
LOUISIANA NONPUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE

2015 Annual Report



Message from Superintendent White

Dear Fellow Louisianans,

One of the most critical choices families make is where to send their child to school. Unfortunately, in a state where one out of every four children live in poverty, many families lack the financial resources necessary to have all choices available to them.

To ensure families are provided this opportunity, the state of Louisiana offers a comprehensive set of K-12 nonpublic school choice programs: the Louisiana Scholarship Program, the Tuition Donation Rebate Program, and the School Choice Program for Certain Students with Exceptionalities. The combination of these programs – each varying in student & school eligibility, funding, and regulations – maximizes the number of school choice options available for Louisiana's most disadvantaged students.

Families have expressed demand for these programs. Since 2012, nonpublic school choice program enrollment has increased by 300 percent. During the 2015-2016 school year, more than 8,200 students and almost half of all Louisiana nonpublic schools participated in a nonpublic school choice program.

Schools have responded with steadfast improvement in student achievement. Were the Louisiana Scholarship Program considered a school system in its own right for purposes of analysis, the Louisiana Scholarship Program would have ranked ninth out of seventy-one systems across the state in 2015 for annual improvement.

The promise to families that their children will be on track to a professional career or college degree starts with ensuring all families possess the fundamental opportunity to choose the school that will best prepare their child for lifelong success.

To our nonpublic school leaders, and to all educators across Louisiana, thank you for all that you do for our children.

Sincerely yours,



John C. White
State Superintendent of Education



Nonpublic School Choice Programs Overview

Introduction:

Parents know their children best. Louisiana Believes – the Department of Education’s comprehensive plan to ensure every one of Louisiana’s children is on track to a college degree or professional career – is based on the premise that families should be allowed to choose the school that is best for their child. This fact is not contingent upon a family’s income nor the ZIP code they live in.

Louisiana students and families deserve excellent school choices – be it from traditional school districts, public charter schools, or nonpublic schools. Unfortunately, while many families may feel a nonpublic school would ultimately best prepare their child for lifelong success, these families lack the financial resources to make this fundamental choice.

To ensure all Louisiana families possess the resources to make this fundamental, the Department has implemented and grown three K–12 school choice programs that provide families the financial resources needed to access the nonpublic school of their choice – the Louisiana Scholarship Program, Tuition Donation Rebate Program, and the School Choice Program for Certain Students with Exceptionalities. Each of these programs vary in student eligibility, funding, and program regulations – enabling the Department and participating schools to combine these programs to maximize the number of school choice options available for Louisiana’s most disadvantaged students.

School Choice Program	Louisiana Scholarship Program	Tuition Donation Rebate Program	School Choice Program for Certain Students with Exceptionalities
Student Eligibility	Students from low-income families entering Kindergarten or from a Louisiana public schools with a C, D, F letter grade	Students from low-income families entering Kindergarten or from a Louisiana public school, or previous Louisiana Scholarship Program students	Students with identified special needs
Scholarship Amount	Full scholarship for tuition and mandatory fees, avg. of ~\$5,500 per student	Partial scholarship, ranges from potentially up to ~\$4,000 to \$4,500 per student depending on the grade level	Partial tuition assistance, avg. of ~\$2,300 per student
How the Program’s Funded	State funded – through legislatively appropriated funds	Privately funded – School Tuition Organizations (STOs) fund student scholarships using private taxpayer donations	State funded – through legislatively appropriated funds
Key Program Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Open-admissions lottery process ✓ Students take all state tests ✓ Department makes school participation decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Scholarships awarded on a first-come, first-served basis by STOs ✓ Schools retain admissions process and criteria ✓ Students take only math and ELA state tests ✓ STOs make school participation decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students must have a special needs plan (created by a school district or the nonpublic school) ✓ Schools retain admissions process and criteria ✓ Department makes school participation decisions

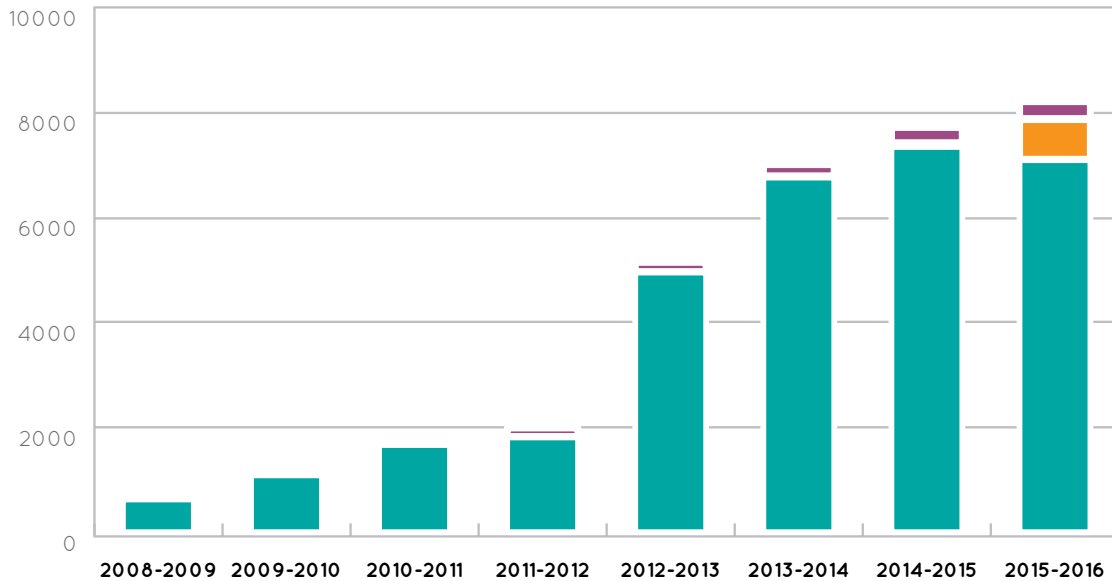
School Spotlight: The Dunham School in Baton Rouge, which participates in all three school choice programs

