



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2014 Volume II: Exploring Community through Ethnographic Nonfiction, Fiction, and Film

Communities Responding to Natural Disasters: Two Forces to be Reckoned With

Curriculum Unit 14.02.03
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Introduction

Now, in my fourth year of teaching as a New Haven Public School elementary teacher at Davis Street Arts and Academics Magnet School, I have come to understand and appreciate the opportunities, which arise throughout our tumultuous school year wherein we, as lovers of learning, can integrate deeper, more meaningful explorations into the curriculum. This being my first year teaching fourth grade, I am exploring for the first time heightened common core state standards proposed for this grade level as well as new and exciting curriculum material designed to meet those standards. While our district has given the subject areas of literacy and mathematics an abundance of mandatory lessons, helpful materials and resources, the subject areas of Science and Social Studies seem to have been robbed not only of the afore mentioned resource materials but so too of the time allotted in each day with which to survey these subjects in a meaningful, engaging way. Similarly, our writing curriculum, although well laid out in terms of which genres of writing we must teach during each marking period, lacks depth. Many of the mini-lessons provided in our curriculum binder are related to the mechanics of writing and the organization of writing journals and fall short in offering meaningful ways to incorporate lesson material into a writing project or performance task. It is my goal therefore to create a curriculum unit, which incorporates a more in depth exploration of science and social studies by way of meaningful performance tasks and written activities.

Today in my fourth grade classroom we are reading a non-fiction core text from our "Plugged Into Reading" program, entitled Rescues by Sandra Markle. This engaging text deals with the various natural disasters that have occurred throughout the world in recent years and how professional rescue teams as well as volunteers have brought survivors to safety. In tandem with this core-text, my students are researching various natural disasters (forest fires, earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, etc.) from the perspective of science. Through my curriculum unit, my goal is to find ways to expand these studies into the more intrinsically interesting subject of how human communities (schools, neighborhoods, towns, nations) are affected by and respond to such challenges in accordance with their own moral value systems and resources. Since the concept of community is neither straight-forward nor concrete in terms of a definition, I have found that approaching this subject requires a great deal of care and sensitivity. Therefore, the conceptual framework I propose is meant to gradually release the responsibility of understanding 'community' to my students by way of guiding them from an analysis of 'outside' communities to a reflection of their own lives and the lives of those in their immediate

communities.

In addition to and, possibly, more importantly than the academic objectives of my unit, my goal is to raise my students' awareness of their integral role within their classroom and school community as well as their neighborhood community. In order to impact their notions of responsibility towards their communities, my curriculum unit takes them on an exploration of community through an in depth study of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Through non-fiction texts, articles, case studies, film and other media, we will observe how communities, both far and near, reacted to the devastation and destruction wrought by not only the hurricane itself but, almost more importantly, by the failed rescue attempts of institutions that only served to worsen the blow. Upon identifying those characteristics, which both failed and came to the rescue of this traumatized community, I will guide my students to be self-reflective and determine what kinds of moral value systems they intend to act upon as they live and develop within their various communities.

This unit links together history, geography, writing and literacy through interdisciplinary explorations into how victims whose lives are directly and inadvertently endangered as well as those who voluntarily risk their lives to be a part of rescue efforts, react in groups to meet the imminent danger posed by these natural disasters. In so doing, the essential question I ask my students to reflect on in the culminating section of this unit is: How might I function as an individual within my community? In this way, my students are being invited to take what they have gleaned from their research to a more personal level that can stimulate their self-expression. So too does it cultivate a sense of personal agency in the face of forces beyond one's own control within my students.

Throughout this unit my students work in both small- and large-group settings on the activities included in this unit. The unit lessons are implemented 4-5 times a week, for a period of 40-60 minutes over a 4-month period. I have divided my curriculum-unit into four sections in which I employ the use of fiction and non-fiction texts as well as film and Internet resources, in an effort to engage them in active reading and enhance their writing ability. The sections are:

Section 1: Rescues!

Section 2: Researching Natural Disasters

Section 3: Exploring Community through the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina

Section 4: What is my Role in my Community?

Content Objectives

To enhance reading comprehension and stamina of various genres of text through active reading strategies.

To create excitement and enthusiasm for researching through the vehicle of choice

To raise awareness to the difference between paraphrasing and plagiarizing and provide strategies to avoid the latter

To foster self-reflection through the active reading of exemplary texts

To make meaningful pedagogical connections between reading and writing.

To strengthen writing fluency, elaboration and organization by way of reading exemplary texts.

To develop critical thinking skills by way of assessing and evaluating case studies and drawing conclusions supported by evidence

To view the events which occurred in a far off community as relevant and noteworthy to one's own community and life

To extend the meaning and apply the lessons expressed in text to one's own life through a mixing of devices given in both fiction, non-fiction and film.

To facilitate creativity and ingenuity

To authentically assess each student's progress in reading and writing by way of project-based activities.

To strengthen social interactions and communication skills among students in a variety of settings.

Teaching Strategies

To learn about the rescue efforts, which have saved the lives of disaster victims around the world through the inspiring and informative stories captured in Sandra Markel's Rescues!

To respond to text through the use of graphic organizers designed to scaffold understanding of specialized vocabulary, text features and text structures.

To engage in expository, research-based and persuasive writing by way of mini-lessons, model texts, graphic organizers and rubrics.

To learn about Natural Disasters from an ecological perspective by way of researching non-fiction texts and articles

To create and present research reports and 3 Dimensional models through guiding questions and rubrics outlining expectations.

To explore the complex concept of community through a study of the community effected by Hurricane Katrina by way of sharing in case study accounts given in non-fiction, fiction and film.

To understand how history connects the present to the past through timelines, maps, photographs and graphic organizers.

To analyze the lessons learned within other communities and to relate them to one's own life within one's own community.

To learn to become more fluent, elaborate and well-organized in one's own writing through the literary devices exemplified in model texts.

