

Re: UPDATE: Senior Graduation Project Tracker 4.29.19

Monday, April 29, 2019 at 9:21:28 PM Central Daylight Time

email: "roderick.mathews@newbeginningsrds.net" and Roderick Matthews"

For email: "meghan@thedensquaregroup.com Meghan Turner", email: "kylan.gleason@newbeginningsrds.net Brian Gleason", email: "kimberly.owens@newbeginningsrds.net Co email: "andrew@thelionsquaregroup.com Andrew Touchette", email: "lauren.coleman@newbeginningsrds.net Lauren Coleman", email: "lisa.knight@newbeginningsrds.net Lisa Knight", email: "kimberly.owens", email: "lauren.coleman@newbeginningsrds.net Lauren Coleman", email: "tasha.daye@newbeginningsrds.net Tasha Barks", email: "tasha.daye@newbeginningsrds.net"

The schedule adjustment for ████████ and State ID has completed. I will give you the details in the morning.

On Mon, Apr 29, 2019 at 9:02 PM Meghan Turner <meghan@thedensquaregroup.com> wrote:

1 Hi Team,

Thank you for everyone's time today in Senior Graduation Project Check-in. Please see the following notes:

- 1. **NEW ACTION ITEMS & DEADLINES:** The tracker has been updated and next step items have been added (highlighted in aqua).
- 2. **FOLLOW UP FOR ABSENT STAFF MEMBERS:** I will follow-up directly with the three team members (Owens, Barks, and Matthews) not present at the meeting.
- 3. **MISSING ITEMS:** All missing items are highlighted in red. I will follow up directly with the leads of missing items.

If there are any questions or discrepancies, please let me know.

Item	Lead	Action	Deadline	Status	Support
EOC	Ms. Knight	Knight to send EOC status report for seniors	EOD 4/25	Complete	Dr. Malinda
	Ms. Knight	Knight to send any EOC updates	Noon 5/3	NEW!	Dr. Malinda
ACT	Ms. Knight	Knight to send ACT status report for seniors	EOD 4/25	Complete	Dr. Malinda
	Ms. Knight	Knight to send any ACT updates	Noon 5/3	NEW!	Dr. Malinda
Work Keys	Ms. Knight	Knight to send Work Keys status report for seniors	4/25	Complete	
	Ms. Knight	Knight to send any Work Key updates	Noon 5/3	NEW!	
Grad Point	Coleman	Coleman to obtain Grad Point report from Ms. Cooper and send to team	EOD 4/25	Complete	Owens (initially), Cooper (enroll students)
	Owens	Verify the Grad Point completion tracker matches students enrollment identification	EOD 4/30	NEW!	Cooper
	Calleman	Ensure all updates to tracker have been complete Outreach plan to students that have not received	Noon 5/3	NEW!	Cooper



5/28/2019

Esqale Yell - Re: JFD&E Senior Graduation Project Treasurer 4/2019

	Banks/ Owens	Run Powerschool Report and compile list of seniors with failed course this semester	EOD 4/30	NEW!	Devon (data); Knight (type of report needed)
	Banks/ Owens	Run Powerschool Report and compile list of seniors with missing credits	EOD 4/30	NEW!	Devon (data); Knight (type of report needed)
	Owens	FY19 certification		NEW!	
	Owens	Devon to run list of FY18 certifications		5/2 NEW!	
		FY18 summer certifications list verified			
		Identify students of students in listies cohort not at JFK		8/2 NEW!	Gibson/ Coleman
	SPS Clean	Devon			

Thanks,

Meghan C. Turner



Roderick "Devon" Matthews
Director of IT

6026 Paris Ave
New Orleans, LA 70122
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roderick.matthews@nisbaola.com | roderick@nisbaola.com



Re: UPDATE: Senior Graduation Project Tracker 4.29.19

Monday, April 29, 2019 at 9:21:28 PM Central Daylight Time

email: "roderick.matthews@newbeginningsnd.nel Roderick Matthews"
 To: email: "meghan@thenewbeginningsnd.com Meghan Turner"
 Cc: email: "andrew@thenewbeginningsnd.com Andrew Toussaint", email: "blair.gibson@newbeginningsnd.nel Blair Gibson", email: "kimberly.owens@newbeginningsnd.nel Kimberly Owens", email: "lauren.coleman@newbeginningsnd.nel Lauren Coleman", email: "lisa.knight@newbeginningsnd.nel Lisa Knight", email: "rachal.banks@newbeginningsnd.nel Rachal Banks", email: "sally.snyder@newbeginningsnd.nel"

The schedule adjustment for [redacted] and State ID has completed. I will give you the details in the morning.

On Mon, Apr 29, 2019 at 9:02 PM Meghan Turner <Meghan@thenewbeginningsnd.com> wrote:
 Hi Team,

Thank you for everyone's time today in Senior Graduation Project Check-in. Please see the following notice:

- 1. NEW ACTION ITEMS & DEADLINES: The tracker has been updated and next step items have been added (highlighted in aqua).
- 2. FOLLOW UP FOR ABSENT STAFF MEMBERS: I will follow-up directly with the three team members (Owens, Banks, and Matthews) not present at the meeting.
- 3. MISSING ITEMS: All missing items are highlighted in red. I will follow up directly with the leads of missing items.

If there are any questions or discrepancies, please let me know.

Item	Lead	Action	Deadline	Status	Support
EOC	Ms. Knight	Knight to send EOC status report for seniors	EOC 4/25	Complete	Dr. Mathis
	Ms. Knight	Knight to send any EOC updates	Noon 5/3	NEW	Dr. Mathis
	Ms. Knight	Knight to send ACT status report for seniors	EOC 4/25	Complete	Dr. Mathis
ACT	Ms. Knight	Knight to send any ACT updates	Noon 5/3	NEW	Dr. Mathis
	Ms. Knight	Knight to send Work Keys status report for seniors	EOC 4/25	Complete	
Work Keys	Ms. Knight	Knight to send any Work Key updates	Noon 5/3	NEW	
	Ms. Knight	Knight to send any ACT updates	Noon 5/3	NEW	
Grad Point	Coleman	Coleman to obtain Grad Point report from Ms. Cooper and send to team	EOC 4/26	Complete	Owens, Mathis, Cooper (entire students)
	Owens	Verify the Grad Point completion tracker matches students enrollment identification	EOC 4/30	NEW	Cooper
	Coleman	Ensure all updates to tracker have been complete. Outreach plan to students that have not received	Noon 5/3	NEW	Cooper

Google doc	Tamikal Coleman	Share google doc with Turner	EOD 4/25	Complete			Coleman
	Banks	Banks to run duplicate number report	Noon 4/25	missing			Mathews
	Mathews	Confirm team members with escholar access	4/25	missing			Banker Dr. Mahalik
State ID numbers			EOD 4/25	missing			
	Banks	Banks to generate ID report of current Knight and Coleman to communicate with senior teachers re: inputting senior grades and graduation flags	4/25	Complete			Knight
	Coleman	Verify all senior grades have been entered	EOD 4/30	NEW!			
	Mathews/ Banks	Run master list of senior students in Powerschool to begin a consolidated tracker of all missing items	EOD 4/30	NEW!			
	Turner	Create master consolidation senior listing template	EOD 4/30	NEW!			Knight
		Enter data on master consolidation senior listing		NEW!			Owens, Banks, Coleman, Knight
On Track to Graduation Report		Final report complete	5/3				
	Banks	Update schedule for Gustav	EOD 4/25	Complete			Devon (lead) and Coleman (student info)
	Coleman	Gustav to enter grades	EOD 4/25	confirmation missing			Gustav
		Retro Attendance entered (plan needed)		confirmation missing			Devon and Coleman
Schedule Ms. Gustav			EOD 4/25	Complete			Turner
	Coleman	Coleman to send Pupil Progression Plan to Turner	4/25	Complete			Coleman
	Devon	Devon to create code for PS retro entering (process must be approved first)	4/30	UPDATED DATE			Turner
	Devon	Devon check in with Turner on process and communication	5/3	NEW!			Mr. Jones
Attendance	Devon/ Coleman	Enter all make-up seat time attendance	NOON	Complete			Mr. Jones
	Knight	Knight to collect report from Mr. Jones and email to team	4/26	Complete			
	Knight	Set up meeting to discuss the issue and RTI process	4/28	Complete			
Senior Transfer Students flagged as 11th Graders	Owens	Owens to make sure the three student's reclassified student are on final checklist	5/2	NEW!			Knight

5/28/2019

Google Maps - Re: Concern regarding top students

Regards,

**NICOLE COOPER | ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL,
JOHN F. KENNEDY HIGH SCHOOL, @LAKE AREA**

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documentation re: Incomplete Grad Point

Google doc	Tarrick Coleman	Share google doc with Turner	EOD 4/25	Complete			Coleman
	Banks	Banks to run duplicate number report	Noon 4/25	Missing			Mathews
State ID numbers	Mathews	Confirm team members with scholar access	4/25	Missing			Banks/ Dr. Mathews
	Banks	Banks to generate OD report of current	EOD 4/25	Missing			
	Coleman	Knight and Coleman to communicate with senior teachers re: inputting senior grades and graduation flags	4/26	Complete			Knight
	Devon	Verify all senior grades have been entered	EOD 4/30	NEW			
	Mathews/ Banks	Run master list of senior students in Powerschool to begin a consolidated tracker of all missing items	EOD 4/30	NEW			
	Turner	Create master consolidation senior listing template	EOD 4/30	NEW			Knight
On Track to Graduation Report		Enter data on master consolidation senior listing		NEW			Owens, Banks, Coleman, Knight
		Final report complete	5/3				
	Banks	Update schedule for Guslav	EOD 4/25	Complete			Devon (tech) and Coleman (student info)
	Coleman	Guslav to enter grades	EOD 4/25	confirmation missing			Guslav
Schedule Ms. Guslav		Retro Attendance entered (plan needed)		confirmation missing			Devon and Coleman
	Coleman	Coleman to send Pupil Progression Plan to Turner	EOD 4/25	Complete			Turner
	Devon	Devon to create code for P.S retro entering (process must be approved first)	4/26	Complete			Coleman
Attendance	Devon	Devon check in with Turner on process and communication	4/30	UPDATED DATE			Turner
	Devon/ Coleman	Enter all make-up seat time attendance	5/3	NEW			Mr. Jones
	Knight	Knight to collect report from Mr. Jones and email to team	Noon 4/26	Complete			Mr. Jones
Senior Transfer Students flagged as 11th Graders	Knight	Set up meeting to discuss the issue and RTI process	4/26	Complete			
	Owens	Owens to make sure the three students reclassified student are on final checklist	5/2	NEW			Knight



May 7, 2019

Dear NBSF Families,

As you are aware, it has always been the goal of NBSF to be as open and transparent with our parents and students as possible, and to provide our community with as much information as we can. As such, we would like to update you on matters that have transpired over the course of the last few weeks. As you are aware, several allegations have arisen regarding NBSF. In response to these allegations, the Board responded with several steps including the selection of a new bus operator, the hiring of an outside independent investigator, and placing our CEO, Michelle Blouin Williams, on paid leave. Our executive team has worked tirelessly to ensure no disruptions to any of our schools and we deeply appreciate the work they have done.

