Monarch Butterflies, Day of the Dead, and Climate Change: Culture and Awareness in the World Language Curriculum

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Introduction

New Jersey Schools are encouraged to implement new standards to develop interdisciplinary units focused on climate change that include authentic learning experiences, integrate a range of perspectives, and are action oriented. A lesson plan on the topic of the Monarch Butterflies migration and the Day of the Dead is a great example to accomplish these objectives.

Why Monarch Butterflies?

1. They pollinate plants in our gardens.
2. They serve as an indicator of a healthy environment.
3. They are very sensitive to habitat and climate change. Their extinction can affect the entire ecosystem.
4. Their presence stimulates positive effects in mood and mental health.

Word Language Performance Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Interpretive</th>
<th>2. Interpersonal</th>
<th>3. Presentational</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive: Demonstrate comprehension of broad oral and written messages found in engaged authentic materials on global issues, including climate change.</td>
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<td>Interpersonal: Exchange brief messages with others about climate in the target region of the world and in your own region using memorized and practiced words, phrases, and simple, formulaic sentences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentational: Name and label tangible cultural products associated with climate change in the target language region of the world.</td>
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Source: https://www.nj.gov/education/standards/lu1n/learning/spreadsheet/

Learning outcomes

After this lesson students will be able to...

1. To identify the different stages of development and learn the four stages of butterfly metamorphosis: egg, larva, pupa, and adult.
2. To understand the meaning and significance of Monarch butterflies in Mexican culture and their relationship to Indigenous Day of the Dead beliefs.
3. To talk about the dangers that Monarch butterflies face at risk and the impact on the broader natural environment in which we live. Students can create awareness in their community.

Connecting Culture and Climate Change

- Monarch butterflies have a high dispersal ability and a short generation time, making them vulnerable to a changing climate.
- Monarchs are highly sensitive to weather & climate, and face a decline in milkweed abundance and an increasing frequency of extreme weather events.
- The returning migration route from U.S.A. and Canada to the north of Mexico coincides with the Day of the Dead celebration.
- We can use the Day of the Dead celebration to increase awareness about climate change through a lesson plan that explains the Monarch’s migration, life cycle, and threats.
- Indigenous believe holds that the spirit of their beloved departed ones return in the form of a butterfly.
- It is important to explain that indigenous knowledge regarding the conservation of Monarchs were developed over hundreds of years.

Create lesson plans

- Due to the collaborative affords between Mexico-Canada-U.S.A, there are available online numerous videos and website with information. Take advantage!
- A lesson plan can be delivered in many days and with the participation of science classes.
- Invite local organizations and advocates to participate in your lesson plan. For example Rutgers has the Pollinator Garden. https://rutgersgardens.rutgers.edu/education-resources?
- Scan my QR code for lesson plan!

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