



VAYLA-NO
PRESENTS:



Raise Your Hand **CAMPAIGN**

SIX PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS, SIX YEARS AFTER THE STORM

450 Student Voices from Inside New Orleans' Educational Experiment

Full Report

SEPTEMBER 2011

Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association of New Orleans (VAYLA-NO)

4646 Michoud Blvd., Suite D2

New Orleans, LA 70129-1816

Office: 504-253-6000

Fax: 504-754-7762

www.vayla-no.org



Acknowledgements & Supporters

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Youth Research Leaders

Cassandra Tran	Sarah T. Reed, Class of 2009
Paul Sampson	Chalmette High School, Class of 2009
Danyea Pierre	Sarah T. Reed, Class of 2010
Linda Tran	Abramson Science and Technology, Class of 2011
Victoria Tran	Sarah T. Reed, Class of 2012
Julie Cao	McMain Secondary School, Class of 2012
James Do	Sarah T. Reed, Class of 2009
Hoang Hoang	Cypress Hills High School (TX), Class of 2009
Lynn Hoang	Benjamin Franklin High School, Class of 2013
Luc Nguyen	Benjamin Franklin High School, Class of 2012
Shirley Tran	Lusher, Class of 2016
Nhi Tran	McMain Secondary, Class of 2008
Anna Nguyen	McMain Secondary, Class of 2011
Trang Bui	Sarah T. Reed High School, Class of 2008
Timmy Vo	Brother Martin, Class of 2008

Supporting Organizations

Vietnamese Initiatives in Economic Training
Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana
Kids Rethink New Orleans Schools
Puentes New Orleans
MQVN Community Development Corporation
Urban League Young Professionals
Young Leadership Council
Institute for Women and Ethnic Studies

Partnership for Youth Development
Louisiana Language Access Coalition
Young Empowerment Project
Orleans Parish Education Network
API Young Professional Network
Students at the Center
YOUTHansia Foundation
Fountain of Youth Foundation

*The designation "supporting organization" signifies a firm belief in the importance of this youth-led research initiative, and an affirmation that young people must be at the forefront of our city's education reform movement.

Design

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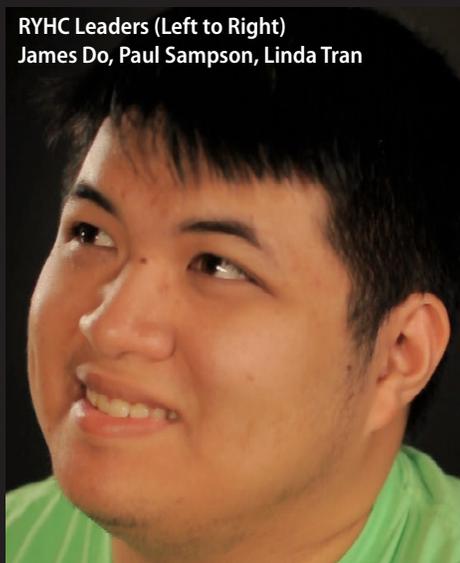
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"I do this work because I'm looking forward to making changes, real differences; making the community better, the education better, for everyone else. Because when I think about it, I don't want my sisters and brothers to go to a bad school. I don't want them to experience what I had to experience. If they can't learn, what are they going to do?"

*—Linda Tran,
Lead Youth Organizer and Researcher*

RYHC Leaders (Left to Right)
James Do, Paul Sampson, Linda Tran



Introduction

After Hurricane Katrina, education officials and lawmakers promised to build a New Orleans public school system capable of delivering a “world-class” education to all students. For six years, students in New Orleans public schools have waited patiently for the delivery of this promise. While changes have been made to the way that schools are governed and managed, declarations of the reform movement’s success do not always align with the experiences of students who spend forty hours each week inside our city’s public schools. As students, we may not know the name of our school’s CEO, or even which school district we fall under, but we do know whether or not our teachers are effective, our counselors are available, or our busses are running on time. Standing on the inside of New Orleans’ educational experiment, we know for certain that it is too early to declare “mission accomplished.” Considerable work must be done to ensure that every student has access to a quality education in our city.

Unfortunately, young people, particularly students of color, have had little opportunity to share feedback or influence the direction of New Orleans public schools. In this era of great educational change, we have been acted upon rather than treated as invaluable partners. Grounded in our belief that student voices must be at the forefront of New Orleans’ educational transformation, youth at the Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association (VAYLA) embarked upon an **18-month bottom-up research initiative** to assess conditions in public high schools from the student perspective.

Using both qualitative and quantitative research methods, we recorded over **50 hours of testimony** from students and parents, and administered a survey project that engaged **450 students** from **six public high schools**, yielding over **25,000 student observations**. This research initiative represents the most extensive youth-led, student-centered evaluation of New Orleans public high schools since Hurricane Katrina. Our study encompasses Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) and Recovery School District (RSD) schools, both direct-run and charter. In total, **450 students have “raised their hands”** through either a survey or interview to express their concerns.

On the heels of Superintendent John White’s 100th-day in office, as well as the six-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, we present our research findings and recommendations as a gift to the city of New Orleans, and to the officials who exercise power over what happens in our schools. At this historical moment, it is critical for the young people who rely on our city’s public schools to raise their voices. In the spirit of Superintendent John White’s 100-day initiative, we hope that this report can contribute to the formation of a system that embodies excellence, equity and community. Until then, we remain highly critical, yet always eager to contribute our ideas and knowledge in the struggle forward.

—*Raise Your Hand Campaign, August 2011*

Six of the RYHC Founders (Left to Right)
Lynn Hoang, James Do, Linda Tran,
Cassandra Tran, Paul Sampson,
Danyea Pierre



Executive Summary

This youth-led, student-centered research initiative examines twelve dimensions of schooling that local students identified as integral to a quality education—**teaching, student support services, physical environment, textbooks, school food, family inclusion, rigor and college readiness, English as a second language, school fees, access to school options, transportation, and safety**. Through interviews, focus groups and peer-to-peer surveying, 450 students at six public high schools reported on their school’s delivery of these dimensions, which we use as the basis for evaluating educational quality and equity in the post-Katrina system.

Based on a thorough analysis of the student responses, there is much to celebrate when considering the state of public education in New Orleans. Specific schools have emerged as beacons of hope on particular issues, and we want to highlight these successes.

- Student reporting on **counselors** reveals two standout schools, an OPSB charter and an RSD direct-run school, in which over 75% of students believe their counselors are “helpful” or “very helpful” when it comes to supporting student progress and post-secondary planning.
- When asked about **teaching**, over 60% of students across the six schools report that their teachers are “prepared” or “very prepared” for class; 60% of students also believe their teachers put a high degree of effort into helping students learn.

- With regards to **physical environment**, there are two schools in our sample, an RSD direct-run and an OPSB charter, in which the majority of students report overall school cleanliness ratings of “good” or “excellent,” and a willingness to regularly use the restrooms.
- Student responses on access to **textbooks** spotlight two exemplary schools, both in the OPSB, in which over 80% of students report being permitted to take textbooks home to study, and the majority of students report receiving textbooks in at least four of their classes.

Notwithstanding these highlights, our study also reveals educational conditions that are cause for concern and immediate action. Considering the data set as a whole, we can conclude unequivocally that the majority of students attending these six high schools believe major improvements are needed. Five of the six schools, including all four RSD schools and the OPSB direct-run school in the sample, were consistently reported as underperforming when measured against standards that constitute a holistic, quality education. There were very few indicators of educational quality for which respondents, on average, rated their schools a four or a five on the survey’s five-point scale. With the exception of the OPSB charter school, the mean student response ratings for most of the indicators fell between 2.5 and 3.5, which can be converted to a “D” or “C” grade point average.



We also found significant disparities in the quality of education between the schools in our sample. Students from the OPSB charter school—the only school in our sample with a significant white population, as well as a significant medium to high-income population—reported a markedly higher quality of education across nearly every dimension of schooling in our study. There were also considerable disparities between the five remaining schools, with one RSD direct-run school performing well below the others in the majority of categories. Overall, these disparities are systemic and troubling, suggesting that access to quality education is a privilege enjoyed only by those who are able to gain entry into specific schools.

The report's findings highlight 12 issue-areas, each of which points to significant concerns:



Teaching

- Less than 30% of students believe their teachers make class lessons interesting.
- 70% of students feel their teachers do not manage the classroom well.
- At three of the six schools, 70% of students report having at least one substitute teacher each week.



Student Support Services

- Only 1 in 4 students feel comfortable turning to school staff with an emotional or social problem.
- 20% of students report never visiting a guidance counselor each year.



Physical Environment

- 60% of students do not feel comfortable using the restrooms at their schools
- 40% of students report that their schools are “unclean” or “very unclean.”



Textbooks

- At two of the high schools, 80% of students report “never” or “rarely” being able to take textbooks home to study.
- Over 70% of students report classes that do not have enough textbooks for all students.



School Food

- Only 1 in 100 students believe that schools are serving “excellent” lunches.
- Only 1 in 10 students believe that schools are serving “good lunches.”
- 50% of students do not eat lunches that are provided by their school each day.



Family Inclusion

- 30% of English-speaking parents and 50% of limited-English proficient (LEP) parents have never visited their child's schools to talk with a teacher.
- 71% of Asian students and 82% of Latino students report that their parents "rarely" or "never" receive forms in their native languages.



English as a Second Language (ESL)

- 70% of Asian and Latino students report having been misplaced in an ESL class that they believe did not challenge them, or fit their needs.



Academic Rigor and College Readiness

- 1/5th of students do not complete any homework each night.
- 3/5th of students complete one hour of homework or less each night.
- Sixty percent of high school juniors and seniors report feeling that their school is not preparing them for college
- Over half of the students not taking Advanced Placement classes report that institutional barriers prevented them from enrolling, rather than personal preference.



School Fees

- 42% of students report struggling with school fees, including 67% of students at one RSD direct-run school.
- 28 % of all fee complaints are about uniform costs.



Access to School Options

- Low-income students, compared to others, are twice as likely to report attending a school that is not their choice.
- 75% of students from LEP families reported parents with insufficient knowledge of school options for their children.



Transportation

- 25% of students who are not attending the school of their choice cite a lack of viable transportation as the primary cause.



Safety and Bullying

- 28% of students feel "unsafe" or "very unsafe" at school, including 56% of students at one RSD direct-run school.
- 19% of students from LEP families report being harassed due to their ethnicity.

Teachers



Teachers have a tremendous impact on student learning, and their overall schooling experience. Since teaching is so integral to a quality education, we included four indicators of teaching quality in our study, including: 1) preparedness and organization; 2) effort to help students and ensure student learning; 3) ability to make class lessons interesting; and 4) ability to manage classrooms effectively. We also looked at each schools' reliance on substitute teachers.

Findings for teacher "preparedness" and "effort to ensure learning" are higher overall. The majority of students reported that their teachers are "prepared" or "very prepared" for class each day, and that teachers put considerable effort into ensuring that students learn during class time.

Students at the six schools reported systemic deficiencies in the areas of "engaging lessons," "classroom management," and "reliance on substitute teachers." Over 70% of students reported that their teachers do not make class lessons interesting, and over 60% of students reported that their teachers do not effectively manage the classroom environment. 70% of students across all six schools reported having one or more substitute teachers each week.

Fewer than 30% of students reported that teachers make class lessons interesting.

7 in 10 students said their teachers do not manage the classroom effectively.

"They are all new teachers; have no experience with teaching. They just sit there, and tell us what to do, tell us to read out of the book. They don't go through the problems with us, or try to help us figure out how to get the answers."

**—11th grader,
RSD direct-run high school.**

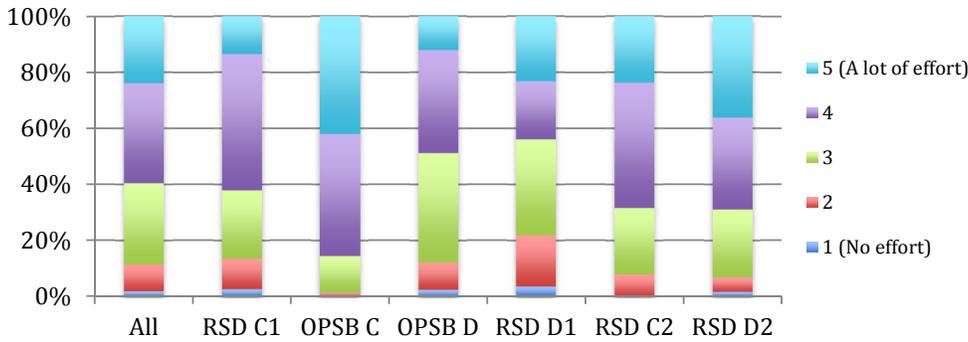
"There were a few teachers where I really felt that support. I had an amazing foreign language teacher. She actually supported me when I first started sharing my poetry. She came out to a couple of my events. That was unexpected; I invite people to go, but I never expect them to show up. These types of teachers can really make a difference for a student."

**—2009 Alumnus,
RSD direct-run school.**

"With some teachers, you walk into the classroom and they have already assigned work. You are on your own for the entire class."