The Board has been in constant contact with the investigators to determine whether any impropriety has occurred. We have also been in contact with Michelle Blouin Williams. On May 7, 2019, Michelle Blouin Williams tendered her resignation as the CEO from the NBSF Network.

For the duration of this academic year, our executive team will continue to lead NBSF with the support of the board. We have commenced the search for a new CEO to lead the Network and we are working to make sure that leadership is in place to start the upcoming school year off strong. We are confident that the Network will be ready to begin the 2019-2020 school year with strong leadership that is prepared to move us forward and give your children the exceptional educational experience that they deserve.

Providing your child with the best education possible remains our top priority, and we know that you share this same sentiment. We look forward to continuing to serve you and your student(s).

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this or any other school matter, please direct them to your school's leader, who will share them with the executive team. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Sincerely,

The New Beginnings School Foundation Board



Good Afternoon Everyone,

I just wanted to touch base and make sure we're on the same page about next steps from our meeting yesterday. Here's what I think we agreed on, please let me know if there's anything I've misunderstood:

I organized this by student issue. Questions I have are at the end of each paragraph, in blue.

ISSUE 1: Students with failing S2 grades.

---ACTION: Laney will go through the Fs list and check students' current grades in powerschool. After grades have been stored, Laney will print updated transcripts with final S2 grades to reflect the final grades, and put those in the graduation files.

ISSUE 2: Students with incorrect coding from classes taken at Lake Area/JFK, including:

-A: Health/PE issue from 2017-2018

-B: Semester 1 classes/grades from 2018-2019 that weren't stored

-C: Spanish I coded twice for a student when the student was enrolled in Spanish II

-D: Arts classes that need to be confirmed to have the state course code to meet the arts requirement

---ACTION: Ashley or Dr. Payne will provide documentation of what the student should have earned to Laney for the graduation file, and then submit a transcript change request (? or something? How are transcript changes made?) to the appropriate person.

---ACTION: Ashley will check the fine arts state codes to make sure that classes that meet the criteria for the Arts requirement are coded correctly (Graphic Arts, Music and Media, Drama I, and others.)

Question: *What is the process for updating transcripts in powerschool?*

ISSUE 3: Student transcripts missing required courses that were made up on Grad Point

---ACTION: Ms. Cooper will print or email individual reports for senior Grad Point progress to Laney, and then also submit a transcript change request (? Or however this is done) to the appropriate person so the courses can be added to the students' transcripts ASAP.

ISSUE 4: EOC scores pending for students

---ACTION: [Testing Coordinator] will print individual EOC test reports for all seniors and provide them to Laney for the graduation files.

---ACTION: [Testing coordinator, or anyone who can check the seniors' EOC scores] will communicate the final scores to the senior team, and I think Ms. Coleman? will contact the seniors who tested to inform them of their scores, and their graduation status.

Question: *Who is the testing coordinator? Who has the difficult task of talking to seniors about their test scores?*

ISSUE 5: Transcripts incomplete from prior years at a non-JFK/Lake Area school (this is for the students missing credits on their powerschool transcripts who took the course and somehow it didn't get onto their JFK transcript, or wasn't coded correctly on their transcript, but we have a physical copy of the credit given)

---ACTION: Dr. Payne will provide copies of those transcripts to Laney for the graduation file, and then submit a transcript change request [again, not sure the process for this].

ISSUE 6: Students who are, at this moment, still working on completing work for graduation requirements.

---ACTION: their grade will be stored when grades are stored as an F, and if they complete the work, whoever is in charge of this I think this is Ms. Coleman? can request a grade change for that student.

PLAINTIFF'S EXHIBIT "44"

tabbles

5/28/2019

Google Vault - Feed: Follow-up from yesterday's meeting

Question: who is the point person for this? What is the deadline for completing this work?

Issue 7: Final grades for S2 not stored in powerschool

—ACTION: The data team [Ms. Banks and Mr. Mathers?] will store final grades in powerschool by the end of the day today.

Issue 8: Some teachers have not submitted grade verification forms

—ACTION: Mr. Gibson and Ms. Cooper will contact individual teachers who have not turned in grade verifications.

Is there anything I missed? I'm working from home today but available by email or phone: 504-473-0481. I feel really hopeful after our meeting yesterday. Let me know if there's something more I can do to help.

Have a good day,

Laney French

Meghan C. Turner

Respectfully,

Ashlei E. DeLange, MA, PLPC

Professional School Counselor

JOHN F. KENNEDY HIGH SCHOOL @ LAKE AREA

6026 Paris Ave.

New Orleans, La. 70122

(504) 267-8811 Ext 3023

*ashlei.delange@newbergliningsnola.net

<ashleidelange@newbergliningsnola.net>

Re: Graduation roster

email: [Kathy Paduan](mailto:Kathy@thebernquiangroup.com)
To: email: [Brian Gibson](mailto:Brian.gibson@nordcingsinc.org)

Thursday, May 8, 2018 at 1:08:22 PM Central Daylight Time

Fantastic- glad to hear !!

Kathleen Paduan
504-655-0213

> On May 9, 2018, at 11:51 AM, Brian Gibson wrote:

> Additionally we have given Laney what she had been asking for. Fitz reach out to her so she can share. She's now working with Mr. Matheus

> Sent from my iPhone

>> On May 9, 2018, at 10:43 AM, Kathy Paduan wrote:

>> Mr Gibson,

>> Unfortunately I am in Memphis today or I would come and see you in person. It sounds as though there is some confusion about the process of certifying Seniors for graduation. Due to the sudden departure of your counselor and her apparent lack of completion of many tasks prior to leaving, I asked Meghan and later Delaney French to assist in this large task.

>> We have concerns about the lack of data for many students and even though we are very late in the game, with graduation happening next week, we must do everything possible to confirm which students have and have not met the requirements.

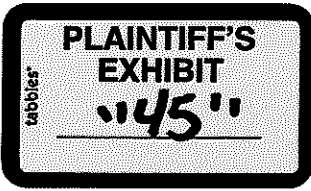
>> Please supply (or direct your staff to provide) Meghan and Laney with all data they have requested. I will be available by phone for a short time today and can meet you in person tomorrow when I am back in New Orleans.

>> Thanks in advance for your cooperation. We all have the students' best interests at heart and I'm sure we can accomplish our goals by working together.

>> Kathy

>> Kathleen Paduan

>> 504-655-0213



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Re: JFK update

Print all

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nicole.cooper to laneyfrench, meghan, talisha.pyne

[show details](#) [print](#) original May 14

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We look forward to seeing you on campus tomorrow.

Audit

Thanks

On Tue, May 14, 2019 at 8:51 AM Laney French <laneyfrench@gmail.com> wrote:
That's great! Thanks for letting me know. I'm finishing up the last 50 senior transcripts today from home, though I plan to be there at 9 am tomorrow. But I plan to send an update of the student's so far sometime this morning, and then another update at the end of the day.

I hope Senior Night went well!

-Laney

504-473-0481

Sent from my iPhone

On May 14, 2019, at 7:47 AM, Nicole Cooper <nicole.cooper@msub.edu> wrote:

Good morning,

Ms. Knight has prepared the testing documents that you requested. Will you be on campus today?

Regards,



List of seniors from today

Wednesday, May 16, 2019 at 1:43:36 PM Central Daylight Time

From: "laneyfranch@gmail.com Laney French"
 To: email: "lauren.coleman@newbeginningsnola.net Lauren Coleman", email: "talaha.payne@newbeginningsnola.net Talaha Payne", email: "nicole.cooper@newbeginningsnola.net Nicole Cooper", email: "meghan@thelettersquaregroup.com Meghan Turner", email: "roderick.maltbewe@newbeginningsnola.net Roderick Maltbewe", email: "shel,delarge@newbeginningsnola.net Ashiel Dalarge", email: "brian.gibson@newbeginningsnola.net Brian Gibson"

Hi Everyone,

Here's a summary of our work today. Thank you so much for your assistance.

We broke the remaining 52 seniors into case loads, according to where they are in the graduation / records update process. Please check these lists and let me know ASAP if something is inaccurate, if a student is in the wrong caseload.

1. These students are on Laney's case load. They have met the graduation requirements and documentation has been provided to Laney, now she needs to enter it into powerschool. They are **GRADUATES**.

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2. These students are on Dr. Payne's case load. They have most likely met the graduation requirements, but the documentation from Grad Point (or other sources) needs to be provided to Laney so she can verify that they have met the graduation course requirements. They are **PROBABLE GRADUATES**. Once documentation is submitted and reviewed by Laney, they become graduates (if everything is accurate and they have met the requirements.) These students are "no longer" working on course work, and we are just in the process of getting their grades verified and into powerschool.

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cc: Brian Turner

cc: Meghan Turner - Dr. Peterson questions

Re: Graduation questions

email: "Brian.gibson@newbedfordingschools.net Brian Gibson"
to email: "meghan@sheltonaquatics.com Meghan Turner"

Friday, May 17, 2019 at 11:43:36 AM Central Daylight Time

Meghan,

We understand the policy and stand by the decision regarding students not being able to participate in graduation based on not meeting requirements. [redacted] situation brings into question the overall policy regarding testing because he was not afforded every opportunity to sit for the EOC test. We definitely want to abide by all policies, but please understand that the school was negligent because unlike every other student he was not afforded every opportunity to demonstrate proficiency on this exam. We do not agree with this decision and feel that this decision is wrong. Our administrative team collectively agrees that he should be allowed to participate in the ceremony. Furthermore, [redacted] parents are prepared to meet with you at 12:30.

On Fri, May 17, 2019 at 11:39 AM Meghan Turner <meghan@sheltonaquatics.com> wrote:

Hi Mr. Gibson,

I agree that this an unfortunate situation. The student was flagged on our transcript audit for several weeks. We were told that the parent was aware of the EOC situation and your team was working to clarify the student number issue. However, the student does not qualify for graduation. Nine other students that did not pass an EOC test were told they could not participate in graduation. Allowing this student to participate would be inconsistent with the policy used for other students that did not pass the EOC. I would encourage you to be consistent with the policy used for the other students.

Best,

Meghan Caye Turner

On May 17, 2019, at 11 05 AM, Brian Gibson <brian.gibson@newbedfordingschools.net> wrote:

Hi Meghan

[redacted] is currently a 12th grade student who has been determined eligible for graduation based on not meeting EOC requirements. [redacted] has a unique situation in that he was told by the former District Test Coordinator (Dr. Russell King) and his Guidance Counselor (Aeriel DeLargel) that he passed the Biology EOC. The aforementioned Guidance Counselor has corroborated this statement. Additionally, [redacted] and his mother were provided with a passing Biology score at that time. Records show that [redacted] was not set for the Biology EOC since 2016, missing several opportunities to demonstrate proficiency on said test. Under the instruction of the new test coordinator, Lisa Knight,



[redacted] was advised that he did not meet the Biology requirement. [redacted] presented to Ms. Knight his two identification numbers and expressed that there was an error as a result of him having multiple numbers. We are asking that he be allowed to participate in the ceremony (please note: he will NOT receive a high school diploma) with the condition that he and his parent sign an agreement with the school that outlines stipulations for participation. We appreciate your support on this matter as this is a very sensitive issue regarding miscommunications from network and school site personnel to a student and his family.

On Fri, May 17, 2019 at 10:27 AM Meghan Turner <mtturner@thelakeareapdxil.com> wrote:
Hi Mr. Gibson,

We reviewed a full listing of graduates yesterday afternoon with your team. Please respond with a written request for the students you wish to participate in graduation. I will connect with you after this meeting and once I've received the students names in writing and review the records.

