



## Muncie Community Schools

4301 S. Cowan Rd.  
Muncie, IN 47302  
Phone: (765) 747-5211  
[www.muncie.k12.in.us](http://www.muncie.k12.in.us)

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**MEDIA CONTACT:** Andy Klotz (765) 747-5210 ofc.  
(317) 372-1277 cell  
[andy.klotz@muncieschools.org](mailto:andy.klotz@muncieschools.org)

### MCHS teacher to take students on virtual vacation

*Lilly Endowment grant allows Adam Cunningham to travel to Caribbean*



Muncie, Ind. – Adam Cunningham can't wait to teach his students about the history, people and culture of Cuba. He'll throw in lessons about Haiti as well, but he won't be reciting information from a book or pulling photos off the internet. He'll be offering first-hand accounts of conversations with natives and describing the tastes of freshly made local cuisine.

"My end goal is for them to see exactly how varied cultures can be, and hopefully spark their interest in other groups of people outside of the United States," he said.

Cunningham, a 7<sup>th</sup> year Social Studies teacher at Muncie Central High School, will visit five Caribbean cities in five weeks next summer – Havana, Cienfuegos, Trinidad and Santiago, Cuba, and Port-au-Prince, Haiti – thanks to an \$11,612 grant he received through [Lilly Endowment's Teacher Creativity Fellowship Program \(TCFP\)](#). He hoped to go this summer, but has delayed the trip until 2022 because of COVID-19.

"Traveling this year could still be difficult, and I might lose out on some opportunities if there are still a lot of shut downs this summer," he said.

Those would be opportunities to visit historic sites, dine at local establishments or take part in community events, all of which he plans to share during his excursion through daily posts on an interactive blog full of photos and videos.

"I'm excited to interact with some of our Caribbean neighbors and learn from them," Cunningham said. "And it's a great opportunity to experience Cuba, which has been isolated from the United States for so long."

This will be Cunningham's first attempt to virtually teach while traveling. He learned about the TCFP from fellow teacher Drew Shermeta who encouraged him to apply. Shermeta and Melody Stader, another MCHS social studies teacher, helped him with his application, which he said was a key component to creating a quality submission.

Cunningham is one of the TCFP's 101 grantees for 2021. The program was created in 1987 to provide Indiana's public and private educators the encouragement and financial support to renew their own curiosity and deepen their commitment to the education profession.

"We are truly impressed by the remarkable projects these educators have designed that promise to restore them, both personally and professionally," Ted Maple, the Endowment's vice president for education, said. "During an extraordinary year in which teachers, principals and other K-12 educators have faced immense pressures because of the pandemic, meaningful renewal experiences take on an added value as these men and women seek renewal and a rejuvenated, greater commitment to their students and to the education profession."

For more information on all Lilly Endowment Renewal Programs, visit [lillyendowment.org/for-grantseekers/renewal-programs/](https://lillyendowment.org/for-grantseekers/renewal-programs/).

#### **About Muncie Community Schools**

*Serving the local community since 1855, Muncie Community Schools (MCS) educates more than 5,000 students at six elementary schools, two middle schools and one high school while also managing several other educational facilities. Through its unique partnership with Ball State University, MCS strives to maximize each student's potential so he or she can be a positive, productive member of society. Find out more about MCS or Director of Public Education and CEO Lee Ann Kwiatkowski at [muncieschools.org](https://muncieschools.org).*

#### **About Lilly Endowment Inc.**

*Lilly Endowment Inc. is an Indianapolis-based, private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly and his sons, Eli and J.K. Jr., through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company. While those gifts remain the financial bedrock of the Endowment, the Endowment is a separate entity from the company, with a distinct governing board, staff and location. In keeping with its founders' wishes, the Endowment supports the causes of community development, education, and religion, and it maintains a special commitment to its hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana.*

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