

NSPRA Golden Achievement Awards – NOLA Public Schools: The Leah Chase School

ENTRY SUMMARY: NOLA Public Schools (NOLA-PS), the U.S.'s only all-charter district for nearly 20 years, manages 67 schools and 41,500+ students under the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB). In February 2024, after Lafayette Academy's charter was revoked due to an "F" rating, NOLA-PS was tasked with directly running a traditional school—the first in decades—within just five months. The Communications Team rebranded it as The Leah Chase School, exceeded the 250-student enrollment goal, and opened it on time and under budget by August 2024, turning a challenge into a success.

RESEARCH: NOLA Public Schools (NOLA-PS) commissioned **formal research** through a survey company, engaging stakeholders—parents, educators, community members, staff, and board members—to compare views on traditional vs. charter public schools. Ten focus groups with about 25 participants yielded these **qualitative insights**: Challenges include uneven charter quality, a need for centralized services, and concerns over the charter model's equity and future. Hopes focused on centralized support and schools as community anchors.

After considering this research, including community feedback from school board meetings indicated strong community support for a return to traditional, direct-run public schools. Based on these findings, we were confident that a new direct-run school would be well-received and seamlessly integrated into NOLA-PS's portfolio.

The former Lafayette Academy building, now The Leah Chase School (TLC School), featured a mural honoring New Orleans culinary legend Leah Chase. The NOLA-PS Superintendent named the new K-5th grade school after her, reflecting a commitment to quality education and local culture. Key dates: June 5 – Enrollment opens; June 29 – Registration Day; Aug. 3 – Ribbon Cutting; Aug. 6 – First day of school.

The communications team conducted **secondary research** on Leah Chase's legacy as a famed chef, education advocate, and civil rights champion, and **primary research** via talks with the Chase family, who stressed academic excellence. These findings crafted a brand narrative reflecting New Orleans' values and history.

Further **Primary research** analyzed a successful NOLA-PS Millage Renewal Campaign, which blended digital and traditional marketing—social media, ads, and community engagement. We found these tactics effective and adaptable for promoting the new school to a similar audience.

Audience Identification: NOLA-PS families, potential new parents, teachers/staff, community leaders, the community, elected officials, the school board, and business leaders in Orleans Parish, as well as the local media to help promote the new school, enroll students, and get the community involved in the success of the new school.

PLANNING: The team developed a comprehensive marketing and public relations plan based on the research, with the **overarching goal** of positioning the school system as a pioneer in opening the first new, direct-run traditional public school in New Orleans in nearly two decades, following the shift to an all-charter district after Hurricane Katrina.

Objective 1: Formally introduce The Leah Chase School (TLC School) to the community through at least three engagement opportunities, with the aim of informing and generating support from key target audiences by June 5, 2024.

- **Target Audiences:** (Refer to audience identification in the research section)
- **Strategy 1:** Implement media relations and utilize diverse communication channels to spread the word.

Objective 2: Increase awareness of The Leah Chase School (TLC School) by launching a compelling brand narrative, look, and feel, to help generate excitement around the new school and garner at least five news stories about the school by April 30, 2024.

- **Target Audiences:** (Refer to audience identification in the research section)
- **Strategy 1:** Collaborate with marketing experts to craft an engaging narrative and develop a comprehensive marketing and PR campaign to introduce TLC School.
- **Strategy 2:** Roll out an educational campaign using both traditional and digital media platforms.

Objective 3: Implement an effective marketing campaign to help enroll at least 250 students at TLC School by August 6, 2024.

- **Target Audiences:** Former Lafayette Academy families, current NOLA-PS families, and potential new families within the NOLA-PS system.
- **Strategy:** Leverage a variety of communication tools and media relations to motivate families to enroll their children in TLC School.

IMPLEMENTATION: Between February 24 and August 6, 2024, the NOLA-PS communications team implemented an integrated marketing and public relations plan to support the opening of the new school, working under a tight 5-month deadline. The team often joked that we were "building the plane while flying it," as all objectives had to be implemented simultaneously. The following **tactics** were used for each objective.

