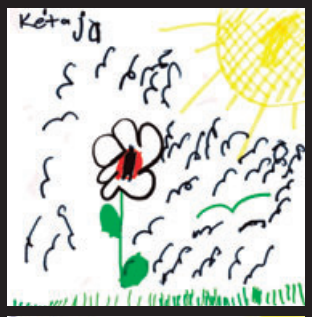
Education after Katrina

TIME FOR A NEW FEDERAL RESPONSE



SEF
SINCE 1867

Southern Education Foundation
135 Auburn Avenue NE, 2nd Floor • Atlanta, GA 30303
www.southerneducation.org

The Southern Education Foundation

The Southern Education Foundation (SEF), www.southerneducation.org, is a nonprofit organization comprised of diverse women and men who work together to improve the quality of life for all of the South's people through better and more accessible education. SEF advances creative solutions to ensure fairness and excellence in education for low-income students from preschool through higher education.

SEF develops and implements programs of its own design, serves as an intermediary for donors who want a high-quality partner with whom to work on education issues in the South, and participates as a public charity in the world of philanthropy. SEF depends upon contributions from foundations, corporations and individuals to support its efforts.

SEF's Vision

We seek a South and a nation with a skilled workforce that sustains an expanding economy, where civic life embodies diversity and democratic values and practice, and where an excellent education system provides all students with fair chances to develop their talents and contribute to the common good. We will be known for our commitment to combating poverty and inequality through education.

SEF's Timeless Mission

SEF develops, promotes and implements policies, practices and creative solutions that ensure educational excellence, fairness, and high levels of achievement among African Americans and other groups and communities that have not yet reached the full measure of their potential. SEF began in 1867 as the Peabody Education Fund.

Credits

Education after Katrina: Time for a New Federal Response is one of a series of reports by SEF in which we undertake research, disseminate information and work with policymakers to expand education and economic opportunities in the South. Other reports can be found at www.southerneducation.org.

SEF thanks all Mississippians and Louisianans who offered their time and talent leading to this report and who continue to exhibit great determination and courage in efforts to restore and improve education for all children in their states.

Steve Suitts, SEF program coordinator, is the author of the report and was responsible for its research and analysis. Lauren Veasey, SEF associate program officer, assisted in developing research and charts and fact-checking. Lynn Huntley, SEF's President, edited the report. Mary Sommers of Typographic Solutions designed and supervised the printing of the report.

Education after Katrina

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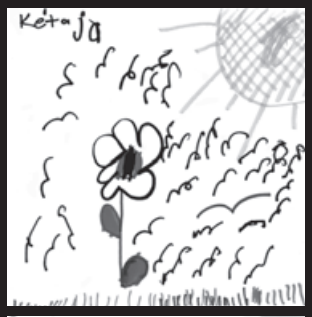

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"Is this America?"
– Fannie Lou Hamer

preface

ALMOST TWO YEARS after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita struck the Gulf Coast of America, thousands of people in the richest nation in the world remain displaced. Huge areas of a premier port city called New Orleans still lie in rubble. Countless families continue the struggle to reclaim normal lives. Despair over loss of place and loved ones haunts many every day.

Nowhere are the continuing effects of the storms more evident than in education. As this report documents, vulnerable children affected by the storms and scattered to the seven winds remain victims of the devastation wrought. Placed haphazardly in poorly reconstituted schools in the region or struggling with limited help in schools that were and are ill prepared to receive them across the nation, the children of the Gulf Coast are still suffering, still at risk and still in need of our help.

This report is rich with data and detail about the plight of such children and the tattered systems of education on which they are now relying to prepare them for life and work. It tells a story of massive failure of "we the people" through our national government to respond effectively and adequately to the storms' devastation. The report documents a piecemeal process through which the federal government has responded to the need of Gulf Coast children for a good education. Though the data on which the report relies are not complete, the picture of neglect that emerges is deeply troubling.

Economically frail states, such as Mississippi and Louisiana, with uncertain futures and limited revenues cannot be reasonably expected to primarily finance their own recovery. Extending resources – human and financial – in circumstances such as these is a primary duty of the federal government. When Americans are hard hit by disasters – be they bombings or hurricanes – there is a need for urgent, high-level, responsive federal leadership and action to supplement local resources.

Education is too important to be left to happenstance and the vagaries of resource-poor, crisis-driven, storm-decimated states. Failing to provide young Gulf Coast students the education needed to meet future workforce readiness requirements, participate knowledgeably in democratic processes or live independently isn't wise, just or necessary. As a matter of fact, it is short-sighted, cruel and contrary to the public and national interest.

What is urgently needed now is a full, well-executed strategy through national public policy to ensure that the resources are in place to provide a quality education for Gulf Coast children, lest they be victimized twice – first by the storms and second by indifference or incompetence. If the policy and resource half steps that thus far characterize the federal response to the Gulf Coast catastrophe are allowed to stand, a tragic precedent will be set. Children of the Gulf Coast won't be "left behind"; they will be "kept behind" due to a massive failure of national will and low priority attached to education as an element of recovery. The subliminal message will be that students, especially those from low-income families, aren't entitled to a quality education, even when it is beyond the capacity of their home states to provide it due to exigent circumstances.

SEF's purpose in writing this report is not to apportion blame, although there is plenty of blame to apportion. Instead SEF's purpose is to challenge Americans and government, especially at the national level, to do now what is still needed to provide adequate educational assistance and leadership for the sake of Gulf Coast children. They have suffered enough and deserve better.

SEF's message is simple: It is not too late. This is America.

Lynn Huntley
President
The Southern Education Foundation

executive summary

SINCE HURRICANES KATRINA and Rita struck the Gulf Coast in 2005, public and media attention has largely focused on economic recovery and rebuilding. Too often the need to create opportunities and structures for a quality education has not been treated as a key element of full recovery planning and strategy. In fact, not since the Great Depression of the 1930s has the United States witnessed so many of its own students thrown out of school.

K-12 Education

In the two months following Katrina, as many as 138,000 students were not in school. Twenty thousand to 30,000 K-12 students did not attend school at all in the 2005-2006 school year. In the following school year, 2006-2007, as many as 10,000 to 15,000 school-age children may have missed all or most days of school.

Schools in 49 states received displaced students after the Gulf Coast hurricanes. In states where the majority of displaced students re-entered school, there were often insufficient numbers of classrooms, supplies and school personnel (including counselors and administrative staff). Schools failed to serve displaced students' needs due to a lack of funds.

After Katrina, schools with displaced students reported an increase in disciplinary problems and a greater need for mental health counseling. Displaced children had some especially serious health problems that were not always addressed and exhibited very poor academic performance on state tests, especially in Texas.

After the 2005-2006 school year, most states and communities failed to set up intense summer programs to address the special needs of displaced and disengaged students. By the 2006-2007 school year, most public schools on the Mississippi coast had recovered their academic performance, although some schools showed lingering problems. In New Orleans, the average student was twice more likely to fail state tests as was the average Louisiana student.

Higher Education

Two dozen public and private colleges and universities were closed by the hurricanes in the New Orleans area, and another five closed along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. A majority of the displaced college students who re-enrolled quickly located to schools in Southern states.

Between 45,000 and 54,000 New Orleans students dropped out of college for at least a semester. Low-income students had great difficulty relocating to another school. Approximately 30,000 students – nearly 1 out of every 6 students in Louisiana's public colleges and universities – dropped out during the entire 2005-2006 school year. Black college students appear to have been affected disproportionately. In the second year after Katrina, more than 26,000 college students in Louisiana's public colleges remained out of school after Katrina.

By the start of the 2006-2007 school year, almost 9,000 students in Mississippi had dropped out or were unable to enroll in college due to Hurricane Katrina. The decline in Mississippi college enrollment was primarily among White students, most of whom were probably low-income.

Child Care

In Louisiana, licensed child care centers lost more than 15,000 children after Katrina. By the summer of 2007, only 1,738 children – 27 percent of the number enrolled before the hurricanes – were being served by licensed child care centers in New Orleans, although in mid-2006 there were over 7,800 children under five in the city. More than half the city's pre-Katrina centers are unlikely to reopen. The storm's effects on Mississippi child care were not as severe or as long-lasting, although Harrison County (Biloxi-Gulfport) child care remained below its pre-Katrina level in the summer of 2007.

National Interest

The national government has a long tradition of responding to education emergencies. In the aftermath of the Civil War, the federal Freedman's Bureau constructed schools, recruited teachers and provided educational supplies. In the 1930s, the Roosevelt Administration responded to a wide range of education needs after the stock market collapse. Measured as a

percentage of the nation's gross domestic product (national wealth), the New Deal response would be tantamount today to spending approximately $58.5 billion for emergency education assistance.

Today, in light of what happened, the federal government has a clear mandate to assist adequately in the recovery of education after Katrina.

Inadequate Federal Response

As of the start of the 2007-2008 school year, the federal government has committed approximately $2.5 billion for relief and recovery relating to education after Katrina. Yet, the federal funds for education after Katrina constitute barely 2 percent of all federal funding committed to address the disastrous aftermath of the Gulf Coast hurricanes. For every $2.5 billion spent for other purposes over the last two years, the federal government has found only $1 to spend for Katrina-related education.

DAMAGED SCHOOLS: The estimated cost of hurricane-related destruction in K-12 and higher education in both states is approximately $6.2 billion, but the federal government has provided only $1.2 billion for education for this purpose. New Orleans colleges and universities suffered the lion's share of the material losses in higher education but have received a comparatively smaller amount of federal funding for damage recovery. In fact, foreign nations essentially have matched federal funding for restoring higher education in Louisiana.

K-12 schools along the Gulf Coast received considerably less assistance from the federal government than they have needed. Some schools continue to require substantial funding. For instance, New Orleans had almost 50 public school facilities damaged beyond repair, and the average school building is 70 years old.

DISPLACED AND DROPOUT STUDENTS: Because federal funds were inadequate, the states probably spent as much as $163 million above and beyond allocated federal funds on K-12 displaced students during 2005-2006. Still, displaced students often had unmet needs and the primary obstacle was a lack of funds. The method of distributing federal funding was also skewed: the most distressed school districts serving the largest numbers of neediest students did not get most of the federal funding.

