



FORWARD New Orleans

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Bradley Charlesworth
Gambel Communications
504.324.4242
bradley@gambelpr.com

Betsie Gambel
504.319.3442
Betsie@gambelcommunications.com

Coalition Establishes Forward New Orleans for Public Schools Calls for Orleans Parish School Board to equitably serve all students

New Orleans (August 15, 2012)– Today *Forward New Orleans (FNO)* announced ***Forward New Orleans for Public Schools***, which calls for the elected members of the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) to embrace the responsibility to equitably serve all public school students in Orleans Parish. Like its parent organization, *Forward New Orleans for Public Schools* is a coalition of diverse civic, neighborhood and business organizations. It has outlined a seven issue platform and, like the original FNO, will seek candidate pledges, this time for each Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) candidate to act on guiding principles to promote fairness and equity for all public schools and students.

“Regardless of school district, school type, or governance structure, the Orleans Parish School Board must use its authority and resources to enhance the likelihood of success for all public school students,” said Suzanne Mestayer, chairman of the Business Council of New Orleans and the River Region. “By forming *Forward New Orleans for Public Schools*, we are providing a yardstick to measure each school board candidate’s commitment to the success of all of our public schools.”

Forward New Orleans for Public Schools has identified six issues that are now critical challenges, plus a seventh item to ensure sound decision making on future issues. OPSB members must pledge to adopt formal policies and amend existing policies to serve all public schools and students.

1. Promote High-Quality, High-Performing Schools

To promote quality public schools for all children, the OPSB must establish and enforce uniform standards of success for its schools, publicly report whether schools are meeting benchmarks, and create consequences for failure.

2. Provide Coordination to Enable Choice

The OPSB must make enrollment easier for parents by requiring public schools to participate in a universal enrollment process and provide information about school performance, enrollment applications and deadlines for all schools.

3. Engage in System-Wide Strategic Planning Process

OPSB must adopt a formal strategic planning policy that includes developing a shared data system to better identify service gaps and needs, determining the number and types of schools that will be needed, updated demographic data, and coordination with the RSD to assess citywide needs, opportunities to jointly promote public schools, and interaction of public schools with other institutions, non-governmental agencies, and non-profits.

4. Resource Management for Facilities

Public school facilities have benefited from unprecedented rebuilding and repair since Hurricane Katrina. The OPSB must develop a plan for the capital maintenance and repair of school facilities to ensure adequate facilities for all current and future public school students.

5. Resource Manager for Taxes and Bonds

OPSB must implement a tax and bond policy to guide board decisions on whether to adjust school taxes or issue bonds. This policy should require an inclusive process that includes the schools and the Recovery School District (RSD) and looks at the sufficiency and use of current funding.

6. Resource Manager for the Fund Balance Reserve

OPSB currently maintains a general fund reserve of approximately \$42 million for emergencies. The board must outline specific, permissible uses of this fund balance reserve to ensure these monies are used appropriately and for the benefit of all public schools.

7. An Abiding Promise of Fairness and Equity for All Public Schools and Students

OPSB members must address any new issues with a commitment to ensuring that all public schools and all public school students are treated fairly and equitably.

According to Urban League of Greater New Orleans President Nolan Rollins, “The contributors and endorsers of *Forward New Orleans for Public Schools* represent the diverse landscape of New Orleans and believe in the power of education to transform our city. We expect School Board members to lead our school system towards fairness and excellence for all public school students.”

He continued, “We have a broad spectrum of endorsing groups, reflecting the understanding that OPSB, as our elected board, needs to govern for the benefit of all public school students and to do so equitably, with the intention to concretely frame some of the issues where there is broad community agreement.”

Forward New Orleans for Public Schools is asking the OPSB to use its authority and resources equitably to enhance the likelihood of success for all public school students both now and in the future. Before the School Board election, *Forward New Orleans for Public Schools* will report publicly on each candidate’s response for a pledge. Qualifying is August 15-17; general election is November 6.

Forward New Orleans for Public Schools coalition members include: Agenda for Children,

Bridge House/Grace House, Business Council of New Orleans and the River Region , Children's Defense Fund, Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans, Common Good, Cowen Institute, Crimestoppers, Educate Now!, Greater New Orleans, Inc., Living Witness Church of God in Christ, Loyola University Institute for Quality and Equity in Education, New Orleans Chamber of Commerce, New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau, New Orleans Regional Black Chamber of Commerce, New Schools for New Orleans, Orleans Public Education Network, Partnership for Youth Development, STAND for Children Louisiana, Urban League of Greater New Orleans, and Youth Empowerment Project (as of August 15, 2012).

Editor's Note:

A document outlining *Forward New Orleans for Public Schools* is attached.

Details about *Forward New Orleans for Public Schools* can be found at <http://www.schools.forwardneworleans.com>. To schedule an interview, please contact Bradley Charlesworth at bradley@gambelpr.com.

Forward New Orleans is a diverse, issue-focused community initiative led by the Business Council of New Orleans and the River Region in collaboration with more than thirty civic, neighborhood and business organizations, all of which are committed to improving the quality of life in New Orleans.

###