

THE RETURN MODEL

**A New Approach to Governance
for Public Schools in New Orleans**

Acknowledgements

The Return Model was developed by a group of school, community, parent, civic and business leaders with an informed interest in public education. They brought different perspectives and experiences to the table, and each of them committed time to studying and thoughtfully considering the issues facing New Orleans public schools. The goal was to develop a governance model that would best serve the needs of students and schools.

Educate Now! would like to thank all members of the Task Force for their participation. While the governance model outlined in these pages benefited from the input of every Task Force member, participation should not imply that any member, or his or her organization, endorses the Return Model.

Governance Framework Task Force

Jay Altman
Co-Founder and CEO, FirstLine Schools

Erin Bendily
Governor's Education Policy Advisor

Cherylyn Branche
Principal, Benjamin Banneker Elementary and Middle School

Hal Brown
Board of Directors, New Orleans College Prep

Deirdre Johnson Burel
Executive Director, Orleans Public Education Network

Larry Carter
President, United Teachers of New Orleans (UTNO)

Sharon Clark
Principal, Sophie B. Wright Charter School

Michael Cowan
Executive Director, Common Good

Penny Dastugue
President, Louisiana Board of Elementary & Secondary Education

Michelle Douglas
Principal, Hynes Charter School

Ruthie Frierson
Founder and Chairman, Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans

Sean Gallagher
Executive Director, Akili Academy of New Orleans

Mary Haynes
Principal, Mary McLeod Bethune School

Doris Hicks
Principal, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Charter School

Janet Howard
President, Bureau of Governmental Research

Leslie Jacobs
Founder, Educate Now!

Kira Orange Jones
Executive Director, Teach for America, New Orleans

Mary Joseph
Relief Project Director, Children's Defense Fund

Kathy Kilgore
Executive Director, The SUNS Center (Serving the Unique Needs of Students)

Woody Koppel
President, Orleans Parish School Board

Mickey Landry
Head of School, Lafayette Academy Charter School

Jay Lapeyre
Past President, New Orleans Business Council

Rayne Martin
Chief of Innovation, Louisiana Department of Education

Erika McConduit
Executive Vice President, The Urban League of Greater New Orleans

Chris Meyer
Special Advisor to the Superintendent,
Louisiana Department of Education

Tony Recasner
CEO, Agenda for Children
Vice Chairman, Greater New Orleans Foundation

Nash Molpus
Associate Director, Cowen Institute

Kathy Riedlinger
CEO, Lusher Charter School

Ron Nabonne
Board Member, The Dryades Street Public
Policy Group

Nolan Rollins
President, The Urban League of Greater New Orleans

Kathleen Padian
Founder, New Orleans School Facility Project

Caroline Roemer Shirley
Executive Director, Louisiana Association of Public
Charter Schools

Andre Perry
Associate Director, Loyola University
Institute for Quality and Equity in Education

Brooke Smith
Director of Strategic Partnerships, City of New Orleans

Karen Carter Peterson
State Senator, District 5

Andrea Thomas-Reynolds
CEO, Algiers Charter Schools Association

Aesha Rasheed
Director and Founder, New Orleans Parent
Organizing Network

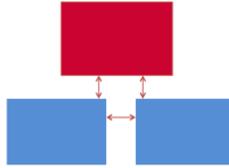
Sarah Usdin
Founder and CEO, New Schools for New Orleans

Educate Now! would also like to acknowledge and thank the following individuals who provided tremendous technical expertise and support for this effort:

Greg Richmond
President and CEO, National Association of Charter School Authorizers

Jim Peyser
Managing Director, New Schools Venture Fund

Sally Upham Hays
Consultant, The Crescent Group



THE RETURN MODEL

A New Approach to Governance for Public Schools in New Orleans

Executive Summary

In the years since Hurricane Katrina, public education in New Orleans has made improvements that were almost unimaginable before the storm. Test scores are up, graduation rates are higher and New Orleans students are closing the achievement gap with their peers in the rest of the state.¹ Yet, the system within which these improvements have occurred is temporary, established by the Legislature as an interim measure.

Currently there are two entities responsible for governing public schools in New Orleans: the Orleans Parish School Board and the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, through the state's Recovery School District. Both entities charter schools, operate traditional, direct-run schools and allocate resources among schools.

Unlike anywhere else in the country, the majority of schools in New Orleans are charter schools, with more than 70% of students attending a charter school.

In 2010, the non-profit Educate Now! convened a task force to discuss future, long-term governance alternatives for New Orleans public schools. In a series of meetings over several months, the members of the Task Force considered how to sustain the academic progress that has occurred since 2005 within a coherent, enduring system that restores local control of public education.

