



Letter from the Superintendent regarding Unification

July 14, 2016

Dear Orleans Parish Public Schools families and friends,

Thank you for your interest in our children and taking the time to understand the significance of the important task of unification. This work is critical to transforming New Orleans into the best-performing urban school district in the nation. This process also gives New Orleans the chance to create something new that will be unique across the country: a system of autonomous schools, defined by parent choice, but that is regulated by a democratically-elected local school board. As Superintendent, I am determined to create an exemplary model of a unified district that offers excellence, choice, autonomy, accountability and public engagement.

Unification is a monumental task; however, it is our duty as educators and leaders to provide the best educational opportunities for our children. Thanks to the leadership of our Orleans Parish School Board members, my administration, and the Louisiana Recovery School District (RSD), we are one step closer to making history and establishing the groundwork for an educational landscape that will benefit our students for years to come.

Since Senate Bill 432 was signed into law as Act 91 a little more than two months ago, the process of developing a successful transition plan to return the current 49 RSD schools to OPSB governance has been promising. Both OPSB and RSD continue to put children first in our extensive collaborations. As required by Act 91, the 13-member advisory committee continues to provide support to both OPSB and RSD. Separately, I convened task forces that invited more than 120 educational stakeholders to offer feedback and their priorities for this transition plan. I'd like to thank all stakeholders who have and continue to offer assistance in unifying New Orleans public schools.

Today, I present to you a first working draft of the plan that will lead us through the transition of unifying our schools. It is important that you understand that unification will be a multi-year process. While we don't know all of the answers, we have identified many of the core questions that must be addressed over the next two years. Between now and the end of August, this working draft will be modified to include additional community and stakeholder feedback from our educators, parents and students. With that input, we can both capture all the key issues and begin to develop solutions so that a final transition plan can be submitted to OPSB School

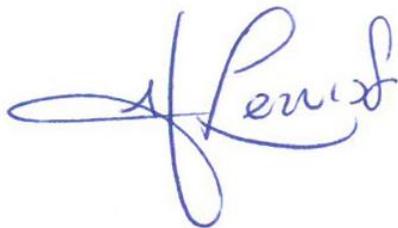
Board members for approval by September 1, 2016, ensuring all public schools return to local governance by July 1, 2018.

This working draft includes detailed guiding principles that reflect the feedback we are receiving on the values that should motivate unification. This document also lists strategic priorities that will drive OPSB's work over the next few years to make the guiding principles of unification a reality. For OPSB to excel in executing against those strategic priorities, this working draft details several operational capabilities and responsibilities that the district must be ready to take on. Lastly, we have cataloged a wide range of policy and operational decisions that will need to be made over the next two years to prepare for unification, based on the feedback we received from task force members and other stakeholder engagement.

In other respects, this draft is very much a work in progress. We've worked with the RSD to understand the current cost structure that supports both organizations and have begun to map that against the work that we will need to carry forward into unification. This document does not yet reflect the full projection of available revenues and potential efficiencies that the final plan will include, in outlining a financially sustainable path forward for unification. Separately, both OPSB and RSD must finalize their own budgets for FY17 before the draft figures in this document are approved. Our final plan will arrange the policy and operational decisions that we have identified (plus any others we add through further engagement) into a detailed schedule of quarterly benchmarks, so that the Advisory Committee and the community can understand and hold us accountable for our progress. While some of those key decisions must be made this year, others will take place over time while carefully considering the implications on schools, students and parents.

Our next steps involve seeking additional community feedback on this working draft. Over the next few weeks, we will continue to engage our board members, schools, educators, parents, students and the community at-large. I remain dedicated to completing the work of doing what's best for our students and families in New Orleans.

All the Best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "H. Lewis". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "H" and a cursive "Lewis".

Dr. Henderson Lewis, Jr., Ph.D.



DRAFT Plan for Unification

WORKING DOCUMENT

FOR COMMUNITY INPUT

July 14, 2016

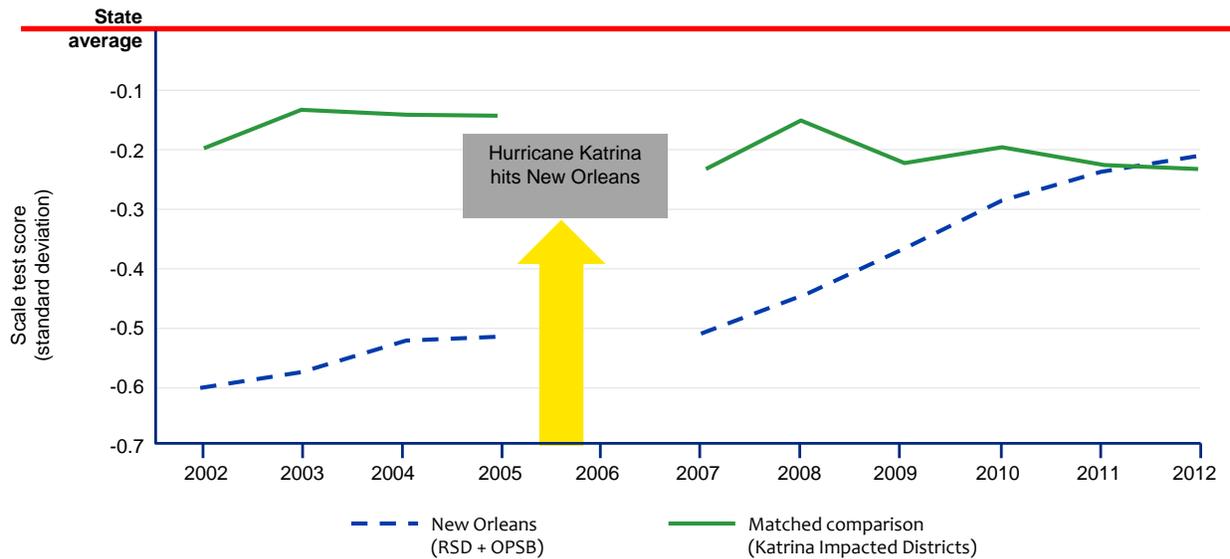
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I. Guiding Principles

Ten years ago, public education in New Orleans suffered both from the results of decades of systemic decay and from the devastation of a natural and man-made disaster. At that point, the education system in New Orleans was among some of the worst in the United States. Over the last decade-plus, the transformation of public schools in New Orleans has been remarkable – both for the dramatic change in the landscape of school options available to families, and – most importantly – for the improved outcomes for thousands of students each year. Core skills in literacy and numeracy, graduation rates, and college matriculation all show significant gains, and robust research has affirmed these gains by comparing them to similar populations of Louisiana school systems affected by Hurricane Katrina.¹

Figure 1
Student Performance in New Orleans vs. Other Districts Affected by Hurricane Katrina



Source: Doug Harris, "Good News for New Orleans." *Education Next*, Fall 2015

With the passage of Act 91, public education in New Orleans is poised to enshrine the core principles that enabled such rapid progress, while also setting forth the next phase of reform in the city. The law presents the community with an exciting, unique opportunity. In unifying all public schools in New Orleans under the Orleans Parish School Board, there is a chance to create something new, for New Orleans to again be a leader in forging a school system without parallel across the country: to show that a city of autonomous schools, that empowers educators to make decisions in the interest of the students they know best, can also exist within a system overseen by a democratically-elected Board that is looking out for issues of quality and equity across the city.

¹ Harris, Doug. "Good News for New Orleans." *Education Next*. Fall 2015 <<http://educationnext.org/good-news-new-orleans-evidence-reform-student-achievement/>>

The stage for this new phase has been set by the continuous progress that both OPSB and RSD have made over the last decade, in advancing student achievement and laying the building blocks of governance and equity. After a period of leadership instability, OPSB has made significant strides in recent years to update its authorization policy and has changed its organizational structure to develop a central office organization that can best serve schools and students. The School Board has taken an active role in passing a number of policies to enhance charter policies, protect the fund balance, and establish an autonomous support structure for network schools. Further, OPSB has been nationally recognized by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers as a high-quality local district authorizer. The RSD, meanwhile, has established strong portfolio management as a core capability for a system of autonomous schools and has worked in recent years to develop a set of citywide services – e.g. OneApp, EnrollNOLA, the Therapeutic Day Program for students with diagnosed behavioral health disabilities – that are needed to address fundamental equity issues, but that individual schools are not equipped to develop on their own.

During this ten year period, student achievement has risen dramatically. In 2005, only 35% of Orleans Parish students were proficient on state assessments, while in 2014-2015, 60% were proficient. This improved performance has closed the gap with the rest of the state, with New Orleans trailing the state average by 5 percentage points in 2015, compared to being 23 percentage points behind in 2005. In terms of school quality, the percentage of D and F schools in New Orleans has dropped from 79% in 2005 to only 26% in 2015².

