Gardens Allow Novel Learning Opportunities for Special Needs Students

Monarchs serve as an inspiration for children at the Center for Independence through Conductive Education.

Monarch butterflies have a history intertwined with education. Currently, two schools are using the monarch and its habitat to not only foster a love of nature in students, but to achieve the education goals of special needs students.

The Vaughn Occupational High School and the Center for Independence through Conductive Education, both in Chicago, IL, have done a notable job using their grants to enrich learning possibilities for students with special needs.

For some students at Vaughn High School, this was their first experience in a garden. Students in environmental science classes are responsible for planting and maintaining the garden. Some students even monitor biodiversity in the garden, acting as "bug reporters". Neat planting boxes called VegTrug's gave students with disabilities, particularly those using wheelchairs, better access to the garden.
access, allowing them to plant plugs in the garden. Students are proud of the work they do in the garden. One student says the garden gives him serenity, allowing him the time and peace to think through issues.

The Center for Independence through Conductive Education requested a garden be installed at their institution to augment their motor skills training program. A key goal for the Center for Independence is to foster a sense of individuality in students. Planting and maintaining the garden afforded students a great opportunity to improve their independence, and be enamored with the natural environment. The Center set out with an initial goal of bringing a new perspective to their students using the monarch as an example. Witnessing metamorphosis and learning about the impressive life-cycle of the monarch bolstered children’s self-confidence. The addition of a schoolyard garden and monarch butterflies helped the Center for Independence achieve its ultimate goal of turning “I can’t’s” into “I cans”.

Curriculum Lesson: Student Projects on Metamorphosis
Students will conduct a variety of interdisciplinary projects that expand their knowledge of butterflies and other insects. This lesson, and many more, can be found online for free!

Students at Vaughn High School are proud of the garden they have created and value the hands-on experience of working in the garden.

An Exclusive Opportunity for all NAMI Participants

We have some exciting, exclusive opportunities for our past NAMI participants: 1) a site visit this spring to your school from one of our Minnesota-based instructors, and 2) supplemental funding for existing schoolyard gardens made possible through the NAMI course. Visits will be based upon schedule availability. Look for an email with more information and an application within the next week.

2015 Population Update and Estimating the Number of Overwintering Monarchs in Mexico
Excerpt from the Monarch Joint Venture
Contributors: Gail Morris, Karen Oberhauser, and Lincoln Brower

Interested in Professional Development opportunities? Check out what the Monarch Lab is offering this summer!
Estimating the Number of Overwintering Monarchs in Mexico

Every year we wait impatiently for the monarch overwintering population count from Mexico. When are they done and how are the monarchs counted?

Find out more [here](#)!

Don't Forget About the Western Population!
The western overwintering population looks to be maintaining, with this year's official count being reported at just under 235,000 monarchs. Relive Monarch Conservation Specialist Gail Moriss' experiences visiting some overwintering sites in California. [Read the full article here](#)!

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Make sure to follow the Monarch Joint Venture on Twitter! Providing useful information on gardening, pollinators, conservation, and monarchs, of course! Follow @MonarchsJV #savethemonarch