

**Programs and Partnerships
Niswonger Foundation Board Update
Thursday, May 11, 2023**

News Highlights

- *Learning Together Day* is set for Monday, October 16, 2023. Eight districts plus University School are participating this year. We anticipate about 3,000 educators in simultaneous, peer-led professional learning.
- Nancy has been appointed to the Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement (TISA) Steering Committee.

Program Updates

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

- The printed Spring impact report will be provided at the Board meeting. It is online at <https://tnapaccessforall.org/apaa-spring-2023-impact-report/>.
- No official word has been given on the funding of APAA for Year 3.
- We currently have 798 students enrolled in a course for the 2023-24 school year.
- With the onboarding of Germantown Municipal Schools, we are now partnered with 97% of all public school systems in Tennessee.
- There are two weeks left in the APAA semester. We currently have over 2000 students still enrolled and working. AP Exams run until May 12th. Students are sitting for these exams at their local schools.
- APAA teachers held zoom Exam Review Sessions throughout the month of April. They were all recorded so students could access them at any time to study for their exams. As of May 1, the review sessions have been viewed over 1,000 times. All recordings can be found on our website- <https://tnapaccessforall.org/ap-exam-reviews/>
- Each spring, we ask at least two teachers from each subject area to complete a Course Review and then meet with us to discuss. The review docs have all been completed (most average 50+ pages) and the zoom meetings are ongoing until May 10th. We will use the reviews to create action steps to guide the updating of the courses over the summer.
- Lead Teachers have been completing reviews of Year One AP exam scores to compile information on areas in the course in which students did not perform well on the AP exam. This information will be added to the course review info above to guide us in course updates this summer.
- The APAA program awarded 173 mini grants this year for a total of \$75,800 going to AP classroom development.
- The APAA program has approved 363 teachers to attend virtual APSI trainings this summer.
- 123 school systems are on-board, 97% of all public, K-12 systems.
- 31 of these systems are located in At-Risk or Distressed Counties, representing 86% of all AR/Dis Counties
- 48 of these systems are rural, representing 91% of all rural areas.

- Vanderbilt Implementation Study is still in its preliminary stages. The initial stages have provided the following data for Year One:
 - 80% of schools that were 9-12
 - 7% were full virtual schools.
 - 2% were charter schools.
 - 176 schools enrolled students.
 - 192 AP Liaisons- 92% of them enrolled at least one student.
- APAA will add 4 new courses in the 2023-24 school year for a total of 21 AP Courses:
 - AP Computer Science Principles
 - AP 2D Art and Design
 - AP 3D Art and Design
 - AP Drawing
 - AP Government and US History are being redeveloped to reflect needed updates and move the APAA program away from the FLVS course. These updates will be ready for Fall 2023.
- Conferences/Travel:
- Gina will present at the CTE conference in Chattanooga in July.
- Proposals to present have been submitted to the National CanvasLMS conference in Colorado in July, the National College Board conference in NYC in November, and the NREA conference in Chattanooga in November.

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

- All Benchmark Assessment Data are completed for this school year. Data sharing meetings have been completed and benchmark testing windows have been established for next year.
- Curriculum Teams are being formed for the next school year. Work will begin in July. Science and Social Studies pacing guides are finalized. Math pacing guides will be finalized by the end of May. Common Formative Assessment teams will complete their work in August.
- The website was updated with new materials in February. Approximately 4,400 new materials were added covering 875 standards this year.
- There are currently 30 school districts and 138,000 students in CER.
- As a result of the SWOT analysis conducted this summer, the decision was made to offer a Leadership Academy within CER. Four districts are participating this year with 20 participants. We will host a reception for participants in May.
- CER has combined efforts with the regional Principal Study Council to offer monthly professional learning with TASL credit. Each session features a K-5 principal and a 6-12 principal who speak on a selected topic.
- An Instructional Coach Collaborative is a new program for 2022-23. There were three virtual meetings offered this year.
- Consortium Pricing was identified as an area of need. We have gained consortium pricing for:
 - Mastery View Predictive Assessments (Instructure/Benchmark)

- Boardworks
- Discovery Education
- School Status

CareerConnect (Funded by Governor's Direct Appropriations Grant)

- CareerConnect is going through its largest expansion period to date. The program has expanded into 3 new school systems and in the process of onboarding 4 new high schools: Johnson County High School, Dobyns-Bennett High School, DB Excel, and Milan High School. Conversations are also happening with Hamblen, Hancock, Hawkins, and Sullivan Counties to bring CareerConnect into their schools.
- Kim Gass has been hired to help CareerConnect in its expansion efforts. Her primary focus will be business development, connecting students to new opportunities and expanding our already large employer network. We are extremely excited to have her on the team.
- Summer Experience planning is underway: Carter County camp is June 19-23, Washington County camp is June 26-30, and Greene County is June 10-21. Students will get the opportunity to visit with employers and post-secondary institutions and participate in hands-on activities.
- We are closing out the Greene County Class of 2023 by celebrating their accomplishments and their journey ahead. 88% are heading towards post-secondary institutions - the most popular being Walters State and TCAT Morristown.
- CareerConnect has been selected to participate in a research study through SRI International. They will be helping us collect data to be able to better tell the story of a CareerConnect student.

