

**Update on the Aftermath of the Hurricanes  
From Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA:  
As the School Year begins (9/7/06)**

In July, we sent a brief information update; the start-up of the school year seems like another auspicious time for sharing some information on what has happened to students, schools, etc.

As always, we hope it is helpful and that it provides a stimulus to elicit more information and perspectives and reminds everyone about matters that remain to be addressed.

If you have something you think we should circulate, please let us know.

The July report (see [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/eneews/ENEWS\(7-12-06\).pdf](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/eneews/ENEWS(7-12-06).pdf)) discussed three topics

- I. Students and Their Schools Current State of Affairs
- II. Lessons Learned and the Challenges Ahead
- III. Some Implications for Policy and Practice

The attached September update provides (a) a bit more data for understanding the ongoing problems faced by the schools, (b) highlights some questions the answers to which would help guide future planning, and (c) lists a variety of major reports and ongoing updates related to the aftermath of the storms.

In addition, we have placed online a description of some of the funded research projects that are underway with a focus on the aftermath related to children's mental health and academic performance, their schools, and their families. This was compiled by one of our graduate students, Nataria Joseph (who incidentally is from New Orleans).

See: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/hurricane/hurricaneprojects.pdf>

Clearly, there is much more to do, and it is important to keep a focus on the continuing needs of students and schools.

We hope you find some of this to be of use.

School Mental Health Project/  
Center for Mental Health in Schools  
UCLA Dept. of Psychology  
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563  
(310) 825-3634 / Toll Free(866) 846-4843 / Fax(310) 206-8716  
Email [smhp@ucla.edu](mailto:smhp@ucla.edu)  
Web <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>

## **Addressing the Needs of Students and Schools in the Aftermath of Katrina: An Update as the School Year Begins (9/11/06)**

### ***A Bit of Data***

>>"About one-fourth of the people living in the areas damaged were children, about 183,000 kids, including 47,000 children under the age of 5. Over half of the children displaced were African-American and 30% of children in the damaged areas were poor, nearly double the 2000 national census rate for child poverty of 16.6%." (From an article by: Bill Quigley, a civil and human rights lawyer and Professor of Law at Loyola University New Orleans School of Law – <http://www.commondreams.org/views06/0221-36.htm> )

>>Researcher Joy Osofsky reports preliminary findings from 1638 students in grades 4-12 (a sample of the over 5000 who completed the National Child Traumatic Stress Network needs assessment and screening survey between December 2005 and May 2006. "About 1 in 3 said they had been separated from a parent or guardian, and 1 in 10 still were separated when they completed the survey. More than 1 in 5 had experienced the death or injury of a family member or friend. Nearly half had a parent who was unemployed...54% met criteria for consideration for mental health referral, with symptoms of PTSD or depression. More than 14% requested counseling...619 children in preschool and grades 1 to 3, using an NCTSN questionnaire keyed to developmental age, filled out by 95% of parents asked to participate when they brought their children to school. This survey found that 31% met the criteria for mental health referral, manifesting symptoms such as irritability, headaches, and sleep problems, including nightmares. About 40% of parents sought services for their children." (Findings reported in the Journal of the American Medical Association, 296, August 2, 2006, 499-502 – <http://www.futureunlimited.org/katrina/KatrinaSurvivors060802.pdf> )

>>"Texas...saw an increase of 46,500 Katrina students at its height last year. About 35,000 of those were still here by the end of the school year, and 31,000 will return this year." (From The Christian Science Monitor, August 22, 2006 – <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0822/p04s01-usec.html> )

>>"The federal government paid school districts millions to handle the unexpected influx of students. But, ... has no plans to provide for the upcoming school year." (Dallas Morning Star)

>>"Across Houston, an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 Katrina evacuees - about 50 percent to 60 percent of the students who were here last year - re-enrolled this fall." (From the Houston Chronicle, August 25, 2006 – <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/front/4140416.html> )

>>"Less than a week before the state opens 17 New Orleans schools taken over because they were failing, it is still nearly 180 teachers and three buildings short. Renovations and reconstruction at three Recovery School District campuses should be complete in two weeks or so. ... So far, 8,234 students have registered to attend 17 schools in the Recovery District. Several schools are already closed to new enrollees. Before the end of the month, 53 public schools in New Orleans are expected to be open, with space for up to 34,000 students - 31 as charters, five operated by the parish school district and 17 operated by the Recovery District. The Legislature in November voted to place 107 of the Orleans district's 128 schools in the state-run Recovery District. ... Enrollment projections are fuzzy, however, since parents are choosing among public schools that in most cases are operating with new staff and no track record to speak of. That uncertainty has prompted many to hedge their bets by enrolling children at more than one school, then choosing one after the first day....