“The school choice programs have given The Dunham School an opportunity to engage with students eager to receive the college preparatory education that our school offers. Each program serves a different segment of the population yet with the common goal of helping students advance at any level.”
– Linda Spear, Director of Admission and Financial Aid

History of Nonpublic School Choice in Louisiana:

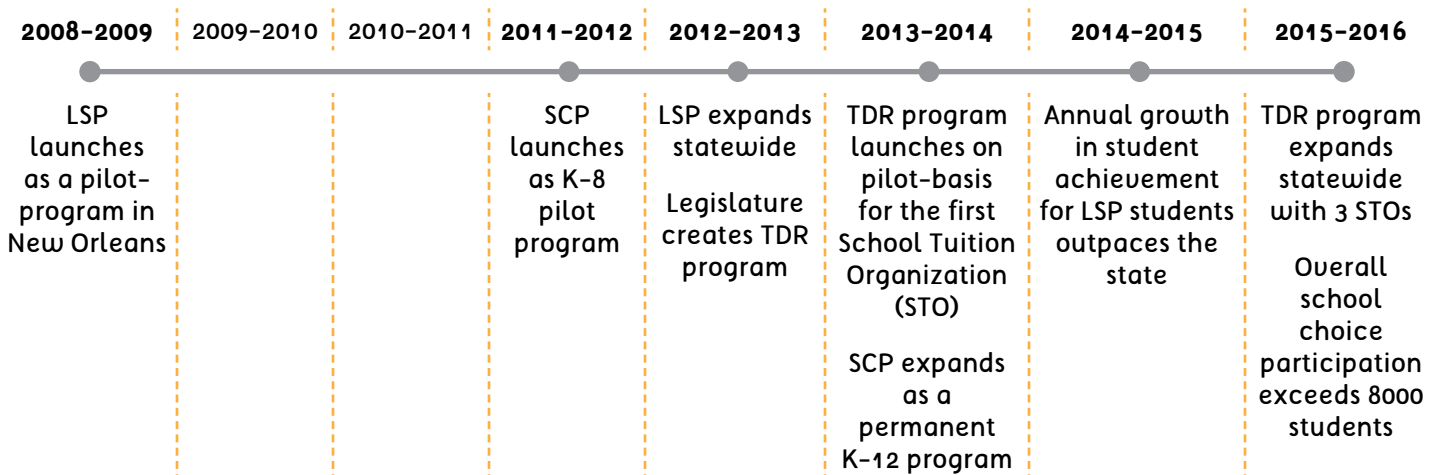
Since 2008 when Louisiana first established the Louisiana Scholarship Program as a pilot-program in New Orleans, Louisiana nonpublic school choice program participation has continuously grown as a result of increased parent demand.

● Louisiana Scholarship Program (LSP)
 ● Tuition Donation Rebate Program (TDR)
 ● School Choice Program for Certain Students with Exceptionalities (SCP)



	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
LSP	640	1100	1678	1823	4967	6778	7362	7110
TDR	0	0	0	0	0	16	63	776
SCP	0	0	0	182	197	233	311	342
Total	640	1100	1678	2005	5164	7027	7736	8228

Key moments in Louisiana nonpublic school choice history:

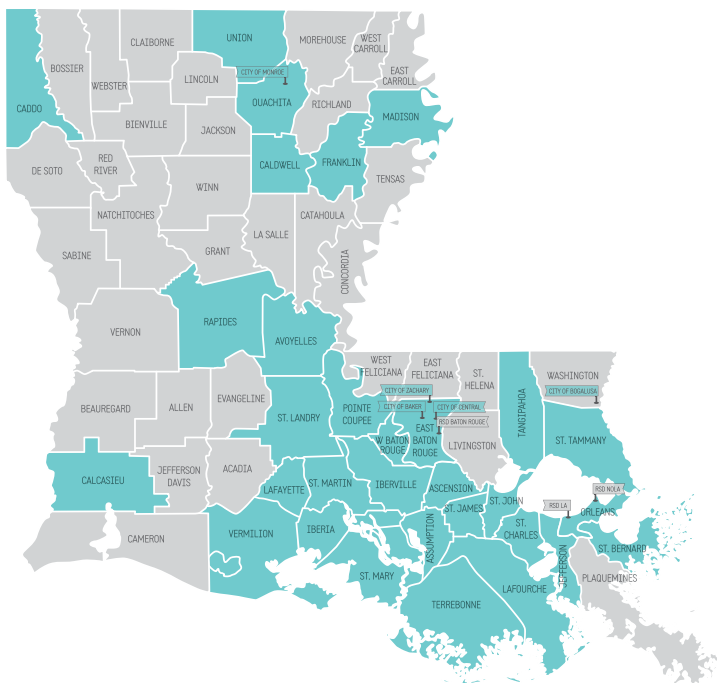


Since 2012, student enrollment in Louisiana nonpublic school choice programs increased by more than 300%

Current Participation in Nonpublic School Choice:

During the 2015–2016 school year, more than 8,200 students either from low-income families or with special needs enrolled in a nonpublic school across 40 parishes through a school choice program.

● Parishes with Nonpublic School Choice Options:



177 total schools – almost half of all approved nonpublic schools – participate in at least one school choice program. Of these schools, 73 percent participated in at least two of the three programs. To participate in any school choice program, all nonpublic schools must be both annually approved by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and certified as compliant with non-discriminatory policies and practices as required by *Brumfield v. Dodd*.



