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For Immediate Release

Governors State University Students Become Teachers

University Park, October 10, 2006 - In a unique educational opportunity for both students and their instructors, more than 300 first through eighth graders from Grant Elementary School in South Chicago Heights spent two warm sunny days in October learning about the environment.

Their teachers were college students majoring in elementary education at Governors State University (GSU). They are currently learning science education techniques and strategies from Dr. Colleen Sexton and Bruce Ketcher of the GSU College of Education.

"Teachers in training gain valuable experience working with small groups of elementary school children in an outdoor classroom," explained Ketcher. "The children learn about the intricacies and wonders of the natural world outside the school walls."

In previous years, the elementary school children have visited the Governors State University campus in University Park. This fall, however, the field trip was to Sauk Forest Woods, part of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County.

According to Ketcher, "This is a great opportunity to introduce these young school children to an environment that is close to their homes. The preserve makes an ideal outdoor classroom with lake, the forest, and the prairie right there."

Louis Angellotti, Principal of Grant Elementary was very pleased with his young students' reactions to the day of outdoor education.

"This opportunity was a great benefit. Our students experienced first hand what they were learning. They are still excited about it. Some even told me they expected to be bored but they really enjoyed it. They were surprised by how much fun it was and how much they learned."

Besides the elementary school children, the university students also had an opportunity to learn.

"As they are interacting and teaching the children, they are learning what works and doesn't work. They are gaining important practice using different methods of discipline and instruction," adds Ketcher.

As part of the teacher education curriculum, GSU students spend hours in elementary school classrooms, observing teachers, assisting students, and working with small groups.

"I have found that the students from Governors State work well with our students," says Angellotti. "We have always had a good response and the program benefits both our students and the GSU students."