Thanks,

Meghan Caye Turner

Regards,

Blake K. Gibson
Principal
JOHN F. KENNEDY HIGH SCHOOL @LAKE AREA
bkdgibson@jfkhsjlin.lakeareapdxil.com | 504-267-8811 (office)

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Re: Concern regarding top students

email: "laneyfrench@gmail.com Laney French"
To: email: "nicole.cooper@newbeginningsncola.net Nicole Cooper"

Friday, May 17, 2019 at 1:44:38 PM Central Daylight Time

I don't know if this is at all helpful, since I can't really confirm or deny whether an issue exists. I can't tell by looking whether GPAs are right or wrong, and I haven't done any investigating. My memory of that day was that you and I believed that the GPAs should be based on what is in powerschool and what will be on student's transcripts, and I still believe that's important. If you're willing to wait until we submit transcripts to STS to determine who is the Val and Sal, that would be the most official way to make the determination. But it obviously couldn't be done by the ceremony today.

On Fri, May 17, 2019 at 1:23 PM Laney French <laneyfrench@gmail.com> wrote:

I remember this conversation from the day we stored grades and added their semester 2 grades and their dual enrollment + grad point credits.

I don't know what to advise. Historical grade data is riddled with errors that might be affecting the GPA but I can't be certain because this is not something I've dealt with before. (For example, I've found classes that are listed with 0 earned credit and 1 potential credit, even though the grade was a passing grade. I've also found grades with 1 earned credit and 0 potential credit, which isn't right- if a grade earns credit, it should have the same amount in both "earned credit" and "potential credit" fields. That might be affecting which grades are going into the calculation of the GPA. This is only one type of error that was common, and that I tried to fix when I saw it but can't be 100% certain it was fixed for all grades on each top senior's transcript. I also don't know if quarter grades and semester grades that don't receive credit are somehow factoring into the GPA since I didn't set up the GPA in powerschool and I haven't looked into how it is calculated.)

To be perfectly frank, this is not a problem that I can solve easily, or even in a matter of hours. I don't even know for sure whether the data issues I've discovered are affecting GPAs.

On Fri, May 17, 2019 at 12:04 PM Nicole Cooper <nicole.cooper@newbeginningsncola.net> wrote:

Good afternoon, Laney.

I am writing to share concern voiced by Ms. DeLarge this morning in regard to the calculation of the valedictorian and salutatorian grade point averages. She is not in agreement with the outcome of the work we did collectively to ensure a final vetted listing of the top students of this class.

Please advise

-



Fwd: Concerns

email: "brian.gibson@newbeginningsnola.net Brian Gibson"
To: email: "laneyfrench@gmail.com Laney French"

Saturday, May 18, 2019 at 9:26:34 PM Central Daylight Time

Hi Laney

Hope all is well. I just wanted to keep you in the loop of my email below.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Brian Gibson <brian.gibson@newbeginningsnola.net>
Date: Sat, May 18, 2019 at 4:58 PM
Subject: Concerns
To: Meghan Turner <Meghan@thetensquaregroup.com>

Hi Meghan,

First and foremost, please advise why PowerSchool access has been taken from all of the Admins at JFK without any notice or communication.

Secondly, I'm very concerned about how this narrative is playing out regarding the 2019 candidates for graduation. My team and I, have only served as a constant and in a lot of cases the only support to Laney's attempt at creating an accurate graduation list. This is and should've always been the work of the counselors and data manager. Prior to TenSquared coming aboard, the counselors (Mrs. Owens & Ms. Delarge) in conjunction with the data manager (Rachael Banks), with oversight from Mr. Matthews was given the charge of creating a potential graduate list. This list never materialized, in fact when you joined us, you were still asking for that very list. Since you came on Mrs. Owens quit and provided very little for Laney to work with and offered no help. Rachael Banks worked sparingly and resigned after taking off close to two weeks straight and left with very little done to help this process. I believe that what these ladies did was always what they had intended to do, which was to leave this senior cohort in complete disarray.

Despite our many challenges, our team remained committed to ensuring that our students would not be negatively impacted by the lack of professionalism displayed by the aforementioned. In our very first team meeting with Laney, a list was presented by you and Mr. Matthews that had many questions about seniors. I shared with you and others that we had been working proactively to produce a list that could be used as a reference. The conclusion from that meeting was the team had presented a lot of information for Laney to begin her process. Since then, my team has worked diligently as a support to Laney to help clear up any questions about seniors. My team greatly valued Laney's work and never worked in isolation of the established process. Somewhere in this last two or three weeks, my team became the owners of this work in conjunction with Laney, when this was and should've always been the work of the counselors, data manager and Devon. To now put this work under so much scrutiny, as if we were the only owners of it, doesn't feel right.





☰ Menu

SCHOOLS

Kennedy High School seniors await transcripts as charter board investigates 'malfeasance'

by MARTA JEWSON
MAY 28, 2019



Kennedy High School senior Ta'Janique Alphonse leaves a board meeting. She's waiting for her transcript after walking at graduation 10 days ago.

Ten days after their graduation ceremony, anxious John F. Kennedy High School seniors — still waiting for their high school transcripts — showed up to their charter network's board meeting Tuesday, hoping for answers amid an investigation into **grade inflation at the Gentilly high school**. Several students said they need the transcripts as proof of graduation before enrolling in college or finalizing financial aid.

Board President Raphael Gang said he wasn't aware of the problem with the transcripts. But late in the meeting, he said there may be "implications" for some seniors as a result of the grade-fixing investigation.

Senior Ta'Janique Alphonse, clad in Kennedy blue and gold, waited in the hallway for an hour and a half with at least 25 other alumni, parents and students as the board discussed the investigation behind the library's doors guarded by armed security guards.

Alphonse wants to attend Xavier University this fall. Her mother, LaToya Banks, said they are waiting for her transcript.

"I'm very upset," she said. "I think this is very unprofessional."

The students have endured a tumultuous spring. Months before graduation, students' grades were called into question by a former employee who said he had evidence that administrators had turned failing grades into passing grades. The New Beginnings Schools Foundation, which runs Kennedy, **began an investigation**. So did the Orleans Parish School Board.

**"I just want to come out with a diploma."—
Semaj Allen**

Then, on May 7, **the network's CEO Michelle Blouin-Williams resigned**. On Friday, the network told parents **five Kennedy staff members were no longer employed**, saying in a letter that investigators had presented "strong evidence of improper conduct."

The letter also alluded to potential impacts on students, saying that the network was "still going through the records of each of our students in detail."

Waiting in the hallway with Alphonse on Tuesday, senior Asia Stepter said she can't get proof of her graduation and described a scramble in the weeks leading up to the ceremony.



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[I'm not interested](#)

“They had people taking tests the day before graduation,” she said.

Another senior described a similar scene.

“It’s falling back on us,” Semaj Allen said. “I just want to come out with a diploma.”

The 18-year-olds said they were instructed to come in the week after graduation to pick up their diplomas. When they did, Alphonse said they were told they weren’t ready.

Asked about transcript delays, New Beginnings board chair Raphael Gang said he hadn’t heard of the issue, but told any families experiencing the problem to get in touch with the network.

The Orleans Parish school district is continuing to investigate, spokeswoman Tania Dall confirmed. Two district employees, Dina Hasiotis and Kelli Peterson were at the meeting Tuesday.

“We acknowledge and recognize the frustration students and families are experiencing given the recent information shared by the New Beginnings Schools Foundation (NBSF) board,” Dall wrote in an emailed statement after Tuesday’s meeting. “At this time, our investigation into NBSF remains ongoing. We have communicated to the board of the NBSF that they must quickly and accurately assess the extent to which any wrongdoing has impacted graduating seniors and to immediately put a plan in place to support students in meeting any unmet requirements.”

The New Beginnings board met with lawyers for an hour and a half while parents, employees and Kennedy alumni — from decades ago and 2019 alike

— stood in the hallways of Pierre A. Capdau Charter School waiting for an invitation to re-enter the board meeting.

Among those waiting was Dory Tarver, an employment lawyer for Runell King. As The Lens reported, King, a former New Beginnings employee, reported **the grade changes** as suspicious earlier this year. He was suspended from his job and fired soon after. At the time, administrators — including Blouin-Williams — said an internal investigation did not find any evidence to support his allegations.

”We have communicated to the board of the NBSF that they must quickly and accurately assess the extent to which any wrongdoing has impacted graduating seniors and to immediately put a plan in place to support students in meeting any unmet requirements.”—Tania Dall, Orleans Parish school district

The network, however, reversed course after **the allegations went public in late March**, soon hiring law firm Adams and Reese to **perform an independent investigation**.

Tarver said drawing any conclusions about King’s standing from Friday’s announcement that five staff members were “no longer employees” with the network would be “speculative.” She said she still hopes to see the board’s investigation.

“I would hope they would make it open to Dr. King at least, if not the public,” she said Tuesday.

Gang read a statement after the public was invited back in to the meeting.

“Our investigation into the malfeasance at John F. Kennedy High School is continuing, and we are pursuing all the implications of that investigation,” he said.

“We are also determining whether there are implications for any students in the graduating class of seniors,” Gang said. “We don’t have all the answers yet, and our team is working as fast as possible to get them.”

“It is our commitment to keep students, families and the community up to date with what we know, when we know it,” he said.

“We want to express our deepest apologies to every student and family at John F. Kennedy High School,” he said. “We are frustrated that our students and families have been put in this situation and we are determined to make it right as soon as possible.”

“I already have dorm fees that have been paid and we don’t even have a transcript,” one parent told the board during public comment. “We go to orientation Thursday. The college needs a transcript.”

Brian Gibson, the school’s former principal, one of the five administrators who lost their jobs, also spoke. He said no one from Adams and Reese, the law firm conducting the investigation, spoke with his administration.

“I want you to be extremely specific about the things I have done,” he said.

A few minutes later, the board voted unanimously to ratify personnel decisions that included Gibson and four other employees no longer working at the school. After the meeting, Gang would not clarify whether they had been fired or resigned due to legal reasons.

The charter board voted to add three new board members, Michael Hubbard, Kendra Norwood and Brianna Spruille White to the board prior to the executive session so they could get up to speed on the investigation. White was the only new member present.

Gang said the board will update families and the public at a board meeting on June 8.

Related

Week in Review: State looking into Kennedy High practices in midst of grade fixing investigation

Emails: Kennedy High School administrators scrambled to confirm graduates' eligibility, even after graduation day.

New Beginnings board unable to give Kennedy High School parents update on graduation review

MARTA JEWSON

Marta Jewson covers education in New Orleans for The Lens. She began her reporting career covering charter schools for The Lens and helped found the hyperlocal news site Mid-City Messenger. Jewson returned... **More by Marta Jewson**

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5/20/2019

Google Walk - Senior transcripts - draft

Senior transcripts - draft

Tuesday, May 21, 2019 at 8:32:28 PM Central Daylight Time

From: "Janey French@gmail.com Janey French"
To: email: "ashlei.delarge@newbeginningsnola.net Ashlei Delarge", email: "meghan@lifersquestgroup.com Meghan Turner", email: "roderick.mathews@newbeginningsnola.net Roderick Matthews"

Hi Ashlei,

I've made the following changes to transcripts and would love your help checking my work. Could you flip through these and let me know if you see something incorrect?