Academic Assessments and Accountability:

Louisiana students and families deserve excellent school choices. In the Louisiana Scholarship Program, students take the same state assessments as public school students and schools are held accountable for academic outcomes through one of the most rigorous nonpublic school choice accountability systems in the nation. The Louisiana Scholarship Program’s accountability system enables quality schools to continue to enroll more students while taking swift action to limit enrollment at lower performing schools. Similarly, students in the Tuition Donation Rebate Program take all required math and English Language Arts assessments and School Tuition Organizations may use academic outcomes to determine which schools they partner with.

Schools participating in the Louisiana Scholarship Program have positively responded to the program’s rigorous accountability system. Student achievement gains in the Louisiana Scholarship Program based on 2015 state assessment outpaced Louisiana’s statewide public school average. ***Over the last five years, the achievement gap between the Louisiana Scholarship Program and the statewide average of students in grades 3–8 scoring at least “basic” proficiency on state assessments has been cut in almost half from 32 percent to 18 percent.*** Furthermore, if the Louisiana Scholarship Program were treated as its own school system, its annual growth in student achievement from 2014 to 2015 would rank as the 9th most improved system in the state. Simultaneously, since 2012, 10 low-performing sanctioned schools have exited the Louisiana Scholarship Program.

Financial Accountability:

Louisiana has strong policies in place to ensure proper use of taxpayer funds as quality educational options are provided to Louisiana families.

Payments on behalf of nonpublic schools in both the Louisiana Scholarship Program and the Tuition Donation Rebate Program are variable and based on the tuition and fees charged for non-scholarship recipients at a given school. Louisiana Scholarship Program payments do not exceed the per pupil amount taxpayers would have paid for the student to attend public schools in their home parish. Tuition Donation Program payments may not exceed a certain percentage of the state's prior year's average state per pupil amount funding – 80 percent for students in grades K-8 and 90 percent for students in grades 9-12.

All nonpublic schools participating in the Louisiana Scholarship Program receive a rigorous annual, independent audit to ensure compliance with the guidelines established by the Louisiana Legislature and BESE. In the 2014-2015 school year, all participating schools were audited, and all except one were found to be compliant with program requirements. The Department took swift action to correct both the minor findings noted by the auditors and worked with the one remaining school to resolve the audit finding issue, including recoupage of scholarship funds.

For the Tuition Donation Rebate Program, School Tuition Organizations annually submit two certified public accountant prepared reports to the Department for review. The first annual report certifies the School Tuition Organization's financial reports comply with uniform financial accounting standards and is free of material misstatements. The second annual report contains information regarding student scholarships and ensures the School Tuition Organization properly accounted for taxpayer donations to fund student scholarships. After a thorough review from the Department, no School Tuition Organization has experienced any financial findings or areas of noncompliance with programmatic requirements.

About this report:

This report provides a snapshot of each nonpublic school choice program primarily during the 2014-2015 school year. The Department also included high-level 2015-2016 school year enrollment information. This report should serve as a useful resource to both families and schools to inform potential future participation decisions in school choice programs. The Department has included statutorily required information, such as 2015 state assessment results for Louisiana Scholarship Program schools, in the appendix. [Click here to see the Appendix.](#)

The Louisiana Legislative Fiscal Office and the University of Arkansas have conducted analyses on the annual cost of the Louisiana Scholarship Program to taxpayers. One focuses on the costs to the state, while the other addresses costs to taxpayers at both the state and local levels. The Louisiana Legislative Fiscal Office concluded that elimination of or reductions to the program would save the state money because, as program participants return to public schools, the state would pay a lower state per pupil amount than what is currently being paid on behalf of scholarship recipients enrolled in the program. Conversely, the University of Arkansas concluded that eliminating or reducing the program as a way to reduce state education expenditures could increase overall education expenditures in that total amount of public dollars spent – including both state and local – would increase. More information on these two analyses is available at http://lfo.louisiana.gov/files/publications/March_2016_Volume4_Issue8.pdf and <http://www.uaedreform.org/louisiana-sseep-evaluation/>.

If at any point families, schools, or citizens have questions about one of these programs, please contact nonpublicschools@la.gov.

Louisiana Scholarship Program

Program Quick Facts		
2014-2015 School Year		Student Eligibility Requirements
# Students	7,362	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Louisiana resident • Household income that does not exceed 250% of the federal poverty guidelines • Either a continuing scholarship student, entering kindergarten, or enrolled in a public school for the previous year with a C, D, F, or T letter grade
# Schools	131	
# Parishes with Scholarship Schools	32	
Aug. Scholarship/Student	\$5,545	

