

**Programs and Partnerships
Niswonger Foundation Board Update
Thursday, August 17, 2017**

Partnership Updates

Literacy Initiative Focused on Effectiveness (LIFE)

- Chuckey Elementary (a LIFE pilot school) was chosen by the state to host a Read to Be Ready Summer Camp. This camp served between 30-40 rising 1st, 2nd, & 3rd graders from June 5th-29th focusing on literacy. The grant award totaled \$40,900.
- We hosted a Place Based Learning (PBL) Institute June 5-6 at the ETSU Allendale campus in Kingsport. The Institute was conducted by Rural Schools and Community Trust through a grant from the Annenberg Fund. Staff members from Hancock County Elementary and Carters Valley Elementary were in attendance.
- Administrators from the LIFE schools presented first-year accomplishments at the School Success Symposium.
- Staff members from all three pilot schools attended a 6-Traits writing training in July focusing on improving writing in grades K-5. This was held at the Sarah Simpson Center in Knoxville. This was in partnership with Polk County Schools.
- Using the professional research firm, KickUp, a survey is being designed to analyze summer professional development.
- Amanda and Larry have been meeting with each Greene County pilot school. During these visits schedules are reviewed, test scores are discussed, staffing issues are discussed, LIFE goals and expectations are reviewed and classroom visits are made.
- The initial planning, design and professional development have been completed in order to start a LIFE initiative with Hancock County Elementary for Fall 2017.
- A literacy specialist, Sara Holt, has been hired to oversee the Hancock County LIFE project.

Niswonger Online

- Summer session had 576 class enrollments, with 538 students earning credits in 23 different courses.
- Online enrollments for Fall 2017 started this week. We are beginning to offer our Online AP Courses as year-long courses. It is hoped that this will encourage more students to sign up since they will have more time to work through the course and study for the test in May.
- Gina will travel to schools throughout the region to meet with fall online students and introduce them to their course.
- Law and Gina are working to create an online course that will support the Career Connect students.
- AP Statistics is the most current course being added to the online inventory. This year we will prepare and train a teacher. The first offering will be in Fall of 2018.

NiswongerCARE Online

- 39 students from the affiliate members completed online courses this summer.
- Two websites have been created for Niswonger Online/ NiswongerCARE Online.
 - One is designed for Affiliate members. This includes information about the online program, courses, other affiliate members, contact information, and supportive videos to help new counselors and liaisons navigate our system.
 - The second website contains an array of online help videos to assist our students as they begin their online coursework.
- We now have 4 Affiliate members enrolling students this fall, Claiborne Co, Hardeman Co, Lauderdale Co, and Haywood Co. This means that Niswonger Online is now serving 38 different high schools with an estimated 32,000+ students grades 9-12.
- Grainger County plans to begin participation in Spring 2018. They have two high schools, with approximately 1,000 students.
- We have interest in identifying one large urban system as a pilot participant in the online program. Nancy approached Shelby and Knox Counties. Shelby has shown initial interest. Gina is working directly with them to ensure that all necessary information is provided.
- Bill Parker, from the TN Financial Literacy Commission, is interested in the online Personal Finance course, and utilizing it throughout the state. Gina has provided access to our course for his review. He will be meeting with Superintendents from SE TN CORE Region on Aug 11th and Superintendents from NW TN on Aug 25th. He will share info on the Personal Finance course along with my contact info and a flyer that discusses our program as a whole and shows all courses the Niswonger Online program offers.
- Gina continues to reach out to high-need, rural counties. The current focus is McNairy, Hardin, Union, Scott, and Morgan. McNairy and Hardin counties are in SW TN, both are school systems located next to our newer affiliates Hardeman and Haywood Counties. Union, Scott, and Morgan are counties in the East TN CORE Region and are also neighbors to affiliate, or soon to be affiliate, members.
- Gina had a proposal accepted to iNACOL (International Association for K-12 Online Learning). She will be presenting an Expert Discussion entitled- *Leveling the Playing Field- How a small foundation in northeast Tennessee created an online program that is giving rural students the education they need and deserve*, at their international conference in Orlando.