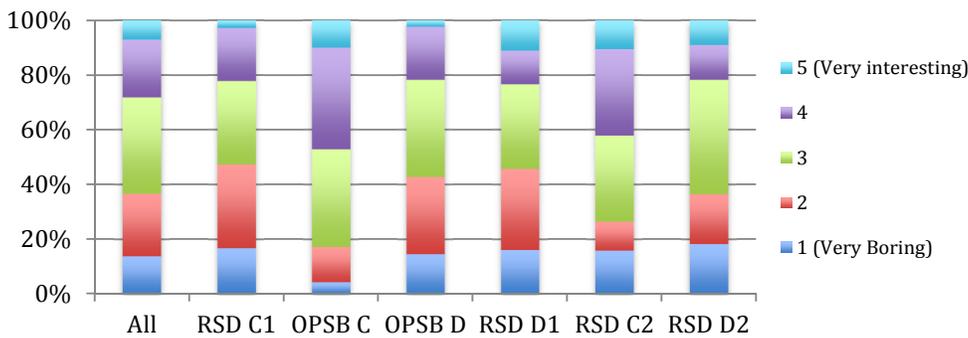
**—11th grader,
RSD direct-run high school.**

How much effort do teachers put into helping students learn during class?



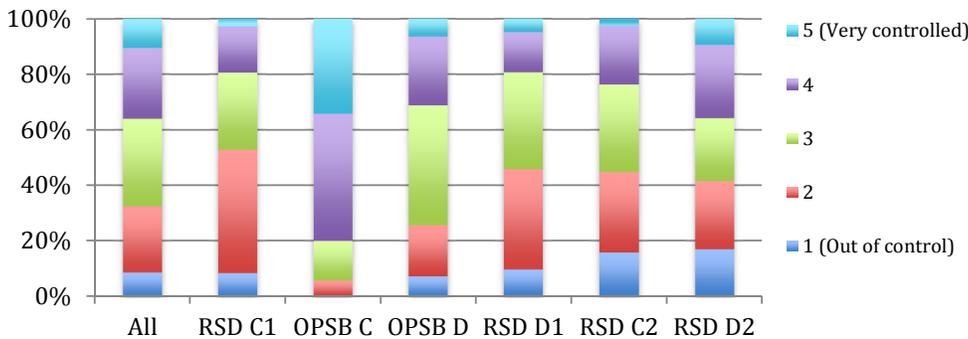
Regarding **teacher effort**, nearly 60% of students across all six schools said teachers are putting “a lot of effort” or “considerable effort” into helping students learn during class. At two schools, RSD D1 and OPSB D, student viewed teacher effort less favorably; less than half of the students at these two schools gave their teachers a 4 or 5 rating.

Do your teachers make lessons interesting?



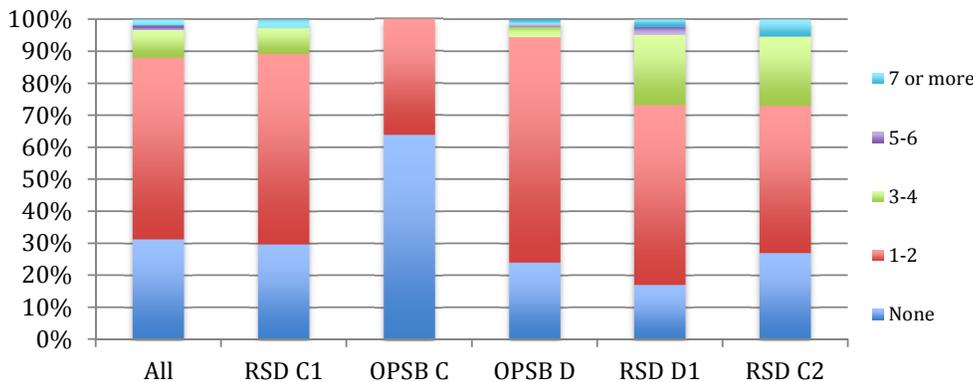
The data suggests that teachers struggle to make **classes interesting**. Fewer than 30% of students at all six schools gave their teachers a rating of 4 or higher, and fewer than 10% of students gave their teachers a rating of 5. At RSD D1 and RSD C1, nearly half of the students gave their teachers a 1 or 2-point rating. The mean rating at OPSB C is 3.42, compared to 2.51 and 2.72 at RSD C1 and RSD D1, respectively.

Do your teachers control the classroom so students can learn?



Classroom management is by and large a systemic problem. At four of the six schools, over 70% of students gave their teachers a rating of 3 or lower. Mean ratings for RSD D1, RSD C1 and RSD C2 hover in the 2.5 to 2.7 range for classroom management; OPSB C has a mean of 4.1 out of 5.

How many substitute teachers do you have in a typical week?



Reliance on substitute teachers is high at RSD D1, RSD C2, and OPSB D, where over 70% of students reported having one or two substitute teachers each week. At RSD D1 and RSD C2, nearly 30% of students reported having over three substitute teachers each week. At OPSB C, over 60% of students reported having zero substitute teachers each week.

RSD C1 = Recovery School District charter
 RSD C2 = Recovery School District charter
 RSD D2 = Recovery School District direct-run

RSD D1 = Recovery School District direct-run
 OPSB D = Orleans Parish School Board direct-run

OPSB C = Orleans Parish School Board charter (selective admissions)

Student Support Services



High quality, accessible student support services are essential to the delivery of an excellent education. Students need enthusiastic, competent guidance counselors to help make academic decisions, prepare for college, and plan for their futures. Students also need trained adults they can turn to when confronting social and emotional problems. The provision of these services is even more pressing in the wake of catastrophic events like Hurricane Katrina and the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, when many students need additional support.

To measure the quality of student support services, we used four indicators: 1) counselor availability; 2) counselor helpfulness; 3) counselor use; and 4) staff approachability for social or emotional problems.

Student responses were most positive for “counselor helpfulness.” Nearly 60% of students reported “helpful” or “very helpful” counselors. Across the other four indicators, students at the majority of schools reported glaring deficiencies in support services. For example, only a minority of students reported that their counselors are “available” or “very available,” and 30% of students reported never visiting a counselor last year.

Only 1 in 4 students said they are comfortable turning to a support staff with an emotional or social problem.

20% of students reported that they did not visit a counselor last year.

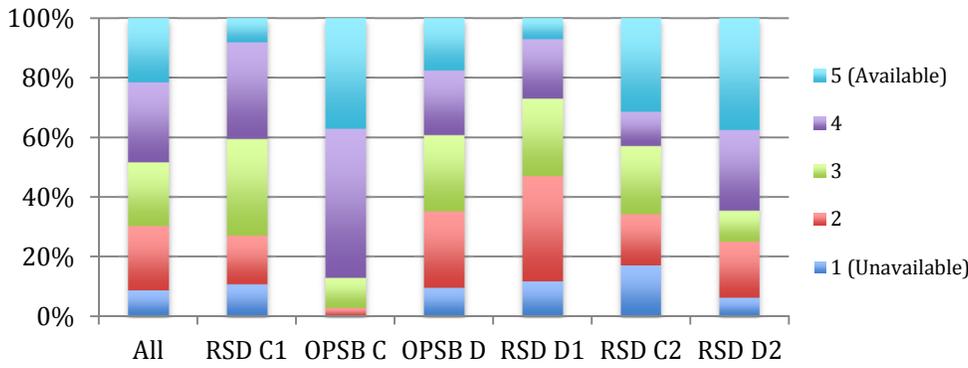
“Only go to my school if you feel as though you can handle everything by yourself, and you are really sure you can get through everything alone. But if you are like me, and you need a little guidance, you shouldn’t go to my school.”

**—12th grader,
OPSB direct-run school**

The counselors are incognito. They’re M.I.A. When they are there, they’re busy, and they don’t accept anyone in there to talk with them. When they finally help you, it’s real quick, like you can’t even get a word through.

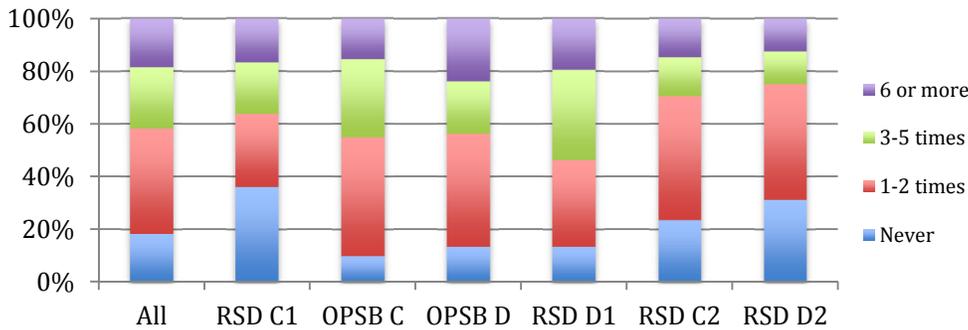
**—12th grader,
RSD direct-run school**

How available are your counselors when you need them?



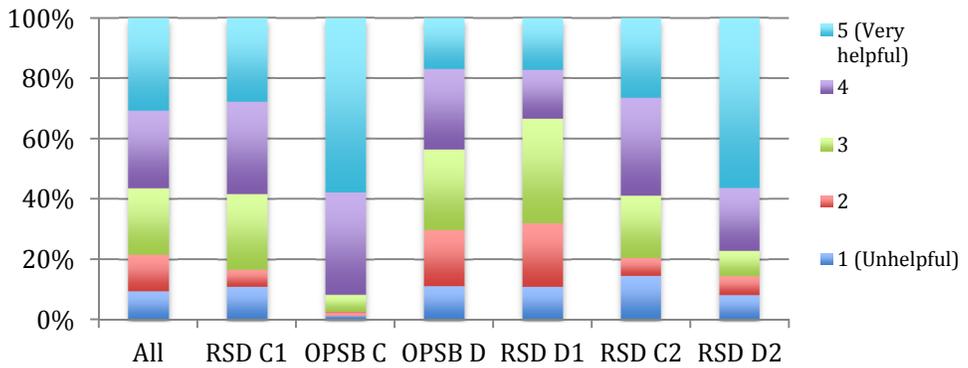
Counselor availability varies widely between the schools. At RSD D1 and RSD C1, for instance, less than 10% of students said their counselors are “very available” (5 pt rating). At OPSB C and RSD D2, however, roughly 40% of students said their counselors are “very available.” Nearly half of the students at RSD D2 said their counselors are somewhat “unavailable” or “very unavailable” compared to only 1% of respondents at OPSB C.

How many times do you visit a counselor each year?



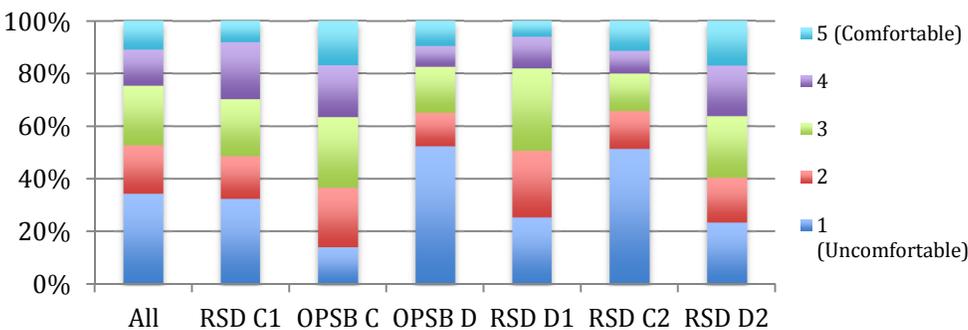
Counselor visits are generally low. Nearly 60% of students across all six schools reported visiting counselors two times or fewer each year. At RSD C1 and RSD D2, over 30% of students reported never visiting a counselor.

How helpful are your counselors in supporting your progress and future planning?



Students rated **counselor helpfulness** higher than other indicators. At two of the schools, OPSB C and RSD D2, nearly 60% of students said their counselors are “very helpful,” whereas only about 30% of the students said this was true across all six schools. Students found the counselors least helpful at RSD D2 and OPSB D, where nearly 30% of students gave their counselors a “1” or “2” rating,

How comfortable are you turning to your high school counselors with emotional/social problems?



Only 10% of students said that they are “very comfortable” turning to a counselor with an **emotional or social problem**. Nearly 50% of students said they were uncomfortable (1-3 rating) at OPSB D and RSD C2. Across all six schools, over half of students said they were very uncomfortable or uncomfortable (1 or 2 rating) turning to a counselor with an emotional or social issue.

Physical Environment



The physical environment of a school affects learning outcomes and the emotional wellbeing of students.¹ Dirty hallways, classrooms and bathrooms detract from the educational environment, and can increase truancy. While no one wants to spend all day in a building that is not maintained or cared for, these are precisely the conditions that many students deal with in New Orleans public high schools.

We measured bathroom conditions by asking students: “How often do you use the bathroom at your school?” To measure school sanitation in general, we asked students: “How would you rate the cleanliness of your school environment?”