The teacher shortage - about 177 out of 500 or so - probably will force classes averaging 25 students per teacher rather than the 20 .... still be within the 28-to-1 state maximum. Recovery

District officials also adjusted the first day for high school students and have staggered the opening. Each grade will have one day to itself - ninth-graders on Friday, sophomores on Sept. 11, juniors Sept. 12 and seniors on Sept. 13 - before all high-school grades attend together on Sept. 14. Students in first through eighth grades are still scheduled to begin classes Thursday at most schools, although kindergarteners and prekindergarteners won't start until Sept. 18, Recovery District officials said. ...

The district also will begin considering the hiring of noncertified teachers if they have college degrees in the subject they're teaching and agree to work toward certification by taking education courses. People who have subject-area training but don't work toward formal certification may be used as substitutes, officials said. Among other tools to be used to fill the teacher gap, the Recovery District is contacting teachers in its applicant pool who haven't yet accepted jobs, offering them day-to-day substitute contracts, and it is contacting applicants on the Teach Louisiana Web site who didn't specify a district where they wanted to work, officials said. University professors who may be able to provide limited teaching help are also being sought." (From Associated Press, September 3, 2006 – <http://www.wvltv.com/local/stories/090306cckrLocalTeachers.64779ac9.html> )

>>The previous school year started with a flourish in The East Baton Rouge Parish School System. "Enrollment was up to 45,000, ending an 18-year decline that saw students leaving our system for private and parochial schools. When Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans, the largest concentration of residents fled to two locations -- Houston to the west and Baton Rouge to the north. Our school district, 80 miles north of New Orleans, includes Louisiana's state capital. Almost overnight, as our parish's population bulged with traumatized families, our school system was faced with challenges and obstacles, including more than 8,000 new students. ... East Baton Rouge Parish will continue to have a significant number of students who decided to stay rather than return to New Orleans and other towns across Louisiana. At the end of the 2005-06 year, had more than 4,000 [students]." (From the American School Board Journal, September 2006 – <http://www.asbj.com/current/coverstory3.html> )

>>According to Sherrel Wheeler Stewart: "Before Katrina, there were some 65,000 students in New Orleans public schools. ... School officials are projecting 22,000 students for New Orleans public schools.... 'Right now, there are 40,000 students in the Catholic school system, down from 50,000 just before Katrina hit,' [according to Archdiocese of New Orleans School System Superintendent Father William Maestri.] 'We want to get schools open because we know when schools are there, families are there, and communities can rebuild,' Maestri said. Catholic schools have enrolled about 500 students who [were] not previously in that system. 'Some of the students and their families do not have the ability to pay. But we are not turning anyone away because of money,' he said. 'The most important thing is for these children to get back in school. We'll worry later about the money.'" (From "The Katrina Aftermath, One Year Later - Part Three: Young Lives on the Edge" August 24, 2006 – <http://www.blackamericaweb.com/site.aspx/bawnews/oneyearlater/katrinapart3825> )

>>"Pre-flooding, over 80% of K-12 students in New Orleans were enrolled in public schools. Children of color who attended public schools before the levees failed have been less able to return to New Orleans than White students. Almost half (46%) of White students in K-12 public education were able to make it back to the classroom for the 2005-2006 school year, while a little over one in ten (12%) of Black students have returned. This disparity led to an 8% increase (from 3% to 11%) in representation of Whites in public schools. Conversely, the percent of Black students, who had the lowest rate of return of any racial/ethnic group, fell from almost 94% to below 83%." (From "The Race to Rebuild: The Color of Opportunity and the Future of New Orleans", August 2006 – <http://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/PDF/racetorebuild.pdf> )

>>In New Orleans, "The old geographic boundaries that once automatically assigned students to particular schools are gone, and the schools have been reorganized in a bewildering new landscape. There are now three types of schools: those managed by the Orleans Parish School Board – a few; new charter schools managed by independent groups – more; and state-run schools managed by a new Recovery School District – the most. When the last student are seated in class, about 27,000 are expected to be enrolled in 56 public schools, compared with about 60,000 in 128 schools before the storm." (New Orleans Times-Picayune)

>>"Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated a school system that was already in severe distress. The current estimates of the cost of physical damages to the school facilities and infrastructure is \$800 million. The FEMA match requirements will cost the OPSB \$55 million (assuming that 100 percent of the facilities are rebuilt)." (Jarvis Robin, Ph.D. written testimony: [http://help.senate.gov/Hearings/2006\\_07\\_14\\_a/Jarvis.pdf](http://help.senate.gov/Hearings/2006_07_14_a/Jarvis.pdf) )

### PASSING THE TESTS, MOVING TO THE NEXT GRADE

"Just 45 percent of the 2,396 fifth-grade students who enrolled in Texas schools after being displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita passed the math portion of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, according to the Texas Education Agency [compared with 81% of the state total passing]. On the reading portion of the test,...only 58 percent of evacuees in third grade passed, compared with 89 percent of all students. In fifth grade, 46 percent of evacuees passed the reading portion, versus 80 percent among all students."

