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William Frantz Public School: A Case Study in the Politics of Education

Martha Graham Viator
Rowan University

Connie Schaffer
University of Nebraska at Omaha, cschaffer@unomaha.edu

Meg White
Stockton University

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William Frantz Public School: A Case Study in the Politics of Education


William Frantz Public School: A Case Study in the Politics of Education
 Martha Graham Viator, Connie Schaffer, Meg White
 Rowan University, University of Nebraska Omaha, Stockton University
 

1. Thesis/Purpose

To show that a market-based school system, commonly known as a charter school system, has the potential to become a destabilizing force that threatens democratic

OPEN

5. What are the implications of a market-based system (charter schools)?

Transfers governance from the historical, locally elected school board to privately appointed charter boards of directors, who now:

- control expenditure of public education funds
- select curriculum for each individual school
- determine licensure criteria for teachers and administrators

Proponents assert the market-based system:

- leads to educational innovations
- increases financial and academic accountability
- allows parents to choose a school that reflects their values and interests


OPEN

3. What long-term conditions led to the market-based system of education in New Orleans?

After the court-mandated desegregation of schools in 1960, a number of destabilizing factors and years of neglect led to resegregation. Ultimately, this led to the traditional

OPEN

2. Why did we use this school as a case study?



OPEN

4. What was the tipping point?

Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans on August 29, 2005, causing cataclysmic destruction of private and public property, in addition to disrupting the school system.

- 72% of all occupied homes incurred damages.
- 56% of occupied homes suffered

OPEN

Rowan University, University of Nebraska Omaha, Stockton University

PRESENTED AT:



ABSTRACT

Public education in the U.S. has long been viewed as a fortification against the enemies of democracy. While the organization of public school districts varied from state to state, the basic governing structure—the locally elected school board charged with overseeing public monies—can be found in every state and represents one of America’s most democratic institutions at the grassroots level. What happened to William Frantz Public School (WFPS - site of the effort to desegregate the schools of New Orleans in 1960 when Ruby Bridges entered the all-white school) and the other public schools in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 reveals the potential dangers an all-charter school district may pose to democracy at its most basic level.

This poster uses a place-based narrative derived from extensive research in multiple archives to convey the story of WFPS before and after Hurricane Katrina (there is no existing scholarly work focused on WFPS). The poster will reflect the years of neglect in the wake of desegregation, including the impact from decades of white flight to the suburbs, urban poverty and disenfranchisement, underfunding of public education, racialized school disciplinary practices, and distrust of public officials and the resulting disparagement of public education. Although many schools did not survive the storm, the badly damaged WFPS building was not demolished, in part because of its pivotal role in the Civil Rights Movement. However, the price-tag for the recovery of New Orleans’ public schools was beyond the capacity of the state, much less the city. The pressing need for funding to reconstruct the district’s buildings and educational infrastructure, recruit teachers and administrators, and meet the academic and social needs of its diverse student population provided a means for the advocates of privatization to advance their agenda. As a result, the building which once housed the WFPS is now called Akili Academy, just one of eighty-some charter schools found throughout New Orleans.

Proponents of charter schools assert that public schools lack the competition, innovation, and financial efficiencies found in the private sector. They argue that choice and accountability ensure that only schools offering relevant curricula while producing graduates who succeed academically will operate, and failing schools will lose their charters, and like businesses in the private sector, close their doors. But in New Orleans, often held up as a model for the charter school movement, questions regarding equity and accessibility have arisen as the faculty and administration at some charter schools seem to be ill-equipped to serve the student population in the city. While such schools that are unable to turn around these deficiencies are closed, the effects can be disruptive to the lives of their students and families. Some charter schools, whose founders recognized that their success might be hampered by accepting disaffected students, negotiated a charter agreement that allowed the school to have selective admission criteria. Furthermore, the traditional functions of the school board, such as determining curriculum, have been ceded to the charter school boards, who are not elected. These private boards are given authority to oversee public monies creating a murky private-public amalgamation distanced from the constituents, many of whom are African American, of the city. Following Hurricane Maria, officials instituted a similar school governance structure in Puerto Rico, again separating constituents of color from those making decisions about public education.