At two schools in our sample, an OPBS charter school and an RSD direct-run schools, the majority of students reported overall school cleanliness ratings of “good” or “excellent,” and a willingness to regularly use the restrooms. Yet these two schools are not characteristic of the entire sample: across the six schools, 60% of students reported avoiding the restrooms, and less than 30% of students reported school cleanliness ratings of “good” or “excellent.”

60% of students said they do not feel comfortable using the restrooms at their schools.

40% of students reported that their schools are “unclean” or “very unclean.”

“There’s big hole in the ceiling of the auditorium. And it’s so dirty in there. Sometimes a rat will run by, and the kids will start screaming and running around. Why can’t you get that under control? I know things aren’t perfect, but a rat shouldn’t be coming at a student. It’s just not clean enough. Keep your school clean. Have mousetraps. Something!”

**—12th Grader,
OPSB direct-run school**

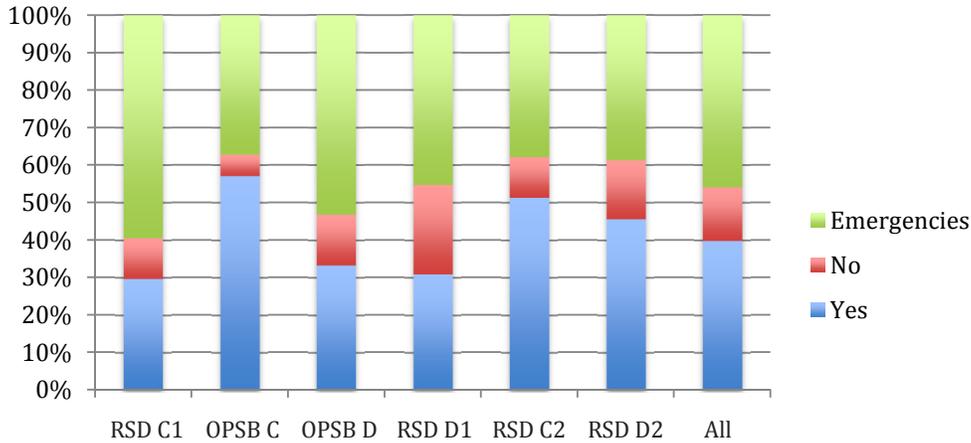
“Some days, you will get to school and no AC is working, and everyone is wet, humid--classrooms, books, everything is wet. A student fainted one time because of no AC.”

**—10th Grader,
OPSB direct-run school**

“If I could, I would clean up the school, change the doors, and repaint the building. Do something to make it feel better for students.”

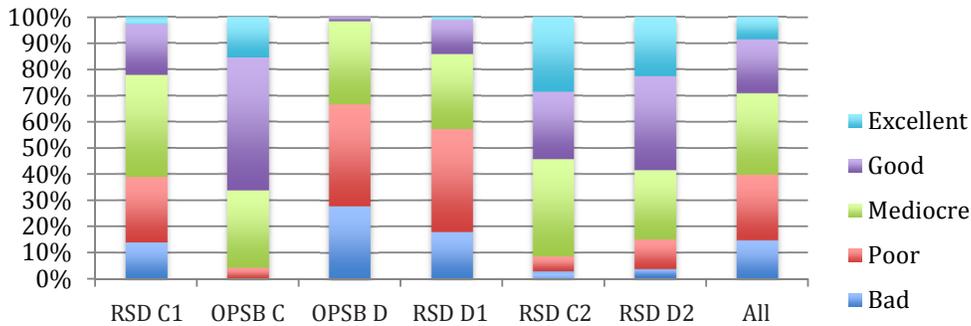
**—9th grader,
RSD direct-run school**

Do you use the bathrooms at your school?



Across all of the schools, 60% of the students said they either do not **use the bathrooms** at all, or they only use them in an emergency situation. There are also significant disparities between the schools. For instance, at RSD C2 and OPSB C, over half of the students reported using the restrooms. At RSD D1, RSD C1, and OPSB D, only 30% of the students reported using the restrooms.

How would you rate the cleanliness of your school environment?



40% of students believe their school's cleanliness is "poor" or "bad." At OPSB C, only 2% of the students said their school's **cleanliness** was "poor," and none said that it was "bad." At OPSB D, nearly 40% of students said their school's cleanliness was "poor," and another 30% said it was bad, compared to 57% of students at RSD D2 who said their school's cleanliness was poor or bad. The mean cleanliness rating for OPSB C was 3.78 on a 5-point scale, compared to 2.08 for OPSB D, and 2.40 for RSD D1.

Textbooks



An excellent public education requires that students have access to textbooks in good condition, both in their classrooms and at home. Our student research team used four indicators to measure access to textbooks: 1) number of classes providing textbooks; 2) textbook quantity within classrooms; 3) ability to take textbooks home; and 4) textbook condition.

Unfortunately, numerous students in New Orleans schools do not have sufficient access to textbooks. While 90% of the students at the OPSB charter school reported “always” being able to take textbooks home, less than 27% of students across the six schools reported having these same privileges. With regards to textbook quantity within classrooms, less than 30% of students across the six schools reported that their classes always have enough textbooks for every student. At two of the RSD schools, over 50% of students reported having three or fewer classes that provide textbooks at all.

“There are some classrooms where you do have books. Where you can take them home, and use them for homework, or to catch-up. But not all classes are like that. I don’t know the reason being—why we can’t get the things we need. All I know is we don’t have it.

**—12th grader,
OPSB direct-run school**

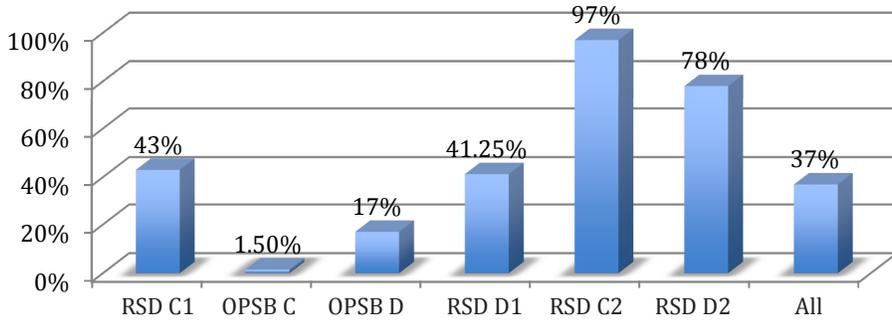
“Why can’t we get enough for every classroom? It’s just the resources that we are lacking.”

**—12th grader,
OPSB direct-run school**

At two high schools, 80% of students reported that they are “rarely” or “never” able to take textbooks home.

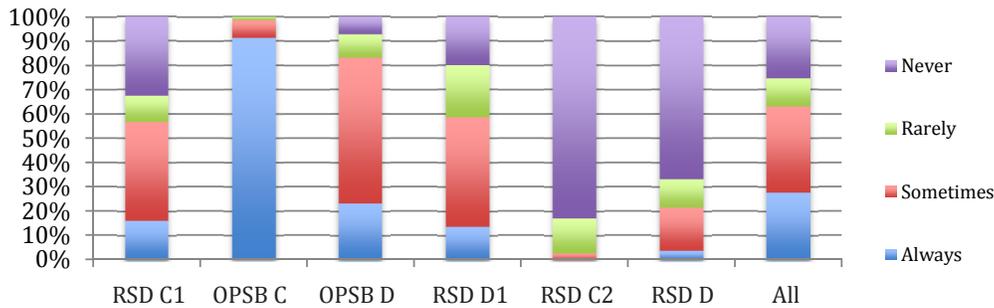
Over 70% of students reported classes that do not have enough textbooks for all

% of Students Who Report Rarely or Never Taking Books Home

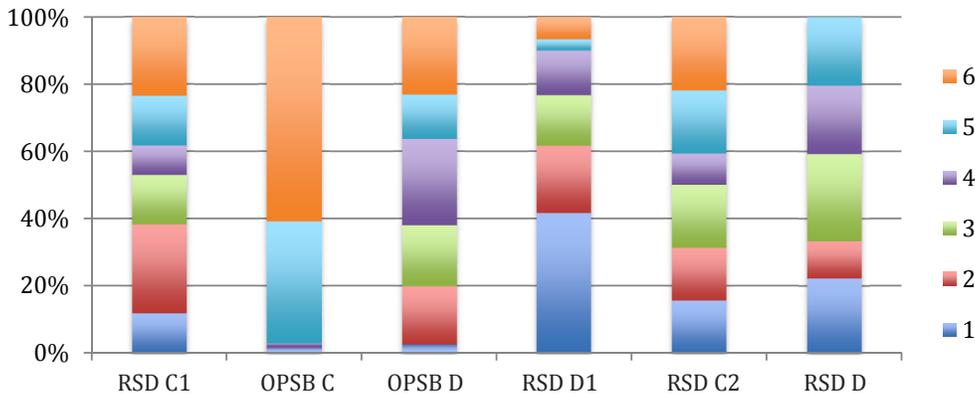


Students' ability to **take textbooks home** varies significantly across the schools. At RSD D2 and RSD C2, 66% and 81% of students reported never being able to take their books home, respectively. At OPSB C, 90% of students said they always could take their books home.

How Often Can You Take Your Textbooks Home?

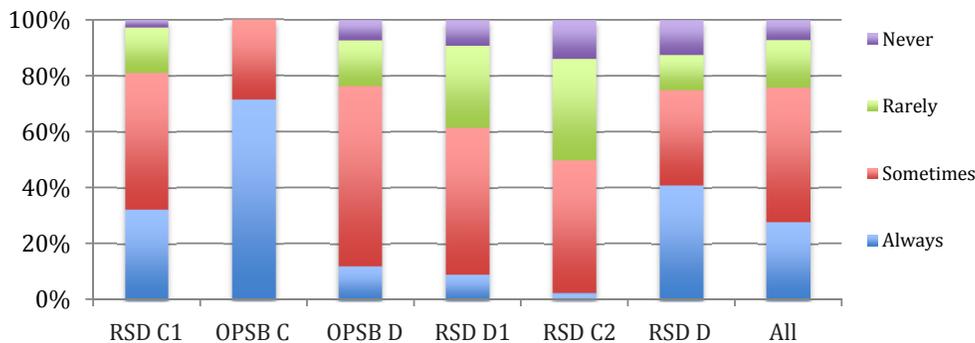


How many of your classes currently provide textbooks?



At RSD D1, 40% of students reported only having one **class that offers a textbook**. At RSD D2, RSD C2, and RSD C1, roughly half of students reported having only three classes that provide textbooks. OPSB C has a mean of 5.51 classes providing textbooks, which is more than double RSD D1, which has a mean of 2.36 classes.

Do classes have enough textbooks for everyone?



At RSD D1, OPSB D, and RSD C2, nearly 90% of students said they have **classes that do not have enough textbooks for everyone**. At OPSB D, over 70% of students said their classes always have enough textbooks.

School Food



Many students live in homes and neighborhoods where nutritious food is hard to come by.² One in every five children in the state of Louisiana is at risk of hunger, and our state has the third highest child poverty rate in the nation.³ In a city where so many children are vulnerable to hunger and food insecurity, it is all the more critical that schools promote student health by providing high quality, fresh, nutritious food. Such an investment would also give students the energy they need to focus academically.

To measure food quality, we asked students to rate the quality of their lunches, and how often they eat the lunches provided by their school. We are saddened by the state of food within New Orleans public schools. On an average day, over 50% of students across the six schools do not eat school-provided lunches, despite the fact that the vast majority of these schools are eligible for free or reduced lunch. While 20% of students at one RSD charter school reported that the lunch quality is “good,” the percentage across all six schools hovers around 10%. Less than 1% of students reported “excellent” lunches at their school.

“I don’t eat lunch anymore. The truth is, I don’t even go down to the cafeteria anymore. From freshman experience, all I had was frozen sandwiches that still had ice in them, and mold. Horror stories. And when we did have something warm, it would end up being gone by the time I got through the line.”

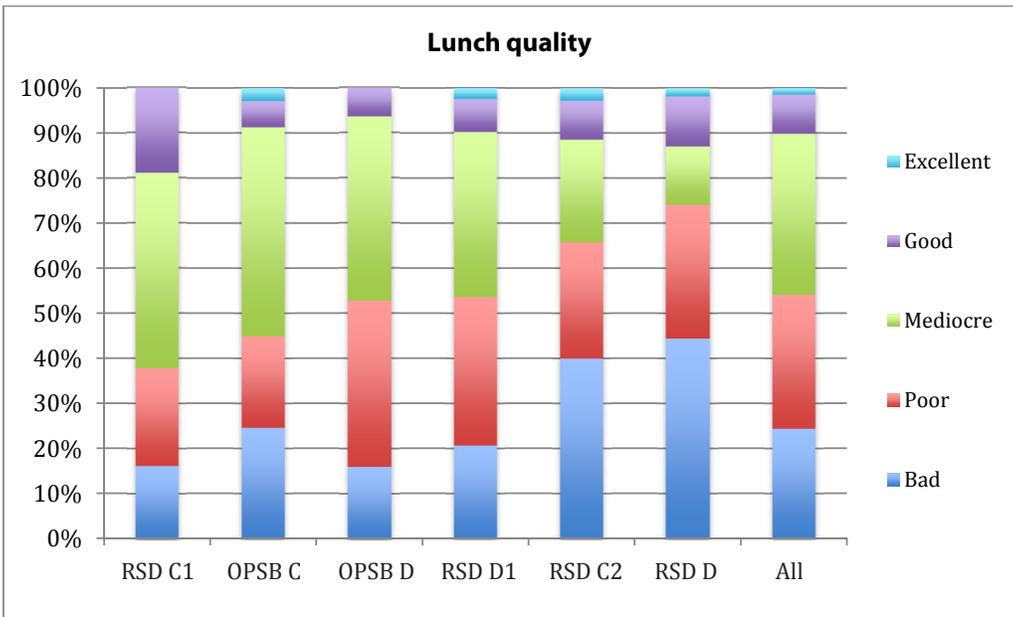
**—12th grader,
RSD direct-run school**

“Sometimes it is really nasty. It feels like we are eating leftovers. You don’t know where the food came from, or when it was made.”