At the same time, OPSB must recognize the substantial needs that our students face every day, both in and out of school, and the hard work of helping those students succeed. The number of at-risk³ students in New Orleans is over 37,000 (84% of all enrollment), and up to 7,200 (16%) have exhibited symptoms of PTSD.⁴ There are now over 1,800 (4%) ELL students and 5,400 (12%) students with disabilities enrolled in New Orleans public schools.⁵

Moreover, the data show the room for improvement that our schools will face as expectations across the state rise from “basic” proficiency to “mastery” of core subjects. There has been tremendous progress over the past decade as “basic” performance scores have risen by over 70% since 2005 but as OPSB works to be the highest performing urban school system in the country, there is more work to be done.

² “10 Years after Katrina: Academic Outcomes” Louisiana Department of Education. <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/katrina/final-louisiana-believes-v5-academic-outcomes.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

³ “At-risk” includes economically disadvantaged students and students who are otherwise “at-risk” of not graduating (See appendix).

⁴ ^[1] “Emotional Wellness and Exposure to Violence: Data from New Orleans Youth Age 11-15.” *Institution of Women and Ethnic Studies*. April 2016. <http://iwesnola.org/resources/publications-articles/download-info/emotional-wellness-survey-report/>

⁵ Internal OPSB Data.

Figure 2

HOW DID STUDENTS IN GRADES 3-8 PERFORM ON STATE ASSESSMENTS?

Students performing at Basic may need additional support to be fully prepared for the next level of studies. Students performing at Mastery and above have met or exceeded the expectations, and are well prepared for the next level of studies. By 2025, A-rated schools must have an average performance of Mastery.

SCORE	DISTRICT	STATE	MINORITY STUDENTS	STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS
MASTERY +	23%	27%	20%	10%	18%
BASIC +	60%	65%	58%	31%	56%

Source: 2014-2015 Orleans Parish (OPSB and RSD) District Report Card

Unification offers a tremendous opportunity to continue the momentum of the last ten years, while pushing for further progress and developing even stronger structures to guarantee effective choice and equitable education opportunities in New Orleans. Under unified local governance, OPSB will assume systemwide management and oversight duties, but parents and families will remain empowered to select the school that best meets each child’s skills. Individual schools will remain empowered to exercise the autonomy that has been the key driver for improvements in their students’ outcomes.

Our aspirations for what unification can deliver to students, families, and educators over the long term are embedded within a set of guiding principles that reflect these ideas. Over the next few years, as OPSB works with stakeholders to more deeply define a future vision for the organization and works internally to transform our organization, these guiding principles can help to ground our conversations and inform our work.

Guiding Principles for Unification

Listening to the thoughts offered by our task forces and other stakeholders, OPSB has established a set of principles that will serve as a guide in its decision making, planning, and execution throughout unification:

1. High Standards: New Orleans must be the best performing urban district in the country.

The remarkable student achievement gains of the last decade have led independent researchers at Tulane to comment, *“We are not aware of any other districts that have made such large improvements in such a short time.”* With continued high expectations, we believe that New Orleans can become the best-performing urban district in the country, and that we should set our sights no lower than that.

2. Continued Progress: We cannot be comfortable with the gains of the last ten years; we must continually raise standards, expand what is working, and cultivate new leaders and new ideas.

As the data shared earlier in this document indicate, there is much work to be done to build on the progress of the last decade. The same urgency that has enabled the transformative work of the last 10 years has to characterize the future, as well. The best school operators in the city are already focused on how they can improve and expand to meet the needs of students. As a district, we must work with our schools to continue to set appropriately high standards and

work with partners to seek out new leaders and new ideas that can represent a pipeline of future progress for the city.

3. Choices for Families: Every child in New Orleans should have access to high-quality public school options that provide a great education.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of public education in New Orleans is the commitment to family choice: the idea that a family knows which schools are the best fit for their child and should have school options to choose from across the city. OPSB is committed to ensuring that all parents and families have many options in their child’s schooling—and that the set of choices for all students continues to increase in quality.

4. Ensuring Equity: Differentiated resources and attention must go to ensuring that schools are succeeding for each individual student, based on his or her unique gifts, talents, and needs.

In recent years, both RSD and OPSB – along with schools and community members – have been committed to improving equity for all students through efforts such as differentiated funding and new programs for at-risk students. The district has a critical role to play in monitoring equity issues, intervening where necessary, and developing citywide solutions to address unmet needs.

5. Empowering Schools and their Communities: Educators closest to students and families are empowered to make instructional decisions for the children they know best, while the district focuses on advancing quality and equity throughout the system

The governance model in New Orleans is marked by a “separation of powers” – OPSB recognizes that schools and school networks are best positioned to make educational decisions for the students they serve, and are committed to giving them the independence and autonomy that they need. At the same time, there are a set of system-level issues – e.g. school authorization, system-wide services, facilities, policy – that demand the district’s citywide lens.

What Unification Means

OPSB recognizes that many in the community are still learning what unification means; even as we increase our own community engagement efforts, some misperceptions may continue to exist. The reality is that Act 91 includes some valuable changes to our system that will help to advance our guiding principles, while also keeping other areas unchanged from how they work today. In some areas, the changes implied by Act 91 reinforce actions already taken by the School Board in adjusting various policies.

The following changes will bring the two districts together under one central organization, with OPSB leading the way forward for New Orleans’ schools.

- A. **Local Voice:** The local, democratically-elected Orleans Parish School Board will oversee public education in the city, including setting system-level policies in key areas.

B. **Consistent, citywide policies on equity:** Both School Board policy actions and Act 91 reinforce systems that protect equity and fairness for all students, notably, EnrollNOLA and differentiated funding. Specifically, the current School Board has undertaken a number of additional steps to advance equity:

- Requirement of all charter schools up for renewal to participate in the common enrollment system
- Neighborhood preference inclusion so that families have access to quality school options in proximity to their homes if they choose
- Termination of neighborhood preferences for academically selective schools so that all students—regardless of neighborhood—have access to the highest performing schools
- Transportation for all students who live greater than 1 mile away from school and transportation for all students with IEPs regardless of distance from school

On the other hand, unification will maintain consistency in some of the core tenets of our progress in the last decade:

Schools will retain the independence to be responsive to their students' needs through control of their staff, curriculum, and budget – protections that were adopted in School Board policy, and are now elevated into law. Through unification, current charter schools will remain charter schools and school operators will maintain their autonomy.

Moreover, families will continue to have many options to help find the right school for their child across the city through the EnrollNOLA process. Over time, OPSB will continue to work with stakeholders across the city to ensure that enrollment policies are working for schools and families.

II. Strategic Priorities

If our guiding principles establish the values that will guide unification and state some of our long-term aspirations for public education in the city, then our strategic priorities describe the work that OPSB will take on to help make those guiding principles a reality.

Governance Priorities

A. We will uphold stringent standards for school authorization, performance, and accountability while empowering those closest to students.

Over the past 11 years, public schools in New Orleans have created a system where schools are held accountable and students are expected to achieve consistent academic growth, and both RSD and OPSB maintain performance frameworks and authorization processes today. Throughout and after unification, students and schools will be held to high expectations for academic achievement, while also appropriately setting standards in a way that encourages operators to take on the hardest-to-serve students and to help turn around schools with historically poor performance. It will take collaborative work with schools and community members to ensure that standards for achievement and growth are consistent across the district.

B. We will ensure a set of citywide services and policies are in place that address equity issues for all students.

As a unified school system, OPSB will consist of diverse and autonomous schools with the district ensuring that schools and students have equitable access to resources. Today, most of the citywide services focused on equity are managed by the RSD (these services are described in greater detail on pages 12 and 13 of this document). Under unification, OPSB needs to be prepared to take on the effective management of these services, to work proactively to identify other areas of need where a citywide focus on equity may be warranted, and to coordinate with partners at schools and in the non-profit sector to determine how those services could best be funded and delivered

Financial and Operational Priorities

C. We will be financially efficient and operationally lean.

The Orleans Parish School Board has developed policies to ensure fiscal responsibility, allowing for the greatest possible share of its resources to be spent on the most critical aspect of any school district: its students. OPSB has worked to implement cost-saving measures by eliminating unnecessary spending while increasing salaries for school-based educators and personnel. Unification will both create additional opportunities for efficiency as we streamline overlapping functions with the RSD, as well as potentially require hard decisions about tradeoffs and what we can afford with the revenues available to us. Looking beyond unification, OPSB will use

unification as an opportunity to establish itself as a leader among school districts in the area of financial effectiveness.

D. We will ensure that facilities are appropriately maintained and provide the best possible environment for teachers and students.