Support—and disdain—for charter schools crosses party affiliations and is a contentious political issue involving fundamental questions of school governance. Proponents view charter schools as a way to stabilize a failing education system; however, this poster will show that a market-based school system has the potential to become a destabilizing factor that threatens democratic principles of representation as well as the public education system that is fundamental to maintaining a literate and empowered populace.

1. THESIS/PURPOSE

To show that a market-based school system, commonly known as a charter school system, has the potential to become a destabilizing force that threatens democratic principles of representation as well as the education system that is fundamental to maintaining a literate and empowered populace.

DEDICATE SCHOOL AS 'PROTECTION' FOR DEMOCRACY

Ceremonies Are Conducted
for William Frantz
Building

**"Here in this kingdom of learning
our children will learn right from
wrong, to repel any foreign efforts
to destroy our country."**

Martin E. Kranz, OPSB Secretary,
October 6, 1938 – Times-Picayune.

2. WHY DID WE USE THIS SCHOOL AS A CASE STUDY?



Photo by Mandy Liu

William Frantz Public School is a familiar public school to many Americans and of historic importance in the advancement of civil rights (and hence, democracy). The school represents the entwinement of race, education, and market-based influence on public institutions within our democracy.

In 1960, 6-year-old Ruby Bridges was the first Black student allowed to attend the all-White school of William Frantz, located in one of the mixed-race neighborhoods of the Ninth Ward in New Orleans.



This image is a work of a United States Department of Justice employee, taken or made as part of that person's official duties. As a work of the U.S. federal government, the image is in the public domain (17 U.S.C. § 101 and 105).

The vast majority of Louisiana's White residents and government officials opposed the court-ordered desegregation. Ruby Bridges and her family faced intense resistance from White parents who refused to send their children to the newly desegregated school.

[VIDEO] [https://www.youtube.com/embed/CoJ1NXclO4w?](https://www.youtube.com/embed/CoJ1NXclO4w?feature=oembed&start=3&fs=1&modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

[feature=oembed&start=3&fs=1&modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/CoJ1NXclO4w?feature=oembed&start=3&fs=1&modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

Lucille Bridges, "My Story: Mrs. Lucille Bridges (The Power of Children)," January 28, 2016, produced by the Spring Branch Independent School District, Houston, TX, YouTube video 3:38.

Members of the White Citizens' Council immediately established all-White private schools, known as cooperative schools, and the State of Louisiana attempted to use public tax dollars to fund these schools. The attempt to use publicly-funded, private schools to undermine the advancement of civil rights began within days of Bridges' entry into William Frantz.

In 2005 (four months prior to Hurricane Katrina), the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. This designation would preserve the building as a symbol of the civil rights era and ultimately save it from post-Katrina demolition. However, William Frantz would find itself amidst a massive shift to charter schools and within an era of unprecedented instability.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018
 USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86) **Page 1**

Frantz, William School, Orleans Parish, LA
 United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Frantz, William School

Other Name/Site Number: Frantz Elementary



2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 3811 N. Galvez St.

