

# IMAGINE



THE POWER OF  
OPPORTUNITY

2024  
ANNUAL REPORT

NISWONGER



FOUNDATION

LEARN-EARN-RETURN<sup>SM</sup>



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To learn more about the Niswonger Foundation and its programs, visit our website using the QR code or link below.



[www.niswongerfoundation.org](http://www.niswongerfoundation.org)

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**Hannah Scheurer**, NiswongerSTART Coordinator  
**Jasmine Martin**, NiswongerSTART Mentor  
NiswongerCARE Advisors: **Ashley Beck**, **Lauren Boles**, **Chelsea Collins**, **Jillian Cox**, **Makayla Davis**, **Hannah Deakins**, **Holly Frye**, **Lauren Garrison**, **Cade Gray**, **Sydney Hall**, **Lydia Howard**, **Katlyn Jones**, **Kyle Richards**, **Lyndsey Sabo**, **Taylor Shanks**, **Cayla Simerly**, **Morgan Simerly**, **Sierra Trent**, **Peyton Vance**, **Shane Webb**, **Gabby Wiley**

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**Law Loving**, Workforce Coordinator  
**Brittany Seybert**, Implementation Coordinator  
**Dr. Ramona Williams**, Implementation Coordinator



# Imagine the Power of Opportunity



## *The Legacy of the Niswonger Foundation*

For 23 years, the Niswonger Foundation has embraced the transformative power of opportunity, believing that when doors are opened, lives are changed. From the earliest years of a child's education to the moment they walk across a college graduation stage, our mission has been to ensure that every student—regardless of background or circumstance—has the support, resources, and inspiration needed to reach their fullest potential. By investing in students, educators, and communities, we have worked to build a future where what's possible knows no limits.

Through our unwavering commitment, we have served hundreds of thousands of students from Pre-K through college, helping them discover their strengths, develop their skills, and pursue their dreams. Our work has not simply been about programs and policies; it has been about people. We have witnessed the impact of early literacy initiatives that spark a lifelong love of learning, the confidence instilled by rigorous college and career readiness efforts, and the empowerment that comes when students realize they can achieve more than they ever imagined.

OUR BELIEF IN **OPPORTUNITY** HAS BEEN MORE THAN A PHILOSOPHY; IT HAS BEEN A CALL TO ACTION.

The Niswonger Foundation has never been content with standing on the sidelines. We have dared to ask, "What if?"—What if we invest in rural schools with the same intensity as urban centers? What if we create pathways to success for first-generation

college students? What if we equip educators with the tools they need to inspire and innovate? And most importantly, what if we commit not just our hands to the work but our hearts to the vision? The answers to these questions have driven us forward, fueling initiatives that have reshaped educational landscapes and touched countless lives.

Our belief in opportunity has been more than a philosophy; it has been a call to action. We have built bridges between students and success, between communities and resources, between challenges and solutions. Whether it is through scholarship programs, leadership development, or partnerships that expand access to quality education, we have stood firm in our dedication to ensuring that no student is left without a path forward.

As we reflect on the past 23 years, we do so with immense pride—not just in what we have accomplished, but in the lives we have impacted. The true measure of our success lies in the stories of students who have defied expectations, of educators who have transformed classrooms, and of communities that have flourished because we dared to believe in "the power of opportunity." The work is not finished, and the vision remains strong. With hands ready to serve and hearts full of purpose, we continue to imagine, to build, and to empower—because when opportunity is embraced, anything is possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott M. Niswonger".

**Scott M. Niswonger**  
Chairman and Founder

# AP Access for ALL



## A Reflection from the Director

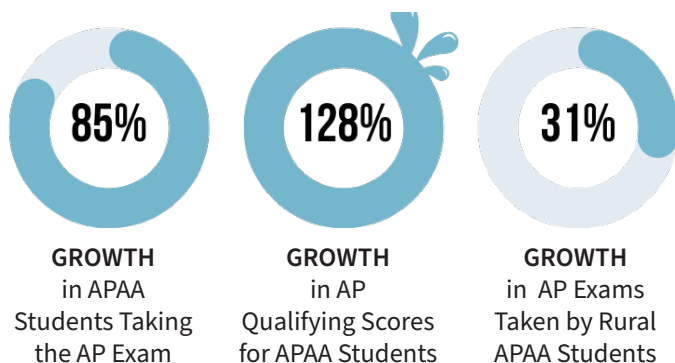


This year, AP Access for ALL (APAA) continued its mission to expand opportunities for Tennessee students by providing free, high-quality online AP courses. Through our partnership with the Tennessee Department of Education, we eliminated financial barriers, enabling thousands of students to access rigorous coursework not available at their home schools. Our program's success is built on the dedication of highly qualified AP teachers and the commitment of schools across the state. By offering flexible, supportive online learning environments, APAA empowers students by boosting their confidence and preparing them for future success. As we reflect on the impact of this year, we remain focused on ensuring all Tennessee students have the tools and resources to thrive.



Gina Pavlovich, Ed. D.  
Executive Director  
APAA

## Four Years of Growth



## Program Milestones

### STATEWIDE PARTNERSHIPS

By July 2024, APAA had partnered with 99% of school systems in Tennessee.

### ENROLLMENT GROWTH

Since 2021, APAA has experienced over 72% enrollment growth, serving more than 7,500 students.

### TUITION SAVINGS

APAA students have potentially saved over \$2 million in college tuition.

### AP EXAMS

Since Year 1, almost 4,500 AP exams have been taken by APAA students.

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

APAA has approved over 1,400 teachers to attend AP Summer Institutes to better their teaching and resources within local AP classrooms.

