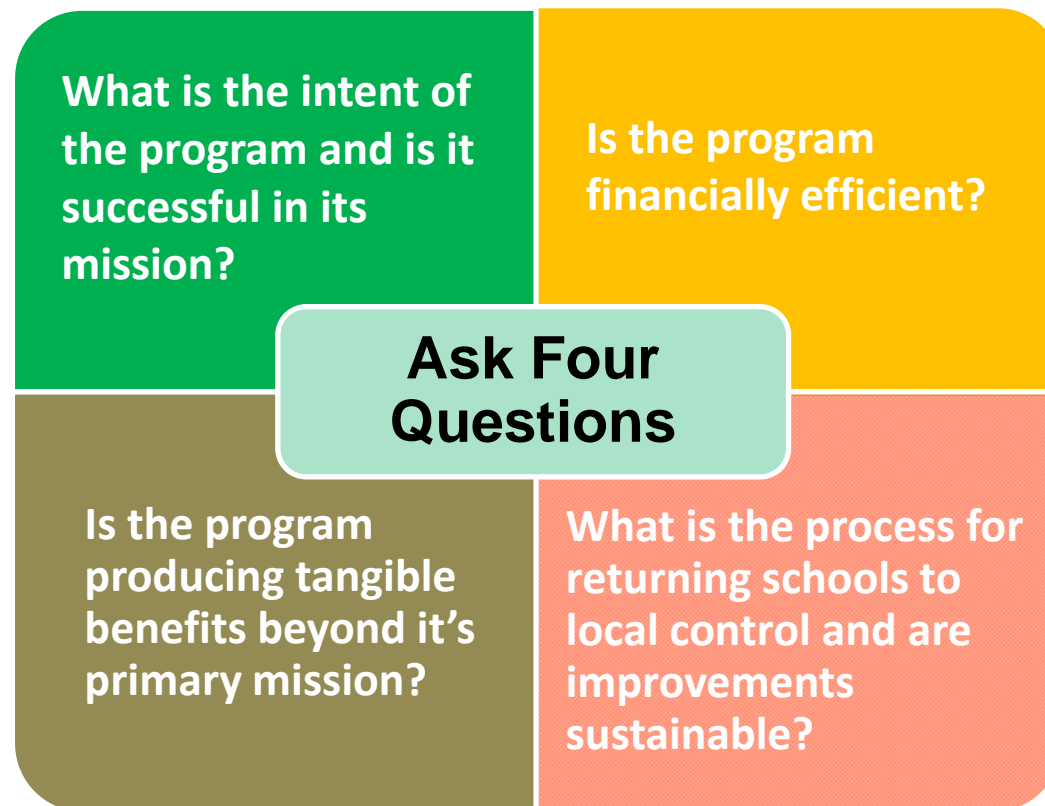


# Recovery School District Reform and Results



Revised Fall 2010

# How do you measure a school intervention program's value?





## **Question 1**

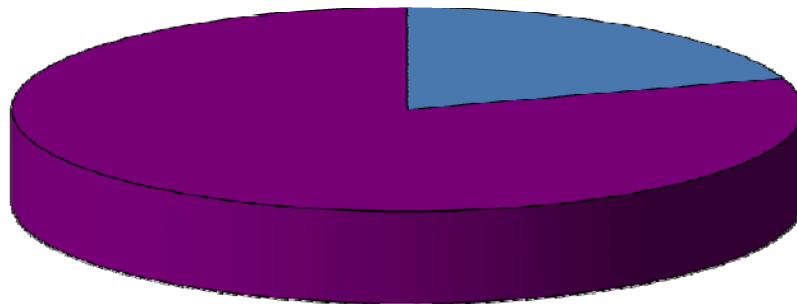
**What is the intent of the program  
and is it succeeding in its mission?**