NiswongerCARE College and Career Advising

- Staffing Changes: Five intern Advisors graduated in May 2017 with their M.A. degree in School Counseling. Each has been hired as mental health and school counselors. Five new Advisors have been hired for 2017-18 school year. Five new interns have been appointed.
- The summer melt program, *Big-Bright-Future*, kicked off in June. Virtual advising is being provided to over 700 new high school graduates with the purpose of mitigating the phenomena of summer melt. Advisors are utilizing texting and other virtual platforms as the primary form of communication to ensure that those students who are on the fence or who are easily discouraged and have little to no assistance outside of school receive the

help and encouragement they need to make it to their selected post-secondary institution in the fall.

- Advisors' services to the schools in the 2017-18 school year will focus on four major campaigns which include the following:
 - **College Application Week/Tennessee Promise (August, September):**
 - Assist students in completing College Applications for selective schools:
 - Begin TN Promise Applications.
 - Plan and host first Path to College Event: College Application Week (September 25-29).
 - **FAFSA Frenzy/Tennessee Promise (October, November, December)**
 - Assist students in completing College Scholarships for selective schools:
 - Continue TN Promise Applications.
 - Assist in completing FAFSA Applications.
 - Host second Path to College Event: FAFSA Frenzy.
 - **FAFSA Completion/College Planning Night (January, February, March)**
 - Continue FAFSA completions by TN Promise timeline.
 - Assist with financial aid requests for Verification.
 - Complete any scholarship applications for Community Colleges:
 - Plan and host 3rd Path to College Event: College Planning Night.
 - **College Signing Day/College Transition (April, May)**
 - Continue working with students on Verification.
 - Assist students in reviewing Financial Aid awards, scheduling appointments with parents who may need assistance understanding the process.
 - Assist students with transition tasks: scheduling placement tests, housing applications, scheduling orientation, setting up their student portal, etc.
 - Plan and host 4th Path to College Event: College Signing Day.
 - Summer Training/Professional Development:
- Returning Advisors began summer training in May focusing on professional development for the summer melt programming. They participated in an online book study using "The 160-Character Solution" which shows how insights from behavioral economics can be leveraged to help students to complete tasks.
- Data for 2016-17 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 reflect that 83% of the students in our service area successfully completed the FAFSA application compared to Tennessee's state rate of 73%.
 - Advisors held individual planning meetings with over 7,500 students.
 - Advisors assisted over 2,200 students with completing college applications.
 - Advisors assisted over 1,500 students in completing scholarship applications.

- Advisors delivered 490 group presentations, serving 11,351 students.
- Advisors organized 105 Path to College events including College Application Week, FAFSA Frenzy, College Planning Night, and College Signing Day.

CareerConnect

- CareerConnect selected a new class of 100 rising 10th graders to begin the program. These students begin their first monthly meetings in August.
- The 11th grade cohort will also continue their monthly meetings beginning with meeting in August
- The two-week Career Connect Summer Experience was a success. The camp was held from July 10-14 and July 17-21. Students were able to visit six industry sites, two post-secondary education institutions, and spent time exploring several different career fields with teachers at Greene Technology Center.
- The NiswongerCare Advisors attended many of the industry field trips and will be able to bring the things they learned to schools throughout the region.
- The Work Ethic Diploma Tracking System (WE Track) is set to go live this month. We will be hosting a series of webinars to train high school staff who will be utilizing this system. Phase two of the development will begin this fall. This Niswonger Foundation effort will support all interested schools in Northeast Tennessee.
- A meeting was held with Matt Garland to plan the next phase of funding for the CareerConnect program.

Professional Development Activities

- **2017 Niswonger School Success Symposium** - Nearly one thousand Northeast Tennessee Educators, representing 17 school systems, attended the 2017 School Success Symposium, on Thursday, June 15. The focus of this year's symposium was *Literacy, School Counseling and School Success*. Keynote speakers included Jan Burkins and Kim Yaris, the writers and thinkers behind Burkins & Yaris *Think Tank for 21st Century Literacy*, where their blog and their instructional resources have drawn a national audience and made them thought leaders in the field of literacy instruction. Kiran Singh Sirah, President, International Storytelling Center, was a second keynote. Kiran has developed a number of award-winning peace and conflict based programs in museums and cultural centers across Europe, coming to the US as a Rotary World Peace Fellow. This year, the Symposium offered a Counselor/Administrator Strand with guest speaker Dr. Tammy Pawloski, Director, Francis Marion University Center for Excellence in Poverty Studies. She draws on her experience growing up in the South to perform her work: *Teaching Teachers About the Impact of Poverty*. Following the opening session, the region's educators had the opportunity to choose from 48 concurrent sessions with a wide range of topics designed specifically for K-12 educators and facilitated by regional teachers, school leaders and educational specialists. The Foundation provided each attendee with a copy of the children's book *The Little Engine That Could* by Watty Piper. This gift was in support of the efforts of the Tennessee Governor's Books from Birth program and was a reminder of the overall Symposium theme of literacy development.