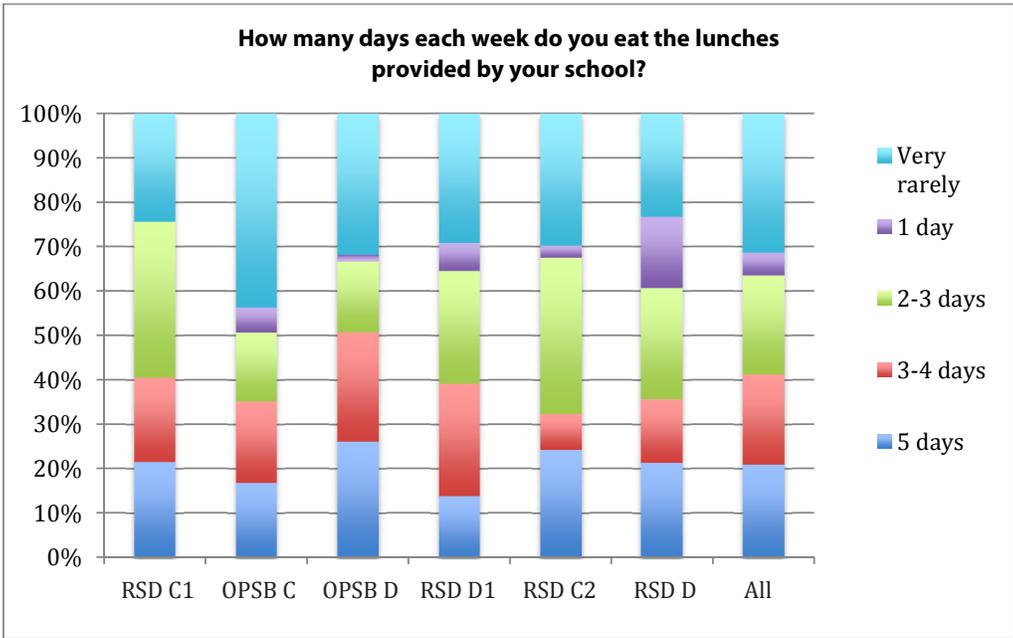
**—11th Grader,
RSD direct-run school**

Less than 1% of students said their school provides “excellent” quality lunches.

Over half of all students said they do not eat school-provided lunches each day.



Across the six schools, only 1% of students gave their **lunch quality** a rating of 5, or "excellent." 53% of students said their lunches are "poor" or "bad." Lunches are the worst at RSD C2 and RSD D2, where over 40% of students gave a rating of 1. RSD C2 and RSD D2 have mean ratings of 2.08 and 1.96, respectively. RSD C2 was higher, with a mean lunch quality rating of 2.62.



Many students are **not eating** the lunches provided at their schools. This is especially alarming given that 76.3% of the students in our sample qualify for free and reduced lunch. At RSD D1, where 93% of the students in our sample qualify for free lunch, over 60% of students reported skipping out on school-provided lunches two days each week or more. Across all six schools, nearly 40% of students rarely or never eat school-provided lunches.

Family Inclusion



Our families must be included in our education if we are going to reach our full potential. From assisting with homework, to encouraging us to value education, our families play a big role in supporting our success. Family members, especially parents, also play important roles as advocates for the quality of our education.⁴

To measure family inclusion, we asked students how many times their parents have visited school to talk with teachers or staff. We also asked Asian and Latino students about the language barriers that their parents face, and how their parents receive information from schools. 30% of students across the six schools reported that their parents have never visited school to talk with a teacher. Limited-English proficient (LEP) parents face the greatest exclusion: over 50% of students from linguistically isolated families reported that their parents have never visited their school.

Our research also points towards a possible explanation for these disparities in parental engagement, revealing systemic deficiencies in the services and communication methods that schools are using to reach LEP families. For instance, over 70% of Asian and Latino students say that school forms are rarely or never sent home in their parents' native languages, and 55% say there are no teachers or staff at their school who speak their parents' native language. Moreover, only 16% of students from LEP families say their parents are given interpreters when they come in for school for meetings.

"I know my son is having some problems academically. I've been there for parent-teacher conferences. The teachers say they are trying their best to help my son, but I feel that it's my fault. If the meetings were in Vietnamese, I would be able to understand more. I would be able to figure out what's wrong."

**—Mother of an 11th grader,
direct-run RSD school**

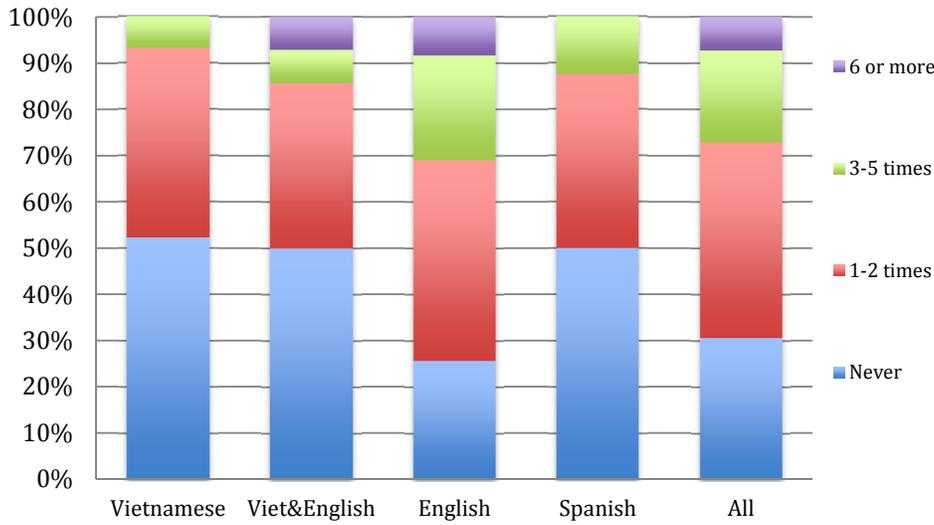
"Let's say, for instance, there is a parent-teacher conference. Most of the Asian students, their parents don't even show up. It is kind of hard for them to come to a parent-teacher conference because they don't understand English."

**—11th grader,
direct-run RSD school**

50% of limited-English parents and 30% of English-speaking parents have never visited their child's school to speak with teachers.

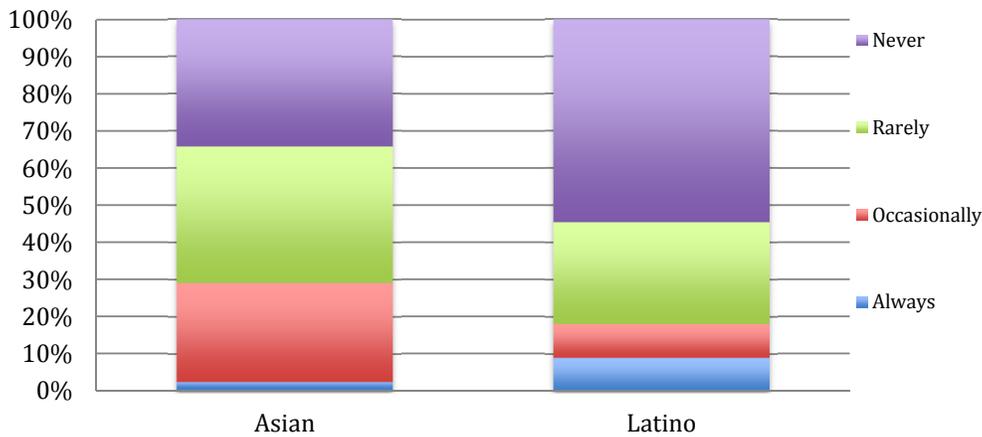
Over 70% of Asian and Latino students reported that forms are "rarely" or "never" sent home in their parents' native language.

How many times have your parents visited your school to talk with teachers? (by household language)



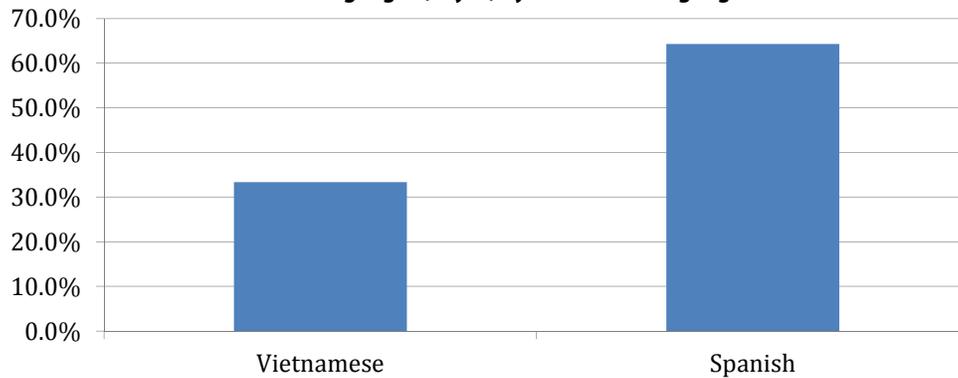
30% of all students report that their **parents** have never **visited their school** to talk with teachers. For students from Vietnamese and Spanish-speaking families, 50% said that their parents have never visited their school, suggesting that language is a significant barrier to parental involvement. Less than 10% of students from LEP families say their parents have come to their school more than three times, compared to over 30% of students from English-speaking families.

How often do you receive forms to take home in a language that your parents understand?



71% of Asian students and 82% of Latino students say that school **forms** are rarely or never sent home in their **parents' native languages**. Less than 10% of Asian and Latino students reported that school forms are "always" sent home in their parents' native languages.

Are there staff/teachers in your school who speak your parents' native language? (% yes) by household language



32% of students from Vietnamese-speaking households and 64% of students from Spanish-speaking households say there are **teachers or staff who speak their parents' native language**.

Academic Rigor and College Readiness



In interviews, numerous students reported feeling unprepared for college, and several high school alumni shared stories of struggling through remedial math and writing classes at the University of New Orleans. Based on this qualitative testimony, our group was concerned with the issue of academic rigor, access to college preparatory curriculum, and college readiness. Average ACT scores in the RSD direct-run schools are incredibly low, particularly in RSD direct-run schools where the average score is a 14.7, nearly 6.5 points below the national average.⁵

To measure academic rigor, we asked students how much homework they complete each night, whether they are taking AP classes, and whether they feel they are being prepared for college.

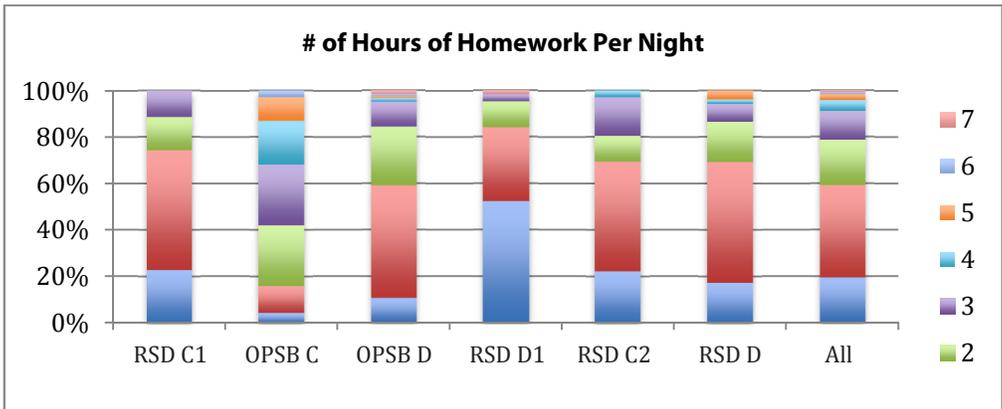
We found that student homework levels are alarmingly low at five of the six schools. 60% of the students in our sample complete one hour or less of homework each night. At one RSD direct-run school, over half of the students reported that they do not complete any homework each night. With regards to college readiness, our study reveals two significant findings. First, 60% of students said their high school is not preparing them for college. Second, students reported formidable barriers when trying to access rigorous college preparatory curriculum; of the upperclassmen that reported not taking AP classes, roughly 55% said that their school prevented them (either by failing to offer the classes or by limiting enrollment), and less than half cited a lack of desire or a personal preference.

