

Programs and Partnerships
Niswonger Foundation Board Update
Thursday, August 11, 2016

Partnership Updates

- *The Greene County literacy project (LIFE)* is progressing on schedule. Amanda Carpenter has been hired as the Literacy Specialist. Professional development activities are being fully implemented with teachers, reading specialists and principals. (More explanation to follow).
 - The LIFE program kick-off was held at the General Morgan Inn on May 16. Teachers and school leaders from the three participating schools gathered for breakfast, a program and activities led by Niswonger Foundation and Greene County central office staff.
 - Dr. Robert Lynn Canady from Virginia conducted two days of professional learning for the L.I.F.E. program. He is considered an expert in the fields of block scheduling, grading practices, and at-risk students. His presentations were directly related to how to use school schedules to optimize use of time in the school day. David McLain- Director, Kathy Austin- school board members, central office representatives and various members of the LIFE team attended. He returned on August 2-3 for follow-up sessions. Dr. Robert Canady was accompanied by Dr. Tracy McAbee and two teachers from Polk County Schools. During this two-day event they worked with the principals and teachers from the three schools. A specific time is being set aside to work with the educational assistants.
 - Plans are underway for a family literacy event. The tentative theme is “A Day in the Life of your Child.”
 - Technology ordered and delivered to schools for the upcoming year:
 - 50 iPads with covers
 - 40 desktop computers (in partnership with the PASTA program at ETSU)
 - 50 day by day phonics manuals for teachers
 - The first assessment has been selected to track literacy trends: easyCBM by Harcourt (HMH)
- *The Governor’s Books from Birth* program played an active role in the recent School Success Symposium. Representatives displayed information about the program and presented a break-out session. We continue to work with birthing hospitals in the region to increase family participation in the program.

College and Career Consortium

Grant Proposals

- An Investing in Innovation (i3) grant was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education, in July. The grant, focused on personalized learning, would serve K-8 schools in the Niswonger Consortium. This 12 million dollar grant proposal was submitted in the validation category. We will know the results by November.
- Two grant proposals were submitted to the Care Foundation of America. The first was a request for an additional year for the NiswongerCARE college and career advising program. The second proposal is to establish NiswongerCARE Online. If approved, this grant would utilize the success of the Niswonger Online program to serve the most disadvantaged counties in Tennessee that are outside our service region. Nancy will present the grants at the August 30th meeting of the Care Foundation Board.

Niswonger Online

- 683 students were enrolled this summer. There were 26 different courses offered.
- In 2015-16, the first with the \$145 fee, approximately 1500 students earned at least one credit. In 2014-15, with no fee, approximately 2000 students earned at least one credit. Last summer's enrollment was largest, to date, with 1294 students.
- In meeting with our district liaisons, it was reported that school systems have budgeted for the online courses for 2016-17. Some have budgeted for the same number of seats as last year. Others have expanded that number. It is apparent that all the Consortium partners have an understanding of the value of these courses for their students.
- Schools will start enrolling for the fall as soon as they start back next week. Dates have been set with school liaisons to meet with their online students for training on our Genius and Moodle systems. New liaisons are being trained. Fall online courses will open on August 24th.
- Students were recently surveyed about their experience with online courses. 71 percent of the students reported that when they emailed/called their teacher they heard back within one day. Less than four percent said they had problems communicating with their teacher. Seventy seven percent of the students stated that, given the option by their schools, they would take another course online with us again in the future. Many of the students wrote additional comments, showing gratitude for their specific teacher and saying thank you for the opportunity. The students' major concern was the outdated Moodle LMS.
- To address the major concern stated in the survey, we are working to update the Moodle system. This is a much needed update that will give the students a better interface. The current timeline will have everything ready before the start of the fall courses on August 24th.
- As evidence of the success of Niswonger Online, a sophomore from David Crockett had a perfect score on the ACT. He credited the success to having completed Latin I, Latin II, Personal Finance, and Economics through our program.

Career Technical Education (CTE)

- CTE teachers and directors attended a professional development day hosted by Niswonger Foundation and Sullivan County Schools, on June 14. Approximately 150 CTE teachers attended to learn about new programs and updates to curriculum.