(From the Associated Press, April 26, 2006 –  
<http://www.dfw.com/mld/startelegram/news/state/14436284.htm> )

"One in four Houston Independent School District students displaced by hurricane katrina failed to make enough academic progress to be promoted to the next grade this school year - a far higher rate than their classmates and an indicator of the massive challenges still facing area schools. About 700 of the 2,900 Katrina students returning to HISD this year were held back, including 41 percent of high school sophomores and 52 percent of juniors. That 24 percent retention rate was among the highest in the area, according to retention rates released by some local school systems.... Surrounding districts also reported high retention rates ....

Following are the retention rates of relocated Katrina students, by school district:

- o Houston ISD: 24 percent
- o Tomball: 23 percent
- o Aldine: 17 percent
- o Spring: 17 percent
- o Katy: 13 percent
- o Clear Creek: 9 percent
- o Humble: 8 percent"

(From the Houston Chronicle, August 25, 2006 –  
<http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/front/4140416.html> )

## **Some Questions that Need Answers to Guide Future Planning**

- C How many displaced students have not found their way to a school? What factors most likely explain why?*
- C How many displaced students are now a grade behind where they would have been?*
- C Among students who were displaced, has there been an increase in special education diagnoses? an increase in antisocial and delinquent behavior? need for physical and/or mental health services?*
- C What is happening to displaced students who had been receiving special education services prior to the storm?*
- C What is happening to students who had been in gifted and talented programs?*
- C What is happening to students who had been involved in team sports and music, art, and drama programs?*
- C What factors most likely explain why some displaced students made a good adjustment in new schools and others didn't?*
- C Have disparities been exacerbated?*
- C What systemic changes have been made to enhance the ability of the impacted schools to address the increased barriers to student learning?*

>>According to the Appleseed Hurricane Katrina Project's Houston City Report: "Many of the students faced challenges because they were not placed in the correct classes or academic level. Since Louisiana was unable to send the student's records to the district, the district was uncertain about the students' proper academic placement."

>>According to the Appleseed Hurricane Katrina Project Birmingham City Report: "For students with special needs, some school districts did not learn until well into the school year whether a student required special assistance, while other school districts performed Individualized Education Program (IEP) assessments early on to identify any special needs students."

>>According to National Association of School Psychologist: "Approximately 37,000 students with disabilities have been displaced to new schools."

>>According to the Appleseed Hurricane Katrina Project *Birmingham* City Report: "Homewood City Schools stated that extracurricular activities, especially sports, brought many of the students together. Because of the Department of Education's athletic waiver, students who participated in sports at their hometown schools were able to participate in sports at their new Alabama school. Having a vibrant athletic program probably played a big part in the camaraderie of the new and veteran students."

>>The Mental Health Association in Texas is urging lawmakers to increase funding for integrated mental health services. The following statistics are cited to illustrate the magnitude of the problem:

- C* Prior to the hurricanes, approximately 18 percent of Louisianans had mental health needs. Subsequently, an additional 30 percent are expected to exhibit signs of a diagnosable mental disorder.
- C* Research shows that 25 to 30 percent of people exposed to severe trauma – and five to ten percent of people exposed to moderate trauma – will develop substance use problems. Katrina directly impacted 500,000 people, suggesting that up to 200,000 could develop a need for substance abuse treatment.
- C* Over 260,000 Louisianans are estimated to be on the verge of developing post-traumatic stress syndrome – half currently live and will seek services in Louisiana. An additional 120,000 projected Louisiana children will develop post-traumatic stress and related anxiety disorders.

[http://www.mhatexas.org/Katrina\\_1st\\_Anniversary.pdf](http://www.mhatexas.org/Katrina_1st_Anniversary.pdf)

For a description of some of the funded research projects that are underway focusing on the aftermath related to children's mental health and academic performance, their schools, and their families, go to:

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/hurricane/hurricaneprojects.pdf>

### ***A Variety of Major Reports and Ongoing Updates Related to the Aftermath of the Storms***

As the number of Katrina reports proliferate, more and more information and analyses are available. Below are a few of the more recent resources that provide information of use to those focused on children, mental health and psychosocial concerns, and schools.

