



Easter/Spring Celebration

Denver Public Schools

In partnership with Metropolitan State College of Denver

El Alma de la Raza Project



Easter/Spring Celebration

By Deborah J. Francis

Grades: Early Childhood/Kindergarten

Implementation Time
for Unit of Study: 1–2 weeks

Denver Public Schools

El Alma de la Raza Curriculum
and Teacher Training Program

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Easter/Spring Celebration

Unit Concepts

- Signs of Spring
- Nonreligious traditions for Easter
- Bunnies
- Chocolate and its relationship to the holiday
- Eggs
- Pinatas

Standards Addressed by This Unit

Visual Arts

Students know how to apply elements of art, principles of design, and sensory and expressive features of visual arts. (A2)

History

Students understand that societies are diverse and have changed over time. (H3)

Reading and Writing

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)

Students will add new words to their vocabulary. (Pathways to Success-Oral)

Students will participate in group discussions. (Pathways to Success-Oral)

Students will listen to a story read aloud; respond to a read aloud story with questions/ comments. (Pathways to Success-Reading)

Students will answer questions about read aloud story. (Pathways to Success-Reading)

Introduction

Easter is a holiday celebrated by Christians. It is celebrated in the spring, and is a sign of nature's rebirth and the renewal of life. The date of this holiday varies from year to year, but usually falls between March 22 and April 25. There are many traditions associated with Easter and spring, such as dyed eggs, chocolate candies, baskets, bunnies, and more. "Easter" is derived from "Eastre," who was the goddess of light and spring (her earthly form was the rabbit, which was the sign of abundance of new life). The Anglo-Saxons celebrated a festival every spring in her honor. The Germans brought the tradition of the Easter bunny to our country, however, Easter wasn't widely celebrated in the U.S. until after the Civil War.

In Hispanic culture, Easter begins with church services, followed by a big family dinner at home. After dinner, the children celebrate by hunting for decorated eggs. Cascarones (eggs filled with confetti) are used to throw at each other. In Mexico, the cascarones are broken over the head of a loved one.

Implementation Guidelines

This unit is recommended for kindergarten and early childhood classrooms. It is to be a supplement for any spring or Easter unit already being used in the classroom. It is designed to incorporate Hispanic literature and traditions into the Easter holiday.

Instructional Materials

The following books and resources are required for implementing this unit:

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|----------|---|
| Lesson 1 | <i>Peter Cottontail</i> by Amanda Stephens (illustrated by Christopher Santoro)
<i>Fiestas/Holidays</i> CD by José-Luis Orozco
<i>Peter Cottontail's Easter Book</i> by Lulu Delacre |
| Lesson 2 | <i>The Chocolate Rabbit</i> by Marie Claret
<i>Del Cacao al Chocolate</i>
"El Chocolate" song from <i>De Colores</i> CD by José-Luis Orozco
"Rima de Chocolate" rhyme from <i>Tortillitas Para Mama</i> by Margot Griego |
| Lesson 3 | <i>A Surprise for Mother Rabbit</i> by Alma Flor Ada
<i>A Piece of My Heart/Pedacito de mi Corazon: The Art of Carmen Lomas Garza</i> |
| Lesson 4 | <i>Fiestas/Holidays</i> CD by José-Luis Orozco
<i>Fiesta USA</i> by George Ancona
<i>Hispanic Holidays</i> by Faith Winchester
<i>Pinatas and Paper Flowers</i> by Lila Perl
<i>A Piece of My Heart/Pedacito de mi Corazon: The Art of Carmen Lomas Garza</i>
<i>Dona Blanca and Other Hispanic Nursery Rhymes and Games</i> by Isabel Schon |
| Lesson 5 | <i>Tío Conejo</i> audiotope by Olga Loya
<i>Pinatas and Paper Flowers</i> by Lila Perl |
| Lesson 6 | <i>Peter Cottontail's Easter Book</i> by Lulu Delacre
All previous materials |