School Leader Development

- Leadership training by New Teacher Center (NTC) for new principals and aspiring leaders was completed on June 2 and 3.
- Directors were invited to attend the seminar to recap the training and how this program would be used in the Niswonger C3 Consortium in the 2016-17 school year.
- There were eleven principals and supervisors trained on June 27-28 for the New Teacher Center's Presenters Academy. This team of ten, led by Vivian Franklin, will provide the leadership training for new principals and aspiring leaders for the 2016-17 school year.

Leadership for Blended and Digital Learning (LBDL)

- Leadership for Blended and Digital Learning (LBDL) facilitator training was completed at North Carolina State University, in April. Nine Niswonger Consortium school districts were represented, accompanied by Gina Pavlovich and Vivian Franklin.
- This team will provide training in blended and digital learning for 30 principals in our region. This training includes an online course and five face-to-face meetings. The following topics will prepare the principals to lead their schools in the transition to a blended learning environment: 1. defining blended learning; 2. creating a culture for blended learning; 3. shifting teaching and learning; 4. supporting professional learning; and implementing and sustaining blended learning.

2016 School Success Symposium

- Thursday, June 30, the *Tenth Annual School Success Symposium* was held at NPAC and Greeneville High School. Eastman was co-sponsor of this event. Board members David Golden and Scott Niswonger addressed the attendees during the opening event. They, also, participated in a break-out session on preparing students to be career ready.
- 960 individuals registered for this event, with 735 in attendance. Fifty breakout sessions were provided.
- Craig Kielburger, from the *Me to We* program was the keynote speaker. Educators have emailed, called, texted and directly shared that the inspiration provided by Craig was "career changing" for them as they start a new school year.
- 35 presenters participated in breakout sessions.
- Teachers are currently completing the evaluation surveys and receiving their certificates of attendance.

AP Summer Programs

- The Niswonger Foundation awarded scholarships to 25 teachers to attend AP *Summer Institutes*. Many of these teachers are teaching new AP class offerings at their school and/or replacing retiring AP teachers.
- *AP Academies* were held by the Niswonger Foundation in chemistry, biology, U.S. history, world history, English composition, and English literature. Approximately 30 teachers attended a session. AP Academies are taught by Niswonger Consortium AP teachers.

Student Summer Programs and Camps

Hundreds of area students spent part of their summer studying STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) topics, with support from the Niswonger Foundation (and partners).

- 143 students participated in “coding” activities. This included 31 who attended one-day Code & Technology camps. These camps were held in Johnson City, Kingsport and (for the first time) in Unicoi County.
- 112 participated in weeklong camps, held in Johnson City, Kingsport and Greeneville. This summer there was a variety of camp options, including first-year (introductory) camps for middle-school and high-school students, two advanced camps, and two focused on computer-aided design (with 3-D printers). These coding activities resulted from the efforts of NF staff, ETSU Department of Computing, and AccelNow.
- The NF provided funding assistance for 100 Jefferson County students to experience “Design the Future,” a weeklong STEM program. The camps were designed to enrich and supplement the education of students in 4th, 5th, and 6th grades. In addition, a camp provided professional development for eleven teachers.
- In Hancock County, the NF facilitated 3, weeklong, engineering camps. More than 30 students participated in the hands-on activities of these camps.
- At ETSU, 25 5th-grade girls and 20 6th-graders participated in two G.I.S.T. camps (Girls In Science & Technology). The two camps, co-sponsored by the NF, were designed to interest young women in pursuing careers in science and technology through outdoor group adventure activities, guest speakers, computer games, scavenger hunts and science experiments.

NiswongerCARE Program

Staffing

- Seven full-time advisors were retained for the second year. Two full-time NC Advisors resigned to pursue graduate programs.
- Two part-time graduate/intern advisors were retained for the second year, while completing the final coursework for their Masters of Arts in School Counseling. Two graduate/intern NC Advisors graduated in May 2016. Both have been hired as full-time school counselors.

- Amy French, Associate Director, resigned in July. She accepted a position as a school counselor at Sullivan South High School. Shawn Stewart, former Niswonger counselor with the i3 grant, will fill this position.