I'm worried about going to college and not knowing anything. In school, they say I'm super smart, but I know I don't understand a lot. I am really bad in English, yet they still give me an "A" in English. I'm, scared to go to college and not know anything, and then flunking out."

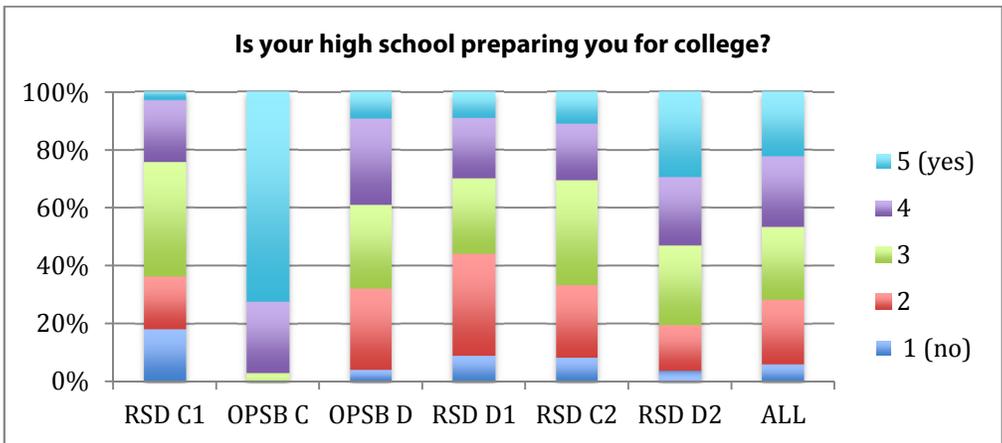
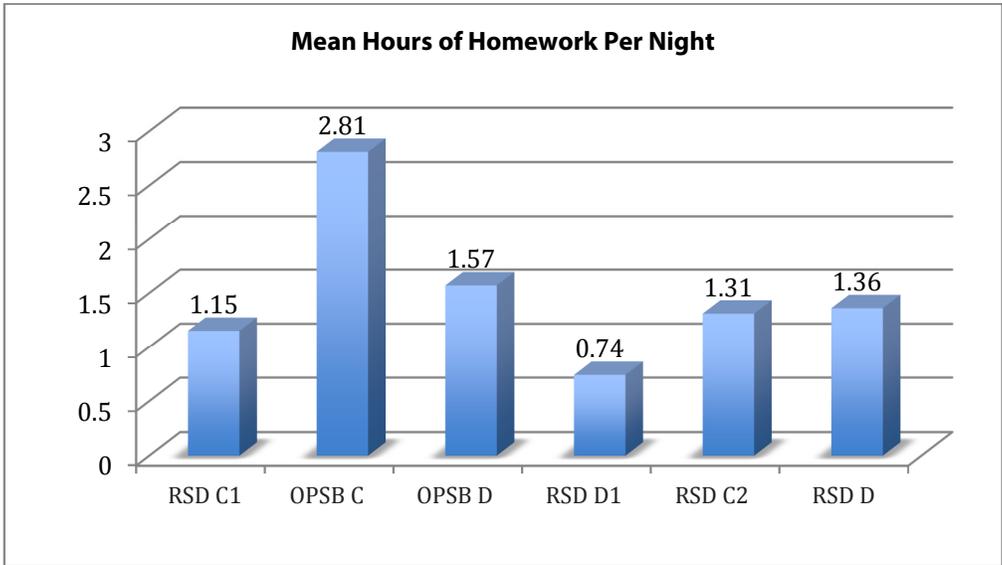
— 12th grader, RSD charter school

20% of students do not complete any homework each night, and 60% of students complete one hour of homework or less.

6 of 10 upperclassmen said their school is not preparing them for college.



Nearly 60% of students across the six schools do one hour or less of homework each night. RSD C1, RSD C2, and RSD D2 have mean nightly homework hours of 1.15, 1.31 and 1.36 hours respectively, compared to .74 hours at RSD D1 and 2.81 hours at OPSB C.



Each student population felt differently about how well their school is preparing them for college. At RSD D1, RSD C1, and RSD C2, 70% or more of students responded with a "3" rating or lower, suggesting that most students at these school do not feel they are being preparing for college. At OPSB C, over 75% of students responded with a "5" rating, and only one student responded with a "3" rating.

English as a Second Language (ESL)



For Limited-English proficient (LEP) students, quality English-language instruction is a critical factor in determining access to general education. Effective ESL or bilingual education programs, which foster the development of English proficiency, are necessary to ensure that LEP students are to participate fully in their English-only core classes, and thrive in American society.

In interviews, LEP students reported English as a Second Language (ESL) programs that are in a state of disrepair. Many of the students called ESL a “skip class” that consists of playing on the computer, watching movies, and sleeping, rather than rigorous English-language instruction. Even after 10 years in New Orleans public schools, one student admitted that he still does not have the level of English proficiency that he needs to participate in his English-only classes.

Students also reported being misplaced into ESL classes that are not aligned with their level of development, leading to repetition and stagnation for intermediate and advanced language learners. 70% of students from Asian and Latino families said they were misplaced into an ESL class that was not challenging or helpful.⁶

Nearly 70% of students from Asian and Latino families said they were placed in an ESL class that they did not need.

“I took ESL last year. I was level two, and there were about six people in the classroom. Most of the work was in the workbook and most of what we did I already knew, so I didn’t learn that much. Usually we would play a game or sit and sleep or something.”

**—11th Grade student,
RSD direct-run high school**

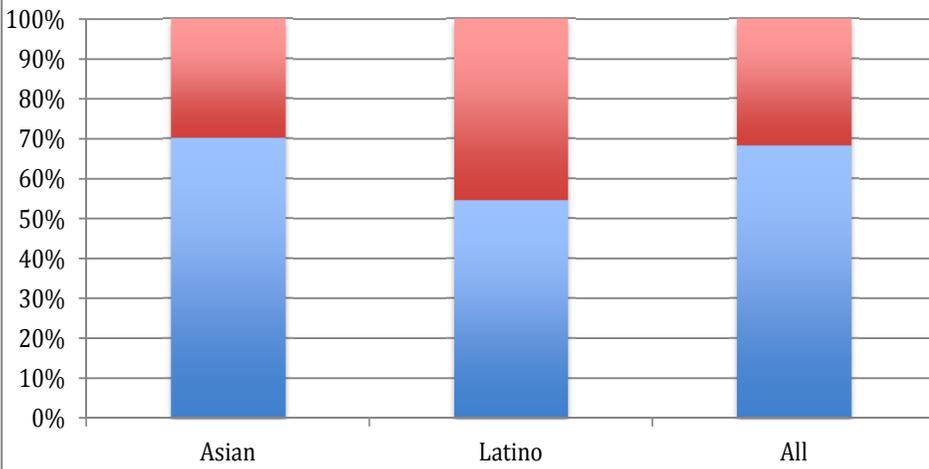
“We have all different levels of students in my class...I am doing 3rd grade work, and I am like, ‘Why am I here doing this simple work?’ I spend my time helping the two other girls.”

**—9th Grade student,
RSD direct-run school**

“When I go in there (to ESL), most of the time we are just sitting there, and if we do work, it is only five problems. Half of the time the teacher lets us go early. To be honest, it was really just a skip class.”

**—10th Grade student
RSD direct-run school**

Were you ever in an ESL class that you did not need to be in?



70% of students from LEP families said that they had, at some point, been **misplaced in an ESL class** that they did not need to take.



Part of the RYHC youth research team at the VAYLA center

School Fees



From uniforms and school trips, to special classes and transportation, many families spend hundreds of dollars in fees each year to send their children to public school. Fees prevent low-income students from taking the classes they want, participating in senior activities, or sometimes even attending the public school of their choice. In one case, we interviewed a student who could not continue attending an OPSB charter high school due to class fees of \$800-\$1,000. We are concerned with the rising, unmonitored costs of public education, and the discriminatory effect these costs have on low-income students.

In our survey, we asked students whether their families were struggling with any school expenses, and which items were causing the greatest financial hardship. At two schools, an RSD charter and an RSD direct-run school, over 55% of students reported they were struggling with school fees. Across all six schools, 42% of students reported struggling with fees. Of all the fee complaints, 28% of them had to do with school uniforms.

42% of students reported struggling with school fees, including 67% of students at one RSD direct-run school.

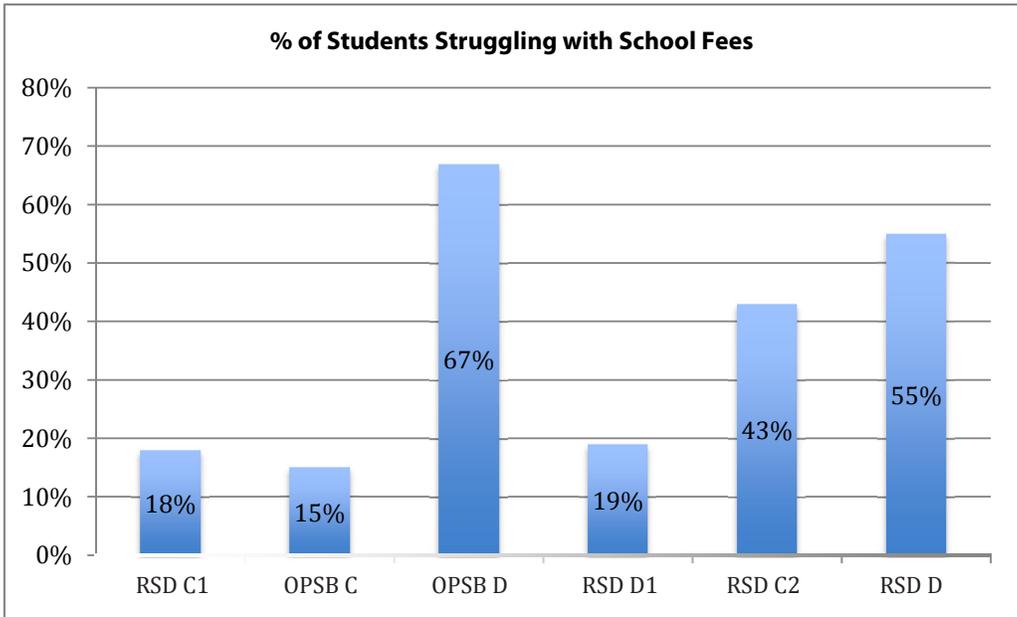
28% of fee complaints are about school uniforms.

"All the students were upset about uniforms, but they said it's up to the school board. I spent \$100 on the shirt, the pants, and the tie. You have to buy the blazer and the cardigan too, for when it's cold. I didn't buy that stuff. My brother only had enough money for the basics. When you tell the school you can't afford the uniform, they tell you 'just buy the basics.' The crazy thing is that they still give you a citation if you wear your own sweatshirt."

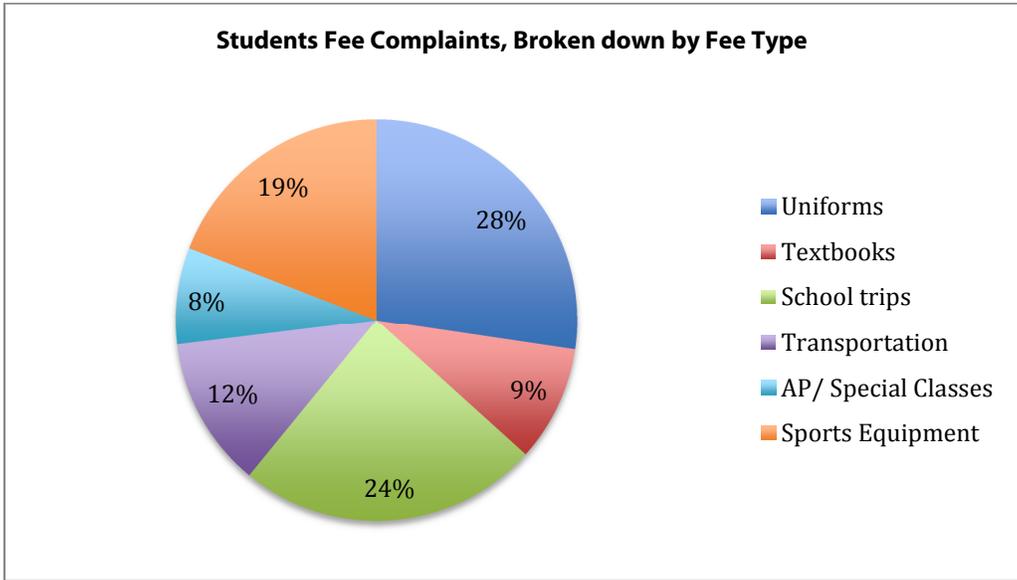
**—11th grade student,
RSD direct-run high school**

"For the whole uniform, it was around \$200. My parents complained to me, because they spent a lot of money on it that they didn't have. They asked why they can't make it more simple."

**—10th grade student,
RSD direct-run high school**



The percentage of students struggling with school fees varies across the six schools. At RSD D1 and RSD C2, over half of students reported struggling with school fees. At OPSB C, RSD C1, and RSD D2, less than 20% of students said they were struggling with school fees.



