


## **Grant Connects Community, Science and Music at Northeast Elementary**

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Northeast Elementary School first graders and Ithaca Children's Garden Education Coordinator Leigh MacDonald-Rizzo planted butterfly host plants last week as part of a new partnership program funded by an Ithaca Public Education Initiative (IPEI) Teacher Grant.

The program is a pilot intended to offer feedback for a curriculum model that can be offered to elementary classes throughout the Ithaca district's eight elementary schools.

IPEI Teacher Grants are awards of up to \$1,500.00 for innovative projects that bring community members into active participation in ICSD classrooms. The Ithaca Children's Garden and local storyteller Regi Carpenter collaborated this spring with Northeast teacher Paula Kilts to teach first graders about plant ecology through storytelling.



After reading a book about the lifecycle of butterflies, MacDonald-Rizzo and the class planted seeds of butterfly-host plants including salvia, dill and butterfly bushes. During other visits, students dissected and labeled flowers, played games demonstrating the concept of a host plant, and gardened. Students also listened to a storytelling session by Carpenter introducing them to plant mythology from a multicultural perspective. Using modeling techniques, Carpenter coached students over several sessions to share their own stories about flowers to small and large groups. Students gained movement, language and public speaking skills.

To culminate the program, the class and their families will attend an evening storytelling event. Following the presentations, students and volunteers will lead activity stations highlighting the projects and concepts they learned during the ecological visits, teaching their parents and peers about flower anatomy, host plants and gardening.

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