The Task Force first developed a vision for governance and the principles that any governance model should embody. It next identified the functions that government must perform in New Orleans' unique, decentralized system of schools. Finally, the Task Force studied a variety of governance options, including returning schools to a traditional school board, as well as various ways of allocating responsibilities among two or more entities. It assessed each option based on its potential to achieve the vision of what good governance should provide while adhering to the agreed upon set of principles. The Return Model was developed as a result of these deliberations.

If implemented, the Return Model would:

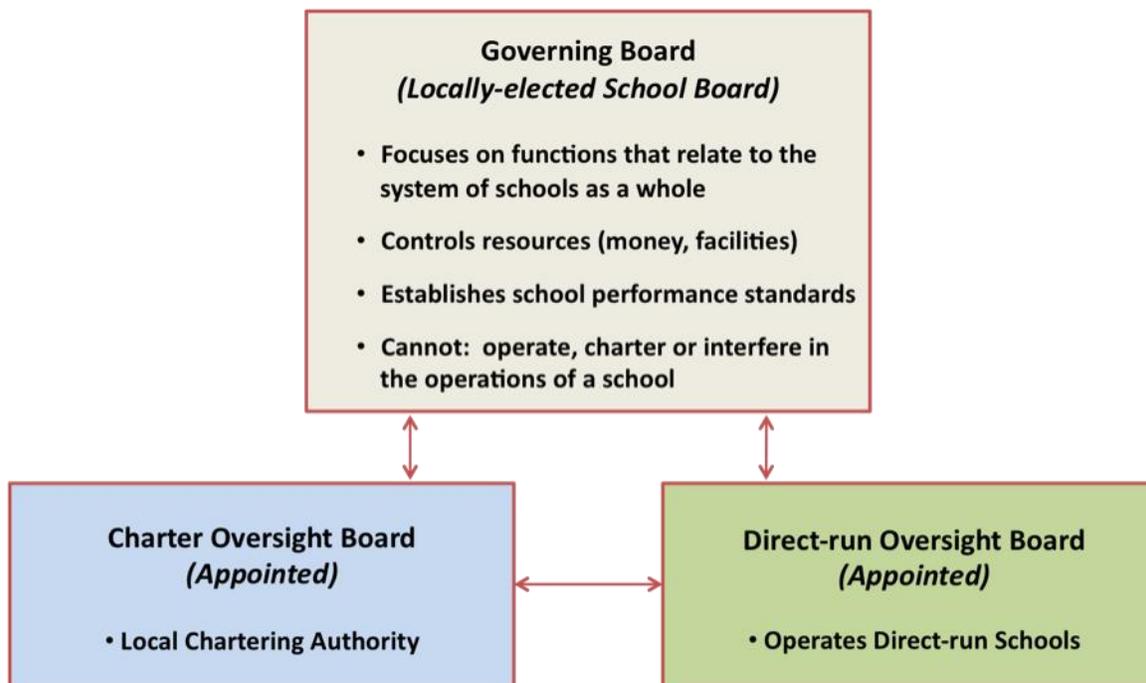
- Restore overarching political authority for all Orleans Parish public schools to a governing board elected by the citizens of New Orleans
- Return to local control the portfolio of public schools that, since Hurricane Katrina, has been managed by the state through its Recovery School District

¹ For information on gains in student academic performance see 1) the Louisiana Department of Education's March 2011 report "The Recovery School District - Louisiana's Turnaround Zone: Answering the Urgency of Now" and 2) Educate Now!'s analysis of the May 2011 test scores, which can be found at www.educatenow.net.

- Support the autonomy of charter schools, now the city’s dominant school type
- Provide the coordination necessary to serve the needs of all students
- Create a governance structure focused on quality schools

The Return Model differs sharply from the pre-Katrina approach to administering public education in New Orleans. Instead of vesting all power in a single board operating through a central office, a governance structure that failed to produce academically successful schools, the Return Model allots these powers and responsibilities among three interdependent boards:

- An elected Governing Board would have overarching responsibility for the school system as a whole and would be responsible for managing the system’s finances and school facilities, planning for the system as a whole, developing standards and policies for matters with system-wide implications, including school quality, and providing the coordination necessary to serve the needs of all students and the public. The Governing Board would be the Orleans Parish School Board with a redesigned and more clearly articulated scope of authority and responsibility.
- An appointed Direct-run Oversight Board would oversee the operation of all non-charter schools, whether currently managed by the Recovery School District or the Orleans Parish School Board.
- An appointed Charter Oversight Board would authorize and monitor the performance of charter schools.



In the Return Model, this division of powers would be accompanied by a system of checks and balances and specific measures to foster coordination and communication when appropriate.

Why this model versus a single board? There are a number of reasons:

- The key reason is to avoid the inherent conflict of interest built into a system in which a single board directly manages some schools, is responsible for chartering schools that will compete with these directly-run schools, and then must fairly set policy and allocate

resources between the schools it directly operates and its charters. It is like asking a coach to fairly referee a game his team is playing.