Over the past several years, OPSB has improved older buildings and built new ones, working to provide the best possible environment for students and teachers. Facilities are the centers of teaching and learning in New Orleans, and it is imperative that these facilities are clean and safe. By developing clear maintenance expectations and service standards, OPSB will ensure that each school building provides an atmosphere that encourages all students to achieve academically. This includes taking full advantage of the facilities maintenance fund that will provide a dedicated pool of resources to fund certain capital projects for schools.

Community and Transparency Priorities

E. We will collaborate with our stakeholders to define policies in the best interest of students.

Our task force on community and transparency reinforced how many of the policy decisions we will make through unification have a substantial impact on our schools and students. As we work through the decisions we must make for unification and beyond, the OPSB will bring together a diverse set of decision makers, including school and community leaders, who care deeply about the future of our schools and students. This process will help lead to equitable and fair policies that will provide the structure for New Orleans Parish Schools to continue to grow and emerge as fastest improving urban school district in the country.

F. We will be transparent with the community on how our schools are performing and how the public's money is being used.

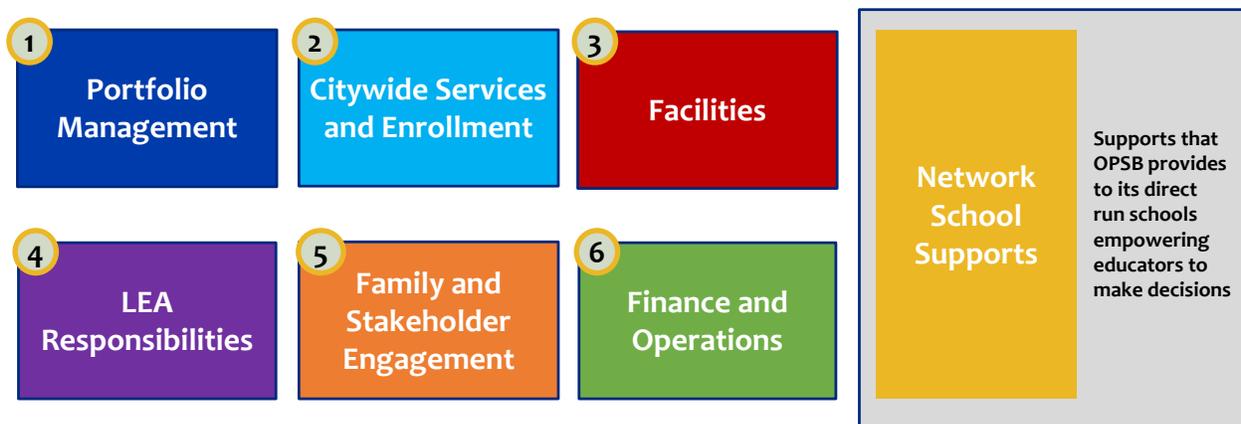
The OPSB has engaged with the community through the initial stages of the unification process with the goal of building and maintaining long-term relationships with all members of the community. Over the past several years, the public perception of Orleans Parish schools has improved.⁶ We are committed to making transparency with the community an ongoing tenet of our work, to earn the confidence of schools and community members that we are working effectively on their behalf.

⁶ Babineau, Kate, Hand, Dave, and Rossmeyer, Vincent. "What Happens Next?: Voters' perception of K-12 Public Education in New Orleans" *Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives*. Tulane University, April 2016. <http://www.coweninstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Cowen-Institute-2016-Poll-FINAL.pdf>

III. Organizational Capabilities

In the process of setting guiding principles and strategic priorities that will inform the unification process, we have recognized that these strategic priorities will call on OPSB to take on a different role as an organization in order to serve all schools and families. For the past year, we have been engaged in the process of transforming our organization, a process will continue over the next two years. By July 1, 2018, OPSB will need the capacity to excel across a range of organizational capabilities. Some of these functions currently reside in the OPSB and RSD, and our priorities will require that these functions operate successfully within our organization. Still others may be new functions and responsibilities that we must take on that neither district currently possesses.

Key Organizational Capabilities



These functions include 1) Portfolio Management, 2) Citywide Services and Enrollment, 3) Facilities, 4) LEA Responsibilities, 5) Family and Stakeholder Engagement, and 6) Finance and Operations. In addition, while the work of OPSB’s direct run schools is not directly implicated within the Unification Plan, it is important to note that OPSB will continue to support these schools in ways that are consistent with the guiding principles articulated here—accountability and empowerment of educators and the community. As a part of the district’s broader reorganization, the Office of Network Schools was established with direct oversight of the district’s 6 traditional (non-charter) school sites. As OPSB continues to empower its direct-run schools with responsibility to meet the needs of these students, OPSB will move additional levels of financial responsibility to these schools as well. Ultimately, OPSB’s vision is that the Office of Network Schools will act as an autonomous internal function that provides supports and services to these schools in the same way that other school operators do for their individual schools.

The six core functions that directly impact unification are:

- 1. Portfolio Management:** A portfolio district is one where schools and educators are empowered to run their own schools but are held to standards set by the district—which regulates the system of schools. Schools are autonomous and have wide latitude for decision making with respect to finances and instructional decisions. The role of the portfolio manager is to ensure that there are an appropriate number of school seats in the system, to monitor schools on both academic performance and other core issues such as equity and financial stewardship, and to make authorization decisions that bolster the quality and effectiveness of public schools over time. Ultimately, the role of portfolio management is to work toward the vision that a great public school is available for all children in New Orleans. Today, both OPSB and RSD play a portfolio management role for their own schools. Under Act 91, all responsibility for authorizations, renewals, and other portfolio actions will be unified with OPSB.

Key Activities:

- a. Accountability:** Maintain clear and consistent standards for all schools in a School Performance Framework – especially regarding student achievement. This includes ensuring that all schools are aware of the framework and the expectations for which they will be held accountable. Further, schools will need to understand the process for improving when they do not meet the criteria for accountability metrics.
- b. Monitoring:** Monitor performance and compliance with standards at all schools, including in areas such as financial stewardship and special education and ELL consent decrees, and develop interventions as needed based on issues that arise.

The OPSB will monitor all schools to ensure that they are operating in accordance with established academic, financial, and organizational standards, as defined in the performance framework. Since schools are required to provide a number of services to students, it is imperative that an oversight body monitors these services to ensure their successful execution.

- c. Planning:** Identify areas of need – e.g. performing demographic analyses for a neighborhood and groups of students – and develop a strategy for filling these needs.

With changing demographics and differing needs across the city, portfolio planning is required in order to maintain a quality education for all students. This includes issues involving the number of seats in schools and the needs of certain neighborhoods.

- d. Pipeline:** Recruit and cultivate leaders / organizations to form a strong pipeline of new school candidates, working with community partners.

In order to ensure that all students have the opportunity to attend a high-performing school, OPSB must make sure that they are continuously looking to the future and are developing relationships with strong leaders and school operators. While OPSB has no direct role in leadership development, the district must provide strong leaders with the

autonomy to continue to do what is best for students. By developing a pipeline of strong schools, OPSB will be able to achieve the goal of consistently improving education across the city.

2. **Citywide Services and Enrollment:** The role of Citywide Services and Enrollment is to work toward the vision that families have choice in schooling and that all students can access services needed to achieve college and career readiness and positive life outcomes. Families need to have many strong school options for their students and desire the opportunity to send their students to a school that best fits their circumstances. Many students have unique needs and require access to services that meet those needs, which often make sense to provide in a citywide structure rather than through individual schools. Today, some of these services are provided by the RSD and OPSB while others are provided by non-profits. Still other needs are seen in the community as unmet, and OPSB, working in partnership with the community, must facilitate solutions to address these emerging priorities.

Key Activities:

- a. **Enrollment:** Maintain a unified enrollment system that facilitates school choice and ensures that families are enrolled equitably.

EnrollNOLA has provided access for families to schools across the city. By approaching this system with an eye of continual improvement, OPSB will leverage the gains made in enrollment in the last several years and continue to advance the system to provide even better access and choice for families across Orleans Parish.

- b. **Citywide Services:** Students with unique needs, as well as differentiated types of schools and programs, require some citywide coordination (rather than being left to each school). Today, the RSD and OPSB manage some of these services, while non-profit organizations are critical service partners in other areas.

These critical citywide services include the New Orleans Therapeutic Day Program (NOTDP) for students with behavioral health disabilities, the Youth Opportunity Center (YOC) for chronically absent students and those with other severe discipline challenges, and the Youth Study Center (YSC) for youth in secure care. The Citywide Exceptional Needs Fund for Students with Disabilities (CENF) is designed to help students meet the needs of their IEPs who do not get adequate funding from the per-pupil funding formula or state funding for special education. Increasing efforts are being made in areas such as Early Childhood, Career Education, and ELL. These areas are particularly important for the advancement of education system in New Orleans.