Lesson Summary

Lesson 1	Easter/Spring 4 Students will share their understanding of Easter and the traditions that are followed in their homes. Lesson includes a hands-on activity.
Lesson 2	Chocolate! 6 Students explore the wonderful world of chocolate, its origins and its values.
Lesson 3	Cascarones 9 Students will view artwork by Carmen Lomas Garza, and explore the traditions of the colored egg. Lesson culminates in a hands-on activity.
Lesson 4	Pinata Eggs 11 Students will learn about the pinata and its role in the Hispanic culture. Lesson will culminate with students making a pinata.
Lesson 5	“Colored Carpets” 13 Students will learn about a tradition from Central America, and create a “carpet” of their own.
Lesson 6	Celebrate! 15 Students will culminate the unit with a celebration of the various traditions they have studied.

LESSON 1: It's Spring!

What will students be learning?

STANDARDS

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students understand that societies are diverse and have changed over time. (H3)

Students know and understand the characteristics and structure of living things, the processes of life, and how living things interact with each other and their environment. (S3)

Students will answer questions about a read-aloud story. (R ECE 12–Pathways to Success)

Students add new words to vocabulary. (OL Pre 7–Pathways to Success)

BENCHMARKS

Students will know and understand the characteristics of living things, the diversity of life, and how living things interact with each other and with their environment.

Preschoolers will listen to and understand a variety of materials.

Preschoolers will experience quality children's literature in a variety of ways.

Preschoolers will understand that print is an important and symbolic means of communication.

OBJECTIVES

Students will understand the signs of spring.

Students will be introduced to customs and traditions from the Hispanic culture revolving around Easter.

What will be done to help students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Read aloud

Modeled writing

Chart

Hands-on art activity

PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Read *Peter Cottontail* by Amanda Stephens. Introduce the Easter holiday and the "Easter Bunny." Discuss that this is a holiday that occurs in the spring. (At the same time you are discussing Easter, introduce various traditions, and that they will be learning traditions from other cultures.) Have the children "brainstorm" different signs of spring. Using modeled writing, list the children's ideas about spring on chart paper, and let the children add illustrations when appropriate. (*Modeled writing is when the teacher writes in front of the group, possibly what they are dictating, and shares a different strategy every day, such as spaces, letter patterns, periods, etc. The teacher then rereads what they have shared.*) Encourage the use of specific vocabulary.

ACTIVITIES

For fun, introduce the activity by listening to “El Conejito” (the bunny) on the CD *Fiestas/Holidays* by José-Luis Orozco. Explain the term *el conejito* means *the bunny* in Spanish. Children will then make a spring picture using various art materials as follows:

- Each child will use a piece of pastel-colored construction paper.
- Using small circular sponges, children will sponge paint (in white) bunnies onto their paper.
- Children will use crayons to add features, grass, and flower stems.
- Children will then take small squares of tissue paper to make flower blossoms.

Encourage the use of proper vocabulary as listed below. Display the children’s artwork in the classroom.

VOCABULARY

Buds — a small growth on the stem of a plant that may grow into a flower

Stem — the main “trunk” of a plant

Conejito — Spanish word for bunny

Blossoms — to open up

Easter — a pagan spring festival; a religious holiday

Hispanic — relating to the speech, people, and culture of Spain, Portugal, or Latin American

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

Peter Cottontail by Amanda Stephens

Fiestas/Holidays CD by José-Luis Orozco

Pastel-colored construction paper

Sponges

White paint

Small squares of tissue paper

Crayons

Chart paper

Resource book: *Peter Cottontail’s Easter Book* by Lulu Delacre

ASSESSMENT

After the activity is completed, bring the group together and have children tell or dictate a story about spring and Easter using the terms and knowledge they gained.

LESSON 2: CHOCOLATE!

What will students be learning?

STANDARDS

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students know and understand the characteristics and structure of living things, the processes of life, and how living things interact with each other and their environment. (S3)

Students will add new words to vocabulary. (OL Pre 7–Pathways to Success)

BENCHMARKS

Students will identify the five senses, especially taste.