### ENROLLMENT REACH

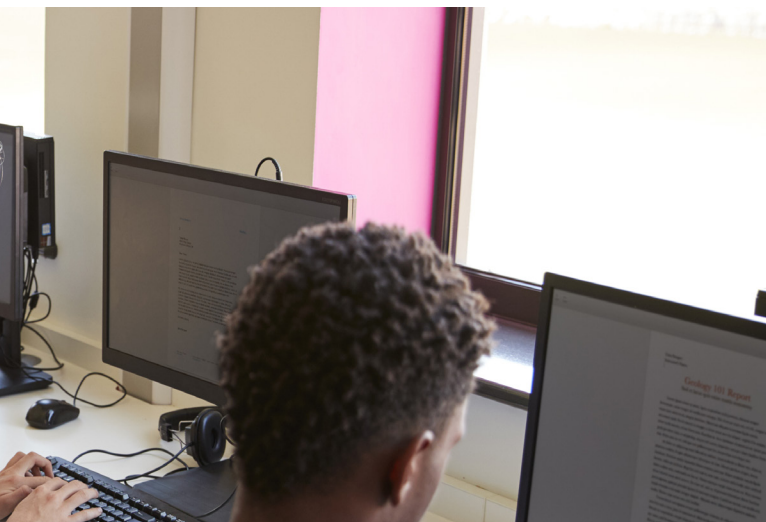
Half of all Tennessee high schools have had at least one enrollment with APAA.

"I TOOK AP ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE, AP STATISTICS, AND AP COMPUTER SCIENCE THROUGH AP ACCESS FOR ALL. THIS PROGRAM GAVE ME A FEEL FOR COLLEGE-LEVEL COURSES AND LET ME TAKE CLASSES THAT WEREN'T TRADITIONALLY OFFERED AT MY SCHOOL. THE LARGE SELECTION OF CLASSES ALLOWED ME TO PURSUE MY **PASSIONS** AND ENJOY WHAT I WAS LEARNING!"

Shreeyans D., Student  
East Hamilton High School  
Hamilton County Schools







## Counselor Spotlight



Students from Middle College pose with their APAA liaison, Laura Streeter (far right).



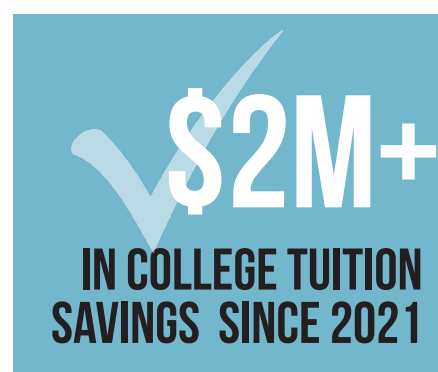
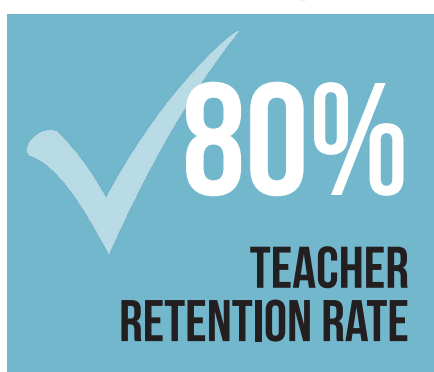
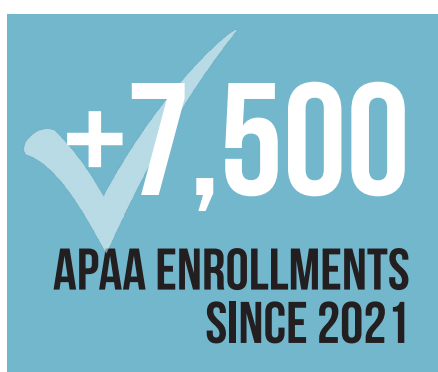
**Laura Streeter** (pictured left) is an AP liaison and counselor at Middle College in Memphis, TN. She has been with the APAA program since its first year and has maintained high student enrollment numbers. Laura helps her students realize the benefits of taking AP coursework and makes sure they have support and guidance along the way.

Laura helps her students realize the benefits of taking AP coursework and makes sure they have support and guidance along the way.

## Rural Impact

"WE ARE A SMALL HIGH SCHOOL IN A RURAL COMMUNITY AND WE DID NOT HAVE AP COURSES PRIOR TO AP ACCESS FOR ALL. THESE ONLINE COURSES HAVE GIVEN OUR STUDENTS THE **OPPORTUNITY** TO TAKE A VARIETY OF DIFFERENT AP COURSES. IT IS A JOY TO SEE OUR STUDENTS WORK HARD AND THEIR EXCITEMENT WHEN THEY OVERCOME A CHALLENGE."

Molly Ashley, AP Liaison  
Wayne County High School  
Wayne County Schools



# Career & Workforce Readiness



## A Reflection from the Director



The Career & Workforce Readiness (CWR) division of the Niswonger Foundation strengthens connections between education and industry, preparing students for workforce success.

Through its flagship CareerConnect program, CWR has empowered over 1,300 high school Explorers to develop essential skills, explore careers, and gain hands-on work experience. The program leverages cutting-edge technology and industry credentials to create innovative pathways to student success. CareerConnect rests on an unwavering belief: every student has the potential to find and excel in a career where they can flourish.

CWR's impact extends beyond students through educator externships, allowing teachers to gain firsthand industry experience that enhances their classroom instruction and career guidance. Additionally, CWR manages the Tennessee Work Ethic Distinction (WED) program, a state-recognized graduation credential earned by more than 5,600 Tennessee students. These integrated initiatives create robust bridges between K-12 education, postsecondary institutions, and workforce opportunities.

Law Loving  
Director  
CWR



"CAREERCONNECT HAS GIVEN ME A LOOK AT MY FUTURE CAREER OPTIONS. I REALLY DON'T THINK I COULD HAVE FOUND THEM WITHOUT MY COACH. ALSO, IT MADE ME REALIZE THAT MY **FUTURE** IS REALLY CLOSE."

Anna, Student  
North Greene High School  
Greene County Schools

## Program Milestones

### PROGRAM FORMATION

Thanks to a generous private donation in Fall 2016, the CareerConnect program formed to serve five high schools in Greene County with the first cohort of Explorers selected the following Spring.

### WE TRACK LAUNCH

An online platform began supporting the implementation of the Work Ethic Distinction program across the state in Fall 2017.

### FIRST GRADUATING CLASS

The first class of Explorers graduated from high school in Spring 2019; many entered postsecondary institutions in pursuit of their career of choice.

