

Disaster Education in U.S. Schools

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U.S. Disaster Education Development and Delivery Formats

1. Federal government development of disaster-related educational materials
 - Federal Resources for Educational Excellence – Teaching and learning resources from federal agencies
 - *FEMA for Kids* (Federal Emergency Management Agency)
2. Collaborative efforts between Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and private corporations
 - The American Red Cross and Allstate Insurance developed a disaster education curriculum (*Masters of Disasters*) aimed at children in grades K through 8 (1999).

2

U.S. Disaster Education Development and Delivery Formats

3. State Departments of Education incorporation of outside source curriculum
 - California Department of Education – *9-1-1 for Kids*; Firefacts.org
 - Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services – *Ready in 3*
4. Teacher support groups
 - *SuccessLink* – a not-for-profit, teacher-support group that conducts workshops and places free lesson plans online for teacher access.

3

Examples of Outside Source Curriculum Currently Used in U.S. Disaster School Education

- **9-1-1 for Kids**
Teaches children how to save lives and property through the proper use of 9-1-1, the United States' universal emergency telephone number
- **FEMA for Kids**
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has developed lecture materials, suggested classroom exercises and sources of more information in support of disaster reduction

4

Examples of Outside Source Curriculum Currently Used in U.S. Disaster School Education

- **Firefacts.org**
Fire safety information for parents and educators
- **Team SAFE-T**
Annualized school-based education materials, supported by *Master of Disaster* from the American Red Cross; teaches age-appropriate emergency information and preparedness skills for students in grades kindergarten through twelve

5

Examples of Outside Source Curriculum Currently Used in U.S. Disaster School Education

- **Masters of Disasters**
Curriculum to help teachers integrate important disaster safety instruction into their regular core subjects such as language arts, math, science, and social studies. Curriculum is aligned with the National Education Standards, supplements the lessons teachers are already teaching. It also provides students with information to help them prepare for disasters and stay safe during and after a disaster in their home, school, or community

6

Examples of Outside Source Curriculum Currently Used in U.S. Disaster School Education

- **Teen CERT**
The Teen CERT program is an in-class, curriculum-based program that provides students with knowledge on the effects of natural and human-caused disasters and their emotional, social, and economic impacts. It builds decision-making and problem solving skills and strategies to help students make informed decisions regarding readiness, response, recovery and mitigation efforts to reduce loss of life and property

7

U.S. Disaster School Education Emphasis

- Development of school disaster management planning
- Disaster training for staff and students
- Preparedness efforts related to emergency drills and crisis exercises for staff, students and emergency responders
- Utilization of existing outside developed resources: curriculum and educational materials

8

Selected Practices School Districts Take to Prepare for Emergencies

Recommended practices

- Allocate time to emergency management planning.
- Conduct an assessment of vulnerabilities.
- Conduct regular drills.
- Identify and acquire equipment to mitigate and respond to emergencies.
- Identify a storage location and replenish emergency supplies on a regular basis.

Source: GAO analysis of Education, DHS, and HHS guidance and training documents.

9

Selected Practices School Districts Take to Prepare for Emergencies

Recommended practices

- Develop an emergency management plan and update the plan on a regular basis.
- Identify and address a range of events and hazards specific to the district or schools.
- Develop roles and responsibilities and procedures for school community members.
- Develop roles and responsibilities for first responders and community partners.

Source: GAO analysis of Education, DHS, and HHS guidance and training documents.

10

Selected Practices School Districts Take to Prepare for Emergencies

Recommended practices

- Develop procedures for communicating with key stakeholders such as parents and students, including those who are limited-English proficient.
- Develop procedures for special needs students.
- Develop procedures in the plan for recovering from an incident, including continuing student education during an extended school closure.
- Determine lessons learned after an incident or training.

Source: GAO analysis of Education, DHS, and HHS guidance and training documents.

11

Selected Practices School Districts Take to Prepare for Emergencies

Recommended practices

- Develop multi-purpose manuals, with emergency management information, that can be tailored to meet individual school needs.
- Include community partners such as local government and public health agencies in planning.
- Coordinate the school district's emergency procedures with state and local governments.
- Practice the emergency management plan with first responders and community partners on a regular basis.

Source: GAO analysis of Education, DHS, and HHS guidance and training documents.

12

Sample Emergency Preparedness Curriculum Currently Used in U.S. Disaster School Education

PRIMARY GRADES

- A very young child can absorb basic emergency preparedness instruction.
- A child needs to know that emergencies can happen to anyone and that there are measures that should be taken in self protection.
- Teacher may introduce concepts of emergency and self-help by relating instructions to the child's everyday experiences.
- Depending upon the rural or urban character of a community, a teacher should give priority to that which children are most apt to experience in their home or school environment.

Source: Utah State Office of Education
Utah School Safety Committee

13

Example of Tips for Teachers (Primary Grades)

- Take advantage of the many free materials developed for primary grade emergency preparedness curricula
- Invite speakers from emergency service groups, and visit the emergency management office, fire department, etc., on short field trips
- Add a few emergency related words to the weekly spelling lesson
- Make up math problems involving emergency response times
- Have children make maps of their community, designating hazardous areas as they perceive them.

14

INTERMEDIATE AND SECONDARY GRADES

- As children get older, they need more detailed information about the hazards of living
- Children in the secondary grades are ready to view events in a continuum from cause to effect
- They should be ready to approach the subjects of natural and man caused disasters

15

INTERMEDIATE AND SECONDARY GRADES

- Unlike the younger children, secondary grade students are more able to relate to things on a world scale
- By the time they have reached junior and senior high school, they should be well aware of the global relationships and repercussions of natural and man caused phenomena
- They also should have a well developed sense of their own place in the scheme of things and confidence that they have direction and control of their lives

16

Example of Tips for Teachers (Intermediate and Secondary Grades)

- **Science** - Relate disasters to physical change, conservation, ecology, and environmental science
- **Social Studies** - Study the interdependence and cooperation of people, organizations, and nations when disaster strikes
- **Health and Physical Education** - These are ideal courses for teaching safety and survival techniques, basic first aid, etc. Have students simulate a disaster situation and take turns playing victim and rescue workers. Practice simple carry/stretchers improvisation, etc.

17

Example of Tips for Teachers (Intermediate and Secondary Grades)

- **Reading** - Give the class a list of reading materials about disasters and emergencies
- **Music and Art** - Have students make safety posters and display them during school disaster awareness week

18

Future Considerations for U.S. Disaster School Education

- Identify educational strategies designed to impact preparedness and knowledge related to response, recovery and resiliency
- Develop more youth-focus disaster education based on systematic research design
- Better define the role children can play in developing community preparedness and resiliency

19

Questions ?

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20