There was no federal assistance available to an estimated 20,000 to 25,000 displaced college students who re-enrolled for the 2005 fall term due to the hurricanes. There were no federal funds to re-engage as many as 30,000 K-12 students who dropped out of school in the year of the hurricanes. There was very little federal support for more than 30,000 college students who dropped out of college for all of 2006 in the aftermath of the hurricane. These students were the most disadvantaged – and probably still are. They were bypassed by the federal government's emergency education assistance.

CHILD CARE: The federal government has made virtually no response to the large perils and deprivations young children at child care centers endured during an emergency, and the federal government has made no real contribution to help restore child care to New Orleans.

Conclusions and Recommendations: It Is Not Over

All told, the federal government has failed to help make the people and the Gulf Coast region "whole." It must work with clarity and urgency to shore up the efforts of hard-working education leaders on the ground – for the children's sake:

- Conduct a comprehensive review of needs and take appropriate action to assist Gulf Coast schools.
- Help Gulf Coast colleges in need of support for recovery.
- Develop a plan to assist dropout students at all levels.
- Mobilize health care professionals to help storm-affected students and their parents.

The students are still there. They still need assistance and opportunities to recover and succeed. It is not too late for them. And it is not too late for the national government to redeem America's ideals of caring and opportunity regardless of race, income or geography. It is time for a new federal response.

introduction

SINCE HURRICANES KATRINA and Rita struck the Gulf Coast in 2005, public resources and media attention have largely focused on economic recovery and rebuilding. Too often the need to create the opportunities and structures for quality education has not been treated as an essential key element for full recovery.

But education is key. The future of the region depends on how well the education systems that prepare Gulf Coast residents for work, parenthood, civic participation and independent living function now and in the future. The Gulf Coast region provides vital routes and ports for natural gas and oil production, international trade and agricultural exports. The wetlands are a vital part of the national ecosystem. One sixth of all imports into the nation come in through Gulf Coast ports. Without improving education, the patterns of entrenched poverty that characterized the Gulf Coast region before the storms will be recycled to the detriment of all.

It is in the national interest to help people in the Gulf Coast region of our great country gain the help needed to attain better lives and futures through education. Not since the Great Depression of the 1930s has the United States witnessed so many of its own students thrown out of school and so many schools and child centers destroyed and closed. During the last two years, however, the most powerful national government in the world has spent relatively small amounts of time, money and effort in helping to set right the lives of America's hurricane-displaced students and the schools they attend.

Only the federal government can provide the new resources – human and financial – and leadership to make recovery through improved education a reality for thousands of young people.

This report is not a condemnation of any individual, department or institution. It is a call for action now at the federal level to respond to the continuing negative effects of the storms on education for thousands of young people and the future of the region.


FRESHMAN SEMINAR
ALL ABOUT ME

K-12 education

HURRICANES KATRINA AND Rita affected Louisiana and Mississippi differently in education. In New Orleans, most residents evacuated the city and many were unable to return to homes or schools for weeks, months or years. On the Mississippi coast, most residents returned to their communities in a matter of days or weeks. Damage to the K-12 educational infrastructure was at least four times greater in Louisiana than in Mississippi.

Even before Hurricane Katrina, the New Orleans school district was in crisis. It had the largest number of the state's lowest performing schools and debt of over $250 million. On the other hand, almost all school districts on the Mississippi coast had healthy budgets and test scores above the state average. Half of Mississippi's coastal schools were ranked by the state as "exemplary" or "superior."

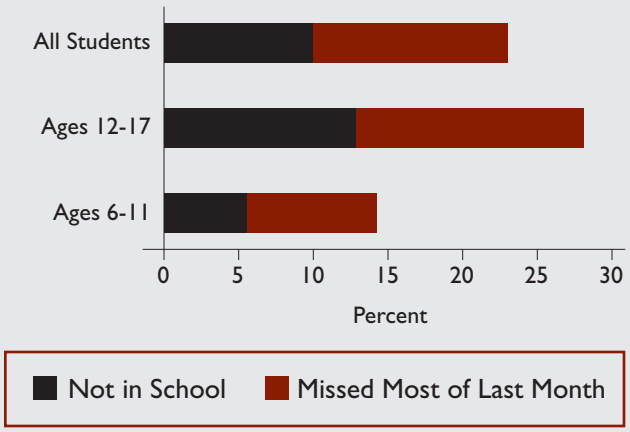
Lost School Days: School Dropouts

From late August 2005, when Hurricane Katrina struck, through late October, when Hurricane Rita did its damage, as many as 118,000 students in Louisiana and 20,000 students in Mississippi were not in school for most or all days. The aftermath of the hurricanes kept thousands of students out of school during the 2005-2006 school year. The approximate numbers were:

- 130,000-135,000 students missed 5 weeks of school
- 50,000-57,000 students missed as much as 1/4 of the school year
- 20,000-30,000 students did not attend school in 2005-2006

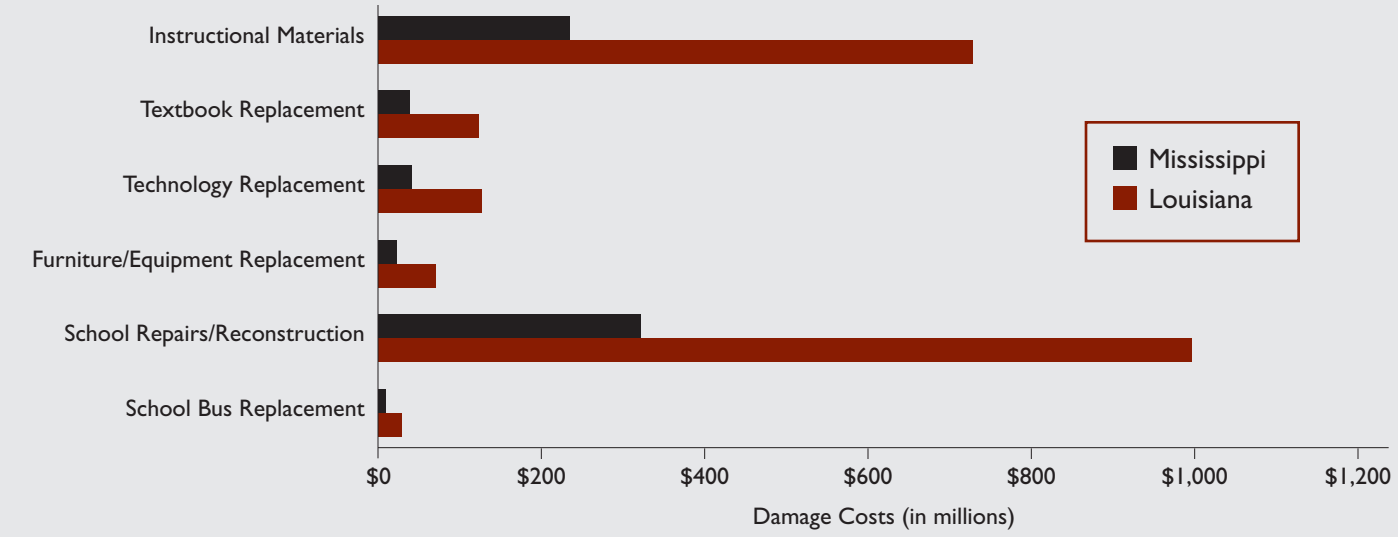
Students Missing School in Louisiana and Mississippi

Families in FEMA Housing Survey: February 2006



Source: Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health

Katrina Damage Costs to Louisiana & Mississippi K-12 Systems of Education



Source: Mississippi Governor's Commission; Louisiana Recovery Authority; SEF Calculations

Dropout and truancy rates are estimated to have been highest among students in families living in Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) trailers, where "rapid-response" surveys suggest as many as 20 to 25 percent of the school-age children did not attend school regularly in early 2006.

In the following school year, 2006-2007, it appears that as many as 10,000 to 15,000 school-age children may have missed all or most days of school – two years after Katrina.

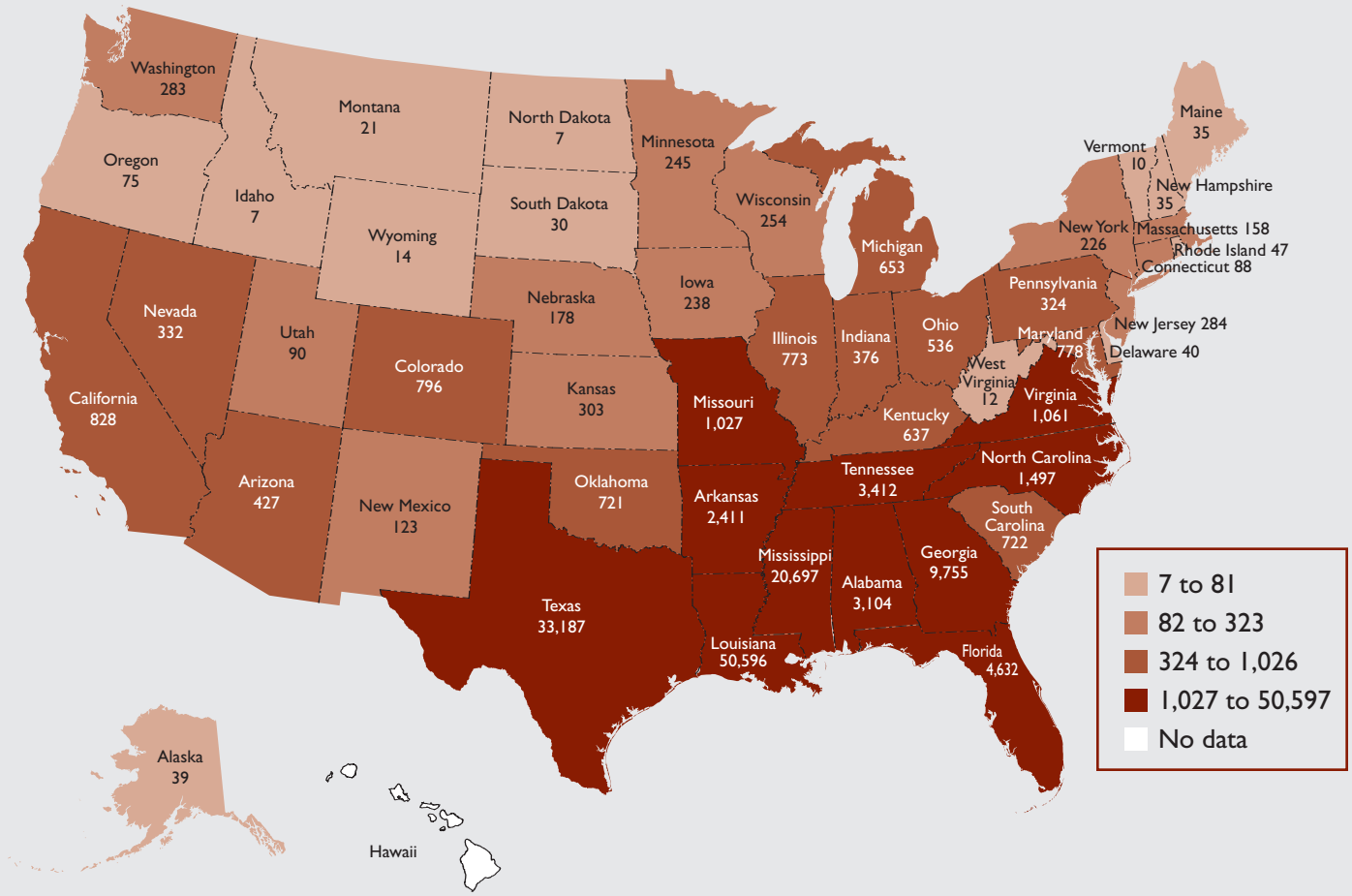
Displaced Students in Schools: Needy and Underserved

School officials and teachers in 49 states and the District of Columbia received displaced students and worked tirelessly to ensure that these children had a safe environment in which to learn (see map below). They faced daunting problems.

In Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas, the three states where the vast majority of displaced students re-entered school at least temporarily, there were too often insufficient numbers of classrooms, desks, chairs, books, supplies and school personnel (especially counselors and administrative staff).

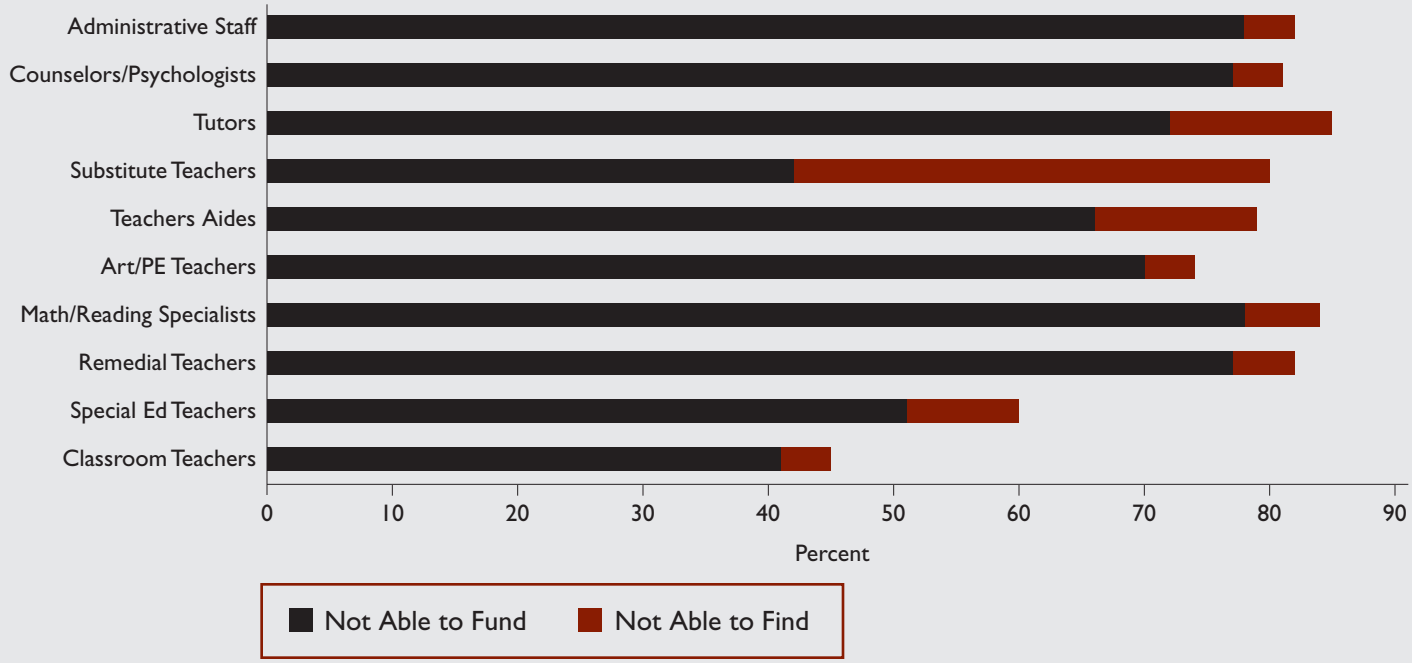
A significant percentage of schools failed to add personnel to serve displaced students. For example, 22 percent of Louisiana schools surveyed by the RAND Corporation in 2006 needed more remedial teachers after displaced students began to arrive, but only 6 percent hired additional teachers to provide remedial work. One in 4 schools needed

Number of Displaced K-12 Students Received



Source: U.S. Department of Education; Ed Week

Lack of Funds Kept Schools from Hiring Needed Personnel



Source: RAND Corporation

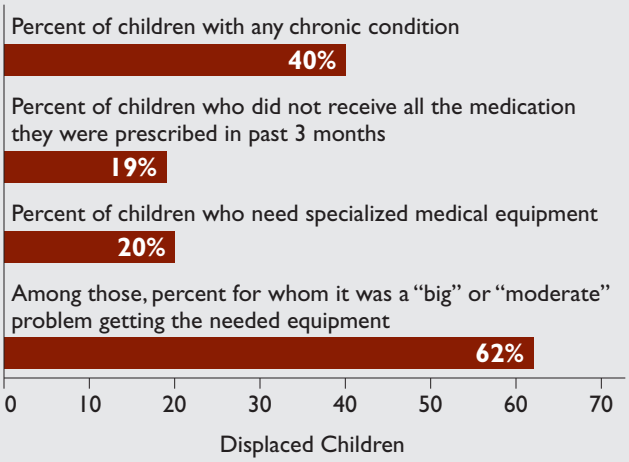
additional tutors, but only 1 in 50 schools hired them. These needs went unmet largely because of a lack of available funds.

Almost 2 in 5 schools in the RAND survey reported an increase in disciplinary problems and an even higher percentage reported that displaced students were more likely to need mental health counseling than other students. Also, two surveys of displaced families living in FEMA housing in 2006 showed that many children had serious health problems. A Columbia University survey found that 40 percent of school-age children had chronic health problems. One in 5 had a need for specialized medical equipment or had missed prescribed medication in recent months.

Short-Term Academic Effects

Understandably, many displaced students exhibited poor academic performance. Five states – Texas, Tennessee, Georgia, Louisiana and Alabama – reported displaced students' test scores as a separate, identifiable group. While differing by grade and state, the overall test scores of displaced students were considerably below the average scores of all other students.

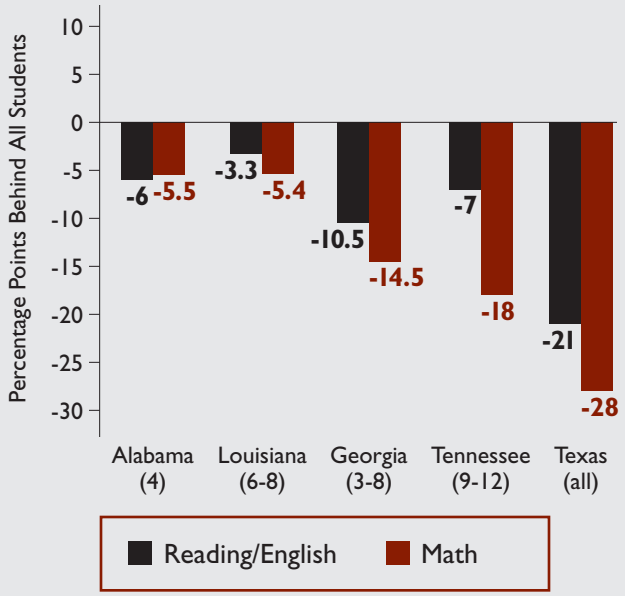
Displaced Children's Health Status



Source: Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health

Gaps in Tests Scores for Displaced Students by State

School grades for the reported scores are in parenthesis after state



Source: Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Tennessee Departments of Education; Texas Education Agency

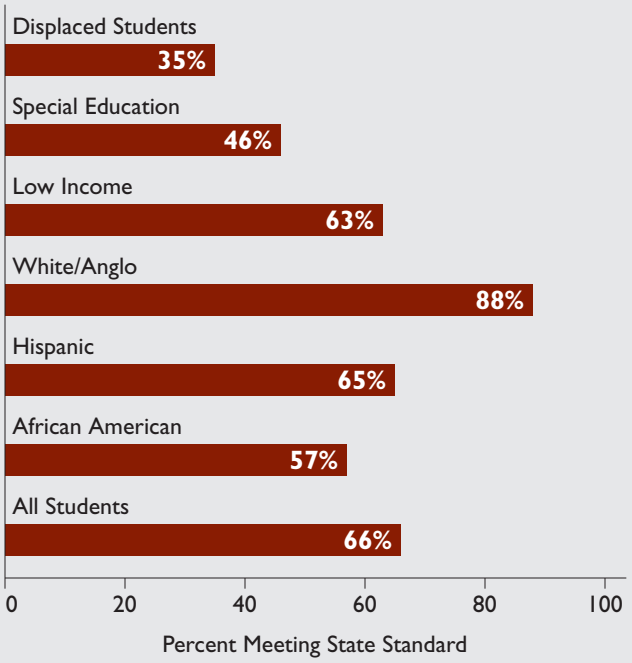
The size of the testing gaps in the five states for displaced students during the 2005-2006 school year ranged from a high of 28 percentage points to a low of 3 percentage points. Outside Louisiana, Texas had the largest number of displaced students and the biggest gaps in test scores. In reading, displaced students scored a cumulative average of 21 percentage points behind other students. When aggregated by school level, Tennessee test data seems to indicate that the gaps between displaced students and original students grew larger in the higher grades. On the Tennessee mathematics test, displaced high school students scored on average 18 percentage points below all other students.

