

## **A Format for Conducting Discussions Among Students about Hurricane Katrina and the Events in the Gulf Coast: What Can Be Done? How Can Healing Take Place? How Can Students Take an Active Helping Role?**

The following pages contain a two worksheets and a lesson plan/discussion outline that can be used now and into the future with groups of students to help them sort out the events in the Gulf Coast in an emotionally intelligent way. The worksheets ask students to focus on different groups involved in the conflict. For example, one is set up with the groups, Children Who Have Lost Their Homes and Relief Workers. If there were 24 students in a class, they might form 4 groups of 6. Each group would complete the worksheet from the perspective of the group they were assigned. In this case, 2 groups would take the perspective of the children and 2 would take the perspective of the relief workers. Older students and/or those with more background, can add groups and/or think of them in more sophisticated ways. So, one might say National Guard Members sent to help and Looters, or for three groups, Meteorologists Tracking the Storm, FEMA Personnel who were involved in recent Florida Hurricanes, and the Mayor of New Orleans, Biloxi, or other affected cities. The selection of groups can integrate with larger curricular concerns, such as reading maps, calculating the height of a storm surge and the force of waves, analyzing the construction and strength of levees, and understanding geography, state and local government, communication systems, and the history, economy, and culture of Gulf Coast cities. The second worksheet is blank, which allows one to define groups in whatever way makes instructional sense.

The social decision making/social problem solving format in the worksheets is designed to help students clarify their feelings, try to understand why they feel as they do and be clear about their sources of information, determine clear goals, and work toward problem solving. Ultimately, this format serves to purpose of creating a deeper sense of empathy and perspective-taking. This is difficult to do, but this format helps that process along. The second purpose of the format is to help focus on action steps. Students in a democracy have shared responsibilities and need to have an orientation toward active participation. These various format are presented in the hopes of fostering greater understanding among our youth and also as tools to help the healing process as events move forward. If you have any questions about the use of these formats, please email me at [MJERU@AOL.COM](mailto:MJERU@AOL.COM) or Fax to me at 732-445-0036. —Maurice J. Elias, Ph.D., Rutgers University & CASEL Leadership Team ([www.CASEL.org](http://www.CASEL.org)).

## Academic Infusion of SEL/Decision Making into History and Current Events

Children Who Have Lost Their Homes

Relief Workers

Feelings

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Problems

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Goals

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Think of things to do

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Envision Outcomes

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Select best alternative

## Academic Infusion of SEL/Decision Making into History and Current Events

Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Feelings

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Problems

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Goals

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Think of things to do

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Envision Outcomes

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Select best alternative

## Thinking About Current Events

1. What is the event that you are thinking about? When and where is it happening? Put the event into words as a problem or choice or decision.
2. What people or groups were involved in the problem? What are their different feelings? What are their points of view about the problem?
3. What do each of these people or groups want to have happen? Try to put their goals into words.
4. For each person or groups, name some different options or solutions to the problem that they think might help them reach their goals. Add any ideas that you think might help them that they might not have thought of.
5. For each option or solution you listed, picture all the things that might happen next. Envision long and short term consequences.
6. What do you think the final decisions should be? How should it be made? By whom? Why?
7. Imagine a plan to help you carry out your solution. What could you do or think of to make your solution work? What obstacles or roadblocks might keep your solution from working? Who might disagree with your ideas? Why? What else could you do?
8. Rethink it. Is there another way of looking at the problem that might be better? Are there other groups, goals, or plans that come to mind?

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([www.researchpress.com](http://www.researchpress.com))