- c. **Mandatory Responsibilities:** Certain functions that are the traditional responsibility of a district must reside within OPSB even if it is not the LEA for all schools (e.g., Child Search and services to non-public students).

Currently, OPSB is responsible for mandatory services for children with disabilities who are not otherwise enrolled at or assigned to a public school, including federally-required services for all non-public students in the parish. This responsibility includes Child Search which requires OPSB to provide identification and evaluation service with the intent of locating all children with disabilities ages 0-22 who are not receiving education services.

3. **Facilities:** We aim to provide the best possible learning environment for students and educators. OPSB's role is to plan for how all district-owned facilities are used and where new buildings may be needed, to set standards around maintenance and design, and to oversee a pool of maintenance funds that schools can draw on to support their own planning priorities. Under Act 91, all buildings, facilities, and property controlled by the RSD will be transferred to OPSB oversight when a school is returned. However, any property belonging to a charter operator will remain property of the school. RSD will continue to administer FEMA-funded capital projects for its schools until those projects are substantially complete, per funding requirements.

Key Activities:

- a. **Facilities Maintenance Fund:** Create the revolving loan fund and policies for drawing on that fund, to allow schools to plan and begin to deploy funds that are set aside for facilities preservation.
 - b. **Building Oversight:** Monitor the general maintenance and longer term issues with buildings as outlined in facilities guidelines.
 - c. **System-Wide Planning:** Assess and help set priorities for building utilization, new buildings, transition of buildings, and sale of unused buildings.
 - d. **Building Assessment:** Periodically evaluate the current state of buildings in order to make certain that adequate funding is available for future needs.
 - e. **Design Standards:** Normalize criteria for new construction and renovations in order to best utilize funding.
4. **LEA Responsibilities:** As the Local Education Agency (LEA) for its network (direct-run) schools and nearly all of its charter schools, OPSB is obligated to provide a targeted set of services for these students and schools. By contrast, each RSD Type 5 charter school currently serves as its own LEA for most purposes. Per Act 91, schools currently under the OPSB LEA will have the option to request that the board make them their own LEA. Schools returning to the OPSB as Type 3B Charters will choose whether to remain their own LEA or join the OPSB LEA.

Key Activities:

- a. **Special Education Services:** Provide services for all students enrolled within its LEA, including both charter and direct-run schools. These services include assigning diagnosticians and other special education staff, conducting evaluations, writing IEPs,

and coordinating partner organizations in order to assist schools in compliance with IDEA.

- b. **Federal Programs:** Serve as the fiscal agent for federal programs, collecting funds and allocating these funds to schools.
 - c. **Grants:** Apply for and administer grants while ensuring compliance by overseeing the financial and programmatic aspects of the grant.
 - d. **Data Management & Reporting:** Aggregate and submit required data and reporting to the state and other relevant authorities (e.g. Independent monitors for litigation) while maintaining student records for schools.
5. **Family and Stakeholder Engagement:** We heard clearly in our Community and Transparency Task Force the need for OPSB to be both collaborative with its stakeholders in defining strategy and policy, as well as transparent with the public about its performance and operations. Today, both OPSB and RSD have functions that engage in strategic planning, community relations, and policy.

Key Activities:

- a. **Strategy:** Set the vision and strategic priorities for a unified system in collaboration with key stakeholders.
- b. **Family Engagement:** Provide ongoing communication with families and a clear channel for input, including the need to gather student voice.
- c. **Board Office Functions:** Management and funding of the Constitutional and statutory obligations related to maintaining a local school board
- d. **Community Relations:** Ensure that OPSB is responsive to family and student concerns and issues.

Task forces indicated that OPSB should authentically engage the community through multiple flexible means of communication while providing clear, consistent and concise information to students, families and community members. Channels of communication include PSAs, advertisements, social media and the OPSB website.

- e. **Intergovernmental Affairs and Policy:** Liaise between state, local, and federal governmental agencies and advocate for policy that advances the needs of students and schools.
- f. **Communications:** Translate the vision, strategy, and actions of the district transparently to all families and community members.

- 6. Finance and Operations:** The role of finance and operations is to provide both resources and a targeted set of support services to schools and the central office. Today, both OPSB and RSD maintain operations team to provide services. Under Act 91, OPSB will take over all operations capacities from the RSD and will continue to provide these services to its own schools.

Key Activities:

- a. **Differentiated Funding:** Operationalize the differentiated funding policy and create a policy and process for ensuring that funding levels remain aligned with student need.
- b. **Finance:** Oversee all financial matters in the district, including taxing and bond authority, insurance, budgeting, payroll, and audits.
- c. **Human Resources:** Manage systemwide aspects of HR, including recruiting, safety, employee relations, benefits, and compliance.
- d. **Legal:** Provide legal oversight on all matters of the district and ensure that the district is operating within its proper authority.
- e. **Information Technology:** Maintain and update IT infrastructure, hardware, software, and IT related contracts.

IV. Budget Implications

Outlined in the previous section of this plan are the core capabilities that a unified district will require. These include 1) Portfolio Management, 2) Citywide Services and Enrollment, 3) Facilities, 4) LEA Responsibilities, 5) Family and Stakeholder Engagement, and 6) Finance and Operations.

A critical component of the final plan will be to outline the implications for the OPSB budget of providing these capabilities in a high-quality way. The budgetary implications of unification are complex and multi-faceted: OPSB will be taking on new work currently managed by the RSD, integrating those functions into the organization, and accessing certain funding streams that support the RSD's work, many of which are restricted to support only particular programs or functions. We are still working to identify the complete picture of revenue and cost that we project will exist under unification (beginning two fiscal years from now), to determine if there is a financial shortfall under this projection, and – if so – to identify proposed solutions to address that shortfall in a sustainable way.

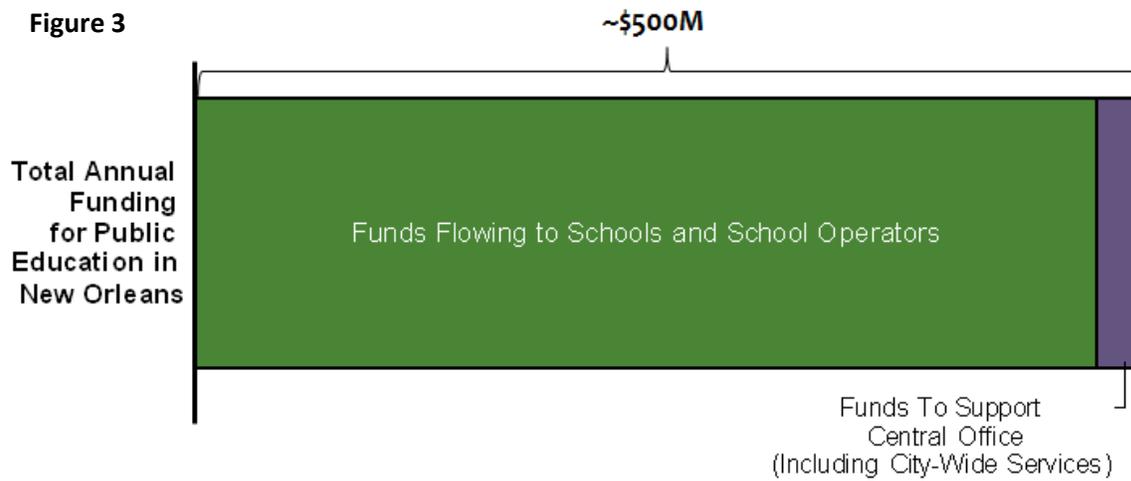
To start the public conversation around budget implications, this draft plan includes figures that combine the OPSB and RSD estimated budgets for FY17. It is important to note that:

- (a) This information only includes costs and revenues that are relevant to unification. For example, it does not include the revenues and costs related to OPSB's direct-run schools, or the revenues and costs associated with FEMA projects overseen by the RSD. This view is intentional: it allows us to focus in on the ongoing resources that should be available to support unification, knowing that a sustainable path forward for unification means that we cannot access resources that are intended for other purposes.
- (b) Both the OPSB and the RSD must go through review and board approval of FY17 budgets. As a result, all figures here should be considered preliminary estimates.

A. Current Annual Funding for Public Schools

Annual funding for public schools in New Orleans is approximately \$500 million with almost 95% of those dollars flowing directly to educating students (See Figure 3). OPSB will continue to work to ensure that the maximum number of dollars flow to those directly closest to students. Since the vast majority of dollars flow directly to schools and will continue to do so, questions around unification will focus on the small share of (<5-6%) of funds devoted to system administration and citywide services. These funds are inclusive of the administration fee, federal funding, and funding from other sources. Our final unification plan will include an estimate of how best to allocate these funds in support of our guiding principles and strategic priorities.