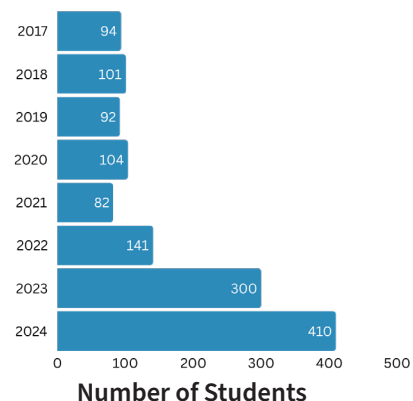
### PROGRAM EXPANSION

In Fall 2022, CareerConnect expanded to six more schools, serving four total school systems. CareerConnect expanded again in Fall 2023 to 12 more schools, serving 23 schools across 11 districts.

### TEACHER EXTERNSHIPS

The educator externship program has supported 69 educators to date, connecting them to industries across three hubs in Anderson County, Morristown, and the Tri-Cities.

### EXPLORER PROGRAM GROWTH OVER TIME

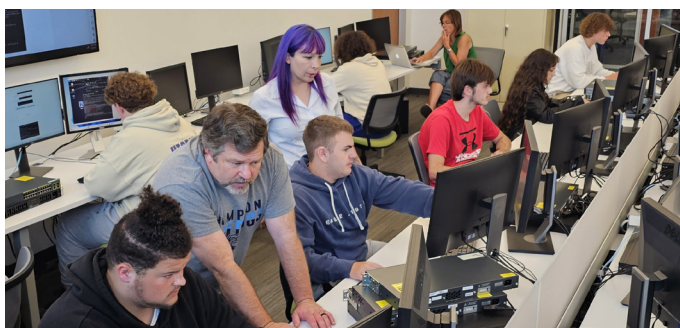






## Summer Experience

Since its inception in 2017, the CareerConnect Summer Experience has consistently emerged as a transformative cornerstone of our program. During summer sessions, Explorers engage directly with industry partners and higher education institutions while developing essential skills and building networks with peers across CareerConnect chapters.



The program's foundational mission remains unchanged: inspiring students to envision bold futures while empowering them to actively shape their career trajectories. These summers create breakthrough moments as students discover new possibilities through peer collaboration and direct exposure to educational and career pathways.

The program's adaptability has been key to its success. From its early days of intensive two-week camps to virtual offerings during the pandemic,

CareerConnect has continuously evolved to meet changing needs. Summer 2024 marked another innovative step forward with our expanded "combine" model, designed to serve an unprecedented number of schools. This new format offered students concentrated two-day immersions across diverse fields including advanced manufacturing, healthcare, entrepreneurship, information technology, and hospitality. Participants engaged in hands-on simulations led by postsecondary faculty, gained insights from professional panels, and received exclusive access to regional employer facilities. The result was an engaging and educational experience that equipped our Explorers with valuable insights for their continuing career journeys.

"CAREERCONNECT GIVES YOU AN INSIGHT INTO FUTURE CAREER **OPPORTUNITIES**. IT ALLOWS US TO HAVE A PERSPECTIVE ON WHAT IS GOING ON BEHIND THE SCENES AND OFFERS US HANDS-ON EXPERIENCES. CC HAS SHAPED ME IN MANY WAYS SUCH AS UNDERSTANDING CAREER SUCCESS. I LOVE SUMMER EXPERIENCE! ONE OF THE BEST OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT WITH INDUSTRY MEMBERS AND NEW FRIENDS!"

Sapana, Student  
Chuckey-Doak High School  
Greene County Schools



# 1,324

STUDENT EXPLORERS  
SINCE 2017



# 5,648

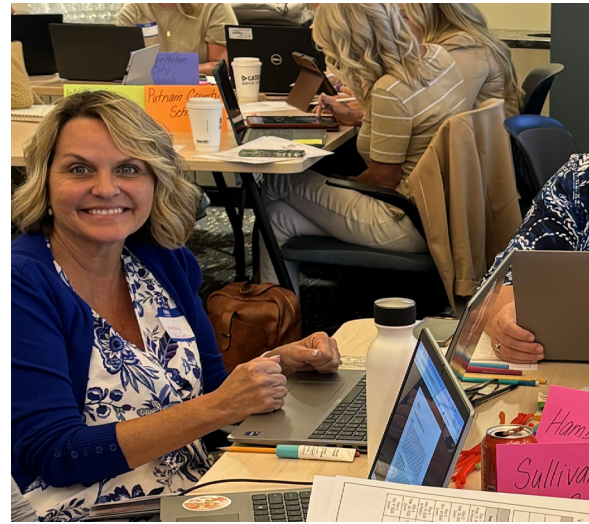
STUDENT WED EARNERS  
SINCE 2018



# 69

EDUCATOR EXTERNS  
SINCE 2023

# Comprehensive Educational Resources



## A Reflection from the Director



**Comprehensive Educational Resources (CER)** is an educational consortium that currently serves 30 school districts in Northeast Tennessee and across the state. CER is a collaboration between these 30 districts and the Niswonger Foundation that reaches approximately 156,000 students. The mission of CER is to improve student achievement by providing the following key elements: common benchmark assessments, reporting, common formative assessments, and pacing guides; data analysis; teacher created resources; and collaboration across our region.



Dr. Mia Hyde  
Director  
CER



CER HAS BEEN INVALUABLE IN OUR DISTRICT, PROVIDING EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS WITH THE TOOLS NEEDED TO ENHANCE LEARNING OUTCOMES. TEACHERS CONSISTENTLY TURN TO CER TO FIND HIGH-QUALITY MATERIALS THAT ALIGN WITH STANDARDS AND PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR CRITICAL TOPICS. THIS ACCESS TO QUALITY RESOURCES HAS STRENGTHENED INSTRUCTION, IMPROVED ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE, AND BETTER PREPARED OUR STUDENTS FOR **FUTURE** SUCCESS.

