

Executive Summary

The founders of IDEA Public Schools NOLA recognize the critical importance of education in breaking the cycle of poverty and ensuring the success and long-term well-being of children and families in New Orleans. Through the creation of high-quality charter schools, the founders aim to strengthen their community and prove what's possible for all students when provided superior educational opportunities.

IDEA Public Schools NOLA will open two campuses in New Orleans, one each in 2019 and 2021. Each campus will serve students in grades K-2 and 6 in their first year of operation. The schools will expand by a grade per year at both the elementary and secondary level until each provides a full K-12 continuum for students.

We are particularly focused on opening schools in New Orleans because we believe that providing a high quality education for children living in poverty must be one of our most urgent public policy priorities. In many parts of New Orleans, generational poverty is crippling children and families who are forced to live in communities with high crime rates, lack of access to quality health care, poor housing and living conditions, high rates of unemployment, and chronically underperforming schools. Despite these challenges, we believe the city of New Orleans has communities with great pride that care deeply about their children. These communities want and need change, and we look forward to partnering with parents and community leaders to provide a high quality education that can transform the lives of children and families.

Despite strong progress on improving student outcomes since Hurricane Katrina, there is a sense that progress in New Orleans has slowed or stalled, and data supports this belief. While the primary theory of action over the past few years has been to grow and expand current charter operators to serve more students, the founders believe it is time to bring new operators to the table in an attempt to accelerate student achievement. Accordingly, the founders plan to partner with IDEA Public Schools, Inc. (IDEA) for education management services. IDEA is a nonprofit charter management organization (CMO) that has achieved nationally recognized success serving students from economically disadvantaged communities. As a network, IDEA currently serves over 25,000 students in the Rio Grande Valley, Austin and San Antonio, and has been recently authorized to open schools in Baton Rouge, LA. Of IDEA's current students, 86.1% are socio-economically disadvantaged students, 33% English Language Learners, and 96.5% are children of color. What sets IDEA apart is their demonstrated ability to increase student academic achievement and attainment for all students and close historic achievement gaps for student subgroups—African American, Hispanic, and Economically Disadvantaged. IDEA students outperform their peers on every Texas measure at the district and state level. Most importantly, IDEA's economically disadvantaged students outperformed state high school graduation rates by nearly ten percentage points, and IDEA low-income students are attending and graduating from college at five times the national average. These types of results are only possible because of IDEA's uncompromising commitment to:

- Creating a culture of high expectations for staff and students at every campus
- Placing a great teacher in every classroom and a great leader in every school
- Developing and implementing with fidelity a cutting edge program model
- Delivering unprecedented support for student to AND through college

Sixteen years of stellar education results reflect the strength of the organization's educational model as does the fact that for ten consecutive years, 100% of IDEA graduates have been accepted in college.

IDEA will provide the critical resources and expertise necessary to ensure our schools start smoothly and that they become models for academic and operational excellence. Among other things, IDEA will be responsible for recruiting and managing school leadership, faculty, and staff; developing and implementing the academic curriculum; and contracting for services. At the same time, our Board will serve as a strong governing body with ultimate responsibility for the educational, operational, and financial performance of our schools.

We have ambitious goals for our children – that 100% of them graduate and matriculate to and through college. We know that this requires a level of rigor that surpasses what is offered in many traditional public schools in urban communities. At the same time, the founders and IDEA are also committed to creating schools that offer a warm environment where children and parents are nurtured and supported and where children have fun. Our schools will nourish the innate joy of learning that all children bring to school and help them to build greater confidence in their own abilities.

IDEA Public Schools NOLA will offer New Orleans families a fundamentally different, community-based choice in public education. In so doing, the founders aspire to end the heartbreaking cycle of poverty, revitalize the most economically challenged parts of our city, and set the standard and the pace for educational change in Louisiana.