



Response to NACSA's Evaluation of Tubman2 Charter Application November 14, 2017

Crescent City Schools is pleased to present you with our official response to the NACSA recommendation to deny approval of our charter application to the Orleans Parish School Board to establish a Type 1 transformation school.

We appreciate that the evaluation team made written note of our strong academic program, steady operations, sound financial policies and systems, realistic budget, engaged board, and strong leaders. Crescent City Schools agrees with NACSA that we have a sound program and a solid plan for transformation. We too think we have a high capacity board and thoughtful, experienced leaders. We are excited the evaluation team recognized the strengths of the organization.

The evaluation team expressed a concern regarding "uneven results" in several places throughout their evaluation, which seems to be the basis of their inability to recommend our charter application for approval. They mention that concern in the third paragraph on page 6, again in the sixth paragraph on page 8, again on paragraph four on page 10, and again on paragraph five on page 12. In all four places, the evaluation team chose to gloss over the growth at Akili Academy and Paul Habans Charter School and focus only on the one school in our network with a decline last year.

We dispute the implication that the transformation of Harriet Tubman Charter School has not been successful. In 2010, this school was ranked 45th in the district with only 36% of students passing tests at basic+ and only 2% at mastery. In just two years, Principal Julie Lause and her team took it from an F to a C and for multiple years kept it in the top ten ranking of schools in the district. We improved our performance every year, with 60% of students scoring basic+ and 31% at mastery. After all of that progress over 6 years, we took a dip last year. In the spring, our basic+ percentage dropped to 54% and mastery to 20%. That dip does not represent a failure in leadership or "uneven gains." It is a dip in scores in a year when one third of the schools in the city lost a letter grade (and Tubman did not). We think the reviewers lacked perspective on the work of turnaround and what the progress at Tubman has meant over the last seven years.

Our state superintendent, John White, visited Tubman on Nov 6, 2017 and said the following: "This school is an innovative school that is doing things creatively for its families and for its children. It's also a great example of how the school came in, took over in a situation that was troubled, and has really turned it around. This is a school that is on the rise and that's great news for education in New Orleans" ([New Orleans Advocate](#), 2017). Like, Superintendent White, we are proud of that growth and stand behind the staff, students, and families at Tubman.

As for the other two CCS schools, Akili Academy was one of only seven elementary schools out of 62 to improve its letter grade last year, earning a C and securing a renewal. Akili earned 9 bonus points, which put it 7th in the district for growth with the lowest performing students. Paul Habans has made 20 points of SPS growth the last two years, ranking 5th in overall growth in

that time period. At a time when the majority of schools and CMOs in New Orleans experienced declines in many of its schools, we have continued to demonstrate success as an organization.

Crescent City Schools is committed to the development of open enrollment charter schools that raise student achievement and prepare students for college. While some other charter organizations in New Orleans choose to be academically selective, start one grade at a time, or find ways to keep students out by not providing busing to all or counseling out hard-to-serve students, we choose to do the most challenging work, that of whole school K-8 turnaround with students in poverty. Thus, at times, our results may appear to be “uneven,” but that is the reality of the work for us and for every other truly open enrollment school in New Orleans. Tubman has a deep bench, a talented leader, and has the capacity for turnaround work.

We worry the evaluation team does not understand the context of New Orleans or the challenge of the work that occurs in open enrollment schools. We will not sacrifice steady growth and the building of a solid foundation in order to attempt to demonstrate rapid and unrealistic growth. Lasting change will only come with slow and intentional work with students, families, and the greater New Orleans community. We believe we have much more to offer, and it is unfortunate that NACSA does not.