Using Technology with a globalized lesson plan in my classroom

This week, my Honor’s Spanish students learned about El Día de Los Muertos, The Day of the Dead, and the influence of The Aztecs, the indigenous people of Central Mexico, on this celebration. To begin, I asked the students how we viewed death in The United States. For evidence, I had them write down products and practices customarily associated with our funerals. Then based on their answers, we discussed The U.S. perspective on death. Next, I projected a video on my smart board from Teacher’s Discovery, (www. teachersdiscovery.com), DVD 1V1383, entitled The Day of the Dead. This is a 25 minute Emmy award winning video filmed live and unrehearsed about a high school boy from Michigan who visits Oaxaca, Mexico to learn from a native Oaxaca high school girl about the customs of The Day of the Dead in her city. During the video, my students wrote down products and practices of The Day of the Dead in Spanish. After the video, I had my students break into small groups and take out their cell phones to further investigate the products and practices of The Day of the Dead in Mexico. Based on the video and their evidence, they discussed and wrote down how death was viewed in Mexico and then compared it to how death was viewed in The United States. I then announced we were going to our local university, The University of Nevada, Reno, to attend the annual Day of the Dead celebration, put on by our Latino Research Center, for the students and community to celebrate together. Here is the link, http://events.unr.edu/event/dia\_de\_los\_muertos\_day\_of\_the\_dead\_5058#.VjTh1DZdHIU. The celebration included traditional food and music as well as sugar skull and mask making activities. There were also altars set up by the community in memory of their loved ones. My students were required to attend as participants or volunteers at the event. I gave extra credit if they were volunteers because this demonstrated taking action and being involved in the local community. The students had to take photos with their cell phones or digital cameras and send them to my school e mail address. During the next class, I projected the photos on to the smart board. Half the students took the perspective of being Mexicans and identified and explained in Spanish to the other half, Americans from The United States, what their products and practices were, as indicated by the photos. The audience had to ask them questions to further their understanding. This also served as a closure activity to review what they had learned previously from the video, their own investigation, and the visit to the university.

When I reviewed the lesson, I realized even though we don’t have individual laptops or I pads at our school, I could have asked students to take out their cell phones and twitter their response to my question about how death is viewed in The United States. It would have been fun for them to read the posted comments and to see their own answer, as well. The time would have been the same, whether they wrote it down or discussed it out loud, and I know students like variety and not the same routine every day. I could have projected the twitter responses from my computer on the smart board, so all students felt involved, even the ones who didn’t own smart phones. I am glad I had students e mail me their photos, as it saved time from each student coming up to the Elmo with their cell phone. Next time I would have each student make a Power Point to make the presentations more cohesive and not just a series of individual photographs. In the past, I always handed students authentic materials or told hem exactly which website to go on to look up information. I’m glad I let them go on their own discovery and investigate their own resources because that way, they owned the information. And finally, when students took on the role of Mexicans, they really had to own their content and synthesize everything they had learned from multiple sources, speaking as experts on their subject.