

Going to Dodge!

*Roosevelt Elementary School
St. Paul, Minnesota*

Watching a red-tailed hawk, exploring wilderness trails, and getting a close-up of everyday farm animals was most likely an unusual way for students and parents at Roosevelt Elementary School to spend a Saturday. Perhaps that was what made it such a hit with the 135 family members who found themselves “Going to Dodge,”—the Dodge Nature Center—on a beautiful fall weekend.

The family field trip to the nearby nature preserve kicked off a partnership with the newest members of Roosevelt Elementary’s Action Team for Partnerships (ATP). It also acquainted families with a community resource in their own backyards and taught science lessons under the guise of fun. The school invited all students in grades K–3 and their families. Roosevelt draws students from diverse backgrounds, and many of their families do not have the time or resources to do daytrips. The ATP planned the trip and shared the cost with Dodge Nature Center, which helped with transportation and provided naturalists to lead tours.

Families met at the school and boarded buses to Dodge. Once there, they took guided walks with the naturalists, who helped them explore the varieties of ecosystems at the nature center. Students received nets and had the opportunity to catch and release insects. They also visited farm animals and watched demonstrations by Dodge’s trained birds of prey, including a red-tailed hawk, a barred owl, and a bald eagle.

The trip gave families an opportunity not just to learn about nature, but to take a trip

without worrying about costs and transportation. One community member said, “I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. I never knew how close the center was in the neighborhood. I enjoyed learning about the classes offered, too.”

The school is hoping to find the money to make this field trip an annual event. Meanwhile, Roosevelt families can return throughout the year on their own for apple orchard tours, grapevine wreath workshops, the Frosty Fun Festival, and summer camps.

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