This structure avoids favoritism and conflicts of interest in the allocation of resources, including both money and facilities by separating resource management from the businesses of running individual schools or authorizing charters.

It also requires that the policies and rules set by the Governing Board apply equally to all schools- charter and direct-run.

- To protect school autonomy, the Return Model prohibits the Governing Board from getting involved in an individual school's budget, personnel, curriculum, salaries, school calendar, food service, transportation or contracts.
- To make certain all students are served equitably and inclusively, including students with disabilities and mid-year enrollees, the Governing Board would oversee the common enrollment process and have the power to enact needed policies to create a fair and transparent process.
- To keep the focus on creating and supporting quality, effective schools, each board would have explicit responsibilities and areas of accountability:
 - The Direct-run Oversight Board would be responsible for operating the direct-run schools well. It would not have another mission.
 - The Charter Oversight Board would be responsible for having high quality charter operators. It would not have another mission.
 - The Governing Board would be responsible for overall system performance. The Return Model gives autonomy to charter schools and the Direct-run Oversight Board. It is the Governing Board's responsibility to balance this autonomy with robust accountability that applies equally to charter and direct-run schools. The Governing Board would set minimum school performance standards and report on school performance. It would also have the power to require either Oversight Board to take corrective action when one of its schools is not meeting the standards and would have the option to close a poorly performing school or transfer it to the other Oversight Board.

This report presents the governance system that the Task Force developed. Not every detail is attended to, and Educate Now! expects and invites community debate that will further refine the model or build upon it to develop an even better alternative.

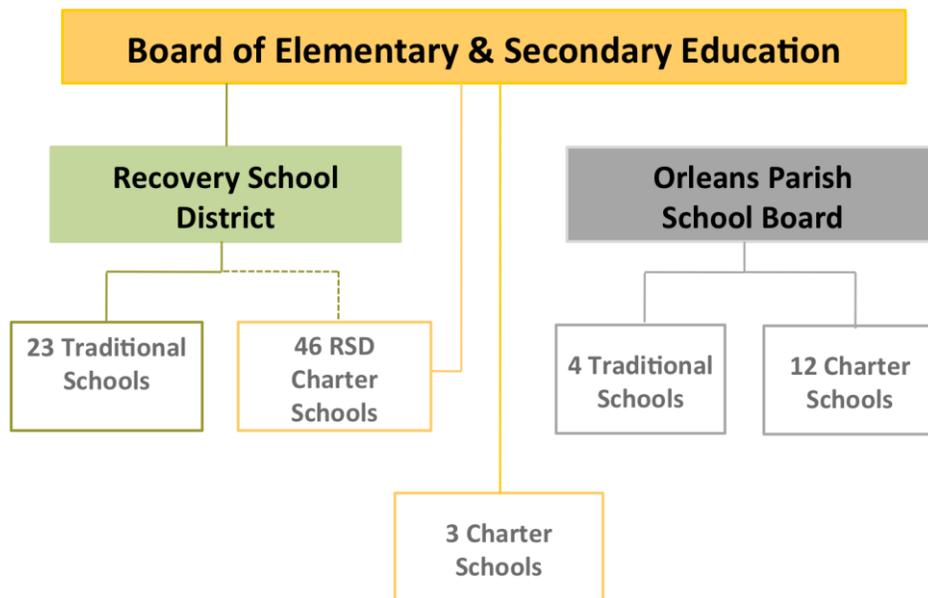
Background

The federal levee system failed in 2005, but even before Hurricane Katrina so had the city's public education system. The overwhelming majority of New Orleans schools were Academically Unacceptable, performing well below the state's minimum academic standards. Large numbers of students failed Louisiana's LEAP tests.

In 2005, the state took control of most public schools in Orleans Parish, transferring every school that was below the state average to the Recovery School District (RSD). This left the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) with a relatively small number of high-performing schools. Subsequently, both the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), acting through the RSD, and OPSB began to charter large numbers of independent public schools.

Today there are 88 public schools in Orleans Parish overseen by two separate governing bodies: OPSB and BESE. More than two-thirds of them are charter schools (61 charter vs. 27 traditional). Currently, 71% of students attend charter schools. And polls consistently show that charters enjoy strong public support.²

2010-11 Governance Structure for Public Schools in New Orleans



Why Talk About Governance?

Orleans Parish schools were broken before Katrina and discussions about the need for a new governance model predate the storm. Evidence from across the country suggested then and now that large urban school districts with traditional governance mechanisms do not do a good job creating and maintaining high-performing schools that serve large numbers of students from low-income families.

² The Cowen Institute "K-12 Public Education through the Public's Eye: A Survey of the New Orleans Community" November 2010 and the Council for a Better Louisiana (CABL) 2009 "Voter Poll on Post-Katrina and Public Education Issues."