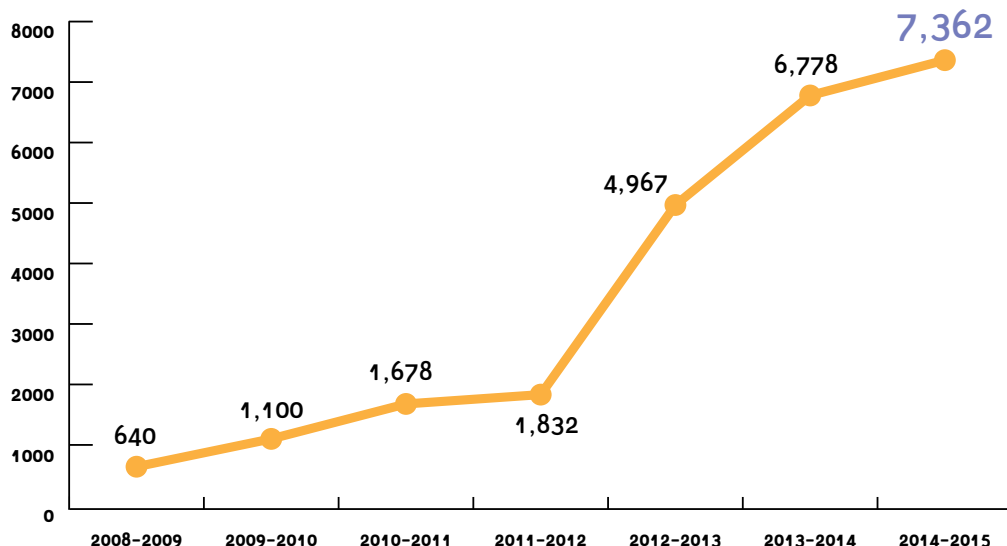
Louisiana’s oldest nonpublic school choice program, the Louisiana Scholarship Program provides thousands of students from low-income families, who would otherwise attend a low-performing school, with the financial resources to send their child to the participating school of their choice. Since its inception, families have consistently expressed both increasing demand for and satisfaction with the Louisiana Scholarship Program. Schools have responded to meet the needs of families – increasing the number of seats available while also making improvements in annual student achievement growth that outpaces the Louisiana statewide average.

“Good Shepherd has participated in the Scholarship Program for the last seven years. We feel that the program has benefitted both the students and the school. Funding through the Scholarship Program, helps Good Shepherd provide the types of academic resources and other supports that will help them achieve and become well-rounded individuals. The positive impact for the students, especially those who have been with us for a while, is manifested through their self-confidence and self-esteem once they have experienced success and realize that hard work and effort pays off.”

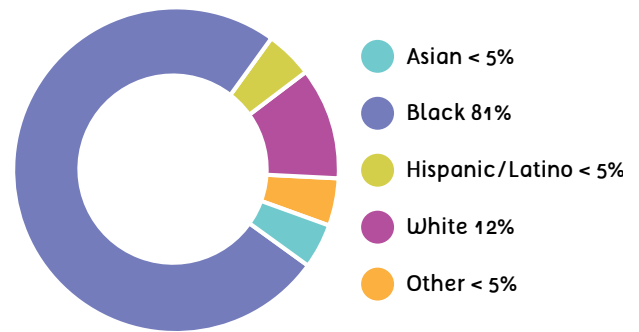
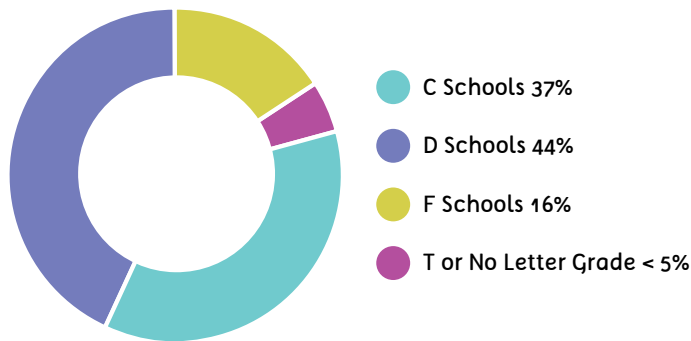
– Emily Paul, Principal, The Good Shepard Nativity Mission School

Enrollment

Since the pilot program launched in New Orleans in 2008, the number of Scholarships awarded each year has grown greatly. In the 2014-2015 school year, 12,012 students applied for Scholarships and 8,693 students, or 72.4 percent, received awards. 7,362 students accepted a Scholarship and enrolled in a Scholarship school in 2014-2015.



Minorities represent 88.6 percent of all Louisiana Scholarship Program students. A total of 1,917 (26.0 percent) of the 7,362 scholarship students were enrolled for the first time as a scholarship recipient. Of students entering the Louisiana Scholarship program for the first time from public school in 2014–2015, 63.5 percent previously attended D, F, or T rated public schools, 92.5 percent qualified for federal free or reduced-price lunch, and 2.4 percent had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).



Scholarship enrollment by grade:

Grade	Students Enrolled	% of Enrollment
K	1216	16.5%
1	1221	16.6%
2	1091	14.8%
3	745	10.1%
4	645	8.8%
5	564	7.7%
6	465	6.3%
7	445	6.0%
8	391	5.3%
9	262	3.6%
10	173	2.3%
11	97	1.3%
12	47	0.6%

“I never wanted or dreamed of going to college. But now I can picture myself going to college and getting a good job afterward, because the teachers at Lutheran pushed me to do my best and encouraged me to do something more with my life.”

– Destiny Gautreux attends Lutheran High School in Metairie






Academic Accountability and Performance

In summer of 2012, BESE adopted one of the nation’s strongest nonpublic school choice academic accountability systems for the Louisiana Scholarship Program. The Louisiana Scholarship Program’s accountability system sets clear minimum performance expectations for all schools based on student achievement results and enforces swift consequences for schools that fail to meet these expectations. While traditional public schools and charter schools face accountability consequences after four years of failing performance, Scholarship schools may be sanctioned from accepting new Scholarship students due to low academic performance after only two years of program participation.

This multiple-year approach ensures families continuously have access to quality participating schools while limiting enrollment in low performing schools. The program’s accountability system has successfully resulted in more schools now meeting performance expectations, the exiting of low-performing schools, and long-term increases in overall student academic performance.