Students will identify characteristics of plants.

Preschoolers will listen to and understand a variety of materials.

OBJECTIVES

Students will learn about where chocolate comes from and the cycle from plant to chocolate.

Students will experience various tastes such as bitter and sweet.

What will be done to help students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Read aloud

Group discussion

Sensory activity

Charting

Sequencing

PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Read *The Chocolate Rabbit* by Marie Claret. Discuss everyone's favorite kind of Easter candy, including chocolate bunnies. Check for prior knowledge about chocolate and its origin. Using the book *Del Cacao al Chocolate*, describe the cacao bean and the process of making chocolate. (Cacao beans are grown, picked and roasted, and then mixed with milk, sugar, and butter to make chocolate.) Explain that the bean is grown in Latin American and South American countries.

ACTIVITIES

To get the children involved with the activity, use the rhyme "Rima De Chocolate" from the book *Tortillitas Para Mama* and the song "El Chocolate" from the CD *De Colores* by José-Luis Orozco. Each child will receive a Chocolate Tasting Worksheet. Students will sample the varieties and stages of chocolate. The first sample will be bitter or baking chocolate. Explain that this is what chocolate tastes like before sugar and butter are added. In the section marked bitter, have the children draw a happy or sad face depending on how they felt about the taste. Next, sample semisweet and have them draw their opinion, and do the same for sweet. (Be sure to discuss that taste is one of our five senses.)

VOCABULARY

Cacao bean — bean from a tree grown in Central or South American countries

Bitter — a disagreeable or acrid taste

Semisweet — slightly sweetened

Sweet — pleasing to the taste

Roast — cooking by dry heat

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

Chocolate Tasting Worksheet

Chart paper

Crayons

The Chocolate Rabbit by Marie Claret

“El Chocolate” from *De Colores* CD by José-Luis Orozco

“Rima de Chocolate” rhyme from *Tortillitas Para Mama* by Margot Griego

Del Cacao al Chocolate

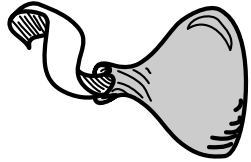


Samples of baking (bittersweet), semisweet, and milk chocolates

ASSESSMENT

Using chart paper, make a graph of the three types of chocolate; review each one and then graph everyone’s favorite. Tally to see the favorite.

Name _____

Chocolate Tasting Worksheet

<p>Milk</p> 		
<p>Semi</p> 		
<p>Bitter</p> 		

LESSON 3: Cascarones

What will students be learning?

STANDARDS

Students understand that societies are diverse and have changed over time. (H3)

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

Students make comparisons of objects. (Oral Language ECE 8–Pathways to Success)

Students follow three-step directions. (Oral language ECE 9–Pathways to Success)

Students include adjectives and adverbs in sentences. (Oral Language 10–Pathways to Success)

BENCHMARKS

Students will participate in various forms of artistic expression.

Students will recognize special days and national holidays.

Students will respect ethnic heritage.

Students will understand that print carries meaning.

Students will use information from their reading to increase vocabulary and language usage.

Students will read literature to understand places, people, events, and vocabulary, both familiar and unfamiliar.

Students will read literature representing various cultural and ethnic traditions from throughout the world.

OBJECTIVES

Students will be introduced to an Easter tradition from Hispanic culture.

Students will describe the process for making cascarones using descriptive language.

Students will demonstrate ability to listen for oral direction.

SPECIFICS

In Hispanic culture, special eggs, called cascarones, are made during Easter. Cascarones are eggshells that are filled with confetti. In Mexico, they are broken over the heads of a loved one, and in other South American countries they are thrown in a fun “battle.”

What will be done to help students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Read aloud

Group discussion

Visuals

Modeled writing

Checking for understanding

Predicting

PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

To prepare the eggshells, use a needle and make a small hole at one end of the egg. Keep poking at the hole until you have made it a little smaller than a dime. Empty the raw egg (you might consider saving to make green eggs and ham). Rinse the inside and let dry.

