

# Louisiana Department of Education

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## Five New Schools to be Built in New Orleans

Construction to Begin by Year's End on Langston Hughes, Andrew Wilson, L.B. Landry, Fannie C. Williams and Lake Area Schools

NEW ORLEANS, La. - State Education Superintendent Paul Pastorek today announced that construction would begin by the end of this year that will result in new or as-good-as-new schools, including Langston Hughes Elementary, Andrew Wilson Elementary, L.B. Landry High School, Fannie C. Williams Elementary and Lake Area, which was previously a middle school and will be re-opened as a high school.

These new schools - one in each of the City's five Council districts - were severely damaged by a combination of Hurricane Katrina and years of deferred maintenance. Hughes, Landry and Lake Area will be replaced by newly constructed buildings; Wilson and Williams will undergo a major renovation to "as good as new" condition.

They were selected as part of the Quick Start process announced by Superintendent Pastorek less than two months ago. This process included meetings with committees of community residents, organized with the assistance of the City Council, to agree on a series of criteria that would inform the decision-making process. Members of the public and community organizations were then invited to submit proposals for new schools, which were reviewed by the Superintendent and his team along with other information they gathered.

"This marks a major milestone for the public school system and the City of New Orleans," said Superintendent Pastorek. "For years, people have commented on the unacceptable physical condition of our schools. For years, they have continued to deteriorate. This year, we have begun renovating schools to a much higher standard, and now we will break ground on new schools by the end of this year. We want these schools to stand as a symbol of the value we place on our children and their education - and as a symbol of what's possible for the future of our city.

"These Quick Start schools are only a first wave. The Master Planning Process is already beginning, and the community will be heavily engaged in that process. We received proposals from the community for 17 locations. While we could only move forward with a limited number in advance while the overall Master Plan is being completed, every one of these proposals will be considered as part of that process - and they may very well be part of the next wave of new construction.

"My goal was to identify a handful of sites where we know we are going to need schools and where the economics and FEMA reimbursement formulas allow us to build new schools. We don 't have to wait for the completion of a master plan to begin. We can start now."

Recovery School District Superintendent Paul Vallas said, "We are serious about turning this school system around, and as part of that, we are creating learning environments that are on par with the kind of schools suburban districts and more affluent communities have. We will have schools with technology and with teachers trained to use superior curriculum models. We expect to be making progress immediately, but we must look toward the future and ensure that we have facilities that we can be proud of. This Quick Start campaign is a very important step, and I look forward to welcoming students into these new schools in 2009."

All five schools that were selected are in rebounding communities with growing populations that are in need of schools for children who live there. All these projects will be paid for with FEMA funds. In addition to funding issues and the anticipated growth of communities and their need for schools, Superintendent Pastorek also considered factors such as the historic significance of the sites and the level of community support they received.

Superintendent Pastorek expressed his appreciation to everyone in the community who participated, including the City Council, the Orleans Parish School Board, Dr. Ed Blakely, and all those who participated on committees or worked on proposals. He also pointed to the support and assistance of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Director Jim Stark, who has been instrumental in developing funding formulas for these schools, the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) and its Director, Jeff Smith, as well as Chairman Donald Powell, Federal Coordinator of Gulf Coast Rebuilding.

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