



FIRSTLINE SCHOOLS

EDUCATION FOR LIFE

ANNUAL REPORT 2011





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Schools

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and
Board

Dear Friend of FirstLine Schools,

In the 2010-11 school year, we continued to see academic growth in all of our schools, and at the same time two new schools joined the FirstLine network: John Dibert Community School and Langston Hughes Academy. While we have now crossed the 50% threshold of students averaging at or above grade level in core subjects, up from 26% five years ago, in the tested grades 3-8, we still have a long way to go to reach our goal of 95% at grade level or above in core subjects. We are committed to learning and persevering to achieve this goal so that we can do our part towards making New Orleans a city where every child goes to a great school.

Towards this end, we are focused on a couple exciting initiatives that we believe will alter the landscape of education in New Orleans. FirstLine Schools' Blended Learning Project is an initiative to provide more personalized learning experiences for students through increased computer assisted instruction and by providing more small group support based on students' individual needs. It also provides a staffing structure that is more financially sustainable than traditional educational models. In our pilot version at Ashe and the 9th Grade of Clark Prep, students are spending up to 20% of their school day on computer assisted learning programs, learning at their own pace and focusing on their own particular needs, based on their goals and assessments. Teachers can focus on critical thinking and higher-order skills in the regular classroom, provide small group support outside of the regular class, and leave systematic review of essential skills in English and Math to computer-assisted instruction which is more efficient and personalized.

Up until now, the successes in post-Katrina education reform in New Orleans have been more in K-8 schools with fewer success stories in the high schools. Because of this, FirstLine Schools partnered with alumni and the Joseph S. Clark Community Council to charter Joseph S. Clark Preparatory High School (Clark Prep) starting in the 2011-2012 school year. This turnaround high school will play a significant role in the next stage of school reform in New Orleans, as we and other charter groups begin to turn around the city's remaining cluster of perennially failing high schools. Clark Prep's active alumni and community members are committed to helping FirstLine rebuild the school's reputation back to the strong academic and community legacy of 20 years ago.

We are proud of our students and the staff, teachers and leaders who work at Ashe, Dibert, Green, Langston Hughes Academy and Clark Prep. We are also deeply grateful to the countless parents, individuals and groups who have made our progress possible. We hope you will continue to support us as we develop lasting institutions that provide a great education to every student in our city.



Jay Altman
Chief Executive Officer



Lawrence Kullman
President, Board of Directors

FIRSTLINE SCHOOLS: A New Orleans Tradition for 20 years



1990: New Orleans Summerbridge (*now Breakthrough*)

The roots of FirstLine Schools trace to the founding of this unique summer program designed to help 5th and 6th grade students gain acceptance into top middle schools.

1992: James Lewis Extension

Working with a group of concerned parents, Jay Altman and the Summerbridge team founded this school, with 100 students and four teachers. Dr. Tony Recasner became the school's Director in 1993.



1998: New Orleans Charter Middle School (NOCMS)

James Lewis Extension converted into a charter school and adopted a new name. NOCMS became the top-performing open-admissions middle school in New Orleans. In August 2005, flooding from Hurricane Katrina destroyed the campus and led to NOCMS' closure.

2005: Samuel J. Green Charter School

Middle School Advocates (the former name of FirstLine Schools) was approached by the state and asked to take over the failing Green Middle School. Green opened as a K-8 charter school the week before Katrina. The school reopened in January 2006.



2007: Arthur Ashe Charter School

Using the NOCMS charter to open a new K-8 school (later renamed Arthur Ashe), this school opened with 42 students and has grown to its current enrollment of over 400 students. In 2012 Ashe is moving to a brand new campus in the Lake Park neighborhood of Gentilly.

2010: John Dibert Community School and Langston Hughes Academy

In 2010, we chartered John Dibert Community School as a turnaround school, to improve academic performance. Also that year FirstLine entered into a management agreement with Langston Hughes Academy, which as of 2012 will officially be a FirstLine School.



2011: Joseph S. Clark Preparatory High School

The doors opened on the newly chartered Clark Prep in August 2011. FirstLine's first high school is a turnaround of an existing school.