Developing Academic Coaches (2019 EIR – Funded by the US DOE)

- Actual study/research aspect of Developing Academic Coaches partnership with New Teacher Center will wrap up at the end of the 2022-23 school year.
- SRI International is collecting data April-May 2023 via surveys and interviews, and then SRI will collect data from our online database in June 2023.
- Awarded \$200,000 from SCORE to support our work during the 2023-24 school year.
- Awarded \$150,000 from New Teacher Center (NTC) for 2023-24 school year to continue our work and build sustainability.
- A plan for this additional funding to include this program being combined with the Comprehensive Educational Resources program is currently underway. This is work to encourage sustainability of this effort.

Kindergarten Readiness (Funded by Bright Start/ Ballad Health)

- Year One of this effort was completed in May with the following accomplishments for 2022-23:
 - A working group representing 17 school districts was formed.
 - An inventory was conducted for current kindergarten screening practices.
 - The working group met regularly with kindergarten teachers in their districts to share key insights from the meetings and to gather feedback.
 - REL Appalachia assisted in establishing best practices through their “Ask an Expert” program. Their assistance included an inventory of screeners, screener design and methods of implementation.
 - Based on the REL Appalachia feedback, 5 screening companies/screeners were vetted. Two screeners were identified for further review.
 - A definition of school readiness was developed and will be finalized in Fall 2023.
 - A strategic plan was developed and finalized.
 - Action steps have been developed for the 2023-24 academic year.

Niswonger CARE College and Career Advising (Funded by Governor’s Direct Appropriations Grant)

- TN College and Career Planning Night events are conducted in all 28 high schools to provide crucial information to parents and students about college search, applications, and financial aid processes.
- TN Signing Day celebrations are planned in all 28 high schools to recognize and commend students who have committed to enroll in some form of postsecondary education or military service.
- Advisors increased FAFSA completion rates to 75% compared to the state rate of 65%. As a result of the Advisors’ efforts in FAFSA completion, sixteen of the high schools served received the FAFSA Champion designation from the Tennessee Higher Education Commission.
- Summer melt programming recruitment is underway with 767 seniors already enrolled reflecting over a 50% increase over the 2022 year-to-date enrollment.
- Signal Vine Messaging platform has 3,279 seniors enrolled. Advisors have sent a total of 69,907 messages about important tasks and deadlines and answered 9,754 individual student questions.
- NiswongerCARE leaders and Advisors attended the Partners for Rural Summit-Cradle to Career national convening in Charlotte during the first week of April. Attendees consisted of college access providers, teachers, principals, superintendents, higher education leaders, legislators, and nonprofit leaders who shared ideas and strategies for ensuring that rural youth have the opportunity to enter school ready to learn and successfully transition from high school to college and career.
- End of year surveys were sent to stakeholders and students requesting feedback on Advisor performance and impact of program initiatives. Results will be

analyzed when all surveys are received, and program modifications will be initiated.

Niswonger Online (Funded by the Niswonger Consortium of School Districts)

