

Programs and Partnerships
Niswonger Foundation Board Update
Thursday, May 7, 2020

Literacy Initiative Focused on Effectiveness – LIFE (Walmart/Annenberg Grant)

- This is the final year of the Walmart/Annenberg Foundation grant for the Hancock County K-2 literacy project.
- With the end of the grant nearing, we are considering lessons learned and mapping the strategy to continue our literacy work in the region.
- We received a grant to operate a three-week KinderCamp in each of the 17 LEA's we serve. Due to circumstances surrounding the current pandemic, funds from the granting organization were withdrawn. We have a strong relationship with this organization and trust that there will be a future partnership.

Rural LIFE (EIR Grant)

With schools closed, Rural LIFE activity has shifted from face-to-face to “virtual.” We did have a face-to-face meeting with the second group of principals, March 10 at the Niswonger Foundation Learning Center; then things changed. We had very good attendance from the 31 principals who had served at “control” schools for the first two years of the project. We will continue the “onboarding” of the new schools with a virtual meeting May 6, with these principals and the lead teachers they have selected. Our work for the 2020/21 school year is still evolving and somewhat uncertain, but our next big project will be a series of 1.5-hour webinars, on a variety of topics, for teachers/staff in all the project schools. The 30-40 sessions will be scattered over a three-week period in June; they have been planned (and some will be delivered) by RL coaches and staff.

The cancellation of the Spring 2020 TN Ready tests will have a major impact on the formal research study of the RL project. With our evaluation partner, AnLar, we are considering modified research designs. None of the alternatives will be ideal, but the Washington, DC officials understand the situation and are “working with” several other projects around the nation with similar complications.

NTC Professional Development (EIR Grant)

- The partnership between Niswonger Foundation and the New Teacher Center continues to progress during this first/planning year of the EIR grant.
- An introductory presentation has been made to the directors/superintendents.
- Dr. Richard Bales, the project director, is currently in communication with school principals and district instructional staff.
- There are 82 possible participant schools in the service area that are defined as rural by the National Center for Educational Statistics. Sixty of those schools will be selected and thirty will be randomly selected as treatment schools in the first year of the program.

- The selected schools will receive the services of two lead academic coaches hired through EIR grant funds. The lead coaches will work to deliver professional development to a school-based coach/instructional leader/teacher within each school.
- The school based instructional leader will work with other teachers at their school to make needed instructional improvements in the area of language arts, math, or science. The participating schools will be selected from high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools.
- Applications are being accepted for the two lead coach positions. Work with school-based personnel and principals will begin this summer. Securing interest in participation with the grant is ongoing.

Niswonger Online

- Spring Term 2020 (regular term ends May 8).
 - Most students are continuing to complete coursework online, as usual.
 - Online teachers have added additional support.
 - To support those who do not have access, a website was created that gives printable off-line resources for students or schools. Tennessee DOE guidelines are being followed.
 - Student progress and grades are being more closely monitored by Gina and Jill.
 - AP Courses will stay open until the end of May. With AP exams being moved to an online/at home format, this time extension will allow for test completion the last two weeks of May.
- Registration for Summer 2020
 - Registration is underway.
 - Most summer online courses will open early (last week of May) to give students more time.
- Course Modifications
 - Some classes will be modified this summer and fall to allow for the completion of coursework that may have been missed this spring - Spanish II, French II, Latin II, Spanish III, Latin III, Accounting II, and Geometry.
- Sevier County will begin enrolling students this fall. They will begin by offering students at all their high schools the opportunity to take Latin
- NiswongerOnline.com is continuously being updated to reflect changes in the schools we work with, our course catalog, and program partnerships.
- Total service area is 26 LEA's and 50 high schools.

NiswongerCARE Online Affiliates

- Cohort enrollment comprised approximately one-half of Niswonger Online enrollment.
- Care Foundation grant will continue to support Affiliate counties through Summer 2022. Ten counties are affiliate members.

Dual Enrollment Partnerships

- The ETSU dual enrollment partnership has continued to stall due to organizational changes at ETSU.
- Attention is being focused on dual enrollment efforts with Walters State and Northeast State, which hold more promise for serving students.

NiswongerCARE College and Career Advising

Advisors continue to serve students across the 30 high schools in Northeast TN during the COVID 19 closures. Advisors are available every weekday from 8:30 - 4:00, to assist students through email, Remind texting, and virtual meetings. Not only are Advisors willing to assist students with completing tasks related to career and post-secondary planning or with completing tasks for admissions and financial aid, but they also want to encourage and support them through this time of change and uncertainty. Helping seniors continue to complete the myriad of tasks related to admissions and financial aid has been especially challenging. In order to accommodate social distancing guidelines, the programming modifications are summarized below.

- **School Engagement-** Advisors reach out weekly to each site facilitator (school liaison) to share information, provide updates, and offer assistance to students. They are currently collaborating with school counselors to plan virtual College Planning Night and College Signing Day events.
- **Student Engagement-** Advisors are using all platforms at their disposal to engage with students and provide information to them. Advisors who were able to obtain student email addresses are reaching out to those students to offer assistance. Each school varies in the resources available to communicate with students: therefore, Advisors are working to notify students about their availability to assist, as well as reminding them of tasks that are still incomplete. To directly assist students, Advisors are using email, the *Remind* texting platform, *Google Chat*, and *Google hangouts*.
- **Data Collection-** New data collection logs were created to document all virtual contacts made with students and other stakeholders. In identifying the engagement and outcomes through the various kinds of virtual communications, best practices can be identified in the future. Current data collected from these logs shows that Advisors have sent **a total of 7,783** messages to date.
- **Advisor Engagement -** Weekly virtual meetings are held with staff. These meetings provide a time to check-in and update staff. In addition to sharing information and best practices, the meetings also provide Advisors with support and encouragement. Each week has included a different theme, including wear

