

End Of The School Year Report:

KATRINA STUDENTS FIND NEW HOPE WITH SCHOOL CHOICE

As a result of one of the most devastating natural disasters in American history and for the first time ever, the federal government provided vouchers to reimburse public and private schools that took in children displaced by Hurricane Katrina. Enacted with bipartisan support and signed by the president in December 2005, the Hurricane Education Recovery Act – specifically Temporary Emergency Impact Aid for Displaced Students – has been an extraordinary success.

More than 157,000 students in 49 states and the District of Columbia got vouchers to attend new schools, and between 14,000 and 18,000 students used them to attend private schools. With the introduction of school choice, thousands of displaced children were able to end the school year with a brighter educational future.



“I never imagined that I would love to come to school everyday.”

The hopeful words of Monique Gordon, a 12th-grader at Dallas's Bishop Dunne Catholic School who was displaced following Hurricane Katrina.



“I knew from the day my family made it to Dallas, things would be different, things would be better.”

Kelly Martinez, a 12th-grader at Bishop Dunne Catholic School, feels blessed to have the opportunity to attend her new school.

“The majority of our new students adjusted without missing a beat because of our disposition and how we treated them. Our principal enabled everyone to attend. He didn't care if they had tuition or not, he didn't look at finances or grades. He simply said ‘yes – we are a family; we just have new family members.’”

— An administrator from Pope John Paul II High School in the St. Tammany Parish of Louisiana

Bipartisan Coalition Behind Katrina Aid Bill

Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn.
Rep. John Boehner, R-Ohio
Sen. Christopher Dodd, D-Conn.
Rep. Bobby Jindal, R-La.
Sen. Ted Kennedy, D-Mass.
Sen. Mary Landrieu, R-La.
Sen. David Vitter, R-La.

“Many of the 284 displaced students reported that [the move to a new school] was a positive experience, due primarily to a sense of being welcome and by efforts made on our part to help them get adjusted to a new environment. We work closely with students to give them comparable experiences to what they are familiar with.”

— Father Michael Conway, principal at Archbishop Shaw Sr. High School in the ravaged Jefferson Parish of Louisiana

“This bill puts the interests of the children victimized by Katrina ahead of politics and ideological battles.” — Sen. Ted Kennedy, D-Mass

Katrina Program Highlights

- Vouchers up to \$6,000 for general K-12 students and \$7,500 for special education students
- 157,000 children attended public and private schools in 49 states
- Between 14,000–18,000 used vouchers to attend private schools
- Private schools included both religious and secular institutions