

**Programs and Partnerships  
Niswonger Foundation Board Update  
Thursday, August 8, 2019**

**Literacy Initiative Focused on Effectiveness (LIFE)**

***Greene County Schools (Three-year project completion)***

- This three-year LIFE project concluded on June 30. Our literacy specialist, Amanda Carpenter; and Director of Special Projects, Larry Neas, are collecting data and other information for the preparation of the final report. Amanda is continuing to provide assistance with our literacy projects, including Hancock County.

***Hancock County Schools (Year 3 of 3 of Walmart and Annenberg Grants)***

- Plans are in place for the third and final year of the Hancock County LIFE project. This project is being led by Sara Holt, literacy specialist, and Larry Neas, Director of Special Projects.

***KinderCamps***

- *Niswonger Foundation/Hancock County Schools KinderCamp* was held for the second time this summer and was expanded to a three-week program. Funding was through a grant from the Walmart Foundation and Rural Schools and Community Trust. This project included a parent component.
- *Niswonger Foundation/ Carter County Schools KinderCamp* was a new addition to our summer programs for 2019. This included personnel and research assistance from the ETSU Clemmer College. Students from Cloudland and Hampton Elementary Schools participated.

***JOYful Literacy Land***

- The attic of the new Niswonger Foundation home is becoming a literacy center for use by the school systems in our Consortium. Preparation of the space is nearing completion.
- Literacy materials donated by Dr. Flora Joy, ETSU Professor Emeritus, have been relocated to the attic and are being reassembled.
- Larry Neas, Amanda Carpenter and Sara Holt; and retired educators Sally Andrews and Lenora Williams are guiding this work.
- We are thrilled that Jennifer Golden, spouse of our Board member David Golden, has graciously agreed to be the muralist for this literacy initiative.

**Rural LIFE (EIR Grant)**

- The Rural LIFE project has successfully completed its first year of implementation. Each of the 36 participating schools have (1) received support toward its own personalized school plan and (2) actively worked to put the plan into action. Each school's plan is part of the overall federally-funded project to improve literacy in grades 6-8 by implementing elements and concepts of personalized learning.

- Support for the schools' efforts include instructional coaching, from one of nine Rural LIFE coaches, and periodic financial support to fund elements of the school plan. Seven of the nine coaches are slated to return for a second year; the coaching team will be joined by new coaches Dr. Catherine Edwards and Dr. Bethany Fillers.
- As an exciting supplement to the school plans and school-year support, the Summer Institute sessions have provided meaningful professional-development opportunities. Fourteen day-long sessions were scheduled, with seven topics addressed in June and repeated in July. Registration was open to any teacher in the 36 participating middle schools. Response was so positive that we had to limit registration. The sessions are being held in the Learning Center at the new Niswonger Foundation office. More than 400 teachers have attended a session; participant feedback and evaluations are overwhelmingly positive.

## **Online Program**

### ***Niswonger Online***

- Summer 2019 classes closed on Friday, July 26th. Approximately 450 students are on track to earn credit.
- Summer classes included 26 sections of 17 different courses. Twenty-two teachers were employed.
- Courses with the greatest enrollment included personal finance, physical education and wellness.
- Fall 2019 opens Aug 14<sup>th</sup>, with enrollment just beginning. Schools have until Aug 31st to enroll students.
- Cocks, McMinn, Haywood, and Clay Counties (Clay is our newest system) will be using our World Languages for the majority of their students.
- Niswongeronline.com is continuously being updated to reflect changes in the schools we work with, our course catalog, and program partnerships.
- Course updates/evaluations for 2019/2020 include cosmetology 1, computer applications, accounting I & II, and Spanish I & II.
- General music is a new fine arts course offering for fall 2019.

### ***NiswongerCARE Online***

- New systems joining for fall 2019 are Dyersburg City, Dyer County, and Clay County.
- Dyersburg City will not be using Care Foundation Funds.
- Dyer County and Clay County will be using the following modified schedule of Care Foundation Funds:
  - Year 1- \$0 seat fees, system pays \$4600 affiliate fee
  - Year 2- Schools pay \$75/seat fee and \$4600 affiliate fee
  - Year 3- Schools pay full costs, \$175/seat, \$4600 affiliate fee
- Held Zoom meeting with Overton Co schools in May and meeting again when they return in Aug. Offered modified CARE funding, as stated above.
- Other interested systems: Sevier, Union, Meigs and Obion.

### ***8th Grade Enrichment***

- By pushing our high achieving 8th graders during their final year in middle school we can better prepare them for high school and the rigorous courses (both in-class and online) that they will encounter.
- Presented at EIR training on June 27th. Participants were very interested in sharing info with their schools and leaders. Answered questions about 8th grade enrichment and 8th graders earning high school credit.
- This past year we had approximately 120 8th graders earning high school credit in a wide range of online courses. That is more than double the previous year's 8th grade enrollment.