- **AP Summer Institute Scholarships** – The Niswonger Foundation provided support for 14 teachers to attend AP Summer Institutes. These professionally presented workshops prepare teachers for the rigorous instruction needed for successful AP courses. We have three priorities in providing the opportunity to attend these sessions: 1) to train a replacement for a school where an AP teacher has been lost to attrition; 2) to retrain a current AP teacher in a subject area where the AP test has been updated; and 3) when financially feasible.
- **AP Summer Academies July 2017** – We hosted the Summer Advanced Placement Academies for Niswonger Consortium AP Teachers in early July. The academies took place at Dobyns-Bennett High School in Kingsport. Scott Lamie, Bristol City Schools and Dr. Chih-Che Tai from East Tennessee State University assisted with this year’s academies. Due to feedback from the Consortium AP Community at last year’s AP Academies, the format was changed this year. The main concern from the AP Community was being able to cover the necessary curriculum in the limited class time available at their schools. AP Teachers wanted to expand the content available to students within the 90-day block course, and beyond, by offering classes with digital and online content. Therefore, the AP Academies this year were structured around achieving this goal. Mr. Lamie, an AP Teacher and technology leader at Tennessee High School, provided the instruction on how to record the AP curriculum. The AP Teachers video-taped, with their subject groups, their labs, lectures, etc., to later share with the Consortium AP Community in the online format. Through this effort, these AP instructors will, not only, support their work, but will improve the quality of AP instruction throughout Northeast Tennessee. Twenty-nine AP teachers participated in these academies.

Summer STEM Camps

- The Niswonger Foundation conducted 14 summer camps, serving 237 middle and high school students. Camps were conducted in Washington, Sullivan, Unicoi and Hancock Counties. Topics included: 1) Girls in Science and Technology; 2) First-year Coding and Technology; 3) Advanced Java Coding and Technology; 4) 3D Printing and Robotics Advanced Coding and Technology; and 5) Programming. This has become an extremely impactful partnership with East Tennessee State University.

Grant Activity

- The Niswonger Foundation submitted three **Education Innovation and Research (EIR)** grants to the U.S. Department of Education on April 13. National organizations were sought to join us in two of the grants. The areas of focus for the grants are literacy (8 million), leadership development (4 million) and career development (4 million). Results are expected at any time.
- We are in discussion with a national organization regarding partnering on a grant opportunity. We are beginning the initial design of a grant proposal to be submitted in partnership with ETSU.

Boards, Committees and Activities

- Nancy participated in the THEC Commission meeting on Thursday, May 11.
- Nancy attended the Tusculum College Board of Trustees meeting on May 12-13.

- Scott, Nancy and David Golden attended a luncheon at the Tennessee State Judiciary Conference on Wednesday, June 14. Both Scott and David accepted awards from this organization.
- Nancy participated in THEC site visits to Pellissippi State Community College and the Tennessee Center for Applied Technology – Knoxville, on Monday July 24.
- Nancy participated in the THEC Commission meeting on Thursday, July 27.
- Nancy is currently serving on the Presidential Search Committee at Tusculum College.
- Nancy participated in the Gates Learning Circle, in Nashville, on August 14-15.
- Nancy participated in the SCORE Steering Committee meeting on Tuesday, August 15, in Nashville.

Publicity and Publications

- News clippings and press releases are available for review.
- The Niswonger Foundation website is currently being updated.
- The Niswonger Foundation hosted Kelly Collins, from THEC for a two-day visit, July 19-20, to learn more about the college and career effort of the Foundation. She will be presenting her findings to the THEC staff.
- The Summer 2017 edition of *Philanthropy*, a publication of Philanthropy Roundtable, has recognized the Niswonger Foundation as one of “the most prominent initiatives... to help rural students prepare for, enroll in, and graduate from college.” The article, authored by Andy Smarick, points to the Foundation’s efforts to increase the availability of Advanced Placement (AP) coursework, expanded curricular offerings through the Niswonger Online program, efforts to increase participation in dual enrollment, and the success of the college and career advising program. The full article is available on the following link:

http://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/topic/excellence_in_philanthropy/dont_forget_rural_schools