28% of all school fee complaints were about uniforms, and 24% of fee complaints were about school trips. 19% of the complaints targeted sports equipment.

Access to School Options



With the erasure of regional attendance boundaries, students are now theoretically allowed to choose from public schools across the whole city. Yet in our interviews, many students did not feel they were attending the school of their choice, and others had no idea that they were even allowed to choose where to go to school. In our survey, we looked at the extent to which students are able to partake equally in the school choice model. To measure a student's access to school choices, we used two indicators: 1) whether a student is attending the school of their choice, and 2) whether a student felt their family had adequate knowledge of school options.

Our findings reveal that socioeconomic background and native language are considerable factors in determining a student's ability to successfully navigate the school choice landscape. Less than 10% of students from limited-English families said their parents are "very knowledgeable" about school choices, compared to over 25% of students from English-speaking families. Students receiving free or reduced lunch, a proxy for class, were also half as likely to say that their parents are "very knowledgeable" about school choices (20%), compared to students who are not receiving free or reduced lunch (43%). Low-income students were also twice as likely to report attending a school that is not their first choice.

"My parents didn't know there were 20 high schools I could go to. My family knew of three or four. My mom and my sisters tried to find a school for me, but I wish they had sent a little packet on the schools—actually, I'd want two packets: one in English, and the other in Vietnamese, for my mom to see.

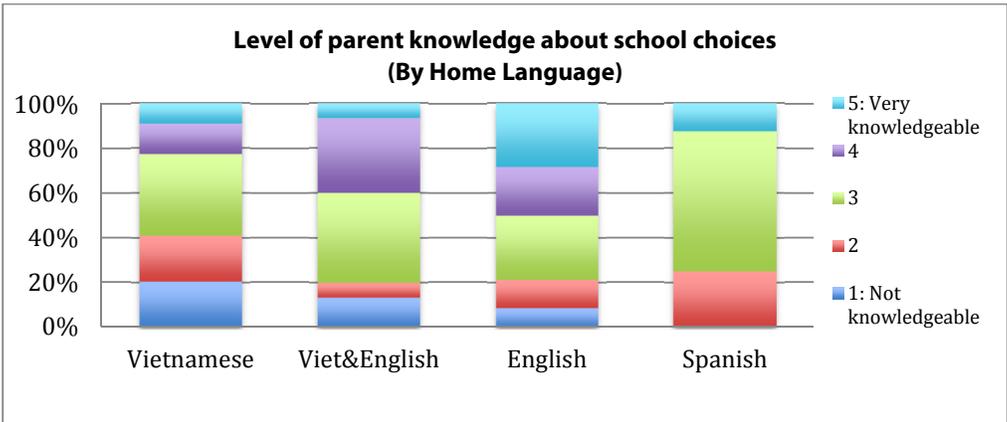
**—11th grader,
RSD direct-run high school**

"I worry about finding a compatible school, especially when I don't know about each school, like the programs it has regarding this and that. Without information, choosing the right school is a matter of luck. Because how am I supposed to know what is what?"

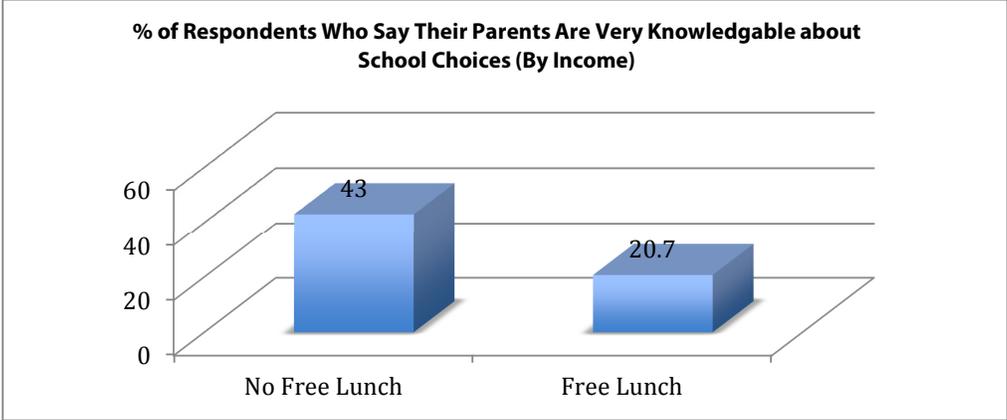
—Vietnamese-speaking mother

Low-income students were twice as likely to report attending a school that is not their first choice.

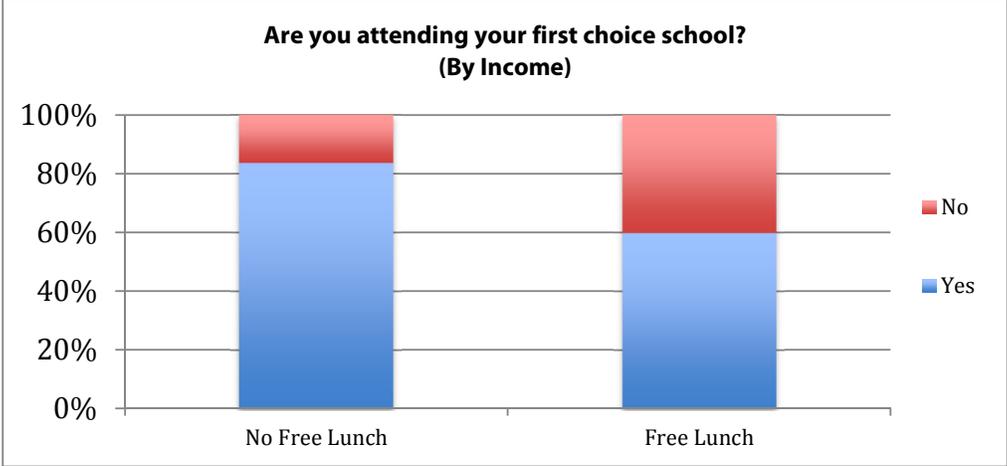
Only 1 in 5 students from Vietnamese-speaking families reported that their parents are knowledgeable about school options.



Students with Vietnamese-speaking parents were half as likely as students with English-speaking families to say that their parents are “knowledgeable” or “very knowledgeable” about school choices in New Orleans (20% vs. 40%).



Students who receive free or reduced lunch were less than half as likely to report having parents who are “very knowledgeable” about school choices in New Orleans (20.7%), compared to students who do not receive free or reduced lunch (43%).



Students who are eligible for free lunch were more than twice as likely to report attending a school that is not their first choice (41% vs. 18%).

Transportation



Without realistic transportation options, many schools are inaccessible for students who are unable to secure private means of transportation, leading to barriers based on economic status and geographic location. Transportation barriers are especially pressing for families in the Lower 9th Ward and New Orleans East, both sections of the city that are characterized by geographic marginalization and a dearth of high performing public schools. In these regions, the provision of efficient, reliable transportation can mean the difference between a student having access to a high performing school, or being locked in a low performing one.

Through our survey, we learned that some students could not go to the schools they prefer due to transportation barriers. Despite the vision of a system where class and geography do not determine educational access, we found that many students are still limited by these arbitrary factors. 20% of students who are not attending their first choice school cited transportation barriers as the primary reason. During interviews, many students reported struggling with unreliable buses and long routes, and some even shared stories of having to transfer schools due to deficiencies in the transportation system.

Over 20% of students who are not at their preferred school reported that transportation was the primary barrier.

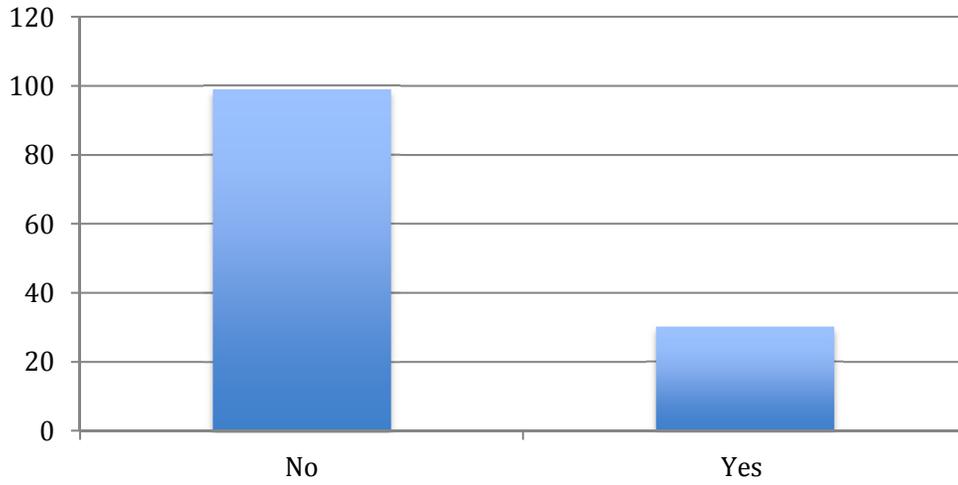
"I really wish I could attend Ben Franklin, but when it comes to transportation, I can't take the risk. My mom asked me, 'If you go to Ben Franklin, how are you going to get there?' That was one of my main reasons for not going back. Transportation was a huge factor, because I live all the way out in the East."

**—11th grader,
OPSB charter school**

It's complicated living so far from your school, when you could be living right down the street and walk home. Sometimes the bus comes late and makes you late to school, or sometimes the bus doesn't come at all, and you are waiting. I don't understand why no one is enforcing bus drivers to get where they need to be. They are getting paid for that. Why are they running late? Why are they not showing up?

**—12th grader,
OPSB direct-run school**

Did a lack of reliable transportation stop you from going to your first choice school?



Over 20% of students who are not at their preferred school said that transportation was the primary barrier. Many of the students who reported **transportation barriers** are from New Orleans East and the Lower 9th Ward.



Safety and Bullying



Safety remains a concern that many students spoke about during interviews. When a student feels unsafe at school, it is incredibly difficult to focus on learning, or sometimes even to remain in school. During interviews, students reported that security guards are not properly doing their job, citing examples of racial profiling, negligence, and unprofessional conduct directed towards students.

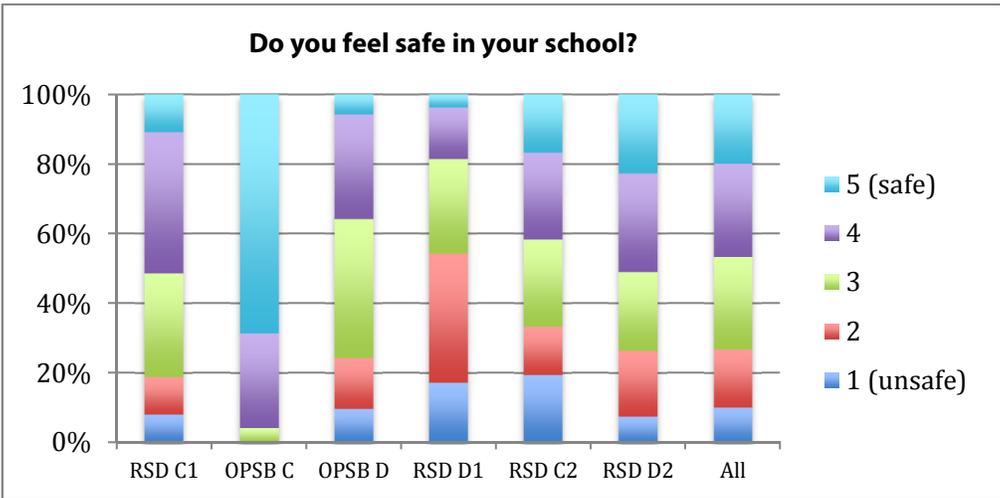
In our survey, we asked students to share how safe they feel at school, and also to share whether they have experienced race or ethnicity-based harassment. While over 40% of students reported feeling “safe” or “very safe” (4 or 5-point ratings), roughly 28% of students reported feeling “unsafe” or “very unsafe” at school. 17% of students from non-English speaking households reported that they have experienced race-based harassment or bullying. Broken down by race, we found that 22% of Latinos, 12% of Asians, 6% of Blacks, and 0% of Whites have experienced race or ethnicity-based harassment.

“I was translating for an ESL student who doesn’t speak English, and these two dudes came up to me. Kept screaming “Gook” in my face—that’s a derogatory term for Asian people. I looked over and the teacher was just sitting there. Did absolutely nothing.”

