

Minnesota Zoo

2026–2027 TEACHER FIELD GUIDE

Learn more at **MNZoo.org/educators-page**

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DEAR EDUCATOR,

Welcome to the Minnesota Zoo, where immersive learning opportunities await! Education programs at the Zoo are essential to fulfill our mission to connect people, animals, and the natural world to save wildlife.

Our resources add new dimensions to classroom learning with fun, unique, and engaging experiences. We are committed to meeting your needs by providing active, inquiry-based programs that support Minnesota K–12 Academic Standards. For a more detailed description of how standards align with our Zoo Classes, please visit **MNZoo.org/in-person-classes**

Throughout this guide, you'll find programs for all grade levels focused on a variety of key learning areas and depth of experiential opportunities.

SCHOOL GROUP BUS FUND SCHOLARSHIP:

- Reimbursement of up to $750 for transportation services.
- Applications are accepted August 3 to September 11, 2026 for the 2026–27 school year.
- Recipients are chosen via lottery system.
- This scholarship only applies to field trips booked for September through March, plus April 27 (ASL Day).
- Check **MNZoo.org/busfund** for updates and to learn more about the application process.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

The Minnesota Zoo offers free and reduced price Field Trips. Please check the chart below to see if your school qualifies.

FIELD TRIP PRICING

School-Year Pricing September 8, 2026–June 11, 2027

Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Percentage	Pre-K–5th	6th–college	Chaperones (1 to 5 ratio)	Paras and Bus Drivers	Additional Adults
Schools with 0–49.99% FRPL or schools outside of Minnesota	$6	$8	FREE	FREE	$12
Schools with 50–84.99% FRPL	$3	$4	FREE	FREE	$12
Schools with 85–100% FRPL	FREE	FREE	FREE	FREE	$12

Parking: $10 per car and $15 per bus

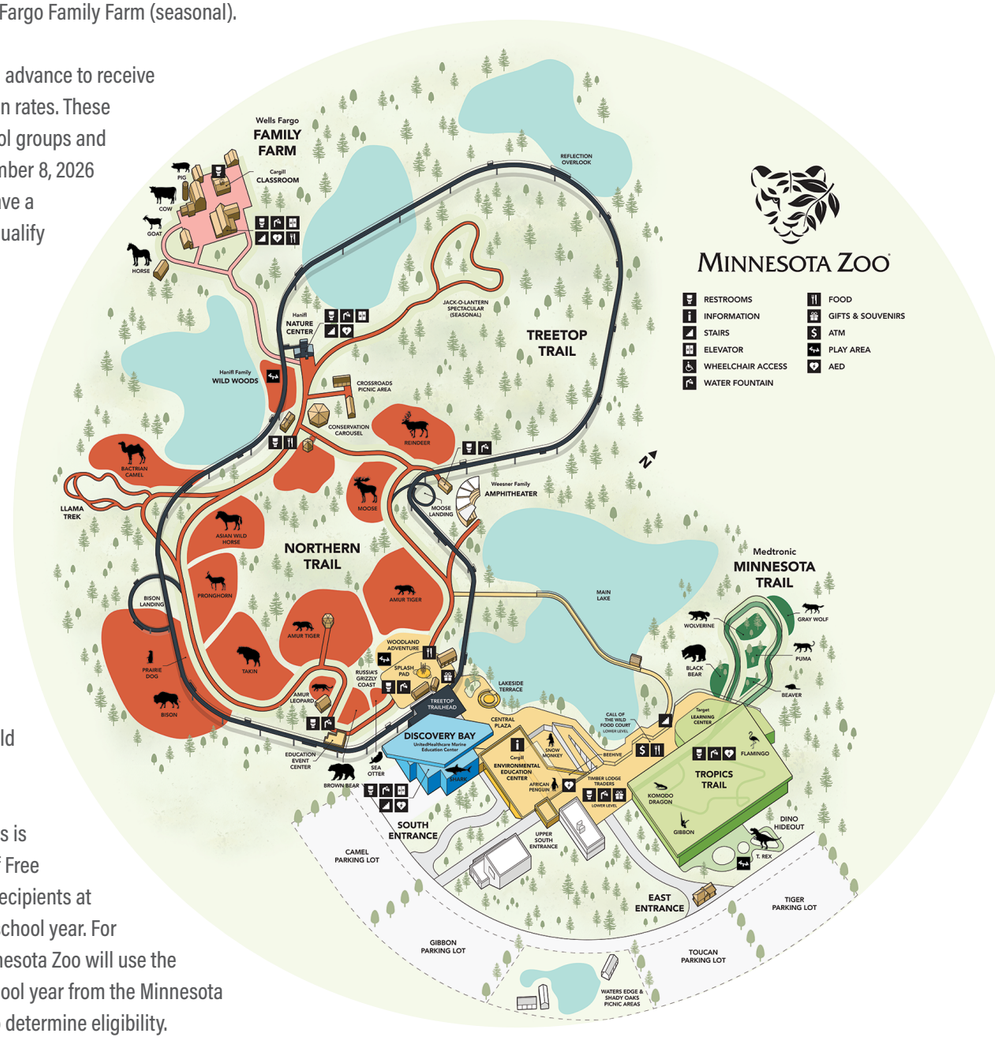
For more information and to register, visit **MNZoo.org/schools,** email educate@mnzoo.org, or call 952.431.9200.