Section 1: Rescues!

The first phase of my curriculum unit takes place in the second marking period wherein students are exposed to informational text during Reading Workshop and are expected to write an expository piece during Writing Workshop. This phase is designed to give students an introduction to the various rescue efforts, which have gone on throughout the world in the recent past. Through the use of our core-text, *Rescues!*, I provide my students with relevant information regarding the various facets of survival which entail preparedness before, during and after a particular event. I must ensure that my students are grasping this information by way of modeling and providing practice using the eight power strategies of reading informational text: Monitoring Understanding, Identifying Text Structures, Identifying Text Features, Previewing Text, Asking Questions, Notetaking and Specialized Vocabulary. You will find that we often make use of the numerous graphic organizers provided by the Plugged-Into Reading program which highlight word studies of specialized vocabulary, the use of text-features when reading non-fiction texts, initiate small research projects and measure students' comprehension of the material covered throughout the text.

Lesson 1: Utilizing Text Features to Preview the Text

Through the use of the 'Plugged Into Reading' graphic organizer " Previewing with Book Parts" (pgs. 77-78), students explore Sandra Markel's *Rescues!* and are prompted to make inferences and predictions using the text clues found in photographs, headings, glossary and other critical text features. Students are then paired up to discuss their findings and share connections they might have to the information they come across.

Lesson 2: Activating Background Knowledge by Asking Questions

Through the use of a KWL chart, students jot down any information they feel they already know about Rescue efforts under the K column. Students are then asked to fill in the W column of their chart with Questions they still have regarding the topic, which arise as a result of previewing the text. Students come together whole class and one large KWL chart is generated in order to share common understandings and questions. As students read the text in the coming days, they are encouraged to fill out the L section of the chart with 'What I have Learned'.

K	W	L
What I <u>K</u> NOW	What I <u>W</u> ANT to Know	What I <u>L</u> EARNED

Lesson 3: Identifying Text Structures: Sequence and Chronology

Students read their first rescue account, "Hasty to the Rescue" and work with the text structure of Sequence and Chronology to create a diagram, which demonstrates the main events in the story, which began with the avalanche disaster and culminated in the rescue of the victim in a plot diagram. Students are guided to include the conflict, rising action, climax, falling action and conclusion.

Lesson 4: Identifying Text Structures: Sequence and Chronology

Students read "Frozen Child" and continue to work with the text structure of Sequence Chronology to describe and depict what occurs when Hypothermia takes over the body using the Plugged Into Reading graphic organizer (pg100).

Lesson 5: Identifying Text Structures: Sequence and Chronology

Students read "Nine Miners Trapped" and create a timeline with illustrations and captions, which depict the sequence of events leading up to the disaster and culminating in the rescue.

Lesson 6: Identifying Text Structures: Compare and Contrast

Students read "Baby in a Burning House" and "Saving Elvis" and compare and contrast the circumstances in each situation to determine what factors were similar and different in each disaster using the Plugged Into Reading graphic organizer (pg 132). Students draw conclusions regarding what is most important to remember in such an emergency situation and how best to be prepared for such an unfortunate event.

Lesson 7: Determining Critical Information

Students read "Tsunami Strikes" and jot down the measures that need to be taken before, during and after such an event to increase the likelihood of survival.

Lesson 8: Determining Critical Information

Students read "Surviving Katrina" and compare the circumstances of Hurricane Katrina to those of the

Tsunami in Thailand using the Plugged Into Reading graphic organizer (pg 161). Here students are guided to summarize the critical information using the specialized vocabulary words floundering, tsunami, survivors and debris when describing "Tsunami Strikes" and evacuated, agencies, generator and chaos when describing the events of "Surviving Katrina".

Lesson 9: Elements of a Survival Guide

Students read 'A Kid's Wilderness Survival Primer' by Joshua Piven and David Borgenicht from the Plugged Into Reading resource materials (pgs. 185-189) and take note of the structure and organization of the guide by way of its paragraphs, headings and sub headings. This serves as a model of expository writing.

As a final project for this phase, students write their own survival guides on "How to Survive Fourth Grade since, in many ways, the children are starting to become 'experts' on ways they have found to meet with success, both academically and behaviorally. In order that the brochure follow expository writing guidelines and also lend itself to a survival guide of sorts, the students must come up with a thesis statement to the effect of: "In order to be successful in fourth grade you must be prepared before, during and after." Students then list which strategies, routines and/or ideas of preparedness they have for each phase of fourth grade thus far in the year and will support each with specific examples. As a reflection of what they have gleaned from the text features and structures within the Rescues! book, students are required to include 4 or more text features within their brochure as a way to make it more visually appealing and engaging for their audience. Students eventually present these brochures to the incoming third graders at the end of the year as a way to bring purpose and meaning to their projects. To follow is the rubric used to assess their brochures:

How to Survive Fourth Grade Rubric

	1	2	3	4
Use of Research Time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notes • Rough Draft • Final Draft 	You did not use the given research time wisely and continuously needed to be reminded to stay focused.	You often needed to be reminded to stay on task during research time.	You adequately used the given research time and rarely needed to be reminded to stay on task.	You always used your given research time and never needed to be reminded to stay on task.
Neatness of Brochure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handwriting • Spacing • Balance 	This brochure is not neat. The handwriting and spacing of the words make the information extremely difficult to read. The brochure requirements are randomly placed and are not properly balanced.	Some brochure requirements have been randomly placed and/or some of the information is difficult to read. The handwriting is appropriate but the content does not demonstrate student's best work.	This brochure is neat, but not colorful. The handwriting for the title and headings is not appropriate. All of the text features have been properly placed in such a way that they contribute to the message.	This brochure is extremely neat and colorful. The handwriting for the information is appropriate and easy to read. All of the text-features are neatly written or typed and properly placed. It is evident that you have put forth your best effort.
Organization of Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of Text Features • Display of Important Information 	Only 1 or 2 text features. Description did not contain enough detailed information. Information may be repetitive	Only 3 or 4 text-features and the description contains limited detailed information. More elaboration is required on each main idea you included.	Included varied text features and all information is in your own words, but survival tips are too vague and require further elaboration for the audience to understand.	Included varied text features, which provided clear support for the three main ideas within the brochure. All survival tips are clear and well explained.
Spelling and Grammar	Your final written brochure has more than 4 spelling or grammar mistakes.	Your final written brochure has 3 or 4 spelling or grammar mistakes.	Your final written brochure has two or less spelling or grammar mistakes.	Your final written brochure has no spelling or grammar mistakes.
Inclusion of Key Information * Main Ideas and Important details for before, during and after sections of brochure	Your brochure does not make mention of the three main ideas for survival before, during and after fourth grade.	Your brochure contains 1 main idea and a few details to support it.	Your brochure contains 2 main ideas and a few details to support it.	Your brochure contains 3 main ideas and pertinent details to support each.

