

**Programs and Partnerships
Niswonger Foundation Board Update
Thursday, February 24, 2022**

Consortium Projects

- The Consortium has secured bill sponsors for six pieces of legislation, particular to the needs of our school districts. The bills are currently in process.
- A Legislative Update Session, with our school superintendents and legislators, was hosted prior to the beginning of the Session.
- A Delegation Dinner, with our Superintendents and the Executive Director of TOSS, is planned in Nashville for March 23, with visits planned in the Capitol and with the Chairs of the House and Senate Education Committees.
- We are sponsoring the Annual Niswonger Consortium of Superintendents Retreat, in Asheville, on February 27-28.

School Program Updates

Rural LIFE (2018 US DOE / EIR Grant)

- Rural LIFE's *Strong Start Network* members met virtually on **February 8** to examine key elements of high-quality writing instruction. Teams also continued to explore the difference between engagement and student ownership, specifically in how high-quality instruction prepares, engages, and supports students for the writing process.
- Rural LIFE **cohort 2 teams** will gather for professional learning on **February 16** to explore what personalized literacy instruction looks like and sounds like in the classroom. Teams will also continue to examine how various types of data can be used to inform instruction and identify systems and structures that effectively support the implementation of personalized literacy instruction.
- Rural LIFE **sustainability grant** teams will gather for professional learning on **February 17** to explore the skills students need to be successful in a personalized learning environment as well as various types of data and how to assess each of their roles in supporting student learning. Teams will also share their progress toward meeting their grant goals via the Sustainability Grant Share Fair.
- They have also begun planning for their Rural LIFE Summer Conference, which will take place in July and be open to all K-12 teachers and leaders across the region.
- As the formal school support phase of the Rural LIFE grant is coming to an end (Summer 2022), the grant leadership team is shifting its focus toward disseminating grant learning in a variety of formats.
- Rural LIFE leadership and partners Leading Edge Learning submitted an article proposal to Learning Forward for its monthly publication *The Learning Professional* as well as proposals for the organization's annual conference in

- December 2022. Similarly, the team will also submit a proposal for Austin Peay State University's Rural Education Conference in March, where the team presented last year.
- The Rural LIFE team will soon begin work crystalizing grant learning into *learning statements*. This process will include several interactive rounds of co-construction and eliciting feedback in articulating key grant learning, in partnership with Cohort 2, Sustainability Grant, and Strong Start Network members.

New Teacher Center Instructional Coaching project (2019 US DOE / EIR Partnership Grant)

- From August through the end of October, Sherry Cockerham (Niswonger Lead Math Coach) and Mindy Volk (Niswonger Lead ELA Coach) completed 9 In-Field Coaching Cycles (Pre-Observation, Observation, Post-Observation) with school and district coaches. From November to present they've increased that number to 23.
- In November, SCORE visited Jefferson County to meet with district leadership along with the Niswonger Team and observed In-Field Coaching with Lead Coaches. SCORE has committed to partnering with Niswonger DAC for sustainability.
- SCORE has pledged to match funds through year 5 of the grant for the New Teacher Center.
- At this point last year, 16% of coaches had attended all 5 forums that were offered. To date, 73% of coaches have attended all 5 forums that have been offered. Of those who don't have perfect attendance, the majority have only missed one forum.
- February/March- Education Resource Strategies has partnered with New Teacher Center to offer their services to the treatment schools and districts participating in our grant. ERS has helped schools and systems use resources to identify more opportunities in their budgets that will give students greater outcomes. They provide their expertise and create a local network that will help our schools/districts navigate the challenges and opportunities of ESSER investments.

STEM.LD (2020 US DOE / EIR Grant)

District and School Participation

- 17 Districts (New districts included to increase number of schools: Anderson County, Union County, Oneida Special School District, Grainger County, and Claiborne County)
- Cohort 1: 12 high schools, 14 middle schools (treatment), 14 middle schools (control)
- Cohort 2: 8 high schools, 6 middle schools (treatment), 6 middle schools (control)
- 40 schools currently receiving treatment

- By the end of the grant 60 schools will have been served.

Cohort 1 Update

- 98% overall completion of orientation training
- Monthly meetings with school representatives to prepare to extend existing partnerships and establish new partnerships working toward 80% teacher engagement
- Developing strategies to increase student participation in out-of-school-time activities

Cohort 2 Update

- 13/14 onboarding meetings complete with the final onboarding meeting scheduled for February 23, 2022
- Onboarded schools have solid plans to complete orientation training in spring; administrators have held June training dates on their calendars, and plans are in place for thoughtful partnership selection.

