



LAKE COUNTY CASCADING HAZARDS

ReVisioning Hazards - Teacher Guide

Setting the Stage

Natural hazards, like wildfires, floods, and landslides not only destroy homes and property but can also be very stressful and scary for families to experience. Following the Valley and Rocky Fires, the Middletown Arts Center hosted community classes as part of the Resilience and RESTORE projects, for community members to come together and process their experiences. In this lesson, students read a poem written as part of the course, do some reflection on their own experience, and practice a visioning exercise to process memories of a hazard they've experienced.



A home being rebuilt as part of the Hope City project in Lake County. Photo Credit: Lake County News

Lesson Overview

In this lesson, students will:

- *Part 1 – (30 minutes) The Unusual Pool*
Read a poem written by a survivor of the Valley Fire who lost her home. Next, students write a brief reflection about the poem and their own experiences with a natural hazard or traumatic event in their lives.
- *Part 2 – (10 minutes) Visualizing the Past and Future*
Participate in a visualization activity to remember a traumatic event in their life.
- *Part 3 – (10 minutes) Closing Activity*
Do a quick stretch and share out, to get ready to transition to the next part of their day.

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Instructional Overview	
Grade Level	Middle/High School
Instructional Time	50 minutes (<i>total time needed</i>)
Unit Driving Question	How can we help our community be more resilient to cascading hazards?
Lesson Driving Question	How can we learn from past events to build resilience for future challenges?
Social-Emotional Learning Focus	Students use stress management strategies to manage their emotions and demonstrate personal agency (CASEL Core Competencies: Self-management)
What Students Will Do	- To begin a unit on cascading hazards in Lake County, students will share their own experiences with hazards and/or traumatic events they've experienced. - Students will use visualization practices to transform negative emotions from past events in order to increase psychological preparedness for future traumatic events.
Materials	☐ ReVisioning Hazards Student Worksheet ☐ Revisioning Hazards Slides ☐ ReVisioning Hazards Visualization Activity Video
Material Preparation	☐ Art supplies for free-draw ☐ Quiet room/calming music for visioning activity
Instructional Strategies	The visualization activity is adapted from the CLEAN Climate Mental Health activity set. Find more information and resources for addressing climate anxiety and mental health on the CLEAN Climate Mental Health page. Additional resources for using trauma-informed practices specific to natural hazards can be found in OSU Extension's Trauma-Informed Toolkit.

Trauma-Informed Practices

Wildfires, floods, and natural disasters can be traumatic events in students' lives. Even if they did not experience the disaster themselves, they may have family members who did, or be affected by upsetting news stories. Here are some suggestions we have as you teach the unit, to provide psychological safety for students.



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- **Prepare Students Ahead of Time:** Let students know ahead of time about the unit. If possible, touch base with a school counselor to let them know you will be discussing potentially challenging topic matter regarding local recent wildfires, and that you may need their help with your students. Example script:

Next week we will begin a unit about natural hazards, developed specifically for Lake County. The curriculum covers recent wildfires that have happened in our area and may bring up some tough memories or feelings. Share your personal feelings on the wildfires if you are comfortable doing so.

We will be learning about the environmental conditions that lead to natural hazards, like wildfires, floods, drought, and landslides, as well as how climate change is affecting these hazards. We will be watching some videos of locals talking about the Valley Fire, and reading some poetry from locals that lived through the Valley Fire.

If discussing these hazards feels like it will be a difficult thing for you, touch base with me this week, or talk to our school counselor.

- Use **self-care and coping strategies** for yourself first, before and during the unit.
- Build in opportunities for **student voice and choice** throughout the unit:
 - Provide alternative assignments if someone does not want to participate in the lesson
 - Encourage students to take breaks when needed and to give you a subtle signal when they need a break, like needing to use the bathroom
 - Invite students to participate instead of saying “we are going to do this...”- assume everyone is doing the best they can and allow them to choose which parts of the lesson they will engage with vs. reprimanding for not engaging.
- **Be flexible.** If students want to talk about their emotions related to a disaster event, let them.
- Use activities at the beginning of the unit that **helps students regulate their nervous system**: Breathing, focusing on their senses and the present moment, jumping jacks, art, and music.



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Part 1

The Unusual Pool (10 minutes)

Hand out a copy of The Unusual Pool handout to students. The Unusual Pool is a poem written by Jennifer Bauer Kelly. Jennifer, a former science teacher at Middletown Middle School, lost her home in the Valley Fire in 2015. This poem was written and published as part of the RESTORE: Restoring Community Post-Disaster Through Art project, facilitated by the Middletown Arts Center.



Ask students to read the poem individually, in small groups, or read the poem together as a class. Use the [slides](#) to read the poem as a class.

Next, have students respond to the reflection questions about the poem, and then spend 20 minutes doing a free-write or free-draw to reflect on their own experiences. Give students the opportunity to share their experiences if they would like to, in pairs, small groups, or as a class.

Part 2

Visualizing the Past and Future (10 minutes)

Begin the visualization by dimming the lights (if possible), and having a quiet room. Read the prompts below to guide the visualization. If you'd like, you can use the [recorded video](#) to facilitate the visualization.

We're going to practice a guided visualization. This is a practice used to reduce stress and anxiety and build a feeling of resourcefulness and resilience. Begin by sitting in a comfortable position. Put away anything that might distract you, and close your eyes.

Visualize a specific event where you felt vulnerable, and like you didn't have control of the situation. This event could be a natural hazard that you survived, like a wildfire or flood, or a scary time such as the beginning of the pandemic when you found out school would be closed.

Visualize the event as if you were in a movie theater, watching a movie scene of the event. Watch the movie scene, and notice how your body feels. You might feel your heart rate speed up, or your chest tightens, and that's okay.

Now, change some of the features of the movie. First, change the tempo. Speed it up and watch it on double time. Slow it down, and watch the movie in slow motion.

Next, change the lighting of the scene in the movie. Make the movie in black and white. Change the colors to blue or yellow tones in the movie.



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If there are voices in the scene, change the pitch of the voices to high-pitched and squeaky, or low and deep.

Zoom in on an object in the scene, and now zoom out high above the scene so you can see the whole state.

As you change the features of the movie, notice how your body feels. Feel your heart rate slow and become calmer. As you start to feel calm, imagine floating into the movie scene and playing a role in the scene. Instead of watching the scene, be part of the scene. Rewind the scene and play it again, but this time feeling calmer. Let your body remember what it's like to live through the scene, and how your body feels different now.

Now, imagine taking this more resourceful state you are in, a calmer, more confident state, to a future world that you are anxious about. Imagine that you float through this future world with more resourcefulness and capability.

Take a moment to take a few deep breaths.

You can practice this type of visualization technique, like fast-forwarding, zooming in and out, and rewinding to feel more perspective and resourcefulness in any challenging area of your life.

The Science of Visualization

Research shows that the practice of visualization can change neural pathways, and train the brain to respond to situations differently. In one study, scientists compared strength of one group of people who did physical exercises, and one group of people that just imagined doing the exercises. In the physical exercise group, finger strength increased by 53%. In the group that just imagined the exercise, strength still increased! Finger strength increased by 35% in the group that just imagined doing the finger exercises ([Ranganathan et al., 2004](#)). Read more about visualization in this [Psychology Today article](#).

Part 3

Closing Activity (10 minutes)

End the class by doing a movement activity to help students transition to the next class. Ask a student to lead the class in a quick stretch routine, and if there's time, ask students to share one word about how they are feeling in a whip-around. If there isn't time, ask students to give a hand signal for how they feel on a 1-5, 5 being fantastic.