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For the **first objective**, raising awareness, a press conference was held on February 29, where the NOLA-PS Superintendent announced the new school would be named after Leah Chase, honoring her legacy in cultural and educational advocacy. The school would serve K-5th grade students starting in the 2024-2025 academic year, with plans to expand to 8th grade. The press event highlighted the school's focus on culturally responsive teaching, student empowerment, and community involvement. Furthermore, four community meetings were organized to gather feedback, and outreach was extended through social media, radio, newsletters, and digital billboards. In addition, four virtual Partner Meet & Greet sessions were held to seek in-kind donations from local businesses, helping ensure the school's success.

For the **second objective**, brand development, a logo reflecting the playful spirit of a K-5 school and aligned with NOLA-PS' branding was designed and unveiled in April. The branding campaign, developed in collaboration with a marketing firm and a PR firm, was divided into three phases: introducing the new school, promoting enrollment, and celebrating the ribbon-cutting and opening. To maintain interest, a "Did You Know" campaign ran across social media and other platforms, providing updates on the school's progress. A dedicated webpage on the NOLA-PS site housed all relevant information, while we designed a standalone site.

The **third objective** focused on driving enrollment, beginning with a comprehensive campaign launched on June 5. This included TV and radio ads, digital billboards, newsletters, yard signs, and Spanish-language media outreach. When initial enrollment numbers were low, an in-person enrollment event was organized on June 29. Leading up to the August 6 opening, a Ribbon Cutting and Opening Celebration event was held on August 3, featuring music, games, and family activities to boost engagement and last-minute enrollments. A media event on the first day of school helped capture attention and encouraged families to enroll before the end-of-September deadline.

The campaign cost approximately \$127,000, covering services from marketing and PR firms, advertising expenses, and a freelance videographer. All other work was handled in-house by the communications team, which included the Chief of Communications, Executive Director of Communications, a photographer/videographer, digital media manager, and Director of Government/Community Relations.

Against Objective – The objectives were satisfied by using the tactics mentioned above and disseminating the information to the intended audiences. The results are detailed below.

EVALUATION: The Texas and New York Education agencies estimate that opening a brand-new school, even with an existing building, typically takes between six months to a year. However, NOLA Public Schools (NOLA-PS) communications team proudly helped open a new school in under six months on time and well under the advertising budget. With an initial budget of \$292,000, the integrated marketing and PR campaign was completed for just \$127,000, coming in 56% below the projected costs.

Between February 29 and August 6, the NOLA-PS communications team exceeded expectations by successfully completing its **first objective**: formally introducing The Leah Chase School (TLC School) to the community. This effort was highlighted by a **press conference that resulted in five media mentions with a combined Reach of 18.4M** according to Meltwater Media Monitoring. *Reach refers to the estimated potential viewership of a media article based on the number of monthly unique visitors.* The press coverage achieved an **Ad Value Equivalency (AVE) of \$170,064.48**, a metric that estimates the monetary value of earned media coverage in comparison to the cost of paid advertisements. Additionally, the team organized three in-person community meetings and one virtual meeting, attracting roughly 120 families and community members. Four Partner Meet & Greets were also held, leading to the establishment of 5 to 10 partners who provided in-kind donations to the school, such as uniform vouchers, school supplies, access to the Children's Museum, extracurricular activities, etc.

Objective two focused on raising awareness of TLC School through the launch of a compelling brand narrative and identity to generate excitement and secure at least five media stories by April 30, 2024. This goal was successfully achieved, with six media mentions contributing to the buzz surrounding the new school. These mentions had a **Reach of 6,198,353 and had an AVE of \$57,334.77**, according to Meltwater. Elements of the branding campaign can be found in the supporting documentation.

The **third objective** centered on enrollment, with a target of 250 students. By August 6, the school had already enrolled 292 students, **exceeding the goal by 15%**, and by the end of the month, the number [had risen to 302 students](#).

Overall, the campaign generated significant media coverage, with **34 online news mentions reaching 75.9 million people and an AVE of \$701,748.69**. It also earned **116 TV news mentions, reaching 1.1 million viewers with a publicity value of \$207,013.01**. Beyond local media, the campaign attracted national attention from outlets like [Axios](#), [The Hechinger Report](#), [Chalkbeat](#), and [The 74 Million](#).

