

Education in New Orleans

The Effect of Hurricane Katrina on Public Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this poster is to explore the gaps in both public and alternative educational options for children who live in the areas most affected by Hurricane Katrina by using ESRI community Analyst and ArcMap to create maps of school locations, population of school aged children, and county boundaries.

I. Introduction

New Orleans public schools have a long and troubled past. They have suffered from lack of funds, poor performance, and low test scores. In an unprecedented move the state took over all under performing schools right before Hurricane Katrina. The chaos that ensued after the storm led to an almost 100 percent take over and the emergence of one of the first charter school districts in the country.

II. Literature Review

Separate but unequal:

- More than half of the schools in NOLA are charter schools
- “The move toward charter schools is a move towards market based education provision and the construction or reconstruction of social exclusions”
- “Katrina was a catalyst that washed away the crisis of a failed education system”
- Six weeks after Katrina legislation was pushed through that allowed the state to take control of 110 of 117 public schools
- Currently more than half the students in NOLA attend charter schools
- Charter schools compete for the best students to ensure that they achieve the test scores needed to stay open

Education in New Orleans:

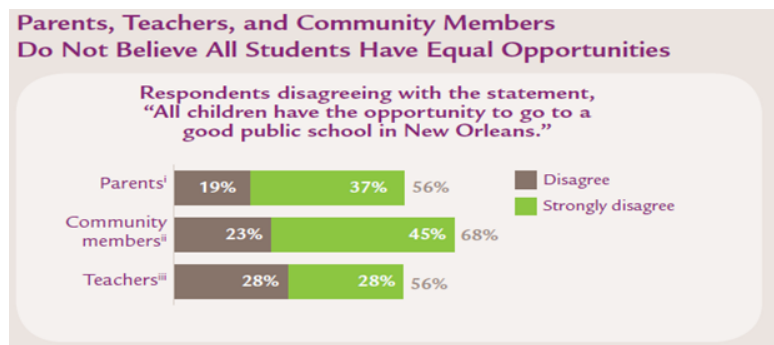
- More than 80% of public schools were damaged during the hurricane
- Charter schools are run by nonprofits such as universities, community organizations and parent groups
- 15 different groups that oversee different charter schools are not obligated to coordinate with any of the other charter school groups. This leads to confusion and disorganization, i.e. In fall 2007 there were 57 different schools set to open with start dates of mid-July to September

All eyes on New Orleans:

- “There is some competition and animosity and a fear that schools are trying to put each other out of business. And that fear is not all false.” Thelma French, OPSB Administrator

Cowen Institute:

- “The current system does not provide all students with access to high-quality public schools”
- “This can create a vicious cycle in which students who are economically and socially advantaged are served by the best schools, while students who are economically and socially disadvantaged attend the worst schools. This trend further reinforces the “tiered system” of schools that has long existed in New Orleans”
- Less than half of new Orleans parents felt like they had options when they were enrolling their children in school
- There are waiting lists for public schools, or no public schools in certain area, which forces students to travel
- “because we have neighborhoods without schools now parents without transportation options do not have school choice”



