

Education & Policy Exchange

Louisiana Field Notes

Fall 2024

Education & Policy Exchange is a nationwide effort to elevate black and brown microschool founders and education entrepreneurs while exploring the gaps between their ability to innovate and the public policy that regulates how they operate. On this leg of the tour through New Orleans and Baton Rouge, we met with a microschool founder and the leader of a statewide homeschooling network, spoke with a leading public policy advocate for educational freedom and the Deputy Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services, and read state-based research from school choice advocates.

What we observed in the education freedom ecosystem:

- Early adopters and innovators in this space
- Interest in learning more about what is working well in other states
- Incredible similarities in the professional backgrounds of founders and educators
- Frustration on the part of all leaders that there are not enough educational options available
- Desire of founders to be connected with innovators locally and across the country

What we learned from the founders and policy advocates:

- Significant lack of knowledge regarding what school choice options are available
- Lack of innovations and options for state-run facilities for children
- Chasm between rural and urban communities when it comes to information
- Cultural conditioning resulting in a laissez-faire mindset with regard to change
- Lack of understanding about the microschool/homeschool experience by families

What questions are emerging as we analyze opportunities:

- How can we galvanize resources to educate and increase awareness throughout the state for school choice options? Do we need a two-pronged approach to reach families in rural and urban communities?
- What are the best public policy solutions that are working in other southern states that could serve as case studies for Louisiana efforts?
- How can the current administration play a role in knowledge sharing and resource mapping?

What we recommend for exploration to ease implementation of school choice:

Consider convening a half-day summit bringing together stakeholders from across the state to learn about the various school choice options and pathways to access each including homeschool family networks, civic leaders from rural and urban communities, friendly elected officials and administration officials. From our conversations, we have learned that these would be some key stakeholders to invite: State Representative Kim Carver (R); At-Large Member of the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, Conrad Appel; Ty Salvant, NOLA Homeschoolers; Michael Williamson, President and Chief Executive Officer of United Way of Southeast Louisiana; Governor Landry's Policy Director, John Kay; and Erin Bendily, Pelican Institute's Vice President for Policy & Strategy.

Partner with the Pelican Institute to compile a user-friendly report on some of the best practices and most applicable innovations in educational freedom from other states. Utilize the loose coalition leaders convened at the summit to distribute it and engage community members in their networks with the information and opportunities. Seek a public-private partnership for a statewide marketing campaign to inform families about their school choice options. Perhaps, United Way's [Blueprint for Prosperity](#) could partner directly with the Landry Administration and share resources.

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