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

The NET Charter High School
The NET was developed after years of research into highly effective strategies for young people who struggle academically or behaviorally in traditional high school settings.

2013-2014 was The NET’s second year at scale and as an independent charter school. During this year, the school served approximately 150 students at a time using targeted, innovative methods designed to insure each student’s individual academic, behavioral and other needs were met. During these first two years, the NET graduated more than 50 young people who teachers, parents and the students themselves believe would never otherwise received a diploma.

Values

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<tr>
<th>Belonging</th>
<th>Independence</th>
<th>Generosity</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Being safe, being accepted and having multiple chances to succeed</td>
<td>• Taking charge of and responsibility for the present and future</td>
<td>• Inspiring and supporting others</td>
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<td>• Having strong positive &amp; respectful relationships with other students &amp; adults</td>
<td>• Taking risks and trying new things</td>
<td>• Solving conflicts productively and practicing forgiveness</td>
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<td>• Being a proud, responsible community member</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mastery</th>
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<td>• Being reliable &amp; prepared</td>
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<td>• Solving meaningful problems</td>
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<td>• Practicing a strong work ethic</td>
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<td>• Meeting high standards by pushing ourselves to create, get feedback and revise</td>
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Student Enrollment

The NET continued to meet its enrollment goal of 150 students.

The NET is entirely open admissions and participated in the One App process. The school worked closely with the RSD to support the placement of struggling students into the NET. While students were accepted all year, most students started in August or January. This year a few students started in Semester 3.

Drop Out Reasons

NET students struggle to stay enrolled for a variety of reasons. Some students leave the city, choose to go to another school or to a GED program. However, a larger number of students drop out. Many students re-enroll later during the year or during a subsequent year. However, if they have not accessed the support they need to overcome the reason they dropped out—lack of stable housing, stable daycare, involvement in dangerous neighborhood issues, etc.—most students are unable to successfully continue their education.

It is for this reason that The NET continually seeks and implements resources and programming to address students’ non-academic needs.
Through a strong focus during 2013-2014 on building strong data systems and interventions, the school improved its identification of students with disabilities. Multiple students were evaluated or re-evaluated to insure they received the appropriate diagnosis and supports.

The school’s special education percentage grew from 14% to 17% and continues to rise. While the students received individualized supports regardless of identification, the improvement in identification is important because it allows students to access State supports, supports in college and increases the school’s funding.
During 2013-2014, the NET worked to raise funding for the following attendance interventions:
- Homebound Teacher to support students who are out of school
- Wireless computers to lend to students to work at home
- Funding for supports for homeless students

In addition, the NET worked closely with the RSD and OPSB to develop the Youth Opportunity Center a high quality city-wide program to address truancy.
Academic Growth

The NET’s academic program and curriculum are directly targeted at students who are working below level. The school structure allows for four major innovations:

1. **Individual Plans** All students have an individualized graduation plan. Staff and students work together to develop intervention plans whenever a student is struggling to stay on track.

2. **Flexible Scheduling** Students typically take 3 of the 6 periods per day allowing for a variety of start and end times which help students parent, work etc. It also allows students to have shorter or longer school days depending upon their stamina, focus, and graduation progress.

3. **Three distinct learning environments**: Students typically attend one class in each environment: Computer Lab for credit recovery and Math & Reading remediation; Core Classes for Math and Science; Advisories for seminar style project driven learning. This variation helps students focus, gain ownership over their academic growth and receive highly individualized supports.

4. **Targeted Interventions** Specialized advisories, individualized opportunities, small group pull outs and other interventions are available as needed.

Despite all being high school students, only 12% of students arrived at the NET able to read at a high school level less than 30% being able to do math at the high school level.
Despite significant effort, the rate of students growing 2 grade levels or more in reading and math fell during the 2013-2014 school year.

All students at the NET receive targeted literacy and math support within their high school credit classes, Blended Learning computer programs and academic intervention groups. This individualized support resulted in a majority of students making more than a year’s worth of academic growth.

The school has analyzed the data on a student-by-student level to try to understand the dip. Poor attendance was a major factor as was slowing growth—as students get stronger—upper middle school levels—their rate of growth slows. However, there is no question that additional interventions are necessary for 2014-2015.

