

Trout in the Classroom (TIC)
Memorandum of Intent
2025-2026 School Year

TO: Blue Ridge Trout Unlimited Trout in the Classroom (BRTIC) Contact

SCHOOL NAME _____

TEACHER'S NAME _____

FROM: Blue Ridge Trout Unlimited Trout in the Classroom (BRTIC)

Welcome to the Trout in the Classroom (TIC) family for 2025-2026 year

We are pleased that (School Name) _____ would like to take part in The Blue Ridge TU Trout in the Classroom (BRTIC) program during the 2025-2026 school year. We look forward to the establishment and maintenance of an exciting and rewarding experience for you, your students and staff, and a productive and mutually beneficial relationship with the BRTIC program.

The mission of TIC is to introduce students to cold water conservation as the first step in becoming future protectors of and advocates for clean and healthy streams, lakes, and rivers. More broadly, TIC aims to reinforce school experiences that nurture a conservation ethic in NC youth.

The purpose of this memorandum of intent is to make key BRTIC relationships clear: what a school can expect from BRTIC and what BRTIC expects from participating schools. The objective is to promote a mutually collaborative and supportive relationship among the key participants - school teachers, administrators, students, and volunteers - to achieve the program's mission and make TIC an enjoyable and rewarding experience for all those involved.

The attached Principles, Policies and Practices, defines those relationships in detail and constitutes an integral part of this memorandum.

To affirm agreement, the responsible teacher and the principal of each school implementing BRTIC are requested to sign, date, and return a copy of this memorandum of intent by mail or email. Please return the MOI no later than Aug 30th of current year. This information will enable us to begin planning for your participation in the fall of 2024. Schools that don't sign and return this MOI in time are subject to being dropped out of the program.

Please retain a copy of this memorandum of intent for your records. Questions about the BRTIC Program and this memorandum should be addressed to BRTIC co-coordinator Rick Conner, reconner@gmail.com or 678-361-1783. Only this signed page needs to be sent electronically to blueridgetuws@gmail.com We look forward to your school's participation in the 2025-2026 BRTIC Program.

With best wishes for a productive and enjoyable TIC experience.

SCHOOL _____ NUMBER of TANKS _____

Tank is owned by _____ (School or BRTU)

PRINCIPAL _____
Please Print Name Signature Date

TEACHER _____
Please Print Name Signature Date

Blue Ridge Trout Unlimited Trout in the Classroom (BRTIC)

Signature _____ Date _____

Principles, Policies and Practices

I. BACKGROUND

The Blue Ridge Trout Unlimited Trout in the Classroom (BRTIC) program is a voluntary effort, a part of a growing national network of over 4,500 TIC programs in more than 20 states. About 40% of these TIC programs are associated with Trout Unlimited (TU).

The BRTIC program is available for middle, high schools, and college programs. It is guided by development of principles, policies and practices which help to provide uniform guidance to this expanding program.

BRTIC's long range vision includes helping to implement the state's education requirement for environmental literacy. Through the BRTIC, teachers will promote a durable conservation ethic among their students on whom the future of our water and other natural resources depends.

THE BRTIC MISSION is to introduce students to cold water conservation as the first step in becoming future protectors of and advocates for clean and healthy streams, lakes, and rivers.

BRTIC is essentially a cold-water conservation program taught to students in a classroom. The students are provided with fertilized rainbow trout eggs which they raise in a 55-gallon tank, in water kept at optimum conditions for the eggs to hatch and grow rapidly to fingerling size. The BRTIC program concludes with a release of these fish into an approved designated stream. Here, the connection is made between the tank water which has been carefully controlled with respect to temperature, chemical balance and cleanliness and the stream receiving the trout. The students see that they have created in the classroom a microcosm of what prevails in nature.

II. PRINCIPLES

1. The BRTIC program is teacher driven. Teachers, rather than school administrators, initiate applications to join the BRTIC family.
2. Teachers are responsible for implementing BRTIC's mission of introducing students to cold water conservation.
3. Schools own the equipment required to successfully raise the trout if it has been purchased with their funds. Equipment provided to a school by the Blue Ridge chapter of Trout Unlimited must be returned to the chapter if the school ceases to participate
4. Schools provide financial and administrative support to the program.
5. Under teacher supervision, students are responsible for carrying out all BRTIC trout raising activities.
6. The release event as a yearly field trip during school hours is an integral part of the BRTIC program.
7. BRTIC management will facilitate the BRTIC program with technical, training, advisory and other types of support.
8. Volunteers have an essential role in helping implement BRTIC.

III. POLICIES ON:

1. ADMISSION TO THE PROGRAM

Teacher initiated applications will get priority consideration for admission to the BRTIC. Experience has shown that BRTIC school performance and teacher commitment are better when teachers, rather than school administrators, initiate application for admission to the program. Also, fish survival rates are better

2. TEACHER TRAINING

All first-year teachers must attend a free special session where they receive TIC orientation, training, and resource materials.

3. PROGRAM MODEL

As BRTIC has limited resources, experienced teachers must be self-reliant and call on BRTIC or Davidson County Aquarium Science personnel for technical support only- (e.g.- a faulty chiller)

For the first two years of their participation in BRTIC, new TIC teachers will receive priority technical support and access to emergency equipment from the program's volunteer network. BRTIC will continue to promote a system by which new TIC teachers can contact designated, experienced TIC teachers for help in resolving tank care problems.

