

Programs and Partnerships
Niswonger Foundation Board Update
Thursday, May 27, 2021

Rural LIFE (2018 EIR/USDOE Grant)

- The school year is ending with an opportunity for reflections with school teams on the impact of the grant-related work (success stories)
- Preparing for summer learning activities, including:
 - Rural LIFE Schools: School teams will meet across June and July for 3 days of grant-focused professional learning designed to help teams:
 - Deepen their understanding of personalized learning and best literacy practices
 - Develop a school plan based upon the Rural LIFE model, including both goals and corresponding progress indicators as well as a coaching partnership plan
 - Sustainability Grant Applicants: Applicants will meet in May for an Explorer's Workshop to better understand the 2021-2022 Sustainability Grant model and June for grant proposal workshops designed to help teams...
 - Explore opportunities to improve literacy via personalized learning and strategically plan for what they want to sustain and how best to accomplish their goal(s)
 - Articulate a clear proposal for sustainability grant consideration
 - Strong Start Network (SSN): School teams will meet across June and July for one virtual session and a 2-day retreat of grant-focused professional learning designed to help teams...
 - Explore the concept of “knowledge building” and how high-quality curricular materials are intentionally designed to build critical content knowledge that helps students not only become stronger readers, but also stronger writers, listeners, and speakers as well.
 - Unpack our curricular materials to better understand their potential impact on student learning
 - Revisit key network tools to set team-specific focus priorities for the next school year
- Regional Professional Learning: Rural LIFE will hold a Virtual Summer Institute (VSI 2021) from June 7-11 and is open for all K-12 teachers and administrators to attend. The purpose of the VSI is to...
 - Provide opportunities for educators to develop/continue to develop an understanding of the concepts of literacy and personalized learning and how they are effectively applied in the classroom/school setting, with 15 sessions across the following learning strands:
 - Improving Literacy through Personalized Learning
 - Supporting Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)
 - Utilizing Technology to Meet Instructional Goals

STEM LD (2020 EIR/USDOE Grant)

The Stem LD project is moving from the planning stage to the implementation phase, with most current activities organized around the 2021/22 school year. Details include:

- Recruitment
 - During April, 46 schools agreed to participate.
 - 28 middle schools (21 are “rural”)
 - 18 high schools (11 are “rural”)
 - A second cohort will be recruited next spring, with the goal of (at least) doubling the participation.
 - “Timing” was typically cited as a barrier in participation in Cohort 1; many schools expressed a desire to have a “more normal” post-Covid environment before committing.
- On-boarding
 - Individual meetings with school leaders are being held during May.
- Professional Development planned
 - Summer 2021
 - 6-hours asynchronous Orientation for STEM teachers & leaders
 - Additional 6-hour Orientation for leaders
 - Orientation led by TNTP
 - Starting Fall 2021
 - “Deep-dive” specialized PD for STEM teachers
 - Led by our project partners (BioBuilder, ETSU, etc.)

NTC Professional Development (2019 EIR/USDOE Partnership Grant)

- Staffing changes have resulted from the project lead, Dr. Richard Bales, decision to retire. Allison Seely, who has been a lead coach with this grant since the beginning, will assume the role of project director. Allison has selected Sherry Cockerham and Mindy Volk as the lead coaches for the remaining two-years of this grant. Sherry recently retired from Johnson City Schools. Mindy is on leave from Jefferson County Schools.
- Work continues with the 30 treatment schools within twelve districts.
- Monthly online forums are conducted with formal instruction on skills required to be academic coaches. These are all done virtually. It also gives all the teachers an opportunity to network with others in our region concerning online and in person instruction.
- Two lead coaches provide in-field coaching to the 60+ teachers who are being trained in the field of academic coaching of their peers. Each teacher has designated times to work with a peer or peer group to improve their skills at leading instructional improvements.
- As schools transition back and forth from in-person, remote virtual, and A/B schedule platforms, our staff makes modifications in how we go about delivering our supports to maintain the goals of the grant.