III. Methodology

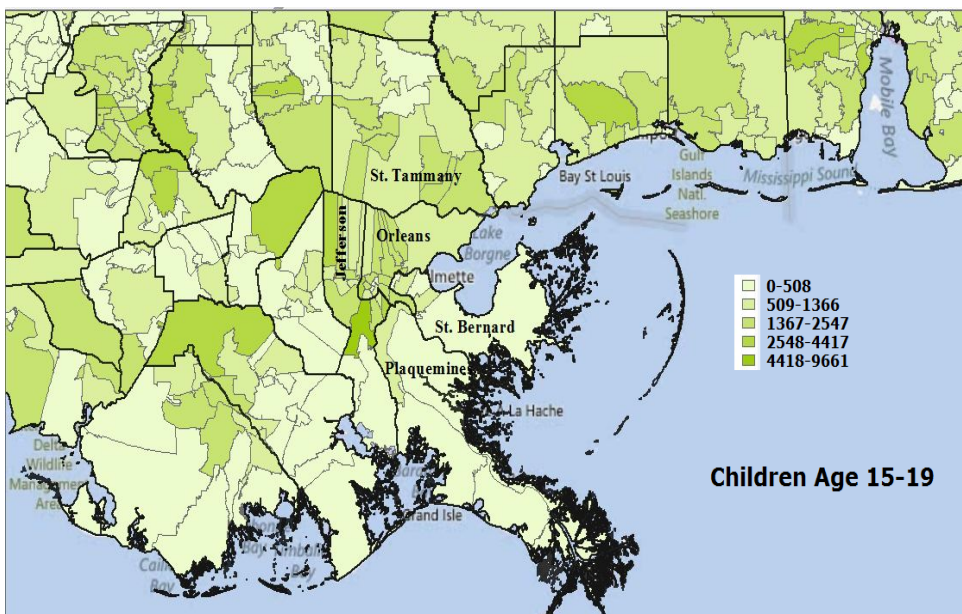
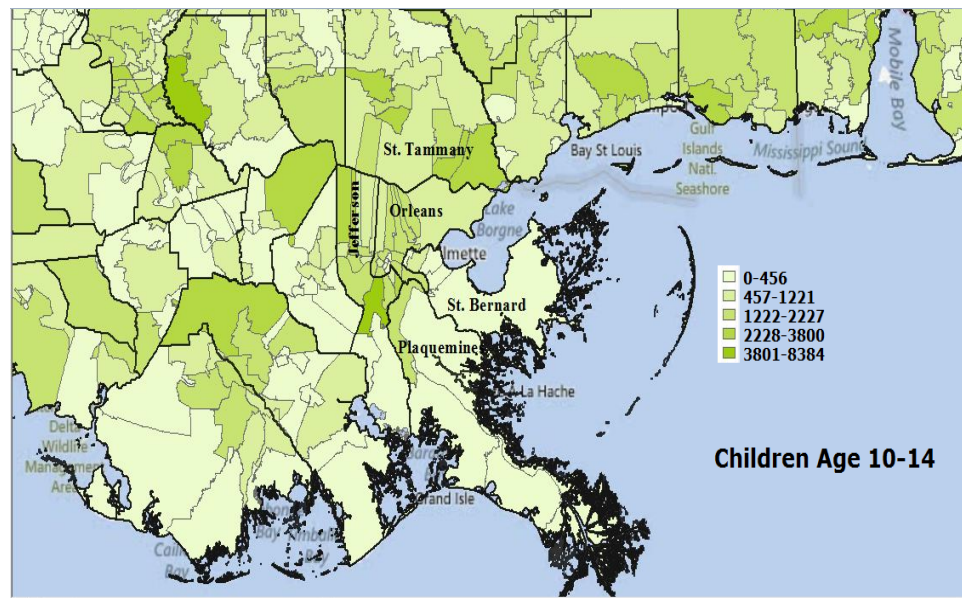
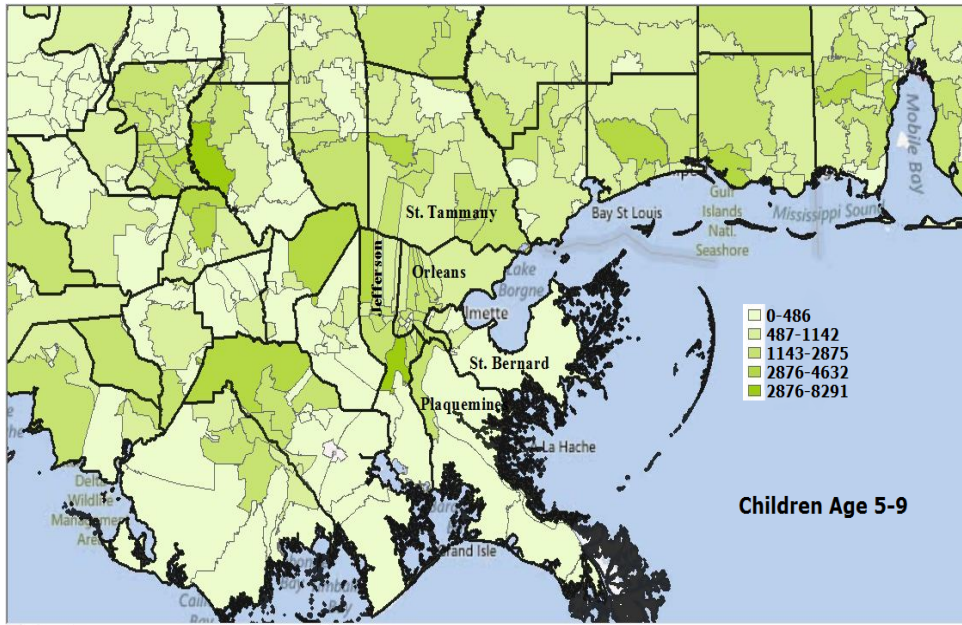
Population Maps: To create the population maps I used the data provided by ArcMap. I first used a state boundary base map and then on top of it I layered a zip code boundary map. The attribute table provided by the zip code boundary map had population information in it for each zip code, and had this data broken up into different age brackets. I decided to use the age brackets of 5-9, 10-14, and 15-19 because these are the ages when most people are enrolled in school. Using Jenks Natural Breaks I created a choropleth map for each of these age brackets, with the lighter green representing lower numbers of school aged children and the darker green representing higher numbers of school aged children. I created these maps to show the demand and need for schools in and around New Orleans, and the areas effected by Hurricane Katrina.

