Educators for Quality Alternatives

Annual Report 2015-2016
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 career paths of their choice.

The NET Charter High School

The NET was developed through years of research into highly effective strategies for young people who struggle academically or behaviorally in traditional high school settings. The NET is open year round with classes available from 8am to 6:30pm and serves approximately 150 students at a time. Every student has an individual graduation plan to support their unique strengths, growth areas, circumstances, and goals. The school offers small classes, a restorative environment, intensive academic interventions, and a vibrant internship program.

2015-2016 Highlights

During 2015-2016, nearly 50 students graduated and the school met or exceeded its strategic and state accountability goals. The Educators for Quality Alternatives’ board made the decision to apply for a second charter in order to serve more young people.
Educators for Quality Alternatives

Student Enrollment

The NET continued to meet and exceed its enrollment goal of 150 students. This has resulted in EQA increasing its enrollment goal to 160 for the 16-17 year and to apply to open a second site.

The majority of new enrollments come via word-of-mouth. Approximately 7 students were mandated via the expulsion office and 30 enrolled via the mid-year Principal to Principal transfer process.

Student Stability increased significantly from 58% in 2014-2015 to 77% in 2015-2016.
Student Demographics

100% of students at The NET are considered at risk for not graduating high school. Most students have multiple risk factors.

In 2015-2016, 23% of NET students were designated as Special Education students. This was the highest rate in the city of New Orleans.

At The NET, an individualized approach is key because 100% of students at The NET are unique individuals with unique strengths, challenges, dreams, and goals.
Attendance

NET student attendance continues to be a challenge. The average daily attendance remained at 67% where it has hovered every year since the school’s first.

Attendance is directly correlated to student’s progress academically and behaviorally and students face a myriad of external & internal challenges to maintaining strong daily attendance.

Despite these challenges, Truancy rates for students prior to and after joining The NET dropped 26%.
Academic Skill Growth

Not only do NET students arrive behind in the number of credits they have earned, but the vast majority arrive with serious skill gaps in reading and math. Only a few students arrive reading and doing math at a high school grade level.

In 2015-2016 students averaged 1 grade level of growth each in reading and math.
Standardized Test Results
Every student, regardless of skill level or Special Education status, must take the state End of Course Exams. In 2015-2016 EOC passage rates grew **+7%**.

Since opening, passage rates have grown **+39%**. The NET continues to keep pace with or outscore all other alternative schools in the district and state.

This year, The NET posted a 7 point increase on the **ACT test**, one of the largest gains in the city.
Internship Program

Students completed 124 internships across the city in 2015-2016, achieving an 80% successful completion rate.

AJ long expressed frustrations with being misunderstood and bored and struggled to focus in middle and high school. Early in his journey at The NET, AJ took an internship the Louisiana Outdoors Outreach Program (LOOP), where he completed his Outdoors Ropes Course Certification, and developed his facilitation and leadership skills which he started to apply to his work the classroom.

In the spring of 2016, he started an internship at Grow Dat Youth Farm, where he stood out for his communication skills, his resilience, and his love of cooking. In addition to working at Grow Dat, he took
cooking classes facilitated by **Recirculating Farms** and started connecting the dots between the culinary arts, food justice, and community organizing.

AJ was offered the opportunity to participate in Grow Dat’s Summer Leadership Academy while taking an internship seminar where he successfully analyzed the impacts of Grow Dat on an individual, community, and systemic level.

His growth and development was clear to his mother, his teachers at the NET and his mentors at Grow Dat, who offered him a full-time position on the farm.

Now, AJ works in the mornings five days a week as a community farmer and comes to school in the afternoons. AJ is on track to graduate in the spring and plans to go to culinary school so that he can one day run his own southern fusion kitchen.
School Culture

Research shows that a student having at least one meaningful relationship with an adult at school dramatically increases their likelihood of graduating. Thus The NET focuses on building strong, healthy, and productive **relationships** between each student and diverse adults—teachers, staff, internship mentors etc.

As a result, students feel safe, respected and, most importantly, that they are growing and succeeding at The NET.

**Student Opinions of the NET**

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<th>Mostly</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like this school</td>
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<td>I feel welcome at this school</td>
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<td>I feel safe at this school</td>
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<td>I feel more successful than I did at my last school</td>
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**Student Opinions of Staff**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have at least one adult to talk to and who helps me</td>
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<td>The staff respect me</td>
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<td>The staff listen to me</td>
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<td>I see staff help each other and help students</td>
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**Belonging  Mastery  Independence  Generosity**
Behavioral Growth

Over **85%** of students at The NET struggled with behavior at their previous schools and many were suspended or expelled, often more than once.

To address students’ needs, The NET’s behavior development approaches are based on best practices in Trauma Informed Care and **Restorative Practices**. These practices are incredibly effective as they help students resolve the issue at hand while simultaneously developing their skillfulness to productively manage themselves and their reactions in the future.
Graduation

In 2015-2016, The NET reached 153 Graduates, achieving an annual graduation rate of 88%!