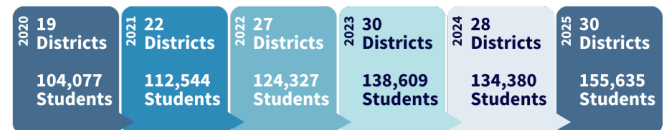


Lori Allen  
Academic Services Supervisor  
Hawkins County Schools

## Program Milestones

### SCALING UP

CER served more students every year with a record of 156,000 students in 30 districts across Tennessee.



### LEADERSHIP SUPPORTS

CER provided new supports and in-person trainings in West Tennessee for school leaders in addition to continuing principal study council and leadership academy.

### ACADEMIC COACH SUPPORTS

CER established an Instructional Coach Summer Summit for coaches across the state, offered continuous training for math and writing, continued supports through the CER Coach Collaborative, and created a forum for new instructional coaches to connect. Dr. Sherry Cockerham, CER's Director of Mathematics and Coaching, leads this work.

### TEACHER SUPPORTS

CER created thousands of materials for the CER website. Teacher leaders have also created high school credit exams and additional common formative assessments.

### MEETING THE MOMENT

CER supported districts with job-embedded teachers by creating a new course, expanded support for districts through a monthly textbook collaborative, and developed pacing guides and lesson notes specific to several adoptions.





## Empowering Coaches

ELA instructional coaches from the Hamblen County School District (*pictured above*) enjoyed discovering the learning-centered approach to writing instruction as part of a year-long training cycle with Dr. Cathy Presnell, 2024-25 Tennessee Supervisor of the Year and former Tennessee Teacher of the Year.

Participating Hamblen County ELA coaches include Dr. Tony Dalton, PreK-1 Instructional Coach; Sarah Yaksich, Grades 2-3 Instructional Coach; Donna Kanipe, Grades 4-5 Instructional Coach; and Dr. Rebecca Drinnon, Secondary ELA & Social Studies Coach.

During the first in-person session at the Niswonger Foundation, participants worked on developing a common understanding of literacy and defining the role of writing in classroom instruction. Participants enjoyed taking on the role of students in tackling high-quality instructional tasks and using the Read-Think-Talk-Write cycle to promote deeper understanding of text. These coaches walked away from their time with Dr. Presnell with hands-on activities and materials to use with the teachers they serve.

“The training empowered us as coaches to support our teachers with the process of writing so that they are better equipped to help students deepen their knowledge, pay attention to the world around them, and express their thoughts and feelings,” said Dr. Dalton.

The six-session series will continue to convene through April 2025, exploring topics such as using writing-analysis protocol, giving high-quality feedback, and curating models of excellence to increase students’ ownership of learning.

## School Readiness Initiative

With support from Ballad Health’s Department of Population Health through the Community Health Improvement program and the Strong Accountable Care Community, the Niswonger Foundation has convened the Northeast Tennessee Consortium of School Districts, which includes representatives from Bristol City, Carter County, Cocke County, Elizabethton City, Greene County, Greeneville City, Hamblen County, Hancock County, Hawkins County, Johnson City, Johnson County, Kingsport City, Newport City, Rogersville City, Sullivan County, Unicoi County, and Washington County. Since this stakeholder group (*pictured above*) first began meeting in August 2022, they have developed an agreed upon definition of “school readiness” and have selected a universal screener for school readiness for the region. In the Fall of 2024, the Brigance Early Childhood Kindergarten Screen was used to assess the school readiness of every student in Northeast Tennessee. The data derived from this screening process will be instrumental in helping school districts and community agencies address the needs of students.

“THIS INFORMATION AND DATA HAVE BEEN INSTRUMENTAL BY INSPIRING **GROWTH** AND KNOWLEDGE FOR OUR DISTRICT CONCERNING KINDERGARTEN READINESS. THIS NEW LEARNING IS IMPACTING AND GUIDING OUR DIRECTION WHICH WILL POSITIVELY INFLUENCE OUR KNOWLEDGE OF STUDENTS.”

Betsy Oliver  
K-5 Elementary Curriculum Director  
Carter County Schools

# NiswongerCARE NiswongerSTART



## A Reflection from the Director



The NiswongerCARE College and Career Advising Program remains steadfast in

its commitment to empowering the students and schools of Northeast Tennessee. Since 2015, our program has worked to strengthen a college-going and career-ready culture, helping students in 26 high schools navigate access to postsecondary opportunities.

Supported by the State of Tennessee, our near-peer staffing model includes 17 near-peer advisors, three graduate school counseling interns from local universities, two community college mentors, a postsecondary data coordinator, and two directors. This approach prioritizes meaningful relationships with students while also equipping young professionals with hands-on training and development.

In 2024, we expanded our efforts with NiswongerSTART, a College Success Mentorship pilot in partnership with Northeast State and Walters State Community Colleges. This initiative extends our mission to support students beyond high school, ensuring smoother transitions into postsecondary education.

We are honored to serve this region and to help students build a brighter, more promising future.



Denise Arnold  
Director  
NiswongerCARE

## Program Milestones

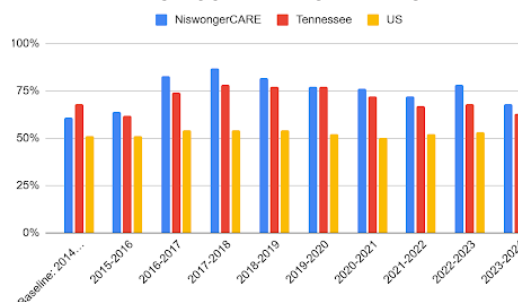
### ADVISOR EXPANSION

NiswongerCARE expanded its team of advisors for the 2024-25 school year, increasing service days in each school to better support students and to align with stakeholder recommendations to have advisors available daily for greater impact.

### FAFSA COMPLETION KICK OFF

NiswongerCARE Advisors helped thousands of Northeast Tennessee students complete the FAFSA application to secure their federal and state aid. NiswongerCARE continues to achieve FAFSA completion rates that surpass both state and national averages.

FAFSA COMPLETION RATES



### BIG\*BRIGHT\*FUTURE SUMMER MELT

NiswongerCARE Advisors served 740 class of 2024 graduates who enrolled in the Big\*Bright\*Future summer melt program, where students were given support and timely reminders to navigate matriculation tasks in preparation for their upcoming post-secondary education.