CITY-WIDE LEARNING



BEAUCOUP LEARNING!
Arthur Ashe: Uptown
John Dibert: Mid-City
S. J. Green: Uptown
Langston Hughes: Gentilly
Clark Prep: Tremé



OUR APPROACH



Our Mission

We create and inspire great open-admissions public schools in New Orleans. Our schools will prepare students for college and fulfilling careers by achieving the following primary objectives:

All our teachers share a deep belief that developing our scholars as good people who are well-rounded, possess strength of character and demonstrate grit will lead to their success in life, as well as in college and beyond.

- Stefan Lallinger, LHA

- **College Readiness:** ensuring all of our students are on track to be academically prepared for success in a college preparatory high school and college as demonstrated by achievement, aspiration, love of learning, and confidence.
- A **rich variety of experiences** for our students to nurture character, health, and active citizenship.
- Developing the **skillfulness of our staff** and building sustainable organizations that facilitate our long-term success.

OUR PEOPLE

At FirstLine Schools, we believe that our job is to support teachers, leaders, and staff to do great work. Through regular professional development opportunities, frequent feedback, and a collaborative working environment, we develop the skillfulness of each teacher and create conditions that facilitate their success.

Our staff is diverse across generations, ethnic groups, and life experiences. The balance of veteran and new teachers leads to a dynamic mix of new ideas and experience-driven approaches.

Our staff has a great variety of skills and talents, but they have one thing in common: an unshakable belief in the potential of all young people.

YEARS OF CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

1 - 5 = 69%
6 - 10 = 15%
10+ = 15%

ETHNICITY

Caucasian = 68%
African-American = 30%
Asian = 1%
Multi-racial = 1%

AGE

21 - 30 = 59%
31 - 40 = 29%
40+ = 12%



WHAT IS A CHARTER SCHOOL?

FirstLine Schools is a nonprofit **Charter Management Organization (CMO)** that manages five charter schools, whose charters were granted by Louisiana's Recovery School District.

Some of our schools were 'startup' charters, schools opened with a new population of students, but most of our schools are 'turnaround' schools, where we work with the existing population of students in a school to improve their academic performance. All of our schools share the FirstLine mission and vision, and all decisions are made in the context of what is best for the individual school to ensure student achievement.

What is a charter school?

A charter school is an independently run public school granted greater flexibility in its operations, in return for greater accountability for performance. The "charter" establishing each school is a performance contract detailing the school's mission, program, students served, performance goals, and methods of assessment.

Who attends charter schools?

Nationwide, students in charter schools have similar demographic characteristics to students in the local public schools. In New Orleans, the vast majority of public schools are charter schools. Most charter schools are open-enrollment, meaning they accept all of the same students as a traditional public school. All FirstLine Schools are open-enrollment schools, meaning that we serve all New Orleans students.

What is the difference between charter schools and other public schools?

Charter schools are public schools of choice, meaning that families choose them for their children. They operate with freedom from some of the regulations that are imposed upon district schools. Charter schools are accountable for the same academic results as traditional district schools, and for upholding the promises made in their charters. They must demonstrate performance in the areas of academic achievement, financial management, and organizational stability. If a charter school does not meet performance goals, it may be closed.





ARTHUR ASHE CHARTER SCHOOL

Arthur Ashe Charter School was founded in the 2007-2008 school year, when FirstLine used the authorization for New Orleans Charter Middle School, an award-winning school destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, to open a new K-8 school.

Named after a legendary tennis player and model of perseverance, Ashe opened as a startup school with 42 students in grades three through six. In 2009-2010, it grew to include all K-8 grades. Ashe will move to its new campus in Lake Park for the 2012-2013 school year.

Ashe's students choose from a variety of enrichment programs, including team sports, drama, and art. During the end of the 2010-2011 school year, Ashe students and teachers were testing software in advance of our pilot Blended Learning Project, which is in full school implementation for the 2011-2012 school year.



Blended learning has transformed Ashe students into pioneering 21st century learners and thinkers by increasing student engagement and catering to the different learning styles of students at their own level and pace.