Section 2: Researching Natural Disasters

The second phase of my curriculum unit takes place in the third marking period wherein informational text is still our primary literary focus and yet, in writing, students are required to learn the necessary steps to researching and paraphrasing information they have gathered on a particular topic. From our reading of *Rescues!*, students choose a natural disaster, which piques their interest most and then engage in further research of this topic. During this time, students are given presentations in our school library on how to search the Internet for credible, reliable sources and how to cite sources in a bibliography. I also give mini-lessons on how to avoid plagiarism when taking notes. This phase culminates in a poster or PowerPoint presentation given by pairs of students along with a model component in the form of a diorama. In this way students learn

not only how to research but also about the important skills of working with another person cooperatively and efficiently.

Lesson 1: Picking a Research Topic

As a whole class, students generate a list of Natural Disasters they encountered in their reading and will choose one they would like to learn more about. The list may include:

1. earthquakes
2. floods and drought
3. tornadoes
4. tsunamis
5. hurricanes
6. avalanches, landslides, and mudslides
7. winter storms and blizzards
8. wildfires
9. volcanic eruptions
10. thunderstorms and lightning

Once students have chosen their topic, pairs or pods of three are grouped together based on common interest. Students then receive a list of guiding questions, created by Julie A. Weaver in her 2013 publication "Natural Disasters", to assist them in their research.

If students are studying floods:

1. Compare the difference between a flashflood and a flood.
2. Where do floods occur?
3. What should you do to stay safe during a flood?
4. How can we try to keep our homes and belongings safe during a flood?
5. What is a drought? Why do droughts occur?
6. What areas closest to where you live are affected by droughts and floods?
7. How are droughts harmful?
8. Research some major droughts that have occurred and tell about them.
9. Research some major floods that have occurred and tell about them.

10. How can floods be dangerous or harmful to us, our natural resources, and way of living?

If students are studying Hurricanes:

1. What is the eye of an hurricane? Describe what it is like.
2. How fast and in what direction do hurricanes move?
3. How do we track a hurricane? What do hurricane hunters do?
4. How do we classify hurricanes? What is the name of the scale? What are the intensity levels?
5. How do hurricanes get their names?
6. How do hurricanes form? Where do they begin? When is hurricane season?
7. What is the difference between a hurricane and tropical storm?
8. Compare the difference between a hurricane and a typhoon.
9. What is a storm surge?
10. How long does a hurricane usually last?
11. How can we protect ourselves from hurricanes?
12. Research some of the biggest hurricanes that we have received. Tell about them.

If students are studying landslides, avalanches and mudslides:

1. Define the meaning of a landslide, an avalanche, and a mudslide.
2. How are they alike and different?
3. Where do they take place?
4. What causes them to take place or happen?
5. How can we predict when or where they will happen?
6. What can we do to protect ourselves? What precautions should we take?
7. Can we measure their strength or how far they slide? Describe the scale used for avalanches.
- 8-10. Research some major landslides, avalanches, and mudslides that have happened in modern times. Tell about them.

If students are studying winter storms:

1. Define and tell the differences between: sleet, snow, frost, freezing rain, and hail.
2. What is the difference between a winter storm warning, a winter storm watch, and a winter weather

advisory?

3. What is a blizzard? Describe its effects.
4. What is an ice storm? Describe its effects.
5. How does a winter storm form?
6. What types of things can happen during a severe winter storm? How can you protect yourself during a winter storm?
7. How does lake-effect snow form?
8. What is thunder-snow?
9. What part of the country is most threatened by these types of storms?
10. Research some major winter storms and tell about them. How much snow or ice did places get?

If students are studying Tsunamis:

1. What is a tsunami?
2. What language does the word "tsunami" come from? What does it mean in English?
3. How are tsunamis formed?
4. What place is at the greatest risk for having a tsunami? Where do most occur?
5. How do they travel? What do they create?
6. How fast do they travel? Do they travel faster over shallow or deep water?
7. How high can a tsunami get?
8. What is the Deep-Ocean Assessment and Reporting of Tsunami, or DART?
9. What should you do to protect yourself during a tsunami?
10. Research some major tsunamis that have occurred. Tell about them.

If students are studying wildfires:

1. What are wildfires?
2. Where do most of them occur?
3. What causes them to occur?
4. What are Santa Ana winds?

5. What is a fire tornado?
6. How do firefighters put out wildfires?
7. How can you prevent them from happening?
8. How often does it happen in the United States or around the world?
9. Research some of the major wildfires that occurred. Tell about them.
10. What should you do to protect yourself in case of a wildfire?

If students are studying earthquakes:

1. What is an earthquake? Why do they happen?
2. Where do earthquakes happen?
3. What is plate tectonics?
4. How are earthquakes measured?
5. What is the name of the scale? What is their intensity?
6. How do scientists learn about earthquakes? How can they tell where an earthquake happened?
7. What and where are the major fault lines in the United States and around the world?
8. What should you do to protect yourself during an earthquake?
9. What are some other names for earthquakes?
10. Research some major earthquakes that have occurred. Tell about them.