- Issues (hopefully) cleared up
- double credits for S2 + Y1 of 2017-2018 removed
- credit for homeroom removed
- Health and PE 1 (.5) each given .5 credit
- Dual Enrollment credits added (for all but one student- need to figure out course code for Sociology and Bio101)
- Credit recovery from individual teachers added/updated

STILL NOT ALL ADDED TO TRANSCRIPTS

- Grad Point credits/grades (some have been added but most have not)
- Spanish II updates
- transfer transcript corrections not all made

Please let me know if you see any of the things I supposedly fixed that aren't fixed, or if you see any issues I don't already know about. Thanks!

Wednesday, May 22, 2019 at 8:54:37 AM Central Daylight Time

email: "ashleidelarge@newbeginningsnola.net Ashlei Delarge"
To: email: "JaneyFrench@gmail.com Janey French"
Cc: email: "meghan@lifersquestgroup.com Meghan Turner", email: "roderick.mathews@newbeginningsnola.net Roderick Matthews"

Good Morning,
Will do
Respectfully,
Ashlei E. Delarge, MA, PLPC
Professional School Counselor



5/28/2019

Google Mail - Sent version.html

JOHN F. KENNEDY HIGH SCHOOL @ LAKE AREA
6026 Paris Ave.
New Orleans, La. 70122
(504) 267-8811 Ext 3023
† ashlei.delarge@newbeginningsda.net
<ashleidelarge@newbeginningsda.net>

On Tue, May 21, 2019 at 8:32 PM Laney French <laneyfrench@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Ashley,

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Please let me know if you see any of the things I supposedly fixed that aren't fixed, or if you see any issues I don't already know about. Thanks!



May 24, 2019

To Our John F. Kennedy High School Families,

As you may know, we hired the Adams and Reese law firm to conduct an investigation into recent allegations of grade inflation and other issues with student credits. At the start of that investigation, we promised to keep you apprised of any developments regarding the investigation. Accordingly, we want to take this opportunity to notify you about some recent changes at John F. Kennedy High School at Lake Area.

While the final report will be delivered next week, we were presented with strong evidence of improper conduct by members of our staff and we took decisive action. As of today, the principal and four members of the JFK Leadership Team are no longer employees of NBSF.

We are still going through the records of each of our students in detail. We will follow-up with each affected student and family as soon as possible.

Our Board will meet this coming Tuesday, May 28th, at 5:30pm at Pierre A. Capdau Charter School at Avery Alexander (5800 St Roch Ave, New Orleans, LA 70122) to discuss the findings of the investigation and our plan moving forward.

Providing our students with an excellent education remains our top priority. While we are extremely disappointed with these findings, we are committed to resolving these issues for our students and moving forward with a strong team in place for the 2019-2020 school year.

Sincerely,

Raphael Gang
Board President
New Beginnings Schools Foundation





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Sincerely,

Raphael Gang
Board President
New Beginnings Schools Foundation





May 24, 2019

Via Certified Mail and/or Email
Brian Gibson



Dear Mr. Gibson

As you are aware, NBSF leadership requested an investigation into several allegations made against John F. Kennedy High School at Lake Area. Those allegations included, but were not limited to, the allegation of improper/inaccurate grade adjustments.

During the investigation, it became clear that you engaged in activities that violated your duties to the students and violated school policies and procedures as it relates to grading and grade adjustments. Accordingly, effective May 24, 2019, you are terminated from your employment with New Beginnings Schools Foundation. Your final paycheck will be provided in the delays allowed by law. That paycheck will include any and all amounts due to you per NBSF policy.

Your health insurance coverage will be effective until May 31, 2019, if you have elected coverage. Please be advised that you and your eligible dependents may continue participation in the organization's group medical and dental plans through the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA). Please contact Human Resources for more information. You should also receive information in the mail regarding your coverage. Please note, there are deadlines to opt into Cobra coverage. Immediate review and acceptance of your Cobra benefits will ensure that you retain your eligibility.

Additionally, you are required to immediately return all of the school's property obtained during your employment including, but not limited to, tangible property (which includes computers, identification badges and keys) and any materials of any kind that contain or embody any proprietary or confidential information of the New Beginnings Schools Foundation and/or JFK High School at Lake Area. These items are to be turned in to Michael Washington, the Director of Human Resources immediately or no later than the close of business, Tuesday, May 28, 2019. Equipment that is not returned will be considered stolen, and may result in a charge for its replacement.

Respectfully,

Michael L. Washington, M. A.
Director of Human Resources

cc: Employee File

PLAINTIFF'S
EXHIBIT
"56"

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

TO: Henderson Lewis, Jr., Ph.D., Superintendent

FROM: Dr. Kelli Peterson,
Chief Portfolio Innovation & Accountability Officer

DATE: September 25, 2019

RE: New Beginnings Schools Foundation Investigation Report

Issue:

On February 28, 2019 the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) received written notification from Dr. Runell King, former Director of Data, Assessment & Accountability at John F. Kennedy at Lake Area High School (JFK), alleging multiple wrongdoings by New Beginnings Schools Foundation: grade changing scheme, mishandling of an investigation, mishandling of a grievance, and employee retaliation.

Investigation:

To assess the allegations asserted by Dr. King, the OPSB administration reviewed additional documentation provided by Dr. King and New Beginnings School Foundation Former CEO, Michelle Blouin-Williams and Human Resources Director, Michael Washington. These documents, along with all documents reviewed, are included as an addendum to this report.

On March 7, 2019 Gayla Mair, Director of School Performance, and Dr. Kelli Peterson, Senior Equity and Accountability Officer conducted a meeting with Dr. Runell King following up on a letter that he sent to OPSB Administration via email alleging grade changes at John F. Kennedy at Lake Area High School had occurred. On March 12, 2019, OPSB leadership (Dr. Peterson and Ulyses Collins) met with NBSF leadership, who shared additional documentation to support their claim that grade changes

were due to an error in PowerSchool related to the weighting scale. The additional documentation included screenshots from PowerSchool and the gradebook for the teacher in question. On March 15, 2019, Dr. King forwarded an email from Dr. Love to Dr. Peterson which stated, "For the record, I was never told that there was an investigation. I certainly wanted to know the urgency, all of a sudden about a roll book." Dr. Love was employed as the Algebra III teacher for John F. Kennedy at Lake Area High School. On March 25, 2019, Dr. Peterson spoke with Michelle Blouin-Williams and asked her about the quote in The Lens article regarding Dr. Love's statement that her grade book was inaccurate. She stated that she would have Mr. Washington forward the emails between him and Dr. Love, which were sent that evening.

The email thread that was provided begins with communication on March 15, 2019, two days after the OPSB had concluded the initial fact finding. The March 15th email from Dr. Love to Mr. Williams [*sic*] states "The roll book has problems and is not accurate." Additionally, she includes a specific student that she questions the final grade designation. In a series of emails forwarded on March 19th, Dr. Love reiterates the inaccurate grades, and also includes that students with "too many unexcused absentees" should have an "F."

On March 26, 2019, Ulysses Collins and Dr. Peterson called Michelle Blouin-Williams to ask questions regarding the email thread and allegations from Dr. Love's emails and requested a statement regarding the additional allegations made by Dr. Love, as well as an update as to where NBSF was with its internal investigation. A response via email was provided on March 26th by Michelle Blouin-Williams. On March 27, 2019, Dr. Peterson called Dr. Love on both her home and cell phone number and left voicemail messages, as well as sending an email to request a meeting regarding the grade change allegations.

On March 28, 2019 and as a follow up to OPSB's investigation into the allegations, Ulysses Collins and Dr. Peterson called Dr. King to ask additional questions regarding PowerSchool password access and use. PowerSchool serves as the school's student information data system, and OPSB wanted to verify the security of the data system. During this phone call, Dr. King stated that the last time that he was logged into PowerSchool was February 26th and that he had only one personal log-in to PowerSchool. However, he stated that Michelle Blouin-Williams asked him to make three additional log-ins for state reporting purposes for an NBSF employee, and two other individuals that he trained on completing this report. He stated that the NBSF employee created three generic accounts for this purpose, King 1, King 2, and King 3. Dr. King stated that he did not manage these accounts or their use.

Dr. King also stated that when Dr. Love left NBSF in January the only information that she recorded in her roll book was attendance, and not grades. However, the school reached out to her asking her to

complete her gradebook with the grades, at which time Dr. Love downloaded this information from PowerSchool and entered it into the gradebook as printed. However, after time passed, she realized that the grades she entered into the gradebook downloaded directly from PowerSchool were inaccurate, which prompted her emails to the school about this issue. Dr. King forwarded the signed grade verification forms from Dr. Love for Quarter 1.

Upon receiving additional information, including signed teacher grade verification forms for Quarter 1, Quarter 2 Stored Historical Data, PowerSchool Report, and Semester 1 Report Cards, for Dr. Love's Algebra class, a comparison of Quarter 1 grades and Quarter 2 grades was completed and analyzed. The analysis indicated that approximately 10 student quarter grades were changed from the signed verification forms from Quarter 1 to what was ultimately inputted into PowerSchool. The same analysis was unable to be conducted for Quarter 2 because the signed verification forms from Dr. Love were unable to be provided by NBSF and OPSB was unable to make contact with Dr. Love directly. The grades as delineated in the grade book correspond with the adjusted/modified grades as reported in PowerSchool, but after additional documentation was reviewed, OPSB was unable to verify the reason for the grade changes.

Second Alleged Grade Change Scheme

On May 24, 2019, it was revealed to OPSB by NBSF Board Chair that, upon the conclusion of the Adams & Reese investigation, additional grade changes occurred by several JFK staff members, including administrators. The OPSB sent written notification that it had come to its attention that there were possible grade changes involving the 2018-2019 graduating class of John F. Kennedy at Lake Area High School, and OPSB expanded the scope of its investigation to include a review of these additional allegations and any pertinent facts surrounding them.

On May 28, 2019, the OPSB sent written notification to the Louisiana Department of Education (Kunjan Narechania and Joan Hunt) that the OPSB had been informed of an additional group of grades that were altered for the current graduating seniors at JFK, which could have serious impact on the receipt of diplomas.

On June 6, 2019, the OPSB staff were present at John F. Kennedy to oversee the LDOE and NBSF's work to begin auditing senior student files to validate credits and graduation requirements. As a measure of increased oversight, OPSB continued and continues to have designated staff on site. On June 7, 2019, the OPSB sent written notification to NBSF Re: Notice of Non-Compliance, Level 2 due to the lack of compliance as outlined with its contractual obligations. On June 25, 2019, the OPSB sent a written update to NBSF Re: Notice of Non-Compliance, Level 2 including additional required action steps. Additionally, this was the first day for summer school at John F. Kennedy for the impacted senior students.

Conclusion:

While the initial investigation of grade change allegations reported as part of the first grade change scheme was inconclusive, a second grade change scheme was reported to OPSB on May 24, 2019 which resulted in the graduating class of 2018-2019 not being certified. As a result of this second act, graduating seniors were not able to receive diplomas and transcripts in a timely manner, some students were required to take additional courses over the summer, and some students were also required to take end of the course exams during the summer all, in an effort to properly certify graduates. In order to ensure students received proper notification of their status and were given an opportunity to rectify things before the start of the next school year, investigation efforts were shifted to providing assistance with record verification, individual student prescriptions and on-site assistance at JFK to expedite the process.