- Kamisha Gray, Assistant Principal

FACTS:

Grades K - 8, Open-Enrollment
School Director: Sabrina Pence
3649 Laurel Street, New Orleans
(through 2011-12 school year)

426 students

97% African-American,
2% Caucasian, 1% Hispanic

98% qualify for
free/reduced meals

JOHN DIBERT COMMUNITY SCHOOL

John Dibert Elementary School was a struggling RSD school in 2009. At the invitation of parents and community members, Dibert reopened as a FirstLine charter school in the fall of 2010.

Through a combination of an inspirational school culture and a rigorous curriculum of development for both students and teachers, Dibert's middle school made the highest gains in academic achievement of all schools in New Orleans in 2010.

Dibert's students choose from a variety of enrichment programs, including team sports, instrumental music, Kids ReThink New Orleans Schools, Scouts and art. Students also take part in an afterschool Garden Club as part of the Edible Schoolyard NOLA.

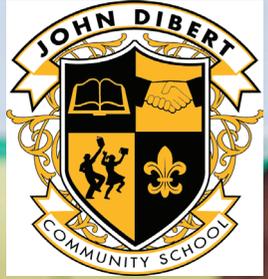


We're building a school upon one simple truth: success will come from embracing our struggles as opportunities for learning.

- Diana Archuleta, Assistant Principal

FACTS:

Grades K - 8,
Open-Enrollment
School Director: Sivi Domango
4217 Orleans Avenue, New Orleans
421 students
89% African-American,
5% Caucasian, 6% Hispanic
98% qualify for
free/reduced meals





SAMUEL J. GREEN CHARTER SCHOOL

At the request of the state, FirstLine took over Green in 2005, shortly before Hurricane Katrina. The school was one of the first in Orleans Parish to re-open after the catastrophe, welcoming students the following January. Green is also the flagship location of the Edible Schoolyard NOLA, which opened in 2006 and has grown with the campus into a 1/3 acre edible garden and teaching kitchen. The Edible Schoolyard NOLA is a FirstLine signature program, which brings many visitors and national recognition to the school.

Over the last six years, Green has been an anchor of community revitalization. The Freret neighborhood surrounding the school is experiencing a renaissance, which can partly be attributed to the hard work that teachers and students are doing at Green. Green has one of the strongest extra-curricular enrichment programs in the city, with 95% of students enrolled in classes in athletics, dance, art, entrepreneurship, music and bike repair, as well as the Edible Schoolyard NOLA edible garden and teaching kitchen.



Green's success is rooted in the belief that hard work and personal responsibility can inspire and effect change, at both the individual and community level.

- Eileen Bunton, Assistant Principal

FACTS:

Grades K - 8,
Open-Enrollment
School Director: Ava Lee
2319 Valence Street, New Orleans
518 students
95% African-American,
2% Caucasian, 3% Hispanic
97% qualify for
free/reduced meals

LANGSTON HUGHES ACADEMY

Beginning in the fall of 2010, FirstLine Schools entered into an operating agreement with Langston Hughes Academy for the 2010-2012 school years. The school's building was the first new facility to be opened in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

Langston Hughes Academy was founded in August 2007 by a dedicated team of teachers, board members and community supporters. Langston Hughes taught us how important it is to achieve greatness despite one's circumstances, Langston Hughes Academy is committed to ensuring that all scholars receive an outstanding education so they may gain admission to competitive high schools in New Orleans and pursue their dreams of success in college and the world beyond.

Langston Hughes Academy students choose from a variety of enrichment programs, including team sports, band, music, and art. Students also take part in gardening and cooking classes as part of the Dreamkeeper Garden and Edible Schoolyard NOLA programming.



LHA Dreamkeepers ensure that our scholars not only dream big, but that they can take on the hard work of making those dreams into reality.