In conclusion, the evaluation data strongly demonstrates the NOLA-PS communications team's success in achieving its goal of positioning the district as a leader in opening the first, new direct-run traditional public school in New Orleans in nearly two decades, meeting both the board's expectations and the community's need for a school. (Examples included in Supporting Documentation).

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Research

- **Formal Research:** [Community Engagement Survey](#)
- **Secondary Research on Life & Legacy of Leah Chase:**
 - Wikipedia – [Leah Chase](#)
 - June 15, 2023 - [The Legacy of Leah Chase, the Inspiration Behind *The Princess and the Frog's* Tiana](#)
 - Jan. 5, 2020 – Los Angeles Times - [Leah Chase’s enduring legacy and independent spirit remembered on this Twelfth Night](#)
 - June 4, 2019 – The Atlantic - [The Culinary Legacy of Leah Chase](#)
 - June 2, 2019 – NPR - [Leah Chase, The 'Queen Of Creole Cuisine,' Dies At 96](#)
- **TLC School Timeline – Key Milestones to achieve**
 - Feb. 29 – TLC School Press Conference
 - March 26 – Partner Meet & Greet #1
 - March 28 – Community Meeting #1
 - April 10 – Partner Meet & Greet #2
 - April 10 – Community Meeting #2
 - April 17 – Community Meeting #3
 - May 1 – Partner Meet & Greet #3
 - May 9 – Community Meeting #4
 - May 22 – Partner Meet & Greet #4
 - June 5 – Enrollment opens
 - June 29 – Enrollment/Registration Day
 - Aug. 3 – TLC School Ribbon Cutting & Opening Day Celebration
 - Aug. 6 – 1st day of school

Objective One Tactics: *Formally introduce The Leah Chase School (TLC School) to the community through at least three engagement opportunities, with the aim of informing and generating support from key target audiences by June 5, 2024.*

- **TLC School Press Conference - Feb. 29, 2024**
 - [Media Alert](#)
 - Superintendent’s [Talking Points](#)
 - Press Conference [Live Streaming Video on YouTube](#)
 - Meltwater [Media Mentions Feb-March 2024](#)
 - [Social media - see page 4 for an example](#)
- **TLC School Community Meetings**
 - [Advertising](#) - for 3 in-person TLC School community meetings & 1 virtual meetings – includes Radio ad, Flyer, billboards and newsletter ads.
 - [Social Media Graphics](#)
 - [Superintendent Video](#) – promoting Community meetings
 - [Video of a Community Meeting](#)
 - **Local TV News Coverage of Community Meetings:** (click links below)

4.30.24 - 6:57:00 AM - WDSU-TV (NBC) – TLC School Community Meeting - reader
4.18.24 - 6:36:43 AM - WDSU-TV (NBC) – TLC School Community Meeting – VOSOT
4.17.24 - 10:03:34 PM - WDSU-TV (NBC) – TLC School Community Meeting - VOSOT
4.17.24 - 10:00:40 PM - WGNO-TV (ABC) – TLC School Community Meeting – news package w/ Supt.
4.17.24 - 8:56:07 AM - WWLTV (CBS) – TLC School Community Meeting – VO
4.17.24 - 7:06:33 AM - WWLTV (CBS) – TLC School Community Meeting - VO
4.17.24 - 5:06:23 AM - WDSU-TV (NBC) – TLC School Community Meeting - VO

- **TLC School Partner Meetings**
 - [Superintendent Video](#) – promoting Partnership Meetings
 - [Partner Meet & Greet](#) brochure – engaged with more than 90 different organizations, people, and entities interested in partnering with The Leah Chase School including after-school programming, technology, teacher and student support, medical services, and more.
 - [Social media – see page 4](#)
 - Four virtual Partner Meet & Greet sessions were held to seek in-kind donations from local businesses, helping ensure the school’s success.
 - **Five Partners Established for TLC School:**
 - Youth Run NOLA
 - Louisiana Children’s Museum Play Power
 - Louisiana Children’s Museum NOLA Readers 2.0
 - Louisiana Children’s Museum Living with the Water
 - Alontae Taylor Uniform Closet
- **Local TV News Updates on TLC School**

5.16.24 – 6:14:48 AM – WDSU-TV (NBC) – School Board to provide update on TLC School – VO
5.15.24 – 5:12:10 PM – WDSU-TV (NBC) – Plans for TLC School – news package w/ Supt
5.9.24 – 7:13:43 AM – WWLTV (CBS) – Future of TLC School – Live Studio interview w/ supt.