### NISWONGERSTART

The NiswongerSTART college mentoring program launched in Fall 2024, enrolling over 100 students from the summer melt program who planned to attend local community colleges. At the end of the program's first semester, students were congratulated for completing their first semester of college with a celebration.





## Expanding Student Support

This year, NiswongerCARE made significant strides in expanding its services to better serve students across the region. To enhance support for high school students, NiswongerCARE increased the number of college and career advisors, ensuring that more students receive direct, daily guidance in navigating their academic and future career pathways.

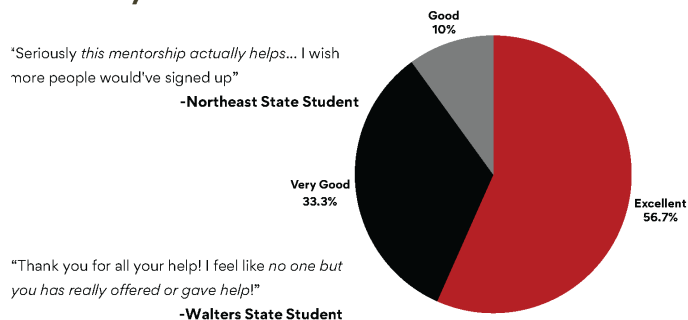
The expansion goes beyond high school, with the introduction of the NiswongerSTART postsecondary mentoring program. This innovative initiative was piloted with a group of students matriculating to Walters State and Northeast State Community Colleges, providing specialized support during their critical first year of transition from high school to college. The program is designed to help students navigate the challenges of adjusting to the postsecondary environment, fostering a seamless transition to higher education.

The growth of NiswongerCARE's services is making an immediate impact. With more advisors spending more time in schools providing vital support to students throughout their high school years and into college, relationships are deepening and a sense of continuity has been established. This sustained relationship is key to ensuring that students have the resources and guidance they need to succeed both academically and personally.

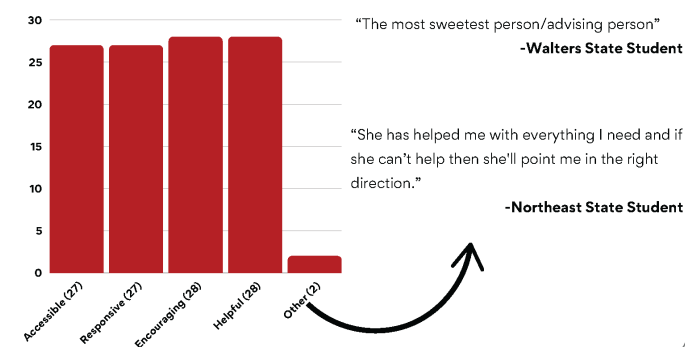


### NiswongerSTART Student Feedback (Fall 2024)

**How beneficial has this mentor program been for you?**



### My mentor has been...



THIS PROGRAM HAS HELPED ME THROUGHOUT EVERY STEP OF MY **COLLEGE EXPERIENCE**. STARTING WITH HELPING ME APPLY FOR TENNESSEE PROMISE AND COLLEGE, TO HELPING ME GET A SMOOTH LANDING FOR MY COLLEGE START TO KEEPING ME AWARE OF AVAILABLE PROGRAMS, SUCH AS TUTORING AND COUNSELING.

Maverick Dojcsak  
Graduate, Hamblen County Schools  
Student, Walters State Community College



# Niswonger Online

## A Reflection from the Director

### Niswonger Online



Our Students, Our State, Our Tomorrow

Niswonger Online proudly serves students across Tennessee. Our fully online courses are aligned to Tennessee state standards and taught by certified Tennessee teachers. In addition to learning the course content, Niswonger Online students gain valuable time management, communication, and digital literacy skills that will serve them in all manner of postsecondary opportunities.

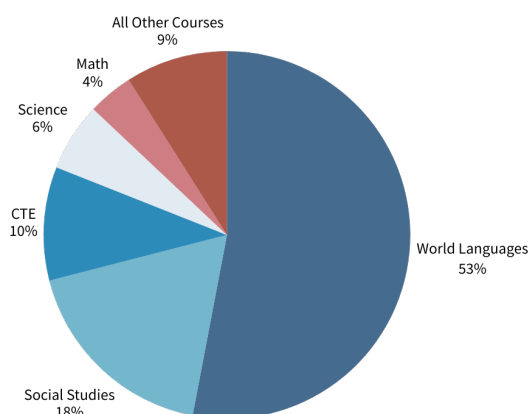


Jillian Davis  
Assistant Director  
Niswonger Online

## A Year of Growth

Enrollment in Niswonger Online courses grew by 12.56% between academic years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. Last year, the three most-enrolled course categories were world languages, social studies, and CTE.

Enrollment Percentages by Category (2023-2024)



## Program Milestones

### WORLD LANGUAGES

The Spring 2024 term was a milestone in the World Language department as it was the first time we offered a level 3 class for all four languages in the same term. Students went above and beyond the required and gained a deeper understanding of American Sign Language, French, Latin, and Spanish.

### TEACHER RETENTION

Niswonger Online employed 43 adjunct teachers in the 2023-2024 school year. Over 70% of those teachers have worked for Niswonger Online for three or more years. Approximately 10 teachers have 10 or more years experience with Niswonger Online.

### MIDDLE SCHOOL

Twenty-one 8th grade students at North Greene Middle School earned a record number of high school credits in Spring 2024, with three students going on to earn additional credits in Summer 2024. In total, 37 high school credits were earned by these students.







## Supporting Students

Before entering ninth grade in Fall 2025, Greene County native Charlie T. had already completed three high school courses. Charlie completed Personal Finance, Economics, and Government through Niswonger Online during her eighth grade year at North Greene Middle School, giving her a head start on high school coursework and an academic advantage over her peers.



