

**Programs and Partnerships
Niswonger Foundation Board Update
Thursday, November 9, 2023**

News Highlights

- The Niswonger Foundation successfully hosted the third annual *Learning Together Day* on October 16. This was an ambitious eight-district and University School, 9 sites, initiative with more than 3000 educators in attendance. Nearly 250 presenters led the sessions. Participating school districts partnered to provide the funding for this professional development. Survey data is available and will be used in planning the event for 2024.
- The Board Calendar for 2024 has been included as an attachment.
- The Niswonger Foundation is hosting the *Annual Education Convening* on November 13. The purpose of this event is to provide a forum for our school leaders to present their list of priorities/concerns to State Legislators in preparation for the 2024 General Assembly.
- Nancy was reappointed as Chair of the Governor's Early Literacy Foundation

Program Updates

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

"I took six online AP courses throughout my high school career. APAA courses granted me the opportunity to take double the amount of AP classes from what I would have originally been offered at my school. I strongly feel that my APAA online classes helped prepare me for collegiate classes. Many of my classes at Yale are similarly organized to APAA online classes that I took, and this helped me transition into college more smoothly."



Jay Simms
Lincoln County High School Class of 2023
Yale University Class of 2027

- 127 school systems are on-board, 98% of all eligible public-school systems.
- 32 of these systems are in At-Risk or Distressed Counties, representing 89% of all AR/Dis Counties.
- 49 of these systems are rural, representing 92% of all rural districts.
- Fall enrollment is 2,053 students. Over 200 students remained on the waiting list due to teacher shortage.
- 51% of all public high schools in the state enrolled at least one student with us this school year.

- 115 sections across 21 subject areas. Student-teacher ratio is 18:1.
- APAA had a growth of over 50% in the number of **rural** enrollments this school year.
- Enrollment will open for Spring 2024 on November 20.
- AP Mini Grant Applications are now open. Forty teachers have already been approved. Applications will remain open until March 29, 2024, or when funds are exhausted.
- Applications for teachers to attend AP Summer Institutes will open on November 20.
- The **Vanderbilt Implementation study** has been approved and they have started work. The first focus is to reach out to AP Liaisons and learn best practices from some of our top Liaisons with high performing students in rural and urban areas.
- In January of 2024 AP Precalculus will be added to the course offerings – bringing the program to 22 AP courses.
- Work is being done to educate lawmakers on how APAA is helping students in their specific districts. Individual pages with data on high schools they serve, as well as the Year 2 Annual Impact Report, are being mailed to lawmakers across the state.
- Gina will be presenting at the Digital Learning Annual Conference and the Virtual Learning Leadership Alliance in February 2024.

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

- Benchmark 1 data files are complete and have been shared.
- A new addition of instructional materials has been produced and refined. These are now posted on CER with over 760 standards added.
- Collaboratives were formed to assist instructional coaches in the use of the newly adopted math textbooks. Dr. Sherry Cockerham assisted Dr. Hyde in leading this work for the CER Districts.
- Common Formative Assessment data are complete for 2022-23. These data have been shared with 22 districts.
- Principal Study Council and Instructional Coach Collaboratives are underway for the new school year. Both have strong survey data.
- Leadership Academy began in October with the goal of supporting the rising school leaders within districts. This year's class has 19 candidates representing 7 districts.

CareerConnect (Funded by Governor's Direct Appropriations Grant)

- Recruitment and orientation have wrapped up for all of our existing and new schools. Across our 23 schools, we have a sophomore cohort of 395 students! Our schools have begun to meet with students monthly.
- As a kick-off to 2023-24 CareerConnect, we hosted the "*Be Pro Be Proud*" career simulation truck in Greeneville, Morristown, Washington County, and Kingsport to provide students an opportunity to have a hands-on learning experience in different careers including construction, CDL truck driving,

journeyman/lineman electrical, and many more. As of 10/23, there have been over 500 students that have had the chance to experience the truck. Below is a link to WJHL News explaining how this exposes students to career opportunities.

