

Black Mountain Middle and Primary schools partner for learning opportunity

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Buncombe County Schools believes in teaching the whole child with personalized, engaging hands-on experiences. Experiential environmental learning helps our students become successful, responsible stewards of the Swannanoa Valley community.

In keeping with these beliefs, the Owen School District has been looking for ways to partner students of various age levels with each other to share and grow together through learning.

For two days in early May, the first-grade classes from Black Mountain Primary visited Owen Middle School for a field trip to tour the many aspects of a growing environmental movement through the schools Natural Impact Initiative.

The target learning goals involved environmental impacts that humans can have on nature through caring for an ecosystem, along with how plants and animals need each other for survival.

The younger students spent the first hour led by eighth graders at different stations. Stations included hands-on demonstrations of how bird beaks are adapted for eating and survival, discussion about the American Chestnut blight (with a scavenger hunt) and how pollinators spread pollen.

"It gave the kids a chance to see what they were learning in action," Sarah Kahlill said. Eighth-grade student Brittney Manning said "the overall goal was to teach the first-graders about pollinators and the environment, and I think we achieved it."

"The scavenger hunt was a great activity for the kids because they found



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Students from Owen Middle School's seventh grade - Adam Drum, Nathan Travis and Ty Creaseman - teach visiting first-graders about pollinators.

different objects that have different characteristics," Kahlill said. "Owen is a good place for children to come to see their future school."

The first-grade students were split up with seventh-grade tour guides who took them through the school and introduced them to the many classes and activities offered at the middle school.

Cesar Aquilera, a student at the middle school said he "liked when they asked lots of questions and got excit-

ed."

"My favorite part was the little girl Ryvor, and how she held my hand the entire time," said Sydney Pruett.

One of everyone's favorite parts of the day was getting to meet in the middle school's courtyard to "make their mark" by chalking environmental sayings and pictures on the sidewalks.

"Honestly, during this time, I had the most fun I've had in a long time," seventh-grader Addy Hamilton said.



Seventh-grade students Caylin Carpenter-Millis and Sydney Pruett lead Kaylie Loyola-Calzada, Yasmin Benitez-Sanchez, Davis Campbell, River Braddy, visiting from Black Mountain Primary, on a tour of Owen Middle.

"Those little kids brought me happiness and a smile to my face. I don't only feel as though we helped and taught the kids, but that we also connected and enjoyed each other."

Overall the experience served to make numerous educational pathways between the students and the environment.

"I think it is important for the first-graders to come see the middle school that most of them will attend because it shows them what they have to look forward to," Ty Creaseman said. "It also shows them how great their community is and how well put together our school is. It also highlights the beauty of our valley and how blessed they are to have an environment like they do."