

# Partner Schools Program – FAQs

## Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge

### THE BASICS – What Is the Partner School Program?

*The program is currently full due to staffing and volunteer capacity.*

The refuge has established a limited Partner School Program for K-6 educators and students based on ensuring quality and the capacity to support the program. Roles and responsibilities include:

- Partner school teachers receive training about using the outdoors as a classroom and how they can do that at school as well as at the refuge.
- Refuge staff and volunteers provide support as needed by helping administrators to organize an effective program, visiting participating classes at school, providing standards-based lessons and prep information before refuge visits, and scheduling and supporting those refuge visits.
- Partner schools receive priority when scheduling the Oak Savanna Learning Center (OSLC).

### THE PARTICULARS – OK, I'm Interested. Then What?

#### How do we get started?

- We will ask the appropriate partner school administrator to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to formalize the partnership arrangement.
- We recommend starting small—with just 2 – 4 teachers and classrooms.
- Your journey will begin with a 1-day “outdoor classroom” teacher workshop at the refuge followed by 1 day of curriculum development consultation. Workshop agenda includes: Introduction to Sherburne’s Expedition Model, the *Compass to Nature*, In the Moment, KWHL, Top 10 Field Activities, Field Time, and a Short Student Visit.

#### Then what?

- We expect that partner schools/teachers will use their schoolyard outdoor classroom with their students at least once a month throughout the school year. (This will increase as they become accustomed to learning in the “classroom without walls.”)
- During year #1, refuge staff/volunteers will visit the school to reinforce use of the outdoor classroom at school and/or to prep students for their first refuge visit, especially if it is a cold-weather visit.
- In year #1, new partner classes will visit the refuge once, probably in late winter or spring. In following years, partners may work up to making three visits per year—one in each season of the school year.
- Maximum of 2 classes will come per visit.

#### How do we keep it going?

- After year #1 and as they are comfortable, experienced teachers will play a role in delivering subject matter in the Learning Center classroom and in leading small groups during field time at the refuge. As comfort level increases, we would expect partner teachers to lead the classroom work that involves lesson content with minimal support from volunteers. We would also expect that they would be able to lead their own groups in the field, if needed.
- Partner schools are eligible to apply for funding from the Friends of Sherburne to help cover bus transportation for refuge visits.