



Teacher Luke Adam hands over a northern pike to ninth-grader Jesse Adams. It was the first gamefish that Adams had ever caught.

Photos by Javier Serna



Jacob Niemi, a ninth-grader, fished pretty hard all day, missing a northern pike that got off his line while he was on a dock before any boats had been launched. He later was rewarded for his efforts with this northern.



Aden Manley-Springer, a ninth-grader, landed this walleye while trolling off the back of a pontoon. It was the first walleye he'd ever caught.

Spartan Angling brings the classroom to the fishing hole

By Javier Serna
Assistant Editor

Math teacher Luke Adam knew a spot. It was, after all, his home waters, just a 15-minute bus ride from his homeroom at Nashwauk-Keewatin High School. And on this day, he'd taken 10 of his students to Bray Lake for a school day of fishing instead of their normal classroom routine.

"We're going to troll between the island and that point," Adam told five of the kids, all ninth-graders, who pitched out plugs as he steered the pontoon along the island weedline.

On one of those passes, Aden Manley-Springer, standing at the back of the pontoon, alerted Adam that he had something on his line.

The young angler was not only fighting the first walleye of the day, but it turned out to be his first walleye ever – a beautiful black and gold fish of about 15 inches, common for this northern Minnesota lake.

"Pretty much the perfect eater," Adam said.

It was one success during a school day full of successes in Adam's recently started fishing class at the school – and some of those successes included but were not limited to other students catching fish.

For six periods every day, Adam teaches math to seventh- and eighth-graders, but one period he teaches a fishing class.

Adam started the class, called Spartan Angling (named after the school mascot) in the spring semester of the last school year. Kids in grades 7 through 12 are eligible for the class, which takes place during the school day, but only those in grades 9 and above are allowed to participate in three field trips per semester.

This was one of those days, and Adam has plans to take the students on a darkhouse spearing adventure for northern pike this winter, an outing coordinated with the Minnesota Darkhouse and Angling Association, as well as another trip to Lake of the Woods.

The aim of the class is to introduce as many kids as possible to fishing, Adam said, and implant the knowledge, skills, and ethics required so it can become a lifetime hobby

for them.

"These are all new kids (to fishing)," Adam said. "The last class wanted to take it again. I was like, 'Do you take algebra again?' I want to give as many kids as I can a dosage of it."

Adam said the school

received a DNR grant of \$20,500 for the department's R3 goals (recruit, retain, and reactivate anglers – and hunters – in Minnesota). That covered a lot of the school's start-up costs, including Adam building up a "lending

library" that allows students to check out equipment such as ice-fishing shelters, fishing rods, and fish finders – stuff they might not otherwise have access to.

But he's hoping to find financial support to keep the

class going into the future, he said.

Adam pointed out that the kids have varying ranges of experience, with some having little exposure to fishing pre-

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