



BATON ROUGE
ALLIANCE
for STUDENTS

2026

YOUTH VOICE REPORT



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Baton Rouge Youth Voice Report 2026

The Baton Rouge Youth Voice Report, a project of the Baton Rouge Alliance for Students, is designed to elevate the perspectives of the city's most important education stakeholders: students. Continuing a listening effort for its fourth consecutive year, the initiative gathered hundreds of survey responses from middle and high school students across East Baton Rouge to shine light on the need for school improvement, public policy, and educational leadership.

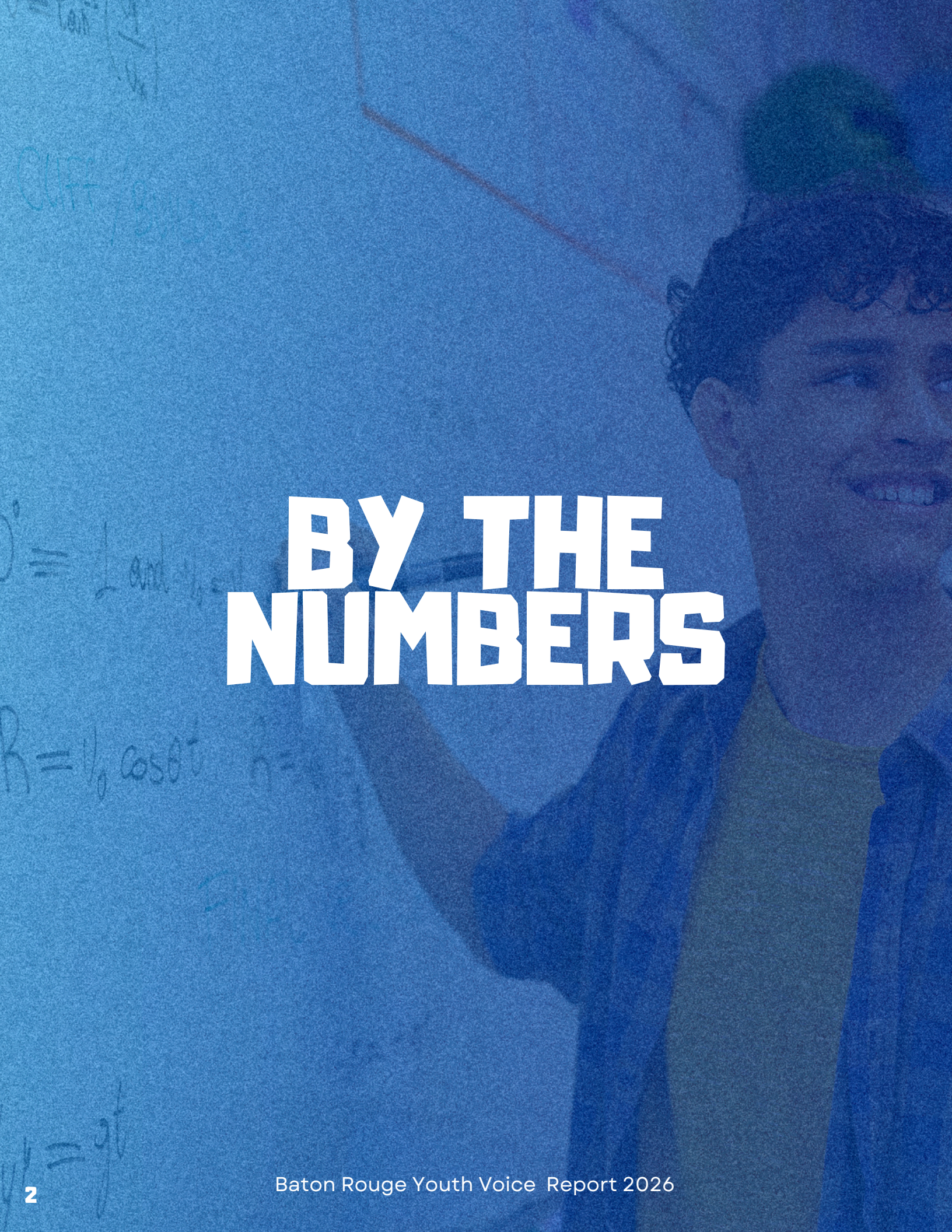
As East Baton Rouge's largest school district prepares for school board elections in the fall of 2026, this report is a data-grounded tool for community members, education leaders and future school board members alike. It provides an important snapshot of students' experiences and priorities, and spotlights students most pressing concerns and desires for their education and community.