# **The RSD is Louisiana's instrument for turning around failing schools and then returning them to the local control.**

- The Louisiana Legislature created the RSD in 2003 to take over failing schools.
- The state's school accountability program determines which schools are failing.
- Schools must be Academically Unacceptable Schools for four years (AUS-4) to be eligible for placement in the RSD
- One New Orleans school entered the RSD in 2004 and four others entered in Spring 2005.
- In Fall 2005, shortly after Hurricane Katrina, legislators passed Act 35, allowing for RSD takeover of schools performing below the state average in failing districts.
- As a result of Act 35, an additional 107 New Orleans schools, most greatly damaged and all de-populated due to the city's mass evacuation, were swept into the RSD.
- Outside New Orleans, 39 failing schools have either been placed into the RSD or placed under supervisory Memorandums of Understanding

## Schools eligible for the RSD are the lowest performing in the state

- ◆ Eligible schools are Academically Unacceptable, with a School Performance Score (SPS) of 60 or lower for four years
- ◆ Average student performance in a school with SPS 60:



20% of students at or above Basic level

80 percent are below Basic

**The accountability bar will be raised to SPS 75 in 2011-2010.  
At SPS 75, 55% of students are performing below grade level**

**Louisiana is unique in its supportive approach to turning around failing schools. Through the RSD, the Louisiana Department of Education is employing nationally recognized best practices to turn struggling schools into successful ones.**

### **Key Strategies**

- Placing failing schools under a single entity, the RSD
- Removing institutional obstacles to implementing reforms that benefit students
- Combining proven, data-driven curriculum and instructional reforms with a longer school day and year
- Promoting choice for parents and schools
  - Parents given freedom to select the best school for their children
  - Having a willingness to use alternative school management models, such as charter school providers and private managers
- Giving schools freedom to hire and retain staff based on performance, to create a longer school day and year, and to implement curriculum reforms that work

# Key RSD reforms

- Implemented a managed instructional model and distributed first quarter 2008 curriculum models for all subjects to all teachers
- Implemented Response to Intervention (RtI) model, a three-tiered approach to ensuring the educational success of all students
- Dramatically decreased spending on school security by 32 percent while improving school climate and safety
- Implemented extended day and extended year to provide increased instructional time-on-task.
- Completed more than 1,700 Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) using Easy IEP. Virtually no IEPs were completed prior to present administration.
- Rebuilt the school district's workforce producing ten times the number of quality teacher candidates for every vacancy and creating a teacher/teacher leader human capital pipeline for all schools, public schools, charter and non charter

# Results and Benefits

## Key Strategies

- **Governing Authority**
- **Effective Teachers**
- **Data-driven instruction**
- **New Schools**
- **School Choice**
- **School Autonomy**
- **Optimizing Budgetary Resources**
- **Modernized Facilities**



## Successful stability and transformation and school district, including:

- **A locally controlled leadership team committed to the implementation of school reforms.**
- **Creation of sustainable reforms despite significant but temporary funding resources.**
- **Test scores in the RSD improved in every grade and in every subject for three consecutive years.**
- **Past 3 years – double digit growth in academic performance.**
- **Senior graduation rates increased from 50% to 86% in three years.**
- **Construction of secure facilities that met the demand of all returning students.**
- **All students are in modern classrooms with technology assets and tools.**
- **Created an environment of self-sustaining improvement.**

## In New Orleans, the RSD has faced unique challenges:

### Facilities

- Public schools devastated by one of the nation's worst natural disasters
- More than 100 school buildings damaged, some completely
- 90% of the buildings in poor condition *before* Katrina
- The RSD fully supplied 70 schools with contents, including furniture, instructional material desktop and laptop computers

### Academics

- Many returning students missed months or years of school
- **More than 80% of students entering RSD schools were 1½ or more years below grade level**
- More than 20 percent of students two or more years older than typical for grade level
- **Influx of federal funds to open schools was temporary; aggressive academic reforms had to be sustainable.**

### Financial

- Unlike traditional school districts, the RSD has no borrowing power or cash reserves
- As a state agency, the RSD is bound by procurement policies, data systems and procedures that are not well suited to a school district
- The RSD initially lacked essential infrastructure such as a payroll system and procurement system.

