

Learning to the Beat of World Drums

Students at Meade Park Explore how Music is Portrayed all Over the World



Last summer, Kahlar Drews, music teacher at Meade Park Elementary, had a idea. What if it would be possible to add a drumline to give students an opportunity to do “extra” music? Students would have the opportunity to explore and learn how music is portrayed all over the world, not just in their music class. He submitted a request to DPSF.

What transpired exceeded his expectations. The Foundation awarded \$10,871 for the project and drums were ordered. His students were almost immediately given performance opportunities to showcase their new skills. The drumline not only increased excitement about music but also helped instill some very valuable lessons for students.

Mr. Drews recognizes that students are exposed to sports and technology from a very young age, and when it comes time to “choose” they go with what is familiar. Students who are involved in the drumline, who are also in sports, learn that it *is* possible to do both. They learn about responsibility. Being part of



Meade Park Elementary Students trying out their new drums.

the drumline means they must pay attention in class and will be held accountable for practicing their music at home. Suddenly, they have realized that they are learning a new language: music. Introducing the drumline has also taught students how to work together as a team - a musical team. He explains that “nobody is the All-Star on this team. Nobody plays louder than the person next to them. Everyone gets louder at the same time and softer at the same time. Each part is unique but is also a puzzle piece to the entire cadence.”



Kahlar Drews, Music Teacher



The African drums are a huge hit with the students.

“They (the drums) are as tall as us!”

Meade Park Student

Students were very excited about the new instruments in their classroom. The younger students were amazed to have drums that are “as tall as us!” They also find it fun to be up and moving in class, while banging on a drum.

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Drumline Cont.

“Providing a variety of ways to learn helps so much as a teacher. I am able to teach a certain topic; and then do a singing activity with it. Then, maybe a dancing game/activity, and then utilize the new drums to get hands-on with whatever the topic of the week is. They really add versatility to my classroom,” Mr. Drews stated. He would love to eventually expand the number of African drums to accommodate even more students.

The world drums have also opened doors for opportunities outside of the classroom. Students were able to attend the “Drumlines and Darkness” event in October hosted by North Ridge Middle School Band Director, Adam Owens.

They also traveled around Danville on Veteran’s Day to perform a few cadences at Hawthorne Estates, Bowman Estates, and The Villas of Holly Brook. Mr. Drews will be on the lookout in 2026 for more opportunities for his students to shine!



Spending time outside of the classroom



Next Day Delivery

Quick Turnaround Allows for Thanksgiving Meal Success for Life Skills Students

In a world of overnight shipping and freaky fast subs, DPSF is aware that some projects are time sensitive. On the morning of November 19 Ms. Kim Fraser, STEP Coordinator and a Life Skills teacher at Danville High School, applied for \$450 in funding to purchase a KitchenAid stand mixer for her Life Skills students. These students help prepare lunch and breakfast twice a week as part of their vocational training. They needed to prepare a special Thanksgiving meal on November 21.

Without the stand mixer, not all students would be able to participate in the food prep.

Thankfully DPSF has a policy in place to expedite requests for less than \$1,000 streamlining the approval process.

Armed with a coupon from Danville's Kohls, (who has been a great donor to the Foundation) the Foundation staff went to work immediately and before the end of the school day we hand

delivered a new mixer to Ms.Fraser. And with Kohls Cash we even managed to score some cool attachments. Ms. Fraser sent the Foundation a message saying the meal “went off without a hitch all because of you (DPSF).” We can’t promise that we can accommodate all next-day endowment requests but for those under \$1K, when circumstances allow, we will certainly give it our best shot. On behalf of Ms. Fraser and her students we thank our donors who make these projects possible.

Life Skills students prepping the Thanksgiving meal using the KitchenAid mixer.



