

President Bush Proposes \$2.6 Billion for Hurricane Relief

Support for Families and Schools Affected by Katrina

President Bush has proposed that up to \$2.6 billion be provided in federal education funding to help families and school systems from the Gulf Coast region that have suffered through Hurricane Katrina as well as communities accepting displaced students. Devastation from the Aug. 29 storm, which displaced 372,000 school-age children in Louisiana and Mississippi at the start of the new school year, has taken a toll on the education systems in these states, with many area schools completely destroyed or inoperable, while others now serve as shelters.



tems throughout the current school year,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings. “The president and I want to take that worry off their minds so that they can focus on the most important thing—educating these children.”

Last month, the U.S. Department of Education launched the “Hurricane Help for Schools” Web page to provide a nationwide clearinghouse of resources for displaced students and the schools and districts serving them.

The site—hurricanehelpforschools.gov—allows schools to post requests for the books, clothes and other supplies they need, and allows companies, organizations and individuals to list the products and services they wish to donate.

> continued on page 2

INSIDE

- 2 College Testing Results
- Around the Country—Louisiana and Texas
- 5 Calendar
- Q&A—Supplemental Educational Services
- Education News Parents Can Use
- 6 Supplemental Educational Services Tool Kit



Having “More Ownership”

Memphis’ Public School Choice Program Gives Parents Options for Selecting Their Children’s Schools

“We want better for our children than what was offered to us.”

When Anthony Boyd and his wife were looking for a school for their first child, they chose Delano Optional School instead of their neighborhood school—an alternative made possible through a public school choice program of Memphis City Schools.

“We want better for our children than what was offered to us,” explains Boyd, whose third-grade son and first-grade daughter have attended Delano since they both were in kindergarten. “We want to pursue anything that would take our kids to the next level.”

Memphis’ Optional Schools Program allows families like the Boyds to decide which public school is best for their children.

Parents are not bound to their assigned local schools; as an alternative, they can choose from 31 optional public schools serving every grade level throughout the school district. Some programs offer more challenging or additional

> continued on page 3

To help develop a funding plan that accurately addresses the needs of displaced students, Secretary Spellings visited the communities in the Gulf Coast region that were impacted by the hurricane or have opened their doors to young survivors.

As a result, the president's funding proposal includes up to \$1.9 billion for school districts, including charter school districts, that enroll at least 10 displaced children.

This relief would reimburse districts for the unexpected costs of educating the displaced children for the 2005–06 school



year—expenses that range from teacher salaries to special services for children with disabilities. For Louisiana and Mississippi, the funds would go to the states for distribution among districts enrolling displaced students and those in severely impacted areas that are working to safely reopen schools.

In addition, to meet the needs of all students, the president has proposed up to \$488 million to compensate families whose children attend private schools. Communities in

Louisiana significantly impacted by the hurricane had an average of 25 percent of their students enrolled in private schools, versus 11 percent nationwide.

At the higher education level, many

universities and colleges throughout the nation have enrolled dislocated students from Gulf Coast-area colleges and have reduced tuition rates and fees for them for the fall semester. As further support, the president has proposed that up to \$227 million be provided for student loan borrowers in the impacted areas to forgive six months of interest; for colleges and universities receiving displaced students to receive a \$1,000 payment for each of these students; and for institutions in disaster areas that have temporarily closed in order to resume operations, as well as for students previously enrolled at these colleges and universities to relieve them of any obligation for repaying federal aid received for the current term.

Secretary Spellings with First Lady Laura Bush in early September at Greenbrook Elementary School in Southaven, Miss., which at the time took in 14 hurricane survivors. Photo by Leslie Williams.

Cautious Optimism for College Testing Results

The latest results from the nation's top two college entrance examinations underscore the need for high school reform, says Secretary Spellings.

Although scores for high school graduates on the ACT Assessment remained steady and those on the SAT showed some progress, Spellings says a closer examination of the 2005 data reveals continuing achievement gaps and less marked improvement compared to gains made at the lower grades.

"The lesson is that the *No Child Left Behind Act* is working in the earlier grades, where its impact is the greatest," she said. "High expectations plus high standards equals higher achievement. It's time to bring those principles to our nation's high schools."

