



Five Years After Hurricane Katrina...

Twelve Recommendations For Healing Our Schools and Our Earth

July 2010

Dear superintendents, principals, teachers and members of our school community: It's five years after Hurricane Katrina drowned our schools. We've come a long way and we have a long way to go. Here are our visions for the tenth anniversary of Katrina in 2015. Please help us move toward these visions by adopting the following recommendations right now in 2010.

Vision: Peace in our schools. In 2015, every school will have a restorative justice program. These programs are an alternative to suspension and expulsion. They keep a lot of violence from happening in the first place, too.

- **Recommendations 1: Invite the Rethinkers to an assembly at your school.** We can tell your students all about restorative justice.
- **Recommendation 2: Go visit a school that uses restorative justice.** In Colorado and other states, schools have been using this stuff for years. Ask us for contact information.
- **Recommendation 3. Go to a training.** You can take a workshop at the Center for Restorative Approaches (a project of the Neighborhood Housing Services) right here in New Orleans.
- **Recommendations 4: Visit Langston Hughes Academy.** Come see the first restorative justice program at an elementary school in Louisiana! (The first high school program is at Walter L. Cohen.)

Vision: Fresh, tasty, local food prepared in fully equipped kitchens. Students will know what's in their food, and will eat it with real utensils and clean hands. Lunch is so good, students will actually eat it! No more garbage bags full of food, Styrofoam and plastic.

- **Recommendation 5: Start buying local food this year.** Serve at least one local ingredient once a week at every school.
- **Recommendation 6: Install hand-washing stations in all cafeterias.** (New schools have them already, thanks to Rethink.) Make sure that teachers give students the permission and time to use sinks once they are installed.
- **Recommendation 7: Tell students what they are eating and make the food healthy.** Post a sign with all the ingredients in our meals each day. Get rid of highly processed food.
- **Recommendation 8: Stop cafeteria waste!** Find out how much waste your cafeteria is producing and reduce it by half before the end of the school year. Use real trays, eating utensils, plates and bowls. Or, use biodegradable products and toss them in a school compost pile after meals. Set up “tasting stations” in the cafeteria where kids can try food on the menu and then order *only* what they will eat. Stop serving the same full plate of food to all students.

Vision: Oil-free schools. Hey, we know this is a big one! But after watching our Gulf Coast covered in oil this summer, we HAVE to make this change. In our oil-free schools, energy will come from renewable sources like sun, wind and water. Students and staff will produce zero waste. More kids will go to schools in their neighborhoods, and the bike racks out front will be full. (But the dumpsters out back will be empty!)

- **Recommendation 9: Measure waste throughout the school.** Figure out how high your air conditioners run, how much paper you throw away and which lights are left on too long.
- **Recommendation 10: Create Green Teams in every school.** Student Green Teams can find ways to cut down on waste and convince other kids to get with the program.
- **Recommendation 11: No more incandescent light bulbs!** Replace those wasteful old bulbs with compact fluorescent ones. They use two-thirds less energy and last ten times longer! They also produce 70 percent less heat, which helps reduce the amount of energy used to cool schools.
- **Recommendation 12: Set up a recycling program!** The typical student produces about 75 pounds of waste each year! Once you have recycling bins, teach everyone how to use them. Don’t let them sit empty, like they do at some schools now.