Not for publication: NA

City/Town: New Orleans

Vicinity: NA

State: Louisiana

Code: LA

County: Orleans

Code: 071

Zip Code: 70117



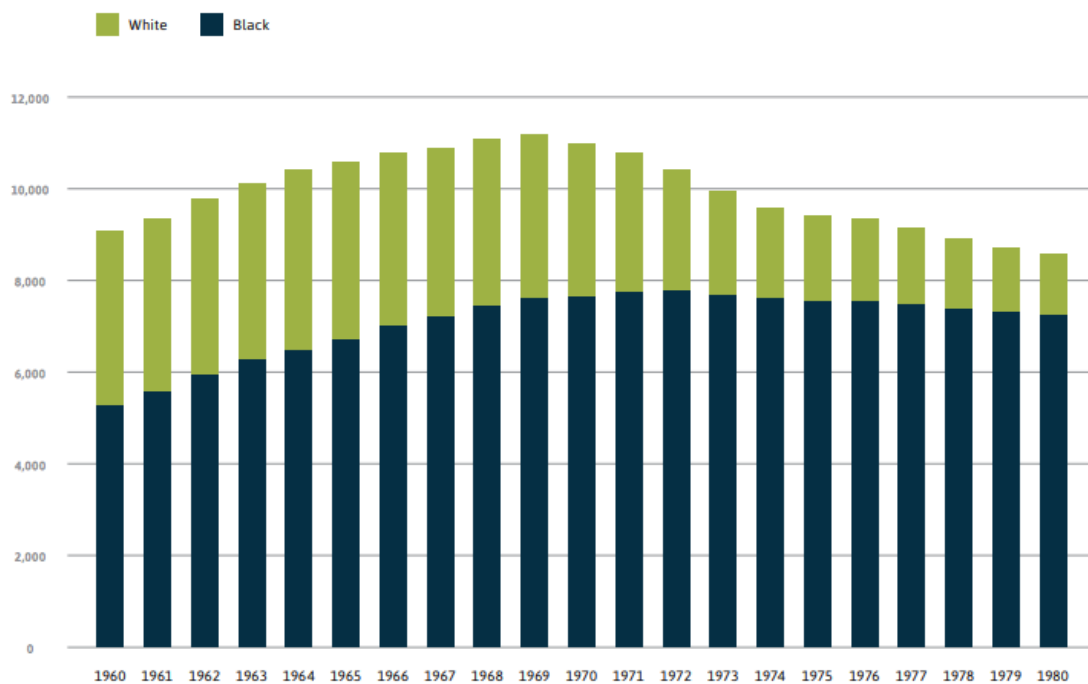
3. WHAT LONG-TERM CONDITIONS LED TO THE MARKET-BASED SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN NEW ORLEANS?

After the court-mandated desegregation of schools in 1960, a number of destabilizing factors and years of neglect led to resegregation. Ultimately, this led to the traditionally elected school board being unable to provide education to the residents of the city.

1. White flight

- Many segregationists transferred their children to private schools or moved to the suburbs. Beginning in 1970, the total number of students enrolled in the city's public schools declined while the number of Black students increased and then leveled off.

Figure 2. NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENTS 1960–1980



Source: Devore & Logsdon (1991), p. 265

Donald E. DeVore and Joseph Logsdon, *Crescent City Schools: Public Education in New Orleans 1841–1991* (New Orleans: The Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1991), p 265.

- Enrollment continued to fall in the 1990s, and by 2005, it was approximately 65,000 and 93% of the students were Black.

2. Urban poverty & disenfranchisement

- Economic dislocation exacerbated the effects of White flight. Factories closed and unemployment increased. For many Black residents, life in the city grew increasingly difficult, especially for those in public housing. The press often depicted these neighborhoods as dangerous and devoid of any promise.

