

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

**CRESCENT CITY  
SCHOOLS**  
INSPIRING WORK  INSPIRING PEOPLE

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THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN ON MARCH 4TH, 2020 THE DAY BEFORE AN EVENT CELEBRATING THE COMPLETED RENOVATIONS OF BLUE TUBMAN, AND JUST PRIOR TO THE OUTBREAK OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN THE U.S. AND SUBSEQUENT CLOSURE OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS.



**Crescent City Schools is a really special organization.** In 2010, we founded our organization with a clear commitment to serving students and their families no matter the challenges. In years past, we have weathered storms and handled roadblocks with our incredible teams of teachers and leaders.

**But the last year brought obstacles that would challenge any organization.** Our staff met those challenges with innovation, enthusiasm, and a commitment to meet the needs of our students no matter what. Even in very difficult circumstances, our staff was able to provide rigorous instruction and a sense of community.

**And we didn't do it alone.** This year taught us not only about our own capacity to respond to a crisis, but also that we have friends in the work who care just as deeply as we do about our school communities. We met the needs of our students through partnerships, collaborations, and alongside colleagues throughout the city who are just as willing as we are to roll up our sleeves and do what it takes to make things right for students.

- Our schools had the highest safety rating from staff in the city, thanks to help from our former school nurse Yanti Turang. Yanti rejoined our team and worked all spring and summer (and is still working with us) to make sure our schools could safely reopen and stay open.
- The Verizon Innovative Learning Schools initiative allowed each of our students in grades 5-8 to have their own computer and internet access, which meant we could roll out high-quality online learning right away.
- Together with our district, NOLA Public Schools, we worked to ensure that all of our families were able to get home internet access for free. And alongside all the schools in our city, our students didn't miss a day of instruction or a day of meals.
- Through coordination with Children's Hospital, CORE Response, COVIDCheck, and DePaul Community Health Centers we've been able to provide routine COVID testing for staff, students, and families, and ensure that every staff member has access to life-saving vaccines.

It's through these partnerships and collaborations that we have been able to salvage a year of learning for our students and make the best of 2020. While many urban areas in our country argued about how to open schools safely, New Orleans - even with its autonomous system of charter schools - was able to work together and get schools open starting in September. We remain committed to working closely with our district and our fellow school networks to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our families in New Orleans.

At Crescent City Schools, we care deeply for the children we serve and are committed to standing in the face of oppression and social injustice. The pandemic has hit our families the hardest, and for the last year we have worked tirelessly to ensure that we deliver the highest-quality education while supporting our students' social, emotional, and educational needs. In these pages, you will see how our staff showed incredible commitment and courage, and how our students continued to learn and grow during the pandemic.

We are so proud of our students and their families, our staff, and our city for working together this year. Challenges lie ahead, but we are confident that our organization is committed to the right things: providing excellent instruction, building school communities that are places of refuge for families, and working to create a high-quality system of public schools in New Orleans.

Thank you for being a part of this important work. Know that your support makes it all possible.

Sincerely,



Kate Mehok (left)  
Co-Founder & CEO,  
Crescent City Schools



Julie Lause (right)  
Co-Founder & Chief of Schools,  
Crescent City Schools

# OUR MISSION

*The mission of Crescent City Schools is to support and develop open enrollment charter schools that raise student achievement and prepare students for college.*

Established in 2010, Crescent City Schools was founded on the belief that all students deserve great schools. Crescent City Schools is a Charter Management Organization (CMO) founded by two veteran educators, Kate Mehok and Julie Lause, in order to address the specific need of transforming failing schools.

Crescent City Schools fosters the performance and improvement of schools and provides the support structure necessary for schools to achieve success. Our organization provides sound methodology and implements best practices for teaching and learning to create a model that transforms the lowest-performing schools into excellent educational institutions.

## 2020 Highlights



Completed renovations of the Montessori campus for Harriet Tubman Charter School

# A

Grade received by all three schools in the CCS network for the “Interests and Opportunities” measure, as assessed by the Louisiana Department of Education

# 1,250

The number of student laptops with built-in WiFi hotspots that CCS was awarded from Verizon Innovative Learning Schools initiative



# OUR SCHOOLS



[tubmancharterschool.org](http://tubmancharterschool.org)

# 1003

Students enrolled  
in grades PreK–8



[akiliacademy.org](http://akiliacademy.org)

# 675

Students enrolled  
in grades PreK–8



[habanscharterschool.org](http://habanscharterschool.org)

# 840

Students enrolled  
in grades PreK–8



# COVID BY THE NUMBERS



117,565

Masks acquired for students and staff

2,744

Face shields acquired for staff



2,541

Laptops distributed to students (*1,250 of these were from Verizon with built-in WiFi hotspots*)



300

Standalone hotspots distributed to students



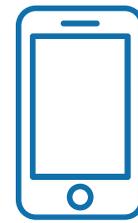
446

Gallons of hand sanitizer acquired for students and staff



8,863

Texts and emails sent to parents and families from March 2020 school closures until the end of the academic year in May



23,732

Calls to parents and families from March 2020 school closures until the end of the academic year in May



263,262

Grab-and-go meals that CCS served to students across the city from March 2020 school closures until re-opening of schools in Fall 2020

# A PLACE FOR LEARNING: BUILDING BEAUTIFUL SPACES FOR OUR STUDENTS

When Tubman made the decision to significantly expand in 2018–2019, school and network leadership knew that it would become necessary to house its younger students, those in grades PreK–2, in a campus of their own. Although Tubman’s original building had been beautifully renovated, the historic building (formerly known as the Adolph Meyer School) was already at capacity serving nearly 650 students in grades 3–8.