Objective Two Tactics: Increase awareness of The Leah Chase School (TLC School) by launching a compelling brand narrative, look, and feel, to help generate excitement around the new school and garner at least five news stories about the school by April 30, 2024.

- **TLC School Logos:**
 - [Full Logo; Abbreviated Logo](#)
- **Did You Know Campaign**
 - [FAQs Flyer](#)
 - [Social Media](#)
- **Branding Campaign Look & Feel:** provide narrative from new school to enroll today.
 - [Branding Kit](#)
 - [Branding Guidelines](#)
- **Phase 1 – New School in Town Campaign:** Simple look and feel to announce the new school and tell folks enrollment was opening June 5th. We wanted to keep this clean and easy to understand.
 - [Flyers, Billboards, Door Hangers, Social Media Graphics, and Radio Ads](#)
 - Social Media Pages Launched:
 - Instagram – <https://www.instagram.com/leahchaseschool/>
 - Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61559280166723>
 - [TLC School Principal Video](#) – New school in Town
 - [Getting to Know the Principal Video](#)
 - [TV Commercial Spot](#) – New School

Objective Three Tactics:

- **Phase 2 – Enroll Today! Campaign:** We developed a more robust campaign wanting to use the last name of Leah Chase... to encourage families to want to see their kids “Chase” their excellence; Chase their future; Chase their passion; Chase their Dreams, and Chase their Culture. These principles embody Mrs. Chase’s legacy, which we aim to inspire in our scholars.
 - [TV Commercial Spot](#) – English
 - [TV Commercial Spot](#) – Spanish
 - [Enrollment Radio Spot](#) – English

- [Enrollment Radio Spot](#) – Spanish
- Streaming Radio Ads - [Report](#) - clicks linked to enrollment page.
- [Digital Billboards](#)
- [Digital/Mobile Display Ads](#)
- [Social Media Graphics](#)
- [Social Media Video w/ Marc Morial](#) (Head of National Urban League) for TLC School
- Mailer / Direct Mail Piece – [Front](#) & [Back](#)
- [Newsletter Ads](#)
- [Yard Signs](#)
- **Enrollment Day Campaign – June 29th**
 - **Advertising Collaterals** – [Digital Billboards](#), [Flyer](#), [Newsletter Ads](#), [Radio Ad](#)
 - [Social Media Graphics](#)

- **Local TV News Coverage on Enrollment**

7.30.24 – 6:35:03 AM – WDSU-TV (NBC) – TLC School Teacher Recruitment – VOSOT w/ Supt.
7/23/2024 8:07:07 AM – WWLTV-Teacher- vacancies @ TLC School
6.26.24 – 11:04:51 AM – WGNO-TV (ABC) – TLC School to Host Enrollment Day – reader
6.25.24 – 12:42:11 PM – WDSU-TV (NBC) – TLC School to Host Enrollment Day – VO
6.5.24 – 5:26:19 PM – WDSU-TV (NBC) –Enrollment Now Open – VO
6.5.24 – 8:26:51 AM – WWLTV (CBS) – Enrollment Now Open – VO
6.4.24 – 4:05:32 PM – WWNO Radio (NPR) – TLC School Enrollment Begins June 5 – w/ Supt.
6.1.24 – 9:24:05 AM – WDSU-TV (NBC) – TLC School to Enrollment & Enrollment Day– Live Studio Interview w/ Supt.
5.30.24 – 7:16:19 AM – WVUE (FOX) – TLC School Enrollment Begins June 5 – Live Interview w/ Supt.