ACTIVITIES

Read *A Surprise for Mother Rabbit*. Discuss the various eggs in the story. Show the painting “Cascarones” by Carmen Lomas Garza. Discuss and explain the concept of cascarones and how they are used.

Place students in groups of four or five. Students will:

- Fill eggshells with small, cut up pieces of construction paper or confetti.
- Tape over the hole with masking tape.
- Dye the eggs after filling with confetti.
- Display the eggs for all students to view.

VOCABULARY

Cascarone— special eggshells filled with confetti and thrown at friends or broken over the head of a loved one.

Mexico — country in Central America, south of the United States border.

Confetti — small bits of brightly colored paper

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

Prepared eggshells

Dye for eggs

Confetti/small cut up pieces of construction paper

Chart paper

A Surprise for Mother Rabbit by Alma Flor Ada

A Piece of My Heart/Pedacito de mi Corazon: The Art of Carmen Lomas Garza

ASSESSMENT

Students will retell the story about the tradition of cascarones. Students will be assessed on their ability to:

- use comparative language (as pretty as...);
- describe three steps in making of cascarones;
- use three adjectives or adverbs;
- make a general statement about the history of cascarones and provide one detail; and
- tell how various eggs are different/same.

LESSON 4: Pinata Eggs

What will the students be learning?

STANDARDS

Students understand that societies are diverse and have changed over time. (H3)

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students will sustain interactions and interact positively with all children.

(Social Dev. ECE 3,5–Pathways to Success)

Students add new words to vocabulary. (OL Pre 7–Pathways to Success)

Students know how to apply elements of art, principles of design, and sensory and expressive features of visual arts. (A2)

BENCHMARKS

Students will participate in various forms of artistic expression.

Students will respect ethnic heritage.

Students will learn to work in cooperative groups.

Preschool learners understand that print is an important and symbolic means of communication.

Preschool learners experience quality literature in a variety of ways.

OBJECTIVES

Students will learn the traditions of the pinata and what is a pinata.

Students will work in cooperative groups making their own pinata.

What will be done to help students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Visual aids

Group discussion

Cooperative groups

PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Display an actual pinata, books with pictures, descriptions, and the painting from the Carmen Lomas Garza book to introduce pinatas. Explain that a pinata is a container, possibly made of clay or paper-mache, that is filled with candy or small treats. Pinatas are hung for holidays, fiestas, and birthdays. Children take turns being blindfolded, turned around, and then swinging at the pinata with a stick until it breaks and the candy scatters.

ACTIVITY

Play the song “La Pinata” from the CD *Fiestas/Holidays* by José-Luis Orozco. Divide the children into small groups. They will need adult supervision during the activity. Using a balloon that is blown up and tied, the children will dip newspaper strips into a paper-maiche mixture (a liquid starch mix can also be used) and apply to the balloon. Be sure that the strips are smoothed. Completely cover except for a small opening to place the candy through. You may want to coat the balloon twice. Let dry for two days and then have children paint to resemble Easter eggs. After the paint is dry, pop balloon and fill with candy. Save student pinatas for the last lesson.

VOCABULARY

Pinata — a container filled with candy, often made from paper-maiche

Paper-maiche — a way of creating art projects from newsprint and a paste mix

Fiesta — a festival

RESOURCE/MATERIALS

Fiestas/Holidays CD by José-Luis Orozco

Fiesta U.S.A. by George Ancona

Hispanic Holidays by Faith Winchester

Pinatas and Paper Flowers by Lila Perl

A Piece of My Heart/Pedacito de mi Corazon: The Art of Carmen Lomas Garza

Pinata

Paper-maiche mix

Newspaper strips

Paint, brushes

Candy and small treats

Balloons

Dona Blanca and Other Hispanic Nursery Rhymes and Games by Isabel Schon

ASSESSMENT

As a group, have the children share their experiences in making the pinata. During the activity, check for “cooperative” work taking place.

LESSON 5: "Colored Carpets"

What will students be learning?