<https://www.wjhl.com/video/daytime-live-at-career-connect-in-kingsport/9093362/>

- CareerConnect has begun to offer “Credly,” an online credentialing and badging system. The goal is to be able to provide opportunities for students to earn “career badges” and to use the platform as an online tool to showcase their skills to employers. For example, if a student earns a medal on the ACT WorkKeys, they will be able to highlight that on their Credly portfolio. There are many more applications to Credly that we are exploring for CareerConnect.
- CareerConnect is, also now, offering “Career Safe” for students to earn an employability skills certification. Within this certification, there are different modules students can complete (which aligns with the existing CareerConnect curriculum). Once students complete one module, they will earn a micro-credential. When students complete all 11 modules, they will earn the employability certification, which also counts as an Early Post-Secondary Opportunity (EPSO) with their school district.

Developing Academic Coaches (2019 EIR – Funded by the US DOE and SCORE) CER Coaches Collaborative-

- DAC offers a training/learning segment on best practices of mentoring/coaching at each of the four collaboratives.
 - September 19, 2023-CER Coaches Collaborative met virtually - Hamblen County District Coaches presented and Allison and Sherry presented Coaches as Transformational Leaders-
 - November 28, 2023- will be the next virtual CER Coaches Collaborative- Hawkins County will be presenting and Allison and Sherry will present the following choice sessions: Coaching Language to Support Planning and Data Use/ Differentiated Coaching Support.
 - February 28, 2024- virtual CER Coaches Collaborative- Elizabethton City will present.
 - May 14, 2024- virtual CER Coaches Collaborative- Bristol City will present. Allison and Sherry will be present during both of these. The following are possible topics based on feedback from coaches:
 - Building Resilience for Adults
 - Instructional Core - Student Focused Learning
 - Facilitating Effective Professional Learning Communities
- October 4, 2023- Seventy attendees for the First Virtual Forum for 2023-24 cohort of mentors/coaches (including coaches from the CER Collaborative and instructional coaches/mentors and district supervisors who are not actively participating in the CER Collaborative but are from CER districts and

- treatment/delayed treatment schools from NTC grant. Topic- Intellectual Prep for Intentional and meaningful Mentoring/Coaching Conversations
- October 11, 2023- Niswonger Foundation and New Teacher Center quarterly meeting Program Quality Survey Highlights
 - October 16, 2023- Learning Together Day- Sherry and Allison presented Effective Coaching Practices to Support Teachers from what we've learned through the NTC grant for administrators and district supervisors.
 - DAC will continue to collaborate with Dr. Hyde regarding aspiring school leaders' series and the coaching collaborative for the 2023-2024 school year.
 - Math textbook collaboratives were organized by Dr. Hyde over the summer and have continued to meet each month. Sherry is facilitating these six different ongoing math textbook collaboratives to support districts with implementation of new material (aligned to the new TN Math Academic Standards). Topics include sharing successes, adjusting pacing, and troubleshooting issues. In particular, districts have found collaborative helpful in solutions around tech issues and identifying gaps/misconceptions. Next steps will include careful examination of the CER benchmarks and use of those data to drive instruction. Also, sharing trends from learning walks to examine supports.
 - Follow-up for the math collaboratives with on the ground support and one-on-one check-ins have included: vetting supplemental (fluency, practice) online platforms with math coaches; working through math kits/manipulatives to align most high leverage tool to lessons; and scheduling school visits to share best practices from each curriculum.
 - Sherry attended the TN Teachers of Math Conference at Belmont on September 15, 2023. Session materials have been shared with math coaches in the textbook collaboratives.
 - Math material teams have met on Sept. 27, 28th and on Nov 1, 3rd at the direction of Dr. Hyde. Sherry has and will attend to "listen and learn" from those closest to the work. Teachers sharing where they are in the work with the new standards and high-quality instructional materials (HQIM), and how the CER updated materials fit have been invaluable.
 - Allison is collaborating with Stephanie Dallman, Instructional District Supervisor for Hamblen County (delayed treatment district) and providing extra support to Hamblen County's Learning Leaders (mentors), Accessibility Coaches, and Instructional Facilitators during their ongoing professional development.
 - Allison is collaborating with Kristi Wallin, First TN Center of Regional Excellence (CORE) ELA, in Hancock County. They are providing guidance and support regarding best coaching practices to support ELA instruction and the use of data in ELA PLCs to the Hancock Co High School and Middle School coaches and administration.

Kindergarten Readiness (Funded by STRONG ACC – Ballard Health)

- The working group has prepared and approved the definition and guidelines of early childhood readiness that will guide the work.