Test scores varied widely on the local level. In Atlanta public schools, a small number of displaced students did better than most other groups of students; but in other school districts, like Houston, the gaps between displaced students and all other groups of students were profound. (Test scores were not aggregated for displaced students for the 2006-2007 school year.)

Overall test scores from public schools on the Mississippi coast, where all but 6,000 students had returned, were as high as they were prior to the storms. It was a remarkable feat. Along miles of devastation, with small trailers and tents serving as both homes and classrooms, amid a very slow, frustrating period of initial recovery, administrators, teachers and students on the Mississippi jointly maintained an impressive focus and dedication on learning that prevented dramatic declines. At the same time, some schools in districts like Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, showed academic problems after the hurricanes, especially among low-income and African American students.

In New Orleans, where nearly 20,000 students had returned by the 2006-2007 school year, test scores in mathematics and English were extremely low. The average Louisiana student was twice more likely to score at state standard on these tests than was the average New Orleans student in the Recovery School District (RSD), where most returning displaced students enrolled.

Houston Students Meeting the State Mathematics Standard, 2005-2006



Source: Texas Education Agency

More "Education after Katrina" on SEF Web Site

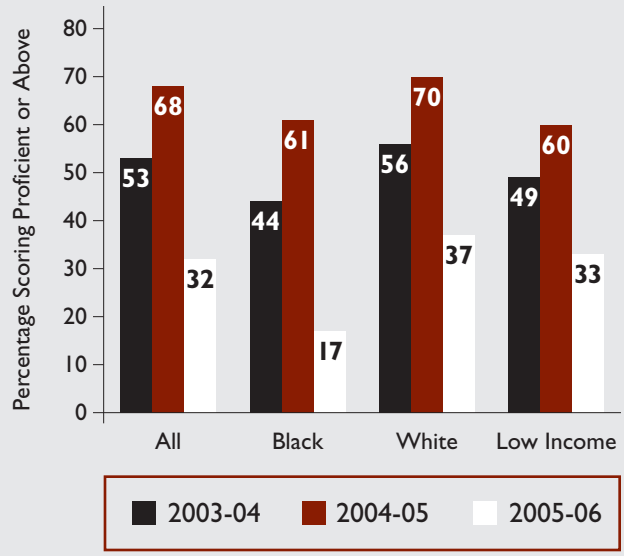
Additional details, charts, analyses and sources, including a research report on "Education after Katrina," can be found on the SEF Web site: www.southerneducation.org.

A Lost Summer for Recovery

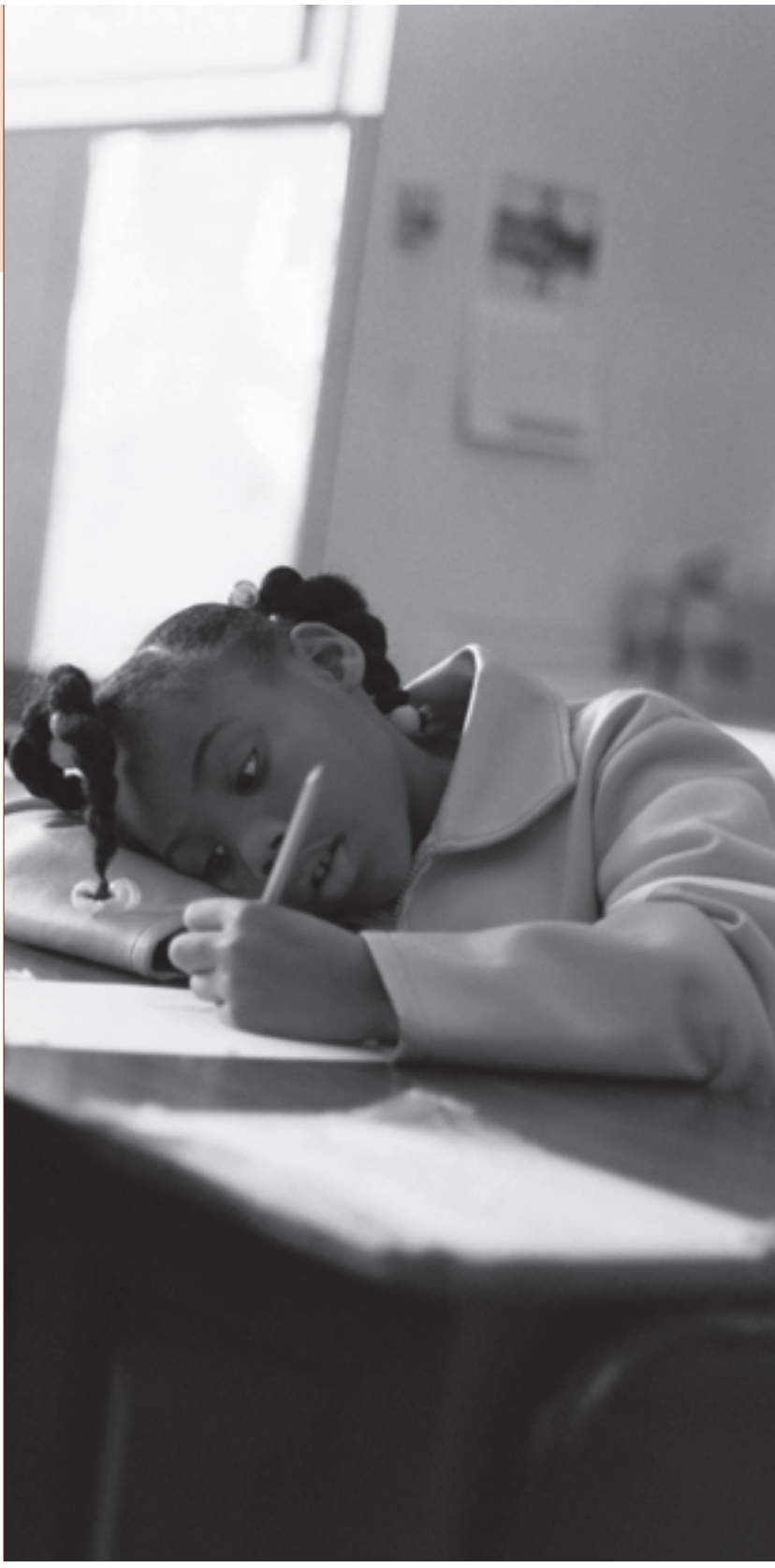
In most places, there were no intense summer programs to address the displaced students' academic, social and psychological needs once the 2005-2006 school year ended. Barely more than a dozen small summer programs with academic content were operational in New Orleans in summer 2006, although according to a special population survey, there were at least 28,000 school-age children there at that time. There were some intense summer programs in Houston and a few other venues, but they were the exception to the rule.

Decline in State Test Scores in Bay Saint Louis/Waveland School District

Algebra Test Scores by Student Group and by Year



Source: Mississippi Department of Education



higher education

TWO DOZEN PUBLIC and private colleges and universities were closed by the hurricanes in the New Orleans metropolitan area; and five were closed temporarily in Mississippi counties bordering the Gulf Coast. Most sustained substantial physical damage.

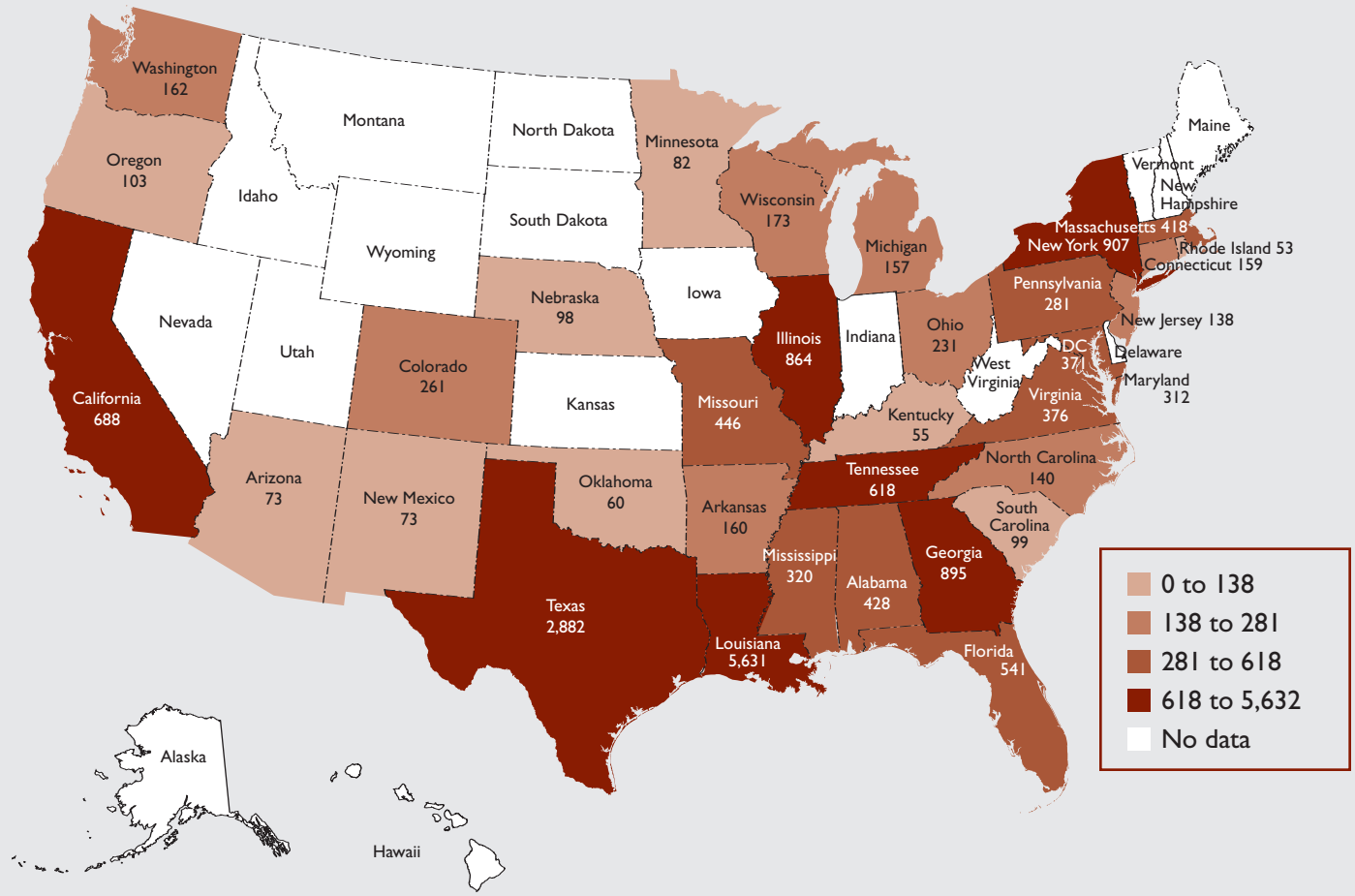
New Orleans colleges had enrolled almost 76,000 students in the 2004-2005 school year, and affected Mississippi schools, primarily two-year colleges, had an enrollment of almost 15,000. The vast majority of these college students were out of school for at least 6 weeks and many did not return to college for much longer periods of time, if at all.

