





Fwd: Leah Chase School Building - Official Letter - Travis Trevor Alva Chase (Thank You)

 Travis Chase <tchase@hano.org>
To  Marie Fazio

  Reply 

The **Travis Chase, Trevor Chase, and Alva Chase** family respectfully requests that the Leah Chase School be designated “**Leah Chase School**” in name as a **building only**, while allowing a strong and proven school operator or Charter Management Organization to run the academic program. This location is uniquely meaningful, and it deserves to be a place where families feel excited and confident to send their children—a school that consistently performs at a C rating or above.

As the grandson of the legendary community icon Leah Chase, and as a past Board Member of a charter driven system of schools, I must be honest about the challenges we see in maintaining a single direct-run school. Without the economies of scale that charter networks enjoy, this direct-run school cannot sustain itself operationally. There is a zero-funding capacity to maintain the facility at the level required, and the current enrollment of around 300 students in a building built for 700 highlights the severity of the issue. We have already seen 1/3 of the students leave, a principal quit, and important programs—such as band, basketball, and other activities parents value—simply do not exist at this direct run school. Families understandably will not send their children to a D- rated school that lacks the basic features they expect to provide for their kids that shapes the entire child’s education like STEM, arts, and athletics.

This one and only direct run school also face stricter staffing requirements, including the mandate that all teachers must be certified. Charter schools do not have this restriction, allowing them greater flexibility in hiring and innovation. Meanwhile, we are watching other schools such as Sarah T. Reed close due to low enrollment, and demographic trends show that today’s families are smaller—often with two children rather than the large households of six plus kids of the 1960s and 70’s and 80’s. Expecting enrollment to rebound in this current climate of 1 to 2 kids per household in 2025 is unrealistic.

This school was doomed from the start, and quite frankly was set up at a deficit, but we cry now about a 9-month runway to fly off into the Educational Sunset – that it’s not fair or enough time! An entire school board running one school, to ask them to give resources and attention too. We must be willing to come together for the greater good of parents who have school-aged children and not folks who have “perceived power” with no kids of their own going to this Leah Chase School. Let’s keep the kids the focus, and allow them to have the best schools, programs, and STEM (A.I.) initiatives.

Operating this direct run school in its current form guarantees continued failure. Bottom Line. Period. It sets a dangerous precedent to allow the city’s only direct-run school to receive concessions and support that charter schools—who are held to strict accountability and pay for the same services from the same authorizer—do not receive. The state and OPSB will inevitably question how a school can justify running year after year at a deficit without addressing the main issues like low to no enrollment, no programs, low to no financial resources.

The local community has already spoken through One App, and it’s evidently clear that parents from Fontainebleau families are not sending their children to a D-rated school—period. Kindergarten enrollment is around 30 students, compared to the 75–105 average at successful charter schools. Expecting two more years under the same model is simply extending the path toward failure and the same results.

It is time to move beyond nostalgia for what used to be and focus on what all parents would want – and that is a great school for their child. As the Mayor-Elect stated recently at Dooky Chase Restaurant: This is a New Direction for New Orleans. We owe it to our children to ensure the Leah Chase School building is matched with an operator capable of delivering the high-quality education our community deserves.

Sincerely,

Travis S. Chase
504/228-1991 c

Trevor L. Chase
Alva D. Chase

1. Direct descendants of Leah Chase and Edgar L. Chase III