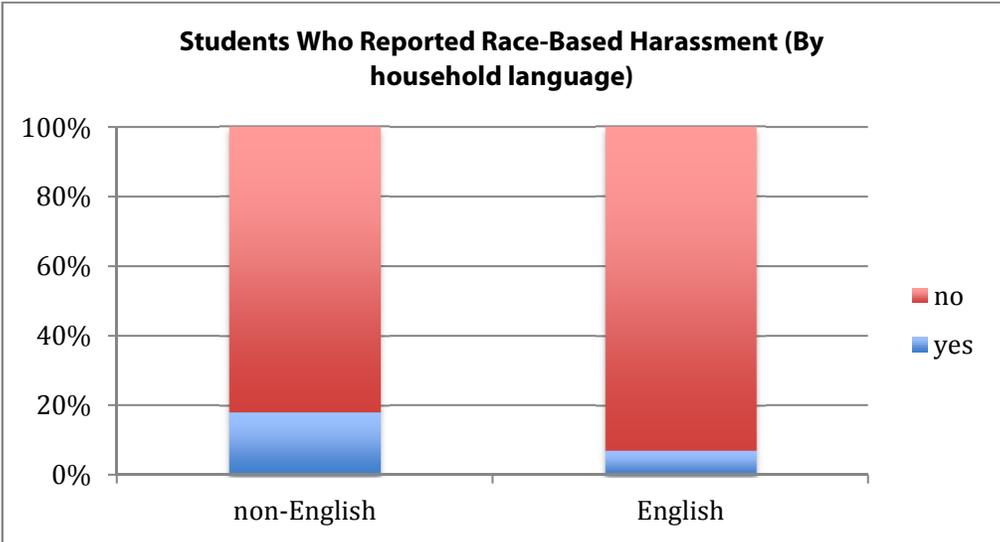
**—Recent alumnus,
RSD direct-run school**

28% of students said they feel “unsafe” at school, including 58% of students at one direct-run RSD school.

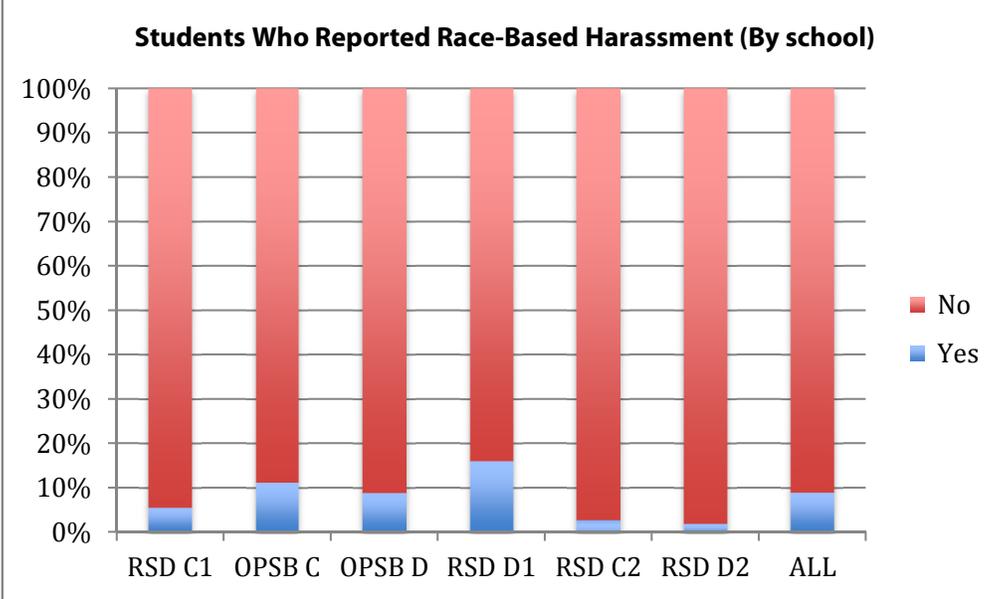
19% of students from non-English speaking households reported being harassed due to their race or ethnicity.



Over half of students across the six schools reported ratings of 1, 2 or 3 for safety, suggesting that safety is still a major concern. At OPSB C, over 90% of students reported feeling “very safe” or “safe,” compared to less than 20% of students at RSD D1.



19% of students from LEP families reported experiencing race-based harassment, compared to approximately 7% of students from English-speaking families.



The percentage of respondents reporting race-based harassment varies across the schools. At RSD C2 and RSD D2, less than 3% of students reported experiencing race-based harassment, compared to over 15% of students at RSD D1.

Student Recommendations

Excellence in New Orleans' system of public schools is not being realized when service deficiencies are as broad and systemic as the students in this study reveal. **Equity** is not being realized when the quality of teaching, counseling, textbooks, physical environment and other dimensions is so drastically different between schools and student populations. **Community** is not being realized whenever families are excluded, students are treated unequally, or the voices of those who rely on the public school system do not translate into meaningful policy changes.

These 43 recommendations are aligned to address the most pressing, recurrent issues vocalized by students. These recommendations target the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB), the Recovery School District (RSD), as well as school leaders and city officials who must take a stand to improve public education in our city.



Teaching

1. Require schools to administer student survey evaluations of their teachers each semester, and use student-generated data to shape professional development, provide teachers with meaningful feedback, and improve the accuracy of teacher performance evaluations.
2. Include professional development workshops each year that focus on creating engaging, relevant, participatory lesson plans.
3. Require teachers to hold office hours for two hours each week, either after school or during lunch and free periods, and compensate teachers for their additional time.
4. Increase the amount of classroom management training required before new teachers enter the classroom, and strengthen ongoing professional development to improve non-punitive classroom management techniques.
5. Partner with community-based organizations to create professional development programs that expose teachers to the communities and cultures of the students they serve.



Student Support Services

6. Make sure there is at least one full-time social worker at each school (apart from academic/guidance counseling) and maintain a social worker to student ratio of 1:400, as recommended by the School Social Workers Association of America
7. Work with students to pilot a Peer Counseling program in a direct-run RSD high school.
8. Require social workers and guidance counselors to have appointment slots after school hours, and during student lunch periods.
9. Collect confidential student survey evaluations of guidance counselors and social workers, and require school and district leaders to strongly consider student feedback when making staffing decisions in these departments.



Physical Environment

10. Require district staff to conduct surprise site visits to assess school sanitation (including bathrooms and cafeterias). Publish publicly displayed "sanitation report cards" at each school.
11. Create a public, online feedback site where students can post comments and pictures about parts of their school that need maintenance, checked regularly by district and school-level staff.



Textbooks

12. Ensure that classes requiring textbooks have enough textbooks for all students, in good condition and at no cost.
13. Ensure that schools permit students to take their textbooks home. If there are “class sets” that cannot leave the school site, then schools must also provide students with “home set.”



School Food

14. Collect bi-annual student evaluations of lunches, and make annual contracts with food providers contingent on student satisfaction ratings.
15. Provide a serving of fresh, locally grown food every day.
16. Offer a healthy afternoon snack to students in every classroom, every day.



Family Inclusion

17. Encourage teachers to call home or conduct home visits at least twice each semester to give parents more opportunities to hear how their child is doing.
18. Create an online information program for families to track how their child is performing academically, and submit questions to teachers on-line. Train parents in how to use this system, and partner with public libraries and school libraries to provide access for parents without Internet in their homes.
19. Translate all critical school forms and information into Spanish, Vietnamese, and any other language spoken by families at the school, and offer LEP parents interpreters for all important school-related meetings.
20. Require schools to make certain staff, such as parent liaisons, available on evenings and weekends so that working parents can get information and resolve issues.



School Fees

21. Uniforms should either be capped at \$75 for two pairs of all required clothing components, or students should be permitted to purchase generic uniform components that meet their families’ budgets.
22. Create a “uniform recycling program” with the goal of providing free second-hand uniforms to 200 incoming 9th graders each year.
23. Create and publicize a means-tested financial aid program for families to apply for uniform fee waivers, as well as other school fee waivers. Monitor schools to ensure they are disbursing funds that are allocated for this purpose.
24. Prohibit schools from charging class or book fees, including AP classes or elective classes. While schools may offer students the option of purchasing a textbook, schools must also offer students the option of borrowing a textbook at no charge.



Transportation

25. All schools must be required to offer realistic transportation options to every student.
26. No student should have to spend more than a total of 120 minutes on a bus each day to attend the school of their preference; ensure efficient transportation options for students from New Orleans East and the Lower 9th Ward.
27. Schools must record and publish how often school buses arrive late to school, and hold transportation providers accountable for the quality and reliability of their service.



Access to School Options

28. Translate the Parent’s Guide to NOLA Schools into Spanish and Vietnamese, and require all schools receiving public funding to publish critical information about their programs in multiple languages.
29. Compile accurate data on which schools have ESL-certified teachers, bilingual staff and other relevant resources or programs so LEP families can make informed school choice decisions.
30. Ensure that there is at least one Spanish-speaking staff person and one Vietnamese-speaking staff person in the RSD’s Family Information Centers.
31. Make sure that all schools receiving public funding, including charter schools and OPSB schools, submit accurate, up-to-the-minute information to Family Centers so that families can research and apply to schools at one convenient location.



English as a Second Language

32. Create a committee of expert ESL teachers to monitor the quality of ESL instruction across the city, and to provide teachers with timely feedback.
33. Provide appropriate, differentiated ESL instruction tailored to each student’s level of language proficiency.
34. Ensure that ESL classrooms have certified ESL teachers.



Safety and Bullying

35. Require teachers and school personnel to report incidents of identity-based (e.g. race, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, religion, etc.) harassment and bullying to the Louisiana State Department of Education.
36. Require schools with high incident rates of identity-based harassment to implement school-wide interventions that teach students about tolerance, difference, and diversity.
37. Create safety commissions at each school composed of students, teachers, security personnel and administrators charged with improving school safety and devising non-punitive interventions and strategies.



Rigor and College Readiness

38. Ensure that every student with at least a “B” average has the opportunity to take a full range of AP classes with qualified teachers; AP classes on the computer are not a sufficient alternative.
39. Give all freshman students the opportunity to be on a rigorous, college-preparatory track, culminating with AP coursework; provide students who enter high school behind with tutoring and additional academic support to help them bridge the gap.
40. Offer daily study halls and homework support at every school, particularly in schools where students are struggling to complete homework in their home environments.
41. Make ACT Prep classes available to all students, free of charge.



Oversight and Equity

42. Provide schools labeled as “academically failing” with technical assistance and additional resources to improve educational quality and ensure equity for students.
43. Monitor and evaluate charter schools and direct-run schools through randomized site visits, student survey evaluations, and other oversight mechanisms that are not solely based on academic performance indicators

School Report Cards

Dimension	Indicators/Survey Questions	RSC C2	OPSB C	RSD D2	OPSB D	RSD D1	RSD C1
Teaching	1) Preparedness / organization for class	4	4.4	4	3.4	3.5	3.66
	2) Effort to help students learn during class	3.8	4.2	4	3.4	3.4	3.48
	3) Make class lessons interesting	3.1	3.4	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.51
	4) Control classroom environment	2.7	4.1	2.8	3	2.7	2.53
	5) Ave. # substitute teachers per week	1.72	0.54	1.29	1.26	1.84	1.32
		B-	A-	B-	C+	C+	C+
Student Support Services	1) Guidance counselor helpfulness	3.5	4.4	4.1	3.2	3.1	3.46
	2) # of Counselor visits/ year	2	2.9	1.6	2.9	3	1.32
	3) Counselor availability when you need them	3.2	4.2	3.7	3.2	2.8	3.04
	4) Comfort level turning to counselor with emotional or social problem?	2.1	3.1	2.9	2.1	2.5	2.4
		C+	A-	B	C+	C+	C
Physical Environ.	1) Overall cleanliness of high school	3.7	3.8	3.6	2.1	2.4	2.57
	2) Use of bathrooms at school (% responding "yes")	50%	56%	43%	32%	30%	30%
		B	B	B-	D	D+	D+
Textbooks	1) # of Classes currently providing textbooks	3.6	5.5	3	4	2.4	3.68
	2) Do classes have enough for all students? (% always)	2%	69%	40%	10%	7%	31%
	3) Condition of textbooks	2.6	3.49	3.8	2.9	3	3.48
	4) Ability to take home (% always, sometimes, rarely/never)	02,98	91,9,0	3,1,78	21,62,17	12,47,41	15,42,43
		D+	B+	C-	C	D+	B-
Food	1) Quality of school-provided lunches	2.1	2.4	2	2.3	2.4	2.62
	2) % of students who eat lunch 3, 4, or 5 days per week	32%	34%	35%	50%	39%	40%
		D	D+	D	C-	D+	C-
School Fees	1) % of students struggling to afford school expenses	55	18	19	43	67	15
			D-	B	B	D+	F
Rigor and College Readiness	1) Hours spent on homework each night	1.3	2.8	1.4	1.6	0.74	1.15
	2) How well is your high school preparing you for college?	3	4.7	3.6	3.1	2.9	2.6
		C+	A	B	B	C-	C
Safety and Bullying	1) How safe do you feel at your high school?	3.1	4.7	3.4	3	2.5	3.26
	2) % of students harassed because of their race or ethnicity	3%	5%	2%	10%	14%	7.70%
		B-	A	B	C	D+	B-
OVERALL GRADE:		C	A-	B-	C	D+	D+

A+ (4.7-5.0)	B+ (3.7-4.0)	C+ (2.7-3.0)	D+ (1.7-2.0)	F (0-1.0)	Most indicators are on a 1-5 scale, 1=poor and 5=excellent. Grades were determined through a consideration of mean response ratings.
A (4.3-4.7)	B (3.4-3.7)	C (2.4-2.7)	D (1.4-1.7)		
A- (4.0-4.3)	B- (3.0-3.4)	C- (2.0-2.4)	D- (1.0-1.4)		

Methodology

We believe that the young people who rely on New Orleans public schools are equipped to articulate standards of excellence and equity that constitute “progress” in education, and to measure the extent to which schools are meeting these standards. Since April 2010, our group of student researchers and adult allies has utilized a Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) methodology to evaluate six New Orleans high schools. YPAR is a methodological approach that fills an “intellectual void that occurs when people’s voices are left out of the research and thus policy decisions that affect their lives and opportunities” (Cannella, 2008, 205). YPAR empowers politically marginalized communities to appropriate the tools of research and become producers of public knowledge. YPAR is characterized by the following three principles:

1. The collective investigation of a problem.
2. The reliance on indigenous knowledge to better understand that problem.
3. The desire to take individual and/or collective action to deal with the stated problem (Morrell, 2008, 157).