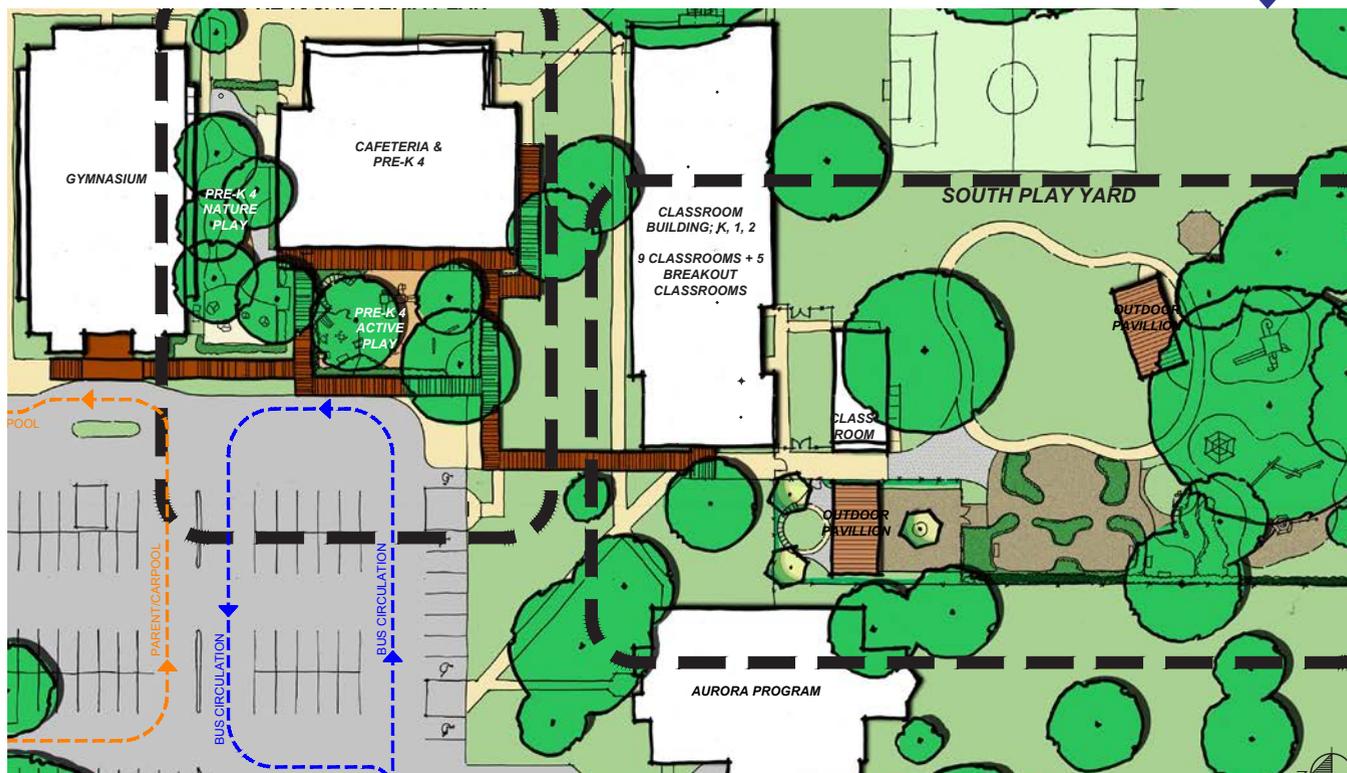
Due to the lack of suitable, vacant school buildings in New Orleans, CCS needed to locate its own facility. After researching several properties in Algiers, CCS found and purchased the former St. Julien campus in Algiers in the summer of 2019. In order to secure a loan and purchase the school building, Crescent City Schools first had to create a separate foundation. After purchasing the facility, CCS extensively renovated the timeworn campus in the summer and fall of 2019 in order to make it ready for students. The renovation of the 11-acre campus, which formerly had been the home to Catholic and other public schools, was completed in early 2020, shortly before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States.



