



**BRINGING
BUTTERFLIES
TO BEACON**



On October 14th, kindergarten students at Beacon Elementary planted milkweed seeds outside their school playground in hopes the plants will attract monarch caterpillars next spring.

After planting a bee garden at the same location this past spring, last year's kindergarten students raised and released monarch butterflies to release among the blooms. Beacon kindergarten teacher Mel Joling hopes that by planting milkweed near the bee garden, monarch caterpillars will be drawn to their favorite food source and form chrysalises in the garden. Students could then observe the entire caterpillar-to-butterfly process wild in nature.

Before students opened the milkweed pods to discover the fuzzy seeds within, Beacon kindergarten teachers taught them all about the life of a seed. In a complimentary hands-on lesson, students explored the cut sections of an apple, talking about what happens once the seeds are taken out and planted in the ground.

DCS Environmental Science teacher & instructional coach Beau Kimmey presented the milkweed unit to students using plants grown by DHS students. Pods collected from these plants were passed out to the kindergartners to open and explore the seeds inside. Many expressed surprise and amazement that so many seeds are contained in the small pod, delighting in their soft fuzziness. Many seeds were caught by the wind and carried off before they could be planted, but plenty still made it into the ground, placed with care by students' small hands.

Once the milkweed seeds were planted, students then were allowed to toss any remaining seeds in the air, dancing around as the breeze blew the downy white puffballs in all directions. With sunshine, some rain and a little luck, milkweed plants will be growing outside the Beacon playground next spring. And hopefully, the kindergarten students will discover a few black and yellow caterpillars munching the tender leaves before settling into the hard work of metamorphosis.