I REALLY ENJOYED THE NISWONGER ONLINE CLASSES. THE TEACHERS WERE GREAT ABOUT MAKING THE ASSIGNMENTS CLEAR AND WERE GREAT AT COMMUNICATING. I ENJOYED BEING ABLE TO WORK AT MY **OWN PACE.**



Charlie T., Student  
North Greene Middle School  
Greene County Schools

## Bridging the Gap

Niswonger Online served more schools over the past few years with full classes as the state-wide teacher shortage impacted our partner schools. As administrators and teachers, we feel that the very best option for all students is an in-person teacher. But in the absence of a highly qualified teacher, we aim to be the very best back-up option. We partnered with Cosby High School in the 2023-24 academic year to offer online Geometry and Chemistry courses. This partnership was highly successful, with an 89% success rate due to the commitment of students, teachers, and administration.

"IT CAN BE DIFFICULT TO TRANSITION FROM HAVING A PHYSICALLY PRESENT TEACHER TO A VIRTUAL TEACHER, BUT THROUGH IT ALL I KNOW THAT **I CAN COUNT ON MY ONLINE TEACHERS** TO HELP ME WHEN I NEED ASSISTANCE. I REALLY LIKE THE FACT THAT WITH AN ONLINE CLASS I CAN GO AT MY OWN PACE, ALL THE WHILE KNOWING THAT HELP IS THERE IF I NEED IT."

Amelia H., Student  
Cosby High School  
Cocke County Schools



2,240

ENROLLMENTS IN  
2023-2024

20,758

CREDITS EARNED  
SINCE 2014

87%

STUDENT SUCCESS  
RATE SINCE 2014

# Project On-Track



## A Reflection from the Director



Project On-Track began serving school districts in the summer of 2021 in the midst of COVID. The pandemic left students, on average, five months behind in math and four months behind in reading by the end of the 2021-22

school year, with even more significant losses for students in majority-Black or low-income schools. The tutoring program is now in its fourth year of serving students in math and literacy across the region.

High-dosage tutoring, sometimes called “high-impact” or “high-intensity” tutoring, is one of the few school-based interventions with demonstrated significant positive effects on math and reading achievement. Project On-Track has been highly effective because the program supports data use and trains tutors to use ongoing assessments to tailor individual student instruction. As a bonus, these sessions have allowed tutors more opportunities to measure student achievement through informal assessments, potentially providing new holistic accountability measures.

Project On-Track continuously shows the benefits of high-dosage tutoring. Some districts have reported increases in students’ learning by an additional three to 15 months based on T-CAP results and Universal Screening reports.



Dr. Debra Bentley  
Director  
Project On-Track

## Program Milestones

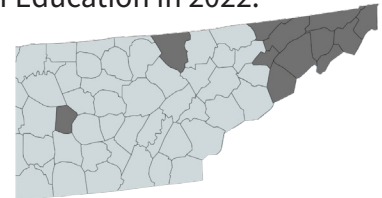
### CARE PARTNERSHIP

In 2021, the CARE Foundation and the Niswonger Foundation committed to a three-year partnership to provide tutoring to students in the First Tennessee region.

### STATE PARTNERSHIP

The Niswonger Foundation and Project On-Track were awarded a \$9 million grant from the Tennessee Department of Education in 2022.

94 SITES  
17 DISTRICTS



### ENROLLMENT GROWTH

Over 1,200 students were served each semester in 2021-2022. By Fall 2024, over 3,700 students were enrolled in Project On-Track tutoring sessions.

### TUTOR TRAINING

In 2022, Project On-Track embedded Trauma-Informed Practices training as part of the tutors’ professional learning protocols.

### REACHING FAMILIES

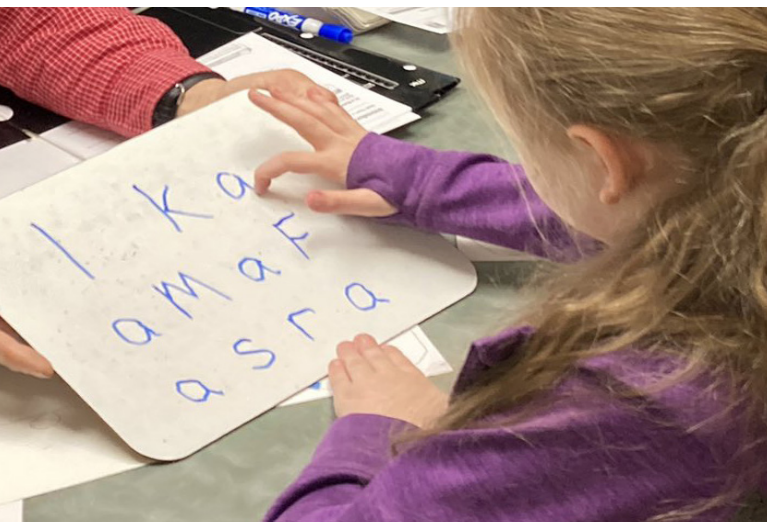
Over 24,000 books and math games have been disseminated to students and their families between April 2023 and December 2024.



PROJECT ON-TRACK HAS BEEN AN ENJOYABLE EXPERIENCE THAT HAS HELPED MY KID'S **CONFIDENCE** DRAMATICALLY.

Project On-Track Parent





## Engaging Families

Partnering with parents and caregivers is an important component of Project On-Track's success. Parents and caregivers are given informational letters at the beginning of the school year, outlining the details of the tutoring program. During the school year they receive project news and parent resources via a text messaging platform, Text Em All. Project On-Track has had over 1,600 parents sign up for the text messaging platform during the 2024-25 school year. Students and families also receive regular reports highlighting student learning progress and take-home resources such as books and math games to continue student learning at home.

### PARENT TESTIMONIALS

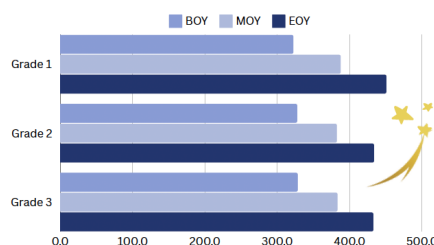
"We have seen so much growth in our child. In the past, we have participated in other tutoring by private tutors, but our child has grown the most with this."

