

Percussion Alive

By Foundation Board Member Nina Brahm
Grant Recipient: Jared Hancock, Westlake



Music teacher Jared Hancock from Westlake Elementary recognized that he had a diverse population of brilliant student-musicians. Armed with just three tubano drums (picture a fetchingly groovy, narrow, tall bongo drum), Mr. Hancock sought funding (\$948.64) for nine additional tubano drums. The Wayne Township Education Foundation agreed with Mr. Hancock that access to the drums would give students what they crave: *authentic instrument experiences*. Mr. Hancock's project, titled *Percussion Alive*, has helped students achieve Indiana State Music Standards, while also creating unifying classroom experiences.

The students in the Mr. Hancock's classroom use the drums to learn rhythms. Sometimes students "echo" a rhythm that Jared plays, and sometimes students play rhythms by reading music projected onto a screen, with a computer program pointing to each note as it needs to be played. But the best rhythms are created and led by students, which has led to some surprising and magical moments, which we will get to in a moment.

According to Mr. Hancock, all of his students love the drums and are highly motivated to behave so as not to lose their turn playing the drums. When the students play the drums in a group, they create an electric, united atmosphere, similar to a group of sports fans stomping and clapping to a familiar chant at a big game. Mr. Hancock opines that the drums allow students to be successful, avoiding intimidating experiences (e.g., when young male singer's voice begins to change).

After purchasing and utilizing the drums in 2015, Westlake fourth graders' scores on the MSD Wayne Township Rhythm Assessment improved measurably, which Mr. Hancock attributes to the tubano drums. But increased assessment scores are not the sole benefit. Mr. Hancock has also witnessed students with special needs, including life skill students and students with Autism, play the drums accurately, effectively, and passionately. In one unforgettable instance, a young quiet female student with special needs surprised Mr. Hancock by leading her music class in an echo rhythm that she created. On that day, she learned that she could be a talented leader.

Mr. Hancock said that he is grateful for the Wayne Township Education Foundation. He feels fortunate to teach in a township where teachers can reach out to the Foundation when they need resources. He realizes that this kind of help does not exist everywhere.