The transfer of schools to the RSD was a short-term intervention to address the problems of failing schools. It was not meant to be, and did not provide, a long-term answer as to how New Orleans public schools should be governed. That question remains on the table.

Before Katrina, one entity – the OPSB – was responsible for virtually all facets of K-12 education. It controlled the facilities, handled the finances, established policies, set the curriculum, and controlled personnel decisions. Now, these responsibilities are spread among multiple entities, including the OPSB, the RSD and numerous charter school operators. Instead of a centrally controlled school system, New Orleans now has a hybrid system with both traditional and autonomous charter schools. It is a “system of schools” rather than a consolidated school system.

The traditional school board model of governance is simply not designed for this system of schools. Shoe-horning the new decentralized system into a framework designed for a highly centralized one would be unworkable. In fact, it could place the progress made to date at risk.

Recognizing the need for a governance structure that can meet the differing needs of both charter and traditional schools, the Task Force asked itself:

Now that we have autonomous charter schools as well as direct-run schools, and the majority of schools in New Orleans are autonomous charter schools, what do we need from school governance to ensure that this “system of schools” performs well, serves all students and is sustainable?

Vision and Principles

To help answer this question, the Task Force first came to an agreement on a vision of what good governance should embody:

New Orleans should have a system of local governance for public education that empowers and requires individual schools to excel and provides the coordination and fairness necessary to serve the needs of all students and the public.

The Task Force then identified the core principles that would guide it in its exploration of governance structures. These guiding principles included some widely accepted touchstones of good government, such as transparency, equity, adherence to standards and rules, accountability and continuous improvement.

The guiding principles also included some concepts specific to public education in today’s New Orleans. The Task Force agreed that the governance structure should:

- Promote quality, high-performing schools for all students
- Continue parents’ ability to choose among schools and school types
- Protect school autonomy, a proven catalyst for academic achievement, from burdensome rules and regulations as well as political pressure and meddling (Charter schools should retain authority for personnel decisions, salaries, budgets, curricula, calendars and scheduling.)

- Serve all students, including adjudicated youth, mid-year enrollees and those with special needs
- Promote fair treatment of both charter and directly operated schools

What Functions Must a New Governance Model Include?

The next step was to consider what model of governance would support the vision and principles.

The Task Force first identified and refined the functions that government must perform. It decided that the following key functions must be addressed by any future model of governance:

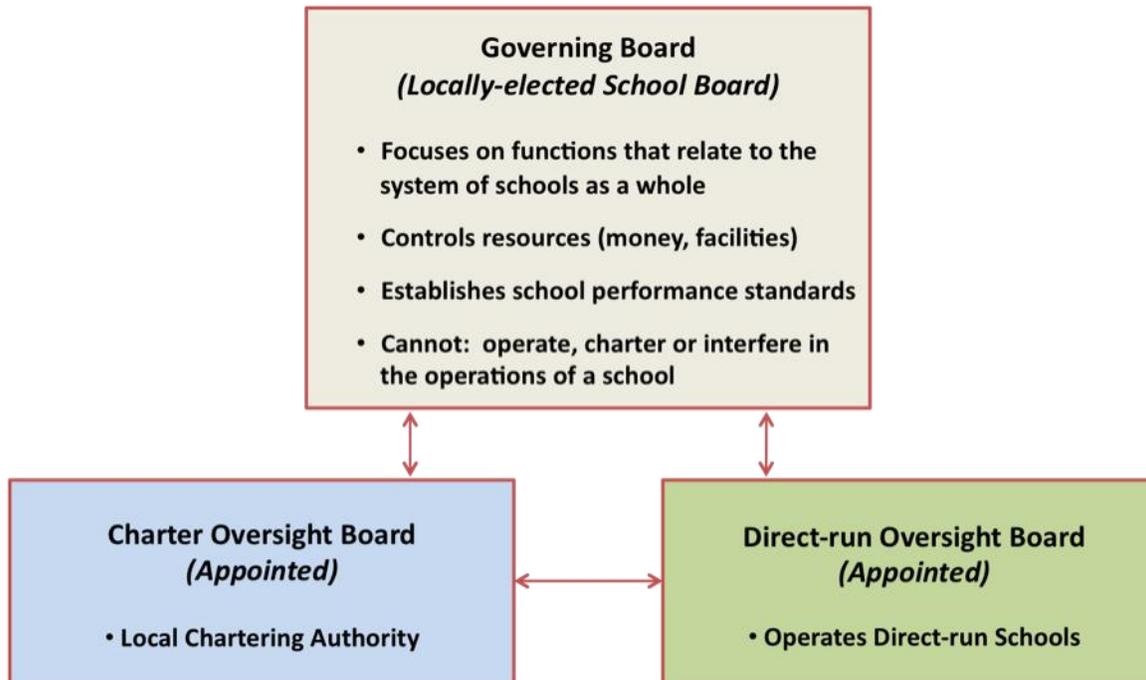
- **Operation of Direct-run Schools:** This includes hiring principals and staff, setting the curriculum and calendar, managing school support services (such as custodial work and transportation) and budgeting.
- **Charter Oversight:** This includes authorizing new charters, monitoring their performance, and renewing or, if necessary, revoking charters.
- **Facilities Management:** This includes implementing the School Facilities Master Plan and overseeing capital repair and maintenance, insurance and the assigning of buildings to schools.
- **Finances:** This includes raising and allocating the money for public education and monitoring system-wide fiscal health.
- **Serving All Students:** This includes enacting policies to ensure that all students are served equitably and inclusively, including students with disabilities and mid-year enrollees.
- **System-wide Planning:** This includes developing a shared data system to collect and monitor student data and to identify service gaps and needs. It also includes anticipating long-term needs and making long-term provision for the right number and types of schools.
- **System-wide Coordination and Communication:** In addition to the regular flow of information between individual schools and the families they serve, the public needs a centralized source of information about the system itself. The system must be able to interact in an official capacity with other government agencies and community leadership.