4. EQUIPMENT OWNERSHIP AND REPAIR

Schools already participating in the BRTIC program who own their own equipment, will be provided loaner equipment as available from BRTIC when repairs are necessary. As loaner equipment is limited, schools who own their own equipment may want to purchase spare equipment as their funds allow. BRTIC will assist with this as requested.

Schools already participating in the BRTIC program with BRTIC equipment will receive loaner equipment from BRTIC as available when repair is necessary and underway.

Unless BRTIC has extra equipment, schools new to the TIC program must buy their own equipment from a list provided to them by BRTIC. Startup TIC equipment should be budgeted at \$1500 with another \$1000 for yearly maintenance.

5. RELEASE EVENT

A yearly event to release the trout grown in the classroom is a critical part of every BRTIC program. The release event provides closure to the annual school BRTIC effort and illustrates the relationship between the tank and the stream. Just as the water in the tank needs to be kept clean, chemically balanced, and free of pollution, so should our streams, lakes, and rivers. The teacher and principal of each participating facility sign a letter of intent guaranteeing the school will carry out a planned release program following the guidelines in the teacher's manual.

6. PROGRAM GROWTH

The BRTIC program has expanded considerably faster than the required increase in volunteers to service it. To avoid mismatches between volunteers and the needs of the program, BRTIC has adopted a policy of limiting the number of new schools, when necessary, to those for which adequate volunteer and budget support is available. The decision on the number of new schools will be made yearly.

7. DISCONTINUATION FROM THE PROGRAM

A school, which fails to meet its commitment to the BRTIC principles, policies or practices will be discontinued from the program but can apply for readmission after a two-year interval. Where special circumstances exist, (co-determined by BRTIC and the affected school) a school may be placed on a year's probation instead of being immediately discontinued. One of the most important commitments is to respond to our emails within a reasonable time (2-3) days. If you do not respond with an acknowledgement of receipt and provide the requested information, Blue Ridge TU will drop the school from the BRTIC program as stated above.

IV. PRACTICES

A. STUDENT ROLE

It is desirable for as many students as possible to carry out all trout-raising activities, including water quality testing and maintenance, trout feeding, tank maintenance and year-end equipment cleanup as specified in the teacher's manual. Students are expected to maintain an up-to-date record of conditions in the tank and fish health as specified in the teacher's manual. All these activities should be done under teacher supervision. It is envisioned that students taking an active role in the care of the fish and their environment are more likely to feel more caring and responsible for trout, not only in the tank but in nature.

B. TEACHER ROLE

The BRTIC teacher

1. Takes the initiative to apply to join BRTIC and implement the program in that school.
2. Obtains BRTIC or their own start-up equipment and supplies as listed in the current TIC teacher's manual.
3. Budgets for equipment maintenance (schools new to the program and those who own their own equipment).
4. Instructs and is responsible for supervising students in the protocols for proper tank, fertilized egg, and fish care, IAW the BRTIC teacher's manual.
5. Secures technical and loaner equipment help as needed from either BRTIC or Davidson Community college Aquarium Science personnel
6. Plans, organizes, and carries out an annual field trip during school hours to release the school's trout fingerlings into waters approved by the NC Department of Natural Resources (DNR). These releases may be supported by conservation talks and demonstrations.
7. For school closings, vacations, sickness, unplanned LOA, etc. participating teachers must ensure that the TIC program is properly executed to preclude loss of fish. TIC teachers must assign a secondary, trained TIC person to act in their absence. This person's name and phone number must be provided to the appropriate BRTIC volunteer
8. Teachers, assisted by students, clean up the tank and its accessories, chiller, and filter for storage until the next school year as specified in the teacher's manual.
9. TIC teachers will only release fish in accordance with their NC. Wildlife Resource Commission permits provided to them for designated waters.

C. BRTIC MANAGEMENT ROLE

1. Supply each participating TIC facility with free fertilized rainbow trout eggs and enough food to promote healthy trout growth while the hatchlings are in the school tanks.
2. Obtain from DNR and distribute to each member school permits to raise trout in classrooms and to release them at DNR-approved sites
3. Assist in equipment budgeting and repair needs
4. Provide loaner equipment as available.

5. In coordination and cooperation with Davidson Davie Community College, Aquarium Science Department, provide technical assistance from time to time.

6. Coordinate and provide conservation experts and presentations on topics dealing with raising trout and cold-water conservation

7. As requested, provide speakers for PTA budgeting meetings to espouse the value of the TIC program.

8. Develop, update, and distribute the teacher's manual and other printed and online materials. The manual is the key compilation of best practices and procedures for successful implementation of the BRTIC program.

D. VOLUNTEER ROLE

Volunteers are an essential part of the BRTIC family. They may come from both within and outside the ranks of TU members. They may deliver fertilized eggs, food and permits to BRTIC schools and may help in other ways, including: (a) assisting teachers in organizing students at release events, (b) helping teachers resolve problems of tank management, and (c) speaking to students on topics such as the importance of the health of our streams, lakes, and rivers to our future; how streams provide the temperature, chemical balance and cleanliness the students maintain in the tank for trout survival, and other topics relevant to the program.

E. COMMUNITY ROLE

Parental or other volunteer involvement can facilitate the TIC experience by helping with release programs, tank maintenance and such activities as feeding trout during prolonged school closings. While not mandatory, such help from the parent or neighborhood community can enrich the TIC experience.