If students are studying volcanoes:

1. What are volcanoes? How do they form?
2. Describe the inside of a volcano. What is the difference between lava and magma?
3. What happens when they erupt?
4. Why do volcanoes erupt?
5. How can volcanoes and the things that they erupt hurt us?
6. What are the differences between active, dormant, and extinct volcanoes?
7. Describe these different types of volcanoes: cinder cone, shield, lava, and composite.
8. How many volcanoes are known to us around the world?

9. Where are most of our active volcanoes found today?
10. How far away do the effects of the volcano reach?
11. What should you do to protect yourself in cause of a volcanic eruption?
12. Research some major volcanic eruptions. Tell about them.

If students are studying thunder storms:

1. What are thunderstorms?
2. What causes thunderstorms or what three things do they need?
3. What is lightning and how is it caused?
4. What causes thunder?
5. How far away can you see lightning and hear thunder? Can you tell how far away a storm is?
6. When and where do most thunderstorms occur?
7. How many thunderstorms do we have around the world every day?
8. What things should you do to protect yourself during a thunderstorm?
9. What types of precipitation occur during a thunderstorm?
10. What is a gust front?
11. How big are thunderstorms (in miles) and how long do they last?
12. What is the difference between a thunderstorm warning and a thunderstorm watch?
13. Research some different major thunderstorms in your area or region. Describe the effects of the storm.

If students are studying tornadoes:

1. What is a tornado?
2. How or why do tornadoes form?
3. What is the difference between a funnel cloud and a tornado?
4. How fast do the winds rotate?
5. How far do tornados travel and typically over what type of land? How do tornados stop?
6. What is the Fujita tornado scale? How intense are tornados? Describe the levels.
7. What can we do to protect ourselves during a tornado?

8. What is the difference between a tornado watch and a tornado warning?
9. What is Tornado Alley?
10. When do tornados mostly occur?
11. Research some major tornados that have occurred. Tell about them.

Lesson 2: How to Research using Credible Sources on the Internet

Students are given a mini-lesson on the importance of searching for information on reputable websites versus the less-reliable, commercial ones. Students are then taught how to use websites like bearport.com, www.iconn.org, www.nationalgeographic.com etc, using keyword searches. It will be explained to students that information posted on commercial websites are actually paid to issue information which many times is not accurate and therefore not credible. Students are also given a Bibliography graphic organizer on which to begin citing their sources. Organizing their research sources into genre and identifying all of the components of a bibliography will be modeled. Students spend time in the computer lab practicing their searches on the afore mentioned websites and will be given scaffolded instruction and assistance in citing their sources appropriately.

Lesson 3: Paraphrasing Vs. Plagiarizing

Students learn the difference between taking direct quotes from a reading passage and rewriting someone else's words into our own words. The teacher models how present factual information gathered from a source in such a way that it is not using the original author's exact phrasing. Students are also cautioned that simply changing a few words within a sentence is not the true essence of paraphrasing either. Students are shown how to take direct quotes and cite them properly. (See Lesson Plan 1)

Lesson 4: Culminating Performance Tasks

Once students have gathered their information and written rough drafts of their notes on each guided question, they can be given the option to present the material on a poster or PowerPoint. Students who already know how to use PowerPoint will, in turn, show their partners how to create PowerPoint presentations and peer learning can occur naturally. Students who create a PowerPoint need to include 10 slides with pictures and some animation while students who choose to make a poster need to include headings, diagrams, pictures and organize their information in a cohesive manner. Students also have to work together on some sort of three-dimensional representation of their natural disaster, either in the form of a diorama or demonstration model. Students are assessed on their knowledge of the topic and their creativity in demonstrating their understanding of forces that cause the disaster to occur and its effects on the communities in its path.

Section 3: Exploring Community through the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina

The third phase of my curriculum unit delves more deeply into the complex nature of community through a closer look at the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina by way of looking more closely into the devastation that occurred as a result of not only the hurricane itself but also due to the conflicted nature of the rescue efforts, which ensued after the storm. It should be noted here that earlier in the year, my students engaged in a unit of study on Global Warming, wherein they researched various ways in which humans are altering the global environment by emitting carbon dioxide and other green-house gasses into the atmosphere. My students also completed a science experiment wherein they measured how the percentage of CO₂ in the atmosphere affected the amount of time it took that environment to cool down. In addition to winning first place in the district city science fair, this hands-on approach to learning about what Global Warming actually means led to further explorations into how climate change is leading to various forms of natural disasters like glaciers melting, flooding, mudslides, drought and forest fires, etc. Upon developing this kind of background knowledge and environmental awareness, students can approach this complex concept of Anthropocene with a greater sense of maturity as it brings to light the fact that what we may call a natural disaster is in fact often a direct result of human activity. Therefore, following this train of thought, my students have greater insight into how the choices and actions by members of a community lead to a wide variety of short and long-term consequences, both positive and disastrous.

Lesson 1: A Humanistic Approach to Disaster

We begin our study of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina through a literary approach in our reading of *A Storm Called Katrina* by Myron Uhlberg and beautifully illustrated by Colin Bootman. This story draws from real-life events as it paints a portrait of a ten-year old boy and his family in the immediate aftermath of the devastating hurricane and powerfully brings to light the challenges faced by the people of New Orleans and the response of its community through small acts of heroism. After reading this story, students are asked to reflect on the following questions:

1. How did this disaster bring the community together?
2. Who were the victims of this disaster?
3. What acts, both good and bad, did people engage in that they otherwise wouldn't have?
4. Identify the humanitarian acts committed in this story?
5. How did Louis Daniel show courage?
6. What purpose did this tragedy bring to his ability to play the trumpet?

Students work in pairs to share their reflections and explore this story from the perspective of other characters in the story, like the mother, father or dog in order to see it from various points of view and recognized the feelings and experiences that would be shared by all under such circumstances.