- Kindergarten screeners have been vetted by the group and are being considered in each district. At the December 1 meeting, a district-wide screener will be selected.

NiswongerCARE College and Career Advising (Funded by Governor's Direct Appropriations Grant)

- Delivery of Service meetings were held in all 26 high schools to guide the work of the advisors for the 2023-2024 school year.
- Advisors reported to their assigned schools during August and year to date have held 2,678 individual meetings compared to the 1,993 this time last year. Advisors held 426 group meetings with 8,317 students participating. This also reflects an increase over the 300 group meetings during this time in the 2022-23 school year.
- TN Promise application opened on August 1, with 92.6% of all eligible seniors having applied as of Oct. 27 compared to 83% who had applied at the same time last year.
- The leadership team conducted school visits and monthly supervision meetings with Advisors in September and October logging over 56 hours spent in schools, and additionally providing virtual assistance to Advisors over 350 times.
- Signal Vine messaging platform for communicating with students currently has 2,245 students subscribed, and 20,666 outgoing messages have been sent to students.
- Dr. Ramona Williams continues to coordinate with the National Student Clearinghouse and is in the process of compiling college-going data to share with Directors and Principals.
- College Application and Appreciation Month activities were held in each high school during September resulting in over 2,127 college applications being submitted. Representatives from regional colleges and TCAT campuses were also on site at many schools to further assist students in applying and providing application fee waivers.
- NiswongerCARE hosted over 160 School Counselors and School Nurses at the Northeast State Community College site for the Learning Together Professional Development Day on October 16. Attendees were provided with 18 breakout sessions with a variety of topics to choose from ranging from legal and ethical issues to supporting students' mental health.
- The leadership team and Advisors hosted several meetings at the Niswonger Foundation over the last three months including a luncheon with Vanderbilt representative Derek Lido who discussed the admissions and selection process for Vanderbilt University. During another meeting hosted by NiswongerCARE, advisors were asked to share their experiences working in college access with the TRI-STAR college tour that included representatives from Vanderbilt, Yale, University of Chicago, and Case Western Reserve. The team also hosted a meeting with Dr. Heidi Leming, Vice Chancellor for Student Success with the Tennessee Board of Regents to discuss ways to partner.
- NiswongerCARE Director, Denise Arnold, Advisor, Heidi Armstrong, Scott Niswonger and Nancy Dishner were interviewed by Janet Lorin, *Bloomberg News*

- reporter, for a follow up article regarding the TRI STAR event in Greeneville, and how admissions to highly selective schools can impact rural students.
- The Leadership team participated in several professional learning opportunities that included the Better FAFSA Train-the-Trainer Summit in Washington DC, First Tennessee Development District's 2023 Education to Employment Summit, Walters State Community College's STRIVE event highlighting health program options. Associate Director Anita Kilbourne-Greer attended the National College Attainment Network's Annual Conference in Dallas, TX with college access professionals from across the nation.

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

- 1,100 enrollments in Fall 2023 Semester and Year Long 23-24 General Education courses.
- Spring 2024 enrollment opens Monday, November 20.
- Cybersecurity Pathway- This new pathway has been created in partnership with STEM.LD.
 - Cybersecurity I will be offered for the first time in Spring 2024.
 - Cybersecurity II is in development and will be offered starting in Fall 2024.
- Early Childhood Education Careers Pathway
 - Early Childhood Education Careers I is in development in partnership with Bright Start NETN/Strong ACC. Our goal is to provide level 1 and level 2 coursework through Niswonger Online. Students can complete level 3 and level 4 coursework through their local community college.
 - Jill Davis and Dr. Catherine Edwards attended the Bright Start Summit in Nashville on September 8, 2023. Niswonger Online was recognized several times for our work to bring Early Childhood coursework to high school students to improve the workforce pipeline.
- Assisting Schools with Teacher Shortages
 - Oneida High School has partnered with Niswonger Online for the first time. They are using ~100 seats in World Language classes this semester. ALL students have kept a passing grade so far this semester. The principal and lab facilitator are providing excellent support for all students. Ten students opted to complete the level 1 language class at an accelerated pace to complete the level 2 language class in the second half of the semester.
 - Cosby High School is a longtime partner with Niswonger Online but has not had many enrollments in recent years. We are providing 88 seats in Chemistry, Geometry, and World Language courses. Jill and Catherine visited the school during the first week of Niswonger Online classes to provide in-person support to students and school staff as they made the transition to online learning. Connections were made that have aided follow-up communication. The initial transition was a little bumpy as students had no previous Canvas experience, but students and staff have adjusted well and maintained excellent communication with Jill, Catherine, and Niswonger Online teachers.

