

Council for American Private Education

CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools

Katrina Spawns Destruction, Displacement, and Outreach

Hurricane Katrina's swirl of destruction flattened, flooded, or otherwise damaged hundreds of schools and disrupted the education of hundreds of thousands of students. But the monster storm also spawned a flood of help and hope as schools across the country welcomed displaced students and communities pitched in to ease the pain and destruction.

In Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama there were, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 1,135 private schools serving 266,465 students. A number of those schools were located in regions that took a direct hit from the hurricane. In Louisiana alone, the state education department identified nine civil parishes as "severely impacted" or not yet open as of September 9. Public schools within those districts served 215,245 students, while 181 religious or independent schools in the same districts served 66,026 students, including 57,543 in grades K-12 and 6,659 in pre-K. Thus, private schools accounted for roughly 25 percent of the students in the hardest-hit regions of the state.

The Catholic Archdiocese of New Orleans runs the largest private school system in the region, enrolling some 50,000 elementary and secondary school students. Education Week reported that by early October about 30,000 students would be served by archdiocesan schools that had reopened either at their regular locations or at satellite sites. The Ed Week story also noted that of the approximately 100 Catholic schools within the archdiocese, most "are unlikely to open until January at the earliest." Meanwhile, the Times-Picayune reported October 4 that two Catholic schools within the city of New Orleans had opened with a combined enrollment of 1,100 students. The paper concluded that "some returning New Orleanians may have to rely on private schools or schools outside the parish to educate their chil-

dren." The city's public school officials announced plans to reopen some schools in November.

Senate Hearings

On September 22, the Senate Education and Early Childhood Development Subcommittee, chaired by Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN), held a hearing on students displaced by Katrina. The panel of representatives from public schools and private schools included Michael Stein,



NASA satellite image of Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf of Mexico, August 29.

president of Margolin Hebrew Academy in Memphis, TN, and Sr. M. Michaeline Green, OP, superintendent of schools for the Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge, LA.

Sr. Green said that Catholic schools in her diocese had welcomed about 4,000 displaced students, representing an enrollment increase of 25 percent. As a result of the influx, some schools had classes of 35 to 40 students and needed additional space and teachers to accommodate the overflow. "The situation should be addressed and funded immediately," she told the Senate panel. "I know that each of you here today hears the cry of all these families and these children."

Mr. Stein reported that his Orthodox Jewish day school of 250 students added

another 24 students during the week after Katrina. "Our school adopted a policy of doing whatever it takes, even though there was no way of knowing the cost and where the money would come from," he told senators. The school provided the new students with free tuition, school uniforms, textbooks, supplies, and school lunches. Staff and parents at the school "created a network to secure housing, clothes, food, transportation, and medical needs in conjunction with the Memphis Jewish Federation and Jewish Family Service." The school also hired additional staff and even brought in a Yeshiva University professor of psychology, with extensive experience in post-traumatic stress treatment, to conduct sessions with students, families, and staff.

Schools Lend a Hand

Like the schools in Baton Rouge and Memphis, private schools across the country were lending a helping hand to students and families in the communities battered by Katrina. Many schools enrolled displaced students and waived tuition. In Texas, for example, over 4,000 evacuees had enrolled in private schools as of mid-September. Numerous schools registered with the U.S. Department of Education's clearinghouse for schools enrolling displaced students and needing books, equipment, or other supplies.

Some of the most moving stories came from communities just outside the hardest hit regions. According to the Catholic News Service (CNS), St. Michael the Archangel School in Baton Rouge nearly doubled its regular enrollment of 772 students by taking in 185 displaced students in what is now called the "day school" and another 400 evacuees in the "night school," which operates from 4 to 10 p.m. The school did not require tuition, though accepted it from families with the means to pay it. "We teach our faith every day,"

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CAPE member organizations:

Agudath Israel of America
American Montessori Society
Association Montessori International—USA
Association of Christian Schools International
Association of Waldorf Schools of N.A.
Christian Schools International
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Friends Council on Education
Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
National Association of Episcopal Schools
National Association of Independent Schools
National Catholic Educational Association
National Christian School Association
Oral Roberts University Educational Fellowship
Seventh-day Adventist Board of Education
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
28 Affiliated State Organizations

a coalition of national associations serving private schools K-12
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principal Joe Wray told CNS. “This is an opportunity to live it.”