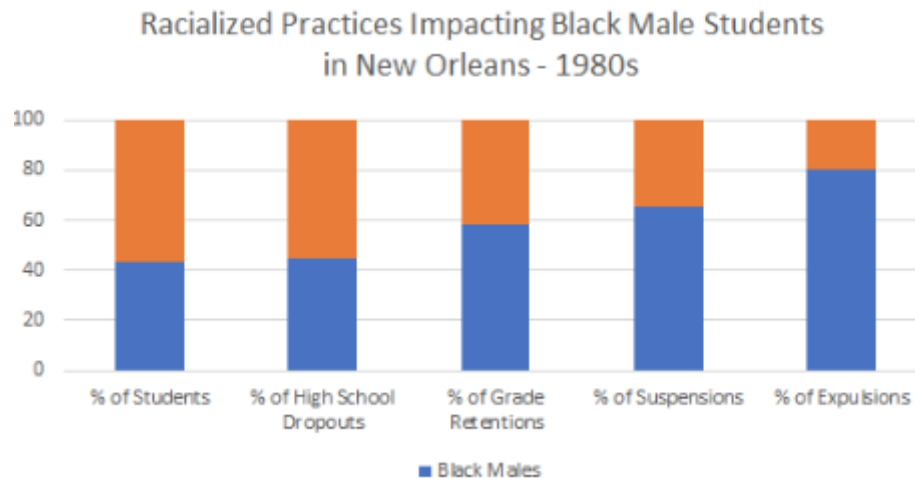


3. Education underfunding

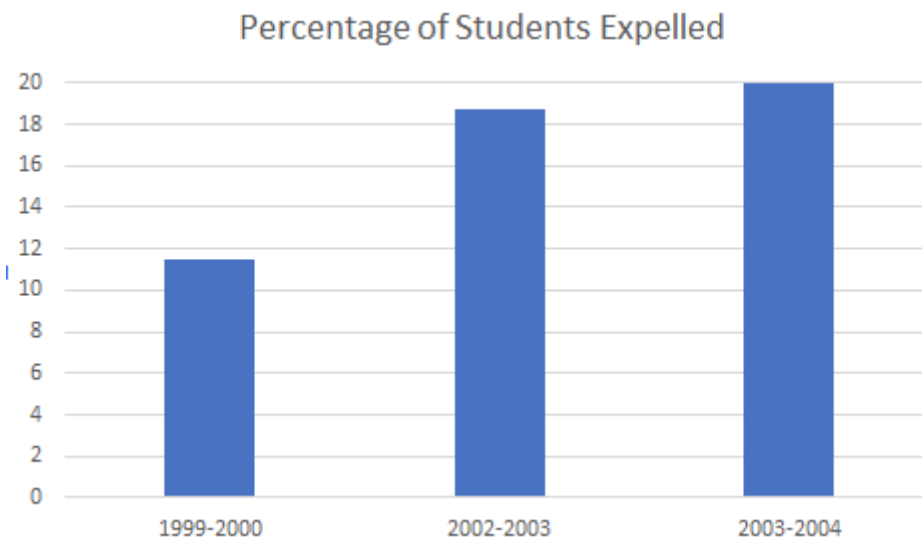
- As industries left and businesses closed, the tax base shrank, leaving fewer dollars for education.

4. Racialized school disciplinary practices

- In 1988, a study conducted by the district concluded that Black males were overrepresented in suspensions and expulsions.



- In addition, the district increasingly used harsh punishments rather than mediation to address disciplinary issues.



5. Distrust of public officials

- Instability due to superintendent turnover (2 permanent and 4 interim superintendents 1999-2005) contributed to distrust.

The Times-Picayune

50 CENTS 199th year No. 82 WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2005 NEW ORLEANS EDITION

BESIEGED AMATO CALLS IT QUILTS

Schools chief suffered utter loss of support

By Brian Thevenot
Staff writer

New Orleans schools Superintendent Tony Amato resigned Tuesday after losing the confidence, goodwill and support of elected officials from the School Board to Baton Rouge. He will leave June 30.

"I am convinced that the action I have taken is not only best for me and

my family, it is in the best interest for the children that I came here to serve," Amato said in brief remarks Tuesday night.

Amato's inability to correct the system's chaotic finances ultimately led to his removal, said Orleans Parish School Board member Una Anderson, one of his closest supporters.

Most of the recently installed board members have complained that Amato acts unilaterally, won't give them information they need to make decisions, has made no progress in fixing finances and can't effectively manage staff.

The abrupt resignation came a day after one of the most divisive and raucous School Board meetings in the past

decade, in which Amato's management was a consistent target of parents, board members and state legislators in the audience.

That was a far cry from eight months ago, when Amato enjoyed the support of politicians statewide, who pushed a law granting him unprecedented authority, and of voters, who trounced his enemies on the School Board at the polls. The superintendent decided to resign as a growing chorus of critics closed in on his shrinking circle of supporters.

When he arrived two years ago, Amato mesmerized audiences with in-

Superintendent Tony Amato follows Orleans Parish School Board interim general counsel Regina Bartholomew to an executive session of the board. The superintendent, as supporter and board member Una Anderson put it, "fell on the sword of his inability to fix the finances."

STAFF PHOTO BY ELIOT KAMENITZ

- Financial corruption by district administrators, school board members, teachers, and support staff, bred even more mistrust.

The Times-Picayune

50 CENTS 199th year No. 82 THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2003 EAST JEFFERSON EDITION

Audit probes millions paid to ex-employees

THOUSANDS GOT CHECKS IN PAST 4 YEARS



Although they are probing for evidence of fraud and corruption, school system officials point out that many of the checks sent to former employees may be legitimate, such as money for accrued vacation time.

INSIDE
Some \$10.5 million was paid to 1,575 former employees.
• About 500 of them went to add workers' comp claims.
• The city paid \$1.5 million to 1,575 former employees.
• The city paid \$1.5 million to 1,575 former employees.

By Brian Stannett

One former Orleans public schools employee who was paid \$10.5 million in the past four years says that the money was not for accrued vacation time but for a series of checks more than three years after she retired.