- For the 3rd year in a row, Niswonger Online is providing online seats for students at Cannon County High School. They have 92 enrollments in Physics, Spanish I, and Spanish II. Cannon County continues to have success with our program thanks to dedicated lab facilitators and great communication with our team.
- Student Success
 - Catherine completes weekly walkthroughs in Niswonger Online classes. She reaches out to students via email and Canvas message with notes of encouragement—both to students who are struggling and to those who are doing well.
 - Catherine and Jill collaborated on an Expectations for Success document which was shared with all schools and is now linked on our website: <https://niswongeronline.com/expectations/> This document outlines the expectations we have for students, parents, schools, Niswonger Online teachers, and Niswonger Online Admin in order for students to be successful.
 - Students were given an opportunity to provide feedback on their online course mid-semester. The survey is anonymous, but students may provide their name if they would like us to follow up.
- Support for Teachers
 - Catherine worked on a brief teacher handbook over the summer with the goal of providing one place for teachers to go for all our important policies and forms.
 - Catherine completes all teacher evaluations. We are working to improve and automate communication regarding these evaluations by using Autocrat, a Google Sheets add-on.
 - We met with Spanish teachers on Zoom November 1 to discuss ways that we can best support this group of teachers. Spanish course enrollments account for ~25% of our total enrollment numbers.
- Quarterly Email Newsletter: <https://www.smore.com/d9ng0>

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

- During the 2022-2023 school year, Project On-Track served 6,129 students in two tutoring cycles at 99 sites in 17 school districts. Students in grades 1-8 were provided tutoring in literacy or math for the full year.
- Project On-Track concluded the Summer 2023 tutoring program serving 1,722 students at 52 sites in 13 school districts.
- Project On-Track is serving **3,251 students** in grades 1-8 in literacy or mathematics during this fall semester. Eighteen school districts are Project On-Track partners.

School District	# of sites
Bristol City	1
Carter County	5

Cocke County	6
Elizabethton City	4
Greene County	11
Greeneville City	5
Hamblen County	14
Hancock County	1
Hawkins County	14
Johnson City	4
Johnson County	4
Kingsport City	2
Newport City	1
Oneida Special School District	2
Rogersville City	1
Sullivan County	10
Unicoi County	5
Washington County	3
Afterschool agencies (YMCA, Coalition For Kids, Langston, LXI, Carver, Rise Up)	18
Total Sites	111

- Project director, Dr. Debra Bentley met with all districts and agencies to review their needs assessment plans and to, collaboratively, develop the Memorandum of Understanding regarding program implementation.
- The project currently has 272 tutors serving students. The curriculum specialists have trained 297 tutors in the literacy program and 93 in the math program. These numbers exceed our 272 tutors because we provide training at no cost for tutors in districts who are being compensated through their own TN ALL Corps grants.
- The TN Department of Education has requested that Project On-Track host a “Learning Walk” on Thursday, November 30. Approximately 20 individuals who serve students in tutoring programs across the state will tour some of our literacy and math sites.

- Project On-Track has been asked to present at the TN ALL Corps Symposium on January 17-18 in Nashville. Sullivan County Schools will join the project staff to share how community partners and school districts collaborate for the success of students.

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

- Niswonger Foundation continues to partner with SRI in their recently awarded 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, Project On-Track.
- Most recently, Dr. Deborah Jonas and Dr. Victoria Shaffer visited us in late October. Dr. Jonas is Director of REL AP; Victoria is recognized as a national leader in rural education and serves as our primary contact with SRI. They attended the Synthetic Biology symposium at ETSU to learn more about the concept and our regional efforts. On Monday, October 16, they observed the Learning Together day. During their visit we discussed possible future collaborations, including ways to provide support for grandparents serving as primary custodians of students and professional development for mathematics teachers.