Lesson 2: Surviving Katrina

Students revisit the story, "Surviving Katrina" in the *Rescues!* core text as a way to refresh their memories of the event through the case study of Karen Nelson, a nurse in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, who was looking after a fifteen-year old boy named William who was in need of a heart transplant when the hurricane hit. Students will now be asked to reflect on the more humanistic qualities of this account wherein Karen acted

like a true hero, risking her own life to ensure that William was rescued. Students are then asked to analyze Karen's choices to stick with William through it all instead of abandoning him and saving herself. Students are asked to act as one side of her conscience and persuade her in a paragraph or two to act in a certain way.

Lesson 3: Getting the Facts

Students engage in research to better understand the events, which led up to the hurricane, occurred throughout the onslaught of the disaster and took place in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina utilizing the skills they have learned from phase 2 of the curriculum unit. Students can use non-fiction texts like Hurricane Katrina, Aftermath of Disaster by Barb Palser, Hurricanes, Witness to Disaster by Judy and Dennis Fradin, Hurricane Katrina by Peter Benoit. Additionally, clips from Spike Lee's documentaries, When the Levees Broke and If God is Willing and Da Creek Don't Rise as well as the National Geographic documentary, Inside Hurricane Katrina. In preparation for an upcoming written piece, students are then given guiding questions to consider as they research these various media:

- 1) How was the natural disaster turned into a man-made disaster?
- 2) What seemed to be the values of the Federal aid institutions like FEMA?
- 3) What seemed to be the values of the victims?
- 4) Were these values working together in a cooperative or competitive manner?
- 5) Which communities of people suffered the most? The least?
- 6) What were some common feelings and experiences by all victims?
- 7) How did people react when they realized that they were on their own?
- 8) What solutions came out of this devastation?
- 9) Who were the true heroes if this tragedy?
- 10) What could have been done differently before the hurricane hit? After?

Students are also given the option to glean understanding from novels like, I Survived Hurricane Katrina by Lauren Tarshis as well as Zane and the Hurricane by Rodman Philbrick, in order to incorporate different genres of reading into the research process. We also explore several articles from www.iconn.org like "You Can Count on Us" by Alan Van Zelfden and "After the Hurricane" by Suzanne McCabe. Having access to different articles through this website allows us to read diverse perspectives and study differing points of view regarding the disaster and its aftermath. Once again we revisit the importance of preparedness before, during and after a natural disaster and then use our understanding of rescues, survival guides and natural disasters to analyze what went wrong in New Orleans. Since students are in the fourth marking period by this time, this phase includes a persuasive writing piece wherein students take a stand and try to persuade their audience of what went wrong and what could have been done differently in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. (See Lesson Plan 2)

Lesson 4: Designing a Functional Levee

Students also engage in an engineering project wherein they work in groups of four to design a levee, which can withstand flooding. (See Lesson Plan 3.)

Lesson 5: Do humans play a role in 'Natural Disasters'?

To bring this phase to a conclusion, students reflect on what a natural disaster is versus a disaster wherein humans do play a role? And, do humans also play a role in 'natural disasters' indirectly? To support students in

their reflection, as a whole class, we can then brainstorm and categorize those characteristics, which brought about the necessary change during the aftermath of Katrina and those characteristics, which further entrenched the community in tragedy and destruction. Such a discussion might lead to the following chart:

Human Characteristics, which Affected the Victims of Hurricane Katrina

Positive Characteristics	Examples	Negative Characteristics	Examples
Cooperation	When victims began working together to provide each other with aid in whatever ways they could. Neighbors began bartering services and goods in order to make ends meet.	Selfishness	When bankers began to make a business out of selling loans to families that had lost everything.
Empathy	When rescue efforts began to come from other states and countries and volunteers lent a hand where non-profit and for-profit institutions had never pulled through.	Indifference	When FEMA denied hurricane victims housing due to the fact that they had not lost enough and had a somewhat stable job

Section 4: What is my Role in my Community?

The fourth phase of the curriculum unit requires my students to think about the essential question: How might I function as an individual within my community? My children will be asked to use any and all of the written pieces they have created thus far to come up with one service initiative, which will inform the class of how they intend to function as a member of the community.

Lesson 1: Reading Accounts of Kids who have Served their Communities

Students engage in reading texts like *Community Helpers from A to Z* by Bobbie Kalman and Niki Walker and read articles like "The Service Effect: How Helping The Community Develops Strong Leadership" by Darian Smith and "Community = Happy" by Ashleigh Haynes, "The Girl Who Planted Hope: How Do I Make A Difference In My Community?" by Layla Akay and "YOU Can Change THE WORLD" by Phoebe Ducote, which offer real life examples of how children have made a difference within their communities in a variety of ways.

Lesson 2: Community Service

Students reflect on the articles they have read and come up with 5 possible service activities they could

engage in to support their school or neighborhood communities. These activities can be focused on initiatives as simple and integral as improving communication and listening skills amongst each other and as involved as taking part in a community service project like a community garden, picking up litter in the neighborhood or raising money for a community cause. They are then placed strategically into groups of 3-4 and share their ideas. As a group they must narrow their scope down to one plan of action by way of assessing the project's necessity, practicality and anticipated impact on the community. Students will research and plan out how they will exact their plan of action and present their idea as a group to the class. Upon teacher approval, students engage in the activity for 1-2 weeks during which time they will keep a journal of their experiences and interactions with members of their community. At the end of this period of time, students present a poster advertisement persuading others to get involved in their cause.

Lesson Plan 1

Rationale: When researching, students must understand the difference between paraphrasing versus plagiarizing in order that they develop the former and avoid the latter.

Learning Goal: Today we are learning how to paraphrase information we read in our research so that we can put our understanding of the author's ideas into our own words.

Materials: a brief article or paragraph for each student to practice paraphrasing i.e. "Cool Job" by Lorrie Castaneda from the Plugged Into Reading Resource materials for Rescues!