She says she was in a list of nearly 1,500 former school system employees who were paid checks after leaving the system, without paper after — but they were hardly unique. The payments, now being sought by school system officials and law enforcement agencies, amounted to a total of nearly \$10 million, she says, and were paid to other teachers and administrators.

While probing for evidence of fraud and corruption in the system's education payroll system, officials point out that many of the payments may be legitimate.

The data, which the school system also has turned over to state and federal investigators, dates to October 1999 and includes the names of 1,575 former employees, a big jump over the 1,000 currently employed.

Some of the payments were to fully a higher employee. The ones who received \$10 checks ranged from \$10,000 to \$100,000. The ones who were paid \$100,000 were paid for accrued vacation time. The ones who were paid \$100,000 were paid for accrued vacation time.

The data, released in response to a public records request, includes names, dates, amounts and other details. With one exception, officials declined to release the data.

In telephone interviews, some people said the list could have been used to find out who was paid the money, and others declined to discuss the data.

The data, released in response to a public records request, includes names, dates, amounts and other details. With one exception, officials declined to release the data.

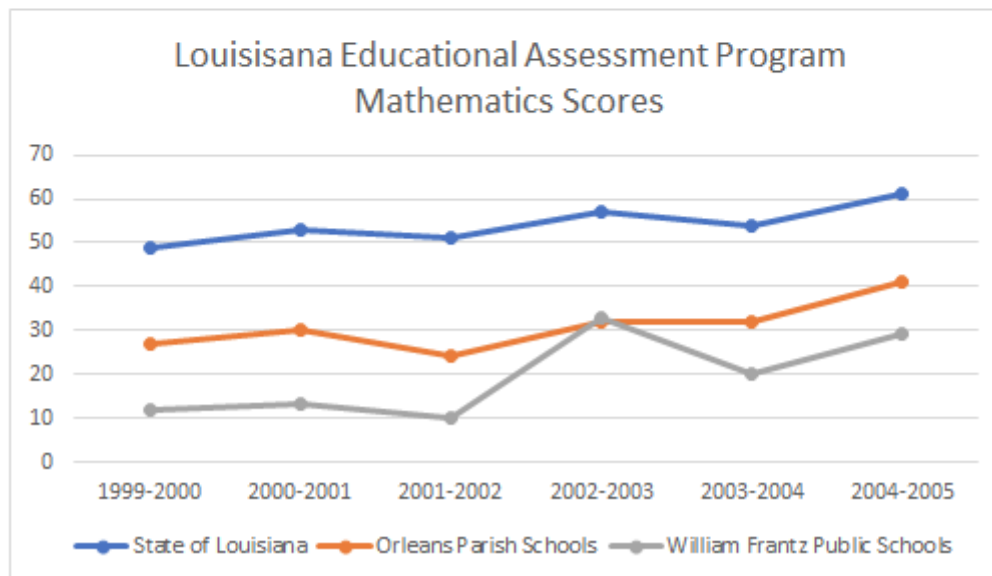
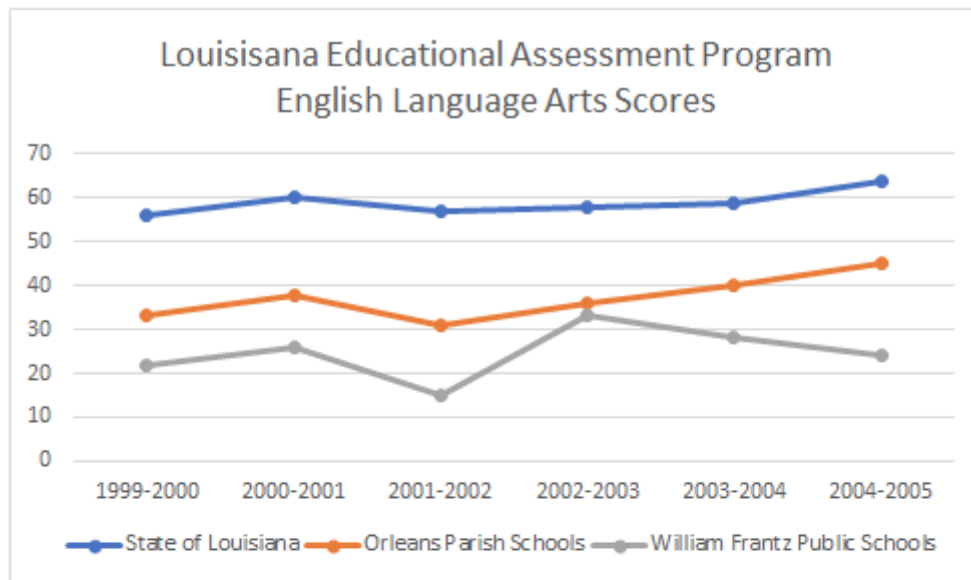
— JIM BROWN, A-12

Frequent district insolvency further eroded the public's confidence.



