

Preparedness in the Classroom

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GUAYNABO, Puerto Rico – There are never too many efforts to share lifesaving information. Educators play an important role in helping students learn about hurricane preparedness this school year.

When talking with children about disasters it's important to allow them to express their feelings. Teachers must listen for misinformation, misconceptions, and underlying fears or concerns and then address them.

It is important to answer their questions simply and directly. Being informed may help them feel better. The amount of information that will be helpful to children will depend on their age and developmental level. Like adults, children are better able to cope with a crisis if they feel they understand it.

Here are some general recommendations that teachers can consider when returning to the classroom:

- Create a safe environment. Children should feel safe talking about past experiences and their worries about this hurricane season. Participation on sharing their experiences should always be voluntary.
- Listen to children's fears and concerns. Take their fears seriously and try to answer their questions simply and honestly. Pay attention to any sign of serious emotional distress.
- Share some your own experiences. This creates a connection and helps them realize they are not alone.
- Focus on the positive. Share ideas on preparedness and how they can help others in need.



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- Keep daily routines as normal as possible. Routines give children confidence, help them establish good habits and offer stability during times of stress.
- Engage students in creative activities. Playing games or letting them write stories or draw pictures gives them opportunities to express their feelings.
- Give them tools they can share with their parents. Talk about preparedness and how they can help their family be ready in case of a disaster.
- Motivate them to participate in preparedness activities. For example, empower students by discussing what they may need in an emergency kit.

For the benefit of Puerto Rico educators and students, FEMA prepared several materials and graphics that teachers can use in the classroom to stimulate the preparedness conversation. With the help of characters Pablo & Paola, children can learn about hurricane preparedness in fun and useful ways.

Some of the materials are:

- Tools for Educators brochure with ideas for teachers to develop with their students at preschool, primary and secondary levels.
- Fact Sheet with important information on how to address some of the student's emotional needs.
- Several graphics to help students participate in a more active way.
 - Have a Family Plan
 - Let's Talk... Hurricanes
 - Word Search - Hurricane Season
 - Word Search - Before the Storm

These materials can be downloaded on the following links:

- In Spanish
 - <https://www.fema.gov/es/disaster/4339/preparacion-huracanes>
- In English
 - <https://www.fema.gov/disaster/4339/hurricane-preparedness>

Other resources that can be very useful in the classroom are:

<https://www.ready.gov/kids/educators>

<https://www.ready.gov/kids/know-the-facts/hurricanes>



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<https://www.healthychildren.org>

<http://www.noaa.gov/education>

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