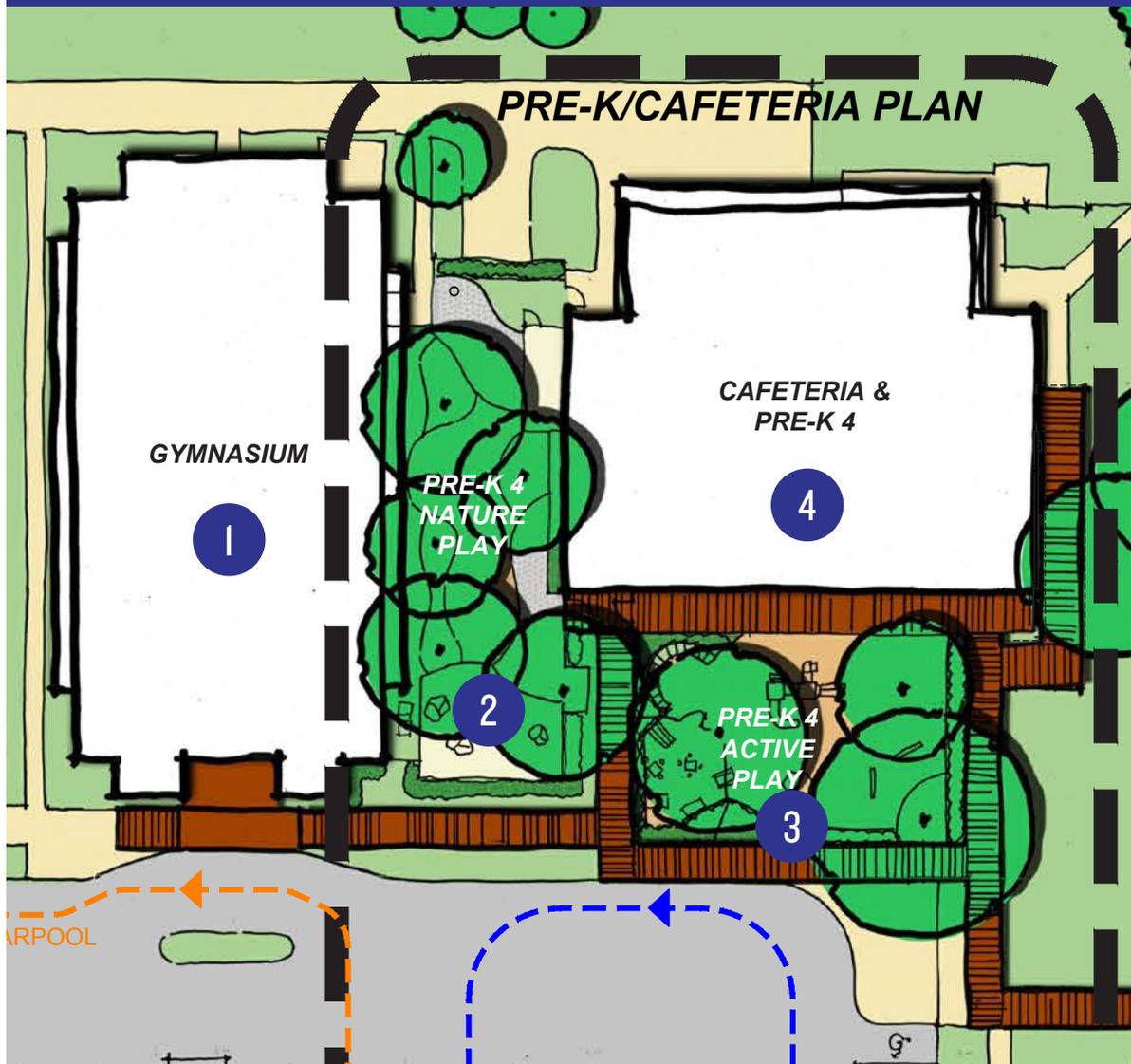
Tubman is well-known for its unique, Montessori-hybrid model, which blends classic Montessori elements with a rigorous, standards-based curriculum. Tubman leadership wanted its PreK–2 students to learn, grow, and develop in a school environment that was in keeping with its Montessori roots and values. As a result, the campus was renovated to prioritize outdoor play, and the classrooms were enlarged to allow for the display and easy access to the “works” that are characteristic of Montessori education. Once the renovations were complete, the campus featured areas for water play, a mud kitchen, a climbing structure, the state’s tallest slide, 2 PreK playgrounds, a gymnasium, a cafeteria, and renovated classrooms for its students.

In addition to providing a beautiful, enriching environment for Montessori students, the campus at 2701 Lawrence Street also provides a permanent home for Crescent City Schools’s Aurora Program, a specialized program designed to support students with severe emotional or behavioral needs. Crescent City Schools is proud to be the first charter organization in the city to have bought and renovated a building in order to meet the needs of this specific student population. Crescent City Schools looks forward to the continued expansion of the Aurora Program in 2021 and beyond, and eagerly anticipates serving more students in the program’s beautiful new home on the Tubman Montessori campus.