A majority of displaced college students who re-enrolled in 2005 relocated to schools in Southern states. In all, 3 out of 4 students who were able to re-enroll in the fall of 2005 relocated to schools in only 10 states.

Louisiana

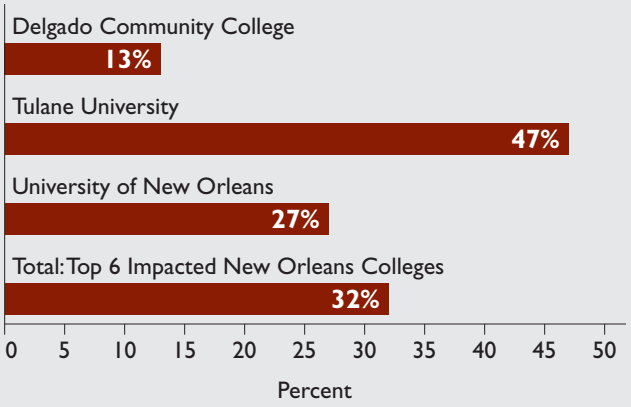
Approximately 60 to 70 percent of the estimated 76,000 students from New Orleans-area schools – somewhere between 45,000 and 54,000 students – are estimated to have dropped out of college for at least an entire semester. Forty-seven percent of Tulane University students transferred to another school without losing a semester. The students least likely to transfer were from Delgado Community College, New Orleans' public two-year college: 13 percent of these students transferred to another school in fall 2005.

Number of Displaced College Students Received



Source: National Student Clearinghouse

Re-Enrollment of Impacted New Orleans College Students, Fall 2005



Source: National Student Clearinghouse

Low-income students who were attending New Orleans-area colleges had great difficulty relocating to other schools. For example, before the storms, while 48 percent of the college students in both public and private colleges in New Orleans were low-income, only about 20 percent of students who re-enrolled in a school outside of Louisiana and Texas in the fall of 2005 were low-income.

In Louisiana, approximately 30,000 students – nearly 1 out of every 6 students in Louisiana's public colleges and universities – dropped out during the entire 2005-2006 school year. When estimates of dropouts from private colleges are included, probably as many as 35,000 students in Louisiana suspended their college education for at least the entire 2005-2006 school year.

Black students in Louisiana appear to have been affected disproportionately at all levels. The number of high school students who took the ACT for college entry dropped by one-sixth in 2006. African American students accounted for almost 60 percent of this decline.

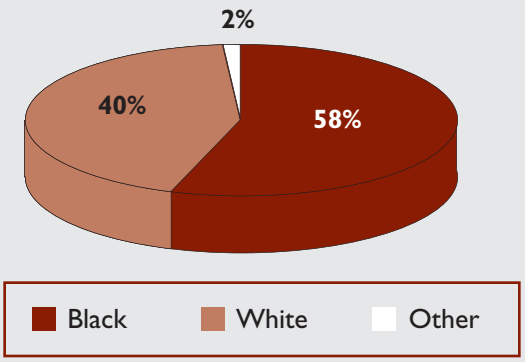
A large portion of college students who dropped out of college were African American: One out of every 5 African American college students in Louisiana's public colleges dropped out.

In the second year after the storms, rates of college attendance in Louisiana continued to decline: It is estimated that more than 26,000 college students in its public colleges and universities remained out of school. Forty three percent of these students were African American, although overall, African Americans constitute only 28 percent of the state's public college enrollment.

In New Orleans, both public and private colleges continued to have reduced enrollments in the 2006-2007 school year. Among the city's 4 major private universities, none had an enrollment that was 90 percent of pre-storm levels. Two historically Black universities, Xavier University and Dillard University, had the largest reductions. Public college enrollment also remained considerably lower. For example, Southern University had only 63 percent of its pre-Katrina enrollment.

Decline in Louisiana ACT Test Takers, 2006

Distribution by Race



Source: ACT

Mississippi

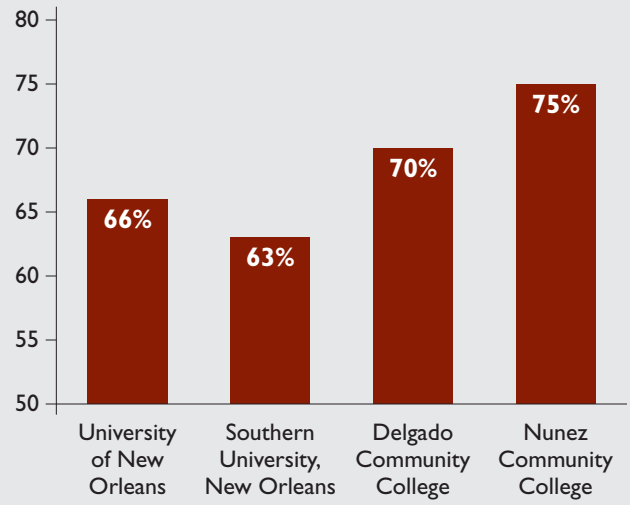
The Mississippi coast has been one of the state's fastest growing areas, but it is home to a relatively small number of colleges and universities. Coastal counties include a satellite campus of the University of South Mississippi, one of the state's four-year public universities; four two-year community colleges; and three small private schools. These are the primary institutions damaged by the hurricanes.

Sixty to 70 miles from the coast, the main campus of the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg and seven other small college campuses, including public and private two-year colleges, received lesser damage from high winds and tornadoes spun off by the hurricanes. The storms also did some damage to campuses like Tougaloo College, more than 200 miles away from shore, and Alcorn State University.

Approximately 15,000 college students (almost all attending two-year colleges) had their education disrupted for an average of 3 or 4 weeks. Nearly 3,000 community college students are believed to have dropped out of school for an entire semester. Enrollment at Mississippi Gulf Coast College declined by more than 2,600 students. More than 1,000 students attending the University of Southern Mississippi dropped out of school for a semester and the enrollment dropped for the entire year by almost 500 students.

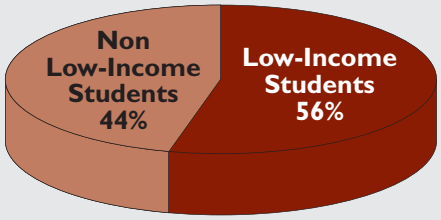
Post-Katrina College Enrollment as a Percentage of Pre-Katrina Enrollment

Spring 2007



Source: Louisiana Board of Regents

Mississippi Low-Income Gulf Coast College Students Impacted by Katrina



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS Dataset Cutting Tool

By the start of the 2006-2007 school year, college enrollment on the Mississippi coast had begun to rebound. Still, based on enrollment projections, almost 9,000 students in Mississippi had dropped out or were unable to enroll in college due to the storms. In Mississippi, unlike Louisiana, 76 percent of the decline in student enrollment since 2005 has been among White students. A majority of those who dropped out of Mississippi colleges were probably from low-income families.

child care

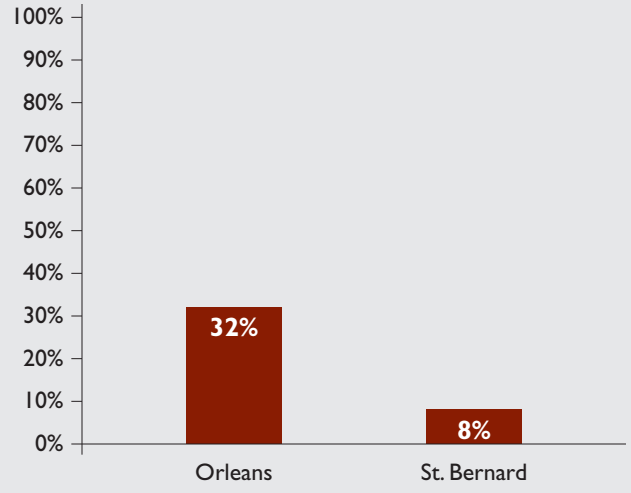
IN THE 2004-2005 school year, most three- and four-year-old children in both Louisiana and Mississippi were in a child care center, nursery or preschool. The storms changed everything.

Louisiana

In Louisiana, licensed child care centers monthly served 47,589 children prior to Hurricane Katrina. One in 5 of these children were in child care centers in the New Orleans metropolitan area. By November 2005, there was a drop of more than 15,000 children in licensed child care. Since then, there has been slow regrowth in the number of children served.

Percentage of Child Care Center Re-Openings Since Katrina

Orleans and St. Bernard Parishes



Source: The Katrina Index, April 2007; Agenda for Children, Louisiana Department of Social Services Bureau of Licensing.

For example, as of May 2007, St. Bernard Parish had only 2 licensed child care facilities, compared to 26 operating before the hurricane, and there were only 66 children in child care compared to 669 in July 2005. In New Orleans, only one-third of the city's licensed child care centers had reopened and only 1,738 children – 27 percent of the number enrolled before the hurricanes – were being served by such facilities.

This slow growth is not due to the absence of small children. A special census undertaken in mid-2006 estimated that New Orleans had over 7,800 children under five and St. Bernard had close to 1,000.

The primary explanation for the slow regrowth of licensed child care centers in these parishes is a lack of local capacity. A Save the Children 2006 survey of damage to child care centers found that more than half the centers (149) in New Orleans were not only closed but unlikely to reopen due to extensive damage.

Mississippi

The storm's effects on Mississippi child care were not as severe or as long-lasting as they were in the New Orleans area. The state temporarily lost 76 child care centers and had a drop of around 6,290 children in licensed child care centers in 14 south Mississippi counties, according to a survey by the Early Childhood Institute of Mississippi State University undertaken three months after the storms. Most centers have rebounded with enrollment close to pre-Katrina levels.