The average national composite score on the ACT was virtually the same as in the previous year: 20.9 (on a 36-point scale). At the same time, the record number of test-takers included an increase in ethnic minorities, suggesting that more underrepresented students are considering college. Since 2001, the number of graduates taking the ACT has increased by 11 percent, with Hispanic students up 40 percent and black students up 23 percent.

"The ACT Assessment scores contain reasons for both optimism and action," said

Spellings. "But a deeper look at the data suggests that too many students remain unprepared for college."

The ACT's outcomes showed:

- > Only approximately half of the test-takers scored 21 or higher in reading, indicating a lack in some of the reading comprehension skills necessary for entry-level college courses.
- > Just 41 percent of graduates scored 22 or higher in math, indicating a high probability of them earning a "C" grade or higher in college algebra, while only 26 percent scored 24 or higher in science, indicating probable success in college biology.
- > A little more than half (56 percent) of test-takers reported taking the recommended core curriculum for college-bound students, which includes four years of English and three years each of math (algebra and higher), science and social studies.

On the SAT, which this year registered the highest math scores on record, the number of

test-takers also rose to an all-time high of approximately 1.5 million. Thirty-eight percent were ethnic minorities, the largest percentage of any class of SAT test-takers to date.

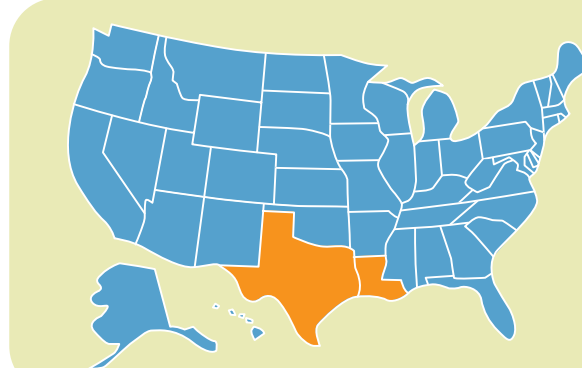
"The Class of 2005, the largest and most diverse group of SAT test-takers in history, deserves credit for its gains," Spellings said. "Now we must ensure that a culture of accountability takes hold in all schools."

Highlights of the SAT results included:

- > The average math score continued to increase from 518 (out of a possible 800) in 2004 to a record high of 520 this year, 14 points above a decade ago.
- > The average verbal score, increasing only fractionally, remained at 508 from the previous year but has held steady for the past three years.
- > More than one-third (36 percent) of test-takers are first-generation college students.

For more information on the 2005 ACT and SAT results, visit www.act.org and www.collegeboard.com.

AROUND THE COUNTRY



LOUISIANA—Many of the universities in the New Orleans area closed for the fall semester due to the devastation to their campuses and the surrounding community that was caused by Hurricane Katrina. A number of the institutions plan to reopen in January for the spring semester; in the meantime, Tulane has set

courses of study than the traditional curriculum, such as college preparatory courses for international studies. Other programs use unique instructional methods such as exploratory learning. Still others focus on developing students' talents in a particular area, such as the performing arts.

"When you have a choice in selecting your children's school, you have a lot more ownership in it," said Linda Sklar, the program's director. "And I think that parents like having their children with other students whose parents have high expectations."

Sklar accepted leadership of the program soon after it gained momentum in the late 1970s as part of the district's desegregation plan. She said the school board at the time was looking for an initiative to retain families who were fleeing to the suburbs and private schools. Board members suggested a type of magnet program that would function as a school-within-a-school so it would not draw

students away from their neighborhood schools. However, when enrollment at some schools continued to decline to as few as 100 students, the school board was forced to find another plan. That is when the district conceptualized schools such as

Delano—which was facing closure due to low enrollment—that would become entirely optional, thereby eliminating attendance boundaries altogether.

"One of the main goals when this all began was to meet the needs of a diverse population with diverse abilities," added Sklar.

Most optional schools, which are tuition-free to city residents, exist as programs offered in addition to traditional classes.



Applicants must meet admission requirements that vary by school, and, once accepted, students are responsible for providing their own transportation.

For Boyd—whose children's school has scored high in the 90th percentile in both reading and math for the past three years—the optional program has meant a better education: "Higher learning, smaller classrooms and more attention to detail," he said.