Procedure:

1) Begin by asking students if they know what plagiarism means. Depending on the responses, explain the term making sure to highlight how easy it is to make the mistake of plagiarizing when doing research due to the fact that collecting facts from non-fiction texts can easily lead to using the authors exact words when transferring that information into their own research documents.

2) Discuss the meaning of paraphrasing and model an example of putting your understanding of what an author writes into your own words using an article like "Cool Jobs" by Lorrie Castaneda. The first paragraph reads:

"At some point in his or her life, nearly every kid wants to be a firefighter. In 1998, the "Didja Ever Want to Be a FIREMAN?" survey on the World Wide Web tried to establish why. After four years of collecting responses, the survey pinpointed four reasons people wanted to become firefighters: the excitement, the heroics, the camaraderie, and a family history of firefighters."

3) On the board, model for the students one possible way to paraphrase this information:

Since being a firefighter is often what many kids dream of becoming, researchers decided to put out a survey on the internet called "Didja Ever Want to Be a FIREMAN?" After many years of research they determined four main reasons: 1) the job is exciting, 2) the job allows you to act like a hero, 3) the job helps you make good friends and 4) if you have firefighters in the family, you are more likely to become one yourself!

4) Explain to students that in order to paraphrase successfully they must understand the vocabulary the author uses. For example, without really knowing what camaraderie is, you cannot accurately paraphrase that critical information. Point out that a tendency of students is to just copy the words they don't understand and then when they are asked what it means, they demonstrate a lack of understanding. Encourage the students to imagine explaining their understanding to a friend and to write down what that natural explanation would sound like.

5) Next, take another paragraph from the same article and practice paraphrasing it as a whole class where the teacher writes down the ideas of the students and guides them accordingly. Actually practice having a child look of a new vocabulary word the students may not be familiar with so they can understand the process and its importance.

6) Have the students work in small groups to paraphrase a third paragraph and then share out their various paraphrases to demonstrate that there are often multiple ways to express the same information. This is also an opportunity to guide those students who tend to use too much of the original text such that their own sentences sound choppy and awkward.

7) Finally, have students practice paraphrasing a fourth paragraph independently and then share with a partner what they have written.

8) Walk around and observe, offering suggestions as you listen.

9) Assign another paragraph or article for homework for the students to paraphrase to give them further independent practice and feedback.

Evaluation/Assessment: We'll know we've got it when we can explain the ideas and information of an author in our own words, without plagiarizing.

Lesson Plan 2

Rationale: Students must understand that in order to be effective in persuading an audience in written form, each argument must be well supported with evidence and examples. So too must the students anticipate counter arguments to their claim and try to address those challenges.

Learning Goal: Today we are learning how to write well-supported claims so that we can persuade our audience of our argument in what could have been done differently in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Materials per group: H-chart

Procedure:

1) Students will take a stand on what they feel could have been done differently in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in terms of being more prepared before the storm or being more responsive after the storm hit.

2) After considering their audience (their classmates and parents), students will fill out an H-chart where on they will list both sides of the argument. This might be used to model for the students what ideas they might

consider:

FOR		AGAINST
Insurance should have covered more of the flooding damage to homes because the weak levees were not the victims' fault		The flooding occurred due to the weak levee system, not the natural disaster itself
FEMA should have provided mobile homes to more victims who lost their homes	ARGUMENT: The Government should have helped the victims of during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina	Many people did receive financial support from FEMA and were already poverty stricken even before the storm
The local government should not have waited so long to evacuate residents		The government was not aware of how severe the storm would be and could not come together in a decision for evacuation

3) Students will then develop their 'For' arguments further with more detail from their research and site specific examples and case studies from their readings to support their claims.

4) Students will then be guided to turn their notes from these graphic organizers and formulate paragraphs. Their introductory paragraph will need to have a hook, a thesis statement wherein they present their argument and its rationale. The following three paragraphs will lay out each of their arguments along with evidence and case study examples. Students will also be encouraged to counter the arguments against their claim. They will conclude their persuasive piece with a conclusion, which both summarizes their argument and drives home their point with a powerful statement.

5) As a way to revise and edit, students will confer with each other using a T.A.G. form wherein they Tell something they noticed or liked about their partners writing, Ask a question regarding something they may not have understood in their partners writing and then Give a suggestion to make the piece more persuasive.

6) As students confer with each other, the teacher can confer one-on-one with each student to provide feedback and guidance to children who may need more support in crafting their arguments.

7) Students will then bring their pieces to publication by typing them out and presenting them at a publishing party wherein parents and administrators are invited to attend and be their audience.

Evaluation/Assessment: We will know we've got it when we have understood all of the necessary elements that go into writing a persuasive essay.

Lesson Plan 3

Rationale: Students are often able to identify a problem and very readily place blame for that problem however, when they are held responsible to think of a solution to that problem, they fall short of understanding the energy and care that need to go into making change happen.

Learning Goal: Today we are learning how to design a model levee so that we can attempt to create sturdy barriers to prevent water from flooding in the event of a hurricane.

Materials per group: one rectangular plastic container or tub, \$10 worth of fun money, levee building materials (sand or gravel, duct tape, cotton balls, plastic sandwich bag or plastic wrap, a sponge, plastic straws, cardboard.), paper cups.