- 6. Federal laws mandating standardized testing

The state of Louisiana extended the use of testing to measure school accountability to the sole measure of individual student academic progress, requiring students in grades 4, 8, 10, and 12 to pass the state standardized LEAP21 test before moving to the next grade level.



7. Disparagement of public education

- Schools and the district faced intense pressure to improve their standing on the state-issued school report cards and stave a takeover from the state. In 2001 this pressure may have led the superintendent and other administrators to misrepresent attendance rates and exaggerate test scores, thus inflating School Performance Scores.

Sample Report Card for parents of students at William Frantz:



Fall 2003 School Report Card for Parents (2002-2003 School Year)

William Frantz Elementary School
New Orleans, Louisiana
(504) 942-3543

Revised:
March
2004

Orleans Parish



- ♦ This report contains the results of the Louisiana School Accountability System for your school.
- ♦ Your child's school, like other public schools, receives a **School Performance Score (SPS)** every year which shows how well the school is performing.
- ♦ SPS is based on the results from LEAP 21, The Iowa Tests, student attendance.

How Is Your School Performing?

- ♦ Your school's SPS is 46.3.
- ♦ Your school needs to receive an SPS of 52.5 in Fall of 2004.
- ♦ Your school received a Performance Label of **Academic Warning**.

Your School's
Performance
Label

Performance Labels	SPS Ranges
Five Stars (★★★★★)	140.0 and above
Four Stars (★★★★)	120.0 - 139.9
Three Stars (★★★)	100.0 - 119.9
Two Stars (★★)	80.0 - 99.9
One Star (★)	60.0 - 79.9
Academic Warning	45.0 - 59.9
Academically Unacceptable	below 45.0

How Much Has Your School Improved?

- ♦ From Fall 2001 to Fall 2003, your child's School Performance Score increased 10.2 points. Your school needed to make its Growth Target of 15.1 points.
- ♦ Your school received a Growth Label of **Minimal Academic Growth**.

Your School's
Growth Label

Growth Labels	Definition
Exemplary Academic Growth	Exceeds Growth Target by 5 points or more
Recognized Academic Growth	Meets or exceeds Growth Target by fewer than 5 points
Minimal Academic Growth	Improves, but does not meet Growth Target
No Growth	Shows a change in SPS of 0 to -5.0 points
School in Decline	Has a declining SPS of more than -5.0 points

Your School's Status

- ✦ Your child's school must make **Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)** in both the SPS Component and the Subgroup Component of the Accountability System.
- ✦ Schools that do not meet performance and growth requirements are placed in **School Improvement (SI)**. **SI** ranges from **SI 1** to **SI 4** this year. The higher the **SI** level, the more support and assistance the school receives from the district and the state.
- ✦ Schools eligible for monetary rewards must show growth for their subgroups (poverty and students with disabilities) and receive a Growth Label of Exemplary Academic Growth or Recognized Academic Growth.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP):	
- SPS Component	Yes
- Subgroup Component	Yes
School Improvement (SI) Status	SI 1
Rewards (\$) Eligibility:	No

The SPS Is Comprised of the Following 3 Parts:

Part 1: LEAP 21 Results for Your School

- ✦ These tests measure student learning in the main subject areas and show how well students in **your child's school** learned the coursework required by the state.
- ✦ Each student is placed at one of five achievement levels, based on his or her test results.