Parish Map: I created the parish map by using the state base map and the county base map. By assigning different color values to each of the parishes I was able to distinguish the parish boundaries better. I chose the 5 parishes on the map because they either were New Orleans, or bordered New Orleans. I also chose them because they were the parishes within a one hour radius of New Orleans, which I decided to use a the longest length of time for someone living in New Orleans to have to travel to school.

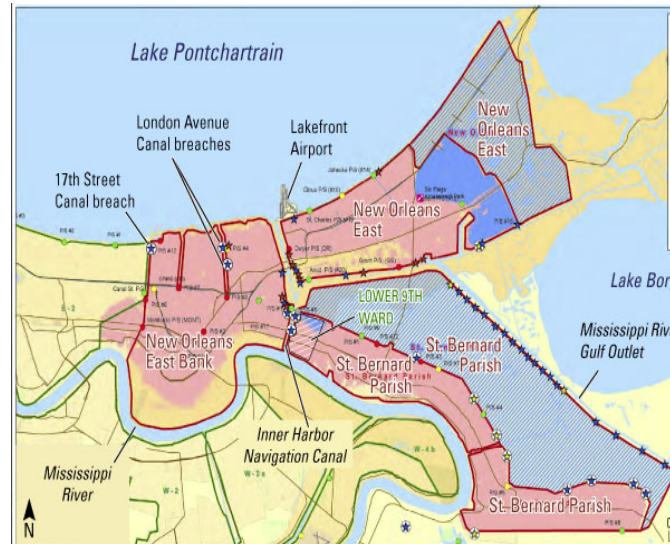
Charter School Location Map: To create this map I first had to create a spreadsheet of all of the charter schools within a one hour radius of New Orleans. I collected information on the grades the school served, when the schools were opened, their addresses and what parishes they were located in, all of this information came from the Louisiana Department of Education website. When I created the first map of the charter schools that were opened before Hurricane Katrina I included schools that were opened in the 2005-2006 year because it was impossible to tell if they were opened for 6 months before the hurricane or after the hurricane. Uploading the spreadsheet to ESRI community analyst I was able to plot the location of the schools. After creating this map I changed their markers on the map to the magenta dot, I then uploaded another spread sheet to ESRI community analyst of all of the schools opened from 2006-2007 and after. This allowed me to plot the charter schools that were definitely opened after the hurricane and compare not only the locations of them, but also the amount of schools.