Perhaps the strongest message students sent this year is that they want a meaningful role in shaping the decisions that affect their education. Across the data, students consistently expressed a desire to be heard and included in conversations about their schools and communities. Whether through student advisory councils, school visits, youth roundtables, or other opportunities for dialogue, students are asking leaders to ensure student voices are a meaningful part of the policymaking process.

While policy decisions shape schools, relationships shape trust. This year's survey revealed another simple but powerful truth: **students do not feel represented by leaders they do not know**. More than half of surveyed students could not identify their school board representative, yet students who could identify representative were nearly three times more likely to feel that their voices mattered. That is a solvable problem. When adults are visible and accessible to young people, students are more likely to believe someone is listening, cares, and will act on their behalf.

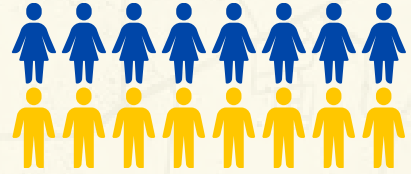
Students are equally clear about the conditions they believe support success. Across four years of Youth Voice data, they have consistently pointed to great teachers, safe learning environments, and accessible mental health support as defining characteristics of a positive school experience. These priorities are directly influenced by the policies, investments, and leadership decisions made by the school board.

This report serves as both an invitation and a challenge: to value student voice as more than an annual exercise, but rather, as an essential part of effective leadership. Students have done their part by sharing their experiences. The opportunity now belongs to the adults entrusted with shaping what comes next.



BY THE NUMBERS

BY THE NUMBERS



Source: Louisiana Department of Education February 2025 Enrollment Count

Total Students Enrolled in Baton Rouge Schools

73,406

EBR NEIGHBORHOOD
SCHOOLS

24,567

PUBLIC CHARTER
SCHOOLS

12,599

LAB & OTHER STATE
SCHOOLS

2,335

PRIVATE
SCHOOLS

14,389

MAGNET
SCHOOLS

8,302

CENTRAL, BAKER
& ZACHARY

11,214

A photograph of three students in a classroom setting. Two students in the foreground are looking at a smartphone held by the student on the right. A third student is visible in the background, also looking towards the phone. The image has a warm, yellowish tint.

STUDENTS SAY...

#1 WE TRUST LEADERS WE KNOW

2026



3X

Students who can identify their school board representative are nearly 3X more likely to believe the board cares about their experience than students who don't.

Less than half of students believe the school board cares about their experience, but the data suggests that trust is built when students know who represents them.

65.2% of students who reported knowing their school board representative believe the board cares about student experiences. Among youth who could not identify their school board members, only **22.5%** agree that those representatives care about them.

In addition to representation, Baton Rouge students continue to say they want a real, structural role in decisions about their education.

- **58.8%** of students say they would attend or speak at a school board meeting
- **65.0%** of students would attend and speak at a Metro Council meeting

“Not enough student voice in school decisions.”

“If the representative paid more attention to the needs rather than their own interests.”

“I want leaders to listen more to students' ideas and concerns.”

“Involve the youth...the youth are the ones living with every decision and choice made”

INVOLVING STUDENTS TO IMPROVE EXPERIENCE AND PERCEPTIONS

Two-thirds of this year's respondents agreed to participate further if asked. Based on the student survey responses, it's evident that students are willing to engage with elected leaders.

Consistent visibility and engagement can help leaders build stronger relationships and trust with students. Building a standing structure for student voice, such as advisory seats or ongoing listening sessions, would help guide district resources toward student-identified gaps.

#2 SAFETY MATTERS IN EVERY ZIP CODE

2026



Safety ranked number 1 among all student participants polled about what matters most in schools.

70.8% of EBR students agree or strongly agree that they feel safe at school

School safety accounts for things such as security staffing, safety procedures, and building conditions, and students have input for areas of improvement:

- What is ONE change you would want school leaders to make right now?
- “They should make safety rules better.”
 - “A fun environment for us to be safe and learn in”
 - “Make schools safer.”
 - “Listen to kids about safety concerns.”

Safety in Neighborhoods

82.9% of students agree or strongly agree that they feel safe in their own neighborhood.

Although most students report feeling safe in their neighborhoods, a North/South gap remains. The gap is smaller than in 2025, but safety perceptions declined slightly in both regions this year.

“I feel safe in my neighborhood” (% Agree)	2024	2025	2026
North Baton Rouge (NBR)	67%	78%	77.4%
South Baton Rouge (NBR)	89%	91%	88.2%
Gap (percentage points)	22 pts	13 pts	~11 pts

CONTINUING TO IMPROVE STUDENT SAFETY

If safety perceptions are to improve, the next school board should ensure every school, regardless of neighborhood or ZIP code, provides students with the same standard of safety. Students have made it clear that they want to be part of that progress, so education leaders have a unique opportunity to engage young people in ongoing conversations about school and neighborhood safety.