# Academic improvements in the RSD

- Test scores in the RSD improved in every grade and in every subject for three consecutive years.
- The RSD led the state in growth from 2009-2010 as well as for the last three years, with a gain of 20 points from 2007-2010.
- Since 2007, the passing rate for first time 4<sup>th</sup> grade test-takers in the RSD increased from 36% to 58%. The passing rate for 8<sup>th</sup> grade first-time test takers grew from 32% to 50%.
- In 2010, Growth in the RSD exceeded the growth in the state in 25 of 30 categories in LEAP, iLEAP and GEE.
- Senior graduation rates increased from 50% to to 86% in three years



## **Question 2**

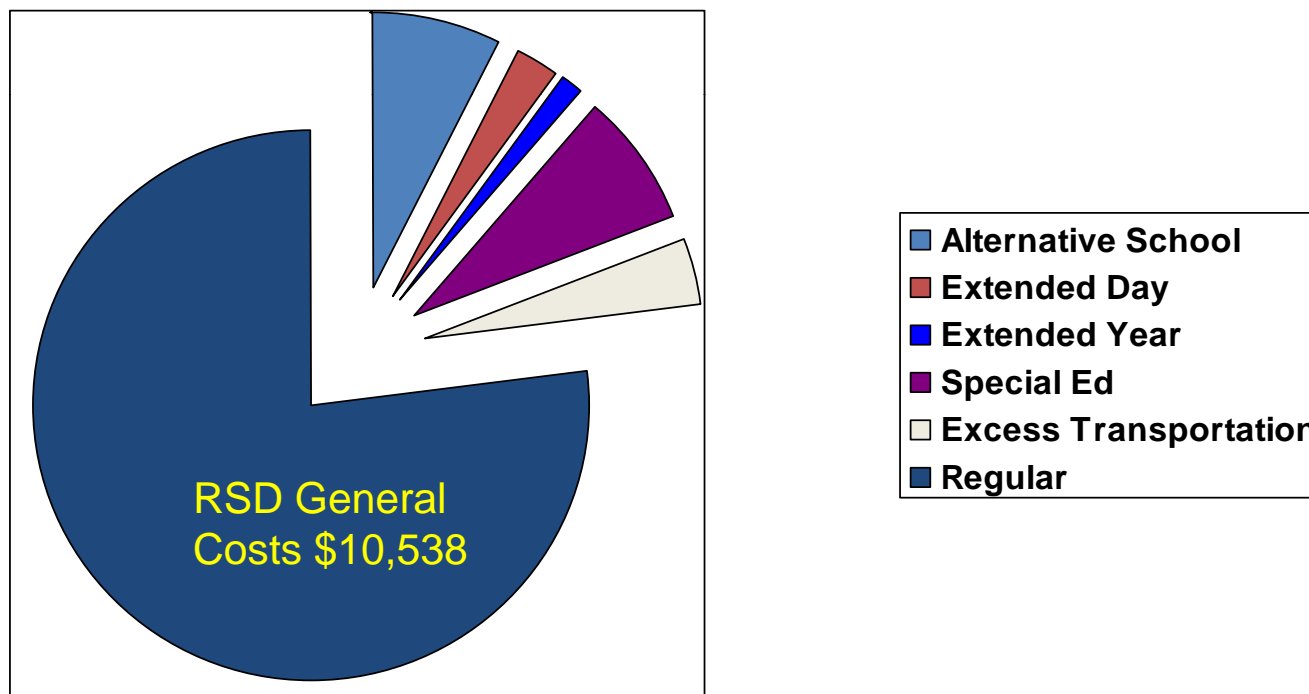
**Is the program financially efficient?**

# Operating efficiently and effectively

- RSD dramatically reduced its reliance on one-time disaster related revenues
- RSD is sustaining reforms while significantly reducing expenditures
- 90% of the RSD budget is built on continuing revenues
- The RSD, unlike traditional districts, has never had a fund balance to mitigate decreasing revenues
- Aggressively seeking additional funding sources, and is well-positioned to receive funding through Teacher Incentive Program (TIP), Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) and federal Race to the Top program
- Despite false claims, the RSD's general education costs (\$10,538 per pupil, is spends less than the state average per pupil amount. Initially following hurricane Katrina, the RSD had an influx of funds used to repair classrooms and schools buildings and purchase new books, materials and equipment destroyed by the storm.