The NET has hired an additional RtI teacher, added a co-teacher to the Tier 3 advisory, and is improving tracking systems to improve literacy and math growth next year.

Starting in 2014-2015, the NET will track credit attainment and, in future years, GPA, as additional measures of academic growth.
Educators for Quality Alternatives

Standardized Test Results

In order to graduate, depending upon their high school entry year and special education status, students must pass:

- Graduate Exit Exams (GEEs)
- End of Course Exams (EOCs)
- Louisiana Alternative Assessment 2 Exams (LAA 2) students on this track can graduate with a Certificate of Achievement or a regular Diploma. Students on this track must ALSO take the EOC exams and ACT type exams.
- Louisiana Alternative Assessment 1 Exams (LAA 1) these students graduate with a Certificate of Achievement

In addition, all students must take the Explore (9th grade); the Plan (10th grade); the ACT (11th/12th grade) exams. These exams do not effect student’s graduation but do effect college access and scholarships.

EOC Scores

End of Course Tests

On all but two tests, scores continued to rise during the 2013-2014 school year with an overall average gain of 4%.

GEE & LAA2 Test
In 2013-2014 between 1 and 11 students took each of the GEE tests & LAA2 so the sample size is too small for comparative data to be useful.
In most areas, the NET outperformed the city’s other alternative schools and in some cases, has comparable scores with transformation schools.

The comparisons below are among initial testers only. The state only release the passage rates of initial testers - students who are taking the EOC for the first time. For the NET and other alternative schools, between 5%-30% of students may be re-taking the EOC after failing the class or test in the past. The NET has asked for more comprehensive data to be released in the future.

Among New Orleans alternative schools, The NET had both the highest overall average and the highest rate of Good & Excellent scores in 5 of the 6 tests. The NET’s average across all tests was even a point higher than one traditional high school, Miller McCoy High School.

Only Good & Excellent scores are counted in the State’s accountability system.

Scores of “Fair” are also passing scores and are counted in the Alternative School accountability system. While far from the district average, The NET’s total passage rates are very respectable in comparison with the other New Orleans alternative schools and even in comparison with some traditional high schools. In Algebra, Geometry and American History, The NET’s scores were highest amongst the alternative schools. Only in one test, English II, does The NET trail the other two alternative schools.
Comparative Scores

**English II**
- Crescent Leadership (Alternative): 63%
- John McDonogh (Turn around): 53%
- Joseph S. Clark High School (Turn around): 77%
- Miller McCoy (traditional school): 67%
- ReNew Accelerated (Alternative): 67%
- The NET Charter High School: 57%

**ELA III**
- Crescent Leadership (Alternative): 58%
- John McDonogh (Turn around): 46%
- Joseph S. Clark High School (Turn around): 79%
- Miller McCoy (traditional school): 59%
- ReNew Accelerated (Alternative): 33%
- The NET Charter High School: 55%

**Algebra I**
- Crescent Leadership (Alternative): 34%
- John McDonogh (Turn around): 37%
- Joseph S. Clark High School (Turn around): 49%
- Miller McCoy (traditional school): 55%
- ReNew Accelerated (Alternative): 35%
- The NET Charter High School: 46%

**Geometry**
- Crescent Leadership (Alternative): 26%
- John McDonogh (Turn around): 37%
- Joseph S. Clark High School (Turn around): 54%
- Miller McCoy (traditional school): 40%
- ReNew Accelerated (Alternative): 33%
- The NET Charter High School: 42%

**Biology**
- Crescent Leadership (Alternative): 48%
- John McDonogh (Turn around): 35%
- Joseph S. Clark High School (Turn around): 71%
- Miller McCoy (traditional school): 40%
- ReNew Accelerated (Alternative): 75%
- The NET Charter High School: 55%

**American History**
- Crescent Leadership (Alternative): 34%
- John McDonogh (Turn around): 49%
- Joseph S. Clark High School (Turn around): 64%
- Miller McCoy (traditional school): 63%
- ReNew Accelerated (Alternative): 43%
- The NET Charter High School: 59%
For the first time this year, schools in Louisiana could be identified as alternative schools for the purpose of accountability. 31 schools were identified but scores were reported only on 13 of them. All these schools must serve vulnerable populations but these schools range considerably in the number of students, demographics, and enrollment requirements. For example, some schools serve incarcerated students while others have a minimum reading level for entry.