FIELD TRIPS

A day at the Minnesota Zoo offers opportunities for discovery and learning, whether you opt for a self-guided experience or select from our menu of programs. The Zoo is a year-round destination that offers both indoor and outdoor adventures. Our areas and trails take you to the ocean in Discovery Bay, the tropics on our Tropics Trail, our local wildlife on the Medtronic Minnesota Trail, and many more adventures on the Northern Trail, Russia's Grizzly Coast, Treetop Trail, and the Wells Fargo Family Farm (seasonal).

Register at least 2 weeks in advance to receive 2026–2027 school admission rates. These rates are available for school groups and homeschool guests, September 8, 2026 to June 11, 2027. You must have a minimum of 8 students to qualify for school pricing.

Please note: you will need to use a credit card to get through the registration system, but that card will not be charged if you choose the $0 payment plan option during checkout. Two weeks before your field trip is when your payment is due and you may use a different credit card (such as a district/organization card) at that time for the field trip fees.



Admission for school groups is based on the percentage of Free and Reduced-Price Lunch recipients at the school in the previous school year. For example, this year, the Minnesota Zoo will use the list from the 2025–2026 school year from the Minnesota Department of Education to determine eligibility.



ENHANCE YOUR FIELD TRIP

DAILY ZOO PROGRAMS

Wings and Things Show presented by Wings Credit Union
Target Learning Center | Daily*

Royal Credit Union Sea Lion Discovery
Discovery Bay | Daily*

Treetop Trail Animal Encounter
Treetop Trailhead (Inside Discovery Bay in cold weather months) | Daily*

*Visit **MNZoo.org/daytime-exper** for times

AT THE ZOO

In-Person Zoo Classes
September 22, 2026 to May 14, 2027
All classes are 60 minutes unless otherwise noted
Fees: $150 per class (up to 30 students per class)

Fun, interactive Zoo classes reinforce standards-based concepts explored in your curriculum. They bring learning to life with hands-on activities led by Zoo naturalists.

Class offerings for 2026–2027 include:

CLASSIC

What's a Wetland? (Grades K–2 or 3–5)
Wade into the world of wetlands and discover why these muddy, marshy habitats are some of the most important on Earth. Learn what animals build homes here and what special skills they have acquired to survive in this unique habitat. Then, build a model fit for our wetland friends.

Animal Classifieds (Grades K–2 or 3–5)
What makes a horse related to a tapir? Is a sea star a fish? In this interactive class, learn how to sort and classify animals using scientific methods and look closer at the physical characteristics of different species.

IN-PERSON ZOO CLASSES



Biomimicry (Grades K–2 or 3–5)
Learn how engineers are turning to nature to solve human problems through the process of biomimicry. Be a biomimicry engineer to investigate seed dispersal and solve an engineering challenge.

Animal Enrichment Challenge (Grades 3–5 or 6–12)
Become an enrichment engineer! Discover how zookeepers create different types of enrichment to keep the animals active and healthy. Then explore animal behaviors to design and build an enrichment item to encourage natural behaviors and adaptations.

Zoo Exhibit Design (Grades 3–5 or 6–12)
In this interactive class, learn about animal needs and identify the components that make a successful Zoo exhibit. Then let's try creating an exhibit model!

NEW! Conservation Quest (Grades 6–8 or 9–12)
You don't need to travel the world to find rare and endangered wildlife! Take a walk on our Minnesota Trail to search for some of Minnesota's most elusive animals. Then, learn how conservationists are protecting the wildlife in our state, and engineer a solution to help freshwater turtles.