### ***ETSU Dual Enrollment Partnership***

- Fall 2019 enrollment for ETSU Dual Enrollment has now reached 52 students. More enrollment is expected in early August.
- Niswongeronline.com has been updated to share information about this partnership. An informational PowerPoint has been uploaded as well as a list of current online dual enrollment courses. Counselors are directing students and parents to the website for information.

### ***Walters State and Northeast State Community Colleges Partnership***

- Progress with both Walters State and Northeast State are progressing. Both schools are excited to work together to offer online CTE dual enrollment courses to students throughout the area.
- Both schools are working on prioritizing their online DE course lists and seeing how they can work together to meet students' needs.
- Individual meetings with Walters State and Northeast State happened in May – July.
- We will have an informational meeting for school administrators/counselors in the fall and expect to see the first enrollments of students in Spring 2020.

### **NiswongerCARE College and Career Advising**

#### *Staffing Changes*

- Three Advisors will not be returning for the 2019-2020 year. Taylor Ward was hired as a school counselor at Cherokee High School and Logan Blankenbeckler was hired as a school counselor at Rogersville City School. Tyler Brackins is in the process of interviewing for a school counselor position out-of-state.
- A new full-time advisor, Emily Emerick, a Cocke County native, will serve the following schools: Morristown West High School, Hancock County High School, and West Greene High School
- Three interns through the partnership with the graduate school counseling programs were appointed. Savannah Madgett, Milligan College, will serve Sullivan South High School. Emily Ray, East Tennessee State University, will serve David Crockett High School. Jessy Alva, Carson-Newman University will serve Jefferson County High School.

#### *Programming Updates*

- Big-Bright-Future, the “summer melt” initiative, kicked off in June. Prior to the program start date, advisors visited with representatives at all regional colleges to gain

professional knowledge about each institution and advice about how to best navigate the tasks left to do before classes begin in the fall. Advisors also coordinated the production of short videos, featuring regional college/university Presidents, that included a welcome message, an introduction of college staff who they may likely encounter on campuses, explanations about various processes, and messages of encouragement. Virtual advising is now being provided to over 600 recent high school graduates with the goal of mitigating the phenomena of summer melt. Advisors are utilizing text messaging and other virtual platforms to assist first generation and low-income students who need extra support to insure matriculation in the Fall.

- Delivery of Service meetings are scheduled to be completed with each high school principal and their counseling staff beginning on August 3rd. These meetings provide the opportunity to collaborate and detail the Advisor's work, as well as to review the prior year's data and to establish goals for the coming year.

#### *Summer Training/Professional Development*

- Advisors began summer training in May, focusing on professional learning to continue developing their skills. In addition to several on-site training events, they participated in an online book study of "Gen Z Goes to College" and "The Appreciative Advising Revolution."
- New Advisors joined the staff on July 1 and have been participating in intensive training designed to prepare for assisting students and helping to develop the college going culture within their schools. The advisors heard from many experts in the field, including state department representatives, practicing school counselors, and college admissions professionals. Returning advisors shared many of the best practices and lessons learned from their time in the field.
- Training has been guided by the adoption of "Appreciative Advising" which is a framework to build relationships with students through six phases of discovery with an emphasis on celebrating student's strengths as they help them to achieve their life and career goals.

#### *Counselor Convening*

- NiswongerCARE recently hosted the 2019 Counselor Convening which was held concurrently with the Niswonger Foundation School Success Symposium. Counselors and Advisors (PK-16) from across Northeast Tennessee were in attendance.
- Dr. Amanda Propst Cuevas, Executive Director of the Appreciative Advising Institute shared her expertise on Appreciative Advising, which is the intentional collaborative practice of asking positive, open-ended, questions that help students optimize their educational experiences and achieve their dreams, goals and potentials.

#### *Outcomes*

- Data for 2018-19 school year is being collected and analyzed as it becomes available from the TN State Department of Education and other sources. Highlights of the currently available data are as follows:
  - FAFSA completion data from the U.S. Department of Education reflects that 89% of the students in our service area submitted the FAFSA application, equating to

5,378 seniors, with 82% of those students who completed the application and verification process.

- Advisors assisted 4,033 seniors in applying for additional scholarships and other financial aid compared to 3,604 seniors in 2017-2018.
- Advisors held individual planning meetings with over 8,832 students compared to 7,800 students in 2017-2018 school year.
- Advisors assisted over 5,144 seniors in completing the TN Promise application compared to 2,700 seniors in 2017-2018.
- Advisors helped seniors to submit 6,984 college applications compared to 4,100 during 2017-18.
- Advisors organized 147 Path to College events including College Application Week, FAFSA Frenzy, College Planning Night, and College Signing Day. This compares to 141 in 2017-18.