**MASTERPLAN FOR TUBMAN  
MONTESSORI CAMPUS**



PREK, CAFETERIA, AND GYMNASIUM PLAN

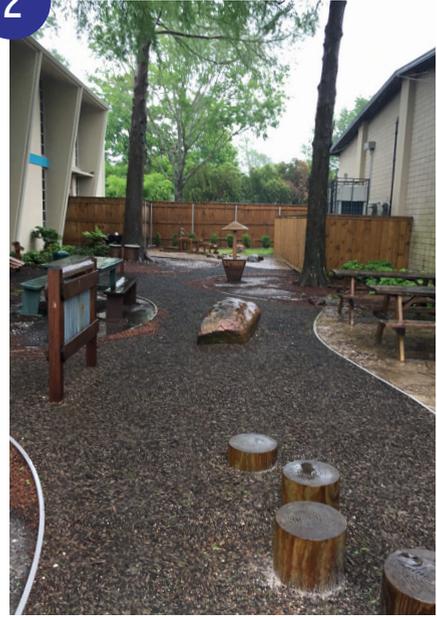


1



GYMNASIUM

2



PRE-K NATURE PLAY

3



PRE-K ACTIVE PLAY AREA

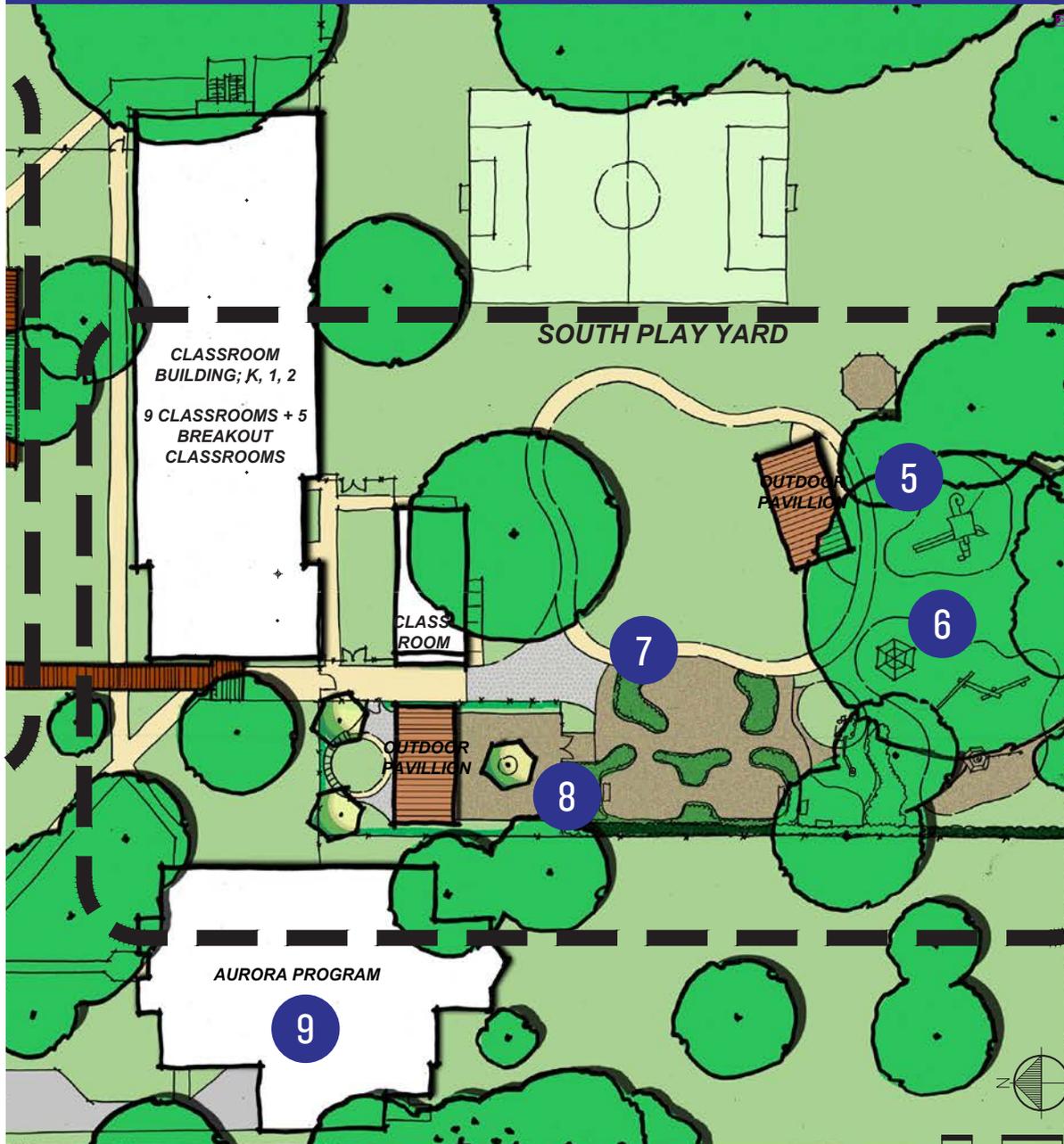
4



PRE-K CLASSROOMS



CLASSROOMS, PLAY YARD, AND AURORA PROGRAM



5



CLIMBING TOWER AND SLIDES

6



CLIMBING STRUCTURES

7



TRICYCLE PATH

8



WATER PLAY AND MUD KITCHEN

9



AURORA PROGRAM

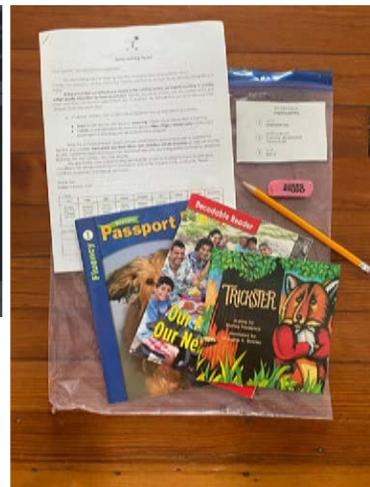
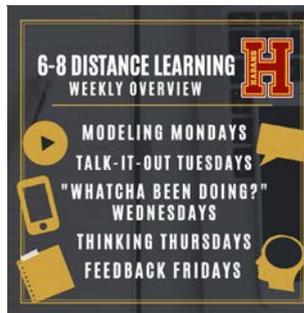
# CONTINUING TO LEARN AND MAINTAINING CONNECTIONS

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, school leaders were notified on Friday, March 13th that school buildings would be closed for a minimum of two to four weeks beginning on Monday, March 16th. Similar to many school districts across the country, the closure continued for the rest of the academic year. The virtual learning plans implemented in the early days of the pandemic were developed and rolled out quickly, in response to the sudden and unexpected shift to distance learning. In the immediate aftermath of the closure of school buildings, staff focused on providing students with continuity and reliable connections with teachers and school staff.

School staff moved swiftly to make an emergency learning plan. Students were sent home on the last day of school with packets of targeted practice work that would correspond to online lessons they would attend for the next two weeks. Every few weeks, families came to the school to receive new printed practice work to go along with their online lessons.

With minimal training in the technology that is now recognized as essential to online learning, teachers jumped into action. At Tubman, teachers used Instagram live to broadcast four lessons a week in each subject, and could use the “view count” feature to determine attendance. At Habans, a weekly schedule was created so that families and students knew what to expect on each day of the week, and Akili utilized technology to continue to provide music education to scholars in innovative ways.

Although the framework varied by campus, each of the schools in the network provided ongoing instruction in core subjects, enrichment activities, and points of connection between staff and students, as well as between staff and parents.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: HABANS STAFF MEMBER SHERRELL HOOD ASSEMBLES LEARNING PACKETS TO SEND HOME WITH STUDENTS AFTER THE CLOSURE OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS; A WORK PACKET SHARED WITH TUBMAN STUDENTS IN SPRING 2020; AN EXAMPLE OF A DISTANCE LEARNING SCHEDULE FOR STUDENTS IN GRADES 6-8



## Meal Distribution

Leaders and staff across our network leapt into action in order to keep students, their families, and school staff safe in the immediate aftermath of the closure of school buildings. Dominique James, Data Manager at Paul Habans Charter School, distributes meals to Habans students and families on March 16th, the first day of closure for school buildings.