Because of this achievement, last month Delano received the distinct honor of being named a *No Child Left Behind* Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education. It is one of four Tennessee schools to be given this year's title.

At Delano—a majority black and less affluent school that has attracted students from at least 39 neighborhood schools—the focus is on technology. It is the only school among Memphis' 11 optional-only schools to be designated a "computer/technology" school. It is equipped with a brand new computer lab; a stock of digital cameras, scanners and camcorders; and its own video studio, called DTV (short for Delano Television).

"It's just a way of life around here," said Principal Patrice Shipp about the integration of technology throughout the curriculum.

Shipp and other staff members see many benefits in the multimedia-enriched instruction, which includes weekly classes that teach students how to use the computer as a research tool for completing class assignments. In addition, after-school opportunities include five computer clubs, a camera club and the school's newspaper staff. Explains Shipp,

who is going into her fourth year as Delano's leader, children "are being exposed to technology at a younger age than they normally would be in school."

Delano's television station, for instance, provides a unique opportunity for



elementary school students to produce a daily news broadcast. At 7:30 every morning, via closed-circuit TV in each classroom, students air a live, simulated newscast of local, world and weather reports. Fourth- through sixth-graders manage the entire operation, both in front of and behind the camera.

The broadcast, said technology teacher Christopher Glenn, "provides an authentic opportunity to extend their learning beyond classroom instruction."

Glenn, who is responsible for everything wire-related at Delano, including technical support for the teachers, is in the process of developing courseware to support science

Delano C

up satellite campuses in nearby Mississippi. Many of New Orleans' students, along with those affected in other areas, have been accepted by colleges across the country. Some, including Harvard University in Massachusetts and Duke University in North Carolina, offered free classes while others lowered tuition considerably.

TEXAS—The Lone Star State opened its school doors to thousands of children displaced by Hurricane Katrina. To help school districts manage the influx of students—for instance, the Houston school district absorbed more than 2,000 students during the week after the storm—the Texas Education Agency temporarily waived

certain restrictions to accommodate the newcomers: The cap was lifted for the student-teacher ratio of 22 to 1; entitlements for the free and reduced-price lunch program was increased; and a 30-day provisional enrollment was issued to satisfy immunization requirements.

From left to right: Sixth-grade teacher Will Miller; sixth-graders Taylor and Jasmine host DTV; technology teacher Christopher Glenn with student Ivyia; parent Anthony Boyd; and Paul and Kellye Braswell with daughter Jordyn on her first day of kindergarten. On page 1, Principal Shipp with second-grader Arnesha. Photos by Louis Sohn.

and social studies instruction along with assessment software that will allow children to interface with an animated character, which will give them feedback on their multiple-choice answers.

What laid the foundation for Delano's accomplishments in the technology field was the hard work of former principal David Moore, whom Sklar calls "a technology guru, way ahead of his time."

When Delano became an optional school in 1979, its emphasis was on the fundamental skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. Soon afterward, following a district position as director of computer education, Moore came on board as the



principal. Immediately he began the school's transition into technology at a time when the country was just at the threshold of the Information Age. Moore and former teacher Terri Davis, whom he designated the school's "teacher technologist," began exploring the possibilities of integrating computers into the classroom. By the mid-1980s, the technological duo's efforts had

positioned Delano as the first elementary school in the district to network computers.

Then a district grant that supported the purchase of video equipment helped to propel Delano into a full-fledged technology school. What began as a project to help students sharpen their presentation skills evolved into a daily news broadcast for which a storage room was transformed into a television studio. Teachers also used the equipment to produce short videos to illustrate various units of the curriculum being studied.