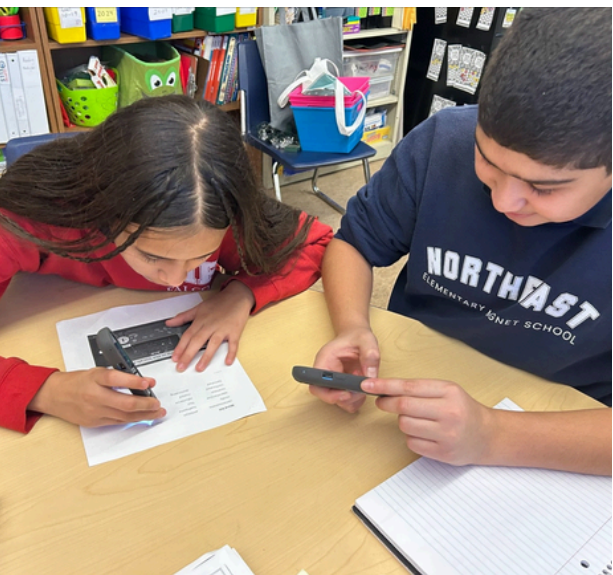
“We used the KitchenAid and it was amazing. ... I was able to get two or three other kids involved that normally can’t, so thank you so much.”

- Kim Fraser, DHS Teacher/STEP Coordinator/Life Skills Teacher



What's **NEW** From YOU

Because You Deserve a Chance to See the Difference Your Generosity Makes in the Classroom



Translating Pens for ELL Classes

Northeast Magnet School English Language Learner (ELL) teacher Ms. Nina Sparling was awarded \$775 for translating pens to support her ELL students in becoming more independent, confident, and successful in their academic journey. They provide immediate, discreet support by translating and reading aloud printed text. They empower students to build vocabulary, improve pronunciation, and develop reading comprehension skills at their own pace. Ms. Sparling stated, "I wanted to express my sincere gratitude for the grant funds awarded to us. My students have already experienced enhancement in our lessons and their learning. I believe that this will continue to make a meaningful impact for years to come."



Award: \$775



Worm Casting Farm at KDBA

Ms. Jennifer Lafler, teacher at Kenneth D. Bailey Academy, was awarded \$447 for a Worm Casting Farm. In her request she explained that she and fellow teacher, Ms. Libby Schnepel, would love to add hands-on lessons about decomposition, soil health, and sustainable agriculture. A worm casting farm would encourage eco-conscious behavior and stewardship. Upon learning of the award Ms. Lafler stated, "Thank you so much! The students will be excited, and it's a great initiative with our partnership with Douglas Discovery Gardens, The University of Illinois YPAR program, and all of our new landscaping where the soil can be amended with worm castings."



Award: \$447



New Anatomy Models for Danville High School

Mr. Gresel Gabawan, a DHS science teacher, was awarded \$843 for high-quality, durable anatomical models for his science and anatomy courses. Both an anatomical model and full size skeleton model were provided with this award. He explained that anatomy is an inherently three-dimensional subject. When using the models, students have increased understanding of the intricate, spatial relationships between organs, which cannot be obtained by images on a screen or watching a video. "Thank you all again so much for making this project possible. The students will be excited to see that I have already assembled and displayed these models in my classroom!" he stated.



Award: \$843

The Danville Public School Foundation Receives Grant from Community Foundation of East Central Illinois

The Danville Public School Foundation (DPSF) received a \$5,443 grant award from the **Community Foundation of East Central Illinois (CFECI)** to fund microscopes. The CFECI is a publicly-supported 501(c)(3) organization. They award grants based on the greatest needs in the communities they serve.

The School Foundation approached the CFECI after receiving a request from Ms. Melissa Sergent, a second grade teacher at Northeast Magnet School. Ms. Sergent stated in her request, "Our new ELA curriculum has units studying the human body, insects and life cycles. The use of microscopes is mentioned in our reading. There is a story specifically about a man that builds his own microscope and discovers bacteria. Having access to real microscopes would give students first-hand experience looking closely at human

cells, animal cells, and other materials that are unseen by the human eye. Most students do not have access to microscopes outside of school. They will now be able to look through the lens of a scientist, seeing their world magnified, possibly for the first time in their lives.

Ms. Sergent's request for 12 microscopes also included over 500 pre-prepared slides of various types including human cells, mammals and plant samples. It also included a storage cart on wheels so the microscopes can be conveniently shared with other Northeast Magnet School teachers, expanding the curriculum enhancement for more students.

Our thanks to the Community Foundation of East Central Illinois for providing this funding opportunity!