#3 **TEACHER SUPPORT** **IS STUDENT SUPPORT**

2026



1/4

of students believe their teachers are not prepared to teach the subject they're responsible for.

While **86.4%** of students say they have at least one teacher who truly engages them in the learning process, EBR students are noticing a support gap that directly influences student experience.

Students are clearly asking for teachers who are equipped, fairly compensated, and able to “focus on instruction.” When students have teachers who engage them, challenge them, and make learning feel meaningful, confidence and post-graduation readiness are more likely to follow.

“Reduce non-instructional administrative burdens on teachers.”

“More academic support for teachers.”

“Raise the pay for teachers”

ENHANCING STUDENT EXPERIENCE WITH GREAT TALENT

Students recognize that teachers are responsible for preparing them to be engaged citizens and productive members of the workforce. Increasing teacher pay is a good first step; however, retaining great teachers requires more than just a salary increase. Implementing an Educator Workforce Strategy that prioritizes meaningful incentives and administrative support is imperative to attract top talent.

#4

2026

MORE MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES



80.5%

of students say mental health challenges are affecting them or their peers, but only one-third say their schools provide proper support.

“I want mandatory mental health classes.”

“More guidance counselors.”

“Be more informative to staff on the many different types bullying.”

Students continue to identify mental health as one of the greatest barriers to success, signaling their emotional well-being is not separate from academic achievement.

Most Baton Rouge students say they or their peers struggle with mental health, yet students report feeling less comfortable seeking emotional support than academic help.

68% of students agree: “I feel comfortable asking for academic support from a staff member at my school.”

v.s.

48% of Students agree: “I feel comfortable asking for emotional support from a staff member at my school.”

STUDENT SUPPORT BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Addressing the needs-to-support gap will require more than expanding services. It will also include building a culture where students know who to turn to and feel supported both inside and outside the classroom. Continued investment in school counselors, social workers, educator training, and other student support services can help ensure all Baton Rouge youth have access to the care they want and need.

A young man is seen in profile, looking out of a window. The entire image has a strong blue tint. The man is on the right side, looking towards the left. His hand is partially visible near the window frame. The window shows a view of trees and a building outside.

LOOKING AHEAD

A STUDENT-INFORMED AGENDA

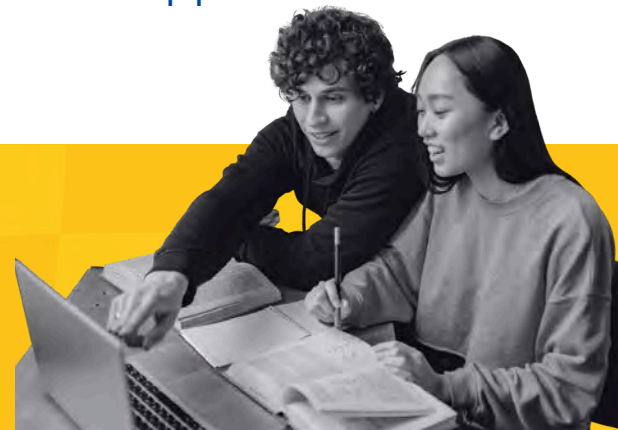
For the Next School Board

Baton Rouge Youth Voice Report 2026

This year's findings offer both a snapshot of student experiences and a roadmap for leadership. The students of East Baton Rouge schools are offering a vision for what stronger schools and stronger communities might look like:

Excellent educators, safe and supportive schools, stronger mental health resources, and leaders who are accessible and ready to listen.

- 1 Identify opportunities to strengthen trust in district leadership and engage students willing to provide meaningful input.
- 2 Sustain school safety progress so that no ZIP code or campus falls behind.
- 3 Develop recruitment and retention plans that support educators' need to focus on instruction.
- 4 Create a clear plan to support students experiencing mental health challenges, including access to counselors, social workers, and trusted school-based support.



A MESSAGE

TO THE COMMUNITY

Baton Rouge Youth Voice Report 2026

**“CHILDREN ARE THE THERMOMETER OF THE
HEALTH OF A SOCIETY.”**

- DR. HANS ROSLING

The voices captured in this report tell us more than how students feel about their schools. The students have revealed the truth about the health of our community and the future we are building together. We believe a quality education is every child's birthright, and achieving that vision requires all of us—families, educators, elected officials, business leaders, and community members—to work together.

Our role is to carry these insights into action by advocating for policies that reflect students' needs and including young people's viewpoints whenever decisions affect their lives. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that student voice is not only heard, but reflected in the decisions that shape the future of every child and, ultimately, the future of Baton Rouge.