Procedure:

- 1) Divide the class into groups of 3-4.
- 2) Explain that the problem they are to solve is to build a levee system that will maintain the boundary between the lake/river and the city represented as the two sides of the rectangular plastic container.
- 3) Explain that their model level must be 5 inches high and wide enough to prevent the water on one side of the container from flooding into the other side of the container.
- 4) Provide each group with their own rectangular container and \$10 of fun money, which they are to use to purchase materials from the following list:

Material	Cost
1 cup of sand or gravel	\$1.00
5 cotton balls	\$1.00
straws	\$1.00
Popsicle sticks	\$1.00
1 foot of duct tape	\$2.00
1 sheet of cardboard	\$2.00
1 plastic sandwich bag	\$2.00
1 sponge	\$2.00

- 5) Allow students time to do some research on how real levees are constructed.
- 6) Have the students take two of the materials and test how well they slow down water by putting a small hole in a paper cup and putting the material at the bottom of the cup. Measure a specific amount of water and pour it into the cup with the hole to observe how well the material absorbs the water. Have students write down their observations
- 7) Instruct the groups to brainstorm their ideas by drawing or writing every idea that comes to mind. Remind them that no idea is too silly as creativity is necessary!
- 8) Have students select the most promising concept. On a fresh sheet of paper have the students draw and

explain their idea.

9) Allow students to determine their budget and 'buy' their materials.

10) Have students construct the levee and assist them in testing it by pouring water into one side of the container.

11) After students have tested their models, have them reflect on what worked well and what did not work well.

12) If time allows, let them improve their model and repeat steps 6-11.

Evaluation/Assessment: We will know we've got it when we have understood all of the necessary steps that go into designing, testing and reconfiguring a possible levee that will keep water out of a designated area.

Appendix: Implementing Common Core Standards

Reading Standards for Informational Text

Key Ideas and Details

1. Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
2. Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

Craft and Structure

4. Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text relevant to a grade 4 topic or subject area.
5. Describe the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in a text or part of a text.
6. Compare and contrast a firsthand and secondhand account of the same event or topic, describe the differences in focus and the information provided.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, timelines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.
7. Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, timelines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.
 8. Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular point in a text.
 9. Integrate information from two texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowingly.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

- By the end of year, read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, in the grades 4-5 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
- 10.

Reading Standards for Literature

Craft and Structure

11. Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.

Writing Standards

Text Types and Purposes

1. Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

Production and Distribution of Writing

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. With Guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.
6. With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

7. Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.
8. Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.

9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection and research.

Speaking and Listening

Comprehension and Collaboration

1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (on-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
2. Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively and orally.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

4. Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.
5. Add audio recordings and visual displays to presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.

Bibliography

Teacher Resources

Palser, Barb. Hurricane Katrina: Aftermath of Disaster. Minneapolis, Minn.: Compass Point Books, 2007. Print. This informational text is ideal for both young and mature readers as it presents the individual, city and national responses to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and the relief efforts that ensued. This text is filled with text features like sidebars, photographs, and a glossary making it ideal for research on this controversial, heavily loaded topic.

Vincanne Adams. Markets of Sorrow. Labors of Faith, New Orleans in the Wake of Katrina. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013. Print. This ethnographic account of the recovery during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina is both sobering and intriguing as the reader is given insight into how the disaster was by no means solely at the hands of Mother Nature but rather intensified and prolonged by the actions and inactions of the state and federal government. The reader is shown deplorable truths about how the privatization of disaster relief turned from humanitarian efforts to lucrative business schemes designed only to generate capital and further entrench the victims in debt and desolation.

Weaver, Julie . "Natural Disasters", 2013. "TeachersPayTeachers.com - An Open Marketplace for Original Lesson Plans and Other Teaching Resources." TeachersPayTeachers.com - An Open Marketplace for Original Lesson Plans and Other Teaching Resources. N.p., n.d. Web. 19 June 2014. <<http://www.teacherspayteachers.com/>>. This lesson sequence, created by Julie Weaver provides several helpful guiding questions for students to use when researching the various natural disasters and offers rubrics for teachers to grade students on their partner/small group projects.

Student Resources

Akay, Leyla. "The Girl Who Planted Hope: How Do I Make A Difference In My Community?." Skipping Stones 25.1 (2013): 10. Primary Search. Web. 23 Mar. 2014. This article, found on www.iconn.org, presents a young teen's views on doing something for the community and being inspired by a short story entitled "The Man Who Planted Trees," by Jean Giono. The young author, Leyla hopes

that in her lifetime, she will continue to plant many more trees as did the shepherd in the short story and serves to inspire readers to nurture their own 'forest of good deeds.'

Ducote, Phoebe. "Community Peace." *Skipping Stones* 25.5 (2013): 10. Primary Search. Web. 23 Mar. 2014. The touching poem "Community Peace," written by an 11 year old Phoebe Ducote is presented in such a way that a powerful message is given in a simple way that students can identify with and feel compelled or inspired to write their own poem about community.

Fradin, Judith Bloom, and Dennis B. Fradin. *Hurricanes*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2007. Print. National Geographic does an excellent job of depicting and describing the nature of Hurricanes, how they develop, the devastation wrought by their powerful forces and the history of various documented Hurricanes throughout history. This text is ideal for the second and third phases of my unit as it provides detailed accounts of Hurricane Katrina as well as scientific explanations of hurricanes, predictions and warnings. This text is rich in text features and text structures to assist students in locating specific information for their research projects.

Graf, Christine. "YOU Can Change THE WORLD." *Appleseeds* 12.7 (2010): 16. Primary Search. Web. 23 Mar. 2014. The article is ideal for the fourth phase of my unit as it presents information on the Jane Goodall's Roots & Shoots, the Jane Goodall Institutes program. The program encourages young people from preschool to college to work on projects that help their communities, the environment, and animals. It is believed by Jane Goodall that young people who participate in the program develop respect and compassion for the nature. This article offers an approach to community service through environmentally conscious behaviors and activities

Haynes, Ashleigh. "Community = Happy!." *Skipping Stones* 25.1 (2013): 11. Primary Search. Web. 23 Mar. 2014. This article comes in handy for the fourth phase of my unit and can be found on www.iconn.org. It presents young, 13 year old's views on improving communities and can offer students a role model closer in age, who has actualized her vision for change in a practical way.

