

New Orleans schools remain as segregated as before Katrina

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A new study from the Education Research Alliance for New Orleans (ERA-New Orleans) at Tulane University found that New Orleans public schools, which were highly segregated in terms of race and income prior to Hurricane Katrina, remain so, in most cases, nearly 12 years after the storm. Researchers with ERA-New Orleans analyzed changes in segregation across a number of student demographics, including race, income, special education participation, English Language Learner status, and achievement.

New Orleans schools were highly segregated prior to the reforms, especially in terms of race and income and the study finds that segregation levels remain high post-Katrina. There were no consistent trends in racial segregation. Among high school students, segregation increased for low-income students and English Language Learners, but decreased for special education students.

“Integrating schools has been a long-standing challenge for districts,” said Lindsay Bell Weixler, research fellow and associate director at ERA-New Orleans. “Our results for New Orleans confirm the broader national pattern that very few school systems—whether traditional or those with choice-based reforms—have had much success in integrating schools.”

This spring, the ERA-New Orleans is releasing a series of papers that focus on New Orleans teachers. The first study in this series, released in February, explored the effects of [Louisiana’s teacher tenure reform](#). Forthcoming studies will examine the implementation of the statewide teacher evaluation system known as Compass, as well as changes in teachers’ perceptions of New Orleans schools from those who taught before and after Hurricane Katrina.

In addition to Weixler, the authors of the current study were: associate director and senior research fellow at ERA-New Orleans Nathan Barrett; Tulane professor of Economics and founding director of ERA-New Orleans Douglas Harris; and associate

professor of sociology at New York University and research associate at ERA-New Orleans Jennifer Jennings.

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