Mission

The mission of Educators for Quality Alternatives is to provide struggling students with the skills, confidence, and experiences necessary to succeed in the education and career paths of their choice.

Schools

The NET Charter High School model was developed through researching highly effective strategies for young people who struggle academically or behaviorally in traditional high schools. The NET: Central City opened in 2012 and The NET: Gentilly opened in 2017. Serving 150-175 students at each school, The NET model provides flexible daily class schedules and a year-round accelerated school year. Every student has an individual graduation plan to support their unique strengths, growth areas, circumstances, and goals. The schools offer small classes, restorative environments, intensive academic and behavioral interventions, and a vibrant internship program.
School Performance

School Performance Scores (SPS)

After years of advocacy by EQA, other alternative schools, and many supporters, the Louisiana Department of Education designed and released an Alternative School Performance Score.

Both NET schools earned scores of C and both schools ranked very highly. The NET: Central City ranked #2 in the state — above the average SPS score for traditional schools in New Orleans — and The NET: Gentilly ranked #7.

The NET: Central City’s Charter Renewal

The NET: Central City’s significant achievements and growth were recognized this fall by the Orleans Parish School Board which awarded the school a five year renewal term, making The NET the first alternative school in Louisiana to earn such an honor.
Student Enrollment

EQA served nearly 450 students across the 2018-2019 school year with approximately 150 at The NET: Central City and 175 at The NET: Gentilly at any given time.

The schools maintained between a 66% and 76% stability rate — meaning that despite the vast majority of students having been truant from, dropped out of, or otherwise not successful in prior schools, they persisted at The NETs from semester to semester.

EQA Expands to Middle School

In October 2018, the only alternative combination school in New Orleans closed without warning. EQA immediately stepped in to take the displaced high school students and amended each school’s charter to take in the displaced 8th graders as well.

The NETs provided these students, as well as additional overage 8th graders, an opportunity to take high school credits. Several students earned enough credits that they moved from 8th grade directly to 10th grade for the 19-20 school year.
**Student Demographics**

By including the phrase *struggling students* in EQA’s mission statement, it insures the organization focuses on serving those students who are most in need.

As schools across New Orleans have collectively improved over the last 10 years, and with the elimination of the 8th grade LEAP as a gatekeeping test, the number of students at The NET who are 2 or more years overage for their grade has fallen from nearly 100% to just below 70%.

Nearly a quarter of NET students have disabilities including *Specific Learning Disabilities, Emotional Disorders, and Other Health Impairments*.

Additional common risk factors to student success include:

- Parenting
- Adjudication
- Working
- Raising younger siblings
- Caring for grandparents
- Homelessness
- Mental health & trauma
- Recent arrival in the United States
Standardized Test Results

Student performance on the new state tests — LEAP2025 — increased at both schools over 2017-18 in nearly every area. The shift to LEAP2025 has had a significant impact on the level of rigor of curriculum and instruction, leading to more high-quality classroom experiences for students.

Curriculum changes included the addition of LDOE sponsored Tier 1 curriculum in English and US History. Instructional changes included a school-wide focus on vocabulary and close reading.
Career & Internship Program

In 2018-2019 Students at The NETs:

- Held over 150 internships
- Participated in over 40 career courses in Skilled Crafts / Digital Media
- Earned 7 industry-based credentials in Skilled Crafts / Digital Media

In addition, students participated in multiple exposure experiences including the YouthForce Career Expo and Ochsner Hospital IT Career Day.

Internships are transformational experiences for students. Students build skills, confidence, and relationships which can help them long after high school.

“I got to help out others”

“I got to learn not only about doing makeup, I got to learn how to sew.”

“I learned more about stuff I want to pursue in college”

“It gave me lots of opportunities and taught me the fundamentals of graphic design. It also gave me a position in customer service where I can learn to interact with people better.”
**NET Graduates & Alumni**

89 students graduated from The NETs in 2018-2019.

Each of their journeys through The NET were unique. Some students moved quickly and smoothly, some dropped in and out over multiple years. Health, family, friends, and finances all contributed to a student’s strengths and challenges while their character, talent, and dreams drove them forward to success.

Our alumni’s journeys after The NET are just as unique. Our 2018-2019 graduates are in college, trade school, and working full time.

A few are participating in YouthForce’s LAUNCH, a new program which provides a “5th year bridge” between high school and college. Students earn industry credentials, an Associate’s Degree, and build their soft skills and social networks.
Faculty & Staff

EQA’s teachers and staff are the key to the organization’s success. The vast majority have significant experience working with at-risk students and the organization continually strives to increase diversity and representation of each school’s faculty, staff, and leadership.