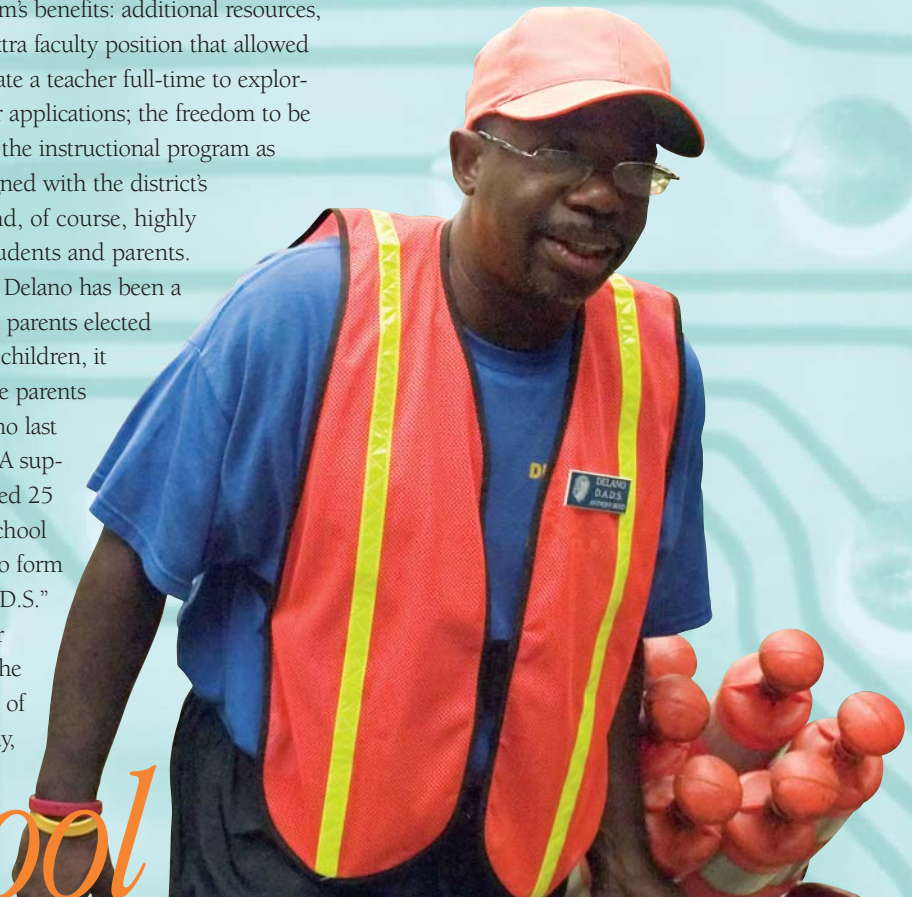
The optional schools program, says Moore, who left Delano in 1996, helped to hatch his hi-tech brainchild: "I think the entire setting was the incubator for our success." He points to the program's benefits: additional resources, such as an extra faculty position that allowed him to dedicate a teacher full-time to exploring computer applications; the freedom to be creative with the instructional program as long as it aligned with the district's standards; and, of course, highly motivated students and parents.

As long as Delano has been a school where parents elected to send their children, it has had active parents like Boyd, who last year, with PTA support, mobilized 25 men in the school community to form "Delano D.A.D.S." Every day, for one hour at the start and end of the school day,

volunteers for Delano D.A.D.S.—which stands for Dads Appreciate Dedicated Students—don their orange vests and caps to set up traffic patrol, helping children to get in and out of cars, and to assist with other security measures, such as making sure all exit doors to the school are locked. They also chaperone school activities and volunteer to read with students. Boyd gives the reason for such high parent involvement: "It's knowing that you're doing something that will better your child's life."



—BY NICOLE ASHBY



Optional School



- > **Grade Span:** K–6
- > **Locale:** Large central city
- > **Total Students:** 288
- > **Race/Ethnicity Enrollment:** 99.6% black, .4% white
- > **Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible:** 81%
- > **English Language Learners:** .4%
- > **Special Education Students:** 12%
- > **Percentage Proficient:** In reading, 98%; in mathematics, 96% (based on a three-year average of 2003–05 state exam results).
- > **Interesting Fact:** Delano has its own television studio from which students broadcast a daily, live news show via closed-circuit TV.

October 20

White House Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Conference, Milwaukee, Wis., the first of several regional conferences over the next year for grassroots leaders. Established in 2001, this federal initiative ensures faith-based and community organizations compete on an equal footing for federal dollars, receive private support and face fewer bureaucratic barriers. Registration deadline for the conference is Oct. 6. For details, visit www.fbc.gov or call (202) 456-6718.

November 13-19

American Education Week, a celebration sponsored by the National Education Association. This year's theme, "A Stronger America Starts with Great Public Schools," is the banner for the week's suggested themed days, including an "Invite Parents to School Day." For activity ideas and sample promotional materials, visit www.nea.org and click on "Special Events," or call (202) 833-4000.