**- Mark Martin, School Director
and Elementary Principal**

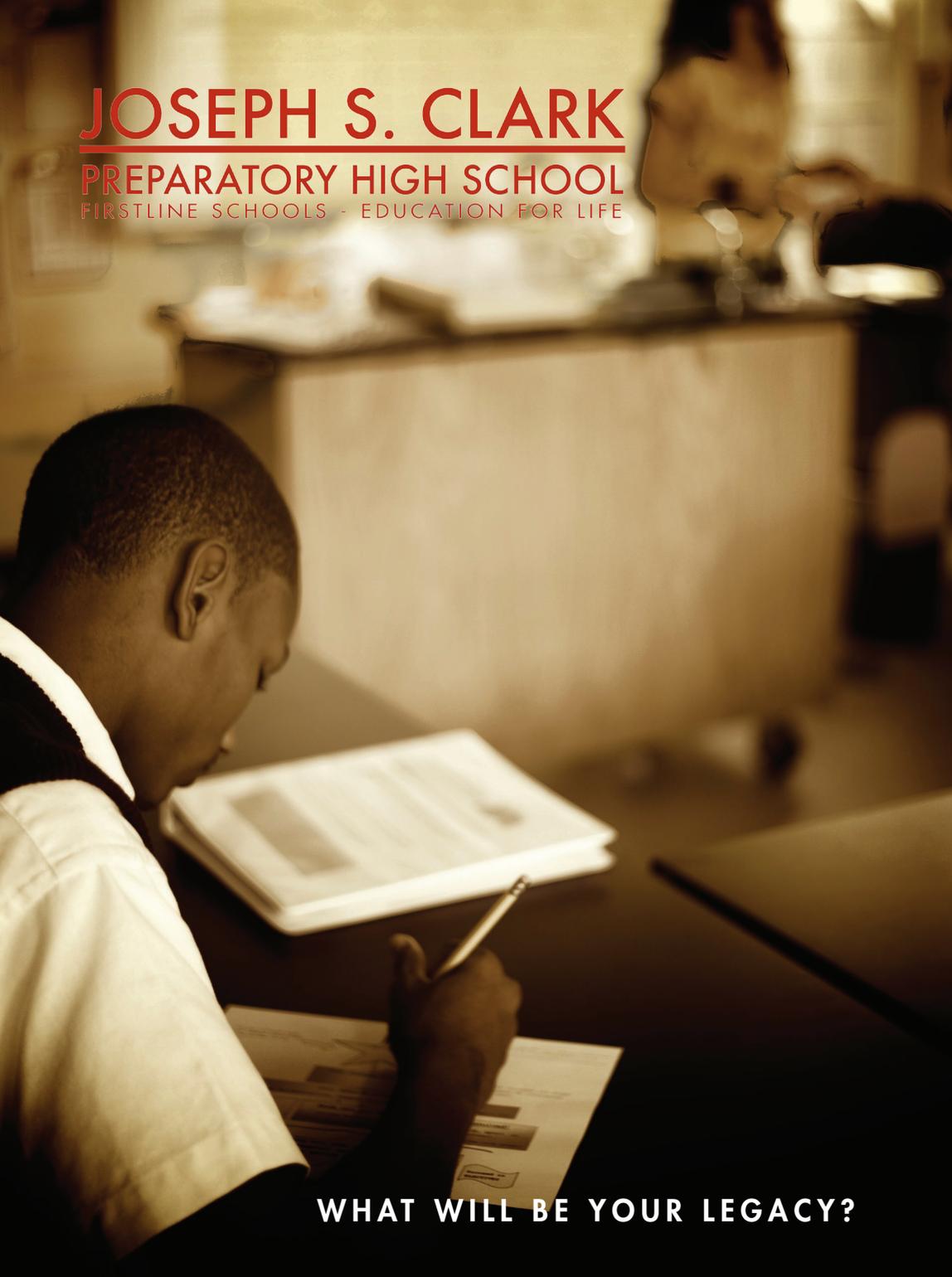
FACTS:

Grades K - 8, Open-Enrollment
School Director: Mark Martin
3519 Trafalgar St., Gentilly neighborhood
617 students
100% African-American
99% qualify for
free/reduced meals



**LANGSTON
HUGHES
ACADEMY**





JOSEPH S. CLARK

PREPARATORY HIGH SCHOOL
FIRSTLINE SCHOOLS - EDUCATION FOR LIFE

WHAT WILL BE YOUR LEGACY?

