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Cultural Tension in the Antebellum Louisiana School System

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I will present on the subject of education in antebellum Louisiana, spanning from the late 1830s to 1860. During this time, Louisiana had established a public school system, opening a number of schools across the mostly-rural state. Students attended either the public schools or private schools established by the Catholic Church and various Protestant churches, but both options proved problematic. The school system was vocally criticized by prominent members of Louisiana society, including those closely associated with the public schools. Critics faulted the schools for their structural failures and the poor quality of teachers, among other problems. Through published writings on the schools such as in the popular journal *DeBow’s Review*, many criticisms of Louisiana schools are revealed to stem from a fear of the South’s cultural inferiority to the Northern states. The presentation will examine the effects of perceived cultural inferiority in writings on education in Louisiana.