

## **Jim did it, so can You!**

In the beginning there was only Jim. Jim loved the world around him. Whenever he was able, he'd go to the lake or the park. He'd kayak on Superior or canoe on the Root. He'd hike anywhere. He'd ride his bike. He'd take his own children camping, fishing or canoeing. He could identify many animals, insects, flowers and trees. He loved the song of birds and frogs. He had great reverence for his world. Before it was trendy, he recycled, repaired and reused.

Jim was a teacher. He loved his 4th graders. He found every opportunity to take his students outdoors. He took advantage of every chance he had to bring nature into the classroom. Long before Richard Louv, he was firmly convinced that the lessons he taught out of doors in Nature stayed with the children far better than any others. Jim knew that sound principles of environmental education would benefit his students and those around them for their lifetimes.

Into the picture comes a new Principal for Jim's school. He was born of pioneering stock from one of those states with huge sky and fertile soil and a love for and appreciation of all things natural. A big and strong man who was not afraid to work with his hands as well as his mind.

These two found common ground and worked together with those whom they recruited to make the school yard a better place to take youngsters outdoors to learn. They were kindred spirits who were convinced that the children they served would learn best with experiential, environmental elements integrated into their everyday lessons. Experiential, environmental elements everyday.

For a long time it was just Jim, the principal and the students. Jim would talk with other teachers about what he was doing and would often share lesson ideas with them. This was particularly true of his colleagues teaching his students going on to fifth grade. These youngsters would ask their new teachers questions which were born of their fourth grade experience with Jim. They had learned to expect more. They wanted more and needed it.

This is how it all began. It all started with one teacher in one school. This was before FOSS, before United Streaming, before "smart boards", computers and LCD projectors. It started with a teacher who began with no special training, who really loved the world he lives in and wanted to share these attitudes and feelings with those enthusiastic young persons he had chosen to befriend and lead.

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