- Enrollment is open for Summer 2023 and Fall 2023 Terms
 - Summer: June 5-July 28, 2023 - There are 90 enrollments currently. Enrollments will continue through the first week of June. We had just over 200 enrollments the past two summers.
 - Fall: August 14-December 15, 2023 - There are currently 150 enrollments. Most schools will wait to enroll students in August. We expect 1,000+ enrollments based on Fall 2022.
- Course Development & Updates
 - Cybersecurity I and II is a new add, in partnership with STEM.LD,
 - Algebra I will be completely redesigned in preparation for new textbook adoption.
 - Physics will receive a major update to include fully online labs from PIVOT labs. This is the same lab program used by AP Physics classes.
 - Early Childhood Education Careers I and II is being added in partnership with STRONG ACC
 - Level I Course Available for Students Spring 2024
 - Level II Course Available for Students Fall 2024
 - Level III and IV course work can be completed via Dual Enrollment at Northeast State or Walters State
 - Completion of the level I and II courses is the equivalent of a TECTA orientation, making students eligible to receive tuition assistance from the Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance (TECTA).
 - TECTA will also provide financial support and mentorship for students as they work toward a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential.
- Live Canvas Training Sessions for Niswonger Online / AP Access for ALL teachers. There are a number of training opportunities scheduled for June 2023. Training is provided by national Instructure/Canvas trainers and specialists. Training sessions are not required, but we hope to provide teachers with tools to improve their Canvas skills for Niswonger Online/AP Access for ALL and their home schools.
- Student Success - Dr. Catherine Edwards has completed weekly walkthroughs in classes, allowing us to identify ways to better support students and teachers. Following a concerted communication campaign from teachers, Catherine, and Jill, we have seen an increase in participation from our Spring 2023 students.
- Our quarterly online newsletter continues to be well received.
<https://www.smores.com/zdfhm>
- Our website has been updated to include additional student spotlights. Visit www.niswongeronline.com and scroll down to the section “Hear from our students”.

Project On-Track (Funded by the Tennessee Department of Education Contract)

- Project On-Track was the recipient of a \$9M TN Department of Education TN ALL Corps Community Partner Grant. The funding period extends through September 2024.
- Project On-Track is serving approximately 2,900 students during spring 2023 in grades 1-8 in literacy and math.
- In March, over 6000 books were distributed to approximately 2000 Project On-Track literacy students. Each student received three books to take home. The selected books included family reading activities.
- This month, Project On-Track staff members delivered 730 family math kits to students at their respective schools. The kits included math manipulatives and a parent guide containing directions for students and family members to use.
- The project has collected feedback from site coordinators, tutors, and parents regarding the 2022- 2023 school year. The survey results are being analyzed and the information will be used in planning for the 2023-2024 school year.
- Over 200 tutors completed a course regarding trauma-informed care and appropriate practices. Trauma-informed specialist Miranda Russell facilitated multiple sessions in January and February.
- A family literacy night was held on Thursday, April 20 at Joseph Rogers Primary School in Hawkins County. The event was a joint effort with Hawkins County and Rogersville City. Hawkins provided their book bus “Words on Wheels” for families to choose books. Students participated in a “make and take” activity associated with a free book while parents attended a workshop regarding how to read, aloud, a book with their child. Over 30 families were present.
- Project On-Track was asked to present at the TN Department of Education’s TN ALL Corps virtual conference on Wednesday, May 3. Project On-Track staff will present with Sullivan County Schools and King University regarding how to use university students as literacy tutors.
- SRI, the project’s external evaluation team, has begun interviews with a chosen group of districts using Project On-Track in grades 1-3 in literacy. The interview process will conclude by the end of May. Additional data will be analyzed by SRI as a final review of the school year and will be completed by June 30.
- Summer, 2023 Project On-Track programs will be finalized by Friday, April 28. Currently, there are 49 sites with an anticipation of serving at least 1,500 students in both math and literacy.

Regional Education Laboratory (REL) Appalachia (Funding from SRI International through a contract with REL Appalachia)

- Niswonger Foundation continues to partner with SRI International in their 5-year contract to operate the Regional Education Laboratory for four Appalachian-area states (REL Appalachia).
- There are currently two active projects in this partnership.

- Niswonger Foundation and 10 area school districts are in the early stages of the “Strengthening Students' Preparation for Careers and College” project.
- The second project, “Accelerating Early Literacy Success,” we are focusing on an evaluation of our tutoring efforts with Project On-Track.
- REL is assisting with data analysis and support for Project On-Track, CareerConnect and NiswongerCARE.
- SRI International is supporting the development of our current EIR grant proposal.

Rural LIFE (2017 EIR – Funded by the US DOE)

- The 5-year middle-school literacy project, Rural LIFE, has now officially ended. The US Education Department requires an independent evaluation of all its EIR projects. Niswonger Foundation’s evaluation contractor (AnLar, LLC) has *unofficially* informed us that our project will have two positive findings. We expect to be able to demonstrate small, but statistically significant, positive findings in school-level English/ language arts (ELA) scores and in mathematics. More details will be available when the final research report is completed.