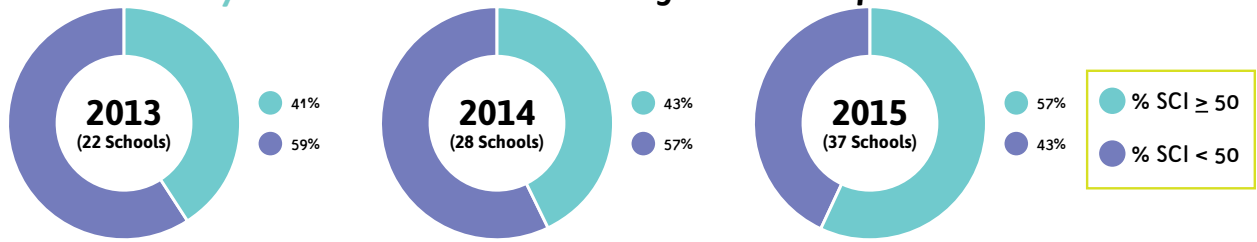
How the Louisiana Scholarship Program Accountability System Works

1 Initial School Participation	2 Assessing Student Achievement	3 Swift Accountability Enforcement
 <p>All schools must meet basic standards to initially participate in the program:</p> <p>Nonpublic Schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved as a nonpublic school by BESE • Non-discriminatory practices certified and Compliant with <i>Brumfield v. Dodd</i> <p>Public Schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public School with A or B letter grade & local superintendent approval 	 <p>Scholarship students take the same state assessments as students in public schools.</p> <p>Schools accepting a larger amount of students in tested grades receive a Scholarship Cohort Index (SCI) – a performance rating of Scholarship student achievement using the same formula as the School Performance Score for public schools.</p> <p>Schools accepting a smaller amount of Scholarship students in tested grades still receive indication of the % of students performing at different achievement levels.</p> <p>See “About Scholarship Cohort Indexes” on page 10 for more information.</p>	 <p>Student achievement results guide future school participation decisions. The Department sanctions schools in at least their second year of program participation from accepting new Scholarship students if they fail to meet the following performance expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools with SCIs: receive an SCI below 50 • Schools without SCIs: demonstrate “lack of basic academic competence” – have at least 10 tested students (and 40 tested units) and achieve less than 25% “basic” proficiency

Schools first received SCIs in 2013 based on academic performance during the 2012–13 school year. These results served as a baseline before any accountability consequences were enforced. Since then, the program’s strong accountability has been in full effect – enabling quality schools to enroll more students while limiting enrollment for low-performing schools.

Two years later in 2015, the majority of SCI-receiving schools now received an SCI score greater than 50. Two-thirds of Scholarship schools that received both a 2014 and 2015 SCI increased their SCI score, with half of these improving schools increasing their SCI score by at least 10 points. Of schools that received an SCI, 68 percent of Scholarship schools received Progress points in 2014–2015, a 14 percent increase from 2013–2014. This shows that more Scholarship schools are making progress with their most at-risk students. Simultaneously, 10 sanctioned low-performing schools have subsequently exited the program all together since 2012.

Accountability In Action: Schools Receiving a Scholarship Cohort Index:



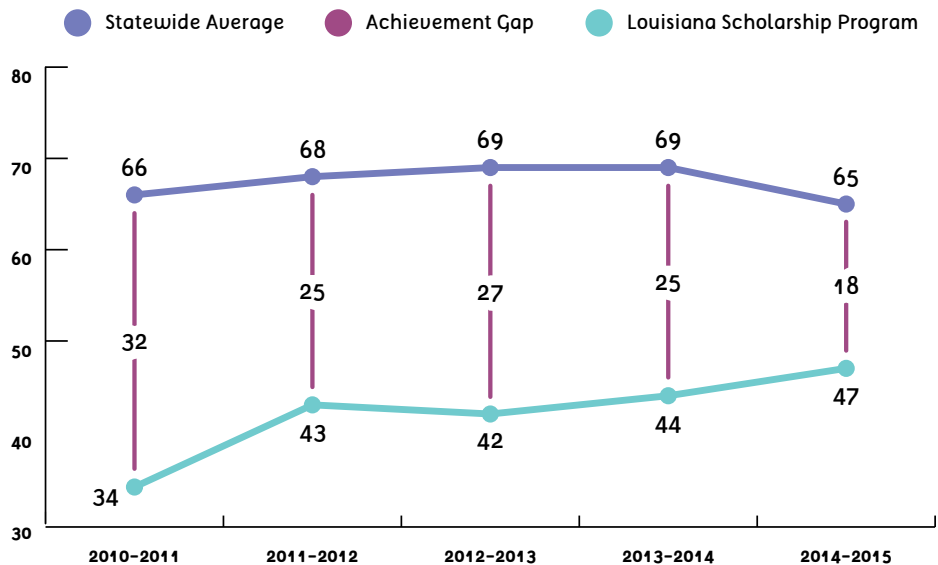
Number of Additional Schools Not Receiving a SCI but Still Sanctioned Due to Low Academic Performance:
2013: 7 schools **2014: 8 schools** **2015: 1 school**

Louisiana Scholarship Program Performance vs. Statewide Public School Averages:

As a result of strong program accountability, the increase in students attending more schools meeting performance expectations has translated to overall increases in program-wide Scholarship student achievement. In fact, student achievement gains in the Louisiana Scholarship Program based on 2015 state assessments – fully aligned with new, rigorous academic expectations – outpaced Louisiana’s statewide public school average.

If the Louisiana Scholarship Program were considered a school system with a system-wide performance score, the Louisiana Scholarship Program’s 4.7 point growth from 54.3 in 2014 to 59.0 in 2015 would have ranked 9th among all school systems for annual performance improvement.

Furthermore, the Louisiana Scholarship Program has closed the achievement gap with the statewide average by almost half (**44 percent gap reduction**) over the last five years for students in grades 3–8 achieving at least “Basic” proficiency.



