



One Small Step, One Giant Leap

By Tom DeKeyser | Superintendent & Middle and High School Principal

The nerd in me loves the great American success story of the race to the moon. This summer marked the 50th anniversary of Apollo 11. I was just shy of two-years-old when Neil and Buzz descended to the surface of the moon. During the last moon mission, Apollo 17, I was five. My mom let us watch portions of it on our black and white TV. I was hooked, like most of the USA, on space travel and proud of my country. I wanted so badly to get involved.

Now, what I find most intriguing about the race to the moon is how and why it started. It was driven by a president's eagerness to advance our country past the U.S.S.R. at the height of the Cold War. JFK made it a goal, a mission, to be first on the moon by the end of the '60s. It, of course, was a significant scientific and technological undertaking. The mission was aimed at bringing our country together; it was something in which we could all be involved.

WLPS has taken many small steps and a few giant leaps at improving the experience of our students at Whitmore Lake Public Schools. Here are just a few examples:

- Everybody learns to swim. From Kindergarten to High School, if students are involved with our schools, they are swimming.
- Dedicated STEM and Project Based Learning at grades 5 and 6.
- Every student takes an Advanced Placement course in high school. 94% of students who took an AP test last year, passed an AP test earning them college credit.
- Early elementary literacy and math programs that have produced 3rd-grade MSTEP scores that top all Livingston County schools and are just behind Ann Arbor schools.

These examples are testimonies to the work we do in Whitmore Lake. At times it feels like we are trying to land on the moon. The job is hard. But it is a job we love. It is a job we are good at. We continually focus on the experience our students have in the classrooms. It is our mission to the moon.

More and more our mission, like Apollo 11, relies on the integration of technology. We are consistently bringing in new devices and replacing infrastructure assembled in the early 2000s. After evaluating our district's technology needs last year, we know we need a serious dose of concentrated technology to get us where we want to be.

In the 2019-20 school year, our students will see an influx of technology as we work to enhance the instructional strategies we know have the highest correlation to learning - personal feedback on learning objectives. Our teachers will be given tools which make them more mobile in the classroom. They will be able to interact with students more using instructional technology while moving around the classrooms.

Each improvement we make is a small step forward. Each small step gets us closer to our mission of providing an exceptional, personalized education. Collectively, all these small steps made for our students turn into one big, giant leap for our community.