Figure 3



B. Costs associated with a unified school district

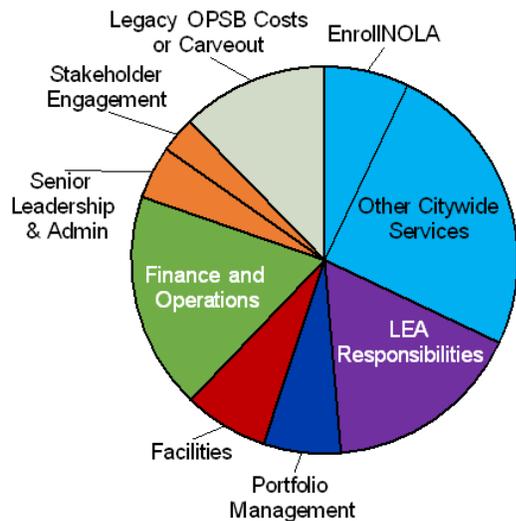
The current costs to support these key capabilities—as well as other required costs— are estimated to total \$28 million across OPSB and RSD for FY17.⁷ Nearly 50% of these funds are used to support citywide services and LEA responsibilities. This total includes legacy OPSB costs that are incurred due to litigation and obligations related to Hurricane Katrina and the school system from before the storm. These are costs that OPSB must bear, although the vast majority of costs are reimbursed through a state-authorized “carveout” of MFP revenues, which is capped and limited to certain expenditures. A summary of costs can be found in Figure 4.

⁷ FY17 Draft OPSB and RSD Budgets

Figure 4

Combined Cost of Key Organizational Capabilities, RSD+OPSB

Based on Current FY17 Estimates



Sources of Costs	%
(1) Portfolio Management: Costs related to personnel and services that support the authorization, planning, and oversight of schools both at the RSD and OPSB	6%
(2) City-Wide Services & Enrollment: Includes EnrollNOLA, plus a range of other equity-related or mandatory services	32%
(3) Facilities: Personnel that support facilities maintenance and oversight of the facilities preservation fund	7%
(4) LEA Responsibilities: A variety of costs incurred in OPSB's capacity as an LEA, including insurance portions of ECS, processing of federal grants, IT requirements, etc.	17%
(5) Stakeholder Engagement: Includes cost of the board, policy directors, communications, and strategy	3%
(6) Finance & Operations: Includes finance, HR, IT, legal, insurance, and a variety of other costs	18%
Senior Leadership: Includes costs related to senior leadership team members and administrative support	4%
Legacy OPSB Costs: Reimbursable costs including health benefits and legal suits both prior to and after Hurricane Katrina, and other costs that OPSB is required to pay, such as sick leave for former employees	12%

Costs that the district incurs mapped to the six organizational capabilities are broken out in further detail below:

- (1) **(6%) - Portfolio Management:** Both the RSD and OPSB have portfolio management functions that regulate and authorize charter schools. Functions at both organizations conduct planning and monitoring. Both organizations have directors that oversee the process, and teams that liaise with and manage relationships directly with schools. Other functions are more analytical and data oriented so that student and school achievement data are measured and analyzed appropriately so that schools can be held accountable.
- (2) **(32%) - City-Wide Services & Enrollment:** Today, both the OPSB and the RSD offer services to students in the city. In some cases, the state or city has mandated services and/or appropriated funding or revenues for specific purposes. In other cases, services may have been the product of a community vision to fulfill a perceived critical need. These services largely advance values that the community holds dear: choice and equity. As City-Wide Services & Enrollment compose such a significant portion of costs, a detailed breakout is offered here:
 - a. **EnrollNOLA** makes up roughly 22% of the City-Wide Services budget. Today, the RSD runs the citywide common enrollment system, which enables all families to have choice in their child's schooling and to select a school in a unified, transparent, and publically accountable system.
 - b. **The New Orleans Therapeutic Day Program (NOTDP)** makes up 18% of the City-Wide Services budget. The NOTDP is a joint collaboration between the Recovery School District, Orleans Parish School Board, and Tulane Medical School's Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. The NOTDP offers a separate setting to serve RSD and OPSB students with the most severe diagnosed behavioral health disabilities in grades K-8.
 - c. **The Citywide Exceptional Needs Fund (CENF)**, 15% of the City-Wide Services budget, is a special purpose fund jointly created by the OPSB and RSD where schools can apply for

grant funding to meet the needs of students with IEP's—especially those who are not funded through the state's special education funding allocation.⁸

- d. **The Youth Study Center and the Alternative Learning Institute (YSC and ALI)**, which total ~14% of the City-Wide Services Budget, is run by the OPSB and educates youth who are court involved.
- e. **The Youth Opportunity Center (YOC)** makes up another 13% of the City-Wide Services budget. Another joint initiative between the RSD and the OPSB, the YOC acts as a bridge connects students and families who are truant or otherwise at risk of dropping out of school with community service providers.
- f. **Exceptional Children's Services** is a function that offers services to SPED students and is an LEA requirement. Certain components of these services *must* be provided regardless of LEA status of schools by the OPSB. **Child Search** and SPED services for **non-public** students that reside in New Orleans make up another ~12% of the City-Wide Services budget. The bulk of this spend is Child Search. For *all* children who reside in New Orleans, OPSB is required to provide identification and evaluation services with the intent of locating all children with disabilities ages 0-22 who are not receiving educational services.

Together, these services add up to ~95% of the City-Wide Services budget. The remaining 5% of **city-wide services** fund emerging efforts related to Early Childhood, school safety, and other miscellaneous areas.

A continuation of the remainder of the central office budget follows by organizational capability:

- (3) **(7%) – Facilities** - The facilities budget includes the personnel and staff that oversee the facilities maintenance fund and those who are generally involved in building maintenance and oversight.
- (4) **(17%) – LEA Responsibilities:** As discussed in the organizational capabilities section, OPSB as an LEA of schools is obligated to provide a targeted set of responsibilities to assist schools in IDEA compliance, including assigning special education teachers and staff, conducting evaluations, writing IEP's, etc. Other responsibilities include serving as the fiscal agent for federal programs and grants, and aggregating and submitting certain data and reporting to the state and other authorities.
- (5) **(5%) – Stakeholder Engagement:** Both the RSD and OPSB today have personnel that engage in external communications, community engagement, and policymaking and liaising with other governmental entities. The OPSB also supports a School Board office and related costs. These costs are a relatively small portion of the central office budget today.
- (6) **(18%) – Finance and Operations:** Today, this bucket of costs include both costs that are obligatory as well as administrative functions that the districts use to operate on a day-to-day basis. These costs include legal fees that OPSB and RSD incur for litigation and contracting purposes, IT functions and personnel, insurance and rent, human resources functions, security,

⁸ The state has a High Cost Services Allocation that it awards to students who have needs that are 4x their per-pupil funding. The CENF funds students with needs in the "medium range" beyond their per pupil allocation and was built specifically to bridge that gap (e.g., between 2-4x)

etc. Lastly, a finance function that oversees all financial matters at both the RSD and OPSB—including the setting of the budget, payroll, audits, etc. make up a sizeable portion of costs.

(7) **(4%) – Senior Leadership & Administration:** Finally, a small portion of the budget funds the superintendent’s offices, senior leadership, and their administrative functions.

Along with the 12% of costs that are covered by the “carveout” revenues, these summarize our current estimate of what OPSB would incur as a unified district if the RSD and OPSB’s budgets were combined for the FY17.⁹ These costs are projected and are subject to revision as new information becomes available.

C. Preliminary Revenue Projections Associated with a Unified School District

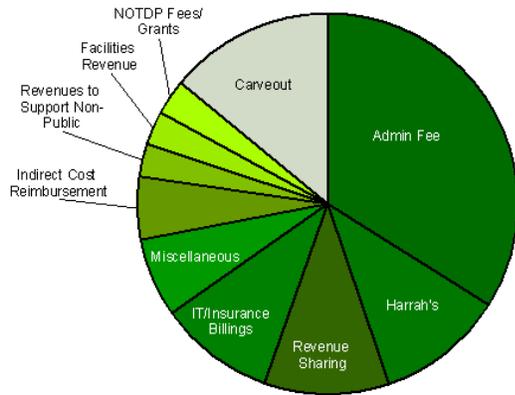
According to current draft estimates the revenue available to support a unified system (aside from the revenues flowing directly to schools and school operators) is an estimated \$22.5 million on an annual basis, after combining both the RSD and OPSB budgets. Roughly one-third of these funds will come from the administration fee that the district collects for each student. This fee varies from 1.75% to 2% depending on whether the charter school is in OPSB’s LEA or not. Additionally, a 2% fee is held back from the direct-run schools to fund systemwide functions for network schools.¹⁰ The remainder is primarily sourced from a variety of federal, state, and local funds that are allocated for specific uses and in some cases are legally or statutorily tied to certain obligations. A summary of these revenues can be found in Figure 5.

