

6 TIPS

TO MANAGE SCHOOLS THROUGH A DISASTER



School administrators are coping with fires, storms, and floods on top of the deep disruption from COVID-19. Here are advice and resources from educators Tim Taylor (Executive Director, Small School Districts' Association), Casey Taylor (Executive Director, Achieve Center), and Mike Walsh (Director-at-Large, California County Boards of Education) on how to manage a school community following a disaster based on their experiences during and after the 2018 Camp Fire in Paradise, CA.



Prioritize caring for yourself and your staff.

- Support traumatized teachers by hiring a full-time substitute to assist.
- Provide signing bonuses to every staff member who agrees to stay for the next school year.
- Give yourself permission to feel what's going on

Watch our video for more: <https://youtu.be/nBjH2o83dg4>



Request and accept help.

- Bring in help from outside your district, like firefighting teams do.
- Find a trustworthy coordinator to manage donations.
- Form a full mental health team: coordinator, crisis counselor, trauma counselor, school psychologist.
- Hire interim principals to share the work of getting schools back up and running.
- Ask your school district attorney how they can help.
- Hire a budget coordinator to manage purchases and pay bills for replacement item

Watch our video for more: <https://youtu.be/lf9hQ74xOtc>



Be strategic about communications.

For the community

- Make sure your students and staff are safe and communicate that regularly.
- Only say what is confirmed by official fire, law enforcement and emergency sources.
- Do a daily community update

To news outlets

- Be prepared to deal with the national media.
- Tell your story to help get long-term donations.
- Update school websites with photos of the damage and ask for donation

With school board members

- Make sure they know where to see your daily updates.
- Longer term, have them help you tell your story.
- Ask them to focus on legislation for long-term aid for your schools.

With others

- Ask legislators for help with existing school bonds that are linked to property taxes and fund schools.
- Stay in regular contact with unions about financial support for staff and plans for the future.

Watch our video for more: <https://youtu.be/xzeDN9oXSVkk>



Streamline decision making.

- Set up daily updates for school board members and ask them not to call school leaders unless absolutely necessary.
- Determine what school board resolutions need to be passed to make sure leaders have temporary authority to make all necessary decisions.
- Ask the board to focus on long-term issues: FEMA contracts, facility contracts, enrollment funding waivers.

Watch our video for more: https://youtu.be/p_PKg9OT2nA



Access and leverage all relief money.

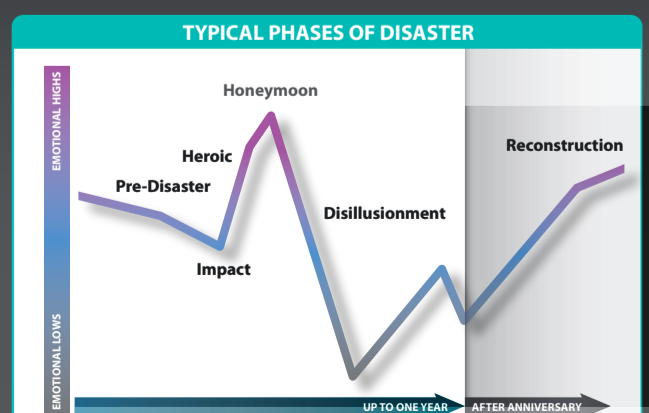
- Designate a FEMA coordinator to identify needs, fill out forms, and chase funds.
- Use FEMA funds for people to help run schools or manage your district, not just for structures or supplies.
- Make full use of funding from the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act for students.
- Access free meals and shelter benefits via the USDA's child nutrition program.

Watch our video for more: <https://youtu.be/oINPOXwLigY>



Prepare for the highs and lows.

- Recovery and Restore phase: For the first year, everyone in the community is in various degrees of trauma. This could last up to two years with peaks and crashes.
- Reconstruction phase: Expect ten years, with new construction starting after nine or ten months.



Watch our video for more: <https://youtu.be/Jc9d8X9tdgE>