



Business Council of New Orleans & The River Region: 2024 Orleans Parish School Board Election Issues-Based Policy Agenda

ISSUE 1: PROVIDE FIDUCIARY STEWARDSHIP OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT AND ITS FINANCES

Orleans Parish School Board members must govern the district consistent with fiduciary standards that ensure they are serving the best interests of NOLA-PS students and families through efficiently deploying the district's resources and assets toward optimal outcomes, requiring the following:

- A. Study board materials and policies in advance of committee and board meetings.
- B. Enter each policy decision conscientiously prepared, exercising due care and diligence to know relevant facts, data, theory, policy, the likely impact of passage and the positions or feedback schools have on the proposal.
- C. Represent the community, students, and families with full independence from political or monetary self-interest.
- D. Continue to update and improve upon the five-year Strategic Plan relying on facts, data, research and analysis to set a realistically aspirational standard for improved educational outcomes and deliver consistent board-level guidance to achieve it.
- E. Introduce or update policies to address issues the Board anticipates will have a material impact, and require the Superintendent to abide by them in management decisions.
- F. Respect the value of the Board process and the decisions it yields, speaking as one voice on issues for which the Board already has spoken or has taken official action.
- G. Require each Board committee to align committee work with Board mandates and to define its purpose, annual priorities, specific Board assignments, and to work in consultation with outside sources where it will enhance the work.
- H. Annually evaluate the Superintendent's job performance based on well-defined performance measures and metrics and accountability for achieving the goals in the Strategic Plan.
- I. Require the Superintendent's regular Board updates to include a report on the progress toward management and district goals identified in the Strategic Plan.
- J. Ensure the existence and periodic update by the Superintendent of an emergency plan that anticipates education disruption based on weather, widespread or pandemic-related illness, electrical/infrastructure outages or other force majeure events and responsibly achieves continuous education access without significant gaps.

ISSUE 2: STRENGTHEN THE FOUNDATION FOR CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

Orleans Parish School Board members must preserve and strengthen the existing district framework for charter schools that balances school autonomy with rigorous accountability for delivering quality education, which requires the following:

- A. Commit to the continued use of the Charter School Accountability Framework (CSAF) in reviewing school performance in academics, finances, operations, and legal compliance, and update it as necessary.
- B. Consistently act on the results of the CSAF when acting on the approval, renewal and revocation of charter contracts, resisting the intrusion of politics or opinion that contradicts the CSAF findings and revise the framework and/or policy as needed to create alignment with the state's new school accountability framework.
- C. Create policy that requires schools to develop and/or refine leadership and board member succession plans, including identification and recruitment of board members that have a diversity of expertise important to governing an organization, as part of any renewal process.
- D. Preserve and improve upon existing charter board resources, including new board member training, to ensure board's ability to govern.

ISSUE 3: PROMOTE THE BEST PRACTICES OF HIGH PERFORMING PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Orleans Parish School Board Members must work with charter school partners and external partners to continue sharing best practices and iterating to include new ones which requires the following:

- A. Create visibility for and publicly acknowledge exemplary instances of school performance so other schools in the district can know of and benefit from formulas for success, specifically including high levels of student growth and the ability to close achievement gaps and A and B performance letter grades.
- B. Assist successful schools in expanding their current capacity to serve more students, including facility modifications and assignments.
- C. Encourage successful schools to replicate, especially to geographic areas lacking high performing schools identified through the Portfolio Plan.
- D. Informed by the Portfolio Plan authorize or open new schools that have a specific focus on addressing needs including but not limited to, English Language Learners, special education, talented, gifted, and overage student populations.
- E. Support sustainability of successful schools by taking portfolio actions to decrease excess seats elsewhere in the portfolio, in alignment with the "Quantity" goals of the Portfolio Plan (*i.e.*, Fill Rate, percentage of students in quality facilities, facility utilization, etc.).

ISSUE 4: ENACT POLICY ON DIRECTLY RUNNING SCHOOLS TO PROTECT FAIRNESS, FISCAL DISCIPLINE, ACCOUNTABILITY AND AUTONOMY

Orleans Parish School Board Members must ensure that all our schools are held to rigorous accountability standards which requires the following:

- A. Enact a policy governing the process for Board consideration of any decision to directly run a school and require open deliberation of whether circumstances exist that require NOLA-PS to directly operate a school, including (1) the non-renewal of a charter school, (2) the revocation of a charter contract based on CSAF guidelines (3) the need to meet a specific programming need identified in the portfolio (4) the need to manage overcapacity to safeguard school and district sustainability.
- B. Enact a policy that requires district run schools to meet the same CSAF standards applicable to charter schools in order to remain open, including, but not limited to: academic performance, financial health, organizational effectiveness, monitoring and interventions, renewal review, and defined renewal terms.
- C. Enact a policy that requires direct run schools to follow the same processes charter schools are required to follow, including, but not limited to: New Orleans Common Application Process (NCAP) procedures, student expulsion policies, student transportation, and per-pupil funding through the District-Level Funding Allocation.
- D. Adopt a policy that governs the delegation of authority and decision making in instances of a direct run school to clarify that decisions, including the budget and staff, are made at the school leadership level.
- E. Ensure that in the event of a collective bargaining agreement, each school's principal shall retain autonomy in decisions to hire and terminate personnel and that if a collective agreement envisions tenure, it requires achievement of high performance as performed through specific metrics and is not earned through years of service alone.
- F. Ensure that the district performs as a "school management organization" for any direct run school, with separate staff where possible; cost accounting for shared services or staff from central office; and fiscal evaluation and accountability according to the CSAF standards.
- G. Recognize that the district represents all students and schools and create and maintain parity in resource allocation and recruitment, communication and messaging strategies to ensure fairness in visibility and public awareness of no fairness in the management single school or category of school accordingly to maintain

ISSUE 5: ENSURE EQUITY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Orleans Parish School Board members must ensure equitable access to high quality public education through the maintenance of district-level protocols that seek to provide meaningful public school educational opportunities for all students, which requires the following:

- A. Maintain the use of and update, as necessary, the differentiated student funding formula that applies to all NOLA-PS schools. Provide an annual DLFA update to the board that includes an analysis of weighted funding distribution trends in each category.

- B. Maintain the common enrollment system, continuing to balance neighborhood, sibling, and closing school preferences with citywide access and continue mandatory participation in a centralized Student Hearing Office, which includes disciplinary and expulsion standards, hearings and safety screenings.
- C. Continue to require schools to provide transportation.
- D. Add to the current process an audit of district operations for “fairness” and adherence to board policies in relation to all schools in the portfolio.
- E. Develop a transparent and accessible methodology for parents to understand differences between schools outside of the state letter grades that includes definitions of school performance scores (SPS), school performance renewal index (SPRI), and growth.
- F. Support and advocate for expanded access to high-quality early childhood education
- G. Support rigorous coursework that prepares students for success post high school, whether in college, technical training, or a high-wage pathway.
- H. Apply the existing policy that no single management organization can operate more than 15% to include NOLA-PS to ensure a diversity operators and programming.

ISSUE 6: RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Orleans Parish School Board Members must coordinate or deliver district-level services that efficiently respond to essential needs and reasonable expectations of students, families and operating within New Orleans’ unique public education landscape, which requires the following:

- A. Require the administration, schools, and partner organizations to collaborate to achieve economies of scale where possible including, but not limited to, transportation, special education, communications, and health care initiatives (including mental health and Medicaid reimbursements) to ensure fiscal prudence. Align NOLA-PS’ budget, staffing and partnerships, as necessary, to reflect and implement these determinations.
- B. In accordance with the Strategic Plan, align the Systemwide Needs Program funding to citywide needs through collaboration with schools and system partners and adopt clear practices to ensure transparency and accountability for the use and administration of funds.
- C. Create better transparency for taxpayers for the millage revenue they direct to the school system by publishing and annually updating a millage dashboard that clearly explains sources and uses of school district revenue, including at the central office.
- D. Demonstrate you can balance the budget exclusive of one-time funding by FY 2026-27.
- E. Apply the existing requirement of an annual financial audit of each charter school to any school that is directly operated by NOLA-PS.
- F. Develop and abide by process of an internal audit of the district to ensure all schools, regardless of charter or direct run status, are treated equitably.
- G. As the taxing authority for the school district, regularly monitor the use and sufficiency of millage revenue, openly debate decisions to roll the millage forward or back and, in the event of a ballot proposition for a new or renewed millage, prepare and publish a fiscal analysis and strategic plan for the projected use of the millage, including a detailed description of its past use where applicable.

ISSUE 7: STRATEGIC PLANNING AND ENGAGEMENT

Orleans Parish School Board Members must ensure the district is prepared for current and future challenges, which requires the following:

- A. Maintain the Strategic Plan, including the portfolio plan, and update as necessary to account for known or probable changes in district needs and demographics.
- B. Identify key areas that would allow the school system to address inequities across the School District while also incentivizing schools that are currently addressing those inequities.
- C. Identify opportunities and develop plans to align systems and expand partnerships to increase the number of public school students who meet key benchmarks of success, including kindergarten readiness, third-grade reading proficiency, on-time graduation and post-secondary placement and persistence.
- D. Operationalize the Portfolio Plan including the provision of an annual update to the public after all portfolio decisions for the subsequent year have been made.
- E. Based on the inputs of the Strategic Plan and the surplus facilities strategy, ensure management of the portfolio of facilities to implement capital improvement plans and off-loading of excess and low-quality facilities to: increase the percentage of students served in quality facilities; ensure high quality facilities across all geographies; meet community needs; generate revenue to meet district needs; and cut district costs related to facility maintenance.
- F. Identify opportunities for the School Board to find additional resources, develop partnerships, and coordinate with governmental bodies, educational institutions, the business and nonprofit communities to ensure we can retain our great teachers and recruit new ones.