STANDARDS

Students will read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students will follow three-step directions. (OL ECE 9–Pathways to Success)

Students understand that societies are diverse and have changed over time. (H3)

BENCHMARKS

Students will respect ethnic heritage.

Students will participate in various forms of artistic expression.

Students will recognize special days and national holidays.

OBJECTIVES

Students will learn about "customs" and how they relate to various cultures.

Students will share "customs" from their families.

Students will replicate a custom from another culture.

What will be done to help students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Story telling

Listening skills

Group discussions

Hands-on art activity

PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Begin by having the children listen to the audiotope *Tío Conejo* by Olga Loya. This is a story from a tape of Latin American folktales. Share with the children that story telling is a "custom" done in many countries and in many families as a way of passing things down through generations. Discuss what "customs" are and how they can differ from one family to another as well as differ from country to country. Share some of your own "customs" or traditions.

ACTIVITY

Share with the children a special custom from Central America — the custom of spreading colored sawdust through stenciled sieves to create designs on the streets like "colored carpets." These designs are created the night before a procession and the week before Easter. They sprinkle water on them so they will stay through the night. Explain that they will create their own "colored carpet."

The students will be given a strip of poster board (needs to be stiff). They will paint the strip with a watered-down glue mix and then use stencils to carefully sift colored sand onto the poster board. Carefully shake off the excess. Continue until the strip is covered with sand.

VOCABULARY

Sieve

Stencil

Central America — area of countries between North and South America

Traditions — handing down information or beliefs

Customs — a long-established practice

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

Strips of white poster board

Colored sand

Stencils of flowers, patterns, etc.

Glue and water mix

Paintbrushes

Tío Conejo audiotape by Olga Loya

Pinatas and Paper Flowers by Lila Perl

ASSESSMENT

As an assignment have the children sit with their parent(s) or guardian and talk about a “custom” or tradition that their family practices. Have the children share that tradition or discussion with the class.

LESSON 6: Celebrate!

What will students be learning?

STANDARD

Students understand that societies are diverse and have changed over time. (H3)

BENCHMARKS

Students will participate in various forms of artistic expression.

Students will recognize special days and national holidays.

Students respect ethnic heritage.

Students become aware of the special meanings of holidays in a pluralistic society.

OBJECTIVE

Students will show knowledge of various holiday traditions from other cultures.

What will be done to help students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Read aloud

Group discussion

Reviews

Hands-on activities

Visual art

ACTIVITIES

Children will enjoy a culmination of the lessons they have done so far. Begin with an egg hunt using the cascarones they made in Lesson 3. After all eggs have been found, let the children enjoy breaking the cascarones or throwing them at targets. (Save the shell pieces for the children to make spring mosaics by gluing the pieces down on construction paper in a spring-like pattern.) Then, hang the pinatas made by students in Lesson 4 and let each group play at breaking their own pinata and gathering the candy that scatters.

VOCABULARY

Mosaic — a picture made of small, colored pieces in a pattern

Review of the following:

Cascarone

Pinata

Fiesta

Cacao bean

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

Cascarone eggs (made in Lesson 3)

Pinatas (made in Lesson 4)

Chocolate

Candy

Books from unit

Peter Cottontail's Easter Book by Lulu Delacre

Construction paper

Glue

Crayons

ASSESSMENT

Children will draw a picture of their favorite part of the unit and with the help of older student helpers or adults, and dictate what they learned from that lesson. Check for knowledge.

UNIT ASSESSMENT

How will students demonstrate proficiency?

PERFORMANCE TASK

Read *Dear Peter Rabbit* by Alma Flor Ada. This is a story made up of letters from storybook characters to other storybook characters. Have children write to their favorite character and tell them about what they have learned throughout the week(s). You will need to have older students or adults help with this activity. Student should be able to:

- understand signs of spring and Easter;
- describe the cycle of cacao bean to chocolate;
- explain what a pinata is and how it is used;
- describe making cascarones; and
- tell about the custom of “colored carpets.”

SCORING RUBRIC

Use the rubric below to assess each student’s knowledge.