JOSEPH S. CLARK PREPARATORY HIGH SCHOOL

Joseph S. Clark High School opened its doors in 1947 as one of the city's first public high schools for African-Americans. Hundreds of esteemed figures in New Orleans' civic life are Clark alumni. But for the past 20 years, Clark's performance declined significantly. As its first high school, FirstLine embraced the opportunity to work together with the Clark alumni, community members, and Clark families to charter this historically important New Orleans institution. Joseph S. Clark Preparatory High School (Clark Prep) opened its doors as a charter school in August 2011.

Clark Prep is based on the model established by Noble Street, a Chicago-based charter management organization that operates the highest performing open-enrollment high schools in Chicago. FirstLine also partnered with The NET Charter High School to create an alternative program within the Clark Prep building. The Mission of The NET is to provide struggling high school students with the skills, confidence, and experiences necessary to succeed in the education and career paths of their choice. With these partnerships, Clark Prep is strengthening the aspirations and future legacies of all Clark Prep students.



Clark Prep, through discipline, scholarship, and community, ensures that every student will have the skills necessary to create a successful legacy for themselves and for the people they love.

- Vanessa DeGuia, Founding Director

FACTS:

Grades 9 - 12, Open-Enrollment
School Directors: Vanessa DeGuia (9),
Reginald Coleman (10-12),
Elizabeth Ostberg (NET)
1301 N. Derbigny, in the Tremé
436 students
97% African-American,
1% Caucasian, 2% Hispanic
91% qualify for
free/reduced meals

THE EDIBLE SCHOOLYARD NOLA

"I definitely recommend kale. It lowers your cholesterol. There are so many things you can do with it - like making kale chips! They are much healthier for you than regular potato chips."

-Fifth-grade Budding Entrepreneur, selling fresh plant starts grown in Green's Edible Garden at a community market.

Founded in 2006, Edible Schoolyard New Orleans (ESY NOLA) is the first replication of the original Edible Schoolyard program in Berkeley, CA, founded by chef and food activist Alice Waters. Since then, ESY NOLA has developed into an independent, home-grown, fully-integrated curriculum for Louisiana State Standards and Benchmarks, using a three-pronged approach of exposure, engagement and access. Our mission is to change the way children eat, learn, and live at all five FirstLine schools in New Orleans.

Students and families are involved in all aspects of the seed-to-table experience, as a means of building community, rebuilding our local food system, and improving the health and well-being of the larger school community.

ESYNOLA Programming at FirstLine Schools:

- **Curriculum Integration:** *Garden Science Class, Kitchen Health Science Integration*
- **After-school Programming:** *Budding Entrepreneurs, Cooking Club*
- **School Culture Programs:** *Meet the Farmer field trips and seasonal tastings, Market to Table Luncheon, La Provence Farm to Table Experience*
- **Family Programming:** *Family Food Night, Open Garden Days, Adult Grocery Tours, Adult Garden Workshops*
- **Food Service:** *FirstLine's school food program, "Eat to Learn, Learn to Eat", received the highest grades in the New Orleans Kids RETHink School Food Report Card Project, with Green's café earning an A+!*



THE EDIBLE SCHOOLYARD
NEW ORLEANS



Brown Rice? What's that?



This picture is of a whole grain, with the bran, germ, and endosperm.