⁹ This excludes the network office portion of the OPSB’s central office.

¹⁰ Though the network schools’ finances are unimpacted by unification and are not detailed in this document, it is worth noting that OPSB has initiated a process to move additional levels of financial responsibility to those schools. To that end, OPSB will collect the 2% administration fee just as it does for other charter schools in its LEA along with an additional “chargeback” fee to provide supports and services to schools in similar ways that a CMO central office would provide services to its charter schools.

Figure 5

Estimated Annual Revenue to Support a Unified Central Office
Based on Current FY17 Estimates



Sources of Revenue	%
Admin Fee: Includes the 1.75% or 2% of per pupil funding collected from each student, including charter and network (direct-run) schools	36%
Harrah's Community Support Grants Program: City council funds aimed to provide grant support projects that support well-being and development of the local community and are primarily directed to the NOTDP, YOC, and facilities	11%
Revenue Sharing: Legislatively appropriated funds primarily directed to the CENF and youth in secure care	11%
IT/Insurance Billings: Direct billings for property insurance, flood insurance, and certain IT costs for some charter schools in OPSB's LEA	9%
Indirect Cost Reimbursement: Costs to process efforts related to federal funds/grants	6%
Revenue to support Non-Public: New funding to support non-public students through differentiated funding law	3%
Facilities Revenue: Act 543 implemented a facilities program that awards \$15 per pupil directed towards facilities	3%
NOTDP Fees/Grants: Fees earned and grants related to the running of the Therapeutic Day Program	3%
Carveout: Reimbursed for <i>specific</i> legacy and Hurricane Katrina related costs that will decline as those costs decrease	14%

D. Cost Efficiencies

Initial estimates suggest that combining the overlapping functions in the OPSB and RSD could produce \$800,000-\$1,200,000 in savings. By conducting a thorough financial analysis of the OPSB and RSD, OPSB will continue to examine all cost efficiencies and other areas for savings. This analysis will continue throughout the unification process in order to ensure that a unified school district operates in a way that is financially sound and sustainable over time. The final plan will include additional information

V. Policy and Operational Decisions

In order to ensure a smooth and successful unification, it is imperative that OPSB make many key decisions around its policies and operations. With the input of the community, the RSD, and other stakeholders, OPSB will determine how and when these decisions will be made. The following pages consist of an initial breakout of decisions that must be made throughout the unification process.

Authorization, Accountability, and Planning

I. Clarify key aspects of Act 91 in OPSB Policy

December 2016

- a. Align roles of Superintendent and School Board in authorization, accountability and portfolio planning to statutory requirements.

Information regarding authorization, accountability, and portfolio planning should be transparent and accessible to parents, school leaders and every member of the community; a clear process for authorization needs to be maintained by the OPSB to ensure that the process is unbiased and consistent. This process should include clear expectations and benchmarking for schools and school leaders. In the longer term, the administrative policies need to address authorization and accountability standards that will be developed through the unification process. Act 91 has outlined that the Superintendent can present recommendations to the School Board regarding school openings, renewals, and closures with the School Board possessing the authority to overturn the decision with a two-thirds vote at the Board meeting following the superintendent's decision.

- b. Define the structure of school intervention and the role of the Superintendent and School Board.

OPSB must define the circumstances when it will intervene in schools and develop a clear step by step process that includes expectations of OPSB and the school during intervention periods. It must determine the scenarios where intervention is mandated. The policy needs to ensure that schools understand when they may be considered for intervention. Examples of reasons for intervention include: financial mismanagement, failure to provide federally mandated services to high-need populations, or failure to provide quality academic programs. The initial steps taken by OPSB to help schools identify potential areas of concern should be clearly outlined and the process for intervention must be clear and include the steps schools should take to remedy deficiencies.

- c. Define the policy regarding test monitoring as part of the authorization process.

Act 91 requires third-party test monitoring starting July 1, 2017 for schools in the year before they are up for renewal. OPSB needs to define its role in coordinating and approving third-party test monitoring for not only its network schools but for separate LEAs as well. OPSB must set expectations and accountability measures for third-party monitors that are transparent to both the partner organizations and schools employing these monitors, and they must determine the

test monitoring requirements and expectations of each LEA to ensure a fair testing process and accurate school performance data.

II. Finalize a common language for charter operating agreements

2016

- a. Create a common language for charter operating agreements as outlined in Act 91, including considerations for whether enrollment percentages, caps, and school individualization will be included in agreements or separate administrative policy.

As required in Act 91, the district needs to develop a common language and structure for charter operating agreements going forward. This is a high priority as many schools in both districts are up for renewals over the next two years and it is vital that the language of these renewals is identical across all schools. This common language needs to include all aspects of Act 91 such as enrollment caps on CMOS, required participation in enrollment and expulsion process, “good standing” exemptions, and guidelines for individualization of agreements. The language of these agreements needs to be clear on which aspects are applicable to schools in OPSB’s LEA compared to schools that are not in OPSB’s LEA. OPSB should also determine additional common language to be added to charter agreements and aspects of charter agreements that allow for individualization.

- b. Align on a variety of authorization standards between RSD and OPSB, including term length.

OPSB will finalize standards to ensure that charter authorization is a transparent process for new charter operators. Examples of these standards include: term length, academic requirements, support structures, transition process from approval to opening day, and accountability benchmarking. OPSB should also provide a clear process and expectations that will allow for improved planning, a smoother transition, and higher expectations for new schools. Developing clear authorization standards will help support the portfolio planning process for OPSB in the long-term by ensuring a clear development path for new, innovative schools that will serve New Orleans’ students.

- c. Determine what (if any) modifications or differentiated support/review systems are required for alternative schools or single site charters.

OPSB will engage with charter leaders including alternative school leaders and single site charters to determine the needs and challenges of these schools. OPSB will determine if there needs to be any revisions to the authorization standards, performance frameworks, and accountability processes to ensure that the student populations at these schools are being treated equitably and schools are being judged fairly. Additionally, OPSB will work with schools to identify supports and resources that will aid in helping alternative schools reach high expectations instead of lowering the expectations for them. OPSB will determine a process between RSD and OPSB for high-stakes evaluations and authorizations during the transition period to ensure that schools are reaching consistent expectations and are being evaluated in an equitable way across the two districts which will lead to easier transitions for schools.

III. Support schools in understanding their decision regarding independent LEA status

2017

- a. Provide clear information to current OPSB schools about roles and responsibilities of LEA status and the implications of their decision on school finances, operations, and reporting as defined by BESE and Act 91.

The Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will be making a number of policy decisions regarding LEA status in the fall of 2016. Following these decisions, OPSB will need to adopt local policies and processes aligned to these state-level regulations. As schools prepare to request to become their own LEA or remain under the OPSB LEA, it is vital that schools leaders have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of an LEA including the length of LEA terms. The School Board needs to define when they would not grant the request for schools to be their own LEA. This information should include a clear explanation of the current benefits and obligations that schools in the OPSB LEA should expect to encounter. OPSB should also clarify which services would still be available to these schools should they choose to switch to their own LEA and what form the services would take, including whether they would be fee-for-service.

IV. Adopt policies and frameworks that define OPSB’s long-term approach to portfolio management

2017-2018

- a. Update the school performance framework to incorporate the state’s adjustment to the ESSA, and determine if any other changes are needed to ensure high standards for all schools and students.

Updating and improving a performance framework requires local input as well as more information from the state regarding the development of their growth formula. The letter grade school accountability system that BESE is finalizing will be in place for the 2018-19 school year, but the OPSB’s goal is to roll out the new system at the end of the 2016-17 school year. The new letter grade accountability system incorporates growth measures and an alteration of the current grading formula to more equitably judge schools. The process to improve the existing framework will require engagement of the local community and school leaders to ensure creation of robust requirements that ensure equity for all students and schools. OPSB must determine the form of the local engagement. Additionally, OPSB must consolidate all of the district’s data collection, analysis, and reporting systems while building a clear structure for the implementation of the framework. The performance framework should include considerations of equity and other measures in addition academic performance.

Policies must be put in place that address long-term OPSB approach to managing excess capacity, defining enrollment targets and caps, and promoting ongoing diversity and innovation in the system’s portfolio. Clear policies should be developed around academic performance, student enrollment targeting, and accountability. Building utilization rates should consider both the student population and facility utilization as part of enrollment targeting. The policy should define a cycle for determining capacity, creating enrollment targets, and defining expectations of utilization. Additionally, to ensure that the portfolio management process incorporates stakeholder input and concerns, the district will consider a mechanism for feedback from school

leaders and other stakeholders. It is important to define this policy to ensure the long-term health of OPSB and fair treatment of schools going forward.

