EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
Baton Rouge Youth Voice Initiative 2023 Report

The Baton Rouge Youth Voice Report is a project of the Baton Rouge Alliance for Students, and is part of the organization’s effort to elevate the voices of community in driving education improvement in our city.

Through surveys and interviews, the findings shed light on the crucial role of great educators, the desire for improved community spaces, and the importance of addressing challenges beyond the classroom. In this report, we’re diving into the thoughts and experiences of the vibrant youth in Baton Rouge.

We’re not just talking about grades and textbooks; we’re talking about what makes their learning environment tick and how Baton Rouge’s history plays a role in shaping their educational journey.

Students highlighted that the most important factor in their school communities is the presence of excellent teachers.
BY THE NUMBERS
25,609 Neighborhood Schools
11,622 Charter Schools
2,412 State Schools

Baton Rouge Education
By the Numbers

73,605 Total Students in all BR Schools

14,365 Private Schools
8,168 Magnet Schools
11,429 Central, Baker & Zachary
GREAT EDUCATORS AS PILLARS OF POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The research unequivocally emphasizes the significance of great educators in shaping a positive learning environment.

An overwhelming 82.7% of students highlighted that the most important factor in their school communities is the presence of excellent teachers. This finding underscores the pivotal role educators play in students' academic and personal development.

BARRIERS TO STUDENT SUCCESS: TEACHING, TEACHERS, & TEACHER QUALITY

A noteworthy discovery is that students perceive teaching, teachers, and teacher quality as the most significant barriers to their success.

This insight calls for a comprehensive examination of teaching methods, teacher training, and overall educational quality to address the challenges hindering student progress.
COMMUNITY SPACES: CLEAN, BEAUTIFUL, AND SAFE

The youth aren't just talking academics; they're saying, "We want the whole package."

From transportation to food, from the school day structure to safety measures, students want an experience that goes beyond the classroom. Students express a desire for better spaces to live and learn, with an emphasis on cleanliness, beauty, and safety.

This sentiment aligns with the broader community aspirations, with a focus on:

- Decreasing crime and violence (80.9%)
- Improving environmental conditions (70.1%) such as pollution and litter

STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Students are advocating for an enhanced quality of experience across various facets of their educational journey.

Key areas for improvement include transportation, food services, the structure of the school day, student effort, dress code policies, bullying prevention, and safety measures.
Notably, there are differences in student priorities based on their place of residence. Respondents from zip codes 70808, 70817, 70807, 70820, 70714, and 70812 identified a pressing need to decrease crime and violence. Meanwhile, those from zip codes 70812 and 70805 highlighted a desire for improved access to quality and equitable education.
6

HOLISTIC APPROACH TO STUDENT WELL-BEING

Schools are becoming more than just learning hubs; they're becoming safe havens.

Students are reaching out for support not just academically, but emotionally too. They want positive relationships, self-esteem boosters, and mental health resources. The data underscores the importance of fostering positive and respectful relationships among teachers and students, staff and students, and students with their peers.

Additionally, there is a growing demand for mental health resources within schools, ranking as the second most frequently mentioned top improvement needed, demonstrating a critical need to address students’ mental health challenges.
CONCLUSION
This report, initiated by students, urges policymakers and community leaders from all backgrounds to collaborate with young people to solve our community's challenges.

**SCHOOL LEADERS:**

We strongly recommend establishing formal mechanisms and structures dedicated to gathering student input. The insights and knowledge students possess are invaluable in understanding their school experiences and facilitating swift implementation of feedback.

**STUDENTS:**

We invite middle to high-school-aged students to take the lead in shaping the future of their schools and communities. Join us in a collective endeavor with a mission more significant than any individual by participating in our city-wide youth advocacy group.