The Task Force then studied a variety of governance options for New Orleans' unique system of schools. It considered returning schools to a traditional school board as well as various ways of allocating responsibilities among two or more entities. It assessed each option based on its potential to achieve the vision of what good governance should provide while adhering to the agreed upon set of principles. The Return Model was developed as a result of these deliberations.

The Return Model is quite different from the pre-Katrina governance model. Instead of vesting all power in a single board operating through a central office, the Return Model allots these powers and responsibilities among three interdependent boards:

- An elected Governing Board would have overarching responsibility for the school system as a whole.
- An appointed Direct-run Oversight Board would operate and manage all non-charter schools.
- An appointed Charter Oversight Board would authorize and monitor the performance of charter schools.

Each board has a distinct set of responsibilities, as illustrated in the following graphic.



The Governing Board

The Governing Board is the Orleans Parish School Board with a redesigned and more clearly articulated scope of authority and responsibility. It would be responsible for the system of schools as a whole. It would manage the system's finances and school facilities, plan for the system as a whole, develop standards and policies for matters with system-wide implications, and provide the coordination necessary to serve the needs of all students and the public. Any policies enacted by the Governing Board would apply to all schools, whether charter or direct-run.

As the system's landlord, the Governing Board would implement the School Facilities Master Plan, a \$2 billion program over ten years, and it would be responsible for adopting and implementing policies related to managing and assigning school facilities.

As the system's finance manager, it would develop the formula to allocate local and state funds across schools and have taxing and bonding authority.

The Governing Board would establish performance standards for schools and have the right to require the appropriate Oversight Board to take action if one of its schools is not meeting these standards. It could also require that a low performing school be closed or moved to the other Oversight Board if it continues to fail.

The Governing Board would also oversee the common enrollment process for open-admission schools, and it would be responsible for enacting policies to ensure that all students are served equitably and inclusively, including students with disabilities and mid-year enrollees.

As the system's public voice, the Governing Board would provide parents and students with information on all schools, including their academic performance. It would represent the system in dealings with other government officials.

As the elected body, the Governing Board would focus on the system of schools – the big picture. It would be prohibited by law from getting involved in an individual school's budget, personnel, curriculum, salaries, school calendar, food service, transportation or contracts. It would not operate a school nor charter a school.

The Oversight Boards

The **Charter Oversight Board** would oversee all charter schools in New Orleans currently under the OPSB or in the Recovery School District. It would authorize new charters and renew, close down or reorganize failing charter schools. If requested, it could take over a distressed direct-run school and convert it to charter status.

The Charter Oversight Board would set financial standards for charter schools and monitor their compliance with applicable rules and policies.

It would not operate any school, charters being by law autonomous and self-administered.

The **Direct-run Oversight Board** would be responsible for the operation of all non-charter schools, including those currently run by the RSD and OPSB. In this respect, it would resemble a miniature version of a traditional school district, with a central office responsible for the budgeting, hiring, curriculum, calendar and support services for these schools.

The Direct-run Oversight Board would determine what, if any, decision-making authority might be delegated to individual school sites. It would be able to start new schools, and if requested, it could take over a distressed charter school and return it to direct-run status.

Board Composition

In discussing the exact composition of the three boards, the Task Force developed a framework, but purposefully left details for others to decide.

The Governing Board: The Task Force assumed all or a majority of the Governing Board would be elected, whether from individual districts or at large.

The two Oversight Boards: The Task Force assumed all or a majority of each Oversight Board would be appointed. The Task Force proposed a two-step appointment process, similar to the one used to select the post-Katrina levee boards:

Step 1: The law would designate who would comprise or appoint a Selection Committee – likely civic and governmental leadership.