Damage Map: The last map which depicts the dame done by New Orleans is from the United State Geological Survey website. The areas in red on the map are the areas that were hit the hardest and received the most damage during the hurricane

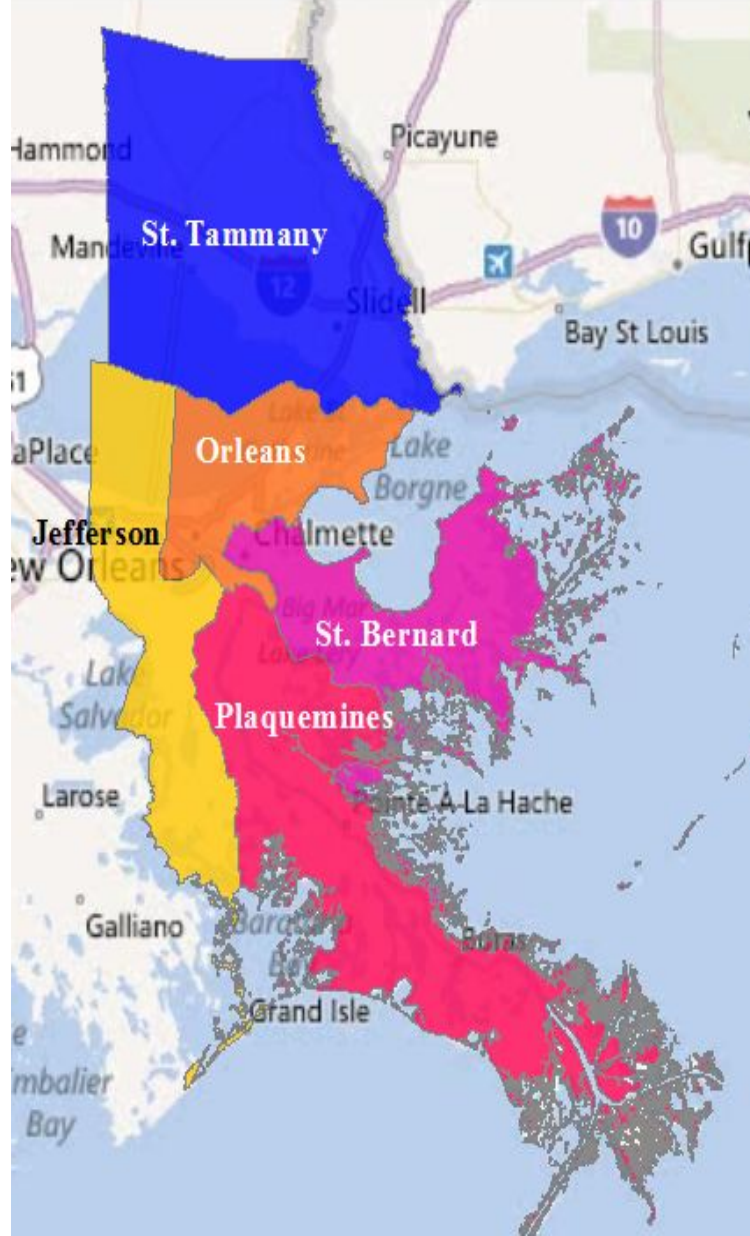
IV. Results and Discussion



Population Map



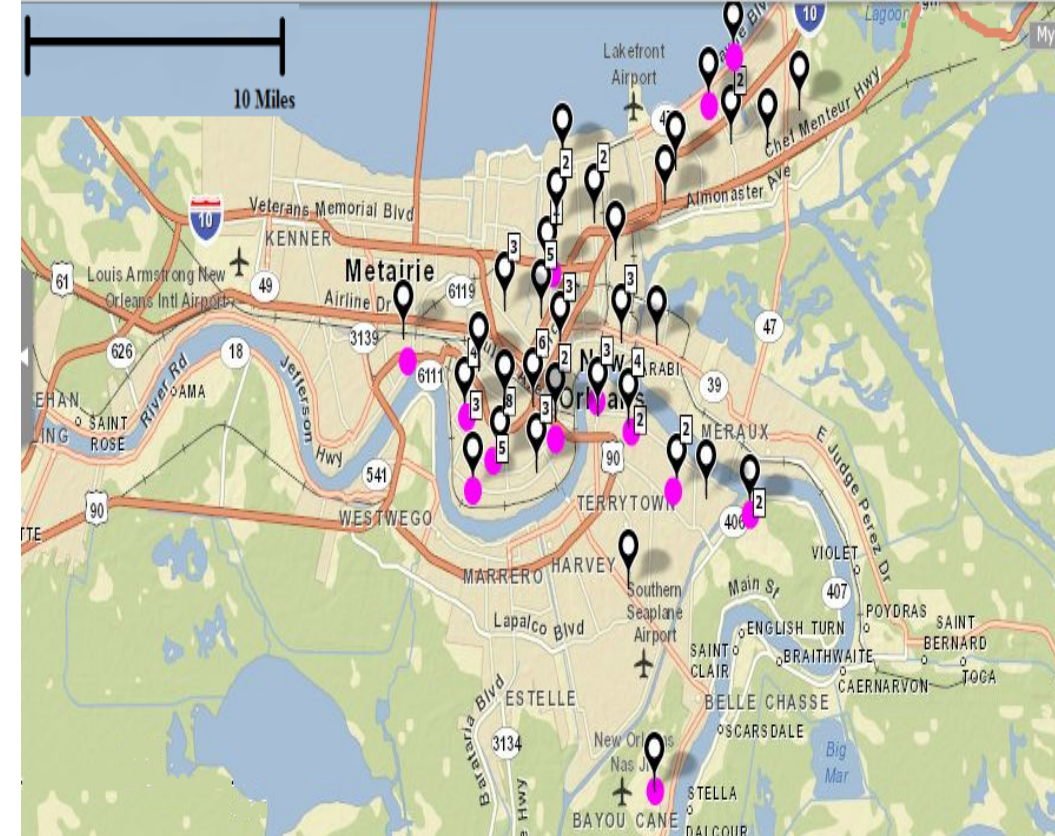
USGS Map of Hurricane Katrina Damage



County Map



Charter Schools Pre-Hurricane Katrina



Charter Schools Post- Hurricane Katrina with Pre-Hurricane Katrina Schools represented by pink dots

V. Conclusion

After conducting research it has been found that that while there are a lack of charter school offerings, there is an even bigger gap between the amount of students needing education and the amount of public schools available of them to attend. The current system in place in New Orleans lacks organization, cohesion, and available knowledge for parents and students. This when paired with certain admission policies and practices has lead to the conclusion that overall the system in New Orleans now is no better than the one that was in place before the hurricane and that it has only served to perpetuate, rather than eliminate, the racial and economic segregation that existed in schools before Katrina.

V.I. Future Research

Future research for this topic could be expanded into a multitude of different areas. One could take a more demographic stance and look into the backgrounds of children who are attending charter schools versus public schools, and could use variables such as family income, family education, race, etc. to see if there is a profile that a charter student “fits” into. One could also look at the academic performance of the charter schools and compare them to public schools to see if they actually are providing a better alternative for New Orleans. Due to the large amount of variables associated with the research there are many different possibilities available for future research.

VII. References

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