Mrs. Shirley Bougere, principal at St. Joseph School in Ponchatoula, LA, told CAPE in an e-mail message that within days of the storm her enrollment had jumped from 299 to 469. She opened seven new sections and hired eight new teachers. “We are conducting classes in every nook and cranny in this school,” she wrote. “The pain of this catastrophe is unbearable at times....You can’t imagine the suffering, homelessness, loss of jobs, and trauma that I see daily. You would have to be here to understand.”

National Associations Respond

National associations of private schools were quick to respond to the pain and suffering left in Katrina’s wake. The Association of Christian Schools International established a relief fund to assist schools damaged by the storm and also set up a bulletin board to allow schools to match needs with offers of help. One beneficiary of the fund will be the First Baptist Christian School in Slidell, LA, which sustained serious flooding, and lost its gym, roof, and records. But despite mud, water, and wind damage to its own facilities, the First Baptist Church somehow managed to provide food, clothing, water and supplies to the community at large. With the assistance of other agencies, it was able to distribute 10,000 meals and 40 pallets of supplies per day.

The National Association of Independent Schools reported that 11 independent schools enrolling some 6,000 students had been impacted by Katrina. The NAIS clearinghouse, which matched schools in need of assistance with those able to provide it, received over 1,000 responses by mid-September. At one point, a contingent of staff and several temps worked round the clock on the Web postings.

Various independent schools came up with creative and effective ways to assist those in need. The Darlington School of Rome, GA, sent 32 student volunteers for a weekend of hands-on relief work in Pascagoula, MS. In Pennsylvania, the Mercersburg Academy female soccer team raised over \$1,500 by pledging hill sprints in exchange for contributions. And the school community from the Old Trail School in Bath, OH, packed two tractor-trailer trucks with supplies and then delivered them to displaced families in Gulfport, MS. Headmaster John Farber said, “A two-day visit to the region makes most of our daily school issues seem rather trivial.”

The National Catholic Educational Association launched a “Child to Child” campaign inviting each Catholic school student in the country to donate one dollar to help Katrina victims. As of October 5, the campaign had raised more

than \$550,000.

The Waldorf school community rallied in support of The Hill School of New Orleans, which sustained severe flooding in several classrooms, including kindergarten. Jacqueline Case, the school’s treasurer, wrote, “We will not be able to salvage our beautiful handmade puppets, dolls, toys, desks, etc. that made Miss Heidi’s kindergarten such a magical place.” After trying to establish connections with parents, school officials discovered that families were scattered across the United States from Santa Fe, New Mexico, to Miami, Florida. “Many of our families, including teachers, have lost everything,” reported Case. While facing the stark possibility that the school may not be able to continue and may “simply become a memory of the best thing that ever happened in our lives and our children’s lives,” Case wrote resolutely, “We will not let this school slip quietly into the night.” The Waldorf community has undertaken a fund-raising campaign to help the school as well as other victims of Katrina.

About a dozen Lutheran schools were located in the Gulf Coast region. Lois Rost, principal of Prince of Peace Lutheran School in New Orleans, wrote to colleagues about his eerie return to the school after the storm: “My office is a moldy mess....The school roof is damaged and leaking....The ceiling tiles were a soggy pile on the floor....It was a very weird trip....I smelled mold and rot. (It stayed with me most of the night, and still comes back to me when I think about it.)...And then there was what I didn’t hear or see. There were no dogs barking. No birds chirping. No cars or traffic on Chef Highway. No train whistles. No kids....This is the stuff of nightmares.” Lutheran schools nationwide were asked to designate chapel offerings through December to meet the needs of affected schools and students. Meanwhile, individual Lutheran schools have responded by welcoming student evacuees. A notable example is the Baton Rouge Lutheran School, which grew from 175 students to 244 students soon after the hurricane.

The Stepping Stones Montessori School on the West Bank of New Orleans was fortunate to have sustained only minor damage, but many of the school’s families were displaced, and as of mid-September, officials could only confirm that 50 percent of students would be able to return when the school reopens. Another Montessori school, The Children’s House in Ocean Springs, MS, was completely destroyed and the school’s director lost her home. But a spokesperson wrote “It seems there may be light at the end of the tunnel.” The light was that a benefactor had donated a piece of land on which a por-

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CAPE Welcomes New Member and New Officers

Agudath Israel of America, an 83-year-old national Orthodox Jewish organization, joined the Council for American Private Education last month, expanding CAPE's role as voice of America's private schools.

