

Student mobility dropped after New Orleans school reforms

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In New Orleans, students are less likely to switch schools than they were before Hurricane Katrina, according to a new report by the [Education Research Alliance for New Orleans](#) at Tulane University.

The report addresses a widespread concern that the new system, where families have considerable choice and schools are closed for low performance, may lead to a revolving door where students constantly switch schools. In reality, the opposite occurred. Specifically, the report concludes that:

- Total mobility declined between the 2004-05 and 2011-12 school years. In more recent years, students have become more likely to stay in the same school each year.
- Mobility has declined for all student groups, but the mobility gaps between black and white students and between low-income and other students have grown by 1-2 percentage points.
- Most types of mobility declined, including “non-structural” mobility where students had the opportunity to stay in the same school but chose to leave.

“There are several possible reasons why mobility declined,” said lead author Spiro Maroulis. “With the New Orleans system, it could be that families have become more satisfied with their initial choices and see less need to move, or it might be harder to enroll in preferred schools.”

The report also examined the characteristics of schools that students leave versus the ones to which they move. New Orleans students typically move to higher-performing schools, but lower-performing students are more likely to move to

schools with performance similar to the ones they left.

“Given the negative consequences of high mobility, the across-the-board declines in mobility are good news, but the data still point to concern about equity,” said co-author and ERA-New Orleans Director Douglas N. Harris.

The other authors on the report are Robert Santillano and Huriya Jabbar. The report covers the period prior to the OneApp enrollment system, which placed additional restrictions on school transfers that may have reduced student mobility further.

The report is available is available at <http://educationresearchalliancenola.org/>.