

Camp, Cyndi. "Trout In the Classroom-A New Season." *PA Environment Digest* Crisci Associates, 13 Mar. 2009. Web. 23 Jan. 2010.

<<http://www.paenvironmentdigest.com/newsletter/default.asp?NewsletterArticleID=11862>>.

Feature - Trout In The Classroom- A New Season

By Cyndi Camp, Doc Fritchey Chapter Trout Unlimited

This year the Doc Fritchey Chapter of Trout Unlimited co-funded a new [Trout In The Classroom program](#) at Ben Franklin School in Harrisburg, fully funded a program at Upper Dauphin Area high School and provided financial help to continue the program in St. Margaret Mary School and Cathedral, both in Harrisburg.

Trout In The Classroom is a school curriculum which introduces children, many of whom would never otherwise think about nature, to its wonders through one very specific avenue. they raise trout from eggs to fingerlings right in their classrooms.

In early spring, with much celebration (and a few tears), they release their charges into approved trout waters in the area.

Annually, statewide, teachers compete for \$500 grants which are matched by sponsoring Trout Unlimited Chapters. In October, grantees and chapter liaisons met with Fish and Boat Commission and [PA Trout Unlimited](#) representatives for a full day of introduction to the educational materials (a binder about 3 inches thick plus a CD of related information) and instruction on the set-up of the 55 gallon aquarium, chiller, pumps, filters and use of water testing reagents. Every new grant recipient is left with all the necessary equipment.

With the help of Chapter liaisons, the teachers prepared the aquaria to receive, in December, about 350 trout eggs. Last year our two participating schools received brown trout eggs. This year, all schools in the state received brook trout eggs, it being the state fish and the "Back the Brookie" initiative.

All four of our teachers are extremely involved and committed to the success of the program. They find innovative ways to incorporate raising the fish into their curricula, aided by excellent resources provided by the Fish and boat Commission, PA Trout Unlimited and the Doc Fritchey Chapter. And the students gain valuable knowledge of the environment needed for the survival of coldwater species. They also quickly take "ownership" of the little fish. You should see them crowd around the tank at feeding time, for water testing and even for cleaning the gravel.

Judd Pittman, of Math-Science Academy at the Ben Franklin School, is an example of the enthusiasm exhibited by all teachers.

His 8th grade students learned about watersheds. Then they drew topo maps of local watersheds and even constructed 3D topos from slices of clay. They've canoed Wildwood Lake, traveled to the Chesapeake Bay and done macroinvertebrate surveys. They've learned about point and non-point source pollution. They've worked in small groups pretending to be Wildlife Conservation officers, writing editorials and talking to the public about environmental issues. They're also mentoring 5th graders and Judd invites the K-3 kids in for short talks about the trout.

Maureen Mahnken and Cathedral School's 8th graders have been so successful in raising their "babies" that, for the second year, we're going to have to do an early, partial release of their fingerlings. They're already about 2 inches long, and we're guessing there are nearly 100... far too many in so little water.

I've learned there are considerable differences between brown and brook trout, even when they're tiny. One thing all our schools have reported this year is the disappearance of fry. No bodies, just progressively fewer fish in the tanks.

Last year, we'd find the dead browns on the bottom and scoop them out. and when they got larger, we'd sometimes see tail fins protruding from another fish's mouth. I wonder if brookies are programmed not to let any bit of food go to waste. I'm guessing the dead are consumed as quickly as they fall.

Also, last year's students had difficulty maintaining optimal water quality, as determined by testing of ammonia, nitrates, nitrites and pH, especially as the fish grew. This year, water chemistry has been excellent. Do brookies have a better relationship with the natural bacteria in their environment? And, at least at Cathedral School, the brookie fingerlings mob any hand that goes into the water.

Being part of this program has been a wonderful experience for me, I'd like to see more area schools become involved, since it will be those students who are best prepared to carry on our mission to conserve, protect and restore this vital resource.

Thanks, Doc Fritchey Chapter for making this happen!

(Reprinted from the [Doc Fritchey Chapter Trout Unlimited](#) newsletter Hatches)

3/13/2009