Harrison County (Biloxi-Gulfport) was one of the communities where child care was hit hardest: Child care centers and the numbers of children they served declined by nearly half shortly after the storms. By 2007, facilities in Harrison County were still serving notably fewer children.

the national interest

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT has a well-established role in attempting to prevent or mitigate the effects of natural and man-made disasters on different segments of the American public and industry. The national government acts to honor the federal compact that binds the states and their peoples together to ensure that vital national resources and security are not compromised and to allay human suffering. In so doing, the federal government recognizes in the name of the American people a shared citizenship and national values that make e *pluribus unum*.

The national government has a long tradition of responding to education needs and emergencies in the aftermath of the devastation. For example, after the destruction of the Civil War, the federal government's Freedmen's Bureau constructed schools, recruited teachers and provided educational resources to aid local groups and governments in responding to needs of newly freed slaves and their descendants.

In 1933, among other measures, the Roosevelt Administration put into place "emergency educational programs" to assist when economic collapse prevented some local and state governments from keeping children in school. The national government made direct grants to rural districts totaling $20 million; $22.5 million in long-term loans to urban districts for teacher salaries; and $213 million in grants and $85 million in loans for school reconstruction and repairs. In addition, the federal government established emergency education classes that enrolled as many as 612,000 young and older adults and funded the creation of nearly 2,000 preschools and nurseries for over 60,000 children.

Adjusted for inflation, this federal commitment of $400 million in the 1930s for education would equal $5.6 billion today. Measured as a percentage of the nation's gross domestic product (current national wealth), the New Deal federal emergency assistance for education would be the equivalent of $58.5 billion today.

in education

Federal Inaction in Education Emergency: Prince Edward County, Virginia, 1959

There also have been shameful moments in the past when the federal government failed to respond adequately in the face of education emergencies. In 1959, five years after the U.S. Supreme Court ordered the end of school segregation in Prince Edward County, Virginia, as a part of the original case of Brown v. the Board of Education, *the county closed all public schools instead of ending school segregation. Local White citizens then established a private academy that the Virginia Legislature later supported through a statewide scheme of publicly financed vouchers.*

From 1959 to 1964, while federal court actions moved slowly back and forth and a Southern-led Congress refused to act, Prince Edward County had no public schools: 1,400 White children attended the private, state-supported schools and most of the 1,900 Black children (a few hundred relocated to communities outside the state) received little or no formal education. U.S. Attorney General Robert Kennedy called Prince Edward one of the few places on earth where children were denied an education.

The national tragedy finally came to an end in May 1964 when U.S. Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black ruled that Prince Edward County public schools must reopen and that, if necessary, the federal district court had the power to order county officials to levy local taxes to support the public schools. More than 40 years later, the State of Virginia established scholarships for the more than 1,500 African Americans who had become the "lost children" of Prince Edward County, denied five years of education due to the state and local government's hostility and the national government's inaction.

Today, the federal role in public education is larger and more dynamic than ever before. It encompasses a self-proclaimed national responsibility to ensure equal education opportunity for disadvantaged students, especially minority and low-income students. In light of the extensive damage to students and schools after Katrina, the federal government has had a clear mandate to respond with ample assistance for relief and recovery to meet all sorts of human needs, including education. For the 2006-2007 school year, the federal government's education budget was $52 billion.

While state and local governments are responsible primarily for financing public education, the federal role is essential for relief and recovery from disasters such as those wrought by the Gulf Coast storms.

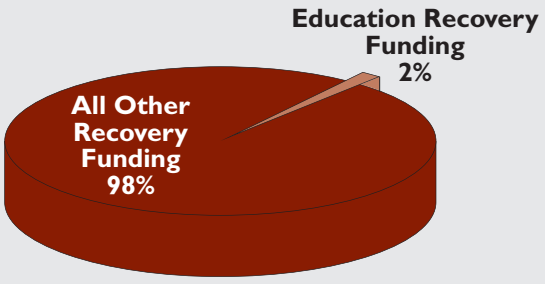
inadequate federal

AT THE END of 2005, four months after Hurricane Katrina, the U.S. Congress enacted and President George W. Bush signed legislation providing $1.8 billion to restart public and private schools in hurricane-damaged states, primarily Louisiana and Mississippi, and to compensate school districts across the nation for receiving and educating students who were displaced by the hurricanes.

In the summers of 2006 and 2007, Congress provided supplemental appropriations totaling $110 million for Katrina-related education needs. The most recent supplement, in May 2007, included a $60 million appropriation to assist higher education and to recruit and train new teachers. Congress also committed approximately $4.3 billion for additional Katrina-related relief and approximately $103 billion for extending military operations in Iraq.

In addition, since August 2005, the president and the secretary of education have authorized approximately $200 million in leftover funds from existing programs. The Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) has announced financial commitments, expenditures and loans totaling nearly $275 million since late 2005 to directly aid schools and school districts affected by the hurricanes, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services rearranged the allocation of $150 million to help displaced children in child care and Head Start centers.

Education Recovery Drastically Underfunded



Source: Congressional Budget Office, U.S. Department of Education

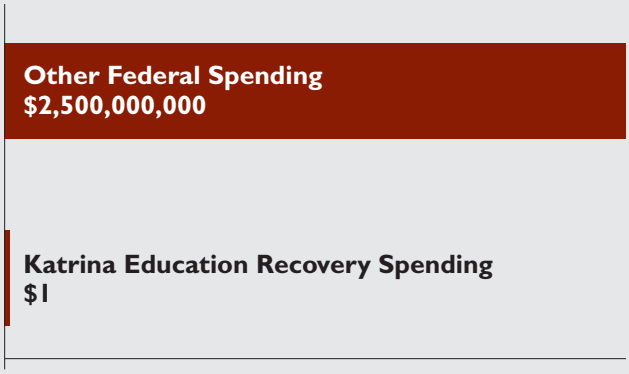
response

In total, as of the start of the 2007-2008 school year, the federal government had committed approximately $2.5 billion for relief and recovery relating to education after Katrina. While this amount for restoring education may appear large in absolute terms, it is small in comparison. For example, the federal monies for education constitute barely 2 percent of all funding that the U.S. government has committed to address all disaster relief and recovery after Katrina.

In addition, Katrina-related education funds made up less than 2.5 percent of the U.S. Department of Education's expenditures over the last two years.

Put another way, the funding the federal government has allocated for relief and recovery of education equals the amount spent for 10 days of funding the Iraq War. Overall, for every $2.5 billion spent for other purposes over the last two years, the federal government has found $1 to spend for Katrina-related education.

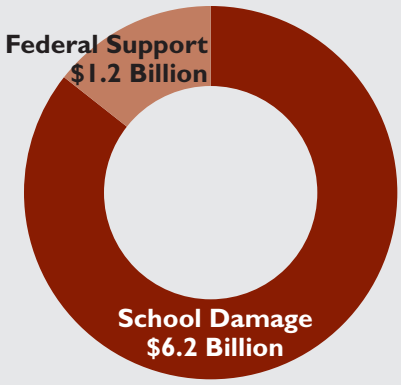
U.S. Federal Government Spending, since 2005



Source: Congressional Budget Office; U.S. Department of Education

Federal funding has been nowhere near the amount needed to help schools in Louisiana and Mississippi restore damaged school structures and replace equipment and supplies. The most recent estimate of costs of hurricane-related destruction in K-12 and higher education in both states was approximately $6.2 billion. In contrast, only $1.2 billion of the total federal funding for education relief and recovery have been committed for restoring and rebuilding the education institutions' physical structures and property.

Cost of Katrina-Related School Damage Exceeds Federal Support for Rebuilding



Source: Congressional Budget Office; U.S. Department of Education

Higher Education Damage

New Orleans colleges and universities suffered the lion's share of the material losses in higher education but have received a comparatively small amount of the federal funding (see chart on following page).

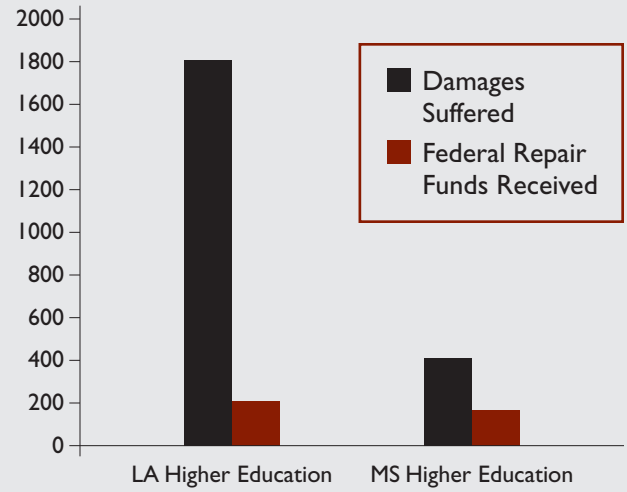
In fact, as of the end of the first quarter of 2007, foreign nations had supplied more funds for restoring higher education in Louisiana than had the U.S. government. At that time, foreign governments had donated, directly or through intermediaries, approximately $131 million to rebuild and restore Louisiana colleges and universities, while the federal government had allocated $120 million.

In May 2007, Congress appropriated an additional $30 million to support restoration of higher education in Louisiana and Mississippi. Assuming these funds are distributed in 2007 in equal amounts between the two states, federal funding for restoring Louisiana colleges will reach $135 million and, at that point, essentially match foreign aid.

Regardless of the exact ranking or amounts at a specific moment, it is clear that foreign assistance has been as important as the federal government's own funding for restoring Louisiana higher education.

Higher Education Damage Costs and Federal Funding for Repairs

In Louisiana (LA) and Mississippi (MS)



Source: U.S. Department of Education; state agencies

Recovery Funding for Louisiana Colleges by U.S. and Foreign Governments

Projected as of July 31, 2007

Source: U.S. Department of Education; others

K-12 Schools' Damage

K-12 schools along the Gulf Coast received considerably less assistance from the federal government than they have needed and requested. Some schools (primarily in New Orleans, St. Bernard Parish and Bay St. Louis, Mississippi) continue to need more substantial funding to address huge, persisting challenges in restoring the school systems' physical plant and basic educational equipment.

