



THE PROJECT: HANDS-ON WORKSHOPS

The Murphysboro Middle School Eco-Action Club focused their 2023-24 project work on monarch butterfly conservation efforts, learning how to germinate and grow milkweed, make wax wraps, and compost. During the school’s Earth Week celebrations, students paired these hands-on activities with environmental sustainability mini-lessons that were shared school-wide. The culmination of their efforts took place at the local Innovations in STEM Education annual Family Eco Festival, where the club led a pollinator garden planting session, gave away milkweed plants to the public, and shared a poster with information about the role of milkweed in the monarch butterfly life cycle.

Project Type: Conservation
Students Involved: 12
Staff Involved: 5
Location: Murphysboro
Grade Levels Involved: 6 - 8th
Number of Students Impacted: 42



Educating students about the natural world and incorporating hands-on science is essential in improving learning outcomes.

- April Bartnick



PROCESS

Starting in February 2024, students from the Eco-Action Club began germinating milkweed seeds in their school’s grow room and learning about the monarch butterfly, its status as an endangered species, and how the insect exclusively feeds on the leaves of the milkweed during its caterpillar phase, making milkweed critical to their survival. This work supplemented the science class’s curriculum, providing engaging, hands-on connections to the natural world. Students germinated and tended to the plants through the spring, finally planting in late April and early May. Students from the club attended the local Family Eco Festival, helping to operate the monarch booth, give out free plants to community members, and participate in the on-sight planting of a native species garden.

OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

Through the Illinois Green Schools Project, the Murphysboro Eco-Action Club successfully grew 100 plants, planted around 20 themselves, and gave the remaining 80 away to community members. Their milkweed will be planted in home gardens across the community, providing vital habitat and nourishment for the endangered monarch butterfly. Participating students developed teamwork skills and deeper connections to their local community while learning important STEM concepts. The students plan to revisit the new native garden during the monarch season to track monarch sightings and share the data with Journey North, a monarch tracking citizen science platform.