V. Define a process for building utilization as it relates to enrollment capacity

- a. OPSB should develop a strategy around building utilization to maximize enrollment capacity. This process should include enrollment targeting, long-term planning, and coordinating. Portfolio planning needs to include a process for setting enrollment targets and capacity within all schools.

Facilities

I. Provide a clear inventory and framework for the transition of all facilities

- a. Develop an inventory of facilities (and their content) and a clear timeline of when facilities will be transferred to OPSB. **December 2016**

OPSB and the RSD should continue the inventory process that is already underway and should include content inside of buildings that are being transitioned to OPSB and other movable inventory not owned by charters. The timeline should include consideration of buildings under construction or with planned construction and their scheduled return to OPSB. The timeline should also include initial steps OPSB must take when taking control of buildings to ensure they are suitable for use under OPSB standards.

- b. Refine existing policy around the sale and access to surplus or vacant School Board facilities. **2017-2018**

OPSB should clarify the decision-making process on vacant buildings and which buildings will be sold and which buildings will be repurposed. This policy should include who will drive this process – facility, operations, finance, the Superintendent, or the School Board. The OPSB must also determine a process to consider the high cost of maintaining vacant buildings versus potential future needs of schools within OPSB district and determine a process that is fair to both to the district and schools who are interested in purchasing an OPSB owned building.

- c. Clarify policy regarding privately-owned buildings and OPSB’s role in overseeing private buildings. **2017-2018**

OPSB should define its role in the oversight of operator owned buildings of schools that exist within the district. Private buildings are currently not included in facility plans, but OPSB has the responsibility to ensure safety of all students in the district. OPSB should determine if it will be in charge of maintenance standards and annual review of buildings for private facilities. OPSB should engage facility decision-makers and school leaders to determine the best approach for to take with privately-owned buildings.

- d. Establish clear maintenance standards for all facilities within OPSB oversight. **2017-2018**

OPSB should revise the Charter Facility Preventative Maintenance Policy to clearly outline all maintenance expectations and clarify maintenance standards in order to provide school

operators with a clearer picture of expectations. These standards should address various areas of maintenance including cleaning, repair, HVAC, termites, fire safety etc. A set of strong maintenance standards that establishes clear service requirements, expectations of facility upkeep, and preventative maintenance will help schools avoid more expensive issues down the road.

II. Create clear and consistent policies for financial management of facilities **2017-2018**

- a. Determine lease language and billing model for schools when they are transferred to OPSB.

December 2017

OPSB should develop standard lease language that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the tenants of OPSB buildings. This policy should outline the billing model for schools and include a process to ensure that tenants are prepared financially to support the insurance, maintenance, and repair costs of the building in the long-term. OPSB recently changed the policy regarding expectations and requirements of tenants and should incorporate the adjustments in facility oversight. This is a key step as buildings transition over to the OPSB.

- b. Establish minimum insuring standards and general insurance policy for schools in order to ensure that all buildings have adequate coverage.

2017-2018

OPSB will provide guidance to RSD schools entering OPSB on purchasing insurance as prices are likely higher compared to what RSD schools are currently paying. Insurance has been recognized as a main concern of RSD school leaders as their property insurance costs will rise. OPSB should include an insurance billing model as part of any policy decision as there are multiple options available for the district/schools. OPSB should determine a process for letting properties out for bid in order to minimize expenses while maximizing coverage. Policy needs to establish minimum insurance requirements for schools keeping in mind that some schools own their own building. OPSB should determine the interim policy for schools transitioning to the OPSB next year and assemble a working group to start exploring the increasing insurance costs and potential solutions. There should also be a transparent process for procuring insurance for all facilities and the chargeback of insurance to schools including reissuing an RFP for insurance with a larger pool of facilities.

III. Lay the groundwork for the development of a long-term Master Facility Plan **2017-2018**

- a. Conduct a one-time assessment of school facilities to understand the range and level of needs that may exist across the city for facilities maintenance.

The assessment of all schools has general support from district leaders but is a large undertaking financially and operationally. The assessment will require resources and time to ensure that it is completed properly. A life-cycle assessment is an opportunity to start developing the long-term facility master plan as it will allow for identification of future projects and potential maintenance issues in each building.

- b. Develop policies and standards for creating and managing the revolving loan fund, the type of projects that will qualify for funds, and the prioritization and distribution of funds.

OPSB must also develop a structure around accessing funds over the interim period and after the transition to ensure equitable and appropriate use of the funds. This should include restrictions on what the money can be used for in terms of repairs and long-term construction projects versus high upkeep costs. The policy will protect the long-term fund balance while ensuring long-term health of school facilities by prioritizing projects and ensuring equitable use of funds.

- c. Communicate to schools how and when funds will be available for use.

OPSB must ensure that schools and school leaders have a clear understanding of funds that are available for their use, and what these funds can be used for to ensure that funds are being used according to policy.

- d. Aim to secure long-term funds for renovations and other facilities issues that are not covered under the Facilities Maintenance Fund

Renewing the millage last year provided short-term funding to the Facilities Maintenance Fund and should provide funding through 2024. A long-term policy needs to include a plan to secure a new form of funding for the renovations that are needed post-2024.

Systemwide Services and Resources

- I. Develop clear processes for transition of EnrollNOLA **December 2016**

- a. Clarify specific and more detailed transition plan for all aspects of EnrollNOLA.

OPSB should determine the timing and process for transitioning the entire EnrollNOLA function over to OPSB. Consideration should be given to the financial implications of sequencing the transition, and the organizational and financial capacity of OPSB to support these functions. Further, OPSB should determine a policy around the Superintendent and the Board's role in EnrollNOLA and what, if any, changes should be made to the current operation. OPSB should also develop a structure for creating enrollment policy, addressing enrollment preferences, and how changes can be made to the EnrollNOLA system and operations. This policy should be finalized around a variety of potential provisions to EnrollNOLA process as outlined in Act 91.

- II. Identify OPSB's role in providing, supporting, or coordinating citywide services **2017-2018**

- a. Define/clarify which systemwide services and resources OPSB will provide that are paid for within expected revenues and the level of resources devoted to each.
- b. Identify whether any additional services and resources could be provided centrally on a fee-for-service basis for interested schools.

OPSB needs to define what services the 2% admin fee will include through revenue and cost analysis. This analysis should consider any changes in the resources needed to provide these

services under a unified district and the impact of these changes. OPSB needs to clarify which services and resources are outside of the admin fee but part of separate funding streams and will continue to function. Examples of these programs including: Harrah's funding for the Youth Opportunity Center and state revenue sharing that supports the Youth Study Center. OPSB should highlight the desired outcomes for the most at-risk students in the system who may benefit from additional services/support.

OPSB should also explore opportunities to provide shared services beyond the 2% admin fee that could be accessed by schools on a fee-for service basis. OPSB could aggregate these services and take advantage of economies of scale to offer lower costs for district schools that opt to use these services. In order to do this OPSB should determine needs of schools since some CMOs organize services on their own. Transportation has been a major concern for task forces and should be considered in the planning process.

OPSB should evaluate vendor contract agreements and potential for adjustments in the future. Currently, vendors support enrollment processes and a variety of other systemwide services. In order to prevent the delay of program transitions, these vendor contracts should be considered in the planning process.

- c. Identify areas where non-profit partners can take the lead in service provision and define whether/how OPSB seeks to play a coordination and oversight role amongst these organizations to ensure schools' access to high-quality services.

Unification offers an opportunity for OPSB to become a coordinator of partnerships who can take the lead on providing particular services. OPSB should determine the feasibility of taking on this role and if it can build this function into its current structure. OPSB should identify partner organizations that can provide high-quality services to schools and develop a coordination structure including a channel through which schools and partners can connect. This will require the creation of a policy for monitoring partners to ensure high quality and effective partnerships to guarantee that schools are partnering with organizations that help them achieve their desired goal. This policy should ensure equitable use of resources throughout the district.

- d. OPSB will assess and develop services and support for youth who are court involved.

As part of its commitment to equity, OPSB will continue to provide high quality programs for youth who are court involved. It will work with service providers to ensure that this population is receiving high quality education services and is prepared to transition back into the student population.

- e. Develop a plan for transition of Youth Opportunity Center.

OPSB should determine how YOC relates to the enrollment process and within OPSB. OPSB needs to work with YOC leaders to develop a transition timeline and determine long-term status of YOC employees and operations. Consideration should also be given to a transition's impact on the Harrah's CEA and how these funds will support the YOC as a part of OPSB.

- f. Ensure the continued success of the Therapeutic Day Program by clarifying future status within the New Orleans community.