Our YPAR project was envisioned and carried out by youth researchers ranging in age from 14 to 20. Our group is made up of twelve youth leaders and fifteen additional youth volunteers, the majority of whom are residents of New Orleans East and members of the Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association of New Orleans (VAYLA), a community-based non-profit organization in Village de L'est.

The RYHC leadership team conducted over forty open-ended peer interviews, four youth forums, and two bilingual English-Vietnamese parent forums to identify key factors that contribute to a quality education from community perspectives and to generate a list of recurrent community experiences. Based on this qualitative research, the team constructed an 80-question survey to evaluate and compare six local high schools along the recurrent dimensions that students identified in interviews and forums. After being trained in how to administer surveys, RYHC team leaders collected 415 surveys from local youth enrolled in six high schools, which serve 2,660 students. The high schools were selected because they service many students from New Orleans East, and they are diverse in multiple respects: student demographics, geographic locations, governing authorities (RSD, OPSB), and management structures (direct-run, charters). Youth researchers used their free periods, lunches, and afterschool time to gather the surveys from fellow students.

After reviewing and discussing the data, the Raise Your Hand Campaign youth researchers convened for five half-day meetings, spread throughout the spring of 2011, to determine a series of recommendations aligned to address the most pressing issues vocalized by students.

Student Population (2009-2010 data) and RYHC Sample at the Six Target High Schools:

School	Enrollment	%Black	%Asian	%Free/Reduced Lunch	Our Sample	% of School
RSD Charter (1)	180	91.0%	6.1%	80.0%	37	20.6%
OPSB Charter*	657	29.7%	22.5%	27.6%	71	10.8%
OPSB Direct*	430	82.0%	16.0%	87.0%	126	29.3%
RSD Direct- Run (1)	564	92.0%	6.0%	78.0%	85	15.1%
RSD Charter (2)	268	99.0%	0.0%	79.0%	38	14.2%
RSD Direct- Run (2)	561	98.0%	0.0%	75.0%	58	10.3%
Total	2,660	76.9%	9.8%	66.6%	415	15.6%*
Our Sample	415	56.7%	32.4%	76.3%		*Sample as a % of total enrollment

Endnotes & References

Endnotes

1. Emerging research shows that physical conditions of school facilities can significantly affect student learning, achievement, and truancy (Uline & Moran, 2008; Durán-Narucki, 2008; Schneider, 2002).

2. Feeding America. Child Food Insecurity in the United States: 2005 – 2007. <http://feedingamerica.org/our-network/thestudies/~media/Files/research/child-food-insecurity.ashx>.

3. Food Research and Action Center. State of the States: 2007 A Profile of Food and Nutrition Programs across the Nation. 2007:57.
<http://www.frac.org/SOS%202007%20Report.pdf>

4. Jeynes (2007) conducted a meta-analysis of parental involvement and urban high school student achievement, and found that parental involvement positively impacts educational outcomes for urban secondary school students.

5. The Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives (2011) compiled statistics on ACT scores in New Orleans high schools, which can be found in New Orleans by the Numbers: Act Scores.

6. Ravitch (2010) suggests that in the high-stakes testing and accountability era in public schools, some schools and districts are purposely classifying students as ESL, which allows students more accommodations to boost their test results.

References

Durán-Narucki, V. (2008). School building condition, school attendance, and academic achievement in New York City public schools: A mediation model. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 28 (3), 278-286.

Jeynes, W. H. (2007). The relationship between parental involvement and urban secondary school student academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Urban Education*, 42(1), 82-110.

Ravitch, D. (2010). *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education.* New York: Basic Books.

Schneider, M. (2002). *Do School Facilities Affect Academic Outcomes?* Washington: National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities.

Uline, C., & Tschannen-Moran, M. (2008). The walls speak: The interplay of quality facilities, school climate, and student achievement. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 46 (1), 55-73.



Survey

RAISE YOUR HAND CAMPAIGN SURVEY Current High School Students

The Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association has created a campaign for students to "raise their hands" when they see problems in their schools. Please help us by filling out this survey. Your survey answers will be anonymous.

You can contact us with questions or concerns at: Phone: 504-253-6000 Email: ryhc@vayla-no.org

Background Information

1. How old are you? _____
2. What is your gender? _____
3. What is your race/ethnicity? (Please select all that apply.)
 - Asian American (Please specify your ethnicity) [e.g. Vietnamese, Laotian, etc.]: _____
 - African American/Black
 - Latina/Latino (Please specify your ethnicity)[e.g. Puerto Rican, Mexican, etc.]: _____
 - White/Caucasian
 - American Indian
 - Other (Please specify): _____
4. What is your home address zip code (e.g. 70129)? _____
5. What is the primary language spoken at home? _____
6. What school do you attend? _____ Current Grade: _____
7. Average Grade (Please circle one): A B C D F Overall GPA: _____
8. Do you receive free lunch in school? Yes No
9. **If you have taken the ACT or SAT**, what was your best score? _____
10. What are the 3 most important issues at your school that you believe need to be changed (teacher performance, classes, lunch, physical building, transportation, etc.)?
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

Physical Environment

1. On a scale of 1-5 (1=Poor; 5=Excellent), how would you rate the overall cleanliness of your high school?
(Poor) 1 2 3 4 5 (Excellent)
2. On a scale of 1-5 (1=Poor; 5=Excellent), how would you rate the quality of the lunches provided by your school?
(Poor) 1 2 3 4 5 (Excellent)
3. Do you use the bathrooms at your high school? (Please select one.)
 - Yes No Emergencies Only
4. How often do you eat the lunches provided by your school? (Please select one.)
 - Always 3-4 days each week 2-3 days each week 1 day each week Very rarely

Instruction and Learning

Please select a rating, 1-5, for each of the following questions about your teachers:

1. On average do your teachers come prepared and organized for class each day?
(Very unprepared) 1 2 3 4 5 (Very prepared)
2. On average do your teachers put effort into helping students learn during class?
(No effort) 1 2 3 4 5 (A lot of effort)
3. On average do your teachers make the class lessons interesting?
(Boring) 1 2 3 4 5 (Very Interesting)
4. On average do your teachers control the classroom so that students can learn?
(Out of control) 1 2 3 4 5 (Very Controlled)

5. How many substitute teachers do you have in a typical week?
 None 1-2 3-4 5-6 7 or more

6. Please tell us what you think about the homework you are assigned (Please check all that apply)
 Easy Busy work Normal Challenging Too hard Time-consuming
 Helpful Not Helpful

7. How many hours do you spend on homework assignments every night? (Please circle) 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8. Have you taken or are you currently enrolled in (Advanced Placement) AP classes? Yes No
- 8a. **If no**, why not? (select one response.)
 AP classes are not offered I did not want to take AP classes I was not allowed to take AP classes
 Other (please explain) _____

9. Have you taken or are you currently enrolled in ACT class? Yes No
- 9a. **If no**, why not? (select one response.)
 ACT class is not offered I did not want to take an ACT class I was not allowed to take an ACT class
- 9b. How helpful was the ACT course in preparing you for the exam?
(Not Helpful) 1 2 3 4 5 (Very Helpful)

10. On a scale of 1-5 (1=Not Preparing; 5=Fully Preparing), how well is your high school preparing you for college?
(Not preparing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Fully preparing)

Classes

1. How many students are in each of your classes on average?
 Less than 15 15-20 20-25 25-30 30-35 35-40

2. On a scale of 1-5, how much do you learn in your classes?
(Nothing) 1 2 3 4 5 (A lot)

3. How many of your classes currently provide textbooks? 1 2 3 4 5 6

4. Do your classes have enough textbooks for all students?
 Always Usually Rarely Never

4. On a scale of 1-5, in what condition are your textbooks?
(Poor) 1 2 3 4 5 (Excellent)

5. Can you take your textbooks home? Always Sometimes Rarely Never

Survey (Continued)

Social Environment

1. On a scale of 1-5, how safe do you feel at your high school?
(Not safe) 1 2 3 4 5 (Very safe)
2. How are students of your ethnicity or race treated in your high school by each of these groups:
(1 = Very disrespectfully; 5 = Very respectfully)
- | | | | | | |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Other Students | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Teachers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Counselors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Security Guards | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
3. Have you ever been harassed or attacked at school because of your race/ethnicity? Yes No
4. Does your school have any student clubs that celebrate your racial/ethnic culture? Yes No

Parent Engagement

1. On a scale of 1-5, how knowledgeable do you think your parents are about the differences between high school choices in New Orleans?
(Not knowledgeable) 1 2 3 4 5 (Very knowledgeable)
2. About how many times have your parent(s) visited your high school to talk with your teachers?
 Never 1 to 2 times 3 to 5 times 6 times or more

Counseling and Support

1. On a scale of 1-5, how helpful are your high school counselors in supporting your progress and planning for the future?
(Unhelpful) 1 2 3 4 5 (Helpful)
2. About how many times do you visit a high school counselor each year?
 Never 1-2 times 3-4 times 5 times or more
3. On a scale of 1-5, how available are your counselors when you need them?
(Unavailable) 1 2 3 4 5 (Available)
4. On a scale of 1-5, how comfortable are you turning to your high school counselors with an emotional or social problem?
(Uncomfortable) 1 2 3 4 5 (Comfortable)

School Expenses

1. Is your family struggling to afford the following school expenses? Please check all that apply.
- | | | | |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Uniform | <input type="checkbox"/> Textbooks | <input type="checkbox"/> School trips | <input type="checkbox"/> School transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> AP or other special classes | <input type="checkbox"/> Sports uniforms and equipment | | |

Transportation

1. Are you currently attending your first choice high school? Yes (Skip to question 2.) No
- a. Which high school was your first choice? _____
- b. Did a lack of reliable transportation stop you from going to your first choice high school?
 No (What prevented you from attending your first choice? _____)
 Yes

2. How do you get to and from school on most days? (Select all that apply.)

- Free Bus Paid school bus Ride from family/friend Carpool
 Drive myself Public bus (How many? _____) Walk Bike

Conclusion

- Do you want to be part of our Raise Your Hand Campaign leadership team? Yes No
Can we contact you for an interview to talk about your experiences at school? Yes No

If we may contact you, you can volunteer to leave your contact information. Your survey will be kept anonymous.

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

******If you have ever been in an ESL class, or if your parents speak little English, please fill out this section******

1. Have you ever been enrolled in ESL classes? Yes No
2. Have you ever been placed in an ESL class when you didn't believe you needed to be in ESL? Yes No
2a. If yes, do you think this was because of your race, ethnicity, or last name?
 Yes No
3. Are you currently enrolled in an ESL class?
 Yes
 No (If no, skip to question 7)
4. How many students are in your ESL class? _____
5. On a scale of 1-5, how challenging is your ESL class?
(Not challenging) 1 2 3 4 5 (Challenging)
6. Do you have a textbook in ESL class? Yes No
7. On a scale of 1-5, how well does your school help you to improve your English reading comprehension and writing skills?
(Not Well) 1 2 3 4 5 (Very Well)
8. Are there teachers/staff at your high school who speak your parents' native language? Yes No
If yes, how many? _____
9. How do your parent(s) and teachers communicate with each other in meetings? (Check all that apply.)
 They speak English together
 Another teacher/staff helps interpret for them
 My parent(s) bring someone to interpret
 Other (Please specify): _____
10. About how often are forms or information sent home in your parents' native language?
 Always Occasionally Rarely Never
11. On a scale of 1-5, how comfortable do you think your parent(s) feel talking to teachers or other staff at your high school?
(Uncomfortable) 1 2 3 4 5 (Comfortable)



Raise Your Hand CAMPAIGN

The **Raise Your Hand Campaign** promotes equal access to quality public education for geographically, economically, or linguistically marginalized students through youth participatory research, leadership development and policy-centered organizing.

The **Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association of New Orleans** is a youth-led community-based organization that empowers Vietnamese American and underrepresented youth through supportive services, cultural enrichment, organizing and positive social change.

Supporting Organizations

Vietnamese Initiatives in Economic Training
Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana
Kids Rethink New Orleans Schools
Puentes New Orleans
MQVN Community Development Corporation
Urban League Young Professionals
Young Leadership Council
Institute for Women and Ethnic Studies
Partnership for Youth Development
Louisiana Language Access Coalition
Young Empowerment Project
Orleans Parish Education Network
API Young Professional Network
Students at the Center
YOUTHansia Foundation
Fountain of Youth Foundation