



Welcome to

# New Harmony High

New Orleans, Louisiana

Students as stewards of the future

## How They Came to Be

### New Harmony High's XQ Super School Journey

New Harmony High was born out of the XQ Super School competition by a founding team with experts from Big Picture Learning, Tulane University's Cowen Institute, Concordia Design and many more. They envisioned a school where young people would be part of the solution to the environmental, economic, and social challenges impacting New Orleans and the Mississippi Delta now and in the future. They designed a school where students would learn how communities could survive, and thrive—in harmony. As a statewide charter school, New Harmony accepts students from anywhere in the state but focuses recruitment on five Louisiana parishes most severely impacted by coastal erosion: Orleans, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. Bernard, and St. Charles.

**At New Harmony High, students are not passive bystanders to the environmental challenges facing the Gulf Coast and the world—they are active researchers, advocates, and problem solvers.**



## Discover New Harmony

At New Harmony High, students are active participants in driving change and solving problems for a region endangered by coastal erosion and environmental threats. By investing in community-building on the ground level, New Harmony High has been able to provide its students with meaningful experiences that tie into and extend far beyond the classroom. Students learn through real-world experiences that maximize hands-on learning. College- and career-ready coursework come to life through internships, research projects, and other activities. Students address the most urgent challenges facing the region, while simultaneously preparing themselves for postsecondary education and a workforce equipped to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

**Launched in August 2018 with 44 students in 9th grade, New Harmony will eventually grow to serve 360 students in grades 9-12.**



## New Harmony Design Features

### 1. Learning while addressing local challenges

New Harmony High engages the interests of students along the Louisiana Gulf Coast to address the environmental, economic, and social challenges of their region. The goal is for students to design and co-conduct research alongside educators and experts. To accomplish this, New Harmony offers a flexible learning environment that's lighter on time spent in traditional classrooms by maximizing meaningful, hands-on experiences outside of the school. These "leaving to learn" opportunities are a deep and meaningful part of New Harmony's culture. Students are immersed in local history, heritage, culture, and landscapes, giving them the context they need to master rigorous academic content and empowering them to apply their knowledge and skills. Working side-by-side with community organizations, researchers, scientists, engineers, and activists, students investigate topics such as coastal erosion, land loss, sea-level rise, community displacement, and ecosystem damage.



Hi, I'm Zoey.

"Want to see what life is like at New Harmony? Join me for a look at my projects, internships, exhibitions, and more."



## 2. A commitment to students' personal growth and agency

Teachers at New Harmony High are called “education advisors,” and each student is part of a small learning community of approximately 15 students called an advisory. Advisors develop deep relationships with students to understand their strengths, interests, and areas of growth. This helps New Harmony support the personal growth of students alongside their academic growth. Advisors work with students to develop and track an individualized learning plan for each student. This gives students more agency—not just over their formal education but also to determine their role in making a positive impact on the fate of their region as they research, study, and act upon the threats to their coastal environment.



**Fernando Wagner**

Education Advisor

“Teaching here is different from many schools because of our role as advisors. Get a sense of what it’s like [in this video](#) that shows a day in my life at New Harmony or hear how Dina describes her role [here](#).”



### 3. Real-world learning to meet workforce demands

New Orleans has one of the largest and busiest ports in the world and metropolitan New Orleans is a major regional hub for healthcare and manufacturing. Additional local careers in STEM fields include water management, electric power generation, environmental health, industrial engineering, and agriculture. But, there's currently a sizable gap between the number of workers needed for local jobs in Louisiana and the number of graduates and potential employees to fill them. New Harmony High equips students with the knowledge, skills, and experience to fulfill these unmet workforce demands. Experiential learning opportunities foster the development of real-world skills. Students will eventually earn credits toward career certifications in a wide range of fields, including coastal restoration.



Hi, I'm Sofia.

"My friend Kira and I won the New Orleans Public Library Black History Month contest! The posters were part of our exhibition of our research about African American migration. The past can be heavy on a person, and creating art can help you cope and share your emotions and connect with your community."



## 4. Internships for impact

Student internships are a cornerstone of New Harmony’s overall approach. Through weekly participation with professional partners, students get valuable work experience, form important relationships with mentors outside of school, and make meaningful contributions to their community. After months of researching, interviewing, and applying, 100% of this year’s sophomores began internships with local organizations. One student served as the finance and budgeting intern at The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana where she created budgets and plans based on their existing grants. Two students served as interns with the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation’s Education Department, where they planned and coordinated educational programming including science lessons for a local elementary school, a STEM event for the local girl schools and participating in research and water quality testing. Through this experience, they learned and practiced important skills such as public speaking, collaboration, and project management.



**Hi, I’m Mervin.**

“I like volunteering and helping others. At New Harmony, I get to do that a lot, like when I hosted a community presentation at the Global Green Center in the Lower Ninth Ward about the consequences of global sea-level rise.”



## Theory Into Action

### Student work: Once upon a time in a city called New Orleans

New Harmony High recently partnered with [826 New Orleans](#) for a project called “Once Upon a Time in a City Called New Orleans” to explore the importance of restoration and preservation. Students wrote dystopian flash fiction stories that imagined a world where New Orleans no longer existed due to environmental catastrophe. Lessons addressed world-building, setting, character, plot arc, and audience empathy. The project culminated in a [published book](#), a release party, and discussion panel attended by the young authors, their families, members of the community, and author [Nathaniel Rich](#). Learn more about this project in the blog, [How a class of young writers explored climate change through storytelling](#).

### New Harmony Values Addressed:

- ✓ We are connected to the environment.
- ✓ We seek balance.
- ✓ Our work is relevant and rigorous.
- ✓ We prepare for the future.
- ✓ We are connected to each other.

## Student Data

New Harmony High serves 103 students in grades 9-10 this school year.

**63% Black**  
**30% White**  
**7% Latinx**

**58% Free/Reduced Price Lunch**  
**37% Special Education**  
**3% English Language Learners**

## Students on the power of projects

New Harmony students get to choose topics they're interested in, do the work, then present what I've learned. Find out why students say this helps them learn more in this video on [exhibitions in project-based learning](#).

### Common Core State Standards Met:

- ✓ RL 9-10.2 - Determine a central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development.
- ✓ W 9-10.3 - Write narratives to develop real or imagined events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured sequences.
- ✓ W.9-10.5 - Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
- ✓ W.9-10.6 - Use technology to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.
- ✓ W 9-10.3a - Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation.
- ✓ W 9-10.3b - Use narrative techniques such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines to develop characters and experiences.
- ✓ SL.9-10.1 - Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.



### Sunny Dawn Summers

School Leader

"Students have been involved at almost every step of the design process. We learned early on that if you make decisions without the voice of your students, you might as well stop where you are."



### Anthony Burrell

Community Coordinator

"What's [my advice](#) for engaging community partners? Research organizations that are aligned to your school's mission and nurture the relationship."

## Blogs and Media

- [Hope, empowerment, and saving the planet at New Harmony High - XQ Blog](#)
- [How a class of young writers explored climate change through storytelling - XQ Blog](#)
- [What we learned after year one as a “Super School” - XQ Blog](#)
- [The future of coastal preservation is in the hands of high schoolers - XQ Blog](#)
- [New high school puts focus on environment, climate change - Associated Press](#)
- [Louisiana high school students study coastal restoration amid threats from climate change - The New Orleans Advocate](#)

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