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

- In Spring 2024 Cybersecurity I will be initiated via Niswonger Online. Cybersecurity II will be available in Fall 2024.
- As part of the STEM.LD partnership, East Tennessee State University faculty members are in the process of meeting with local community colleges and TCATs about a dual enrollment course, certificates, associate degrees, academic pathways and work opportunities related to Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics (AIDA). The possibility of a Niswonger Online course for high school students is also in consideration.
- The initial BioSTEM expansion meeting took place in late September, involving five STEM.LD high schools. The objective of the meeting was to introduce the BioSTEM pathway and invite schools to consider offering these courses. We have gained preliminary commitments from 4 of the 5 schools so far.
- We have worked with TDOE to include Biology I with embedded BioSTEM II standards as the second course in the pathway so students who take BioSTEM I as freshmen, Biology I, and BioSTEM III will be concentrators.

- Additionally, we are in the process of establishing an online workspace for the BioSTEM team to collaborate. We are also looking at work-based learning opportunities for BioSTEM III and IV.
- Cohort 3 currently has a PD completion rate of 77%. Cohort 4 will be onboarding in February 2024
- The last operating partner workgroup meeting for the year will be held on November 1. We are currently working on changes to the MOU and invoicing process for Year 4.
- Upcoming Conference Presentation:
 - Tennessee Science Teachers Association, Presenters: Elizabeth Naegele & Jessica Proffitt, *Success and Challenges: Implementation of OpenSciEd in MS Classrooms*
 - National Rural Education Association, Presenters: Dr. David Little, Dr. Ginger Christian, and Brittany Seybert, *Creating Innovative Schools: K- 12 Career Labs and Community Partnerships*
- Bi-weekly meetings are being held with FableVision as we move forward with the design phase of the STEM.LD Connector, a platform to connect students and teachers with STEM opportunities.
- There is a meeting scheduled with a local community college to host the 2024 STEM.LD Summer Institute. Our next step is to go on a site visit to look at our classroom needs and technology options.
- The STEM.LD team is continuing to look at sustainability efforts regarding high quality offerings.
- Upcoming Events
 - *Frank N STEM* - WSCC opportunity to inspire the next generation of STEM enthusiasts and help them explore various STEM careers and educational pathways.
 - STREAMWORKS RDL Tennessee Regional Competition - Ooltewah High School hosted the STEM-based robotics challenge, Robot Drone League (RDL) on November 4th, 2023, from 8:00am to 4:00pm.

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

- This is the start of the ninth school year of the WED program, and the seventh school year of WE Track supporting the WED program.
- We implemented many of the new revisions decided on by the working group over the last year and the standards have been updated accordingly.
- The website itself has had a few corresponding changes and will continue to get minor upgrades throughout the year.

Grant and Partnership Update

- The Niswonger Foundation is a subrecipient of a grant with Bioindustrial Manufacturing and Design Ecosystem (BIOMADE). The grant is entitled *Completing the Bioindustrial Pipeline*. The Niswonger Foundation will be receiving \$112,297.59 to complete our portion of the work with this project.

- United States Department of Education 2023 Education-Innovation-Research grant proposal has been successfully submitted. The project is entitled “RISE (Rural Initiative for STEM and Educator) Pathways.” This is an \$8.8 million proposal.
- In partnership with Hawkins and Hancock County Schools, we have submitted a Perkins Innovation and Modernization (PIM) grant proposal to the United State Department of Education. The grant is entitled “Consortium for Hancock and Hawkins Innovative Pathways (CHHIP)” This is a \$6 million proposal.
- The first meeting has been held with the Governor’s staff to begin the process of requesting Governor’s Direct Appropriations for the 2024-25 fiscal year.
- Efforts are underway with the Tennessee Department of Education to secure the funding for continuation of Project On-Track (TN ALL Corps) and AP Access for ALL. This will require legislative action.

Publications and Webpage

- Work is beginning on the 2023 Annual Report. Distribution is planned for January.

Contributions (August 2023 to October 2023)

Scott M. Niswonger	\$ 400,000.00
Ballad Health	\$ 115,000.00
David Hatley	\$ 65,000.00
Chris Marsh (Marsh Energy)	\$ 32,000.00
Summers-Taylor	\$ 20,000.00
Daniel and Vicky Johnson	\$ 15,000.00
Amsee, Ltd.	\$ 5,000.00
Robin Shepherd	250.00

TOTAL	\$ 652,250.00
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Niswonger Foundation Current Board/Committee 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 Partners Council
- TDOE Letter Grade Task Force
- TDOE TISA Steering Committee