## Celebrating 8th Grade Promotion

Due to the pandemic, promotion ceremonies could not take place in the usual way for our eighth-grade scholars. Not to be deterred from celebrating students' accomplishments, CCS staff brought the pomp and circumstance to students' front porches around the city. Akili eighth grader, and soon-to-be alumna Leniya Mccoy, received her surprise "Class of 2020" yard sign and promotion gift from Akili staff in May.



## Staff Appreciation

In even the most stable and best of times, teachers play a critical role in a child's development. In the time of COVID, teachers were an anchor for their students amidst great uncertainty. CCS leaders made sure to honor staff with surprise yard signs and goodie bags in celebration of Teacher Appreciation Week. Melissa Dunkley, Tubman Montessori teacher, received hers with a smile.



As 2020 progressed and summer approached, it became clear that the COVID-19 pandemic would continue to disrupt the normal rhythms of work and school. However, CCS leadership believed that 2020–2021 would be characterized by periods of remote learning as well as in-person learning, which meant network and school leaders had to make plans for both learning scenarios.

A tremendous amount of preparation ensued, and two clear priorities emerged: 1) Create and implement a school re-opening plan that incorporated all relevant safety guidelines and recommendations and 2) Develop a “Virtual Learning 2.0” approach for distance learning that built on the lessons learned in Spring 2020.

# HOW CCS PREPARED TO SAFELY RETURN STUDENTS TO SCHOOL BUILDINGS

Crescent City Schools leaders worked for months during the summer of 2020 to craft a school reopening plan in accordance with recommendations and guidelines released by the state government, local government, Louisiana Department of Education, NOLA Public Schools, the Centers for Disease Control, and leading infectious disease health care experts.

One of those health care experts was Yanti Turang, Deputy Medical Monitoring Operations Chief for the New Orleans COVID Monitoring Station. Turang's expertise in the field of infectious disease and direct experience managing the COVID response in New Orleans was invaluable to CCS as the network made plans to return students to school buildings. In addition to Turang's expertise in the medical field, Turang also had a personal interest in the students of Crescent City Schools, as she worked from 2015 to 2019 as the Clinical School Nurse at Harriet Tubman Charter School.

In order to keep staff and students safe, Turang helped school leaders create special protocols that would lower the risk of COVID spread inside of school buildings as well as maximize in-person learning opportunities. Procedures like daily temperature and symptom checks, frequent hand-sanitizing, and mask-wearing would become part of the new routine for every student and staff member in the CCS network. Plans were made to reduce bus capacity, clean school buildings more frequently, and even bathroom procedures were modified to be COVID-safe.

**As the Deputy Medical Monitoring Operations Chief for the New Orleans COVID Monitoring Station, I was responsible for keeping 850 medical staff members safe. I knew that, with the proper precautions and protocols, CCS could reopen its schools and keep its staff and students safe.**

Yanti Turang,  
Deputy Medical Monitoring Operations Chief,  
New Orleans COVID Monitoring Station;  
Manager of Network Health Operations,  
Crescent City Schools



Two of the most significant efforts to increase student safety revolved around new mealtime protocols and the creation of classroom “cohorts.” Whenever students ate, which would require them to remove their masks, staff made plans and accommodations for students to eat in outdoor settings as much as possible, so as to reduce the risk of COVID transmission.

The creation of cohorts, which limit student and staff interactions to one group that remained together all day, would also change the way schools handled lunch, play, staffing, and special education services. School leaders knew that, in the event of active COVID cases on campus, the revised structure would minimize exposure and require only specific cohorts to be quarantined as opposed to the entire school.

Although the schools managed a number of cautionary cohort quarantines, Crescent City Schools is happy to report that, as of the writing of this annual report, there has been no evidence of community spread inside any of its school buildings. We believe that this is due to the diligence of our staff in following and enforcing safety protocols. 75% of students in the CCS network opted-in for in-person learning by January 2021, and CCS leaders and staff are grateful to the parent community for entrusting them with the care of their children.

**Our top priority, and greatest concern, heading into the school year was making sure that all of our students had access to a rigorous and high quality education, while also safeguarding the health and wellbeing of all our students and staff. In order to accomplish both of those goals, we revamped our sanitization schedule to address high traffic/high touch areas, built a stockpile of protective gear, and segmented the play yard.**

**We also created new schedules for classes and pods, set up additional homerooms to ensure class sizes remained low, reduced bus capacity, and developed numerous arrival protocols to screen students for temperature and other health concerns. For us, the single most motivating factor was striving to ensure our kids had equitable opportunities and access to quality education.**

Joshua Blount,  
Director of Finance and Operations,  
Tubman Montessori



# VIRTUAL LEARNING 2.0: NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND LESSONS LEARNED

As fall 2020 approached, it was clear that most students in New Orleans would continue to receive their education remotely. Unlike the sudden and unexpected shift to distance learning at the beginning of the pandemic, school leaders and educators in the CCS network would have the opportunity to prepare well in advance for distance learning in Fall 2020.

For obvious reasons, much of the summer 2020 professional development for CCS staff members revolved around topics that were critical to the success of distance learning. Staff members spent weeks receiving additional training on platforms such as Google Classroom, Flipgrid, Zoom, Clever, Padlet, STMath, and Nearpod. This focus resulted in all staff members achieving a common level of understanding and familiarity with the new platforms. This meant that staff would begin the fall semester from a position of strength, building on the lessons learned in Spring 2020, and also equipped with a new toolkit of virtual learning platforms.

One major barrier to making online school effective is internet connectivity. Most of the students in the CCS network are considered economically disadvantaged, and their families often do not have access to reliable internet or computers.

When the pandemic began, Crescent City Schools partnered with NOLA Public Schools to provide hotspots to every family who needed one, in addition to a computer for every child to use at home.

