportation options for charter schools				
Market of service providers for charter schools				

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