When expenses directly or indirectly related to the storms and the cost of core reforms and interventions are excluded, the RSD's per-pupil expenditures are comparable to other districts.

### The Cost of Reform



## Additional State Support for RSD

The RSD's is almost completely funded through traditional means. Supplemental state support since Katrina is limited to the following:

- A \$32 million loan for operating expenditures in the year following Katrina
- State pays insurance costs for school buildings taken over by state. The RSD controls these buildings; however, 25% are vacant and generating no MFP
- \$4.2 million in supplemental funding through state

**Slide 14**

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**cm11**

I'd talk about this page in terms of per-pupil spending.

cmeyer, 9/12/2010



## Question 3

**Is the program providing lasting benefits beyond its primary mission?**

# Lasting benefits

- The RSD has become a national model for education reform
- Reforms aligned to national education agenda
- As a result, state is better position to secure additional federal dollars
- Attracting national attention to Louisiana, positioning the state to secure additional federal and foundation funding
- Reforms attracting top school providers and talent to Louisiana
- Greatly expanded school choice through growth of charter schools, operated by top national providers
- Capital plan in New Orleans providing considerable economic benefits
- Rebuilding efforts putting majority children in New Orleans in world-class schools for first time
- RSD has become a model for intergovernmental and labor relations

# Capital Program Highlights

- The RSD's capital program, jointly adopted by BESE and the OPSB in 2008, is the largest public-sector rebuilding program on the Gulf Coast since Katrina and the largest FEMA funded school rebuilding program in US history.
- Secured a lump sum settlement from FEMA to fund \$1.8 billion master plan in its entirety
- RSD has opened and rebuilt 5 new schools and have 13 others in various phases of the design process. A total of **87 permanent schools** will be designed for 21st Century learning
- The RSD has more than **\$200 million** in currently open construction contracts
- Working to leverage over \$400 in new market tax credits
- Secured a lump sum settlement from FEMA to fund \$1.8 billion master plan in its entirety
- All new schools within the Master Plan are Green Schools built with LEED Silver standards.
- Projects providing considerable economic benefits in taxes revenues, jobs and state and local revenues during period of sluggish economy activity

# The RSD is a school district of.....

## **QUALITY**

Creating high-performing “best practice” schools, supported by data-driven, research-based models that address individual academic, behavioral or social needs.

## **CHOICE**

Offering parents and guardians the freedom to select the RSD school of their choice, and guaranteeing that access to quality school programs is equitable and attainable.

## **MODERN CLASSROOMS AND OUTSTANDING FACILITIES**

Creating and maintaining safe, clean schools in which every child can be educated in a classroom that is modern and well-equipped for 21st Century learning.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Developing and implementing comprehensive accountability systems that ensure all schools are held to the same high standards

## **AUTONOMY**

Ensuring that RSD schools have autonomy over site-based budgeting and staffing; creating and maintaining alternative governance arrangements, such as Advisory Boards, Steering Committees or Board of Directors.

# The Mission

- The RSD's mission is to take failing schools, turn them around and return them to local control.
- Turning failing schools around is not limited to academic improvement, but includes improving school facilities, strengthening school leadership and establishing a close relationship between the school and the local school community.
- Improving schools is not intended to be temporary but permanent, necessitating that the return of the school to the local governing authority be accompanied by pre-conditions and guaranteed safeguards
- Returning successful schools to local control should be contingent on the school not only being a high performing school but on the local schools charter board or in the case of direct run school, local community board being supportive. This is ultimate local school choice.