OPSB should determine the governance structure for NOTDP going forward and what OPSB's oversight role will look like. Additional consideration should be given to how the NOTDP status impacts CEA funding and grant support and resources that NOTDP needs going forward.

- g. Develop a process for OPSB to address new pain points and challenges that face New Orleans schools through direct development or facilitation of new programs.

This process should explore how OPSB responds to emerging challenges for schools and students that currently exist, as well as those that will arise in the future. This has been done successfully in the past with both the YOC and NOTDP. OPSB needs to determine who is responsible for identifying these district-wide problems. OPSB needs to be pro-active about potential problems and should develop a process for community leaders to express their concerns to OPSB. This clear process will allow for a more timely response to challenges.

- h. Address issues of the current CEA between the RSD and OPSB to account for unification.

December 2016

The OPSB and the RSD need to re-negotiate its current CEA and determine where CEA funding goes depending on status of different functions (YOC, YSC, NOTDP). There is the potential to develop a structure between RSD and OPSB to ensure that funding goes where it is needed through transition period. A timeline of transitions of functions will be needed to ensure that CEA funding changes can be pre-determined.

III. Clarify OPSB's role and policy for ensuring equity for all students

2017-2018

- a. Clarify role of OPSB in establishing procedures and programs to address special education and ELL students' needs.

Currently each Type 5 charter school is its own LEA and is held responsible for providing required services for any student who is assigned to their school. OPSB should determine who is responsible for oversight going forward and should ensure that the process is fair and equitable for all school types (single charter, CMO, network schools). In order to comply with Federal law and serve students well, it is vital that all special education students are receiving the services they need. This policy should consider reporting requirements developed in Act 91 and data aggregation issues and should clarify monitoring process of special education/ELL programs and its connection to authorization and accountability. Additionally, OPSB needs to determine where Child Search and ECS fit going forward since ECS has historically been a special education office separate from the authorization entity.

- b. Develop a policy of oversight and analysis that includes reviewing and monitoring school data and programs to ensure equity for all students.

Challenges have been incurred aggregating district wide special education, ELL, and student demographic data due to privacy laws and inadequate systems to collect and aggregate data. Since OPSB will take on a monitoring and oversight role, access to student data is required in order to ensure that all students are being served appropriately. This ensures that schools are held accountable for special education and ELL mandates. OPSB needs to work with LEAs and the state to create a policy for accessing data that would not violate privacy laws but provides access to the necessary data.

IV. Establish a policy for the ongoing management of differentiated funding

2017-2018

- a. Finalize the policy for differentiated funding, and the process for adjusting the formula, taking into account legal resolution.

Per Act 91, the adopted differentiated funding formula needs to be implemented providing equitable funds for schools serving high-needs student populations as part of the MFP. A policy to make future changes to the formula needs to be developed to ensure long-term equitable distribution of MFP. OPSB should clarify who determines what changes need to be made. The policy should address timing of the MFP formula review and revisions – annual, bi-annual or up to the discretion of the School Board. The policy should also address which funds outside of MFP may be allocating utilizing the adopted differentiated formula (e.g. deferred revenue, federal Title funds via ESSA waiver process).

Overall Operations

I. Clarify HR transition policies for any RSD employees who transition to OPSB **2016**

- a. Determine process around the transition of RSD employees to OPSB and begin to make key decisions around changes that may occur for employees transferring.

OPSB will begin to examine current salary, benefits and responsibilities of RSD employees who may transition to OPSB. Ongoing process will include the financial analysis required to determine if any changes can or need to be made to current compensation packages to fit into budget. OPSB should examine timing of transfer for each employee, and option to divide employee's time between the RSD and OPSB during the transition period in order to avoid overlapping functions or duplicate efforts. OPSB should identify transition leaders to work to recruit and onboard RSD personnel.

- b. Review retirement system obligations and other fringe benefits in the context of the district's overall financial stability, and as required by Act 91.

As RSD employees transition to the OPSB, there will be a large increase in the number of OPSB employees which means there will be an increase in the retirement benefits expense for OPSB. The OPSB should determine options for effectively managing increased expenses and providing stable retirement benefits as required by Act 91. Currently, OPSB employees are mandated to participate in Teacher Retirement System of Louisiana which is different from the current RSD retirement system.

II. Outline when each function will transition between now and July 2018 **December 2016**

- a. Determine the interim steps and who will be coordinating the transition of particular functions.

The transition of functions will take substantial time and a timeline should focus on broader deadlines to determine which functions are transitioning in their present form and which functions will transfer in a differing form. It is important to consider which functions can transition most easily, and which are most vital to establish at OPSB well before the unification officially occurs. Additionally, OPSB should conduct financial analysis to find synergies which may delay or accelerate the transition of certain functions. Roles will change within both organizations creating a need for responsibility and organizational structure changes.

III. Define mechanism for OPSB and RSD to share financial resources **December 2016**

- a. Ensure that each organization remains viable through the transition period (given uncertainty in the pace of school return and school status).
- b. Determine a plan to ensure financial stability, as required by Act 91.

In order to maintain financial solvency through unification, OPSB needs to create a mechanism to cover costs associated with unification. These costs include the addition of unification

focused staff, the transition of functions from the RSD to the OPSB, and one-time costs associated with additional schools joining OPSB. As a plan for the transition of RSD functions to OPSB is determined, additional consideration should be given to the impact the transition will have on finances.

IV. Ensure access to required data

December 2016

- a. Work with the state department and RSD to ensure OPSB has access to historical and current student and school data required to perform authorizing and oversight functions.

OPSB should determine what types of data OPSB needs and who currently controls access to that data. Examples of data needed include: Student demographics, high need populations and services, enrollment data, student transfer and tracking data. OPSB should coordinate with State/RSD to receive access to that data and determine which level of access is needed going forward to maintain evaluation and analysis capabilities in the long-term. This process should include the level of access to data for schools in OPSB's LEA, direct-run schools, and CMOs.

V. Establish a process for the development of administrative processes and procedures

2017-2018

- a. Define the process for the development of administrative processes and procedures across key areas and for managing changes to these processes in the future.

Unification will present unforeseen challenges for OPSB in the future and it is imperative that a process is in place that allows OPSB to identify problems and quickly address them through policy. By defining this process, OPSB will be able to nimbly address issues as they arise. A key part of this process will be the engagement of school and community leaders. OPSB will consider the development of formal mechanisms that will include school leaders and community stakeholders in the policymaking process, including a school leader advisory council.

Appendix

Key Terms

At-Risk Students: As defined by Louisiana law, an at-risk pupil is any student who participates in the free or reduced price lunch program, has been identified as an exceptional child (not including gifted and/or talented), is the mother or father of a child, or has exhibited any of a variety of academic risk factors including: withdrawing from school, failing of exams required for graduation, or is significantly below grade level in reading.

CMO: Charter Management Organizations are nonprofit entities that manage two or more charter schools; many of the charter schools in New Orleans are part of a CMO

ELL: English Language Learner; an individual who is in the process of actively acquiring the English language

EnrollNOLA: Common Enrollment System that facilitates school choice for families by managing the application process and admission of students to over 90% of the schools in New Orleans; it also manages readmissions and transfers of students

ESSA: Every Student Succeeds Act; Federal law passed in 2015

IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; Federal law that ensures children with disabilities have the opportunity to receive a free and appropriate public education

IEP: Individualized Education Program; a written statement of an education program designed to meet a child's individual needs; often used in Special Education

Jump Start: Louisiana's career and technical education (CTE) program for high schools

LEA: Local Educational Agency; a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a State for administrative control or direction of a school or schools

MFP: Minimum Foundation Program; Louisiana's formula to equitably allocate funding for education to school districts

NOTDP: New Orleans Therapeutic Day Program; joint collaboration between the Recovery School District, Orleans Parish School Board, and Tulane Medical School's Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. NOTDP is a separate setting serving RSD and OPSB students with the most severe diagnosed behavioral health disabilities in grades K-8

OPSB: The Orleans Parish School Board; this refers to the district's central office

RSD: The Recovery School District

School Board: This refers specifically to the locally elected members who serve as the constitutional governing authority of Orleans Parish

YOC: Youth Opportunity Center; a joint initiative of the Orleans Parish School Board and the Recovery School District. The YOC serves as the citywide safety net for students at-risk of disengaging from and dropping out of school

Youth Study Center: the juvenile detention center for Orleans Parish administered by the city of New Orleans with education services administered by OPSB

Charter School Types: The document references 4 different types of Charter Schools in New Orleans:

Type 1	New-start charter schools approved by a local school board
Type 3	Conversions of existing public schools, approved by a local school board
Type 3B	Former Type 5 charter schools that are transferred back to the local school board
Type 5	Recovery School District charter schools