In addition, when looking at annual growth from 2014 to 2015, the gains in the Scholarship students in grades 3–8 on achieving both at least “Basic” and at least “Mastery” across all subjects exceeded statewide averages:

	% “Basic” or Above			% “Mastery” or Above		
	2013-2014	2014-2015	Change	2013-2014	2014-2015	Change
Louisiana Scholarship Program	44	47	+3%	6	10	+4%
Statewide Average	69	65	-4%	24	27	+3%

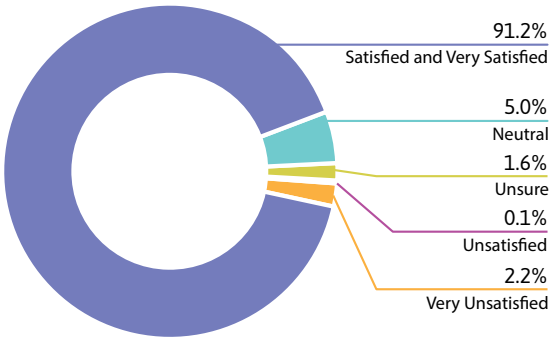
ABOUT SCHOLARSHIP COHORT INDEXES: Scholarship schools with an average of 10 or more Scholarship students per grade served or a total of at least 40 students in tested grades receive a **Scholarship Cohort Index (SCI)**.

The SCI is calculated in a similar manner to the School Performance Score (SPS) calculated annually for public schools. However, it is important to note that the SCI is based solely on the performance of students participating in the Louisiana Scholarship Program rather than the school’s entire student population. Participating nonpublic schools seldom utilize the same assessments for their non-Scholarship students. Like public schools, Scholarship schools that demonstrate progress with students who are below grade level may earn up to ten Progress Points. This measure rewards schools for making progress with their students who are the furthest behind.

[See the Appendix](#) for a complete list of schools with their 2015 Scholarship Cohort Indexes.

Parent Satisfaction

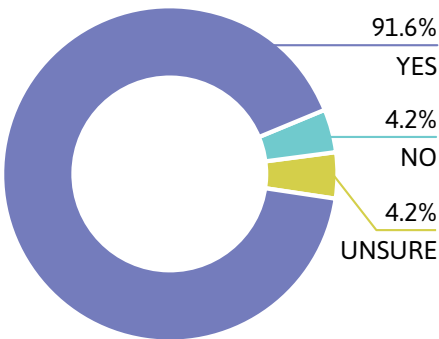
Families participating in the Scholarship Program continue to report overwhelming satisfaction with their schools and the quality of education their children are receiving. Over 1,500 families responded positively to a direct mail survey to evaluate parent satisfaction with the Louisiana Scholarship Program conducted by the Black Alliance for Educational Options and the Louisiana Federation for Children in April 2015.



PARENTAL SATISFACTION:

“Overall, how satisfied are you with your child’s current school?”

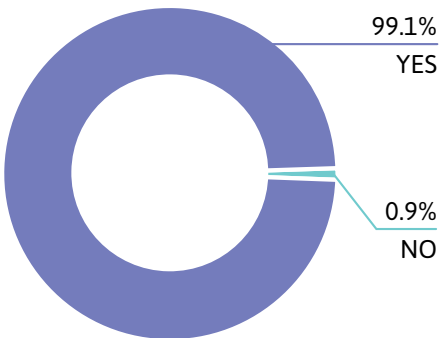
91.2%
of respondents are happy with their child’s scholarship school



ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE:

“Are you happy with your child’s academic progress at his or her school?”

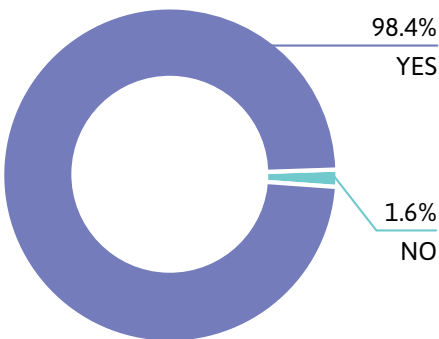
91.6%
of respondents are happy with their child’s academic performance



STUDENT SAFETY:

“Does your child feel safe in his or her Scholarship school?”

98.4%
of respondents feel welcome at their child’s scholarship school



SCHOOL HOSPITALITY:

“Do you and your child feel welcome at your child’s Scholarship school?”

98.4%
of respondents feel welcome at their child’s scholarship school

“I was extremely excited and overwhelmed that they are able to go to St. Benedict the Moor. Every parent should be able to choose the best school for their children.”

– Shermekia Bonnee, Parent of children that attend St. Benedict the Moor School

Tuition Donation Rebate Program

Program Quick Facts		
2014–2015 School Year		Student Eligibility Requirements
# Students	63	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Louisiana resident • Household income that does not exceed 250% of the federal poverty guidelines • Either entering kindergarten or enrolled in a Louisiana public • Or enrolled in the Louisiana Scholarship Program
# Schools	26	
Max Scholarship Cost per Student	\$4,048 for K–8 grade \$4,554 for 9–12 grade Families must pay the difference if tuition exceeds the amount of the scholarship.	

Program Overview and History:

The Tuition Donation Rebate Program (TDR) serves as a compliment to the Louisiana Scholarship Program by providing another avenue for nonpublic schools and low-income families to participate in a nonpublic school choice program. Created through Act 25 of the 2012 Legislative Session and launched as a pilot-program during the 2013–2014 school year, the Tuition Donation Rebate Program enables not-for-profit, tax-exempt School Tuition Organizations to collect private donations from Louisiana taxpayers and use these donations to fund student scholarships for low-income families to attend the nonpublic school of their choice. Taxpayers receive a rebate from the Department of Revenue after the end of each school year for the amount of their donation used to fund student scholarships.