Partners

- Showcases scheduled for February; each partner will conduct a half-hour virtual presentation on their program. Live presentations will be recorded for those who cannot attend. Schools are encouraging teachers to attend presentations to increase engagement.
- Four-day science training held at Tusculum University for four middle schools; 23 teachers and coaches received training
- “If I Had a Hammer” build will take place on WSCC Greeneville campus March 9, 2022
- Robot Drone League Competition will take place on ETSU’s campus March 12, 2022

Other Updates

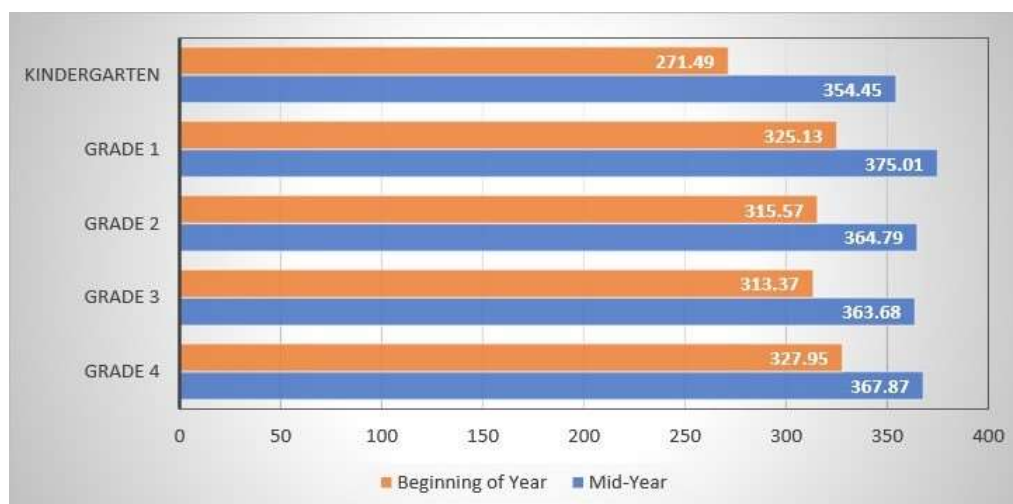
- Dr. Ramona Williams has joined the team. Her focus will be on transition to post-secondary and early post-secondary opportunities.
- We have established a public-facing calendar on our website to promote STEM events and activities.

Project On-Track (2021 Care Foundation of America 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 18 months. There are 31 fourth-grade students in the program based on their significant struggles in reading.

- As of February 10, there are 54 operational tutoring sites in 17 school districts. The sites are serving over 1480 students in grades K-4. Washington County Schools added three new sites in January: Lamar School, South Central School, and West View School.

- A meeting was held on January 19 with representatives from East Tennessee State University, Milligan University, and Tusculum University to discuss the feasibility of recruiting university students to serve as tutors beginning this summer. Interested students will complete an interest survey for placement and receive training in May.
- The Fall, 2021 Results Report has been published and communicated to school district partners, SRI, The Care Foundation of America, and Ballad Health. The report includes an analysis of students' testing results from the beginning of year to mid-year. Every district's mid-year scores improved from their beginning of year scores in all grade levels. The chart, below, shows that every grade level in our project made academic gains from the Beginning of Year Assessment to the Mid-Year Assessment.



- District partners have been contacted regarding the development of a new Memorandum of Understanding for the 2022-2023 school year. Individual district meetings will be held beginning in March.
- We will pursue additional funding for Project On-Track through the TN Dept. of Education's Community Grant program. Details regarding the application process should be released in the coming days.

NiswongerCARE College and Career Advising (2021 Tennessee Department of Education Grant)

- Advisors have been assisting seniors in completing the FAFSA since the application opened on October 1, 2021. Current submission rate is 67.7% compared to the state rate of 60.4%. Advisors will continue to prioritize FAFSA submissions in order to ensure that students meet the March 1, 2022 deadline to maintain TN Promise eligibility.
- TN Promise applications submitted by the November 1, 2021 deadline totaled 5,668 (94%) compared to 89% of last year's seniors.
- Advisors have held 4,766 individual college and career planning meetings with students and 441 group presentations reaching 10,580 students.

- Signal Vine text messaging platform is being utilized for messaging students, and Advisors have sent 22,742 “nudges” to students to remind them of upcoming deadlines and missing tasks.
- Mid-year written evaluations for each Advisor have been completed, and meetings have been held with their supervising director to review performance feedback.
- Planning is underway for the 2022 Summer Melt program with student intakes beginning in March.
- NiswongerCARE has been selected to partner with REL AP on the Career/College Readiness contract they received from SRI International.
- NiswongerCARE has also been selected as a partner with Walters State Community College on the grant they received from Educational Trust. The grant will focus on post-secondary outreach.

