

# Students release trout they raised

By Barbara Hootman

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Some 200 seventh-grade science students at Owen Middle School have been raising trout for release over the past five to six months. Recently, 45 trout were released into the Swannanoa River.

"We do this to teach students about water quality, since trout are a good indicator species," Jim Cooper, a seventh-grade science teacher, said. "The students learn about life cycles as we raise them from eggs for about five to six months, and they learn about the scientific process, as we try to keep the aquarium balanced and healthy. This year, we had to problem solve as fish began to die off, and we found out that they were getting a water mold from the rocks that we put in their habitat.

"The students like to feed them, monitor and maintain the tank, name them and pick their fa-

vorites. The culminating event is the release into the Swannanoa River near school, and the kids love to scoop the fish out of the bucket and watch them find their way into the big world."

The students raised the trout from eggs to fingerlings, monitored tank water quality, engaged in stream habitat study, learn to appreciate water resources and learned to foster a conservation ethic and develop understanding of the ecosystem connectivity.

"Mr. Cooper gathered the 200 students around and asked them if they had any words to say to the fish as they were released," Brittany Krasutsky, a seventh-grade science teacher, said. "Literally every student who raised their hand called a particular fish by name and said good luck. We are so passionate about experiential learning here at Owen Middle School. The trout release program fits nicely with our Natural Impact Ini-



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John Stock from Trout In The Classroom answers student questions during the trout release in the Swannanoa River.

tiative."

Trout in the Classroom (troutintheclassroom.org) provided all of the materials and fish eggs in order to promote science education and to

restock trout into the local streams and rivers. Tom Brewster from Trout In the Classroom came in with the delivery this year and talked to the students about healthy

streams and trout in the local ecosystems. John Stock from Trout in the Classroom attended the trout release and answered student questions.