New Orleans faces a profound problem with school facilities. The city has opened almost 60 public schools the last two years and it may need 30 additional school buildings during the 2007-2008 school year. The need for adding schools will continue over several years as the student population grows. Currently, half of the schools in operation need substantial repairs. Almost 50 public school facilities were damaged so badly that they may be beyond repair. The average New Orleans public school building is 70 years old.

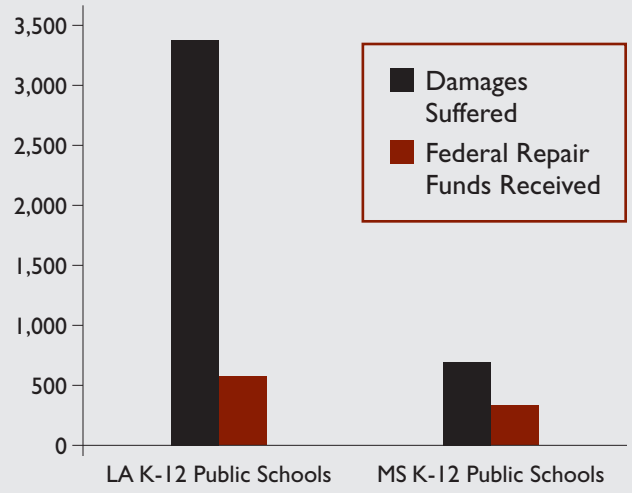
In St. Bernard, southeast of New Orleans, all of the 17 public schools serving 8,880 students in the parish were severely damaged. Five schools were condemned and a few others may not be capable of restoration. Sales tax receipts for the parish and its schools in 2006 were cut nearly in half. The process of rebuilding has been extremely slow. Similarly, in Hancock County, Mississippi, "ground zero" for the Katrina hurricane, the reconstruction of schools in and around Bay St. Louis has been extremely slow due to a lack of adequate funds.

More money is not the only obstacle that these and, to a lesser extent, other school districts face in continuing to repair and build needed schooling, but it remains a primary problem. The federal funds for restarting K-12 schools simply has come up short of the schools' needs and losses in both states – especially in Louisiana.

Even where federal funds have begun to help meet the states' needs for rebuilding schools, if the process involved FEMA, as often it has on the Mississippi coast, local school officials have endured extensive delays and inconsistent policies and practices. FEMA officials frequently have failed to treat the restoration of public schools as a top priority for public funds.

K-12 Damage Costs and Federal Funding for Repairs

In Louisiana (LA) and Mississippi (MS)



Source: U.S. Department of Education; state agencies

K-12 Students' Needs

The federal "emergency impact" funds earmarked specifically to assist K-12 students displaced by the hurricanes also have been inadequate. Congress appropriated $880 million for K-12 displaced students and $10 million for low-income displaced college students in December 2005.

On average the federal appropriation provided approximately $5,600 to K-12 schools for each hurricane-displaced student enrolled and an average of nearly $1,000 to colleges and universities that enrolled low-income, displaced students. Federal funds went to both private and public schools.

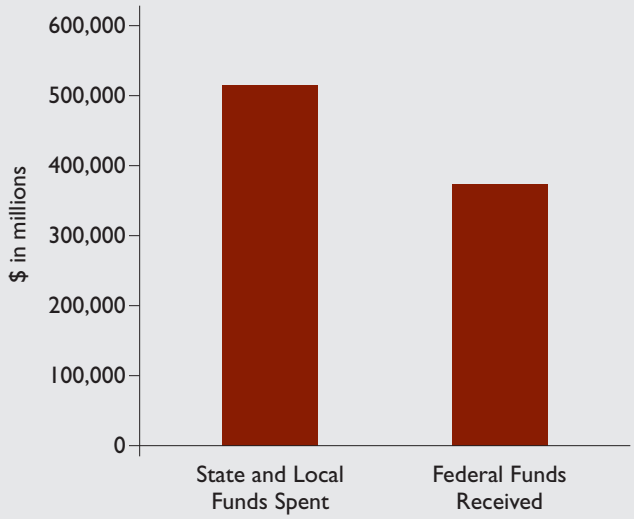
Federal funds did not cover the real costs that local school districts outside Louisiana and Mississippi incurred to enroll and educate displaced K-12 students during the 2005-2006 school year. Federal funding for K-12 displaced students was below the average per pupil expenditures that most states spend on all students.

Most displaced students remained in Louisiana and Mississippi, but other states enrolled an estimated 50,000 to 85,000 students over the course of the year and spent as much as $163 million above and beyond allocated federal funds for displaced students' schooling during the 2005-2006 school year. Wherever displaced students landed after the storms, federal funding was usually not enough to help schools adequately address the students' education-related needs.

There were no federal funds to locate, support or re-engage as many as 30,000 K-12 students who dropped out of school in the year of the hurricanes. This failure stems mainly from two factors. First, the absence of a system of record exchange effectively prevented educators from accurately understanding what was happening to thousands of at-risk K-12 students once they were dispersed by the storms. It was almost impossible to keep up with students on an individual basis, and the absence of a linked record system meant that no one could determine the location of all individual students.

Second, without adequate funds, educators and others had to focus almost exclusively on the displaced students who arrived in need at their schoolhouse door each week or month. In most school districts they were in no position to see, much less serve, students at all levels of education whom the hurricanes had pushed out of school and who did not return.

State and Local Education Funding for K-12 Displaced Students in 49 States and D.C., 2005-2006



Source: U.S. Department of Education

Only nine months after Hurricane Katrina, thousands of displaced students "disappeared" – too often literally. As far as federal policy was concerned, displaced students no longer existed.

With the aid of private philanthropy and volunteers, some schools and school districts in places like Houston, Texas, set up summer programs for displaced students during the mid-months of 2006. In New Orleans in June and July 2006, school-age children were clustered on street corners, in litter-filled lots and on porches throughout large sections of the city. The special census reported at least 28,000 school-age children were in the Orleans Parish during that summer, while there were very few summer programs and even fewer with educational content. It was a summer of missed opportunities for catching up students on lost learning and schooling. But there was no important federal involvement or role in helping displaced students catch up and dropouts to reconnect.

When schools opened across the Gulf Coast in 2006, federal officials described how much the national government had done in response to Katrina. Yet, by August, the federal government's small role in addressing the problems of education after Katrina had essentially ended. In the aftermath, in the 2006-2007 school year, the Gulf Coast schools were left largely "on their own."

New Orleans schools experienced special problems. The city had two school districts – the elected parish school board and the Recovery School District (RSD) authorized by the legislature. The parish school board operated 5 regular schools and 12 charter schools, most of which had selective admission. The RSD operated 39 schools: 22 regular schools and 17 chartered schools. None of the RSD schools had selective admission. In addition, there were 2 other charter schools in the city.

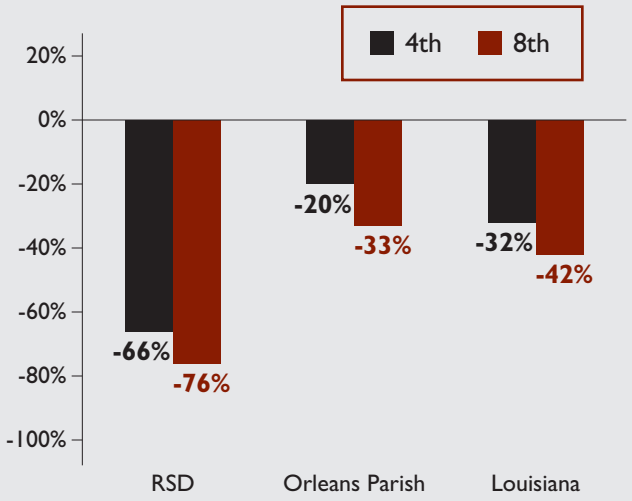
There were widespread problems from the first day of school. Some schools were unable to supply classroom teachers for several weeks. Some had difficulty keeping teachers. Some schools were unable to provide edible meals or functioning water fountains. Some had problems with functioning bathroom facilities and only a few schools offered hot meals. School safety and student violence became a widespread concern for students and parents. Every day throughout the school year, new students arrived at school buildings somewhere in the city seeking enrollment even though many of the schools that were open still required additional repairs.

The city's total public school enrollment began near 12,000 students. It more than doubled during the year. At times, parents of "new" students could not find schools that would admit them. At one point, there were waiting lists for enrolling over 100 students, but eventually more schools were opened by RSD.

By the end of May 2007, there were 58 schools serving approximately 26,000 formerly displaced students across Orleans Parish. Approximately 72 percent were African American and 86 percent were eligible for free or reduced lunch.

The academic problems of the returning displaced students persisted: In both English and math, only one-forth to one-third of the Orleans students in RSD schools scored at state standards in the fourth and eighth grades, while more than

Percentage of Louisiana Students Scoring Below Basic, State English Exams, 2006-2007



Source: The Boston Consulting Group

half of all Louisiana students statewide in the same grades met the standards. The selective-admission schools operated by the parish school board helped to push its student scores above the state average, but the scores of a majority of these schools with some of New Orleans' "best and brightest" also appeared to be disappointingly low.

With federal funds provided earlier, New Orleans schools emerged in the 2006-2007 school year as the site of the nation's foremost experiment with charter schools. In September 2006, it had 69 percent of its students in charter schools, the largest percentage of any major U.S. city. By the end of the school year, added enrollment in regular RSD schools had reduced the number to 57 percent. By all indications, New Orleans will remain the nation's premiere testing grounds for how charter schools can serve the needs of disadvantaged students.

Recent community surveys by the Boston Consulting Group indicate that a large majority of parents and community leaders support increased choice in the public schools and are relatively optimistic about the long-term future of New Orleans public schools. In the summer of 2007, the Recovery School District hired Paul Vallas, former superintendent of Philadelphia Public Schools, as its chief executive officer. Vallas immediately announced plans for a large program of summer schools in the city and established what he referred to as "Tiger Teams" to address major, lingering operational issues in the RSD schools. He began work in July to face the immediate challenge of opening as many as 20 additional schools during the course of the 2007-2008 school year.

In surrounding New Orleans suburban parishes, there has been continued steady progress toward repairing or building new schools, although schools in rural St. Bernard remain largely closed. Jefferson Parish has decided it needs to hire additional school counselors to address some students' lingering problems in the aftermath of Katrina.