With headquarters in New York City, Agudath Israel manages a broad agenda of advocacy that includes representing the interests of a nationwide network of hundreds of Orthodox Jewish elementary and secondary schools serving tens of thousands of students.

Rabbi David Zwiebel, AIA's executive vice

president, attended CAPE's board meeting last month and described the breadth of educational, charitable, and religious activities with which Agudath Israel is involved. One of the organization's top priorities is education legislation and policy.

Besides welcoming their newest colleague, CAPE's board of directors elected new leaders last month. Ken Smitherman, president of the Association of Christian Schools International, was elected president of CAPE; Irene McHenry,



CAPE's President Ken Smitherman (left) with CAPE's newest board member, Rabbi David Zwiebel of Agudath Israel of America.

executive director of the Friends Council on Education, was elected vice president; and Patricia O'Neill Maynard of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America was elected secretary.

Last spring the board elected Patrick Bassett as treasurer. Pat is president of the National Association of Independent Schools.

Counterbalancing the excitement of new members and leaders was the sadness of saying goodbye to two exceptional colleagues: Dan Vander Ark and Richard Osborn, both former presidents of

CAPE. Dan, who served as CAPE's president since 2002, recently retired from his position as executive director of Christian Schools International. Dick Osborn brought to a close 25 years of service to CAPE, first through the Maryland state CAPE and then through the national board as representative of the Seventh-day Adventist Board of Education. He is currently president of Pacific Union College in Angwin, California. Both men served CAPE with wisdom, grace, and style, and both will be sorely missed.

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table classroom can be placed. Both Montessori schools pleaded for assistance through an online bulletin board established by the American Montessori Society. The Montessori community is reaching out with generous offers of assistance to those in need.

Sara Hardin, a representative of Christian Schools International in the affected region, reported that Grace Christian School, where she was once the administrator, had its main floor flooded and ruined, along with supplies, copiers, books, and other school items. CSI responded by establishing a fund to help the school with its rebuilding efforts. The organization has also asked its schools to help Katrina victims by enrolling students, housing families, and "adopting" a school that needs assistance.

The Friends Council on Education encouraged its member schools to support the relief efforts of the American Friends Service Committee and to offer temporary placements to displaced students. Council officials reported the following: "As of October 4, 35 Friends schools across 15 states have created at least 174 spots for displaced students in their schools, often at no or low cost to families. Twenty-one students have been placed to date.

Dozens of Episcopal schools across the coun-

try have also offered to take in and educate student evacuees. The National Association of Episcopal Schools (NAES) listed nearly 20 schools and early childhood programs affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. St. George's School in New Orleans actually had some good news to report late last month. Pending the restoration of electricity and the availability of clean water, the school hopes to reopen by mid-October for those families remaining in the region.

The tragedy and loss caused by the hurricanes were tempered by the outpouring of help that came so quickly and abundantly. A prayer composed by the Reverend Peter G. Cheney, NAES executive director, captured the depth of the storms' effects and the good that might emerge:

Dear God. Give comfort, strength and peace to those most affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, especially any who have lost or are separated from loved ones. May the ache in their hearts be the place where your unfailing love and their brokenness find each other. May this tragedy bring resolve, conviction and a deep spirit of generosity to each of us. Teach us to embrace our sadness lest it turn to despair, and unite us in our common humanity, as we reach out in hope to those who suffer. Amen.

Congress to Act on Katrina Aid

Shortly after Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, CAPE and the private school community called for federal assistance to apply to all affected students and schools—elementary, secondary, postsecondary, public, and private.

In mid-September, the Bush administration announced a program that would support the education of displaced students in public or private schools. The plan called for the federal government to cover 90 percent of education costs for evacuees up to a maximum of \$7,500. CAPE quickly applauded the initiative.

Representatives Sam Johnson (R-TX) and Kenny Marchant (R-TX) introduced a bill (HR 4017) in the House October 7 to capture the concepts proposed by the president. An important first step, the bill is expected to undergo some refinements as it works its way through the legislative process.