Due to the welfare of students being at risk, OPSB made the decision to seek revocation of NBSF's charter to operate JFK. On July 18, 2019 as this matter was still being reviewed, the New Beginnings School Foundation Charter Board unanimously voted to surrender their charters for both John F. Kennedy at Lake Area High School and Pierre A. Capdau Charter School at Avery Alexander effective at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. Additionally, NBSF has made several key changes in leadership, in response to OPSB requesting that NBSF share any changes to leadership or processes as a result of OPSB's investigation into the allegations and the open Notice of Non-Compliance, Level 2. As a result, NBSF hired a new CEO and made other changes to their leadership. Additionally, NBSF moved from GradPoint, the system that was in use during the 2018-2019 school year, and began using EdGenuity. These changes addressed some of the concerns OPSB expressed that gave rise to the initial Notice of Non-Compliance and the ultimate decision to seek revocation of NBSF's charter. However, in light of these changes and the voluntary surrender, OPSB is no longer seeking revocation.

Outstanding Issues:

Although this report summarizes the Orleans Parish School Board's efforts around its investigation and even though NBSF voted to surrender, there is still an open Notice of Non-Compliance, Level 2. During its investigation, OPSB was also made aware that the CEO for New Beginnings Schools Foundation allegedly altered minutes from a NBSF board meeting which led to a transportation contract being awarded that may not have gone through the appropriate approval process as required by NBSF. The following items are still outstanding as it pertains to the Notice of Non-Compliance:

1. NBSF must submit quarterly reports (due by the 30th of September, December, March, and June) to OPSB with the following information:

- Copies of minutes from any meetings of the NBSF Board of Directors;
 - Copies of any contracts issued;
 - Monthly financial reports for each month of the quarter; and
 - List of all payments issued that exceed \$10,000 with proper invoice or backup for such payments.
2. NBSF shall submit individualized plans for any senior student that does not successfully complete the graduation requirements during the summer session.
 3. A written report at the conclusion of their investigation that should summarize the details of the investigation, including documents reviewed and persons interviewed. This report should also discuss any conclusions reached and summarize any corrective action taken or planned by NBSF as a result of the investigation.

The Orleans Parish School Board will continue to work with New Beginnings Schools Foundation to bring the Non-Compliance to a close and resolve any outstanding requests through OPSB's Charter School Accountability Framework process.



☰ Menu



SCHOOLS

Orleans schools superintendent calls for criminal investigation into Kennedy High School, announces citywide audit of high school student records

by MARTA JEWSON
JUNE 27, 2019





John F. Kennedy High School at Lake Area on Paris Avenue in Gentilly.

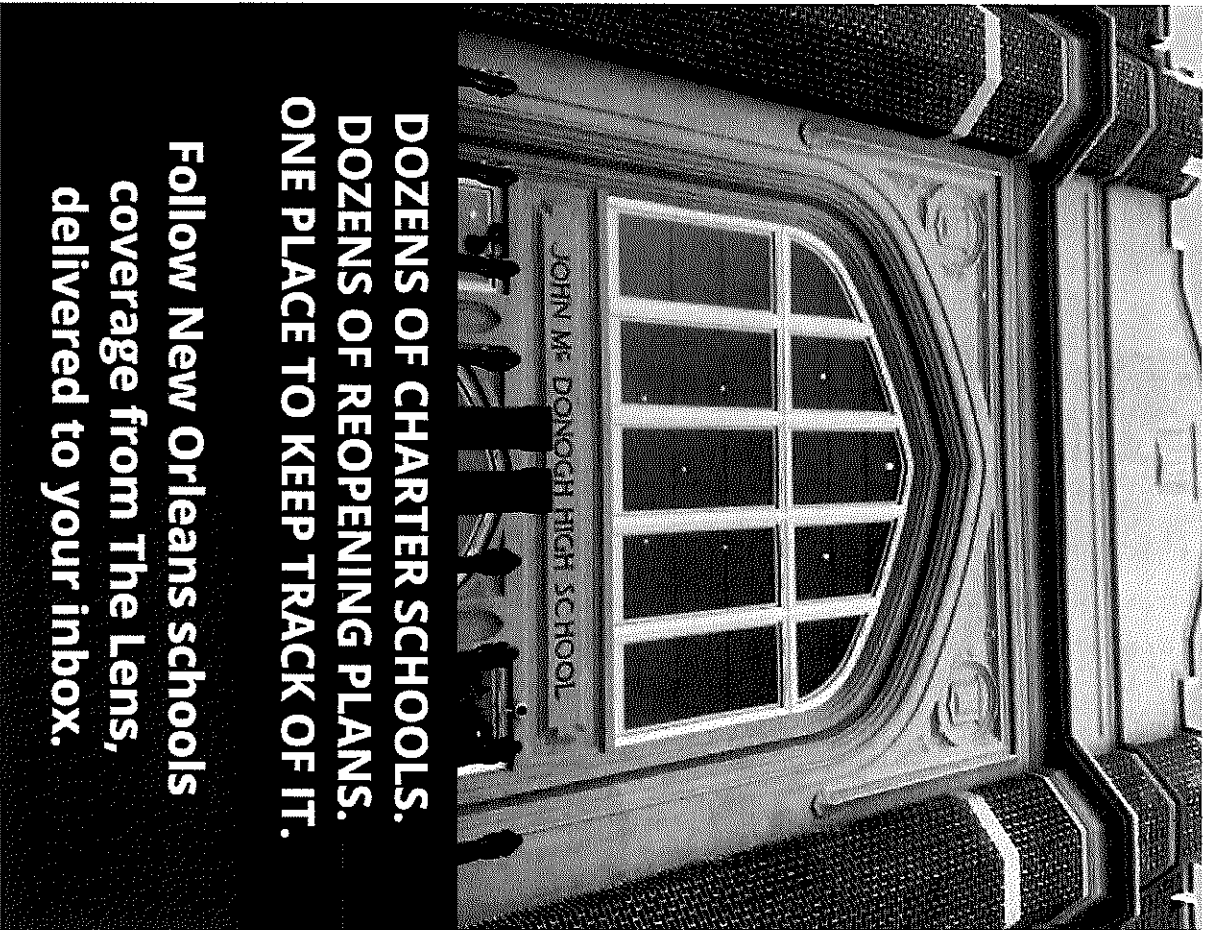
Orleans Parish schools Superintendent Henderson Lewis Jr. on Thursday blasted John F. Kennedy High School and the New Beginnings Schools Foundation, the nonprofit that runs Kennedy, amid a grade-fixing scandal and investigations that have rocked students at the Gentilly high school. Lewis called for a criminal investigation into the school and said that the district will conduct a student record audit of every Orleans Parish school district high school.

“First and foremost, on behalf of the district, I would like to apologize,” Lewis said, as he addressed Orleans Parish School Board members and the public at the board’s monthly meeting Thursday evening.

Lewis’ remarks came a week after it was revealed that nearly half of the students in the school’s 2019 graduating class **were not eligible for graduation** due in part to staff “malfeasance,” New Beginnings board president Raphael Gang told The Lens last week. The announcement came more than a month after the school’s May 17 graduation ceremony.

“Due to the careless and reckless actions of the adults you trusted at JFK, you should be celebrating your senior graduation this month, but instead, you have been forced to question the certainty of your future,” he said, calling the incident “shameful and intolerable.”

Earlier this month, Lewis warned that the district may revoke the school’s charter over the alleged grade inflation. This week, the district expanded the warning issued to New Beginnings. Under the terms of the **new warning letter**, the charter group will be required to provide seniors — now forced to attend summer school to graduate — with weekly status updates, hold parent meetings, and set plans for any student who doesn’t meet requirements this summer. Additionally, Lewis said New Beginnings must audit all of its students’ transcripts to see if they’ve met requirements.



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[I'm not interested](#)

Lewis also announced he had sent a letter to State Inspector General Stephen B. Street, Jr. asking him “to conduct his own independent investigation into this matter to assess if any criminal wrongdoing has occurred.”

In the letter to the IG, Lewis also wrote, “It is my understanding that members of your office have been on site at JFK.”

Then, he made an announcement with citywide implications — the district will expand the student record audit to all high schools in the city.

“We cannot allow this travesty to happen again,” Lewis said. “We will audit student records at every high school, working with experts in the field to help us design high school quality auditing tools.”

The senior class record review at Kennedy came in the midst of a series of scandals at the network. In March, [The Lens reported on a former employees’ allegations](#) that several students’ Algebra grades had been improperly changed from failing to passing. The employee, Runell King, had been suspended and fired after informing administrators of his suspicions.

Improperly changing grades could impact the school’s graduation rate, an important component of its state performance score. Kennedy was most recently graded an F based on state standardized test performance alone. But its graduation rate score was 84.9, a B. Overall, it was rated a C.

The charter group hired a law firm to investigate and placed CEO Michelle Blouin-Williams on paid leave. She later resigned. The district is also investigating grade-fixing and allegations that Blouin-Williams doctored board minutes and the board violated its own policies regarding contract approval.

Summer school started this week

Last week, New Beginnings Schools Foundations board president Raphael Gang **announced that nearly half of Kennedy's 177 seniors were not eligible to graduate.** Of the 87 seniors who are missing credits or exams, 69 were allowed to walk in bright blue and gold gowns at graduation mid-May, only to find out last week they had more work to do.

Fifty-nine of the 87 students need to earn between one-half and two credits to complete high school, according to a fact sheet provided by the network.

The network set up a summer school but it's likely that 24 students will need to re-enroll at Kennedy this fall to complete requirements, Gang said last week.

In a statement Thursday Gang said New Beginnings is serving nearly 60 students in summer school, which began Monday.

"We continue to reach out to families (including with home visits) to ensure we can support students on the path to diplomas, whether that is taking summer school, enrolling next year, or taking a required assessment," he wrote in an email. "We're reporting our weekly progress, including summer school student attendance, academic progress, and support provided to students as requested in the letter."

Gang also announced new CEO Kevin George had hired Harold Clay to lead the high school.

At the board meeting, Lewis promised Kennedy would be open this fall.

"Regardless of the outcomes of this investigation, I want to assure the JFK community that JFK will remain open this coming school year, and our priority is to ensure continuity and stability for all families currently enrolled."

The charter network will hold a parent meeting for Pierre A. Capdau Charter School families on July 10 at 6 p.m., Gang said. A meeting for Kennedy parents will be held July 11 at 6 p.m. Both meetings were required by the district. Gang said he will provide an update the week of July 15.

Lewis said the district is still investigating the allegations. "I expect to give a report of our findings and recommended actions later this summer."

Related

KIPP New Orleans eyes takeover of troubled Kennedy HS

Week in Review: Orleans schools superintendent calls for criminal investigation into Kennedy High School

Kennedy HS has not provided school district required information on grade-fixing, transcript errors, according to warning letter

MARTA JEWSON

Marta Jewson covers education in New Orleans for The Lens. She began her reporting career covering charter schools for The Lens and helped found the hyperlocal news site Mid-City Messenger. Jewson returned... [More by Marta Jewson](#)

NOLA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

EVERY CHILD. EVERY SCHOOL. EVERY DAY.