However, while the comparison is not as apt as a comparison with the other alternative schools in New Orleans, it is important to review where The NET stands among alternative schools state wide.

In all testing areas, the NET performs in the middle of the group. Having this information for the first time this year is helpful—we can now reach out to and learn from the schools whose test scores were higher than ours.
Internship Program

Number of Internships

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<th></th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
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<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
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<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>8</td>
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Successful Completion

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<th>2011-2012</th>
<th>2012-2013</th>
<th>2013-2014</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>60%</td>
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Highlights from 2013-2014 Internships:

British Council Project
NET students worked with Xavier University’s Art Department to produce a piece of art which was displayed on the Thames River in London.

The Trafigura Work & Learn Center
The NET’s neighbor, the Youth Empowerment Program’s, new Bike Shop provided training and internships for multiple NET students.

New Orleans Design Development & Manufacturing LLC
Designer Briana Burgau opened up her new business to NET interns. Not only did she teach the interns about designing, sewing, and business, she provided each student with deeply meaningful mentoring. During NET Night 2013, her intern, Faith Shepard, was moved to tears as she described her personal growth as Briana’s intern.
NET students mostly struggle with themselves—they are often missing the skills to respond adaptively to expectations, requests, difficult assignments or situations. Thus their most challenging behaviors occur when they are asked to push themselves—stay in class, complete a difficult assignment, speak respectfully to someone who upset them etc.

For this reason, the NET responses to behavior are focused on building students’ communication, conflict resolution and problem solving skills. Each time a student’s behavior is inappropriate, the student is addressed by a staff member and must complete a process which includes taking responsibility and “making it right” with whoever they disrespected or hurt. This process can be a simple conversation, a written agreement, or a mediation. Overtime, students learn the skills they need to respond appropriately to challenging situations inside and outside of school.

**Suspensions**
The NET uses suspensions as a last resort and as a “cooling off time.” When a student is unable to complete the restorative process at the time—because they are high, unable to control their anger, have hurt another student or staff member, etc.—they may be suspended. They understand that the suspension isn’t the “hard work;” the “hard work” is coming back and making things right with the individuals or community that they disrupted and getting themselves back on track.
Research shows that one of the most important factors in a student succeeding in high school is the quality of the relationships the student has with his/her teachers and other school staff.

The NET’s small size, advisory system, orientation, excursions, Town Hall, internships and many other school structures and opportunities are designed with this in mind. A survey given in 2013-2014 shows the school’s success in bonding students to adults and the resulting sense of student investment and empowerment.
Graduation Rate

The Louisiana Department of Education calculates the Graduation Rate as the percent of students who graduate four years after starting high school. This, however, is not an appropriate metric for schools like The NET which target students who are behind.

The NET advocated for alternative schools’ graduation rates to be calculated as the percentage of students who meet the graduation date set when they enroll.

This means that initially The NET’s graduation rate will decrease annually as more students miss their graduation dates. However, it will even out and then increase over time.
During 2013-2014, the NET started the Next Steps program which is focused on helping students transition to employment and further education upon graduation from the NET.

With only having a coordinator for 7 hours a week, great progress was made including:

- All graduating seniors developed an “Options Map” to guide them in their post-graduation steps
- Next Steps website with opportunities, tips and guidance directly targeted for NET students
- Weekly Next Steps meetings with workshops on job searching, college applications, FAFSA and more

Based on initial successes, the NET raised funding to expand the program to a half-time position for the 2014-2015 school year.

The Next Steps program is starting to find and track NET alumni in order to assess the effectiveness of the NET’s model and to provide graduates support as they navigate training, education and employment options.
School Year Highlights

NET Carpentry & Construction Class

During the 2013-2014 school year, the school’s Carpentry and Construction program got underway. Students started by building out their classroom—learning everything from framing and dry walling to measuring and working together.