Meanwhile, on the Senate side, Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and others were working on their own proposal to provide assistance to all displaced students. The Senate Education and Early Childhood Development Subcommittee, chaired by Senator Alexander, held hearings September 22 on Katrina's displaced students. The senator staunchly promoted equitable assistance, describing a one-year, temporary program through which funds followed displaced students to any public or private school as "the fairest approach." And although there had been initial resistance by some senators to the president's call for equitable aid, by early October there seemed to be a definite change of heart as a bipartisan team of Senate staffers pushed to get a comprehensive and inclusive proposal ready for Senate action. Details about the Senate bill were sketchy at the time Outlook went to press. For the latest information, visit www.capenet.org/new.html.

Return service requested

CAPE notes

U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings last month announced the names of 295 schools identified by the U.S. Department of Education as the No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon Schools for 2005. Schools were selected either because they dramatically improved student performance on standardized tests in reading and math or their test scores placed them in the top ten percent of schools in the nation or state. Fifty private schools were among the awardees this year.

"These Blue Ribbon Schools are an example of what teachers and students can achieve," Spellings said in announcing the awards.

According to a USDE news release dated September 23, "Seven of the No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon Schools for 2005 were directly affected by Hurricane Katrina and are currently not operating. These devastated schools include: Christian Brothers School in New Orleans, La., Edna Karr Magnet School in New Orleans, La., Stuart Hall School for Boys in New Orleans, La., St. Clement of Rome School in Metairie, La., Gautier High School in Gautier, Miss., Pascagoula High School in Pascagoula, Miss., and Pass Christian High School in Pass Christian, Miss."

"Our hearts and thoughts go out to the students and educators at these schools," Spellings said.

More information about the program, including the application for 2006, is available on CAPE's Web site at www.cape-net.org/brs.html.

Private School Awardees

(by state)

The Donoho School, Anniston AL • Tucson Hebrew Academy, Tucson, AZ • Carden Heights School of Orange, Orange, CA • McDowell Elementary, Laguna Niguel, CA • New Horizon School, Pasadena, CA • Salem Lutheran School, Glendale, CA • St. Edward the Confessor Parish School, Dana Point, CA • St. Mark's Lutheran School, Hacienda Heights, CA • Stella Maris Academy, La Jolla, CA • Palmer Catholic Academy, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL • St. James Cathedral School, Orlando, FL • St. Joan of Arc Catholic School, Boca Raton, FL • St. John Vianney Catholic School, Orlando, FL • St. Mary Catholic School, Fort Walton Beach, FL • St. Mary's Catholic Elementary School, Moscow, ID • St. Alexander, Palos Heights, IL • St. Damian School, Oak Forest, IL • Holy Family School, New Albany, IN • Immaculate Heart of Mary School, Indianapolis, IN • St. Michael School, Greenfield, IN • St. Simon the Apostle, Indianapolis, IN • St. Thomas Aquinas Elementary School, Indianapolis, IN • Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy, Overland Park, KS • The Independent School, Wichita, KS • Christ the

King School, Lexington, KY • St. Agnes Parish School, Louisville, KY • Christian Brothers School, New Orleans, LA • The Dunham School, Baton Rouge, LA • St. Clement of Rome School, Metairie, LA • Stuart Hall School for Boys, New Orleans, LA • Maimonides Academy/Yeshivat Rambam, Baltimore, MD • Shrine Catholic Grade School, Royal Oak, MI • St.

Charles Borromeo Catholic School, Charles, MO • Duchesne Academy of the Sacred Heart, Omaha, NE • St. Vincent Martyr School, Madison, NJ • St. Leo Catholic School, Winston-Salem,

NC • Nativity School, Cincinnati, OH • SS. Cyril & Methodius School, Lakewood, OH • Portland Jewish Academy, Portland, OR • Rosemont School of the Holy Child, Rosemont, PA • St. Andrew Catholic School, Myrtle Beach, SC • O'Gorman High School, Sioux Falls, SD • The Atone-ment Academy, San Antonio, TX • St. Austin Catholic School, Austin, TX • St. Laurence the Martyr Catholic School, Sugar Land, TX • St. Luke's Episcopal School, San Antonio, TX • St. Patrick School, Dallas, TX • St. Peter Prince of Apostles School, San Antonio, TX • Charlottesville Catholic School, Charlottesville, VA • Our Lady of Good Counsel School, Vienna, VA.



2005
Blue Ribbon Schools