July 19, 2019

Dear New Beginnings Schools Foundation Families,

The district has accepted the decision by the New Beginnings Schools Foundation (NBSF) to surrender the charters for John F. Kennedy High School and Pierre A. Capdau Charter School at the end of this upcoming school year. First and foremost, I want to reassure you that this will not affect your student's placement or educational experience for the 2019-2020 school year, as both schools will remain open this school year and beyond. There are no additional actions to be taken by families at this time.

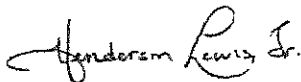
I would like to thank the NBSF Board of Directors for their leadership and for making this choice in the best interest of students and families. We have been working closely with the NBSF Board and school administration and will continue to do so to ensure a successful school year and subsequent transition.

As Superintendent, I have remained transparent and engaged in the monitoring of this situation. Ultimately, this decision by the NBSF Board of Directors is appropriate and what is best for students.

The district is committed to directly supporting NBSF families during this transition. Over the course of the school year, we will have experienced district staff members onsite at both schools to ensure a successful school year and smooth transition. Soon, we will also begin the process of identifying a successful operator to run the school starting in the 2020-2021 school year. We will share updates with you on how families and stakeholders can engage with potential organizations in the upcoming weeks.

If you have any questions, please reach out to district at 504-304-3520 and request to speak with Cathy Chase, Director of Family Engagement.

In Service,



Dr. Henderson Lewis, Jr.
Superintendent of Schools
NOLA Public Schools

PLAINTIFF'S
EXHIBIT

tabbles
"59"



OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

504-827-1951

KEVIN R. GEORGE
6026 Paris Ave.
New Orleans, LA
70122

kevin.george@nbsfnola.com

August 2, 2019

Dear JFK Stakeholders:

We appreciate everyone's patience as we work together through this difficult situation. This is a communication to provide an update to our communities. The Louisiana Department of Education is working through the verification process. We are in touch and working with them to reach completion as soon as possible. Once this is complete, we will advise parents and students of our next steps.

If any students have college deadlines approaching, please contact us and provide your college name, contact person, email and phone number. We will reach out to your college immediately.

If you have any questions, please contact me at kevin.george@nbsfnola.com or at 504-827-1930.

Sincerely,
Kevin R. George

Kevin R. George
Interim Chief Executive Officer





LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Raphael Gang
New Beginnings School Foundation
2045 Lakeshore Drive
New Orleans, LA 70112

Dear. Mr. Gang,

Thank you for the information regarding the ongoing review of graduate completion records for the 2019 graduating class being completed by the New Beginnings Schools Foundation (NBSF).

In order to assist in the NSBF review, and in order to validate its findings, the Louisiana Department of Education will conduct a separate review of the policies and practices around credit attainment and graduate completion records at John F. Kennedy High School (JFK). This review will

1. Assess the extent to which NBSF and JFK are completing an accurate assessment of each student's graduation status;
2. Assess the extent to which NBSF and JFK communicate with every student and family about the steps needed to move to their post-secondary plans; and
3. Provide recommendations to NBSF on policies related to credit attainment that will prevent future challenges.

I will reach out to schedule a call with you and your team to discuss the details of the review.

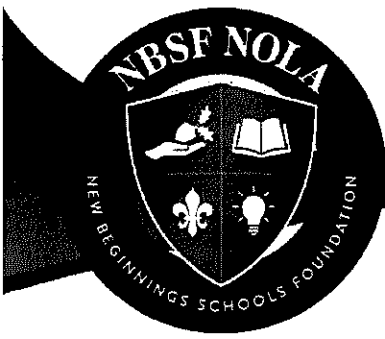
Sincerely,

Kunjan Narechania
Assistant State Superintendent

Cc: Henderson Lewis, Superintendent, Orleans Parish School Board



Louisiana Believes



OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

504-827-1930

KEVIN R. GEORGE
6026 Paris Ave.
New Orleans, LA
70122

kevin.george@nbsfnola.com

August 22, 2019

Mr. Ryan Gremillion, Policy Director
Louisiana Department of Education
1201 North Third Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Dear Mr. Gremillion:

Over the past several weeks, we have worked with your staff to address questions about the eligibility of certain John F. Kennedy High School students for graduation. Specifically, we have reviewed the transcripts and other academic records of all students who participated in the school's Spring 2019 graduation ceremony, as well as others for whom questions were raised. This review process has resulted, thus far, in the identification of 8 students who met all requirements for graduation with the exception of up to one Carnegie unit due to administrative error. The State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) provides for a waiver to address these circumstances in Bulletin 741, §345(C)(2):

2. Course Requirement Waivers

a. The LDE may waive up to one Carnegie unit required for graduation in the following circumstances:

i. waivers for students who transfer to Louisiana from another state during their senior year, are on course to graduate in their previous state of residence, and are unable to schedule and complete the needed course; and

ii. waivers due to administrative errors.

b. In each situation, the district must provide:

i. a letter of justification from the local superintendent; and

ii. a copy of the student's transcript.



Pursuant to this policy, I respectfully request approval of a course requirement waiver for the following students:

	Student ID Number	Carnegie Units Not Earned	Description of Administrative Error
1	██████████	0.5	Student failed .5 unit of US History and administration failed to re-assign student in the course
2	██████████	1.0	Student erroneously enrolled in Human Geography Regular (Credit Recovery) instead of Human Geography AP (Initial Credit)
3	██████████	0.5	Student erroneously enrolled in Health (Credit Recovery) instead of Health (Initial Credit)
4	██████████	1.0	Student passed Algebra I Pt 1 and Pt. 2 which does not count towards TOPS Core 4 Graduation requirements. Student assigned Algebra I (Credit Recovery) instead of Algebra I (Initial Credit)
5	██████████	1.0	Student assigned English I in unapproved, unauthorized online learning program.
6	██████████	1.0	Student assigned Physical Science in unapproved, unauthorized online learning program.
7	██████████	1.0	Student never assigned Health during high school career and was not re-assigned to take PE course after failing that course.
8	██████████	1.0	Student erroneously enrolled in Human Geography Regular (Credit Recovery) instead of Human Geography AP (Initial Credit)

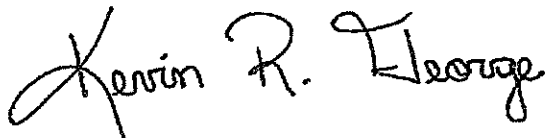
Your staff have informed me that they are in possession of these students' transcripts and all other required documentation.

The leadership of John F. Kennedy High School will ensure that all of the above students and their parents or legal custodians are advised of any potential implications of these waivers on their eligibility for TOPS and other forms of postsecondary education financial aid. The school leadership further commits to ensuring that all future John F. Kennedy High School Seniors are properly advised. We hired a team of experienced high school counselors to review all student transcripts this past summer. Our newly hired counselors reviewed all transcripts again to check the work of the summer school counselors. Our newly hired counselors are experienced in high school graduation requirements. All current seniors are in the process of being advised on their status with the use of the State issued Individual Graduation Plan Documents. All transcripts have been uploaded to the local system and will be uploaded to the State Transcript System in October. After the Fall Semester, our counselors will once again meet with all seniors to ensure they understand their remaining graduation requirements. All former administration and counselors no longer work for the New Beginnings Schools Foundation.

We are continuing to support and advise other students who do not yet meet graduation requirements and appreciate the time and guidance your staff have provided in addressing each of their needs.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin R. George". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Kevin R. George
Chief Executive Officer
New Beginnings School Foundation



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

August 22, 2019

Kevin R. George
Chief Executive Officer, New Beginnings School Foundation
6026 Paris Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70122

Re: Waiver Request

Dear Mr. George,

Pursuant to Bulletin 741, *Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators*: §345. Requesting Waivers of BESE Policy, the Louisiana Department of Education has approved the request submitted for John F. Kennedy High School for a waiver of up to one Carnegie unit required for graduation for the following students:

LASID # [REDACTED] The student failed .5 unit of United States History, and the John F. Kennedy High School administration failed to reassign the student in the course. As a result of this error, the student needs .5 unit in United States History in order to meet graduation requirements.

LASID # [REDACTED] The John F. Kennedy High School administration erroneously enrolled the student in Human Geography Regular (Credit Recovery) instead of Human Geography Advanced Placement. As a result of this error, the student needs one unit in Human Geography in order to meet graduation requirements.

LASID # [REDACTED] The John F. Kennedy High School administration erroneously enrolled the student in Health (Credit Recovery) instead of Health (Initial Credit). As a result of this error, the student needs .5 unit in Health in order to meet graduation requirements.

LASID # [REDACTED] The student passed Algebra I Part I and Part II, which does not satisfy TOPS Core 4 graduation requirements. The John F. Kennedy High School administration erroneously assigned the student to Algebra I (Credit Recovery) instead of Algebra I (Initial Credit). As a result of this error, the student needs one unit in Algebra I in order to meet graduation requirements.



LASID # [REDACTED] The John F. Kennedy High School Administration erroneously assigned the student to English I in an unapproved and unauthorized online learning program. As a result of this error, the student needs one unit in English I in order to meet graduation requirements.

LASID # [REDACTED] The John F. Kennedy High School Administration erroneously assigned the student to Physical Science in an unapproved and unauthorized online learning program. As a result of this error, the student needs one unit in Physical Science in order to meet graduation requirements.

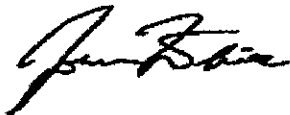
LASID # [REDACTED] The John F. Kennedy High School administration failed to assign the student to a Health course at any point during the student's high school career. The administration also failed to reassign the student to a Physical Education course after the student initially failed that course. As a result of this error, the student needs one unit in Health and Physical Education in order to meet graduation requirements.

LASID # [REDACTED] The John F. Kennedy High School administration erroneously enrolled the student in Human Geography Regular (Credit Recovery) instead of Human Geography Advanced Placement. As a result of this error, the student needs one unit in Human Geography in order to meet graduation requirements

This waiver is being approved due to administrative error on the part of John F. Kennedy High School, with the understanding that an action plan has been developed to prevent the situation from reoccurring in the future. The students subject to this approval must still meet all other graduation requirements in effect at the time they entered high school.

Please contact Ryan Gremillion at 225-342-1501 if you need further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John White".

John White, Superintendent
Louisiana Department of Education



☰ Menu



SCHOOLS

Audit: New Beginnings may have enrolled students outside of New Orleans, jeopardizing funding

by MARTA JEWSON
FEBRUARY 11, 2020





From May 2019, a New Beginnings Schools Foundation board meeting. (Marta Jewson/The Lens)

A New Orleans charter school network that has been the subject of recent controversy over its management of one of its schools — **John F. Kennedy High School** — may have enrolled students who didn't live in Orleans Parish last school year, according to the group's annual audit, released on Monday. The finding could jeopardize any per-pupil tax dollars* tied to those students, forcing the network to pay the money back.

Auditors identified “multiple students” whose files did not contain documentation showing that they lived in New Orleans during the 2018-2019 school year, the period auditors analyzed. Since the audit does not provide further details, it's unclear how many — or if any — students enrolled in New Beginnings Schools Foundation schools actually lived outside of the city and whether would attempt to recover any of the per-pupil funding tied to those students. But the finding does raise some questions about how the city's charter schools check residency and to what lengths they should go to ensure its accuracy.