- **Phase 3 – Ribbon Cutting & Opening Day Celebration Campaign**

- **Advertising Collaterals** – [Digital billboard](#), [Flyer](#), [Newsletter Ad](#), [Invitation](#), [Map](#), [Ribbon Cutting Program](#), [Yard Signs](#)
 - [Digital Ads](#)
 - [Social Media Graphics](#)
 - [Video for social media](#) – promoting the event
 - [Video of the Event](#)
- **TL School Websites** – [Initial website on district’s website](#); [Final independent website](#)
- **Local TV news Coverage – Ribbon Cutting & Opening Day Celebration**

8.3.24 – 10:05:04 PM – WVUE (FOX) – TLC School Ribbon Cutting – news package
8.3.24 – 9:04:30 PM – WVUE (FOX) – TLC School Ribbon Cutting – news package
8.3.24 – 5:17:03 PM – WWLTV (CBS) – TLC School Ribbon Cutting – VOSOT w/ Stella Chase
8.3.24 – 5:10:17 PM – WDSU-TV (NBC) – TLC School Ribbon Cutting – VOSOT w/ Supt.
8.2.24 – 10:15:45 PM – WWLTV (CBS) – TLC School Ribbon Cutting Tomorrow – VO
8.2.24 – 6:34:48 AM – WWLTV (CBS) – TLC School Ribbon Cutting Tomorrow – VO

- **Media Event – 1st Day of School**

8.6.24 – 10:14:34 PM – WGNO-TV (ABC) – TLC School Opens – VO
8.6.24 – 5:44:11 PM – WWNO Radio (NPR) – TLC School Opens
8.6.24 – 5:09:43 PM – WDSU-TV (NBC) – TLC School Opens – Principal interviewed
8.6.24 – 5:07:09 PM – WGNO-TV (ABC) – TLC School Opens – Supt. soundbite
8.6.24 – 12:08:44 PM – WWLTV (CBS) – TLC School Opens – news package
8.6.24 – 8:17:09 AM – WWLTV (CBS) – TLC School Opens – Live interview w/ Deputy Supt.
8.6.24 – 8:04:40 AM – WVUE (FOX) – TLC School Opens – Live interview w/ Supt. #3
8.6.24 – 7:04:54 AM – WVUE (FOX) – TLC School Opens – Live interview w/ Supt. #2
8.6.24 – 6:36:25 AM – WDSU-TV (NBC) – TLC School Opens – Live interview w/ Supt. #3
8.6.24 – 6:05:52 AM – WDSU-TV (NBC) – TLC School Opens – Live interview w/ Supt. #2
8.6.24 – 6:04:22 AM – WVUE (FOX) – TLC School Opens – Live interview w/ Teacher
8.6.24 – 5:38:31 AM – WDSU-TV (NBC) – TLC School Opens – Live interview w/ Supt. #1
8.6.24 – 5:34:58 AM – WVUE (FOX) – TLC Opens this Morning
8.6.24 – 5:07:15 AM – WDSU-TV (NBC) – TLC School Opens this Morning – Live interview w/ Supt.
8.6.24 – 4:08:07 AM – WDSU-TV (NBC) – TLC School Opens this Morning
8.5.24 – 8:46:45 AM – WVUE (FOX) – TLC School Studio Interview – Live interview w/ Supt #1
8.5.24 – 6:38:50 AM – WDSU-TV (NBC) – TLC School Opening Tomorrow – Supt. soundbite

TV & Radio News Coverage – TOTALS

- [TVEyes Media Report](#)

Social media – TLC School’s Instagram and FB pages were created May 29, 2024.

- **X page** – <https://x.com/NOLAPSchools>
 - [X Stats for TLC School from various non-NOLA-PS sources](#)
 - Reach=212,537
 - Ad Value Equivalency=\$1,965.96
 - Engagements=231
 - Reactions=197
 - Estimated Views=10,754
- **Instagram page** – <https://www.instagram.com/leahchaseschool/>
- **Facebook page** – <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61559280166723>
 - [Meltwater Stats for Facebook & Instagram](#)
 - Reach=485,731
 - Ad Value Equivalency=\$4,493.03
 - Reactions & Engagement=83
 - Estimated views=34,227

To see even more social media examples, click these links:

- [Social Media Examples](#)
- [Meltwater Stats for Facebook & Instagram](#)
- [X Stats for TLC School from various non-NOLA-PS sources](#)