One graduate was Tanya who faced incredible struggles including both losing her beloved father and having a baby in her senior year. Thanks to her perseverance and the NET’s homebound services, counseling, online courses, and lots of flexibility and support, Tanya could proudly hand her diploma to her baby girl in June 2016.
This year The NET started two new Awards: The NET Academic Leadership Award and the Next Steps Award. Both are highly selective awards that come with a scholarship to help students begin their education and careers after high school.

Hansel was our first NET Academic Leadership Award Recipient. Hansel was also our first dual-enrollment student at Delgado Community College. Since graduation, he has attended Delgado as a General Studies major while working part time. Hansel plans to complete his basic coursework and then transfer to a four-year university.
NET Alumni & Next Steps

With the Next Steps Coordinator, each senior develops a plan detailing the tasks they need to complete and skills they need to develop in order to enter college, trade school, or the employment of their choice upon graduation. The Next Steps Coordinator then helps them complete these tasks and develop their skills.

The Next Steps program’s goal is to stay in touch with all graduates for at least 5 years and work with all alumni seeking support. Currently, the Next Steps Coordinator is in touch with and providing support for approximately half of the NET's alumni.

Of those alumni, between 85%-100% from each class are employed, pursuing college or trade programs, or both.
Tihut graduated in Spring 2016 with a career goal of owning her own business such as a salon/spa or beauty product development. She was accepted into the Cosmetology program at Delgado Community College and has begun her journey by gaining knowledge and experience for her career. When Tihut completes the Cosmetology program she plans to study Business at Delgado or a four-year university. She also continues to be employed by Raising Cane’s, a job that she has had since high school.
Staff

Teaching and working at The NET is challenging: we strive to accomplish audacious goals with our amazing but struggling students in a beautiful but profoundly unhealthy city. Thus the attraction, development and retention of mission aligned, experienced, skillful, and diverse teachers and staff is vital to the students’ and school’s success. 2015-16 continued the school’s strong retention record with an 89% staff retention rate and 40% of staff having opportunities for promotion, increased leadership responsibilities, or movement from part time to full time.

Staff Highlight: Leanna First Arai. Ms. Leanna joined The NET in 2013 as a part time ELL teacher. Since then she has become an indispensible member of the staff. After finishing her Masters, Leanna came onboard full time as the school’s Homebound Teacher and ELL Advisor. She spends about 60% of her day in the field, meeting with families and tutoring students at home, in the hospital, in Orleans Parish Prison, and at the Youth Study Center. This vital service is not always an easy one. Leanna has a special gift of communicating with students and families when they are under great stress, and she is always flexible, always creative, and always working to make sure every student succeeds regardless of the barriers before them. With Leanna’s support, students who are on maternity leave, have chronic health issues, have suffered an accident or have some type of special circumstances are able to continue in their studies and stay on track.

NET Staff Demographics

Belonging  Mastery  Independence  Generosity
Expansion

Since opening, The NET has consistently been overenrolled. Last year 700 students dropped out in New Orleans and 1510 students—over 20%—are two or more years behind in high school.

Thus EQA made the decision to expand to a second NET school in another neighborhood in the city.

The NET2 will open in August 2017 under the principalship of Todd Reynolds, the NET's founding Dean of Students.
Finance & Fundraising

The NET continues to maintain **clean audits and perfect scores** on all financial components of the Charter Compact.

In 2015-16, EQA raised over **$100,000** through fundraisers, donations and grants. This additional funding helps the school expand programming, fund teacher-developed projects, and continually improve student supports.

Thanks to the hard work of many people across New Orleans, including EQA board members and supporters, the city adopted a new **Differentiated Funding Model** which distributes per-pupil allocations to take into consideration the higher costs associated with students who need ELL services, Special Education services, and over-age students who need to catch up. This change significantly supports The NET’s long term financial model.
In Memoriam

The NET lost Ja’shad Simmons, who was killed on June 26, 2016. “Shoddy” and his family were well known and well-loved at The NET and he is greatly missed.

Ja’shad Simmons
11/12/1997-6/26/2016
Voices from the NET

In honor of the 10\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of Hurricane Katrina and the Levee Failures, NET students and staff created a Memory Wall to share their experiences. Their notes remind all of us that while our city and families have survived and thrived, the pain and loss of that time is still a very real part of us.

I remember waking up in the morning with a bunch of water under my bed. The bed was floating. I was scared I didn’t know what to do. We were rescued. It was sent to the Jeff Davis bridge for 5 days.

During Katrina there was lots of people trying to break into our house, but my mom went to get some food. She built a house to protect us. We just had way brother. We had a few goats and chickens. But my mom always cooked our food on the grill even if it was just a bowl of rice and beans, but she also grilled fish and stuff nobody really messed up.