On the Mississippi coast, school recovery has continued, although trailers remain a staple in many school yards as repairs and construction proceed. Perhaps the one exception is Hancock County, where progress in school renovation remains very slow.

College Students' Needs

The federal government provided $10 million to colleges for enrolling displaced students: an average of $1,003.21 for each of the 9,968 displaced college students whose family incomes were qualified as "low-income." Federal funds went to both private and public schools. As a result, the colleges and universities that took in low-income students are estimated to have spent as much as $45 million of their own resources educating these students during the fall semester of 2005.

There was no federal assistance available to the colleges and universities where an estimated 20,000 to 25,000 additional displaced college students (not eligible for federal aid or who were not counted as eligible) enrolled for the 2005 fall term. Some of these students were able to pay college costs at the new institutions, but many others were not. As a result, both public and private colleges issued a large number of waivers for fees and costs. These institutions expended an estimated $75 to $125 million of their own resources to support the education of these displaced students in 2005. There were also "stranded students" who were probably missed by the available data on displaced college students.

The federal government's decision to provide only $10 million to respond to the emergency needs of over 80,000 college students – both those displaced from their schools and those whose families were displaced from their homes – left a large number of low-income students without the means to continue their education, especially after the fall 2005 semester. All told, public and private colleges across the nation provided somewhere between $120 million to $170 million in support of displaced students for their higher education.

Allocation of Federal Funds

The federal legislation authorizing the bulk of monies to states for reopening local schools appears on its face to treat all students and schools equitably, but in practice it shortchanged some schools and school districts that suffered the largest damage and dealt with the largest numbers of displaced students.

The federal definition of a "displaced student" included students who moved only within their own school district – from one damaged school to another operating school in

the same district. As distributed, these federal impact funds tended to help disproportionately the hurricane-affected school districts within Louisiana and Mississippi that had less damage and a smaller loss of students.

St. Tammany, the suburban parish of New Orleans across Lake Pontchartrain, provides a revealing example. In effect, St. Tammany public schools received $23.3 million in federal impact aid to educate primarily its own students in numbers slightly smaller than before the hurricane, while Baton Rouge received only $3 million more than St. Tammany to educate an influx of 4,000-5,000 new displaced students. Instead of having to use federal funds to educate added, new students, St. Tammany received what amounted to a federal supplement of about $666 per child across the district to spend on a slight decrease in the number of students in their 35,000 student population.

This method of distributing federal funding increased per pupil revenue for all districts that had a substantial number of displaced students who remained within the local school district, and it skewed the federal aid for assisting the most distressed schools and students in public school districts in both Louisiana and Mississippi. The funding formula helps to explain one of the reasons that suburban New Orleans parishes and many school districts in Mississippi along the Gulf Coast have been able to recover at a faster rate than New Orleans schools.

No school district received a "windfall," and the damages and suffering at all coastal school districts were real. But some districts in the disaster areas have had a much easier recovery, in part due to the way federal funds were skewed. Federal education funds did not go as a matter of priority to schools and students with the greatest needs and disadvantages.

Federal Funds for Displaced Students in St. Tammany

Living on the opposite side of a huge man-made lake from the city of New Orleans, St. Tammany's residents suffered real, widespread losses from the ravages of Hurricane Katrina, but only 3 of its 52 public schools were destroyed. All public schools had some damage, but the district did not have extensive destruction on the magnitude of what visited New Orleans schools. According to an auditor's report, damage to St. Tammany's school infrastructure was approximately $110 million, roughly one-tenth the cost of school-related destruction in the Orleans public schools.

St. Tammany's schools reopened in late September, less than a month after Katrina. A month later, in October 2005, the district had 32,500 students in school, 90 percent of its pre-Katrina enrollment. By Christmas, 95 percent of its students had returned to the district schools. Meanwhile, the district also did not receive a substantial number of students from other parishes. Instead, St. Tammany educated students who were displaced from schools within its own district.

Because it had 3 destroyed schools that forced students to transfer elsewhere in the district, St. Tammany reported that it had between 5,300 and 6,000 displaced students and received $23.3 million on the basis of the number of displaced students the district was educating. (The district also has received additional FEMA monies to rebuild schools.)

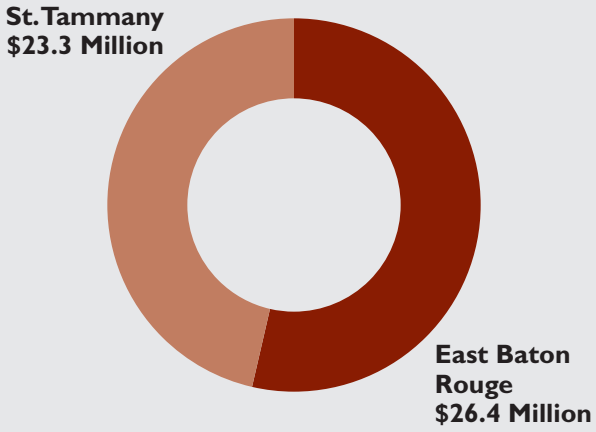
In other parts of Louisiana, school districts had to use the federal funds – and probably some of their own funds – to educate additional numbers of displaced students who increased their school district's total enrollment. For instance, East Baton Rouge schools took in more than 5,000 new displaced students from other Louisiana districts by October 2005. (The number declined to almost 4,000 in December.) In turn, the Baton Rouge public schools received $26.4 million as of June 30, 2006, from the federal impact appropriations to educate these children who were in a new location and a new school.

New Displaced Students and Federal Impact Aid

St. Tammany and East Baton Rouge Public Schools

New Students – December 2005

Federal Impact Aid as of June 30, 2006



Source: Congressional Budget Office; U.S. Department of Education

Child Care

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provided $90 million to serve 5,000 displaced children who had attended preschool and another $60 million in waivers for child care centers. The federal government has made no contribution or impact to help restore child care to New Orleans. By way of contrast, the damage to Mississippi's child care sector was smaller than New Orleans' and has improved substantially through strategic uses of the limited resources of private philanthropy.

Consequences

There will be grave, negative consequences emerging in the next few years from the disaster that students and children endured in the aftermath of Katrina. As a result of the lack of response and resources, especially in the New Orleans area, the pressing problems of education, which troubled the city even before the storms, may worsen.

Before Katrina, New Orleans' high school graduation rates were among the lowest in the nation due to high dropout rates. The city's students have experienced enormous forced mobility and the professional research strongly suggests that, in absence of effective efforts for prevention and recovery, these problems will escalate in the coming months and years.

Unless remarkable changes are implemented, the underachievement and low academic performance with which New Orleans schools have struggled in the past will become entrenched once again. In turn, the poverty, racial and economic isolation from which so many suffered in the past will be re-created in the future.

Money is not the sole answer to the education problems of the Gulf Coast, but having adequate resources is a precondition to creating a public system of education that will reverse the downward cycle of poverty. Without adequate resources, it is difficult to imagine that many low-income people from the region will have a chance in the future for better lives and livelihoods through education.

conclusions &

It Is Not Over

In an era when education has become one of the most important factors in providing all children with opportunities to become self-reliant adults capable of contributing to society, the federal government virtually abandoned the most disadvantaged students displaced by Katrina. There is now mounting evidence that the hurricanes may have created a new lost generation of students in an area of the nation that is already among its poorest.

The federal government has failed to help make the people and the Gulf Coast region "whole." It must work with clarity and urgency to undo the consequences of past failings and help shore up the efforts of hard-working education leaders on the ground – for the children's sake and for the sake of our nation.

The national government needs to help meet the remaining education challenges from the hurricanes:

- A comprehensive review of education needs is a matter of first priority in order to assess the work that must be done to assist Gulf Coast schools to achieve at high levels of excellence in the future. This assessment includes considering the needs of students, teachers and school officials, as well as the school buildings where learning will take place. New funds must be allocated to help meet the continuing needs of displaced students and assist in rebuilding schools that serve the students who are most in need. The review also should assess the needs of displaced students who remain in school districts outside of the Gulf Coast region, and resources should be provided to schools to assist these students where needed.
- Measures should be implemented to help Gulf Coast universities and colleges that still need support for reconstruction and recovery. There are both public and private colleges and universities in New Orleans that have been unable to restore their campuses and enrollments. In the 21st century, these institutions are as vital to our national interest as the preservation of other private and public sectors of our economy. These struggling institutions have a venerable history of educating low-income, disadvantaged young people from Louisiana and across the United States.

recommendations

The federal government can preserve these institutions of higher education at little cost, especially when compared with the cost of mass ignorance. Moreover, the costs are small relative to past and recent federal allocation for assisting private sectors of the American economy recover from natural disasters.

- A plan to assist students at all levels who have dropped out of school in the aftermath of the storms should be developed to reconnect and reclaim thousands of talented young people before it is too late. The link between failing in school and dropping out is well known, as is the link to the criminal justice system. It is in the national interest to avoid increasing the nation's numbers of incarcerated people by diverting them into the skill-building education system.
- The need to mobilize health care professionals to help storm-affected students and their parents is urgent. Students must be healthy in order to learn. Also, anti-social and dysfunctional behaviors caused by the storms' trauma, left untreated, will fester and become manifest in ways that disserve the public interest.

Serious consideration should be given to the creation of a high-level, federal-state coordinating entity to oversee the development and implementation of the measures set forth above. On a temporary basis, this body would help to coordinate personnel, resources and knowledge. This body would help to maintain education recovery as a visible federal priority in practice and policy, to make federal assistance more effective, and to assure that the federal government's role is responsive.

The crisis in education caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita is not over. Nor is it too late to renew and adjust the federal role in order to make a real difference in the lives of thousands of young people who are still deeply affected by the hurricanes. This role is vital. It is a role and responsibility that the national government must continue to share, until the job of education recovery is done.

The American people and its government had not faced a challenge to its mission in education like the Katrina disaster for almost 70 years. While the government's response in the last two years has not been adequate, there remains important work that the federal government can do in helping disadvantaged students and disabled schools recover and succeed in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

The students are still there. They still need assistance and opportunities to recover and succeed. It is not too late for them. And it is not too late for the national government to redeem America's ideals of caring and opportunity, regardless of race, income or geography. It is time for a new federal response.

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Southern Education Foundation
135 Auburn Avenue, N.E., Second Floor
Atlanta, Georgia 30303-2503

(404) 523-0001

info@southerneducation.org

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