>Education Week provides “Hurricanes Katrina and Rita: The School Impact” which dispenses constant updates covering the hurricanes' impact at the district, state, and federal levels.  
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/collections/hurricane-katrina/index.html>

>The Applesseed Hurricane Katrina Project has highly informative reports on the situations faced by individuals affected by Hurricane Katrina in the areas of education, housing, health care, employment, and legal services. Programs implemented both immediately and long-term to help the evacuees are highlighted (including government funding). The following are available at <http://appleseeds.net/servlet/PublicationInfo?articleId=207>

>>A Continuing Storm >>Atlanta City Report >>Baton Rouge City Report  
>>Birmingham City Report >>Houston City Report >>Interviewees  
>>New Orleans City Report >>San Antonio City Report

>The Children's Defense Fund's report is entitled: “Katrina's Children: A Call to Conscience and Action. 2006.” The aim is to emphasize the need for action. It outlines the pre-Katrina situation of children in the affected states and shows how the hurricane magnified the problems that have been there for years. Provides statistics on the pre-storm status of poverty, health care, education, and other matters and highlights them by relating stories of displaced children in Renaissance village and other places like Houston, Texas.  
<http://cdf.convio.net/site/DocServer/KatrinaReport.pdf?docID=1421>

>Written Testimony of Robin Jarvis, Acting Superintendent of Recovery School District. July 14, 2006 Hearing: United States Senate Subcommittee on Education and Early Childhood (New Orleans, LA). Discussion of the impact of the hurricanes on the New Orleans school system and details the plan that the school district has developed for a "world-class" school system.  
[http://help.senate.gov/Hearings/2006\\_07\\_14\\_a/Jarvis.pdf](http://help.senate.gov/Hearings/2006_07_14_a/Jarvis.pdf)

>The Urban Institute has published a series of papers, fact sheets, commentaries, and more focused on the question: *Which public policy approaches would deal best with the devastation in greater New Orleans?* One major emphasis is on children and families and covers education healthcare, employment, arts and culture, the social safety net, the well-being of children, and more. For an overview, see <http://www.urban.org/afterkatrina/#children>  
For a piece by Paul T. Hill & Jane Hannaway on “The Future of Public Education in New Orleans” go to: <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?id=900913>

>Government Accountability Office (GAO) Reports (contain correspondences and testimony) For example, see: *Catastrophic Disasters: Enhanced Leadership, Capabilities, and Accountability Controls Will Improve the Effectiveness of the Nation's Preparedness, Response, and Recovery System.* GAO-06-618, September 6. <http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-618> – Highlights - <http://www.gao.gov/highlights/d06618high.pdf>

>The Center for Social Inclusion has produced "The Race to Rebuild: The Color of Opportunity and the Future of New Orleans."(August 2006). This report identifies the problem of rebuilding as "our failure to invest in ourselves and each other through our government. It also identifies the role that race has played in driving the problem and detouring us from the solution." Includes a section on education. <http://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/PDF/racetorebuild.pdf>

>American School Board Journal, September 2006 – Three cover story pieces

>>Rebuild. Rebirth. Renew.

One year after Katrina, New Orleans embarks on a great experiment to radically reshape its schools, but will the effort succeed?

<http://www.asbj.com/current/coverstory.html>

>>Recover.

Gulf Coast schools are struggling through red tape, devastation, and declining enrollment in an effort to return to 'normal.'

<http://www.asbj.com/current/coverstory2.html>

>>Response.

For a longtime board member, East Baton Rouge's management of post-Katrina challenges is an example of how to do it right.

<http://www.asbj.com/current/coverstory3.html>

From the Dallas Independent School District

"We have a plan to continue services for the 2006/2007 school year. This is based on the work that we did in 05/06. We are revising our first staff training for school support staff, establishing a disaster research committee, and will be providing direct services to students.

We NEED materials that provide information to teachers, principals, curriculum-focused departments that grab their attention regarding the needs of children who experience trauma such as Hurricane Katrina.

Lessons learned:

(1) What worked:

>COLLABORATION across many student support departments and the leadership of DISD who supported the work with students.

>BEING ON THE SCENE IMMEDIATELY demonstrated our concern for children and families. (We had staff at the emergency shelters and our buses came immediately...with nurses conducting health screenings...to take the students, with their families, to school.

>CONNECTING to experts in the field. We are working with the University of Oklahoma Medical School that is part of the Child Traumatic Stress Network.

(2) What did not work:

>We were not able to document and collect data on everything that was happening. We were not prepared to collect data across multiple systems, so some of our work is anecdotal and not real data. (This is why we have several initiatives to address this matter, e.g., we are expanding our current database across two departments; we are convening a research training committee that will be incredible.)

(3) Longer-term challenges:

We have a plan. We are prepared. We are managing the children and families' physical and mental health care. But two big issues are: housing and academic performance. (High school students seem to have the greatest academic challenge.)"