Spring 2003 Grade 4 LEAP 21 Test Results (Number and percent of students at each level)

Achievement Levels	English Language Arts				Mathematics			
	Your School		District*	State	Your School		District*	State
	#	%	%	%	#	%	%	%
Advanced	0	0.0	0.3	1.0	0	0.0	0.6	2.6
Mastery	1	1.9	5.3	12.9	2	3.8	4.1	13.0
Basic	16	30.8	30.2	44.1	15	28.8	27.7	41.3
Approaching Basic	13	25.0	29.6	25.9	11	21.2	26.2	23.3
Unsatisfactory	22	42.3	34.6	16.1	24	46.2	41.5	19.8

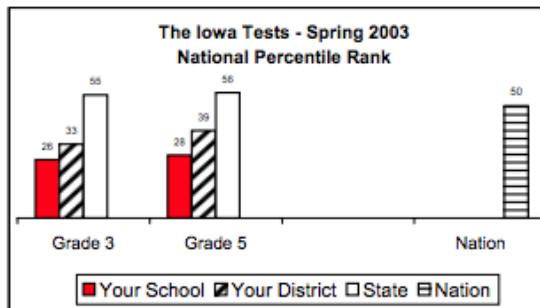
Achievement Levels	Science				Social Studies			
	Your School		District*	State	Your School		District*	State
	#	%	%	%	#	%	%	%
Advanced	0	0.0	0.4	1.8	0	0.0	0.5	1.7
Mastery	5	9.6	2.9	12.3	1	1.9	2.9	11.6
Basic	14	26.9	19.3	36.6	18	34.6	28.6	45.5
Approaching Basic	17	32.7	43.3	35.4	12	23.1	31.5	25.0
Unsatisfactory	16	30.8	34.2	14.0	21	40.4	36.5	16.3

*The term District refers to the Orleans Parish School System.

Please see the **Practice Assessment/Strengthen Skills (PASS)** Internet tool to access practice test questions with instructional feedback at www.LouisianaPASS.org. For more testing information, such as LEAP 21 tutoring lessons, please see "The Tests" webpage accessible from the Louisiana Department of Education website at www.louisianaschools.net.

Part 2: The Iowa Tests

- ♦ The Iowa Tests show how well Louisiana students perform compared to students across the nation.
- ♦ The performance of the typical student in the nation is at the 50th percentile for any grade level.



Parts 3: Attendance

- ♦ Attendance rates are based on prior year's data.

2001-2002 Attendance			
	Your School	Your District	State
Attendance	96.1%	92.3%	93.8%

Subgroup Component - Status of Your School's Subgroups

It is important that all subgroups within a school improve academically and meet the requirements. The following table shows the status of each subgroup at your child's school.

Subgroups	English Language Arts	Mathematics	Additional Academic Indicator - Attendance Rate *
	Met Requirements?		
African American/Black	YES	YES	
American Indian/Native Alaskan	N/A	N/A	
Asian/Pacific Islander	N/A	N/A	
Hispanic	N/A	N/A	
White	N/A	N/A	
Economically Disadvantaged (Free and Reduced Lunch)	YES	YES	
Students with Disabilities	YES	YES	
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	N/A	N/A	
All Students in the School	YES	YES	YES

N/A indicates fewer than 10 LEAP 21/GEE 21 test takers for a given subgroup.

* The attendance rate shows how well students are attending school on a daily basis.

Enrollment and Teacher Quality Results for Your Child's School

Students as of October 1, 2002*		
	Number	Percent
Total Students	274	100%
- Regular Education	244	89%
- Students with Disabilities	30	11%
Total on Free and Reduced-Priced Lunch	272	99%

* Based on PK-12, Nongraded grade structure.

2002-2003 Teacher Quality			
	Your School	Your District	State
Percent of Core Classes Taught by Highly Qualified Teachers	71%	81%	86%

- ♦ Core classes are English, math, science, social studies, foreign languages and the arts.
- ♦ Please access "Teach Louisiana" from the Louisiana Department of Education Website to find the certification status of your child's teacher.

For more information, please call the Louisiana Department of Education toll-free at 1-877-453-2721 or visit the website at www.louisianaschools.net.



Notes

4. WHAT WAS THE TIPPING POINT?

Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans on August 29, 2005, causing cataclysmic destruction of private and public property, in addition to disrupting the school system.

- . 72% of all occupied homes incurred damages.
- . 56% of occupied homes suffered major or severe damage.
- . 80% of Orleans Parish school buildings were unusable.
- . Initial repairs to schools were estimated to reach \$800 million to \$1 billion, far exceeding expected tax revenues in a normal year.

