



Ryan Elementary School used Edusoft to quickly evaluate hundreds of students who arrived without records after the Katrina hurricane.

### Quick Facts

- Public School district in Louisiana
- Urban and rural district covering a large geographic area
- About 48,000 students
  - About 8,000 new students enrolled in the district following the Katrina storm in 2005
  - About 78% minority
  - About 78% qualify for free or reduced lunch
- 87 schools including:
  - 53 elementary schools
  - 16 middle schools
  - 18 high schools

### Snapshot

East Baton Rouge used *Edusoft* to assess thousands of post-Katrina students who arrived with no records, providing quick assessments for the new students from New Orleans, and effectively handling the transient population.

## East Baton Rouge Parish School System

An influx of children from the nearby flood-ravaged city of New Orleans could have disrupted education in East Baton Rouge Parish. But significant progress was made during the school year, thanks to the dedicated teachers, a strong Strategic/Accountability Plan, and a new assessment method using the *Edusoft Assessment Management System* by Riverside Publishing.

East Baton Rouge used *Edusoft* to assess thousands of students who arrived with no records, so they could be placed at the proper instructional level. *Edusoft* also helped track the transient students. Most of all, *Edusoft* supported the district's strategy of data-driven instruction.

"We're the closest big city to New Orleans," said Liz Frischhertz, Program Specialist at the East Baton Rouge Parish School District, "We started enrolling children displaced by Katrina as soon as the electricity went back on here." Just 70 miles north of New Orleans, East Baton Rouge Parish was a dry and safe haven for a many families displaced by the storm.

## Challenges

- Improve student achievement and successfully carry out the district's Strategic/Accountability Plan
- Provide an environment of learning to a population displaced and disrupted by the Katrina storm

## Solution

*Edusoft Assessment Management System* modules:

- Benchmark Exams
- Teacher Tools
- State Analysis

## Benefits

- Easy-to-update system provides continuity to a highly mobile population
- Fast turn-around time supports benchmark assessments at the beginning and end of 4-8 week academic units at the heart of the district's accountability program.
- Web-based system allows administration to unify district programs and stay updated remotely
- Item Analysis feature identifies groups of students with similar instructional needs for data-driven learning

## Plenty of challenges

That fall, however, the district was facing its own challenges. It was struggling to address its own students' high mobility rate. In addition, the district had recently been placed on the state's accountability program for low performing schools and was implementing a new Strategic/Accountability Plan.

"We all knew we had our work cut out for us," said Jennifer Baird, Assistant Superintendent for Accountability and Assessment. But instead of sliding further away from success, that year East Baton Rouge made progress toward its goals to improve test scores and centralize data-driven instruction.

How did they do it? The staff was dedicated, the initiatives were effective, and the district began using the *Edusoft Assessment Management System*. *Edusoft* is a standards-based solution that makes it easy for districts to collect, analyze, and act on student performance data to improve classroom instruction and student performance. "Success is the culmination of a lot of hard work," said Baird, "Assessment is a big part of that."

## Uniformity for a transient population

As families fleeing the floodwaters in New Orleans rushed into East Baton Rouge, enrollment rose by nearly 15 percent. But even before Katrina, the student population in East Baton Rouge was very mobile. Providing consistency to a turbulent population was a challenge.

*Edusoft* provides East Baton Rouge the ability to rapidly update its lists as students switch schools or teachers. "Changes are easy to do," said Ruth Bennett, LEAP Specialist. That fall, they were submitting changes every week.

## Fast assessments for students with no records

*Edusoft* helps with effective record keeping, but many students came from New Orleans with no transcripts. "For most children from New Orleans, all of their school records were lost due to flooding," said Melinda Billings, Technology Coordinator and Reading Intervention Teacher at Ryan Elementary School. "The first month, we didn't know anything about them. We used *Edusoft* to get a footing on where they were academically."

New students took baseline tests as they arrived. *Edusoft* provided results immediately. That allowed the new students to be placed in the proper classes without delay. "If we didn't have *Edusoft*, it would've taken longer and it would have meant a lot more handwork," said Billings.