<u>Rubric Points</u>	<u>Description</u>
4	Exceeds expectations in giving information in letter.
3	Acceptable information given in letter.
2	Partially acceptable information given.
1	Little or no information given.

Bibliography

Books

- Ada, Alma Flor. *A Surprise for Mother Rabbit*. Miami, FL, Santillana Publishing, Inc.
Mother rabbit's children decide to surprise her by collecting the eggs. They go around asking different birds for their eggs. The collection they gather shows that each one is unique.
- Ancona, George. *Fiesta U.S.A.* New York, Lonestar Books, a division of Penguin Books, 1995.
This book describes the way Hispanics celebrates their traditions in the United States.
- Beckman, Cheryl, Roberta Simmons, and Nancy Thomas. *Channels to Children*. Colorado Springs, CO, Channels to Children, 1982.
A guide to activities for Early Childhood classrooms.
- Brown, Margaret Wise. *El Conejito Andarin (The Runaway Bunny)*. New York, Harper and Row Publishers, Translation 1995.
The story of a small bunny wanting adventure.
- Claret, Marie. *The Chocolate Rabbit*. New York, Scholastic Inc., 1983.
A fun story describing how the first chocolate bunny may have been created.
- Delacre, Lulu. *Peter Cottontail's Easter Book*. New York, Scholastic Inc., 1992.
A book that is full of ideas, games, activities, and traditions for Easter — fun illustrations with hidden objects.
- Del Cacao al Chocolate*, Mexico, 1975.
The story of the cacao bean and the process of making chocolate.
- Garza, Carmen Lomas. *A Piece of My Heart: The Art of Carmen Lomas Garza*. New York, The New Press, 1991.
A collection of Carmen Lomas Garza's works.
- Griego, Margot, Betsy Bucks, Sharon Gilbert, and Laurel Kimball. *Tortillitas Para Mama and Other Nursery Rhymes*. New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1981.
A collection of Hispanic nursery rhymes and songs for children.
- Mailbox Magazine. "Preschool." February/March 2000, The Education Center, Greensboro, NC.
Magazine full of activities for the young student.
- Perl, Linda. *Pinatas and Paper Flowers*. New York, Clarion Books a Houghton Mifflin Imprint, 1983.
Describes traditions and celebrations from Hispanic culture, including art and activities.
- Schon, Isabel (Translated and Collected). *Dona Blanca and other Nursery Rhymes and Games*. Minneapolis, MN, T.S. Denison and Company, Inc., 1983.
A collection of games and children's rhymes.
- Stephens, Amanda. *Peter Cottontail*. New York, Scholastic, Inc., 1994.
The story of how the wolf tries to destroy Easter by stealing the eggs from Peter Cottontail, but Peter tricks the wolf in the end.
- Winchester, Faith. *Hispanic Holidays*. Mankato, MN, Bridgestone Books, 1996.
Brief descriptions of the various Hispanic holidays.

Audiotapes/CDs

De Colores and Other Latin American Folk Songs for Children CD by José-Luis Orozco, Berkeley, CA, Arcoiris Records, Inc.

A wonderful collection of songs for children in Spanish.

Fiestas/Holidays CD by José-Luis Orozco, Berkeley, CA, Arcoiris Records, Inc.

Songs of various celebrations.

Tío Conejo (Uncle Rabbit) and other Latin American Trickster Tales audiotape by Olga Loya, Little Rock, AR, August House Audio.

Tales of Latin America told by Olga Loya.

About the Author

Deborah Francis received her Masters Degree in Curriculum and Instruction, specializing in creative arts, from Lesley College in Boston. Her Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education (with an emphasis in language arts) is from the University of Northern Iowa.

Deborah has taught Early Childhood in the Denver Public Schools for the past 12 years. Previously she taught kindergarten and second grade, and was the director of a day care facility for the Department of Defense Mapping Agency in Glen Echo, Maryland.

She is employed in Denver Public Schools teaching Early Childhood in an inclusive setting, serving children with special needs.