

PRESS RELEASE

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New Orleans Preschool Teachers Trained in Recognizing and Responding to Emotional Scars as School Year Begins

Washington, DC, September 5, 2006 – When schools in the New Orleans Recovery School District (RSD) reopen this week, preschool teachers will start the year more prepared to meet Louisiana state pre-kindergarten standards and better able to recognize and respond to children’s emotional issues resulting from Hurricane Katrina. Teaching Strategies, Inc., the Washington, DC-based developer of *The Creative Curriculum[®] for Preschool*, was tasked by the RSD to train over 60 preschool teachers and aides on using *The Creative Curriculum* and Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum to meet Louisiana’s early learning standards. The training also focused on how to adapt teaching practices to support children after a traumatic event. “The Recovery School District envisions a world class system of education for New Orleans,” explains Jeffrey Capizzano, Director of Public Policy and Research at Teaching Strategies. “We feel privileged to have the opportunity to play a role in this effort.”

The training, paid for by the RSD, was conducted from August 22nd – 25th. Early childhood educators in New Orleans were trained on how children develop and learn, including research on child trauma and resiliency. Participants learned about the role that classroom arrangement, daily routines, specific teaching strategies, and partnerships with families play in a child’s recovery from emotional trauma and how they promote academic and social development. Research indicates the serious need for this type of training. A recent survey of families who experienced Hurricane Katrina that was conducted by Columbia University's National Center for Disaster Preparedness found that almost half of parents surveyed reported having at least one child who developed a new behavioral problem after the storm. “The strategies we presented during the training are designed to help preschool children feel calm and comfortable, express feelings and emotions, and cope with frustration,” explained Lois Rector, a Louisiana-based *Creative Curriculum* trainer. “Establishing an environment of normalcy and support provides the foundation that will allow children to make developmental gains throughout the school year.”

To adapt teaching practices for the specific needs of New Orleans preschoolers, trainers used the Teaching Strategies’ publication, *Helping Children Rebound: Strategies for Preschool Teachers After the 2005 Hurricanes*, written by curriculum expert and Louisiana native Cate Heroman and mental health expert Jenna Bilmes. The free resource has been disseminated nationwide and is designed to help preschool teachers address the psychological needs of children who have been impacted by hurricanes. “Our greatest priority is to provide educators with the tools necessary to promote the cognitive, physical, social/emotional, and language development of young children,” said Diane Dodge, founder and president of Teaching Strategies, Inc. “This guide, in conjunction with the training, will aid them in their effort.” With a grant from the ExxonMobil Foundation, over 20,000 of these booklets have been disseminated across the country.

“Hats off to your professionalism and to your obvious dedication to the teachers and children of our great city,” one teacher commented about the training.

Equally important, Teaching Strategies is committed to supporting the RSD teachers throughout the school year by providing additional professional development trainings and classroom resources. “As productive as the training was, there is still a long road ahead. Ongoing support and assistance for these teachers is vital. They will need our thoughts, prayers, and resources,” noted Gail Kelso, another Louisiana-based trainer.

The New Orleans training is one demonstration of Teaching Strategies’ commitment to the Gulf Region. Over the past year, Teaching Strategies has matched, two-for-one, the monetary donations from staff members and colleagues to support the Louisiana Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (LAEHCY). The effort raised over \$22,000, which purchased uniforms for 1,038 displaced children now enrolled in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System. Teaching Strategies also replaced materials lost in the three hurricanes of 2005 and provided additional *Creative Curriculum* materials to centers that enrolled displaced children.

Helping Children Rebound: Strategies for Preschool Teachers After the 2005 Hurricanes can be downloaded for free at <https://www.teachingstrategies.com/relief>. A second publication, *Helping Children Rebound: Strategies for Infant & Toddler Teachers After the 2005 Hurricanes* is also available. For more information about Teaching Strategies’ work in New Orleans, or to request materials for children affected by the 2005 hurricanes, please see the Teaching Strategies Web site (www.teachingstrategies.com) or contact Jeffrey Capizzano by phone at 1-800-637-3652, ext. 1742, or by e-mail (jeffreyc@teachingstrategies.com).

Teaching Strategies, Inc. is a woman-owned company committed to making a difference in the lives of young children by providing scientifically based educational materials to preschool programs nationwide. Believing that our country’s future depends on our ability to nurture the optimal growth of every child, the company’s mission is to enhance the quality of early childhood programs by offering practical, innovative, and developmentally appropriate curriculum materials, training services, training materials, and parenting resources. Teaching Strategies materials are used in thousands of Head Start and other preschool programs around the country, including programs run by all branches of the military and Department of Defense schools worldwide.