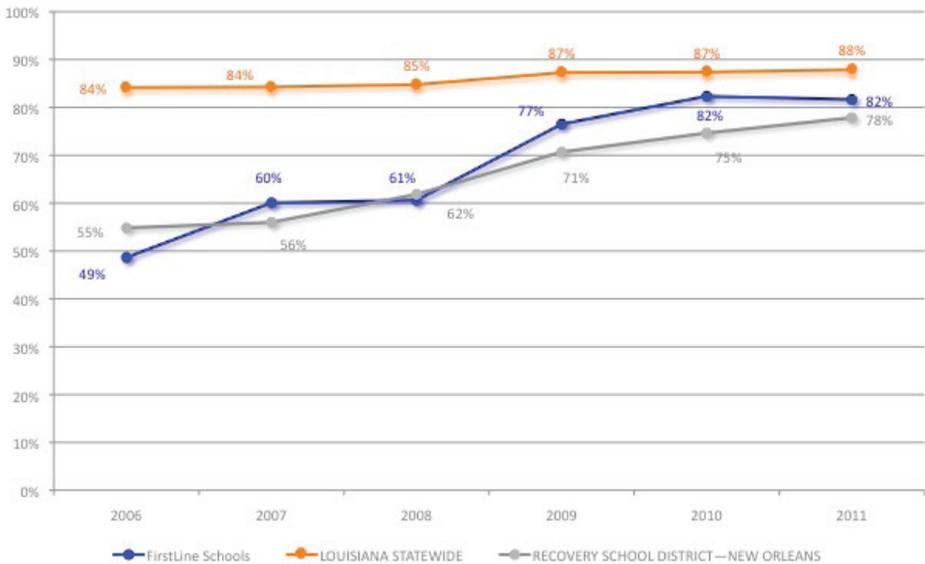
Brown Rice is a whole grain! A grain typically has an endosperm, germ, and bran, which are surrounded by something called a husk. The husk is an outer shell that is removed before we can eat the grain. The germ and bran provide protection along with loads of vitamins, minerals, and fiber to help you stay healthy! Brown Rice has all three of the layers, making it a *whole grain*, while white rice is only the Endosperm.

ESYNOLA's mission is to improve the long-term well being of our students, families, and school community. We do this through comprehensive food education that integrates hands-on organic gardening and seasonal cooking into the school curriculum, culture, and cafeteria programs.

RESULTS

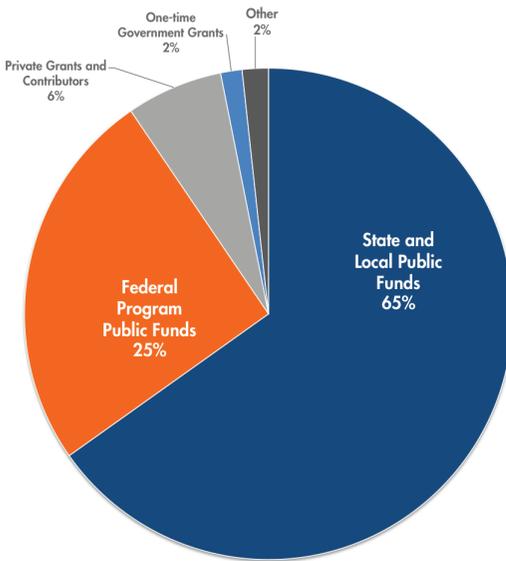
A national “achievement gap” – the disparity in academic performance between groups of students – means that, on average, black and Latino students from low-income families are two to three years behind their peers. At the individual level, these shortfalls lead to a lifetime of fewer career opportunities, lower earnings and poorer health. FirstLine Schools is proud of our students and staff and the hard work they have done to raise the bar for academic achievement in New Orleans’ schools.

% Students scoring *Approaching Basic* or above on i/LEAP statewide testing program



FINANCIALS

Revenues by Source

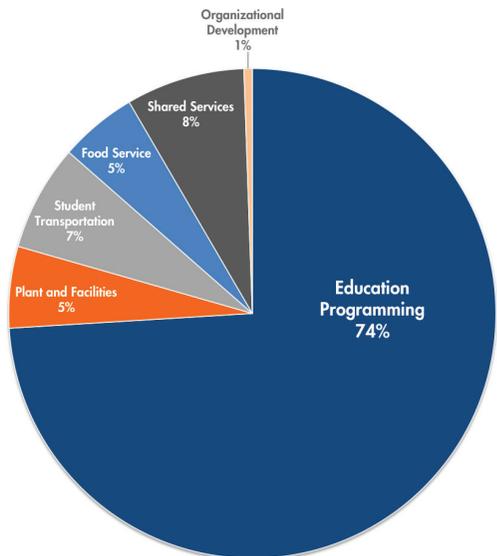


FirstLine Schools is a 501(c)(3), tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation. Our schools are all Type 5 charter schools in the Recovery School District, which means they are public schools, but governed by an independent board.

