

YOUTH VOICE REPORT

2025



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Baton Rouge Youth Voice Initiative 2025 Report

The Baton Rouge Youth Voice Report is a project of the Baton Rouge Alliance for Students elevating the voices of the city's most important education stakeholders—students. By sharing insights from this year's survey of 327 middle and high school students across East Baton Rouge Parish, we aim to ensure the young people who experience our system every day help shape how it improves.

Students from schools across the parish shared their thoughts for this project. Our team analyzed the response set to track trends across subgroups, and reviewed the overall data set. Students attending schools with state ratings of A or B were grouped as “high-performing schools,” and students attending schools rated C, D, or F were grouped as “lower-performing schools.” We also compared responses from students in North Baton Rouge (NBR) and South Baton Rouge (SBR), using Florida Boulevard as a dividing line.

Students describe Baton Rouge schools at their best as people-first and purpose-driven, filled with great teachers, engaging lessons, and adults who know and care about them. Students prioritize a strong focus on college, careers, and making their families proud. At the same time, readiness for life post-high-school isn't experienced evenly: students in higher-performing schools report stronger engagement and preparation than peers in lower-performing schools. What happens outside of the classroom environment matters—safety, neighborhood conditions, and long bus commutes, especially in North Baton Rouge, shape whether students can fully participate in their education. Taken together, these patterns explain why students consistently call for equitable access to quality education as a top community priority.

This call for equitable access to high-quality education is strongest in NBR (24% vs 11% in SBR), precisely where commute burdens and neighborhood condition gaps are more acute. Inside schools, students in lower-performing schools more often ask for mental health resources (22% vs 11%) and academic support (9% vs 5%), underscoring uneven access to the supports that enable learning. Combined with readiness gaps and time costs, these signals make a compelling case: equity isn't an accessory. It's what students say they need most.

Bottom line: Baton Rouge students, no matter where they live or go to school, want excellent teachers, safe communities, and real pathways to college and fulfilling career. The data in this report show they're striving for those goals, and they show where our system can get better. Prioritizing quality, equitable education is not only the right thing to do; it is the improvement students are directly asking us to make.



72% Students highlighted that the most important factor in their school communities is **Great Teachers.**

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a blue pen, writing the number '4' on a grid-lined notebook. The notebook page is filled with rows of numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8) written in blue ink. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue and green. The text 'BY THE NUMBERS' is overlaid in white, outlined font.

BY THE NUMBERS

24,959 ENROLLED IN
NEIGHBORHOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS



11,961 ENROLLED IN
CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS



2,400 ENROLLED IN
STATE SCHOOLS



BATON ROUGE ENROLLMENT **BY THE NUMBERS**



73,253 TOTAL STUDENTS ENROLLED
IN ALL BATON ROUGE SCHOOLS

14,335 ENROLLED IN
PRIVATE SCHOOLS



4

8,326 ENROLLED IN
MAGNET SCHOOLS



11,272 ENROLLED IN
CENTRAL, BAKER & ZACHARY





YOUTH PRIORITIES



GREAT TEACHING DRIVES STUDENT SUCCESS

When students picture the school community they want, they start with the people in front of the classroom.

Students ranked “Great Teachers” #1 for what matters most in a school community (34%), an important role reinforced by daily experience:

77% say they have at least one teacher who truly engages them

62% feel teachers care about them

66% believe educators in their schools are qualified

READINESS ISNT EQUAL: PERFORMANCE GAPS PERSIST



When students describe the purpose of school, they point to the next step: “Pursuing Higher Education (College)” is the top first choice (33% overall).



That goal holds across all campuses—about one third of students of both high-performing (A/B) and low-performing (C/D/F) schools choose college first.



Students also report disparities in access to advanced coursework and extracurricular programs.



DIVIDE IN PREPARATION & EQUALITY

24% of North Baton Rouge Students call for more equitable education access vs **11%** in South Baton Rouge.

Meanwhile, South Baton Rouge students lean future-forward:

75% say school is preparing them for a college/career pathway vs 59% of students in North Baton Rouge

77% already know their post high school plan vs 63% of students in North Baton Rouge



SAFETY SHAPES LEARNING

Safety concerns remain a dominant theme, particularly among North Baton Rouge students, with a significant number citing crime and violence in their communities as a top concern.



78% NORTH BATON ROUGE

91% SOUTH BATON ROUGE

**SAY THEIR
NEIGHBORHOOD
FEELS SAFE**



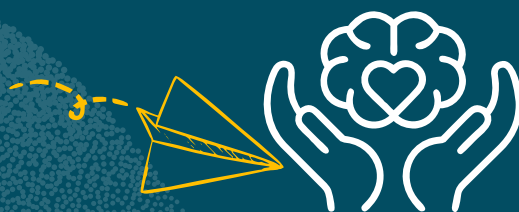
COMMUNITY CHANGES *& Student Advocacy*

46% WANT MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Mental health needs and help-seeking differ by gender. Boys are more likely to call for additional mental health resources (28% vs 18%) and are slightly more likely to rank social-emotional support as a top school-community priority. Girls report lower comfort seeking emotional help (43% vs 49%), while both groups show higher comfort seeking academic help, with girls slightly ahead (63% vs 60%).




Students believe in their own ability to shape their communities for the better. Nearly the same percentage of **North and South Baton Rouge students**, 68% and 66%, respectively, **agree that the skills they are learning in school can help them improve their community.**



Students yearn to have a voice

Students want to have a voice in the education conversations happening across the parish, so they can address the barriers to quality education identified in the survey. More than half of students said they would be more likely to attend and speak at a school board or Metro Council meeting if there was an opportunity for formal student participation.

STUDENTS ARE LOOKING FOR AVENUES BY WHICH TO ADVOCATE FOR COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS AND ACADEMIC CHANGE, BUT ALSO BELIEVE THAT THE PARISH'S ELECTED LEADERS HAVE THEIR BEST INTERESTS AT HEART. FORTY-ONE PERCENT OF STUDENTS EXPRESSED THAT THE LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD CARES ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE.

41%  **OF STUDENTS BELIEVE THEIR SCHOOL BOARD CARES ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE**



TAKE ACTION



This report highlights young people's perceptions of the challenge of their own educational journey and the Baton Rouge community as a whole. As stakeholders in the city's future success, the students' responses should serve as a catalyst for meaningful action by education and policy leaders. Every student deserves a school that delivers on the promise of high quality learning opportunities, a welcoming and supportive environment, and preparation for the future.

SCHOOL & CITY LEADERS:

We strongly recommend a comprehensive educator workforce plan that focuses on recruiting, retaining, and rewarding the highest-quality educators in Louisiana to work in Baton Rouge. We also encourage expanding programs designed to keep our city clean and safe. Create platforms for students to provide direct feedback and opportunities for them to engage in problem solving.

STUDENTS:

Students deserve to have their voices heard, and are asking our city's leaders to listen. We encourage young people to stop waiting for a formal invitation to engage in these discussions. Attend a school board meeting, email your area's elected representatives, create and participate in student council. You have the ability to create change across the parish even now.



BATON ROUGE
ALLIANCE
for STUDENTS



SCAN HERE!