FEATURING AMBASSADOR ANIMALS

NEW! Critter Connection (All Ages)
This 30-minute experience is all about the animals. Meet some amazing live ambassador animals as a naturalist shares stories and answers the questions. This encounter is sure to be a highlight of your trip to the Zoo!

Adaptations in Action (All grades)
Let's explore the amazing ways animals thrive in the wild. Get up close with a live ambassador animal, explore animal artifacts, and engage in hands-on activities to discover what makes animals equipped to survive in their habitats. From sticky feet to super senses, this grade-inclusive class dives into the science behind how animals eat, hide, and move to stay alive.

AT YOUR SCHOOL

Outreach Classes
45–60 minutes in duration
Fees: $150 per class (up to 30 students/class)
Up to 90 miles from the Zoo

Zoo Careers (Grades 6–12)
Bring the zoo's programs to you! In these exciting hands-on classes, Zoo educators engage your students in activities to learn about the variety of career opportunities at zoos and aquariums. ***NOTE: This class does not include live animals.***

STEM STATIONS

PROGRAMS INCLUDED WITH ADMISSION

Tuesday-Friday on select weeks, 10 am-1 pm
Presented by Flint Hills Resources

FREE interactive stations will be set up throughout the indoor areas of the Zoo and facilitated by Zoo Education staff. These stations will include hands-on activities and biofacts to enhance your learning during your field trip.

Adventures in STEM
November 10-13 | January 12-15, 19-22

STEM is all around us! Stop by the stations to experience how zoo and conservation professionals use STEM in their daily work. and put your skills to the test.

Zoo Careers
December 15-18

Ever wonder what it takes to work at a zoo? Investigate what types of careers are available at a zoo and try your skills and knowledge to find out if a zoo career might be in your future. Learn more about a variety of jobs, from animal care to exhibit design.

Around the World
Student Orentation Times 9:45 - 10:30 am
Presentations 10:30 am - 1 pm
February 17 and 18: Spanish*
February 24: German*
February 25: French*
February 27: American Sign Language**

Come to the Zoo for a global animal adventure! Get up close and personal with animals while learning how to talk about them in different languages. Middle and high school students take the stage with fun, interactive presentations about zoo topics, from sea lions in Spanish to flamingos in French.

**If you are a language teacher looking to get your class involved in presenting on one of these days, please email us at educate@mnzoo.org.*
***Interpretive services will be provided for ASL Day.*

Local Conservation
March 9-12, 16-19

You don't need to travel across the world to see rare and endangered animals. Stop by our stations to learn more about the conservation efforts happening right here in Minnesota, and easy ways that you can protect and conserve some of our amazing native species. Our stations will focus on conservation efforts of the following species: American bison, prairie butterflies, freshwater mussels, and Minnesota native turtles.

Global Conservation
April 13-16, 20-23

The Zoo aids many programs around the world to protect wild animals and wild places. Students can talk with educators, interact with biofacts of threatened species, and learn how to help animals across the world from their own homes and communities. Our stations will focus on conservation efforts of the following species: African penguin, chinchilla, Amur tiger, and black rhino.

TOURS

Guided Trail Tours (Grades 5-College)

September 22, 2026 to May 14, 2027
45 minutes in duration
Fees: $50 per tour; maximum of 8 participants per group

Led by a Zoo naturalist, this tour will engage middle and high school students in an exploration of exhibit design, animal behavior and management, Zoo careers, and conservation. Select from the Tropics Trail, Medtronic Minnesota Trail, Russia's Grizzly Coast, or Aquariums.

VIRTUAL PROGRAMS

All virtual tours and classes take place on the Zoom platform. Each program is approximately 30-45 minutes long and can accommodate up to 25 devices/people.

Fees: $125 per class/tour

VIRTUAL TOURS

All ages | Offered year-round | 30 minutes

Ocean Tour - Discovery Bay
Tropics Tour – Tropics Trail
Penguin Tour – 3M Penguins of the African Coast*
**June-August only*

VIRTUAL CLASSES

September 22, 2026 to May 14, 2027
30-45 minutes

Penguin Palooza (Grades K-2)

What makes a penguin so amazing? Learn more about how penguins survive in the wild using their unique adaptations and find out how we care for our penguins at the Zoo.

Animal Enrichment (Grades 3-5)

Join us to learn how animal observation data is collected and used to plan and assess successful enrichment that encourages animals' natural behaviors.

