

## SPARK Grant Funds Ecological and Environmental Studies at McAuliffe Elementary School

In January 2016, McAuliffe Elementary School was awarded a \$3,800 grant from SPARK to ignite their students' interest in ecological and environmental studies. The grant allowed them to invite renowned author and illustrator, Henry Cole, to visit the school to read and discuss two of his books on our environment and the important role everyone, including students, can play in protecting and preserving it.

The grant also funded a variety of other activities to ensure that Mr. Cole's visit had a lasting impact on students and their environmental education. The school library purchased additional books related to the environment, including fiction and non-fiction titles.

A joint committee made up of the school librarian and the science committee worked together to purchase plants for the children to grow. Portable greenhouses were purchased and helped students give their plants the proper amount of sunlight needed in order to grow successfully. Students made observations about how the plants grew over time and used their observations to make connections in math and science.

Next, students created either a bird feeder, bird house, or painted a flower pot in their art class. Students then took their projects home to enjoy.

Students learned about important pollinators, the impact of habitat loss on butterflies, and what we can do to help save the monarch butterfly from becoming an endangered species. Because milkweed is an important source of nectar for monarchs, students planted it in the school garden and were given milkweed seeds to take home to plant in their yards.

This grant will have a lasting impact on McAuliffe students for years to come. The books and other equipment purchased through the grant will be used by students each year to continue this important project to encourage them to be good stewards of the environment and to understand how they can make a difference in their own community.