School Tuition Organizations award scholarships to eligible students on a first-come, first-served basis. Unlike the Louisiana Scholarship Program, receiving an award does not guarantee placement at a particular school. Students must still apply directly to the nonpublic school of their choice for enrollment. Schools retain their admissions process and criteria when making enrollment decisions. If admitted, families may then use the scholarship to pay for tuition and are responsible for any fees and tuitions not covered by the scholarship.

About the School Tuition Organizations:

	ACE Scholarships Louisiana	Arête Scholars Louisiana	New Schools for Baton Rouge Excellence Scholarship Fund
Year started as an STO	2014–2015	2013–2014	2015–2016
Geographic Focus	Statewide	Statewide	Baton Rouge Region
2014–2015 # of student scholarships funded	13	50	n/a
2014–2015 # of participating schools*	3	24	n/a
2015–2016 # of student scholarships funded	558	205	13
2015–2016 # of participating schools*	77	50	4
STO Website	http://www.acescholarshipsla.org/	http://www.aretescholars.org/	http://newschoolsbr.org/our-approach/excellence-scholarship-fund/

*Schools may partner with more than one School Tuition Organization

During the 2014–2015 school year, two School Tuition Organizations – ACE Scholarships Louisiana and Arête Scholars Louisiana – awarded a total of 63 student scholarships through the Tuition Donation Rebate Program. The 2015–2016 school year saw the statewide expansion of the two existing School Tuition Organizations and the addition of a new School Tuition Organization in Baton Rouge. This overall program growth resulted in significantly increased enrollment growth to 776 students in the 2015–2016 school year across 104 different schools.

School Tuition Organization ELIGIBILITY Requirements:

To participate in the Tuition Donation Rebate Program and award student scholarships, interested organizations must submit a notice of intent to the Department and demonstrate that they meet the following eligibility requirements:

- ✓ Tax-exempt, not-for-profit organization with IRS recognized 501(c)(3) status
- ✓ Has no employees or board members that have been convicted or entered a plea of nolo contendere to a crime identified in R.S. 15:587.1.

Key School Tuition Organization PARTICIPATION Requirements:

Once the Department verifies an organization's eligibility, School Tuition Organizations must annually perform the following key program requirements:

- ✓ Award student scholarships on a first-come, first-served basis using a Department approved application
- ✓ Adequately advertise scholarship availability to the public, with an emphasis on notifying parents of students in public schools that received a letter grade of a D or F
- ✓ Issue scholarship payments to participating schools using private taxpayer donations on a quarterly basis
- ✓ Using funds retained for administrative costs (up to 5 percent of each donation towards student scholarships) to pay for required state math and ELA assessments for TDR students
- ✓ Issue two annual reports prepared by a certified public accountant to the Department pertaining to the School Tuition Organization's financial information and awarded student scholarships
- ✓ Follow all other program rules and policies found in R.S. 47:6301 and BESE Bulletin 134, as amended

The Louisiana Department of Education may limit or bar a School Tuition Organization from participating in the Tuition Donation Rebate Program if the School Tuition Organization intentionally or substantially fails to comply with these requirements.

2014-2015 Student Enrollment:

The 2014-2015 school year saw initially small overall program enrollment as School Tuition Organizations began establish themselves and prepare to significantly scale statewide for the 2015-2016 school year. During the 2014-2015 school year, 63 students participated in the Tuition Donation Rebate Program. Of these, 23 students enrolled in Kindergarten. The remaining program enrollment saw less than ten students enrolled in each subsequent grade.

School Participation:

The combination of the Louisiana Scholarship Program and Tuition Donation Rebate Program provide Louisiana nonpublic schools with two complimentary programs with varying student eligibility, funding, and regulations. Schools sign up to participate in the Tuition Donation Rebate Program directly with School Tuition Organizations rather than the state. School Tuition Organizations may use self-determined academic, organizational, and financial to determine which schools they ultimately partner with.

Some schools that did not originally choose to participate in the Louisiana Scholarship Program may instead choose to participate in the Tuition Donation Rebate Program – favoring the trade-off of a lower scholarship payment amount for less direct state regulation, such as maintaining the school's selective admissions criteria. Often schools participate in both programs, leveraging each program's unique characteristics to maximize the overall number of seats available to students from low-income families. Of the 104 schools participating in Tuition Donation Rebate Program during the 2015-2016 school year, 56 percent also participated in the Louisiana Scholarship program.

“Jesuit High School is excited to be a part of the Tuition Donation Rebate Program. The Tuition Donation Rebate Program is helping to communicate the message that our school welcomes all students, regardless of socioeconomic status. We are hopeful that more students will take advantage of the program.”

– Peter Kernion, Principal, Jesuit High School

School Choice Program for Certain Students with Exceptionalities

Program Quick Facts		
2014-2015 School Year		Student Eligibility Requirements
# Students	311	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Louisiana resident • Student has been evaluated by a local public school system and determined to have any one of the following exceptionalities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autism • Developmental Delay • Mental Disability • Other Health Impairment • Specific Learning Disability • Traumatic Brain Injury • Student has an Individual Education Plan, public school provided services plan or a nonpublic school created services plan to address the students exceptionalities. • Student is eligible to attend a Louisiana public school
# Schools	19	
Average Education Certificate per Student	\$2,233	
	Families must pay the difference if tuition exceeds the amount of the educational certificate.	

Program Overview and History:

The School Choice Program for Certain Students with Exceptionalities Program focuses specifically on providing families of students with disabilities with the tuition assistance needed to send their child to the nonpublic school that they feel will best address their child's specific needs.