November 14-18

International Education Week, a celebration jointly sponsored by the departments of Education and State. Founded in 2000, the week's observance provides an opportunity for foreign students living in the United States to share their cultures with American classmates. For event ideas and materials, as well as an online IQ quiz testing one's global knowledge, visit exchanges.state.gov.

Q & A GLOSSARY

Is my child eligible for supplemental educational services?

Children in schools receiving Title I funds that have not made adequate yearly progress for three years are entitled to supplemental educational services (SES)—free tutoring and other extra academic help outside of the regular school day. The *No Child Left Behind Act* requires that school districts offer SES opportunities to students from low-income families who remain in Title I schools that have been identified as "in need of improvement."

Parents of eligible children should receive annual notices about the availability of services. School districts must provide a state-approved list of SES providers, which may include public and private schools as well as community and faith-based organiza-

tions, from which parents can make a selection. Once a decision has been made, parents meet with the provider and district staff to discuss specific goals for the child, set up a schedule for services, and decide how the child's progress will be measured. SES providers must give both the parents and the school information on the child's advancement.

For details about local SES opportunities, contact your local school district or state department of education. For information about federal guidelines, call the U.S. Department of Education toll-free at (800) USA-LEARN.

SES supplemental educational services: additional academic instruction provided free-of-charge to students from low-income families in Title I schools that have not met state targets for increasing student achievement for three years.

News Show Focuses on Student Safety

Keeping students safe—in and out of school—will be the focus of the October broadcast of *Education News Parents Can Use*, the Department's monthly television program. The discussion will explore how safe schools promote learning and achievement; what principals and teachers are doing to ensure student safety; and what communities and families can do to keep children safe in the after-school hours. Guests will include national child safety experts as well as local educators and parents.

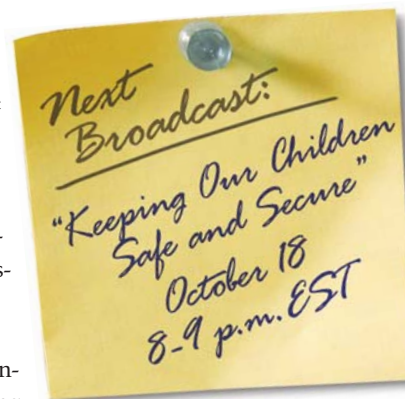
Additionally, in the wake of the recent natural disaster that has displaced thousands

of families along the Gulf Coast, the show will provide updates on what the education community is doing to aid in the Hurricane Katrina recovery effort.

Each month, *Education News Parents Can Use* showcases: schools and school districts from across the country;

conversations with school officials, parents and education experts; and advice and free resources for parents and educators.

To learn about viewing options, including webcasts, visit www.ed.gov and click on "Parents," then "News Parents Can Use," or call toll-free (800) USA-LEARN.



Teachers Ask the Secretary, a new, interactive Web site at www.ed.gov/teachersask, allows users to learn about a wide range of teacher-related subjects, including how educators can volunteer for hurricane relief efforts.



Supplemental Educational Services Tool Kit

The Supplemental Educational Services (SES) Quality Center recently published a free tool kit for parents and community leaders to inform them of the opportunities for getting extra academic help for children.

Under *No Child Left Behind*, children from low-income families in Title I schools that have not made adequate yearly progress for three years may sign up for supplemental educational services. The *SES in Action* tool kit provides strategies, tips and tools for finding free tutoring services for eligible children.

Items in the kit include:

- > A chart outlining the roles of states, school districts and providers in the SES process;
- > A worksheet illustrating the necessary steps to register a child for tutoring services;

- > A “to-do list” for tracking details about local SES opportunities;
- > A worksheet for choosing a quality SES provider, with suggested survey questions;
- > A fact sheet that addresses such issues as transportation, the timeline of services, qualifications of providers, and services available to students with disabilities;
- > Templates to use as promotional materials along with samples of public service announcements and press releases for informing families and community members about SES; and
- > A full-color poster and brochure from the Education Department to distribute as outreach materials.

The *SES in Action* tool kit is available online at www.tutorsforkids.org or by calling toll-free (866) 544-8686, while supplies last.

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