

Children of the Storm

Tenisha Dounseroux is excited to finally be in school. She was supposed to start the fourth grade in New Orleans this fall. But just before classes began, Hurricane Katrina, one of the worst hurricanes ever to hit the United States, slammed the states on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico on August 29 [2005].

Tenisha was sad and scared as she watched heavy rains and high winds rip through her city on the Mississippi River. When New Orleans flooded, school was the last thing on Tenisha's mind as she and her family drove 350 miles west to Houston.

More than 24,000 evacuees from New Orleans moved to the Houston **Astrodome**,¹ but Tenisha and her family spent five days in a hotel. Within a week, a generous Houston family had given the Dounseroux family shelter in the loft above their home. A few days later, Tenisha started school in Houston. She is one of an estimated 125,000 New Orleans children who scattered across Louisiana and neighboring states to start a new school year.

The Houston school district alone enrolled almost 2,000 students in the days following Katrina, including Tenisha and her brother Terren. The district also reopened two schools that it had closed the previous spring. Those schools were devoted entirely to children displaced by the storm.

It's hard to move and start going to a new school. It's even harder for the many children **displaced**² from the states hit hardest by Hurricane Katrina. School guidance counselors say that relocating to an unfamiliar school is bound to affect many of the children.

Tenisha and Terren, though, are doing well. They enrolled at MacGregor Music and Science Magnet School. MacGregor accepted more than a dozen displaced students.

After just two days at school, Tenisha and Terren were making new friends. "[Our new] school is great!" Tenisha told *Senior Edition*.

¹ **Astrodome:** Houston's huge indoor stadium

² **displaced:** forced to move to another location

Reading Passage

Many of Tenisha's and Terren's classmates are embracing the new arrivals. "We want to make our new classmates feel good because we know they've gone through so much," James McKethen, a fourth grader at MacGregor, told *Senior Edition*.

"It's cool to have new friends," adds Tiye McKethen, James's sister, a third grader. "And they get to have fun in a new school and stay in a safe place."

Terren misses playing basketball with his friends in New Orleans. Tenisha misses the teachers and students at her old school. But the family says it will most likely settle down in Texas for good. "I want to stay in Houston," Tenisha told *Senior Edition*.