

# CHARTER LEADERS OF COLOR **MATTER.**

## Sean Wilson

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International High School of New Orleans



I come from a single-parent home where my mom worked 2–3 jobs to ensure that we had a stable place to live, everything we needed, and a good bit of what we wanted. She valued education, ensuring that all of her children graduated high school. At this point in time, most have graduated college and all are successful in their own rights. I received a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and a Master's in Business Administration, and I'm now working toward my Doctorate at Xavier University of Louisiana.

Education is so powerful—the more you know, the more you have access to. I want all students to have access to a high-quality education. At the core of my work as an educator is the belief that when treated better, people will do and provide better.

I've had good people in my life. Those who pushed me, challenged me, and also made me understand that I have to be in control of my life and destiny. I can't leave it to chance. Poverty, home life, and zip code do not have to determine where you end up. That which is out of reach is only out of reach when I decide it's out of reach. These lessons inform our global school culture at the International High School of New Orleans (IHSNO).

## **COACHING GLOBAL CITIZENS**

Our cohort graduation rate index at IHSNO improved 25.2 points over the last year, now exceeding the state average by 4.7 percentage points. On average, each IHSNO student receives 3 college acceptances. Recently a student was accepted into 115 colleges and offered nearly \$4 million in scholarship aid! She persisted toward achieving a goal, and I'm so proud of her. She reflects the passion of the IHSNO student community.

Newsweek cited IHSNO as one of the best International Baccalaureate schools in the USA in 2017 and one of the top high schools for low-income students in 2015. The vision of our school: International High School Students are compassionate, productive global citizens who positively impact the world. Our students come from 30+ different nationalities, and we are the only stand-alone high school in New Orleans offering students the opportunity to participate in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme.

Coaching students to be global citizens includes creating a mindset of respect, listening, and hearing at our school. For example, every classroom at IHSNO collaboratively writes its own social contract, which details how all classmates and instructors should treat one another, and especially how to treat one another in moments of conflict. Contracts emphasize respect and listening and preclude put-downs. At the staff level, we follow a program called Capturing Kids Hearts, from Flippen Group, which trains teachers and administrators in creating relational connections with students. The respectful behavior of staff members trickles down to influence student behavior as well.

## A MORE PEACEFUL TOMORROW

We teach our students that we are all interconnected and that we all have a say in what's happening in our world. This inclusive view encourages collaborative problem-solving, which in turn creates a better and more peaceful school community.

A more inclusive worldview among educators and policymakers also has potential for tremendous positive impact. I believe that diversity of thought must inform how education is provided and distributed. Race and ethnicity is one part of this, but there are many other elements of diversity to consider as well. For example, someone coming from a rural community will have different perspectives to bring to the table than someone from a suburban background, and then someone from an urban neighborhood will bring another valuable lens. There are different narratives in terms of what's important to these various groups in getting an education. We need all of these lenses—all of these voices—if we are to have an inclusive and sustainable education system. The voices of people of color are needed in education leadership, not as a centralized narrative (i.e. “educators of color” all with similar stories), but rather as a diverse narrative (educators from various backgrounds, well-trained as excellent teachers).

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# International High School of New Orleans

“A unique environment offering an international education to all students regardless of their zipcode.”

Location	New Orleans, LA
Year Opened	2009
Student enrollment	460
Grades served	9-12
Website	<a href="http://www.ihsnola.org">www.ihsnola.org</a>



### Student Demographics

Asian	2.4%	Homeless Youth	4%
Black/African-American	65.2%	At Risk Students	79%
White/Caucasian	5.3%	Students with Disabilities	9.4%
Hispanic/Latino	27.1%	ESL Students	14.6%



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