And in the fall, as a result of its partnership with Verizon Innovative Learning Schools (VILS), Crescent City Schools was able to provide 1,250 Chromebooks with built-in WiFi to its middle school students. Although Crescent City Schools's efforts to acquire these Chromebooks for its students began long before the COVID-19 pandemic, the network had no way of anticipating how much its students would rely upon the VILS Chromebooks. The VILS grant, along with Chromebooks that CCS had secured in previous years and those donated by the local school district, enabled the network to reach a 1:1 computing ratio for its students.

A HABANS STUDENT RECEIVES HIS CHROMEBOOK WITH BUILT-IN WIFI IN AUGUST 2020, MADE POSSIBLE BY THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN CRESCENT CITY SCHOOLS AND THE VERIZON INNOVATIVE LEARNING SCHOOLS PROGRAM





The best thing about being a science teacher is being able to spark a student's curiosity about the natural world. The increased use of technology this fall, and students having their own devices, has been a game changer! The lessons can be completely immersive as they take on roles as student scientists.

Dara Coleman,  
8th Grade Science Teacher,  
Paul Habans Charter School

Because of the COVID pandemic, our students haven't been able to attend in-person field trips this year. I organized a virtual field trip to the National Museum of the American Indian, which helped them learn about the important role of the Navajo Code Talkers in World War II. After the virtual visit, my students used Google Slides and Flipgrid to curate their own virtual museum.

Adam Lownik,  
7th Grade ELA Teacher,  
Harriet Tubman Charter School



# STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and closure of school buildings beginning in March 2020, there was no state testing in Spring 2020. Consequently, there are no School Performance Scores or Student Growth Scores. However, there are some scores that go into the Louisiana Department of Education's formula for calculating SPS that are still available, such as schools' scores for the Interests & Opportunities and Dropout Credit Accumulation Index (DCAI) measures.

## Interests and Opportunities

The Louisiana Department of Education describes this measure, which makes up 5% of the school's rating, as follows: "Interests and Opportunities is intended to measure whether schools are providing students with access to a well-rounded education, exposing them to diverse areas of learning in which they can develop their skills and talents and leading to a pathway to prosperity." The maximum number of points a school can receive for this measure is 150, and anything equal to or greater than 100 points is considered a grade of A. We are proud to report that each of the schools in the CCS network received a grade of A for this indicator. Akili received 134 points, Habans received 142, and Tubman received 150 points (a perfect score). The high performance of our schools in this area is evidence of our deep commitment to providing a variety of enrichment opportunities and developing our students' interests as part of their education.

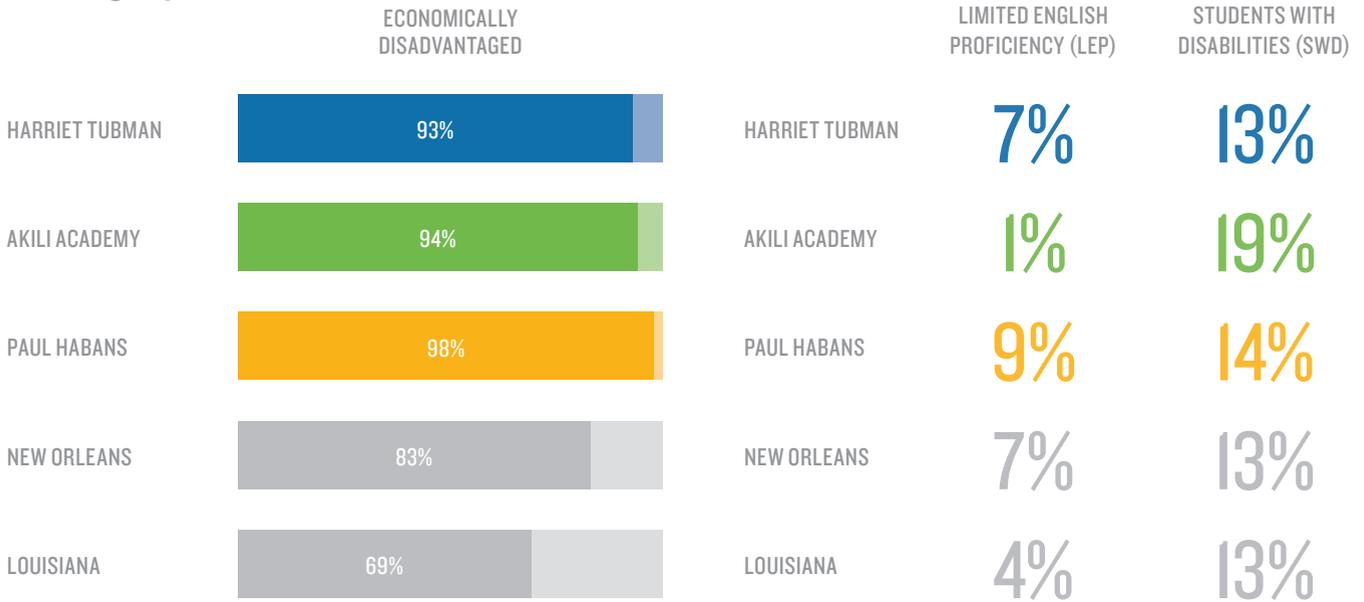
## Dropout Credit Accumulation Index

This measure awards points for students who were enrolled in grade 8 at a CCS school in 2018-2019 based on credits those same students earned in ninth grade in 2019-2020. This measure essentially looks at how well-prepared former CCS students were for high school. Anything equal to or greater than 100 points is a grade of A. CCS is proud to share that all of its schools earned a grade of A for this measure: Tubman received 134.5 points, Akili received 125.8 points, and Habans received 141.7 points.

