

Education

Prior to hurricanes Katrina and Rita, approximately 260,000 students attended 473 schools in 11 parishes in south Louisiana. Because of FEMA funding and resources, more than 80 percent of these have reopened, bringing more than 210,000 students back to their schools and communities. FEMA, through its Public Assistance Program, has and continues to provide significant resources to support the repair and rebuilding of schools in Louisiana.

One of the hardest hit areas was Orleans Parish, where 126 public school campuses suffered damages from Hurricane Katrina. Assuring these schools' students have access to educational facilities remains a priority for FEMA. Of the 126 damaged campuses, 61 campuses were open and ready for students at the beginning of the 2007-08 school year, and an additional 13 campuses are undergoing repairs and should open soon utilizing FEMA Public Assistance grant money.

Temporary educational facilities have been installed throughout the entire state to meet immediate needs. In Orleans Parish, 12 temporary facilities will open during the 2007-08 school year to provide additional classroom space for up to 7,200 students. The temporary schools should provide educational solutions to house the expected number of students while other schools are being replaced or repaired.

With schools ready to open for this school year, the Department of Education has started long-range master planning efforts for Orleans Parish. FEMA is supporting the plan to renovate or break ground on five new schools by the end of the year, reshuffling resources to fully fund these five schools.

FEMA continues to work actively with the Recovery School District (RSD) and Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) to schedule repairs or replacements of damaged school buildings. This work also includes cooperation with the Louisiana Department of Education and the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. FEMA remains committed to providing all available and eligible resources to reconstruct a sound educational system in New Orleans.

The state of Louisiana has received 74 percent (\$1.26 billion) of the estimated \$1.7 billion needed. This includes \$277 million to RSD-run schools in Orleans Parish and \$60 million to OPSB. Much funding is available and it is now up to local applicants to draw down these monies and begin rebuilding their schools. To date, \$369 million of the \$1.26 billion made available by FEMA has been drawn down by the applicants.