

Superintendent's Update



February 2018



Do you remember going on field trips when you were in school? Most of us do. They provide a special and memorable way to learn, going far beyond what a student reads in a book or on a computer.

We provide many opportunities for field trips here in our schools. But our resources to transport students to places like museums or outdoor classrooms are limited.

Enter Robbie Grimes and the Wayne Township Education Foundation. Robbie is eLearning Specialist for our district. The Wayne Township Education Foundation, as you probably know, is a community catalyst for stimulating learning and recognizing excellence in our schools.

Robbie wanted our students to be able to experience the world beyond their community. He realized technology could provide the opportunity for virtual field trips around the world. With a tool called Google Expeditions, students use viewfinders that take them in 3D fashion to places such as Machu Picchu, Antarctica, and the International Space Station. Visit a classroom where a Google Expedition is underway, and you'll see students holding viewfinders up to their eyes, fingers pointed toward a classic piece of art that seem inches away, or heads tilted up toward a mountain that feels close enough to climb.

Robbie's passion for what Google Expeditions could do for our students prompted him to write a grant proposal that he submitted to the Wayne Township Education Foundation. The grant was funded. Now, students throughout our schools are taking virtual field trips.

"When you see a student reach out and try to touch a shark on the Great Barrier Reef and when they can tell you about the intricate details of that lesson five months later," Robbie says, "you know you've impacted that student and influenced their learning in a major way."

Over the years, the Wayne Township Education Foundation has provided teacher innovation grants that have impacted more than 300,000 MSD Wayne students. But the organization's reach extends beyond the classroom. One of the many other ways the foundation plays a fundamental role in the vitality of our community will be seen on Saturday, February 10, at the Wayne Winter Games. This power-packed day at the Ben Davis Ninth Grade Center will deliver exciting fitness activities, a health fair, workshops, and classes related to fun movement and health. This family event is open to our entire community. You can visit the Wayne Township Education Foundation's page on our district website for more information.

The foundation is one of hundreds of organizations in Wayne Township that make our community a better place to live. Those organizations — businesses, churches, other non-profit groups — are made up of people who give of themselves to improve our students' quality of learning and our citizens' quality of life. The level of school-community engagement is the highest I've ever seen in the 12 years I've lived and worked here. With new energy being invested in economic development, the west side of Indianapolis is working toward improvements that could greatly benefit our schools and community.

And so I invite you to become involved if you are not already, and to remain involved if you are. Our school district is thriving because of strong partnerships. I appreciate our community's continued commitment to the success of our students. We Are Wayne!

*Dr. Jeffrey K. Butts
Superintendent*