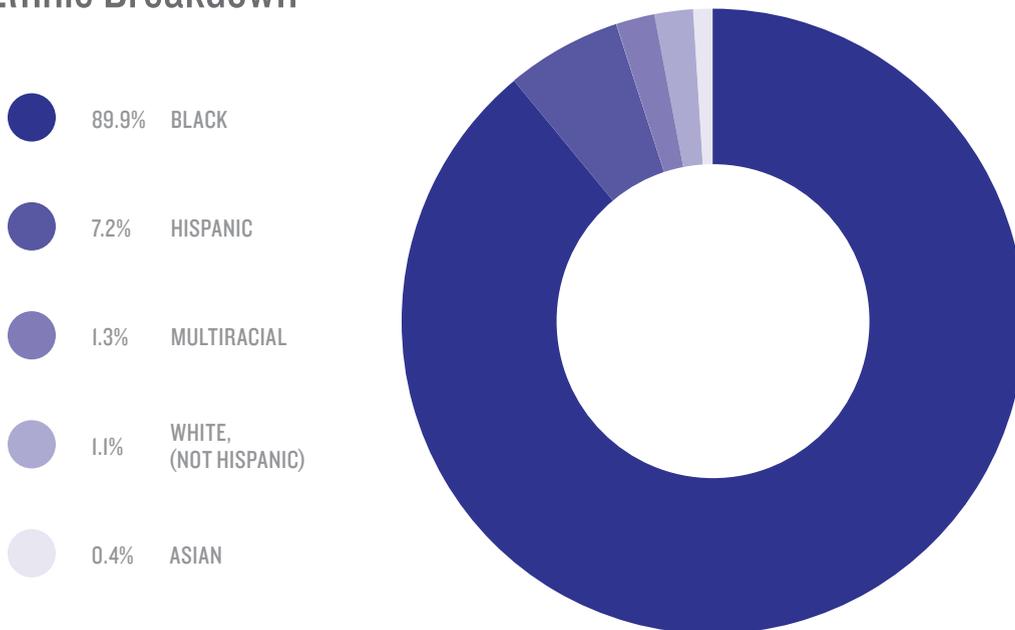


# OUR STUDENTS

## Demographics



## Racial/Ethnic Breakdown



# OUR STAFF

## Experience

Teachers with 4-plus years of experience

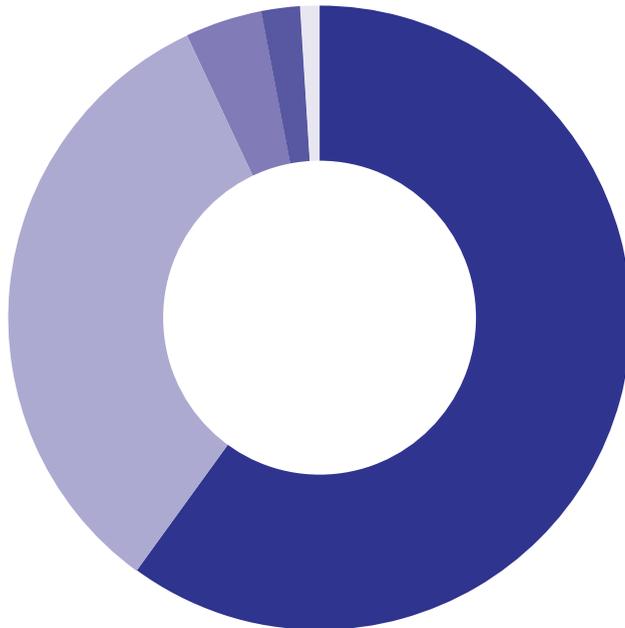
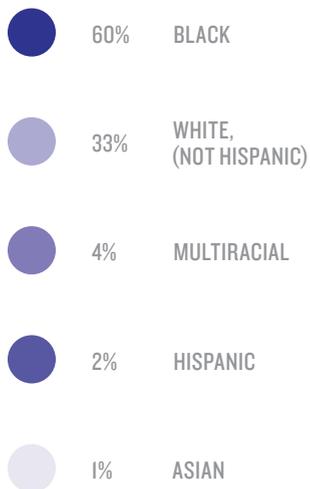
HARRIET TUBMAN **58%**

AKILI ACADEMY **68%**

PAUL HABANS **57%**



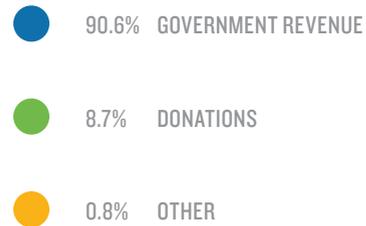
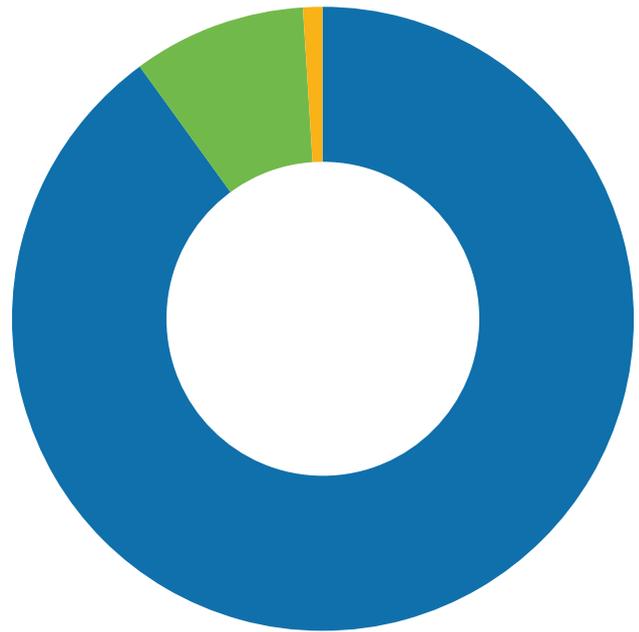
## Racial/Ethnic Breakdown



# FINANCES

Crescent City Schools designs each of its schools to operate sustainably on public funds. However, in order to truly meet the needs of the more than 2,300 children we serve, our schools offer extracurricular activities, innovative programming, and other enrichment opportunities. These programs enhance the quality of our students' education and require us to pursue additional philanthropic dollars. We thank all of our donors for supporting the children of New Orleans.