*Edusoft* also helped start a permanent trail of grades for those students. "Now a year later, the only records we have for those children are post-flood," said Billings. Should a disaster ever hit East Baton Rouge, they don't have to worry about losing their *Edusoft* records. Data are stored off-site in highly secure, redundant servers.

*“Edusoft shortens the length of time between the test and the results. Remedial instruction can be set in place right away.”*

Jennifer Baird, Assistant Superintendent for Accountability and Assessment

*“We test and retest and use the data to drive instruction.”*

Melinda Billings, Technology Coordinator and Reading Intervention Teacher at Ryan Elementary School

### Assessments for a relevant, rigorous curriculum

East Baton Rouge Parish originally acquired *Edusoft* to support its Strategic/Accountability Plan. At the heart of the plan is a series of four- to eight-week academic units.

Students take a variety of tests which are assessed using *Edusoft*. These include an August pre-test, end-of-unit tests throughout the year, and a May post-test. Educators use the test results to focus their teaching. “We test and use the data to drive instruction,” said Billings.

The assessments are designed to allow teachers to pinpoint exactly where, in a multi-step problem, a student may have trouble. The district’s Benchmark Assessment System correlates its unit tests to the Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum teaching units and the Louisiana Grade Level Expectations (GLEs). *Edusoft* helps the districts ensure that each school teaches a consistent, relevant, and rigorous curriculum.

*Edusoft* presents test results in a clear, reader-friendly format. The color-coded graphs make analyzing them straightforward, even for teachers for whom data-driven teaching is new. The results are available online in minutes for teachers, principals, and even remote district staff members. “*Edusoft* shortens the length of time between the test and the results,” said Baird, “Remedial instruction can be set in place right away.”

### Item analysis for performance trends

Educators look for trends in answers, students, and schools to determine the right kind of remedial instruction for each student or class. They can view student scores, and results by gender, ethnicity, and grade level to determine which students need extra help on which items. “*Edusoft* gives us an exact printout per child, per class, and per grade,” said Billings. They can compare students’ progress over time. Individual student benchmark reports show analysis of content standards, performance bands, and item analysis.

The Item Analysis capabilities in *Edusoft* have been particularly useful for helping district educators identify skills that students lack. The reports not only show which questions are troubling students, but also which parts of the questions the students missed. “We can now find out why a child got a particular question wrong. Did they get the first step right and the second step wrong? Was the wording distracting?” said Baird. The schools then create intervention groups or tutoring sessions.

### Centralizing student data

The web-based *Edusoft* system allows the administration to stay closely involved in each school's progress without making frequent trips to each campus. East Baton Rouge Parish is a geographically large area and web-based reporting helps cut down on travel time and fuel costs.

"We can see who has taught which units, how the tests have been scored and how well the students do—even if we never set foot into the school," said Baird. Staying more involved in more schools' results helps the district keep its accountability plan on track.

### Training the teachers

Administrators can also use the *Edusoft* system to track which schools are slow to adopt data-driven learning. "We can log into the system and see which schools look at the reports and how often," said Ruth Bennett. Some schools have rapidly embraced this new approach to classroom teaching, but others need more support from the district.

East Baton Rouge offers effective, on-going teacher training. "Our training is part technology and part instructional data," said Jennifer Baird. Partnership with the Stupski Foundation provides release time for teachers to attend monthly interactive sessions to train in a computer lab. An *Edusoft* consultant works closely with district staff to facilitate successful inservices. School coordinators learn about new features of *Edusoft* and have time to ask questions and resolve problems.

### Progress has begun

Data-driven teaching is new to most schools in the district. The schools that have been using data to drive instruction for several years, such as Ryan Elementary, have already seen a rise in test scores. "Progress here has been going up steadily," said Melinda Billings.

So for the district as a whole, after one year of using *Edusoft*, it's too early to see academic improvement. But in that short time, *Edusoft* performed above and beyond its intended uses, providing quick assessments for the new students from New Orleans and effectively handling the transient population. "Katrina made a tough problem an even tougher one," said Jennifer Baird. But luckily, East Baton Rouge had *Edusoft*, making assessments a whole lot easier and helping the district keep its Strategic/Accountability Plan on track.

**For more information about *Edusoft*, visit [www.riversidepublishing.com](http://www.riversidepublishing.com) or call 800.323.9540.**