Step 2: The Selection Committee would invite nominations and choose among them for the appointed positions. Members of the public could nominate anyone (including themselves) for consideration. The Selection Committee would be required to select

appointees who meet the qualifications outlined in the law. Examples of possible qualifications include: a parent, someone with financial expertise, a former school administrator, teacher or charter board member, someone living in each of the five council districts, etc.

Community Involvement and Input

The Governing Board and both Oversight Boards would be required to maintain a physical presence in Orleans Parish. They would be subject to the state's Open Meetings and Public Records laws and would be required to provide an opportunity for public comment as an agenda item at their meetings. Each board would be required to make decisions based on policies approved in an open process with opportunities for public participation.

Separation of Powers

The Return Model pivots on a key idea that distinguishes it from present practices: separation of powers.

There is an unavoidable conflict of interest built into a system in which a single board manages some schools, is responsible for chartering competing schools, and then must fairly allocate resources between the schools it directly oversees and its charters. It is like asking a coach to fairly referee a game his team is playing. Neither the RSD nor OPSB has consistently allocated resources fairly among all of their schools.

Placing these responsibilities in one entity is a recipe for tension, distrust and conflict. Separating these functions defuses this tension, supports fairness and equity and allows each board to have a clear focus and a greater likelihood of success. Most importantly, prohibiting the Governing Board from involving itself in the daily operations of schools, allows it to focus on the important, larger system-wide issues that have been neglected in the past: managing resources well, communicating with parents, the public and government officials, long-term planning, not allowing a school to continue to perform poorly year after year, and making certain all students are served.

Enacting System-wide Policies

The Governing Board would establish policies that relate to the system-wide functions for which it is responsible, such as facility assignment and enrollment. All Governing Board policies would apply to all schools, whether charter or direct-run.

The Task Force did not discuss the details of how the Oversight Boards would make policies pertaining to their schools, but it did stipulate that the Oversight Boards could not adopt any policy that conflicts with a policy established by the Governing Board.

The process for enacting Governing Board policies would be:

1. Any Board can recommend policy. If an Oversight Board objects to a proposal put forward by either the Governing Board or the other Oversight Board, a two-thirds majority of the Governing Board will be required to override that opposition.
2. If the two Oversight Boards come together behind a new policy or a policy change, it becomes policy unless a two-thirds majority of the Governing Board vetoes it.

To ensure that the Oversight Boards take the time to consider opportunities for coordination and collaboration, they will be required to hold joint meetings at least twice a year.

Additional information on the Return Model's process for enacting system-wide policies can be found in the flow chart in the Appendix.

Financial Oversight

The Governing Board would have ultimate authority over the system's fund balance and would manage its resources. It would have the power to intervene if either Oversight Board failed to comply with pre-established financial standards.

The Direct-run Oversight Board, in essence a mini school district, would be required to submit a balanced budget and regular financial reports to the Governing Board. It would be required to spend a designated percentage of its money on costs incurred at the schoolhouse level. It would be its own Local Education Authority (LEA).

The Charter Oversight Board would set financial rules for the charter schools (quarterly reports, balanced budget, annual audit, etc.) and monitor compliance. Each charter school would be its own LEA.

In accordance with current charter law, the Charter Oversight Board and the Governing Board would be limited to charging charter schools a combined fee of no more than 2% for administrative and governing functions. The Governing Board would also be limited to charging the Direct-run Oversight Board the same as the Charter Oversight Board.

Legislative Approval Required

Enacting the Return Model would require legislation. The new model would become effective the fiscal year following its enactment. If passed in 2012, it would take effect starting July 1, 2013.

Conclusion

New Orleans faces an extraordinary challenge. It needs to adopt a school governance model for a system comprised mostly of charters but that also includes traditional, direct-run schools. The Task Force studied a variety of governance options for this unusual configuration of schools. The Return Model is the result of a process that assessed each option based on its potential to achieve the vision of what good governance should provide while adhering to an agreed upon set of principles.

The Return Model recognizes that the New Orleans "system of schools" requires some entity responsible for attending to system-wide needs, such as ensuring all students are served. At the same time, because New Orleans has two very different types of schools, someone must be looking after their distinctive requirements.

While the Governing Board would maintain a system-wide view, each Oversight Board would be able to focus on and advocate for the specific needs of the schools under its control. This eliminates the conflict of interest and potential bias of having one governing body making decisions that could favor one kind of school over another. The autonomy of charter schools

will be better protected by their Oversight Board, and the different needs of direct-run schools will be the concern of their board.

The Return Model is designed to meet the needs of all students in a manner that is both equitable and fair.

