



## Our Lady of Mount Carmel Private Parochial, San Francisco



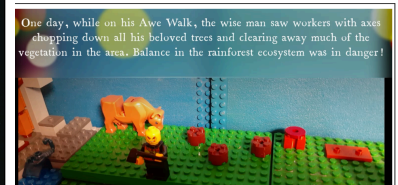
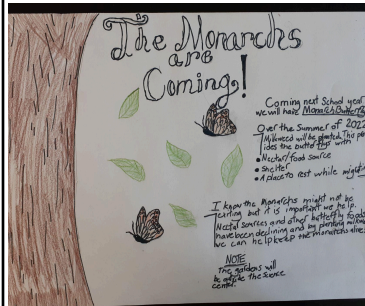
### Land Based Ecosystems, Green Building and Grounds

Level: Entry

Pathway: Curriculum and Instruction



PLANTING THE MILKWEEDS



One day, while on his Awe Walk, the wise man saw workers with axes chopping down all his beloved trees and clearing away much of the vegetation in the area. Balance in the rainforest ecosystem was in danger!

Mary Dournaee, a middle school teacher at Our Lady of Mount Carmel, participated in the Environmental Solutionary Teacher Fellowship to develop a solutionary unit of study on biodiversity loss. Her students learned about organisms that live in the biosphere in various ecosystems. Students looked at global cycles and how changes to these can affect the climate and biodiversity. To facilitate this unit plan, the class reached out to the school principal and advocated for their biodiversity project to become a schoolwide and community effort to raise funds for a 'Grand Garden' with native, Monarch butterfly friendly plants as well as edible plants that supplement school lunches. Through donations, they now have the connections, funding, and milkweed plants necessary for a Monarch butterfly habitat within the soon-to-be-built school garden. Students in grades 3-8 may help design and construct the garden.

This project gave students a view into global systems and cycles of life. They are able to understand why and how these systems and cycles can fall out of balance and end up with global ecological issues. Once they identify these imbalances, they can work backwards to try and find solutions to these issues that will otherwise just be pushed further out of balance. Students have learned strategies to design their own solutions using financial, social, and scientific lenses to create the greatest good and least harm to humans and all other living organisms.

The next step is the actual construction of the Grand Garden this Fall, followed by community planting efforts of milkweed and edible plants. This offers Mary and her students an opportunity to continue building awareness in the school community into next year. Maintaining the garden will continue this work beyond that time as well. Students may be responsible for picking fruits, vegetables, and herbs and distributing them at lunch. There will also be a watering and weeding schedule so that multiple classes tend the garden on an ongoing basis. This will be a contemplative, safe space for the community to enjoy nature and consider additional ways they can reduce their ecological footprint and maintain climate resilience.