Niswonger Online (Funded by our Consortium School Districts)

- Spring 2021 semester ended May 14th. Final grades were accessible by schools on Monday May 17.
- Current summer enrollment is smaller than usual. This was expected given that summer school is mandatory this summer.
- NiswongerOnline.com is continuously being updated with semester dates and information, our course catalog, and program partnerships.
- After this spring semester, CARE Foundation money will no longer cover seat fees of our current affiliate schools.
- We have some remaining funds from the CARE Foundation and are hoping to present a way to use it to help new schools that use Niswonger Online courses, thanks to the AP Access for All program.
- This spring we had 6 new CTE courses, thanks to the CARES stimulus funds from the state of Tennessee. These courses saw positive enrollment growth.

AP Access for All (2021 Tennessee Department of Education Grant)

- The initial leadership team has been selected, with two more approved to begin June 1.
- The current focus:
 - Meeting with vendors, GeniusSIS, CanvasLMS, and FLVS to make sure everything needed is ready for the influx of enrollment
 - On-boarding of new school systems (with intentional target of systems that offer no, or limited, AP opportunity)
 - Developing MOU for AP Access for All school systems
 - On-boarding of new administrative staff
 - Developing Job descriptions and contracts for 17 core administrative hires
 - Job Search for Coordinator of Finance (Full-time)
 - Job search for 8 Regional Relationship Specialists through various outlets such as Indeed, Social Media, state newsletters, and CORE offices
 - Select a marketing and communications vendor
 - Develop website, **tnapaccessforall.org** as a landing page for schools, teachers, and students
 - Partnering with the College Board, APSI, and other vendors to make College Board training for teachers available this year and next
 - Hiring and training of new AP teachers for this fall

NiswongerCARE College and Career Advising (2020 Federal CARES/Tennessee Department of Education Grant)

- Both Junior Planning Nights and College Signing Day events were planned in all 30 high schools.
- Social Media engagement has increased over all platforms since Advisor Mary Kerns volunteered for the role of Social Media coordinator. Over the last few months, Instagram visitors increased by 121.6% and Facebook reach increased by 289%.
- **FAFSA completion rate is currently at 74% of current high school seniors. This compares to the state rate of 69% and nationally at 48%.**

- Summer melt programming enrollment is underway with 450 seniors already signed up to receive assistance throughout the summer after graduation.
- NCAN's New Congress Virtual Advocacy Week was held during the first week of March. Denise Arnold was joined by Anita Kilbourne-Greer, Shawn Stewart, and Nellie Greer, Nancy Dishner, along with Niswonger Scholars and NCAN Student Fellows Jasmine Martin and Gustavo Castillo. They held virtual meetings with Tennessee legislators throughout the week asking them to reflect on this crucial moment for the college access and success community.
- Signal Vine Messaging platform enrollment increased to 3,666 students who receive important reminders and are able to ask questions and receive support through text messaging.

CareerConnect

- Our graduating class of 2021 has completed CareerConnect requirements and were celebrated on May 10 with their senior banquet. Out of the 26 students who have completed the program, 23 are heading to some form of post-secondary education, 2 are entering the military, and one plans to enter the workforce directly after graduation.
- The class of 2022 and 2023 finished their regular monthly meetings online and are gearing up for their summer experiences.
- Summer is looking promising to be able to gather safely for our annual summer experiences. Opportunities have been lined up with post-secondary partners to visit their campuses as well as with local industries to visit their facilities. Senior camp will be from June 7 – 18. Junior camp will be from July 12 – 23. Both are being held at Greene Technology Center.
- Recruitment for the class of 2024 will continue into next school year. While recruiting efforts were primarily virtual this year, we were able to recruit most of students into the program, but still have room in the cohort. Continuing to recruit into the next school year will allow us to reach the students who were completely virtual and disconnected from extracurriculars at their school.

Project On Track (2020 Care Foundation of America and 2021 Ballard Health Grant)

- Niswonger Foundation's "Project On-Track" is a literacy tutoring program for students in grades K-3 whose learning has been significantly impacted by the loss of instructional time over the past 12 months. This is a three-year grant from the Care Foundation of America, with partnership from Ballard Health,
- Dr. Debra Bentley, previously with Johnson City Schools is directing this work.
- Eight districts have submitted signed Memorandums of Understanding to implement Project On-Track beginning this summer and/or during the 2021-2022 school year: Coker County, Greene County, Hancock County, Hawkins County, Johnson City, Johnson County, Unicoi County, and Washington County.
- Six districts are reviewing Memorandums of Understanding to implement Project On-Track beginning this summer and/or during the 2021-2022 school year: Carter County, Elizabethton City, Greeneville City, Hamblen County, Newport City, and Sullivan County.