The Return Model would:

- Provide for local control
- Promote equity in the allocation of resources by having the elected Governing Board be the resource manager
- Ensure coordination and reduce the risk of duplication of effort by clearly defining roles and responsibilities
- Foster cooperation by providing opportunities for the two Oversight Boards to work together on policies that serve their common interests
- Promote transparency in decision-making by having clear lines of authority and responsibility and by having policy decisions made by local boards
- Assign responsibility for system-wide functions such as interfacing with other governmental bodies, emergency response, and long-term planning
- Assign responsibility for providing information to and responding to the public;
- Protect the autonomy of charter schools
- Create a governance structure focused on quality schools

This is a unique governance model for a unique public school system. It is more complicated than the traditional model of a single school board working through a central office. Although returning schools to one board is uncomplicated, this model has not been successful nationally and does not meet the current needs of New Orleans public schools.

It is the hope of Educate Now! that continued discussions will further refine the Return Model and its interconnected three board structure. *Educate Now! welcomes your comments, suggestions for improvement or questions. Visit the Return Model page of our website to [post a comment](#).*

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

BESE has approved a plan for Orleans Parish schools. Why don't we just see how that works?

Under the plan approved by BESE, New Orleans will keep the current governance structure for at least five more years. The plan does allow for the transfer of individual RSD schools back to the OPSB if:

1. The school meets the required performance standard and votes to return to OPSB.
2. The OPSB successfully submits a plan to take back and turn around a failing school.

This plan remains in place unless new legislation is passed or BESE decides to amend its policy.

Continuing under the same governance structure we have now is an option. There are some inherent problems, however, including voter preference for local control and the confusion, conflict, and lack of coordination associated with having governing bodies with overlapping or redundant responsibilities.

Why not return to the traditional governing system with one locally elected school board?

The Return Model includes a locally elected board with overarching authority, but it addresses the inherent conflicts of interest built into a system wherein a single board – whether elected or appointed – manages some schools, charters others, and then must fairly allocate resources between the schools it oversees and charters.

Why not just convert all schools to charters?

New Orleans has traditional schools that are high-achieving. The Task Force recommended a blended model that allows for both charter and direct-run schools, rather than limiting our options to either all charter or all traditional.

With three Boards, how will the public know who is responsible for what?

The three boards would have very distinct responsibilities. If the issue is about a charter school, the Charter Oversight Board would be responsible. If it involves a non-charter school, the Direct-run Oversight Board would be responsible. If the issue applies to all schools, the Governing Board would be responsible. Additionally, the Governing Board would be responsible for communications, including a guide outlining roles and responsibilities and methods of problem resolution.

This structure seems complicated. How will decisions ever get made? What about duplication of effort?

The Task Force looked at many different possible governance structures. One governing entity appears simple and could be assigned responsibility for all governance functions, but imbedded within this model is the internal conflict of having the same entity run schools, charter schools and allocate the resources.

With three boards, the clear definition of roles and responsibilities and funding will reduce sources of conflict. Further, the opportunity for each board to recommend policies is an incentive for cooperation, and in many cases the interests of the two Oversight Boards will be

aligned. For example, they will have a shared interest in how facilities are managed and what rent is being charged.

What will ensure that funding is equitable for all schools and students?

The dollars will continue to follow the student. A weighted student formula, adopted by the elected Governing Board, would reflect that some students, such as students with disabilities, are more expensive to educate than others. The amount of money that will follow a particular student is the same, whether it flows to a charter or direct-run school. The Direct-run Oversight Board would receive the money for its students and set the budget for its portfolio of schools. Each charter operator would directly receive the funds for its students and would control its own budget. The Direct-run Oversight Board and the charter schools would receive their federal title funds directly from the state.

Will the system be more expensive to operate?

No, it will not. Eliminating the currently redundant system in which both BESE and OPSB operate and charter schools will save money. Placing management of all direct-run schools under a single administrative structure (the Direct-run Oversight Board) should reduce costs now incurred by the duplicate administrative structures currently in place – one for RSD’s direct-run schools and the other for OPSB’s direct-run schools – and allow more money to go directly to the classroom. Likewise, the Charter Oversight function will also be more efficient, eliminating duplicate oversight systems. The cost to the charter schools to cover the expenses of the Governing Board and the Charter Oversight Board will not exceed the 2% limit currently in law.

What about school performance standards?

The Governing Board may set performance standards for schools higher (but not lower) than those established by BESE. These standards must apply to both Oversight Boards and all schools, with the possible exception of alternative or special-needs schools. Each Oversight Board would be permitted to adopt standards for its schools higher than those established by BESE and the Governing Board, but not lower.

How will these school performance standards be upheld?

If either type of school has not met the Governing Board’s standards and the responsible Oversight Board has not addressed the problem, the Governing Board would have the right, based upon approved policy, to: (1) close the school, (2) require the existing Oversight Board to change school management, or (3) select the other Oversight Board to take over the school (either to run directly or to charter).

How will we be sure that all students are served inclusively? What if a parent or student can’t find a school in which to enroll?

