

Beyond Personal Finance: Using Katrina’s Classroom Videos across Disciplines

While the lesson plans of *Katrina’s Classroom: Financial Lessons from a Hurricane* deal with personal finance and emergency preparedness, the videos from the curriculum can be used for so much more. They can serve as conversation starters or to give context to lesson plans for a variety of topics or activities. Some of these topics could include social issues, prioritizing, family dynamics, friendships, weather patterns, urban planning, government relief spending, rebuilding communities, rebuilding costs, population shifts, employment shifts, and on and on. Further, the concepts can provide a backdrop for activities in math, statistics, creative writing, debate, fine art, science, geography, family consumer science, and current events—just to name a few.

The FEMA [disasters website](#) provides a wealth of information for similar activities. It has searchable, downloadable data and narrative reports of all federally declared states of emergency. You can pull data for every state on 26 different types of disasters (including weather, terrorism, chemical, viral, fire, flood, industrial) and four disaster declaration types (major, emergency, fire management, fire suppression).

While Hurricane Katrina was a significant event in 2005 that continues to have implications today, disasters of one type or another happen everywhere and all the time. A suggestion for developing a lesson based on similar situations in your state or region follows.

Activity suggestion

[FEMA data](#) show that the states of the Sixth Federal Reserve District—Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee—have had 55 major disaster declarations *since* Hurricane Katrina. The chart breaks the numbers of “Major Disaster Declarations” out by state.

	Alabama	Florida	Georgia	Louisiana	Mississippi	Tennessee
Flooding	0	0	0	1	1	0
Hurricane	1	2	0	3	1	0
Severe storms and tornadoes	1	1	2	1	1	1
Severe storms and flooding	2	0	2	1	1	2
Severe storms, tornadoes, winds, flooding	6	3	2	1	4	10
Severe winter storms and flooding	0	0	0	0	0	1
Tropical storm	1	2	0	1	0	0
TOTAL	11	8	6	8	8	14

Use the data in the chart above (or similar data for your state or region) and have your students do the following tasks.

1. Map, chart, or graph the disaster declarations by type, by state, by year (not shown here but available on the FEMA site).
2. Calculate ratios of incidence of disasters between states or between disaster types.

3. Make a prediction about weather activity in each state for the next year. Describe how you arrived at your prediction.
4. Research and identify the agricultural industries in each state. Discuss or write about the economic impact of the weather disasters of the last seven years (or in any selected year) on these industries.
5. Discuss, research, or write about why certain states appear to be more prone to certain types of weather disasters than others.

This chart activity is just one example of how you can use the videos of *Katrina's Classroom* to frame the study of topics in subjects beyond personal finance.

More resources for further study or cross curricula lesson development

[FEMA disaster declarations](#)

["Deadliest Tornadoes" \(PBS documentary\)](#)

[Hurricane Katrina: Social-Demographic Characteristics of Impacted Areas](#)

[How New Orleans Flooded \(PBS documentary\)](#)

["Understanding Katrina" \(from the Social Science Research Council\)](#)

Related resources

["Supply shocks: For better or worse" \(high school lesson plan\)](#)

["Biloxi-Gulfport Economy Keeps Coming Back" \(EconSouth article\)](#)

["The Gulf Coast: Two Years after Katrina" \(podcast transcript\)](#)

[*Ruin, Resilience, Restoration* \(Atlanta Fed 2005 annual report\)](#)

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