"I just want to thank you for helping to fund this project and make it possible for my daughter. She is a fantastic reader but struggles sometimes in her understanding of math the first time around. The after-school tutoring has helped her understanding by leaps and bounds. I am a single mother. My work schedule put me home by 10 p.m. the past several years, and now battling a serious illness my work schedule does not prevent me from helping my daughter (as I am no longer working) but being sick many days does. The added stress of no income and moving to low-income housing has taken a great toll on her confidence in her abilities. It really does take a village to help raise a child. This village is more appreciated than you could ever know."

## Student Success

Project On-Track students showed marked improvement across three benchmark periods: Beginning of the year (BOY), Middle of the year (MOY), and End of the year (EOY).

Project On-Track Literacy Improvement (2023-2024)



STUDENTS IN THE PROJECT ON-TRACK PROGRAM HAVE DEMONSTRATED TREMENDOUS **GROWTH!** WE ARE THANKFUL FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE OUR STUDENTS WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT TO ACCELERATE THEIR LEARNING, CLOSE LEARNING GAPS, AND INCREASE PROFICIENCY.

Richard VanHuss  
Director of Schools  
Elizabethton City Schools



During the 2023-2024 school year, students in grades 3-8 who participated in Project On-Track's standard-based tutoring averaged six percentage points higher on their EOY than their BOY benchmark assessments.



Project On-Track served 3,777 students in grades 1-8 after receiving an additional \$3.7 million in funding from the State of Tennessee.

# STEM Learning Design



## A Reflection from the Director



**STEM.LD**

NISWONGER FOUNDATION

For the past four years, **STEM Learning Design (STEM.LD)** has served students

and teachers in grades 6-12 by providing professional learning to teachers and out-of-school-time activities and advanced coursework to students. To date, 56 schools in 16 school systems have participated in the \$8.8 million research grant, impacting more than 21,300 students.

Teachers have participated in learning opportunities such as curriculum implementation, 3D printing, and robotics while students have attended robotics competitions, STEM camps, and cyber challenges. New advanced courses have been launched including online courses from ETSU and Walters State Community College; online cybersecurity courses through Niswonger Online; and BioSTEM I-IV, a new CTE pathway focused on biotechnology that is now available in several high schools in Northeast Tennessee.

Finally, STEM.LD has developed a new tool that connects students and teachers to STEM opportunities in their region. STEM FLEX will launch in early 2025, providing a one-stop shop where students can find activities, classes, or competitions of interest and register to attend.

Dr. Vicki Kirk  
Director  
STEM.LD



## Program Milestones

### ONBOARDING TRAINING

Since 2020, nearly 732 educators have completed STEM.LD training.

**610**

**TEACHERS  
TRAINED**

**122**

**LEADERS  
TRAINED**

**21,347**

**STUDENTS  
SERVED**

### CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

STEM.LD trained 85 educators in OpenSciEd, an open source curriculum, and provided each one with materials for classroom implementation.

### ADVANCED COURSEWORK

Grant partners created curriculum for 10 STEM courses, including a BioSTEM pathway for high school students and several college-level courses.

### SUMMER INSTITUTE

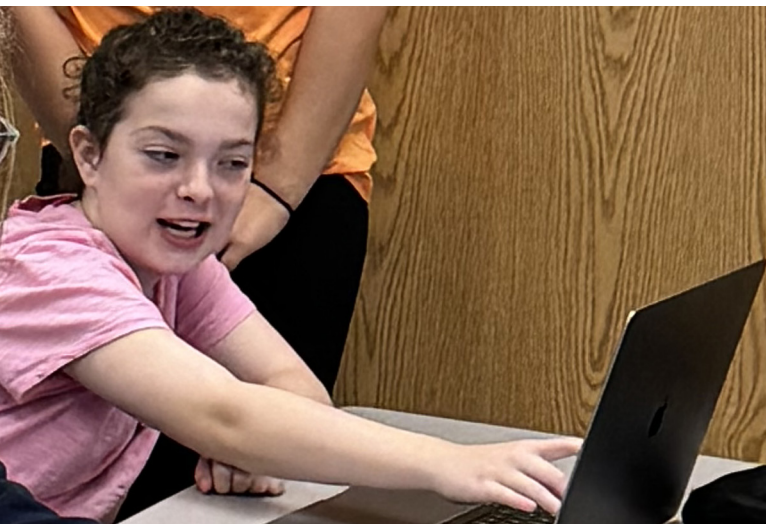
The STEM.LD Summer Institute was offered in 2023 and 2024 for teachers in Northeast Tennessee with over 100 educators in attendance each time.

### STEM FLEX

STEM FLEX is a website that connects rural students and teachers to in-person and virtual STEM opportunities. To engage your passion for STEM, visit [stemflex.org](https://stemflex.org).







## BioSTEM: an Emerging Field

Through a partnership with BioBuilder and the participation of three school districts in Northeast Tennessee, STEM.LD has created a biotechnology curriculum for the state's BioSTEM CTE pathway. Students who pursue this pathway take four courses and are eligible for a valuable industry certification. This cutting-edge programming prepares students for a variety of careers, from agricultural research to biotechnical manufacturing.

Teachers collaborated with leadership from STEM.LD partners to write the curriculum and participated in a four-day training during the summer of 2024. Response to the training was overwhelmingly positive. Teachers with decades of experience said it was one of the better in-service trainings they had ever attended. One teacher said, "I would hope anybody teaching this program would have access to the same kind of content-rich PD that we got to have this week."