- Two districts are still in discussion with implementation to begin the 2021-2022 school year: Bristol City and Jefferson County.
- Nine hundred-eighty students are projected to be served this summer in districts' learning camps and child-care programs.
- Project site coordinators will be trained on May 17-18 in the delivery of instructional materials to be used by tutors. Site coordinators will be responsible to train all tutors prior to students beginning the tutoring program.
- Project Funding:
 - Care Foundation of America - \$2,300,000 (3-year commitment)
 - Ballad Health - \$300,000 (1-year commitment; possible 3-year commitment)
 - A proposal for \$382,812 has been submitted for the Northeast TN Childhood Readiness and Resilience Project to Congresswoman Harshbarger under the House Committee on Appropriations – Community Project Funding

Comprehensive Educational Resources – CER (Funded by Our Consortium of School Districts)

- Completed first year with common benchmarks and data sharing: 12 districts shared benchmark data this year
- Successful first year of materials development: There were 29 curriculum teams. 10/29 teams had 100% of standards completed and 16/29 teams met the 80% goal. Our CER average was 65% of standards with materials posted on the website.
- Currently 23 districts participating in CER – growing by 40% this year from the original 17 districts.

WE Track (Work Ethic Distinction)

- Program expansion continues. Added two new school districts this spring (Lewis and Trenton City); with discussions ongoing with several more including Shelby County and Wilson County
- A revised set of WED standards and an updated website is on track for the fall start of school
- New reach out from Mississippi counties (Pontotoc, Lee, and Union) may lead to more expansion opportunities, similar to Virginia counties.
- Virginia counties still going strong; beginning year 2 of our partnership in July

Professional Development Activities

- The Niswonger Foundation has taken the lead on a region-wide professional development day to be held on Friday, October 22, 2021. While all 19 school districts are setting calendars to participate in 2022, seven districts will participate in this inaugural event. We are anticipating over 3000 educators in attendance that day.

Grant Activity (Since February Board Meeting)

Awarded (\$11,200,000)

- Ballard Health – Partnership with Project On Track - \$300,000
- Tennessee Office of the Governor - Direct Appropriations
 - Match Support for STEM LD - \$200,000
 - NiswongerCARE College and Career Advising - \$700,000
- Tennessee Department of Education
 - AP Access for All - \$10 million

Submitted

- Community Project Funding – US House of Representatives - \$382,812

Recent Contributions (February 1 – April 30)

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------------|
| Hope Adkins | \$ | 100.00 |
| Yianni Alepohoritis | \$ | 50.00 |
| Ballad Health | \$ | 300,000.00 |
| Barbara Bates | \$ | 50.00 |
| Corporate Giving | \$ | 91.00 |
| EJ and Leslie Creutzinger | \$ | 1,000.00 |
| Harold and Nancy Dishner | \$ | 5,500.00 |
| Vivian Franklin | \$ | 50.00 |
| Daniel Hasler | \$ | 6,000.00 |
| Sarah Holt | \$ | 50.00 |
| Laura Linville | \$ | 50.00 |
| Rob Mahaffey | \$ | 250.00 |
| Michael and Betty McCollough | \$ | 100.00 |
| Carolyn McPherson | \$ | 25.00 |
| Gary Nave | \$ | 1,000.00 |
| Scott Niswonger | \$ | 275,000.00 |
| Dan and Kathy O’Dell | \$ | 100.00 |
| John Payne | \$ | 20.00 |
| Anthony and Connie Pentz | \$ | 1,000.00 |
| Michael and Gwen Roberts | \$ | 1,000.00 |
| Rita Sexton | \$ | 25.00 |
| Ricky and Robin Shepherd | \$ | 100.00 |
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| Total | \$ | 591,561.00 |