Gaby Fighetti, who formerly worked for the Recovery School District and the NOLA Public Schools district, led the team that developed OneApp, the city's centralized application process. She told The Lens that she thinks schools are very good at ensuring students first enrolling meet residency requirements, but that their year-to-year follow-up may not be as exhaustive.

“The question isn't whether it's important for our schools to serve only Orleans residents. I think most would agree that it is,” she wrote in an email Tuesday. “The challenge is how do you ensure that in a way that doesn't hurt the students our schools are serving?”

“For our more economically disadvantaged families, proving residency is very difficult because residency is often temporary,” she noted.

New Beginnings operates two schools in New Orleans: Pierre A. Capdan Charter School and John F. Kennedy High School. Kennedy has been the subject of much media attention after half of its graduating class of 2019 learned they hadn't met graduation requirements one month after their May ceremony. This

audit covers the 2018-2019 school year, when the charter group also ran Medard Nelson Elementary School, which closed last spring.

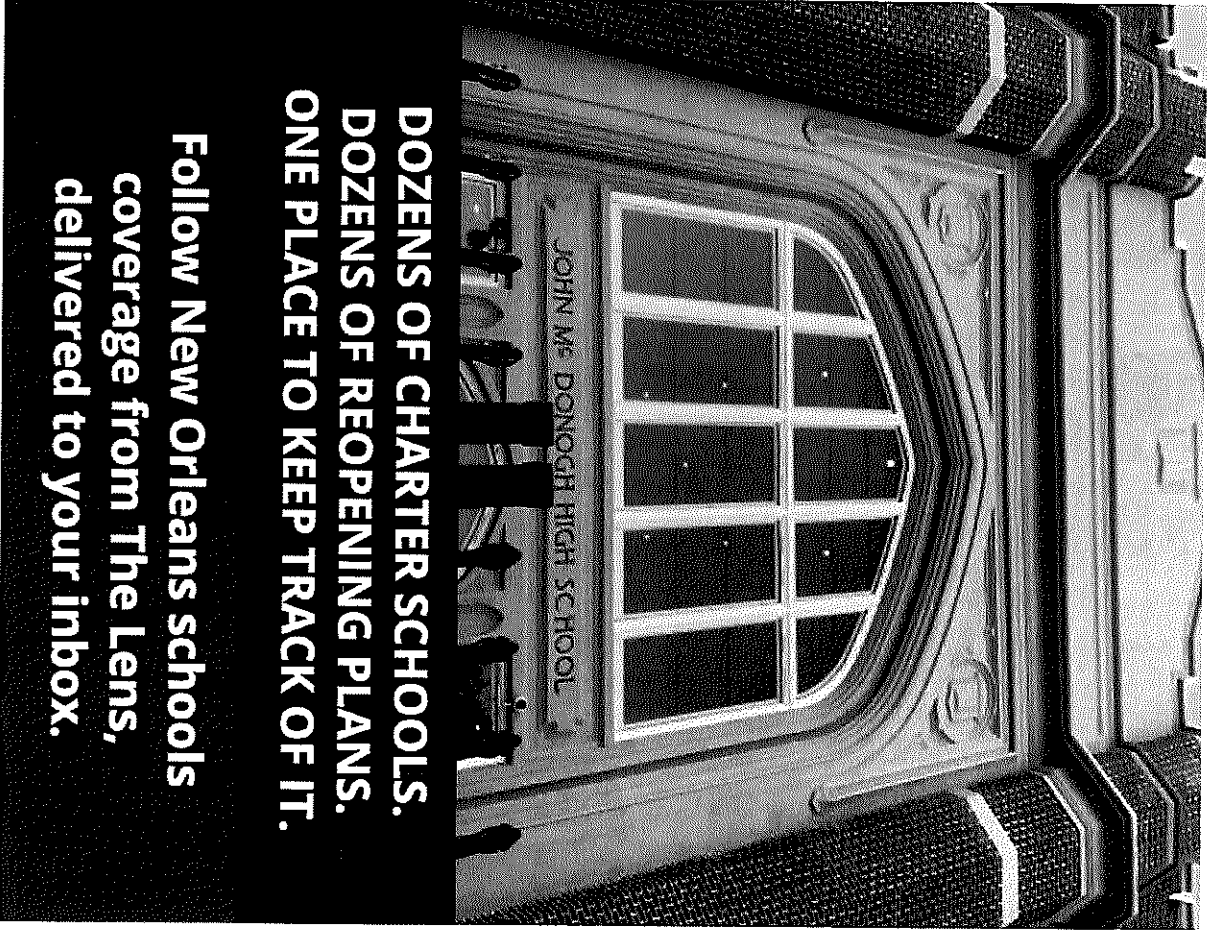
Following the scandal, New Beginnings' governing board **voted to surrender its charters to Kennedy and Cappau** at the end of this school year. KIPP New Orleans Schools will be taking Kennedy over. Cappau will be operated by InspireNOIA.

New Beginnings' audit, which all charter groups are required to submit to the Louisiana Legislative Auditor annually, also identified several financial problems. Auditors found the network overestimated revenue and underestimated expenses, which they attributed to high turnover in the finance office. They also found that the school did not properly document its management of federal grant money Separately, more than half of school credit card transactions they reviewed couldn't be supported by itemized receipts showing what was purchased.

New Beginnings board president Raphael Gang said the charter group asked auditors to take a close look in their first meeting with them.

"We requested that our auditors take an extremely thorough look at our organization and let us know about any deficiencies they found in real time so that we could correct them as quickly as possible," he wrote in an email Monday. "We are proud to say that at this point all of the issues raised in the audit have been addressed."

Gang did not answer questions about how many students may have been improperly enrolled.



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State law **requires charter schools** to enroll students in their defined jurisdiction. Only a handful of charter schools in the city, those overseen by the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education with a Type 2 charter, are allowed to accept students from other parishes. All of New Beginnings' three charter schools last year were Type 3B, indicating a turnaround state school that had returned to Orleans Parish school board control.

OneApp and Orleans Parish residency

The NOIA Public Schools district annually conducts a computerized lottery, called **OneApp**, for students entering school for the first time or switching schools. Students who continue on at their current school from grade to grade do not interact with the system. The vast majority of New Orleans students are assigned to schools through OneApp.

The lottery essentially consists of two distinct phases. Students are assigned to schools by the district through OneApp. Then, they must register with the independent charter school, which consists of providing proof of residency, immunization records, emergency contact information and similar items.

Fighetti, who now works for Crescent City Schools, thinks schools do a good job ensuring a student's residency the first year they enroll, but that annual checks of residency are much more time consuming.

"It is far more challenging to collect residency documentation for continuing families because it becomes a one-off request for documentation and response rates from parents/guardians can remain low even after repeated attempts for the information," she wrote in an email Tuesday.

"You can take the position that any student who doesn't submit that information in a timely manner should be dis-enrolled from the school for the coming school year, but that's neither practical nor in the

student's best interest.”

She also believes a stance like that is dangerous, because she thinks it would likely result in more false-positives — students who simply can't provide the paperwork even though they do live in the district — than the rooting out of students who actually don't meet residency requirements, she wrote.

District spokeswoman Fatima Mehr responded to questions about residency in a statement attributed to the district.

“NOIA Public Schools expects that schools verify residency as a condition of enrollment,” Mehr wrote.

“Students who are found to live in another parish may be issued an official notice of ineligibility to attend by their school.”

Asked what schools should do on an annual basis, Mehr replied with another statement attributed to the district: “Schools should collect residency as part of their registration process for school.”

Fighetti also thinks schools should check for residency each year, and said many school leaders work hard to ensure they are working with families in tough situations.

“On the west bank, for example, families may move between Jefferson and Orleans multiple times a year as their personal situations change,” Fighetti wrote. “School administrators understand those circumstances.” She added that **federal regulations** allow students considered homeless and living in temporary housing outside of their school zones to stay in their schools of origin.

The audit warned that the school may have to repay some of its per-pupil funding, a major source of the network's revenue totaling millions of dollars per year.

“This error could mean that the school could potentially have to repay the local Minimum Foundation Program Funds if the school did not have proper documentation of admission requirements being met, the student resided within the jurisdiction of the school or could provide the proper waiver,” **the audit states.**

Now, New Beginnings **will verify residency of** all students sent from OneApp to the school, according to a corrective action plan it submitted as part of the audit.

Asked whether the Louisiana Department of Education would seek the money, spokeswoman Sydni Dunn said the department “will review the audit and determine next steps.”

Other findings

New Beginnings’ audit also flagged several financial issues.

The group “did not maintain sufficient documentation” **related to its Title 1 federal grant** funding, provided to schools with high levels of low-income students. The federal grants in question **totalled about \$2 million** last school year, according to the audit, though it’s not clear how much of that may have been affected by the problem.

That was one of many items addressed in its improvement plan, also included in the audit, which states the charter group has **a new process** for documenting grants.

Auditors also checked class sizes and enrollment and **discovered a variety of issues.** Seven out of ten classes reviewed were not properly classified on the schedule and **11 high school classes exceeded maximum class size.** The size limit for high school core classes is 33 students.

The auditors also checked several data points against data submitted to the Louisiana Department of Education on Oct. 1, 2018. Each year schools report employee information and enrollment information on that date.

Employees' experience level **didn't match what was reported to state** in 17 of 25 employees reviewed. When it came to employee salaries, 25 of 25 employees' June 30 review **didn't match their personnel files**. When auditors tried to review employee attendance for select employees, they **couldn't find any records approved** by a supervisor tracking attendance for the selected pay period.

Additionally, 11 of 20 transactions **could not be supported** by an original itemized receipt that identified precisely what was purchased

The audit didn't mention anything regarding board minutes, which former CEO Michelle Blouin-Williams is alleged to have doctored to retroactively make it look like the board approved a contract, according to **a WWI-TV report from David Hammer**. Blouin-Williams resigned amid the graduation scandal as investigations from the state, district and charter group itself were underway.

The district also wants to take a closer look at the charter group, according to a statement sent by spokeswoman Fatima Mehr that's attributed to NOLA Public Schools.

"Based upon the review of their audit, New Beginnings did not meet the long-term stability metric, as they did have material weaknesses cited, thus NOLA Public Schools has issued a notice requiring New Beginnings to meet with us for a fiscal health meeting to delve deeper in these matters."

Correction: This story, as originally written, said that "state" funding would be at stake. Per-pupil funding includes both state and local funding. The New Beginnings audit says that **local funding may have to be repaid for students that may have lived outside of New Orleans. (Feb. 11, 2020)*



☰ Menu



SCHOOLS

Weak grading policy prompts district review of all high school promotion plans

by MARTA JEWSON
FEBRUARY 7, 2020



John F. Kennedy High School at Lake Area on Paris Avenue in Gentilly.

The NOIA Public Schools district has discovered yet another problem at John F. Kennedy High School, which faced **a major scandal last year** when half the students in its 2019 senior class were found ineligible to graduate.

The district began reviewing high school documents after a school posed a question district staff found concerning. In addition to Kennedy, the district flagged Morris Jeff Community School's policy language. It's unclear which school first prompted the review.

The Lens has confirmed that the problem led the district to tell schools to ensure all students' grades — including their first, failed attempts in a course — were included on their transcripts and factored in to their GPAs, according to an announcement sent to school leaders. Failing to include all grades in transcripts would violate state policies. But, when it comes to GPA calculations, the district's message may go beyond what schools are required to do under state rules. District officials have since denied that the message was intended to be read as a new district regulation.