Five regional high schools are offering BioSTEM I in their 2024-25 schedule with over 500 students enrolled. Observations of classrooms during the first semester of the 2024-25 school year show students

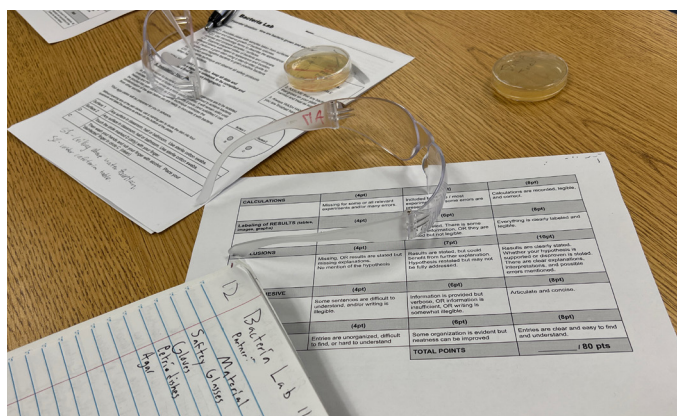
have a high level of engagement with and enthusiasm for the content. In the second course in the sequence, students will be introduced to BioSTEM II content embedded within the Biology I class. Beyond that, students may elect to participate in BioSTEM III and IV where they will have opportunities for research, work-based learning, and industry certification.



Teachers from Greeneville City Schools attend BioSTEM training in Summer 2024.



BIOSTEM HAS BEEN SUCH A **GAME CHANGER** FOR OUR STUDENTS. WE HAVE SEEN INCREASED STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN SCIENCE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORE CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS.



Student notes, goggles, and bacteria samples used during a BioSTEM I lab session.

Cynthia Propst  
Teacher, Biology/AP Biology  
Greeneville High School





# Niswonger Scholarship and Leadership Program

## ***The Closing of an Era: Providing an Exemplar for the Power of Opportunity***

The **Niswonger Scholarship and Leadership Program** is a prestigious initiative designed to support and encourage the development of future leaders for Northeast Tennessee. Since being established in 2002 by philanthropist Scott M. Niswonger, this scholarship and leadership program has been completed by 101 exceptional high school seniors who demonstrated academic excellence, leadership potential, dedication to serving the community, and a strong commitment to return to live in, work in, and serve our region.

All recipients received financial assistance for college, along with access to valuable mentorship and professional development opportunities. The program lived up to its potential to empower Scholars to achieve their academic and career goals, fostering a culture of leadership and service, while instilling a commitment to Northeast Tennessee.



*2002 Inaugural Class (pictured left to right): Jessica Epley Burchette, Elizabeth Batson Tetrick, Scott M. Niswonger, Nick Darnell, and Morgan Hammer Krapf.*

Beyond financial support, this program placed a strong emphasis on leadership development. Scholars participated in various workshops, networking events, and service projects that enhanced their skills and broadened their perspectives. Strong mentorship provided guidance throughout their college journey and beyond. By equipping

students with the necessary tools to excel in their fields, the program ensured that Scholars emerged as capable and responsible leaders ready to make a positive impact.



*2024 Capstone Class (pictured left to right): Trent Dickerson, Samuel Hensley, Macy Noe, Mabel Olson Morris, Gustavo Castillo, and Derek Driskill.*

A unique aspect of the program remains its focus on the **Learn-Earn-Return** philosophy of the Niswonger Foundation. Most of the graduates of the program have, or will, return to the region as professionals, educators, and entrepreneurs, driving innovation and progress in our communities. Those choosing not to return will repay the financial investment the Foundation has made in them. Those funds will be reinvested in serving our mission “to create opportunities for individual and community growth through education and other sustainable projects.” The Foundation proudly continues to support the Niswonger Scholars Alumni, the next generations of leaders who are committed to excellence and service.

THE 101 NISWONGER SCHOLAR ALUMNI ARE SHINING EXAMPLES OF OUR CONTINUING COMMITMENT TO **“IMAGINE - THE POWER OF OPPORTUNITY.”**

The “sun-setting” of the Niswonger Scholars program is the closing of an era with grand vision for the future. The impact of our Scholars will be felt for generations to come!



**With Appreciation to Contributors  
to the Niswonger Foundation**  
*July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024*

Amsee, LTD  
 Andrew Johnson Women’s Club  
 Ballad Health  
 The Brotherton Foundation  
 Sherry Cockerham  
 Elliot (EJ) and Leslie Creutzinger  
 Patrick and Susan Creutzinger  
 Edward Arellano and Sarah Creutzinger  
 Holly Czoka  
 Dennis and Donna Depew  
 Harold and Nancy Dishner  
 James F. Durham  
 David Hatley  
 Daniel Johnson  
 Chris Marsh/Marsh Petroleum  
 Gary Nave  
 Scott and Nikki Niswonger  
 Nor-Well Company, Inc.  
 Ricky and Robin Shepherd  
 Summers-Taylor  
 Oliver Smith Thomas  
 Ramona Williams  
 Michael and Rita Wooten

**Grant Partners**

Ballad Health  
 Brotherton Family Foundation  
 Care Foundation of America  
 New Teacher Center  
 Northeast Tennessee Consortium of School Districts  
 State of Tennessee, Office of the Governor  
 REL Appalachia (SRI International)  
 Tennessee Department of Education  
 Tennessee State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE)  
 United States Department of Education



**An Operating Foundation**

The Niswonger Foundation was founded by businessman and philanthropist Scott M. Niswonger. Unlike most private foundations, the Niswonger Foundation was established as an operating foundation with its own programs and projects. The Foundation is also approved as a charitable organization.

**Statement of Financial Position**  
*June 30, 2024*

<b>Assets</b>	
Cash	6,709,766
Restricted Cash	44,870
Grants Receivable	1,707,294
Investments	10,669,538
Other Assets	600
Student Loans Receivable	252,327
Collections	101,861
Property, Equipment, Net of Accumulated Depreciation	5,653,983
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>25,140,239</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>	
Accounts Payable and Other Accrued Liabilities	542,638
Deferred Revenue	82,961
Lines of Credit	763,394
United States Department of Agriculture Loan	540,904
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>1,929,897</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	
Net Assets Without Donor Restriction	20,310,342
Net Assets With Donor Restriction	2,900,000
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>23,210,342</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>25,140,239</b>

THE NISWONGER FOUNDATION  
 DISTRIBUTED **\$11,691,903** TO  
 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND  
 SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS IN THE  
 FISCAL YEAR OF 2024.



NISWONGER



FOUNDATION

*LEARN-EARN-RETURN* <sup>SM</sup>

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