### **CareerConnect**

- Both two-week Summer Experience camps were successfully completed with a record attendance.
- Three students were placed in summer internships. Two students were at Meco Industries; 1 intern was at American Greetings.
- Fall after-school meetings for 10th and 11th grade Explorers begin August 7 and run through the fall.
- Monthly planning meetings for seniors begin in Aug.

### ***WE Track (Work Ethic Diploma Tracking)***

- School outreach is planned to coincide with start of school. Follow-up meetings will be conducted on a school by school basis.
- The Niswonger Foundation will begin utilization of the \$100,000 Direct Appropriations Grant received from State of Tennessee. These funds will be used to expand WE Track and the Work Ethic Diploma across Tennessee. These funds will also be used for site upgrades.

### **Professional Development Activities**

- ***School Success Symposium - June 20***
  - Commissioner Penny Schwinn
  - Perry Wilson, Founder If I Had a Hammer, Inc.
  - Dr. Amanda Propst Cuevas, Director, Office of Appreciative Education, Florida Atlantic University (Counselor Convening)
  - Focus on career awareness/preparation
- ***Trauma Informed Care - Regional Summit*** – July 11
- ***Rural LIFE*** – Numerous meetings and conferences for treatment schools.

- **English Language Instruction** - We are in the early stages of planning curriculum support for the next five years of English/Language Arts instruction (PreK-12). School districts are making important decisions *soon...* about their ELA programs in the textbook adoption process. At the most recent Superintendents Study Council meeting, the Directors of Schools expressed a desire to work together, in a regional effort supported by the NF, to support schools/teachers in quality literacy programs (curriculum & instruction).

## Grant Activity

### **Grants Submitted**

- The Niswonger Foundation is the lead applicant or a major partner in three federal proposals with announcements expected soon. In August we learn the fate of two EIR proposals and, in September, about a WORC proposal (US Dept. of Labor through the Appalachian Regional Commission).
- **STEM.LD** is a proposal to the US Dept. Of Ed. aimed to increase high school students' participation in STEM-related dual enrollment courses by improving the quality of STEM instruction in grades 7-12, increasing career awareness, and supporting a wide range of out-of-school STEM learning opportunities. This EIR proposal could result in \$4M of federal funds.
- A second EIR proposal would support improved instructional planning in NF-related schools. Improved planning is critical in helping students be successful with new standards and higher academic expectations. This proposal, with **NTC** as the lead organization, could provide a total of \$16M in funds, with NF's share at \$2m+.
- In the WORC competition, NF serves as the lead organization in a partnership with TN 1st, in a \$900K proposal to support and recruit veterans; the proposed would study the workforce needs of the area, match veterans to openings, and work to make for a good employer/employee "fit". The **VET Program** has three initiatives: (1) VET Match - an employer/employee job matching, and training program focused on veterans living in NE Tennessee, (2) Transition to Tennessee (T3) – an initiative to attract transitioning military, and (3) VET Start – a mentorship program to assist entrepreneurial veterans in starting new ventures.

### **Grants Received**

- \$50,000 was received from Delta Dental in support of the Niswonger CARE College and Career Advising Program.
- \$154,905 was received from the Walmart Foundation and Rural Schools and Community Trust in support of the Hancock County LIFE literacy project.
- Ongoing activity continues with Rural LIFE, an \$8 million-dollar grant from the U.S. Department of Education.
- The Niswonger Foundation has completed the final reporting to receive \$600,000 in direct appropriations grants from the State of Tennessee. These grants will support CareerConnect's WE Track initiative (\$100,000) and the Niswonger CARE College and Career Advising Program (\$500,000).
- \$5,000 was received from Plus Mark in support of CareerConnect.

- \$70,000 was received from Care Foundation of America in support of NiswongerCARE Online.

**Boards, Committees and Activities**

*Nancy's Quarterly Activities*

- Attended the TICUA board meeting on May 14, in Nashville.
- Attended the SCORE Steering Committee meeting on May 15, in Nashville
- Attended the THEC quarterly Commission meeting on May 17, in Nashville.
- Participated in the Selection Committee for the Dean of the Walters State Niswonger Campus.
- Participated in the “Portrait of a Graduate” for Kingsport City Schools.
- Spoke at the GASL Summer Collaborative on June 26.
- Participated in the THEC quarterly Commission meeting on July 25, in Murfreesboro.

**Recent Donations (May-July)**

Rural School & Community Trust	\$ 154,905.80
John Tweed	\$ 47,000.00
CARE Foundation	\$ 70,000.00
First Tennessee Bank	\$ 25,000.00
Harold and Nancy Dishner	\$ 5,500.00
Plus Mark	\$ 5,000.00
East TN State University	\$ 3,500.00
Thomas Wennogle	\$ 2,500.00
Allen and Julie Barnett	\$ 2,000.00
Delta Dental	\$ 50,000.00
YourCause/Corp. Giving	\$ 78.40
Scott Niswonger	\$ 1,650,000.00