It's not clear exactly what Kennedy's internal policy was, but it appears to relate to how students' grades were recorded after they had repeated courses they had previously failed. The policy in question could have resulted in school staff improperly recording classes on students' transcripts and was not in compliance with state policy, district officials said.

Raphael Gang, board president of the New Beginnings Schools Foundation, the nonprofit group that runs Kennedy, declined to comment about the policy or how many students it may have affected. The group's CEO Kevin George did not respond to a request for comment.

At Morris Jeff, the problem policy said that after a student took a course for the second time, "the lower grade will be deleted."

“Last week we were called and told that our ‘repeat/delete’ policy was against state regulations, so we amended it to align with their expectations,” Morris Jeff CEO Patricia Perkins wrote in an email. “The school did not choose to count both grades – we were directed to do so.”

It’s not clear if Morris Jeff’s “repeat/delete” policy applied to a student GPA calculations, transcripts or both. And leaders at that school said it hadn’t resulted in any incorrectly recorded grades because no students had repeated courses “under these circumstances” at the high school, which has been open for two-and-a-half years. This year it enrolls freshman, sophomores and juniors.

Though deleting a grade from a transcript is against state regulations, the state allows “repeat/delete” policies for GPA calculations.

In an interview Friday, Caroline Roemer, the executive director of the Louisiana Association for Public Charter Schools, said the district was correct on preserving academic records but wrong in asking schools to align GPA calculations. “GPA is not a formula determined by the state. It is a locally controlled policy.”

“Is it OPSB’s intention to make this the GPA policy?” she wondered, while also questioning if the district had the authority to do such a thing.

“I appreciate that OPSB is trying to get a handle on this and ensure that we don’t have the Kennedy disaster again,” she said, adding she hoped the district would work on communication. “I believe before you send out directives, you should have communication with school leaders.”

Asked if the district may have overstepped in appearing to demand that schools adjust their GPA calculations, district spokeswoman Dominique Ellis denied that the communication was a policy directive. Rather, she said, it was a simple reminder.

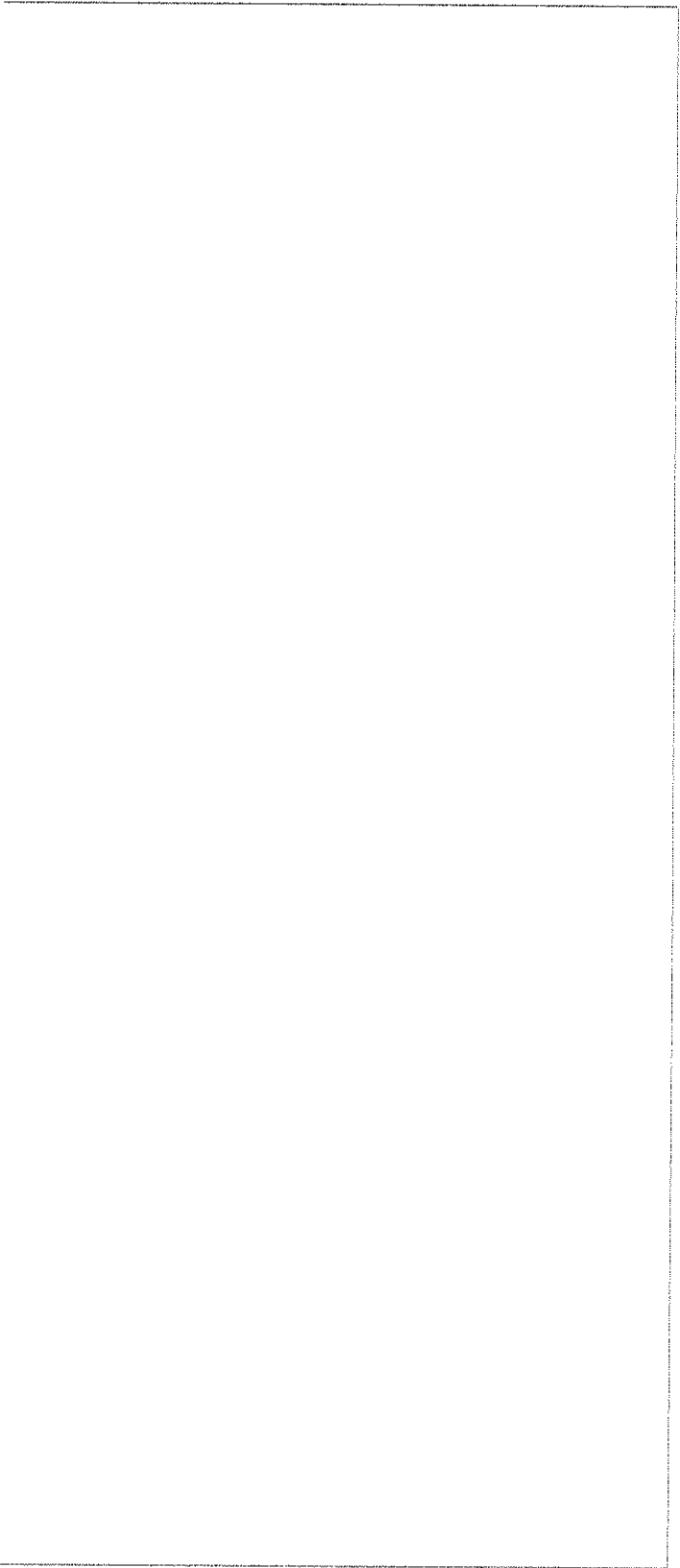
“There is no policy change being issued from the district,” Ellis said in a Friday phone call.

Ellis said Friday some school leaders may have misinterpreted the email.

“It caused some confusion because people misread it,” Ellis said. “A couple of people have responded back and are saying, ‘We’re confused on this.’ And we’re working through this now. That’s all that’s happening here.”

Morris Jeff has already changed its internal documents.

Pupil Progression Plans



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The policy at Morris Jeff was part of its “pupil progression plan,” a state-required document that outlines how schools promote students through grade levels. At charter schools, nonprofit volunteer boards — rather than a citywide elected body like the Orleans Parish School Board — approve those plans. Neither the state nor district reviewed the annually submitted plans, until now apparently.

“After conversations with a school that led to a question about PPPs, we have reviewed each high school’s Pupil Progression Plan as part of our efforts to increase oversight,” a NOLA Public Schools spokeswoman wrote in an email attributed to the district.

In mid-January, The Lens asked the district if it reviewed charter schools’ pupil progression plans. The plan describes what students need to advance from grade to grade based on state academic standards. In an email attributed to the district, spokeswoman Fatima Mehr wrote, “We do not approve or offer comment on these documents, as that is a function of the LDOE.”

When asked to confirm that assertion, Louisiana Department of Education spokeswoman Sydni Dunn wrote in an email that “Pupil Progression Plans are sent to LDOE, but they aren’t reviewed/approved.”

The district said its board did not approve or review the plans “as the OPSB is prohibited by law from impeding a charter school’s programming autonomy.”

But one week later, the district sent out a message warning school leaders about the transcript and GPA policy problems, which was based on a review of pupil progression plans.

“It has come to our attention that some schools have been following a policy whereby if a student elects to repeat a course that they have already taken with the goal of achieving a better grade, the lower of the two grades will be dropped from the transcript and not included in GPA calculations,” the email said.

“This is not in line with [two state regulations] and needs to be rectified as soon as possible.”

The district highlighted two specific sections in those two policies, BESE **Bulletin 1566** and **Bulletin 741**. They are also in the district’s operating agreement with each charter school, according to the district.

The district further instructed schools on how to calculate grade point averages and track repeated courses on transcripts.

“If your school has been allowing students to retake courses and drop the lower grade from their record and/or GPA, please reach out to your Director of Accountability immediately to discuss next steps,” the email said.

When we asked the district to explain the message, they said a school prompted the review.

“As stated before, the district does not approve PPPs. However, after conversations with a school that led to a question about PPPs, we have reviewed each high school’s Pupil Progression Plan as part of our efforts to increase oversight,” district spokeswoman Tania Dall wrote this week in an emailed statement attributed to the district. “Language potentially needing alteration was only found in two high schools’ PPPs, and the matter has since been addressed. The note that went out to schools was meant to clarify expectations across the district.”

Asked if the district could require alterations to charter schools’ PPP’s, state spokeswoman Sydni Dunn wrote in an email, “That is between NOIA and their charters.”

The district is not retroactively reviewing records to see if the weak policy language affected previous students, district spokeswoman Dominique Ellis said in a phone call earlier this week. Kennedy officials

refused to answer questions and Morris Jeff said none of its students were affected because it has not offered repeated courses.

Tracking courses and which courses were passed in credit recovery — a student's second attempt at a course they had previously failed — was a major problem at Kennedy, according to a state review conducted last summer.

Kennedy's pupil progression plans were a major weakness at the school, said Kathleen Padian, a partner at Tensquare, LLC, which was hired last year to review student files there, in an October interview.

"It doesn't appear that anyone ever looked at the pupil progression plan for Kennedy and matched it up for what was being offered to students," she said. "The pupil progression plan for Kennedy was in no way, shape or form in compliance."

Officials from Kennedy did not answer questions about whether the school had updated its policies. The Lens also asked KIPP New Orleans Schools, which is **slated to take the school over from New Beginnings** in the 2020-2021 school year. KIPP New Orleans did not respond to repeated requests for comment inquiring how the school would handle any affected Kennedy students when the group takes over the school.

Morris Jeff makes changes

Morris Jeff updated its plan at the end of January, according to an email from school spokeswoman Heather Harper.

"Morris Jeff met with NOIA PS early last week to clarify and make adjustments to its PPP," Harper wrote.

“Morris Jeff has no previous graduates and no other student has repeated a course under these circumstances.”

The language change in the school’s plan is pretty stark.

The previous **version of Morris Jeff’s PPP** said students would be allowed to replace a grade if that course was repeated and they achieved a higher grade. It also said the grade would be deleted.

Morris Jeff’s revised plan, revised Jan. 31, says, “If ANY course ... is retaken, the student record MUST reflect both grades earned in the course, and both grades MUST be used in calculating GPA.”

Contrary to the district’s directive, the state says schools can calculate a GPA with the highest grade achieved in a repeated course, raising the question of whether the district may have gone too far.

When we asked the state if the district had overstepped, Dunn said it was a matter between the district and its charter schools.

The state allows for what it calls a “**repeat/delete rule**” when calculating grade point averages, but state policy requires that all classes taken remain part of students’ transcripts.

“Local GPA is determined at the local level. For example, they may weight specific courses for valedictorian, honor cord, etc,” Dunn wrote. “They can also pick the higher course grade to determine GPA.”

Dunn wrote that the state has specific rules for how to calculate GPA’s when it comes to TOPS, the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students.

Ellis did acknowledge that different calculations may take place at the state level. “The state can drop the lower grade when they do the calculation on their end.”

When it comes to student transcripts, Dunn said the state rules are clear: no grades should be deleted.

“All academic course grades are academic records and should be on the transcript,” Dunn wrote. “A standard part of our review for signing off on transcripts was to check to see if the previously-attempted course was on the transcript.”

That’s something the district is also reviewing in [its new high school audits](#), which review a sampling of 25 high school student files per school.

Update: This story was updated to include comments from Caroline Roemer.

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