STEM.LD (2021 EIR – Funded by the US DOE)

- The most recent STEM.LD Newsletter - <https://www.smores.com/dp68a-stem-ld-newsletter?ref=email>
- Forty-three of 50 schools have completed deep-dive partnerships for the 2023-2024 school year.
- Twenty-two teachers have applied for the 2023 Summer STEM.LD Externship. School systems include Anderson County Schools, Claiborne County Schools, Oneida City Schools, Union County Schools.
- Cohort 3 schools will start orientation on May 6th.
- Partners are starting to set up meetings with their partnered schools to discuss upcoming events for the summer and fall.
- On Monday, April 24, our team met with teachers from Volunteer High School to kick off curriculum development for a new BioSTEM course. Guest speakers included Brian Caine, Coordinator of Science for the TDOE; Dr. Natalie Kuldell, Founder & Executive Director of BioBuilder; and Dr. Pamela Mims, Professor and Associate Dean of Research and Grants at ETSU. This course will be piloted in the fall as a Biology I but will eventually be offered as the first course in the BioSTEM CTE pathway. Volunteer will be the first high school in our region to offer BioSTEM CTE courses. Sixty students from Volunteer HS have registered for BioSTEM in the fall.
- Dr. Vicki Kirk and Law Loving have been invited to present at the Tennessee CTE Summer Institute with a presentation entitled: *BioSTEM: Piloting an Innovative CTE Pathway for Rural Schools*
- Representatives from STEM.LD, Sulphur Springs Elementary School and ETSU will present at the NREA convention and symposium in November. The

presentation is entitled: *Creating Innovative Schools: K- 12 Career Labs and Community Partnerships*

- RFP submissions have been received by two national vendors and oral presentations have been completed. The next steps are to complete independent scoring on both RFP submissions.
- 86 participants have registered for the STEM.LD Summer Institute as of 5/01/2023. The call for proposals is open to STEM organizations in our region.
- Student and teacher survey data collection is underway at all treatment and control schools for both cohort 1 and cohort 2.
- Upcoming Events
 - May 8th - Hammer Math Dream Home Challenge
 - May 13th - MATE Appalachian Highlands Super Regional Underwater Robotics Competition
 - STREAMWORKS will host the 6th Annual MATE Appalachian Highlands Super Regional Competition on May 13th at ETSU (Ranger Class) and Milligan University (Scout Class). Teams include students from Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky, Indiana and Pennsylvania, ranging in grades as young as second grade through university.
 - May 16th, 17th, and 18th - UAH Day of Cyber. This is a one-day cybersecurity camp that will cover hardware assembly, cryptography, forensics, and more.

WE Track (Funded by Governor's Direct Appropriations Grant)

- Revisions to Work Ethic Distinction (WED) standards, most of which are focused on student access, will be announced this month.
- Early data indicate we have a higher WED earn rate in 2022-23. This year we have 2,539 participants. To date, 298 have earned the Tri-Star Scholar Distinction.

Grant and Partnership Update

- The Tennessee Legislature approved \$2,170,000 in Governor's Direct Appropriations for the Niswonger Foundation. The funding will support:
 - College and Career Advising \$820,000
 - CareerConnect and Work Ethic Distinction \$900,000
 - Capacity Building/Matching Funds \$450,000
- Awarded \$200,000 in funding from the State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) to support an additional year of the Developing Academic Coaches Grant.
- Awarded \$150, 00 in funding from the New Teacher Center to support an additional year of the Developing Academic Coaches Grant.
- Awarded \$50,000 from Bright Start/Ballad Health to build and implement online pathway for early childhood education credentialling.

- Ballard Health has joined as a sponsor for Learning Together Day with \$40,000 in support.
- A proposal has been submitted to Bright Start/Ballad for a 2023-24 Community Health Improvement Site grant. The project is “Defining Kindergarten Readiness in Northeast Tennessee. The requested amount is \$75,500.
- A US. Department of Education 2023 Education-Innovation-Research grant proposal is currently being written. The project will be “Rural Pathways and Professions.” This is an \$8 million proposal.
- The initial steps have been taken in the submission of a grant to the Appalachian Regional Commission. This grant will be in partnership with the United Way of Southwest Virginia.

Publications/Webpages/Social Media

- The Niswonger Foundation 2022 Annual Report “*Focus on Future Perfect*” was completed and distributed in February.

Contributions (February 2023 – April 2023)

Scott M. Niswonger	\$ 250,000.00
Chris Marsh (Marsh Energy)	\$ 31,000.00
Hope Adkins (Niswonger Scholar)	\$ 300.00
Total	\$ 281,300.00

Niswonger Foundation Current Board Representation

- Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities
- Tennesseans for Quality Early Education
- Governor’s Early Literacy Foundation
- State Collaborative on Reforming Education
- Tennessee Arts Commission
- Tennessee Department of Education
 - Philanthropy Engagement Council
 - LAUNCH – National Pathways Project
 - TISA Steering Committee