Programming

- NiswongerCARE Leadership team recently held focus groups to gain feedback from the NC Advisors and other stake-holders, including the Leadership Council. As a result of these meetings, and the analysis of currently available outcome data, the following programming changes are being implemented for the second year of the program:
 - The “Delivery of Service” planning template has been updated to further clarify the role and services provided by the advisor to meet the individual needs of each high school. Administrators, school counselors, NiswongerCARE Director or Associate Director and the assigned NC Advisor will meet at each school during August to collaborate and complete the template.
 - Each school will be required to provide the NC Advisor a caseload of students assigned specifically to him/her. The Advisor will assist and support the assigned students throughout the school year with college planning, college applications, financial aid applications, and transition to post-secondary education.
 - Social media initiatives, Twitter and Facebook, are being intensified to increase post-secondary awareness and engagement among students, parents, school and community members.
 - A website hosted by NiswongerCARE is being developed to provide students in Northeast Tennessee with information and resources.

Summer Training

- Second year NC Advisors began summer training in June with a focus on personal development and skill enrichment. They participated in a book study using StrengthsFinder 2.0. At the heart of the book is the internet based "Clifton Strengths Finder," an online personal assessment test which identifies their strengths and advocates building strengths rather than focusing on weaknesses.
- NC Advisors attended the “FAFSA Frenzy” training sponsored by the Tennessee Department of Education to prepare for implementing the changes to the FAFSA filing process effective in October 2016. Students will now be able to file the FAFSA as early as October 1st, rather than in January, for the 2017-18 academic year and will use the prior-prior year tax information.
- New NC Advisors joined the staff on July 11. They are participating in intensive training to prepare for assisting students with college going activities. NC Advisors have had the opportunity to hear from many experts in the field, including state department representatives, practicing school counselors, and college admissions professionals. Second year NC Advisors shared many of the best practices and lessons learned from their first year in the field.
- Advisors visited the campuses of Lee University, Vanderbilt, UT-Chattanooga, MTSU, and Tennessee Tech to gain first-hand knowledge of each institution.

Outcomes

- 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 reflects that 64% of the students in our service area successfully completed the FAFSA application. This reflects an increase from 61% in 2015-16, and equates to approximately 200 additional seniors.
 - NC Advisors held individual planning meetings with 5,435 students.
 - NC Advisors assisted 1,743 students in choosing their college match.
 - NC Advisors assisted 1,290 students with completing college applications.
 - NC Advisors assisted 1,052 students in completing scholarship applications.
 - NC Advisors assisted 429 students in visiting various college campuses.

Budget

NiswongerCARE expended 97.4% of the funds provided by the CARE Foundation of America for 2015-16.

Boards, Committees and Other Meetings

- Richard and Vivian met with the TN DOE CORE Office staff for discussion and updates on May 11.
- Mr. Niswonger and Nancy attended the Board of Trustees meeting at Tusculum College on May 13-14.
- Vivian attended the TN Transformational Leadership Advisory Council led by SCORE and the TNDOE on May 26.
- Richard and Nancy attended and presented at the Superintendent's Study Council on June 8.
- On July 6 Vivian was interviewed by Patrick Lester, who is compiling information from completed i3 Grants for the US DOE. This interview will be included in the national data publications from the 2010 i3 grant recipients.
- Nancy was the speaker for the Newport Kiwanis Club on July 12.
- Nancy met with Rob Mahaffey, Executive Director of the Rural School and Community Trust, on July 15, in Washington, DC.
- Nancy met with Katherine Haley, Director of K-12 Education, for the Philanthropy Roundtable, in Washington, DC, on July 17.
- ACT hosted a webinar on the new software *Profile* which uses student values, interests, and abilities to find a career and college fit for students. This software is free from ACT. On July 18, Vivian trained the NiswongerCARE advisors on how to use *ACT Profile* with students.
- Nancy met with Don Yu, with Civic Nation, in Washington DC. On July 18.
- Nancy was appointed to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and attended her first meeting on July 19, in Nashville.

- Vivian and Nancy were joined by Niswonger Scholar Alumni, Todd Skelton, to give a presentation to the Regional Educational Laboratory in Appalachia REL/CNA conference, in Nashville, on July 25.

Publicity and Publications

- News clippings and press releases are available for review.
- www.niswongerfoundation.org has been updated