

The decentralized New Orleans school landscape

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newwave@tulane.edu



Samuel J. Green Charter School is part of Firstline charter management organization, which operates multiple charter schools. (Photo from the Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives)

According to a [brief](#) released by the [Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives](#) at Tulane University, 60 percent of public charter schools in New Orleans are now part of a charter management organization (CMO).

A CMO is an organization that operates multiple charter schools. By performing many of the functions of a traditional school district, CMOs act as small, nontraditional school districts in an otherwise decentralized education landscape.

“This issue brief offers a unique analysis of the increasing prevalence of CMOs in New Orleans,” said Vincent Rossmeier, director of policy for the Cowen Institute. “The brief helps to highlight the benefits and drawbacks CMOs have for individual schools, students, parents and administrators.”

The brief found that since the 2006-2007 school year, the number of students attending schools within CMOs and the total number of CMOs have both increased significantly. There are now 12 CMOs operating in New Orleans, and some enroll more students than entire parishes in Louisiana.

The brief also explains how CMOs affect public school governance, including charter school boards. It provides both new analyses of CMOs, as well as foundational information so that the public can better understand the increasing importance CMOs have in New Orleans' public education.

While more research is needed to determine the effects CMOs are having in New Orleans, some possible positive and negative effects of CMOs are highlighted in the brief.

The mission of the Cowen Institute is to advance public education and youth success in New Orleans and beyond. Launched in 2007, the institute informs relevant stakeholders, decision makers and the public at large on issues related to K-12 public education, [opportunity youth](#), and college and career readiness.

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