



## New Orleans District-Charter Collaboration Compact<sup>1</sup>

**Date Signed: June 2012**

**Number of Students: 39,896 (2011-2012)**

**Percent of Charter School Students to All Public School Students: 69.5%**

**Charter Authorizers: Orleans Parish School District, Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**School District Governing Body: State control**

### Overview

The percentage of New Orleans public school children attending charter schools went from 5 percent in 2005 to nearly 80 percent today, and the city is on track to reach 100 percent within the next three to five years. This makes for a compelling if unusual backdrop for a district-charter compact. Given their numbers and the strong push for reforms after (and to a lesser extent before) Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans charter schools were in a strong negotiating position at the signing of the compact, and they have wasted little time getting big things done. Perhaps the biggest win is the implementation of Recovery School District’s (RSD) universal enrollment system, OneApp, which streamlined the application process for parents and ensured that schools accepted children without regard to whether they needed special education.<sup>2</sup> To date, three-quarters of the city’s 83 public schools are participating in OneApp. Recent legislation paved the way for “Type 2” charter schools—those located in New Orleans but whose authorizer is the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education—to be included. The Orleans Parish School Board passed an amendment requiring that all of their schools join the OneApp system when their contracts are renewed. Since the compact signing, the city has also released a report card on all schools that includes a section covering on equity. This accessible “Equity Report” follows through on charters’ promise to improve transparency about the numbers of special-needs students served. Compact signers set out to develop a transparent facilities assignment process, which was also a success: every school in need of a facility was placed in one. There are several other smaller wins, including a new alternative education program.

### Key Compact Agreements

### Big Wins

Universal enrollment that meets needs of all students including special-needs students and mid-year enrollees.	Universal enrollment completed and implemented for all RSD schools. <sup>3</sup>
Improve services for special-needs students: ensure 100 percent of charter schools meet requirements, district will advocate for requisite resources, and charter schools will develop innovative solutions to serve students with special needs.	
Improve services for alternative education students by opening two new charter schools to serve them, securing adequate funding, and ensuring charter schools comply with legal requirements of expulsions and withdrawals, including accurate reporting of numbers.	Alternative education program launched in August 2012.
Develop a fair and transparent facilities assignment process.	Process based on neighborhood need and performance of the charter operator requesting facility was developed and partially relied upon. All schools in need of a facility were placed in one.
Develop process for community input in charter authorization process.	
Develop a common school report card and evaluation system to compare school-level results.	“Equity Report” released for 2011-2012 includes achievement, growth, and demographic data on each school in the city.
Develop master teacher training program.	One of two planned programs has launched.

1. See [this compact on CRPE’s website](#).

2. See CRPE’s webinar, “How District and Charter Schools Coordinate Enrollment: Practical Experiences from New Orleans and Denver.”

3. See “New Orleans RSD OneApp Enrollment Packet 2012-13.”

## Challenges and Next Steps

New Orleans submitted a RFP to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for continued funding of its compact work. The foundation has funded nearly \$3 million for many parts of the proposal, which is no less bold than the original compact. Importantly, however, the foundation has elected not to fund the city's efforts to improve special education services for children in charter schools. While the city has worked to improve these services, it has not made the progress it had hoped for. Students in pockets of the city are well-served, but there is no comprehensive strategy. The city continues to look for start-up capital to fund this project. Building on the work outlined in the original compact, the city hopes to iron out the kinks of the OneApp program and incorporate all public schools in New Orleans within the next two years. This may help further the goal of improving community engagement. Some progress was made including a new timeline for closure announcements, but it was a tight timeline, and parents were rarely offered better options in time for enrollment. It still represented progress from past practices of almost no local parent engagement. There has also been some progress on the compact's goal of creating citywide infrastructure for new school development, but that work has also not been fully realized. Efforts to solicit community input in the charter authorization progress have been slow given the local politics and historically strong opposition from powerful community groups. Given that the charter school market share is nearing 85 percent, this may be an issue that becomes less important over time. Policy and operations work is complete but yet to be tested. A concern for New Orleans going forward is shared by many other compact districts: how to improve instructional practices via improved talent pipeline and teacher training. Lastly, a concern unique to New Orleans is how to set a regulatory environment for an all-charter system.