- your pajamas to work, dress up as your favorite Disney character, share your favorite quarantine recipe, and a virtual pizza party.
- Social Media- Advisors' biographies and contact information has been shared to all of NiswongerCARE social media accounts. Each week, several college and career planning resources are created and shared on social media and emailed to school counselors to send out to students. Advisors have demonstrated a great deal of innovation and creativity in presenting these resource including videos on the NiswongerCARE *YouTube* channel, *Tik Tok*, flyers and links to numerous useful websites. Our website, <https://www.niswongercare.com/> provides updates and information to students and parents, and an easy way to contact their Advisor.
 - WJHL's Josh Smith conducted a 30-minute interview with Nancy that has been used on social media for the past month. He interviewed Denise, live, on the evening news. Contacts to the webpage increased significantly as parents and grandparents listened to the interviews.
 - *Big*Bright*Future* (Summer Melt Programming)- Prior to school closures, Advisors began identifying and enrolling seniors in the program. Students receive weekly texts and can ask questions and request assistance through our *Remind* platform. Currently **386** seniors have enrolled in the program, and recruitment efforts are underway using social media, email outreach, and press coverage to reach the goal of 1,000 students.
 - Hiring Plan- Efforts are currently underway to hire college and career advisor positions for the 2020-2021 academic school year with an anticipated start date of July 1, 2020. A "*Meet and Greet*" webinar event was recently held for interested applicants to learn more about the program and the duties of the position.
 - **FAFSA Update- Data as of April 10, 2020 reflect that 87% of our 6,062 seniors have submitted a FAFSA, compared to the state's rate of 85%.**

CareerConnect

- The new Class of 2023 has been selected.
- Planning for both summer camps is underway. A contingency plan is being developed but is difficult to predict. Camps are dependent on industry and business participation, tours, etc.
- Planning for fall meetings is underway.
- The Senior Celebration was postponed. The plan is to move the event to summer, based on the guidance received regarding COVID-19.
- Law submitted a grant request to John Deere, receiving \$10,000 for the 2020-21 fiscal year.

WE Track

- Schools are continuing to track student progress. As expected, COVID-19 is
- having an impact on participation.

- We are using this challenging time as an opportunity to refine and expand the resources available to the users of the system. The site will double in size by summer.
- The first out-of-state expansion is occurring. The Virginia (Crater Region) is now moving to active project; This is a consortium of eight LEA;s and approximately 8250 students. We will receive \$60,000 for startup costs, \$10,000 in annual revenue
- The Tennessee Chamber/Manufacturer’s Association, in Southeast TN, have been using a different platform that hasn't been meeting their needs. Additionally, the Tennessee Chamber has decided to focus on marketing the WED to business and industry, allowing us to focus on building the relationships with schools. They are going to fold their site and move their schools to WE Track. The move will mean new industry connections and staff support from the Tennessee Chamber. This partnership is being finalized at this time.

Professional Development Activities (In addition to Rural LIFE)

- In response to a need identified during the COVID-19 pandemic, Gina Pavlovich, John Payne, Dr. Richard Kitzmiller, and Allison Seeley are developing PD opportunities for our school leaders to better prepare them as leaders in a remote learning environment.
- The second step will be PD for K-12 teachers with focus on effective pedagogy in the online environment
- The 2020 School Success Symposium and Counselor Convening have been cancelled for Summer 2020. The new date has been established for June 22, 2021.

Future Grants and Partnership Activities

Education Innovation and Research:

- After a delay (from the expected date), the US Education Department has announced the 2020 competition for the mid-phase EIR grant. For this \$8M proposal, we are “recycling”/revising last year’s STEM.LD proposal in the \$4M early-phase competition. We have selected a different evaluation partner and are lining up several implementation partners (such as BioBuilders). The proposal will be due June 15.
- We are simultaneously monitoring the 2020 early-phase EIR competition. We are not certain of the release date or the details of the RFP, but we believe it will involve Professional Development for teachers (with a strong emphasis on teacher choice in activities). We have a strong national partner poised to help us develop this proposal, if/when the competition is announced.

Curriculum/Data Project

- The Niswonger Consortium is preparing to employ a regional curriculum director jointly supported by the participating LEA’s. The director will work with the systems that opt into the project to accomplish five primary tasks: 1) produce a

regional curriculum which is aligned to state standards and contains the rigor to help students master essential skills. This curriculum will be supported by the necessary materials and resources to successfully implement the curriculum 2) create pacing guides for all core subjects; 3) create a series of benchmark assessments to ensure students have mastered essential skills; 4) create a data management system which will help district level staff analyze and effectively use state/benchmark data to drive the instructional program; and 5) maintain constant communication with the Study Council and keep superintendents aware of progress and challenges. The director will be housed at the Niswonger Foundation in Greenville.

English/Language Arts (ELA) Curriculum Selection

- All LEA’s in Tennessee are in the process of curriculum/textbook/resource selection for teaching ELA. The Niswonger Foundation is working in a supporting role providing a forum for discussion and coordination among our systems. We are preparing to assist the systems with targeted professional development for teachers and school leaders.

Recent Contributions (February 1 – April 30)

Scott Niswonger	\$	25,000.00
First Horizon Bank	\$	25,000.00
John Deere	\$	10,000.00
Brandon and Jama Boles	\$	1,250.00
Amsee	\$	1,000.00
Anthony Pentz	\$	1,000.00
Elliott (EJ) Creutzinger	\$	1,000.00
Patrick Creutzinger	\$	1,000.00
Michael and Betty McCollough	\$	100.00
YourCause/Corp. Giving	\$	97.20