LaFrance, Ethan. "Kool Kids." *Cobblestone* 29.5 (2008): 31. Primary Search. Web. 23 Mar. 2014. Found on www.iconn.org, this article provides ideas on how to become an engaged and active citizen and to make a difference in someone else's life and/or the community. This article is beneficial in guiding students through the fourth phase of my unit as they begin to explore practical and necessary ways they can become more involved in their various communities

Markle, Sandra. *Rescues!*. Minneapolis, MN: Millbrook Press, 2006. Print. This engaging text is part of the Plugged Into Reading program and is to be read as the core text during the second marking period in fourth grade. This text deals with the various natural disasters that have occurred throughout the world in recent years and how professional rescue teams as well as volunteers have brought survivors to safety. Several of the graphic organizers mentioned in phase one of this unit correspond with the Plugged Into Reading Resource Materials for this text.

McCabe, Suzanne. "After The Hurricane." *Junior Scholastic* 108.3 (2005): 4. Primary Search. Web. 23 Mar. 2014. This article, found on www.iconn.org is a helpful source for student research on the aftermath of Katrina as it presents information on the victims of Hurricane Katrina and describes how the hurricane affected many different parts of the U.S. in September 2005.

Palser, Barb. *Hurricane Katrina: Aftermath of Disaster*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Compass Point Books, 2007. Print. This informational text is ideal for both young and mature readers as it presents the individual, city and national responses to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and the relief efforts that ensued. This text is filled with text features like sidebars, photographs, and a glossary making it ideal for research on this controversial, heavily loaded topic.

Philbrick, W. R.. *Zane and the Hurricane: a Story of Katrina*. New York: The Blue Sky Press, 2014. Print. This novel presents a suspenseful, engaging story of a 12-year-old boy and his dog, Brandy, who are trapped in New Orleans during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. As the young reader is led through Zane's adventurous journey the tragic circumstances of this historical event are brought to light both sensitively yet factually so that a student can gain perspective with the gentle aid of narrative.

Smith, Darian. "The Service Effect: How Helping The Community Develops Strong Leadership In Students." *Future Reflections* 31.3 (2012): 47. Primary Search. Web. 23 Mar. 2014. In the fourth phase of my unit, this article is useful in providing students with examples of service activities they might engage in. This article gives a personal narrative on author's experiences of being a part of the U.S. community service AmeriCorps, which aims at providing fun, recreational programs for blind youth and seniors in the United States.

Smith, Steph. "LONG ROAD AHEAD. (Cover Story)." *Scholastic News – Edition 5/6* 74.4 (2005): 4. Primary Search. Web. 23 Mar. 2014. This article, found on www.iconn.org provides poignant information on fundraising activities created and carried out by school children in the U.S. to help hurricane Katrina victims in New Orleans, Louisiana. The article goes into the value of these donations made to Katrina relief groups as well as the challenges facing hurricane survivors.

Tarshis, Lauren, and Scott Dawson. *I Survived Hurricane Katrina*, 2005. New York: Scholastic, 2011. Print. This adventurous fictional narrative brings the reader a compelling account of a boy, Barry and his dog who are swept away from their family by the floodwaters after the levees break. The entertaining, suspenseful novel leaves readers at the edge of their seats as they wait to see if Barry will make it back to his family. This novel is ideal for students who are inclined to learn about historical events through realistic fiction. This story is told from the perspective of a ten-year-old boy and includes illustrations to hold reader's engagement.

"Trying To Recover." *Scholastic News Edition 4* 68.5 (2005): 2. Primary Search. Web. 23 Mar. 2014. This article, found on www.iconn.org is important for students to read as they research Hurricane Katrina because it reports on the cleanup of the U.S. Gulf Coast region after hurricanes in 2005. This article informs readers about how Hurricane Rita hit Gulf Coast communities in Texas and Louisiana just three weeks after Hurricane Katrina struck the area and describes the devastation wrought by these series of storms.

Uhlberg, Myron, and Colin Bootman. *A Storm Called Katrina*. Atlanta: Peachtree, 2011. Print. This beautifully illustrated picture book presents the tragedy of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina to children in a tactful, inspiring way. The story revolves around a young boy, Louis who is on a mission to find his father amidst the desperation and debris and finds strength in his cornet as an instrument of strength.

Van Zelfden, Alan. "YOU CAN COUNT ON US. (Cover Story)." *Boys' Life* 95.12 (2005): 16. Primary Search. Web. 23 Mar. 2014. This article is excellent for student research and can be found on www.iconn.org. This article shows students how the U.S. Boy Scouts served the victims of Hurricane Katrina and brings to light those organizations, which acted in the spirit of altruism as opposed to those, which sought to exploit the needy.

Film

If God is Willing and Da Creek Don't Rise. Dir. Spike Lee. HBO Home Entertainment, 2010. DVD. This documentary is directed by Spike Lee and is a follow up to his earlier documentary, *When the Levees Broke*. This documentary touches on several events which occurred during the years of New Orleans rebuilding efforts such as the FBI's investigation into the New Orleans Police Department and their handling of the rebuilding projects in the city, the NFL's New Orleans Saints winning the Super Bowl which brought great pride to the defeated city and the United States Army Corps of Engineers and their mishandling of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet Canal which caused the flooding of New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina.

Inside Hurricane Katrina. Dir. John Ford. National Geographic, 2010. DVD. This powerful, journalistic account of the events surrounding Hurricane Katrina provides students and adults alike a comprehensive analysis of the devastation caused not only by mother nature but also by human error. Through personal interviews and gripping images and narrative, National Geographic holds the engagement of its viewers while educating them in a powerful and memorable way.

When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts. Dir. Spike Lee. HBO Video, 2006. DVD. With painstaking detail, Director Spike Lee, covers the disastrous series of events that devastated the city of New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Through vivid

images, eye-witness accounts, interviews and jazz instrumental music he paints a picture of the gross incompetence of those in power of the state and federal level who mistreated the poor and underprivileged community members by blatantly ignoring their needs—acts of indifference, which Spike Lee informs the viewer, still go on to this very day.

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