Advanced Animal Enrichment (Grades 6-12)

Go deeper into exploring the science behind helping wildlife thrive in human care. Join us to learn how animal observation data is collected and used to plan and assess successful enrichment that encourages animals' natural behaviors.



FEATURING AMBASSADOR ANIMALS

Creature Feature (All Ages)

It's all about the animal in this up-close and personal encounter. Meet two ambassador animals, learn about their special adaptations, personal stories, and ask our educator questions about our animal friends. You never know who you might meet during this unique and surprising program!



CLASSROOM RESOURCES

STAY CONNECTED TO EDUCATION AT THE ZOO

Explore classroom activities and teaching resources at **MNZoo.org/educators-page.** Follow "Minnesota Zoo for Educators" **@MNZooEdu on Facebook** and subscribe to the **MNZOOEdu Times newsletter** to hear about new resources as they are developed.

STEM AT THE ZOO

The **Zoo M**ath and **S**cience (ZOOMS) Program reveals just what it takes to engineer a modern zoo. Students can apply three different lenses:

- Engineering for animals (exhibit design)
- Engineering from animals (biomimicry)
- Engineering by animals (animals as engineers)

ZOOMS provides the opportunity to apply important science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) concepts to real-world situations using the Minnesota Zoo as a context for study.

ZOOMS STEM Design Challenge

Presented by Flint Hills Resources (Grades 3–12)

From designing animal enrichment to building a model of a renovated animal exhibit, the ZOOMS STEM Design Challenge encourages students to use their science and math knowledge, creativity, problem-solving, and research skills to come up with the best solution to a real problem faced by the Minnesota Zoo staff. Select teams will be invited to showcase their designs during Exhibition Week at the Zoo, March 1 – 5, 2027.

Sign up your class by visiting **MNZoo.org/Stem**
Participating teachers are also encouraged to attend a *free* ZOOMS Design Challenge Teacher Training. Dates and times are listed below. Register at **MNZoo.org/professional-dev**

STEM at the Zoo: Intro to ZOOMS Design Challenge Teacher Training

Recommended for new ZOOMS teachers
Thursday, August 6, 2026, 9 am–3 pm
Free; registration required

In-Person ZOOMS Design Challenge Teacher Training at the Minnesota Zoo

Thursday, September 24, 2026, 9 am–3 pm
Free; registration required

FLINT HILLS resources®

Engineering a modern Zoo ZOOMS! through math & science



STEM Lab: Zoo Careers (Grades 3–College)

September–April; Limited summer availability
Fees: $40 per student, per day; $500 per day minimum (includes admission)

Explore careers at the Zoo to see how real-world STEM is applied as we care for and protect wildlife. In this 3.5-hour program, participants will be led through hands-on activities, a Zoo trail tour with a behind-the-scenes visit, and an animal encounter with a naturalist to learn more about and practice skills needed to work at a zoo. This experience can also be customized to support student learning goals.



MUSSEL CONSERVATION & WATER QUALITY INITIATIVE

Native freshwater mussels are often out of sight and out of mind, but they're critical for healthy rivers and lakes. Sadly, freshwater mussels are the most at-risk group of animals in the United States with five species native to Minnesota listed as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Minnesota Zoo is collaborating with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to help mussel populations by rearing mussels for release into the wild. Schools can help by being freshwater mussel advocates and spreading the word about how important mussels are to the Land of 10,000 Lakes and beyond.

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND

Show Us Your Mussels Challenge (Grades 6–12)

Calling all Minnesota middle and high school students! We need you to create original community-based marketing campaigns educating the public about the importance of native mussels, the impact of water quality on native mussels, and what actions we need to take to ensure their survival. All campaigns are invited to highlight the efforts at the poster symposium here at the Zoo. Schools who reach the most community members will have their field trip paid for. Get your students involved in real-world conservation efforts while meeting science and ELA standards. Find more information at **MNZoo.org/SUYM.**

ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHERS

For over 40 years, the Minnesota Zoo has been a valuable partner to teachers across the state and around the country. Visit **MNZoo.org/schools** to discover all the ways we can support and inspire the work you do!

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT THE ZOO

Learn how to make your curriculum even more amazing with our workshops on STEM, data collection and analysis, and wetland conservation science. Visit **MNZoo.org/professional-dev.**

FREE EDUCATOR PREVIEW PASSES

Test-drive your scheduled field trip with an advance visit to the Zoo. Email us at **educate@mnzoo.org** to arrange your visit.