Niswonger Online (Funded by Niswonger Consortium of School Districts)

- All online spring courses, General Education and AP Access for All (APAA), will close May 13.
- Currently, there are 1400 enrollments in Niswonger Online Gen Ed Courses. This enrollment number includes Spring 2022 semester courses and year-long courses.
- We have been supporting students, parents, teachers, and school staff as they learn to use our technology: both the Student Information System and Learning Management System.
- We currently have 56 Gen Ed teachers; 14 new teachers were hired for Fall 2022; 5 additional new teachers were hired for Spring 2022.
- Enrollment for Summer and Fall 2022 opens March 1.
- Updated Spanish I curriculum was launched for Fall 2021. A new Spanish II course is being used for Spring 2022. Both were created by a Niswonger Online teacher. A small group of Spanish teachers will meet in June to review feedback on these courses and make any necessary changes to prepare for the 2022-23 school year. Spanish courses continue to have our highest number of enrollments.
- We have partnered with two new schools thanks to STEM.LD. We are offering Geometry and Algebra I to 8th grade students. We look forward to learning from these partnerships to be able to serve even more STEM.LD participants in Fall 2022.
- Our partnerships with virtual academies such as Collierville Virtual Academy and Jefferson County Virtual Academy have been very successful. Both schools will continue to partner with Niswonger Online for the 2022-23 school year.
- NiswongerOnline.com is continuously being updated with semester dates and information, our course catalog, and program partnerships.

AP Access for All (2021 Tennessee Department of Education Partnership Contract)

- Currently, 111 school systems are fully on-board with AP Access for All ~ 86% of all public, K-12, systems.

- 29 of these systems are in At-Risk or Distressed Counties (representing 81% of all AR/Dis Counties).
- 45 of these systems are rural representing 85% of all rural area in Tennessee.
- Our second data report (the APAA Impact Report) will be shared statewide in March.
- Total APAA enrollment for this school year - 1746. This is below our goal of 2,000 but only because we could not find all the teachers needed in AP Psychology, AP Art History, and AP Computer Science. Almost 200 students who wanted an AP course with us could not be seated due to these teacher shortages. We are hopeful that this will not be an issue next year after training teachers through APSI this summer.
- AP Cohort
 - Angela Taylor has been leading monthly AP Cohort meetings that assist AP teachers with enriched materials and methods of instruction. The next session will include pointers regarding how to recruit students for AP classes.
- New courses being offered
 - AP Spanish is currently being developed for Fall 2022.
 - We are also anticipating developing AP Physics and AP French for fall 2022.
- AP Review Board
 - Each of our 16 courses will be assigned a team of 3 to be on the AP Review Board.
 - The team will go through the course with a grading/review rubric to assess quality and provide feedback.
 - Rubrics will be reviewed closely and edits/updates will be made before the fall 2022 school year.
 - APAA hired a total of 98 teachers for this school year to serve our students.
 - 160 teachers completed online training to become a Niswonger Online teacher.
 - To prepare for next school year we will have to hire approximately 100 more teachers. Promotion and training for these hires will begin late April/early May.
- Free AP Training for Teachers
 - Over 700 teachers have been approved for a seat at a virtual APSI training for this June and July.
 - Teachers are signing up now through our partnering universities, UTC and Rice University.
 - When teachers respond that they are no longer able to do the training we offer the seat to another teacher. We will continue to do this until all seats are filled.
- Regional Relationship Specialist (RRS)
 - The second performance reviews are being held now and through next week. These reviews focus on the goals of each Specialist for their region and assisting them with appropriate next steps.
 - After performance reviews, RRS will begin to travel to schools to promote APAA for fall enrollment.

- RRS will visit all schools, especially focusing on one-on-one meetings with schools who are onboard but have not enrolled students or school systems that are not onboard.
- Mini-Grants
 - APAA will begin offering \$500 mini-grants to AP teachers across the state. The competitive grant application will open in March.
- Marketing and Media
 - CRISP is working to develop our following on social media platforms and sharing pertinent information with all stakeholders throughout the state.
 - Please follow us and share:
Website- tnapaccessforall.org
 - <https://www.facebook.com/apaccessforall>
 - <https://twitter.com/apaccessforall>
 - <https://www.instagram.com/apaccessforall/>
 - Interviews have been completed for WCYB, PBS, and local Knoxville stations. The next interview will be on Feb 22 with a Memphis morning show.
 - New APAA Swag has been ordered and is being sent to RRS for students and liaisons.
 - Flyers focusing on enrollment for next year have been developed and are being shared across the state.
 - Flyers that focus on *AP+DE (dual enrollment) = Success* have been developed and are being shared across the state. We will continue to share this mindset with all high schools, and all colleges and universities. We want the AP program and the DE program to be seen as partners that work together to help students. Not as competitors.
 - Flyers to be given to 8th grade counselors are being created. These focus on AP courses that can work for 9th graders' schedules.
 - A banner and table runner have been developed to take to conferences and seminars.
 - CRISP and Wendi work on continual modifications and updates of the website to make sure all information is pertinent and easily accessible.
- Conferences/Travel:
 - AP leadership is setting our first face-to-face meeting with all Regional Relationship Specialists to take place in Franklin TN the first week of April.
 - Due to COVID, there were no conferences this first year of the grant. The APAA team will be making up for that in the second year and are already planning on attending five conferences. We are sending in proposals to present to at least three of these. We will update as proposals are accepted and plans are finalized.