FirstLine is held to the same legal and financial regulations that govern traditional public schools.

FirstLine leaders are discerning managers of resources. Our aspirations for the programs we provide (extra support for struggling students, field trips, enrichment activities) exceed our public revenues. We rely on grants from corporations and foundations, gifts from individuals and in-kind donations to bridge the funding gap.

Expenses by Category



FirstLine has adopted strict budgeting policies and stringent internal controls to ensure proper stewardship of its assets. For a copy of the FirstLine audited financial report, please visit: www.firstlineschools.org/financials

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Partners in FirstLine's Success

Community partners are essential to our schools. They provide a breadth and depth of services that allow us to address the needs of the whole child in the context of the school community. FirstLine is grateful to the countless individuals and more than 50 organizations that have contributed thousands of hours to our success.

New Orleans Outreach and New Orleans Kids Partnership, both nonprofit organizations, coordinate community partnerships in our schools. To learn more about our partnerships or find out how to become a partner, contact Rebekah Cain at rcain@firstlineschools.org or 504-952-1331.



New Orleans Outreach

New Orleans Outreach, begun as a program within New Orleans Charter Middle School, links volunteers and community resources with public charter schools. During the 2010-2011 school year over 2,100 students from seven partner schools benefited from the work of Outreach volunteers.

In partnership with Outreach, FirstLine offers a range of enrichment classes and extended day programs. Students choose from a broad menu of sports teams, dance, music, visual arts, drama and more. All students participate in the activities at no cost to families. To learn more, visit www.nooutreach.org.



New Orleans
OUTREACH

DONORS AND VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP

Many thanks to the individuals and organizations who have part-
nered in success by supporting FirstLine Schools during the 2010-
2011 school year.

Foundation and Corporations

The Almar Foundation
Barraso, Usdin, Kupperman,
Freeman & Sarver
The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
The Booth-Bricker Fund
The Brunch Experiment
Circular Consulting, Inc
Educate Now!
First Baptist Church of New Orleans
F.I.S.H. Foundation
Freeport McMoRan Foundation
Garden Conservancy
GPOA Foundation
Greater Houston Community Foundation
Greater New Orleans Foundation
The Gustaf W. McIlhenny Family Foundation
The Home Box Office, Inc.
Junior League of New Orleans
The Keller Family Foundation
Libby-Dufour Fund
Milagro Foundation / W.K. Kellogg
The Mary Freeman Wisdom Foundation
The Murphy Family Foundation
Nestle Purina PetCare Company
New Leaders for New Schools
New Orleans Kids Partnership
New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival &
Foundation, Inc.
New Orleans Outreach
New Orleans Town Gardeners
New Schools for New Orleans
The Octavia Foundation, LLC
Pro Bono Publico Foundation
The RosaMary Foundation
Rosenthal and Jacobs Foundation
Ruth U. Fertel Foundation
The SF Foundation
The Walton Family Foundation
Whitney National Bank
Zemurray Foundation

Individuals

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Dickie Brennan

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Chase
Nancy Rutter Clark
Chuck Dunn
Randy Fertel
Carro Gardner
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Edible Schoolyard NOLA Culinary Board

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Chef Ambassador, FirstLine Schools
Chef John Besh, Restaurant August
Chef Susan Spicer, Bayona
Chef Frank Brigtsen, Brightsen's
Chef Leah Chase, Dooky Chase
Chef John Currence, City Grocery
John T. Edge, Southern Foodways
Alliance
Chef Donald Link, Cochon
Chef John Folse, Chef John Folse &
Company
Chef Allison Vines-Rushing and Chef
Slade Rushing, MiLa
Greg and Mary Sonnier, The Uptowner

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Send your tax-deductible
donation to:
FirstLine Schools, 4200 Canal Street,
Suite C, New Orleans, LA, 70119
or donate online at
www.firstlineschools.org

**We believe New Orleans can
be the first city in America
where every child goes to a
good school.**



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EDUCATION FOR LIFE