MNZOOEDU TIMES E-NEWSLETTER

This publication features program updates, event information, exhibit news, and more. Sign up on our website at **MNZoo.org/educators-page**

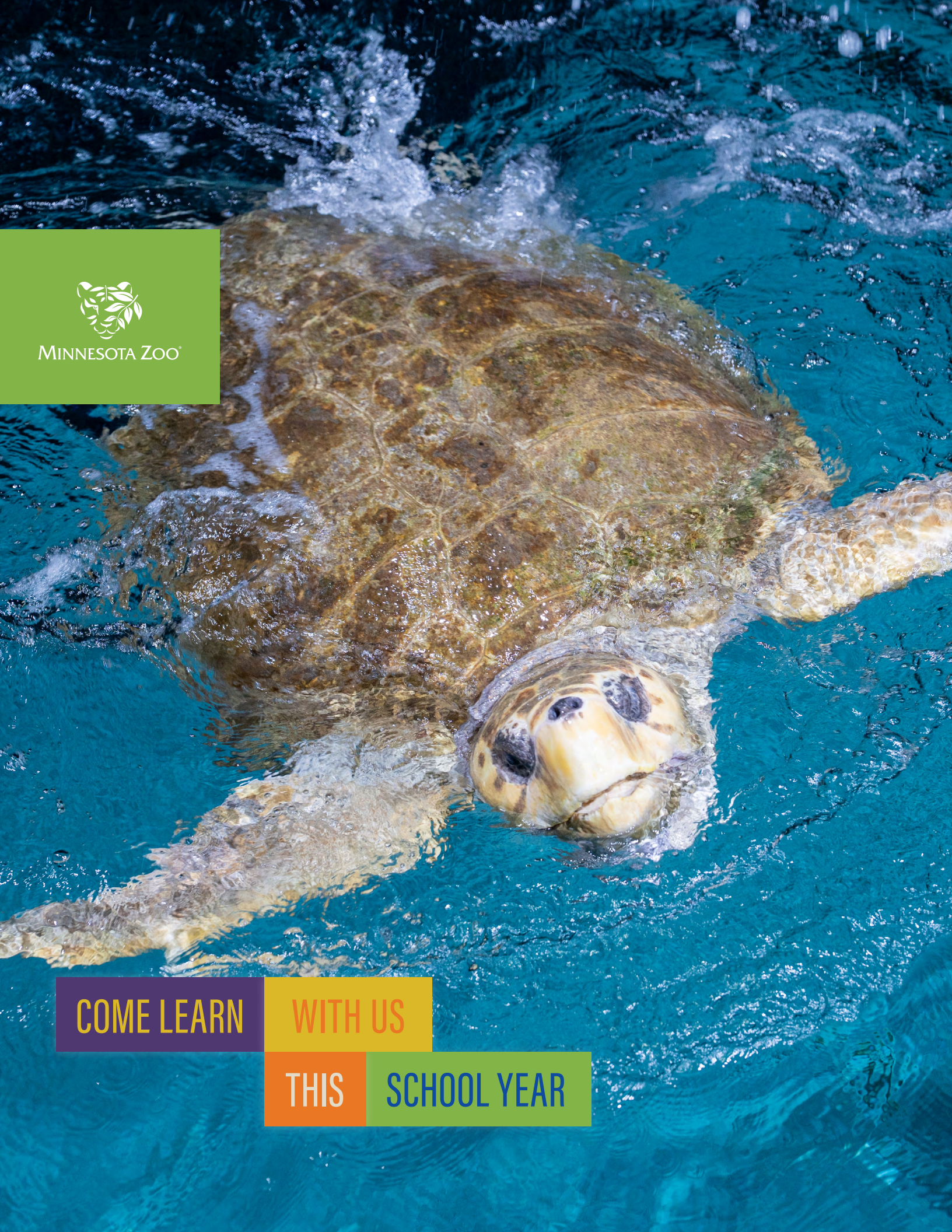
MINNESOTA ZOO FOR EDUCATORS FACEBOOK PAGE

Connect with us on **Facebook @MNZooEdu** to share ideas and resources about teaching, animals, conservation, and the Minnesota Zoo.

CURRICULUM AND RESOURCES

Discover materials you can use on your trip to the zoo and back in the classroom. Visit **MNZoo.org/field-trip-classroom-resources**




MINNESOTA ZOO
COME LEARN WITH US
THIS SCHOOL YEAR