As residents returned to the city, the school district could not rebuild without monies beyond its customary tax allocation. Federal and state governments promised significant grants of money to charter schools; without this money, the city of New Orleans had insufficient funds to rebuild, hire, and replace materials lost to the storm. The tax base, which funded the public schools, would take years to recover.

- . The federal government pledged \$20 million but restricted the money to the expansion of charter schools.

LAWS & GUIDANCE / ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

Key Policy Letters Signed by the Education Secretary or Deputy Secretary

September 14, 2005

ARCHIVED INFORMATION



Dear Colleague:

The U.S. Department of Education is continuing to work with States and schools to ensure that the children affected by Hurricane Katrina continue their education with the least disruption. In recent days, officials from several States have contacted the Department's Charter Schools Program (CSP) staff, seeking increased flexibility to serve the thousands of students displaced by Hurricane Katrina. Because charter schools are exempt from many State and local education rules, they may be uniquely equipped to serve these students. Accordingly, the Department is prepared to consider requests for statutory and regulatory waivers of various requirements under the CSP and other federal statutes and regulations over which the Secretary of Education exercises administrative authority.

In addition, the Department has identified approximately \$20 million of Fiscal Year 2005 funds still available under the CSP, which the Department would like to use to assist States and their charter schools to meet the immediate educational needs of students displaced as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

Enclosed please find guidance on the process for requesting CSP supplemental funds and waivers. Written requests for supplements must be submitted to the Department on or before **September 23, 2005**, to ensure consideration and allow the Department sufficient time to review the requests and obligate the funds by their expiration date of September 30, 2005.

Thank you for your diligent efforts to assist displaced families and students affected by Hurricane Katrina. If you have any questions please call Nina Rees, Assistant Deputy Secretary for Innovation and Improvement, at (202) 205-4500. We look forward to working with you in the days and weeks ahead.

Sincerely,

/s/

Margaret Spellings

cc: State Charter School Program Directors

William Frantz Public School is representative of the devastation school buildings suffered, as well as the inability of the district to repair and reopen. Many homes in the surrounding neighborhood remained uninhabitable for months and for some houses, even years. As a result, the school district did not prioritize renovating the school.



The William Frantz Elementary School after flooding and damage from Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Photo courtesy Recovery School District

5. WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF A MARKET-BASED SYSTEM (CHARTER SCHOOLS)?

Transfers governance from the historical, locally elected school board to privately appointed charter boards of directors, who now:

- . control expenditure of public education funds
- . select curriculum for each individual school
- . determine licensure criteria for teachers and administrators

Proponents assert the market-based system:

- . leads to educational innovations
- . increases financial and academic accountability
- . allows parents to choose a school that reflects their values and interests

Analysis of a market-based system in New Orleans found:

- . Accountability measures that closed charter schools also undermined the identity of neighborhoods and schools.
- . Merit-based systems tied teacher evaluations to test scores without consideration of factors outside of school that impact student performance.
- . Hiring by individual charter schools rather than a larger district system diminished the influence of the teachers' unions and their advocacy for stability in the teaching profession.
- . New approaches to teacher hiring, such as Teach For America and TeachNOLA, eroded teacher qualifications and experience.
- . Low-performing students and special needs students were discouraged from applying to some schools in order to keep test scores high.
- . Charter school officials, who are not elected, were not accountable to the citizenry.



Photo by Mandy Liu

Conclusion: the events in New Orleans, as represented by the transformation of William Frantz Public School into charter school Akili Academy, illuminates the de-democratization or unraveling of democracy at its most basic level.

When you give up on one public school, one school district, one city... it becomes easier to give up on the next and the next and the next.



REFERENCES

Schaffer, C.L., White, M., and Viator, M.G. (2020). William Frantz Public School: A Story of Race, Resistance, Resiliency, and Recovery in New Orleans. NY: Peter Lang Inc.

Curriculum Vitae of Authors

Connie L. Schaffer graduated summa cum laude with a BS from Kansas State University. She earned her MS and EdD from the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO). She taught middle and high school and is now a faculty member in the UNO College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences.

Meg White has been an educator for over 30 years. She earned a BA from Marymount University, an MA from San Jose State University, and an EdD from Northcentral University. Currently, she is an Associate Professor of Education at Stockton University.

Martha Graham Viator earned a BA in history from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and an MA and PhD in history from Auburn University. Recently retired from Rowan University, she taught in the College of Education after teaching high school history in public schools.