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Google Expeditions Pioneer Program Visits Westlake Academy

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From Ecuador’s Galápagos Islands and Smoo Cave in Scotland, to the Great Barrier Reef at Heron Island, students at [Westlake Academy](#) (WA) got the virtual tour of a lifetime.

Thanks to [Google Expeditions Pioneer Program](#), 18 sessions were held at Westlake Academy so students could experience the world in a new way through virtual reality field trips. The Expeditions are designed specifically for the classroom by a band of technological innovators and professional educators.

“Technology takes students to places they wouldn’t normally be able to go to during school,” said Ray Workman, IT Coordinator, in a press release.

A team from the Pioneer Program helps teachers understand the process and provides them with materials, which include smartphones that fit into a Google Cardboard headset and a tablet to guide the experience via a router that is configured by the Google Pioneer team.

No matter the age, sounds from the classroom were much the same as students got a 360-degree view of destination environments all over the world. “Wow!” “Cool!” “Whoa, dude, check that out!” “They have a Burger King there?”

John Alfone, Google representative, said the virtual tours open doorways to places students might have misconceptions of, or might not ever visit. “They get to see things they didn’t even realize existed.”

Maru Busico-Flight, technology integration specialist, said Westlake Academy staff is grateful to be chosen as part of this pilot program. As an International Baccalaureate World School, this type of activity fits in perfectly with Westlake Academy’s international mindedness focus. Busico-Flight said she applied for the program as part of the Academy’s Global Collaboration initiatives, in hopes that WA would be selected from the ones around the world including U.S., Brazil, Australia, U.K., Canada, Singapore and Denmark.

“When I learned about Google Expedition I fell in love with the idea immediately!” Busico-Flight said in a press release. “I am thrilled that we are able to integrate technology to enhance our students’ learning experiences and bring lessons to life.”

[Click here](#) to learn more about the Google Expeditions Pioneer Program.