The Governing Board would oversee the common enrollment process, determine the number and types of schools needed, and manage an integrated Student Information System. In addition, in compliance with an approved policy, the Governing Board would have the right to assign students to schools in the case of mid-year enrollees, special needs or an unanticipated surge in the student population.

What if a parent believes a school has violated enrollment rules?

Each Oversight Board would be required to have a student placement/advocate office to provide immediate access for parents and students encountering problems. Parents who believe their

problem has not been appropriately resolved by the Oversight Board, would have the right to appeal to the Governing Board. The Governing Board would review the case to ensure that the appeal process at the Oversight Board was properly implemented. The review would be to determine adherence to process and not to reconsider the facts of the case.

What if a school wants to convert from direct-run to charter?

State law allows any traditional, direct-run school to apply to convert to a charter. The power to approve or reject a conversion charter application would reside with the Charter Oversight Board.

What if a school wants to convert from charter to direct-run?

A charter board could turn in its charter and request that the Direct-run Oversight Board operate the school.

How will rules and policies be enforced?

The Governing Board would have authority to issue warnings, require remediation plans, and impose sanctions on Oversight Boards. The strongest sanction would be to request the appointing authority to seat a new Oversight Board. Such a request would require the support of a two-thirds majority of the Governing Board.

In addition, all official board actions, whether by the Governing Board or one of the Oversight Boards, would take place in public. Public pressure is a strong motivator, and in the Return Model, citizens would have a better understanding of where responsibility for action or inaction resides than they do in the current system.

How will the Governing Board determine compliance with its rules and policies?

The Governing Board would evaluate the Oversight Boards' compliance with its rules and policies based on the overall performance of the portfolio of schools under each Oversight Board and not on the performance of one particular school.

What would the process be for reorganizing in compliance with the new model?

OPSB and RSD direct-run schools would come under the Direct-run Oversight Board. Charter schools, including OPSB types 1, 3, and 4 and RSD type 5s, would be transferred to the Charter Oversight Board, which would assume oversight of existing charter contracts.

The new model would become effective the year following legislation, e.g., if passed in 2012, it would take effect starting July 1, 2013.

What will become of the Recovery School District (RSD)?

The RSD will continue to exist as a state mechanism for taking over chronically failing schools, *i.e.*, schools that have been failing for four or more consecutive years. As such, it will continue to be empowered to take over chronically failing schools in any district, including Orleans.

Is there a way I can provide feedback on the Return Model?

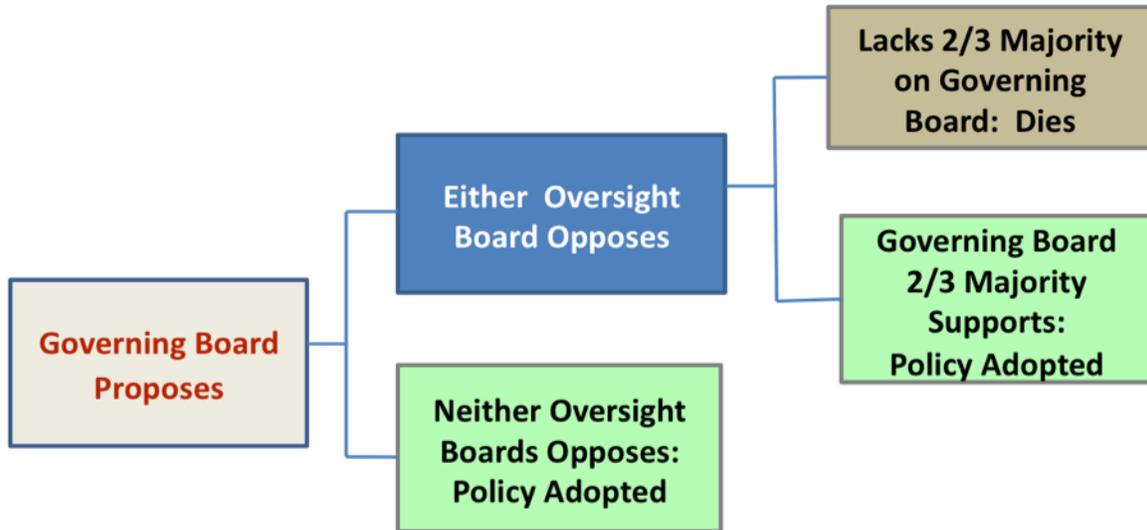
Yes, go to the Return Model page of the Educate Now! website and [post a comment](#).

APPENDIX Enacting Governing Board Policies

Enacting policies that relate to system-wide functions, such as facility assignment and enrollment, would be the responsibility of the Governing Board. All Governing Board policies would apply to all schools, whether charter or direct-run.

These system-wide policies could be proposed by the Governing Board or by one or both of the Oversight Boards. The chart below shows how the process would work.

Governing Board Proposes



One or Both Oversight Board(s) Proposes