## Revenue



# Expenses



- 30.6% GENERAL EDUCATION
- 16.2% SPECIAL EDUCATION
- 12.0% FACILITIES
- 8.3% STUDENT SUPPORT
- 7.8% FOOD SERVICES
- 6.9% ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT
- 4.8% ENRICHMENT & EXTRA-CURRICULARS
- 4.2% SCHOOL LEADERSHIP
- 3.7% TRANSPORTATION
- 3.1% TECHNOLOGY
- 0.6% SECURITY
- 1.8% OTHER

# BOARD & DONORS

## Board of Directors

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Bob Stefani, *Board Chair*

Morgan Williams



This past year has been a trying time for our city, our nation, and the world, and CCS staff and students have faced truly unprecedented circumstances. Although 2020 was challenging, everyone associated with CCS should feel very proud of the swift and impressive response of our schools. Within days of the closure of school buildings, CCS school leaders and staff prepared academic materials for distance learning, established processes to distribute food and other necessary supplies to families, lent Chromebooks to hundreds of families to facilitate distance learning, and, perhaps most importantly, continued to provide academic and social-emotional support to students through 2020.

One of the characteristics of schools in the CCS network is the display of inspirational quotes throughout our school buildings. Although these vary from campus to campus, they are meant to inspire our students as they walk the halls of each building. As we have navigated the COVID-19 pandemic, one quote by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. especially epitomizes the resolve of the CCS community this year:

*The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.*

When school buildings closed due to the pandemic, our teachers and staff were suddenly confronted with extraordinary challenges, and their commitment to the children of New Orleans, dedication to the craft of teaching, and genuine connections with our students and their families shined through.

Although the pandemic was obviously unexpected, from the perspective of the board, our staff's dedication and abilities surprised no one. As board members, we have the privilege of seeing first-hand our staff's belief in each child's potential and their dedication to shepherding our students' growth and development year after year. Even with this experience, our staff's resiliency and ingenuity in the face of this crisis was impressive to all of us.

So, while we are very grateful to the donors, supporters, and friends of CCS who are reading these words, the primary purpose of this letter is to acknowledge and thank our teachers and staff for all that they have done in the past year. Thank you for the hours spent learning Google classroom, Zoom, and other technology platforms. Thank you for the many calls you made to parents, encouraging them as they suddenly became the supervisors for their children's distance learning. Thank you for providing our students with a sense of constancy during a time that was anything but normal. Thank you for all that you have done, and continue to do, for our students and families.

In gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'B. Stefani', with a small blue dot above the 'i'.

Bob Stefani, Board Chair

## Organization Donors

Apple Bus Company	King & Jurgens LLC	PeyBack Foundation
Arthur J. Gallagher & Co.	New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Foundation	Pro Bono Publico Foundation
Booth-Bricker Fund	New Schools for New Orleans	The J Foundation
Campbell Foundation	Online Optimism	Verizon Innovative Learning Schools
Give A Note Foundation		Walton Family Foundation

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Helen Bost	Lisa Daggs	Jasmine Graves-Black-Clemons	Gwendolyn Jones
Megan Bourgeois	Kathryn Davis and Keith Vighram	Lakeisha Green	Douglas Kane and Jason Klein
Jennifer Braaten	Jeanette Davis-Loeb	Elizabeth Greenberg	Lauren Karabas
Timothy Bryant	Caitlin Dean	Elder Gwin	Kathryn and Steve Karel
Jessica Buchanan	Tommy DeCarlo	Keren Habtes	Aaron Kaye
Tim Bundy	Siobhan Dempsey	Doug Harrell	Riley Kennedy
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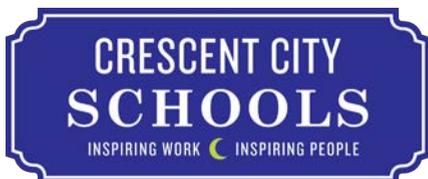
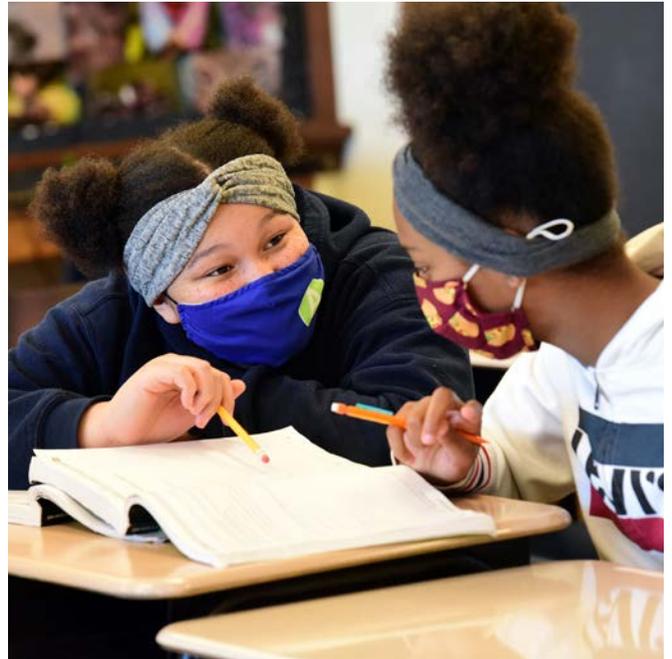
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