Non-365 Club Donations Received Since Our Last Newsletter Recent General, Memorial, Restricted and Scholarships

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Donor Spotlight

Matt and Jamie Skovran

While the Foundation can help provide some financial fuel, it is the teachers who identify needs in the classrooms and drive positive change. The Skovran's, true partners in education, are a perfect example.

Each with over 20 years in education (24 for Jamie and 26 for Matt), they chose to establish their careers in Danville Public Schools. To date, they have 44 years of service to District 118 combined. Jamie Skovran, a 2019 Golden Ruler Winner and 2020 Dr. David L. Fields Teacher of the Year, graduated from Illinois State University in Elementary Education with a concentration in middle grades and history in 2001. She later earned her Master's degree from Eastern Illinois University in Educational Administration. She taught 7th grade science and social studies at South View Middle School for ten years before transferring to KDBA where she again taught middle school science before becoming their current Assistant Principal.

“DPSF provides that extra financial boost for the things that school district budgets can't necessarily support.”

Jamie Skovran, KDBA Asst Principal

Matt Skovran, also a 2020 Dr. David L. Fields Teacher of the Year, earned his Undergraduate degree from University of St. Francis Joliet in Elementary Education with a concentration in middle grades and history in 1999. He also later obtained his Master's degree from Eastern Illinois University in Educational Administration. He taught 7th grade science and social studies as well at both North Ridge and South View before teaching STEM education through Project Lead the Way (PLTW) beginning in 2014. In addition, Matt is also the DHS head boy's cross country and baseball coach.

A Danville native, Jamie graduated from Danville High School in 1997. Matt, on the other hand, is a Danville transplant who grew up in Minneapolis and was hired by District 118 after his college graduation. The weather was a little warmer here

too, and that was a bonus. Matt and Jamie were married in 2002 in Danville. They have three children who have all gone through Danville schools with their youngest set to graduate in the Class of 2027. Their passion for teaching comes full circle as their oldest daughter also has aspirations to work for District 118.



The Skovrans cheering on the Vikings

Both Matt and Jamie contribute to the Foundation's 365 Club. Jamie recalls when she was in the classroom, DPSF was able to bring robotics to the students at KDBA, not once but twice, when the materials available to her had become outdated. She has also observed additional Foundation funded projects that have helped students at KDBA, most notably a bounce house and a Lu system for use in PE. Matt shared that “DPSF has provided our students with many explorational opportunities beyond the basic materials that we use in the classroom. In PLTW, DPSF has helped purchase flight simulators and drones to support our STEM study on the science of flight, both have opened new educational pathways for our Danville students to grow and nourish their curiosity.”

You can often find Matt and Jamie cheering on the Danville Band of Vikings and the DHS girls soccer team. Thank you Skovran's, for all of the many ways that you show up for your students!



Matt and Jamie cheering on the Vikings



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Because of YOU

2026 365 Club Gifts Top \$100,000

Thank You!

With ESSER funding in the rearview mirror, today's financial climate is more challenging. The Foundation is able to fill in some gaps by awarding classroom endowments for teachers. Through your gifts, important projects that enhance educational opportunities are being implemented in schools across the District. For FY26, DPSF is projected to award over \$170K!

The **365 Club** campaign kicked off in November with a fundraising goal of \$85,000. As of January, over

\$107,000 has been pledged in support of our mission. To our donors, THANK YOU! We can't think of a better way to start the new year.

Not a member? Maybe we missed calling you or you are just learning about the **365 Club**, it is not too late. Just [click here](#) or on our logo to provide your online gift.

If you would like more information before becoming a member, please accept this as your invitation to attend the **365 Club Breakfast**. Just RSVP to Stephanie Yates at yatess@danville118.org



Stephanie
Stephanie Yates,
Executive Director

It's not too late to join the
365 Club for 2026!



SAVE THE DATE

It is almost that time! Please make your reservation for the 365 Club Breakfast on April 16, 2026 at 8:00 a.m. at Turtle Run. There is no cost to attend.

The Foundation invites all of our donors
to celebrate with us at our

365 Club Breakfast

April 16, 2026 8:00 am

Turtle Run Banquet Center
332 East Liberty Lane, Danville IL
Please RSVP - 217-444-1038
yatess@danville118.org



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