During the summer, students built a deck in the backyard and worked with Habitat for Humanity building a foundation for one of their homes.

The classes have inspired several students to further develop their skills in the field. Three graduates of the school and program completed a forklift training insuring access to good paying employment.

The construction teacher, Byron Bishop, was promoted to Internship Coordinator for the 2014-2015 year.
The NET staff continues to be the school’s strongest asset. Each year the school has added positions and has made maintaining a high quality, stable staff a priority. Staff are recruited and developed with the following in mind:

- **Believe** in each and every student
- Achieve meaningful results with each student
- Take personal responsibility for professional, school and student growth
- Continually grow through constant **reflection and feedback**
- Are passionate about and skilled in their subject, their craft and the mission
- Work collaboratively to design innovative and effective solutions

**Staff Profile**

**Neil Poynter, Advisor**

Neil joined The NET in 2012 and quickly became a leader for his students and colleagues.

Neil’s instructional experience and skills shine in his English and Social Studies advisories. Furthermore, he models how to build student community in and out of the classroom leading both the NET Ambassadors and the NET Town Halls.

For the 2014-2015 year, Neil will serve as a community building coach for other Advisors.
Advocacy & Accountability

The EQA Board of Directors and NET staff worked closely with the Recovery School District, Louisiana Department of Education and other alternative schools to design and get passed an alternative framework which will be used to make decisions regarding the renewal and extension of alternative charters. The passage of this framework was a vital step to insuring the school’s long term stability.

The benchmarks are set very high and all alternative schools will struggle to meet them. However, the framework is an important step toward recognizing alternative schools’ unique missions and goals.
EQA grew and maintained a health fund balance of 20%, had an unqualified audit with no findings, and received 100 out of 100 points on its LDOE Financial Performance Rating.

The NET received the following major grants:
- The Walton Family Foundation grant for general operations and development
- The Federal Perkins grant to develop the Carpentry and Construction program at The NET

In addition EQA received the endorsement of the Recovery School District to receive funding from the Harrah Fund for the 2014-15 & 2015-16 years.
In Memoriam

During the 2013-2014 school year, four current students and one alumni were murdered in unrelated incidents of violence in New Orleans. The deaths occurred in quick succession over the summer and fall inflicting great grief and stress on students and faculty. With the support of the community, The NET was able to provide counseling and support to students, families and staff. The school has established relationships with Louisiana Children’s Bureau and Tulane University to provide ongoing support to students and staff respectively.

On All Saints day, 2013, the NET Ambassadors created a memorial garden for their lost classmates, friends, and family members.
Voices from the NET

This poem came from a collaboration between the NET’s American History teacher, Farhad Karim, and the community program Silence is Violence. Students studied poets who “were inspired by the resilience of folks throughout U.S. history who speak truth to power, and who refuse to be silent in the face of violence” and wrote their own truths into poems. Several students, including Faith, performed their work at a city-wide poetry slam in Spring 2014.

I am New Orleans
By Faith Shepard

I am New Orleans from the sacred grounds of ancestors to the dust that remains from their bones in the ground that fertilizes the grass from the celebratory second home I will always make known I am from New Orleans.

I am homegrown like the stones by the Mississippi I’m smooth like the jazz played by Louis Armstrong we are strong and it doesn’t matter how long it takes the city and the people who reside, we will rise above the murder and hate because our city is great.

I am New Orleans from uptown to downtown to the ferry on the Mississippi to the French Quarter. I am New Orleans, I am the screams of the mother of their children that lay in the caskets I am the blood stains on the street, the voice of a killer speaks cold and emotionless.

I am the three year old playing in the New Orleans streets that feels the sting of the bullet that pierces my skin I hear the screams as I slowly close my eyes on the New Orleans street, New Orleans needs peace.

I am New Orleans from the grit of the Ninth Ward to the pillars of the Roosevelt Hotel. I am New Orleans to the gangsta strapped with the gun on their waist ready to slay and the old women who are grandmothers with Bible in hand praying that their grandson makes it inside safely tonight.

I am New Orleans.