Originally authorized as a pilot program for grades K-8, the 2012 Legislative Session solidified the School Choice Program for Certain Students with Exceptionalities Program as a permanent program and expanded the program to additionally serve grades 9-12.

Families participating in this program receive an educational certificate, which is paid directly to the school by the state on behalf of the family. The certificate is worth either approximately 50 percent of the per-pupil allocation of state funds to the student's local school district. If the school's tuition and fees exceeds the certificate amount, then parents are responsible for paying the difference. Students participating in the School Choice Program for Certain Students with Exceptionalities do not take any state tests.

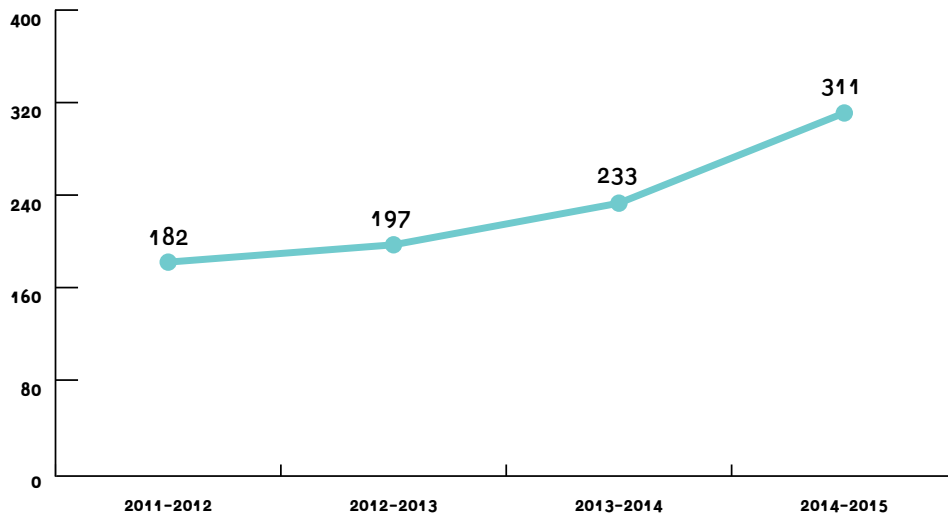
During the 2014-2015 school year, 19 total schools participated in the School Choice Program for Certain Students with Exceptionalities. Only schools with demonstrated evidence of serving students with disabilities and are located in parishes with a total population of 190,000 or more – Caddo, Calcasieu, East Baton Rouge, Jefferson, Lafayette, Orleans, and St. Tammany, may be eligible to participate in the program. Schools submit a notice of intent to participate to the Department on an annual basis. The Department awards educational certificates to students in a lottery each spring with a priority given to continuing students. Schools may retain their selective admissions criteria to determine if they will accept and enroll each student.

"For us, the School Choice Program for Certain Students with Exceptionalities allows placement in a school environment that not only meets the academic needs of my child, but also the social and spiritual needs. With all the stressors associated with being a parent of a special needs child, it is a relief, both emotionally and financially to have the School Choice Program assist with the cost of tuition in this loving learning environment. My daughter looks forward to school because she knows she will be included to reach her potential all day, every day!"

– Cassie Prudhomme, Parent of a student at St. Michael Special School

2014-2015 Student Enrollment:

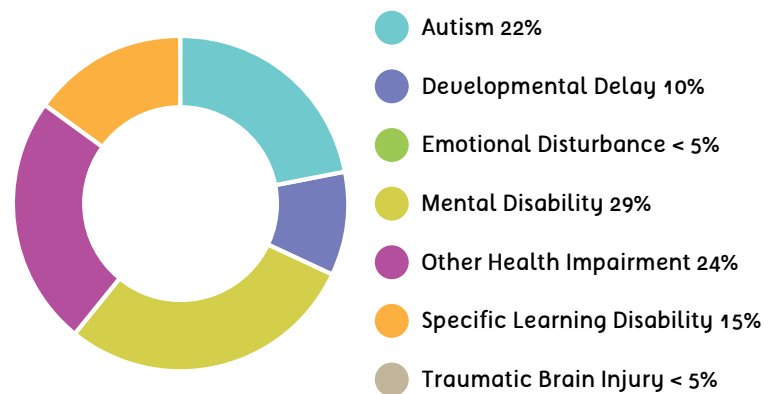
Since the School Choice for Certain Students with Exceptionalities first launched in the 2011–2012 school year, overall program growth has increased by 71 percent through the 2014–2015 school year.



Enrollment by grade:

Grade	# of Students Enrolled
K	≤10
1st	12
2nd	11
3rd	18
4th	14
5th	31
6th	23
7th	40
8th	20
9th	37
10th	25
11th	20
12th	59

Enrollment by Exceptionality



Conclusion

The Department believes that power to choose a child’s education belongs in the hands of his or her family, irrespective of the family’s zip code or socioeconomic status. By combining the three K–12 nonpublic school choice programs – each with their own varying student focus, funding, and regulations – enables the Department and participating schools to maximize the number of school choice options available for Louisiana’s most disadvantaged students.

[Click here to see the Appendix:](#)

- » [2014-2015 Louisiana Scholarship Program Enrollment](#)
- » [Spring 2015 Louisiana Scholarship Program Student Performance Rates](#)
- » [2015 Louisiana Scholarship Program – Scholarship Cohort Indexes](#)
- » [C, D, F, and T Public Schools Based on 2015 Letter Grades](#)
- » [2015-2016 Tuition Donation Rebate Program Participation Report](#)

[Click here to see the Legislative Report](#)