**Ben Kleban: In response to** [**Discipline part of school reform**](http://theadvocate.com/news/opinion/4286206-123/letter-discipline-part-of-school)

**November 2, 2012**

Contrary to Ms. McNeil's claims that our schools are "failing", New Orleans College Prep schools have never received an “F” letter grade. Our schools achieved “top gains” status from the state in 2012 with 14 points growth on the School Performance Score (SPS) to achieve an 82, 7 points above the "failing" mark of 75 and among the top 5 fastest-growing RSD schools in New Orleans last year. The letter's title is exactly right - discipline is absolutely a part of school reform, and New Orleans College Prep does not apologize for holding high behavioral expectations for its students. However, we have implemented alternatives to suspensions in our schools since 2010 and we’ve dramatically reduced our suspension rate to under 15% so far this year across all our schools.

Ms. McNeil makes an assumption that because a relatively large number of our students in 2010 were suspended at least one time in the school year, that we "push students out of school" and "increase the likelihood of dropping out". Again, Ms. McNeil’s conclusions are inaccurate - less than 2% of our students are expelled each year, and less than 2% of our students drop out of high school. Both our expulsion and drop out rates are significantly below the state average for similar grade levels. We also admit new students with special needs at higher rates than the district average, proving not only that we don't "push out" students, but that we actually "pull in" high needs students at higher rates than other public schools in New Orleans.

Charter approval decisions should be based on a comprehensive and accurate set of data points - not just one spurious metric that doesn’t tell the whole story of a school’s performance. NACSA is far more objective and balanced in their decision-making and should stick to their established protocols, which have been proven successful across the country.

**Ben Kleban**

**Founder and Director**

**New Orleans College Prep**