In every student survey, the most frequent response to the open-ended question “What’s the best thing about The NET?” is “the teachers.” Additional survey responses underscore the quality of EQA’s faculty and staff:

82% of students feel welcome here

83% of students feel more successful here than they did at their previous school.

94% of students feel respected by the staff

99% of students have an adult they are comfortable talking to
Staff Spotlight: Temple Gowan, Seminar Teacher

We’ve known of Temple’s brilliance in the classroom for the last 5 years so we were delighted when the New Orleans Superintendent and community recognized her work with the prestigious, city-wide New Orleans Excellence in Teaching Award.

Everything in Temple’s work — from the decorating of her room, to the Essential Questions and texts she selects, to the assessments she develops — signals to students that they are valued, capable, and important individuals who have a lot to offer both inside and outside of the school.

At the end of each semester, students at The NET give their feedback on a schoolwide anonymous survey. Nearly every semester, there are multiple responses to the question “What is the best thing about The NET” that simply say “Temple.” Her popularity comes from the truest place — being a great teacher. Temple’s students feel both challenged and supported — they know what she expects, will push for their very best, and they know that she will provide the scaffolding, support, and encouragement they need to reach it.
Big Picture Learning Affinity Cohort

In 2018, EQA was invited to join the first Big Picture Learning Affinity Cohort.

The founders of The NETs drew on the Big Picture Schools model when developing their original school plans, and they have frequently collaborated with and learned from BPL over the last ten years. Joining the Affinity Cohort has been a rewarding opportunity to take our relationship to the next level. As members of the Affinity Cohort, school leaders receive virtual and on-the-ground coaching from a Big Picture Regional Director and staff participate in conferences and school visits across the country.

Finance & Fundraising

EQA continues to meet all local and state financial requirements including maintaining a clean audit and a healthy fund balance. We are grateful to our partners and funders in 2018-2019 including, but not limited to:

- Baptiste Community Ministries
- Keller Family Foundation
- New Schools for New Orleans
- Pro Bono Publico
- Catherine Stewart & Family
- YouthForce NOLA

Authorizer Changes

2018-2019 was the first year of full OPSB unification, which means that EQA’s charters moved from state to local oversight. EQA is grateful for a smooth transition and significant support from OPSB in policy development for alternative schools, including accountability and differentiated funding.
Strategic Planning

The EQA Board engaged in a strategic planning process throughout the 2018-2019 school year. The Board’s goal was to determine how to grow responsibly to increase support of EQA’s current students while increasing the number of young people having access to EQA’s programming.

Using these considerations, EQA committed to three major programming expansions for 2019-2020 and beyond:

- **The Bridge Middle School**: a therapeutic program for 7th and 8th graders during their expulsion terms.

- **The NEST**: a childcare center for the infants and toddlers of NET students

- **New Orleans Accelerated High School**: a transformation of ReNEW Accelerated High School into an EQA school
In Memoriam

This was a hard year for our family as we lost a colleague, a graduate, and five current and former students. We are blessed to have known each of them and the world is a poorer place for their absence.

Each of our young people were killed by gunfire. Our students and staff insist that our city and country work harder to end the cycle of violence.

Gerard Poole

Toneya Young

Dr. William Lambert

“Mr. Bill”
Mayor LaToya Cantrell Hears from NET Students

“I love my city. I work in my city but I really wish that my city would get better and that people can go places without getting hurt. I feel like I can’t go to a party without someone getting shot or hurt or something. I can’t go to concert or a DJ without somebody shooting at each other. I think we need more security and everywhere I go, I would feel more comfortable. I might go outside more if it was safer. I really hope it changes as I grow up. “

“I feel like New Orleans is failing its people. Many schools are still bad because some teachers don’t help the students enough. I feel like when students don’t receive help they give up on school. That’s why a lot of teenagers are not in school. If we hire teachers who are excited to teach and take more interest in students' personal lives, I believe that more teenagers would still be in school instead of on the streets.”

“My concern is the gun violence here and killing. Sometimes, I’m scared to even come out of my house because I’m too afraid that I might get shot by a bullet that wasn’t meant for me. Mayor Cantrell, I would love if our community was a lot safer for people to walk...When I turn on my television and somebody has been shot or killed by a gun that does something to me. Nobody deserves to have their life taken away from them. It’s sad because it’s families that are losing loved ones from gun violence and something must be done about it.”