

Beneficial Supports for Students and Educators During Hurricane Recovery



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FACT SHEET

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Disasters, such as hurricanes, require schools to be responsive to the needs of their students and staff. The recovery period following a disaster can be chaotic, leaving little time for reflection. However, in preparation for future disaster scenarios, it is vital for schools to consider:

What are the most helpful supports educators can provide to their students and school personnel for recovery?

To help answer this pressing question, researchers from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Gibson Consulting Group surveyed school personnel from ten rural school districts in eastern North Carolina that were heavily impacted by Hurricane Matthew. Through analysis of pertinent survey questions, researchers identified the most commonly provided supports, the supports that were perceived to be most helpful during recovery, and the supports that were perceived to be missing during recovery.

Supports Provided

Respondents identified supports that were provided to students and school personnel following Hurricane Matthew. Overall, adjustments to the school calendar was the support most frequently identified by school personnel as being offered to students and school personnel (Table 1).

Table 1 What supports were provided to students and school personnel following Hurricane Matthew?

Support Provided	Provided to Students	Provided to Personnel
Adjustment to school calendar	86.0%	74.8%
Personal supplies to take home	56.8%	8.8%
School supplies	56.1%	8.4%
Shelters for personal use/housing	41.8%	6.0%
Free meals at the school	35.5%	6.0%
Referrals to agencies	35.1%	5.5%
Financial support	34.5%	4.5%
Transportation	33.9%	1.9%
Mental healthcare providers	33.3%	4.2%

THE STORM: Hurricane Matthew

- At least 600,000 students affected
- An estimated 4,000 evacuees
- 109 shelters

Data Collection

- March - June 2018
- Online survey of school and district personnel
- Districts distributed link to survey

Surveyed Districts

- 10 rural districts
- 178 schools
- 65% students economically disadvantaged in 2014 - 15

Survey Respondents

- 1,345 teachers
- 821 school staff
- 122 school administrators
- 245 district staff
- 1,722 surveys completed
- 32% of respondents had moderate/ extreme impact to their personal residence

Beneficial Supports

Respondents ranked the supports that students and school personnel received from most to least beneficial. Shelters for personal use, adjustments to the school calendar, and an emergency response plan were identified among the top five most beneficial for both groups (Table 2). Respondents were only able to rank supports that they identified as being available to the respective group.

Table 2 What were the most beneficial supports provided to students and school personnel following Hurricane Matthew?		
Rank	Most beneficial for students	Most beneficial for school personnel
1	Shelters for personal use/housing	Adjustment to school calendar
2	Adjustment to school calendar	Shelters for school/relocate schools
3	Free meals at the school	An emergency response plan
4	Personal supplies to take home	Financial support
5	An emergency response plan	Shelters for personal use/housing

Missing Supports

Respondents listed supports that they felt were missing for students and themselves. Mental healthcare in the form of counselors or social workers, financial support in the form of gift cards or donations, and free meals during the school day were identified as missing supports for both groups (Table 3).

Table 3 What, if any, supports for students and school personnel were missing?		
Rank	Missing support for students	Missing support for school personnel
1	Amended policies for student achievement	Financial support
2	Mental healthcare providers	Free meals at the school
3	Physical healthcare providers	Personal supplies to take home
4	Financial support	Mental healthcare providers
5	Free meals at the school	School supplies

Implications for Policy and Practice

Examples of what supports were provided, helpful, and what were missing during a recovery process can help policymakers and practitioners prepare for future disaster scenarios. Updating emergency response plans can be a beneficial step during the recovery process. Additionally, policymakers and practitioners could:

- **Ensure that basic needs are met.** Connect students and school personnel with resources for housing, food at school, and personal supplies for their home (food, clothing, etc.). Financial support in the form of donations and gift cards was missing for both groups and has the potential to help families meet basic needs. Personal supplies were given to students but were missing for school personnel.
- **Provide mental healthcare.** Mental healthcare was not provided at many schools, yet this proved to be a significant issue for both students and school personnel. Access to adequate mental healthcare is a basic need throughout recovery, and for some, even after the recovery period has ended.
- **Relieve pressure on students and school personnel.** Amending policies for student achievement and/or adding time to the academic calendar can acknowledge the difficulty of completing standard work while facing an extraordinary stressful situation.

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