



# NEWARK TEACHERS UNION

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## **Wilson Avenue School Closure Sign of Neglect Pre-Hurricane Irene**

*Newark Teachers Union calls for restoration of vital Ironbound community school*

NEWARK...One child brought a sign that read, "We deserve a healthy, safe environment" before she was bused away from Newark's Wilson Avenue School. Another little girl cried. As parents brought their elementary and middle-school age children to the first day of school, they found buses shipping off students to the Central Ward or to Belleville. While the Newark Public Schools District office blames Hurricane Irene for the problem, Newark Teachers' Union President Joseph Del Grosso found the state run district management at fault for mismanaging the situation.

"Mushrooms and mold were growing in the Wilson Avenue School building already," said Del Grosso. "Hurricane Irene may have acerbated the problems with the facility, but these were pre-existing conditions that the district's state appointed leadership choose to ignore, while favoring upkeep on buildings co-located with charter schools." He pointed to lack of upkeep including not repairing holes in external walls and scaffolding that has been holding up a crumbling brick wall for more than seven years. "Lack of routine maintenance made the damage from the storm much worse than it should have been," said Del Grosso.

Del Grosso also faulted the district for being slow to notify parents of the problem, and renting out-of-district space at St. Anthony's in Belleville while Newark school buildings stand vacant. Hurricane Irene hit Newark on Sunday, August 28, more than one week before the start of school. "The District had time to be in touch with the community and should have consulted with teachers and parents from Newark before making such an important decision," said Del Grosso.

Del Grosso was out visiting Quitman Street and Belleville St. Anthony's facilities Tuesday as students were bused in from Wilson Avenue. "We will be keeping a close eye on the transition from Wilson Avenue to safeguard students and make sure teachers have everything they need to teach," said Del Grosso. "When Hurricane Katrina tragically hit New Orleans six years ago, corporate interests seized on the disaster to turn almost the entire school district into charter schools. The citizens of Newark need to watch the response closely when negligence makes natural disasters worse and demand that a good public school is restored for the Newark's children."

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*The Newark Teachers' Union represents teachers, aides and clerks and in New Jersey's largest school district. For more information, see [www.ntuافت.com](http://www.ntuافت.com) or call 973-643-8430.*

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