Comprehensive Educational Resources (Funded by Niswonger Consortium of School Districts)

- The goals for new teacher resource materials have now been met for this year. Currently, 93% of teams have 1 material per standard and 72% of teams have

- more than 1 material per standard. These quality materials are accessible for all teachers to assist in improving the quality of classroom instruction.
- Twenty-seven school districts are now participating in CER. Twenty-five out of 27 districts are using a common system of data benchmarking – CASE. Twenty of these systems have agreed to share their benchmark data in an effort to improve classroom instruction.
 - The next benchmark data will be available in early April.
 - We are creating and/or revising pacing guides for the 22-23 school year. Pacing guides will be finalized by mid-March.
 - A teacher satisfaction survey will be conducted in April.

CareerConnect

- The graduating Explorers Class of 2022 is in the final stages of post-secondary planning. Students are finalizing their FAFSA and creating pathways based on their respective career choices (will have more accurate data once we approach the end of the school year).
- The classes of 2023 and 2024 are going through their regular monthly meetings in person and online (for students who remained virtual or are in quarantine due to COVID). The Explorers are gearing up for their summer experiences.
- Plans for an in-person summer experience are underway. Currently reaching out to industry partners for student internships and site visits during summer experience. Rising senior camp will be from June 6 - 17 and rising junior camp will be from July 11 - 22, both are being held at Greene Technology Center. Also exploring options for additional Saturday activities throughout the summer.
- Recruitment for the class of 2025 will begin shortly. Currently working with school liaisons to find days in March to come and recruit the next CareerConnect cohort.
- We are exploring expansion opportunities with Washington and Carter County School Systems, as well as connecting to local industry to build continued support for CareerConnect.

WE Track and Work Ethic Distinction

- Work Ethic Distinction continues to grow, with one new Tennessee school district being added this spring (Fayette County). This brings the total to 133 participating high schools,
- Tennessee employers continue to be added to the site as contact information comes in. Over 200 employers support WED across the state,
- A new Virginia County (Amelia County) has been added, bringing the total of Virginia high schools to 9.
- HB 1840/ SB 1776 is moving forward thanks to the work of Law Loving and Mike Krause. As introduced, students who fulfill the requirements of the Tennessee Work Ethic Distinction program will receive recognition as a *Tennessee Tri-Star Scholar*. Law will likely testify in favor of this bill at some

point in the Session. Passage of this bill will certainly increase the high school participation across the State.

Grant Activity

- REL Appalachia has chosen the Niswonger Foundation as a partner in their newest contract with SRI International. The work they will be conducting for our Consortium will be of significant assistance with both our literacy and college and career readiness efforts. This work will be provided at no cost to the Foundation.
- NiswongerCARE has also been selected as a partner with Walters State Community College on the grant they received from Educational Trust. The grant will focus on post-secondary outreach and will be of particular service to at-risk and underserved students in our region.
- Three Governor's Direct Appropriations grant requests were submitted in February. The requests would support the following programs for 2022-23:
 - Niswonger Care College and Career Advising - \$760,000
 - CareerConnect programs for Greeneville City, Greene, Carter, and Washington County School Districts - \$450,000
 - STEM.LD required matching funds- \$200,000
- A grant proposal was submitted to Food City to be a sponsoring partner for Learning Together Day 2022 - \$45,000.
- Preliminary groundwork has begun in preparation for, potentially, two US DOE EIR grant proposals for 2022.

Other Foundation Happenings

- The Foundation hosted Tosha Downey, Senior Vice President for Advocacy and Governance for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, for a two-day informational visit February 16-17.
- Scott and Nancy chaired the Collectives and Advocacy Subcommittee for the Governor's revised school funding efforts.
- Nancy is serving on the ESSER Steering Committee for the TDOE.
- Nancy is co-chairing the Bright Start Learning Environments Workgroup, in partnership with Ballad Health. She also serves on the Bright Start Leadership Team.
- Nancy continues service on the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, Tennessee Arts Commission, Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association, Tennesseans for Quality Early Education, Governors Early Literacy Foundation (executive committee), SCORE Advisory Council and the Tennessee Learning Circle.
- The 2021 Annual Report – a tribute to the Foundation's 20th Anniversary – was produced and mailed in January.