

Niswonger Foundation

Northeast Tennessee College and Career Ready Consortium

DID THE NORTHEAST TENNESSEE COLLEGE AND CAREER READY CONSORTIUM IMPROVE STUDENT COLLEGE READINESS, ACCESS, AND SUCCESS?

Project Overview

THE INTERVENTION

THE PROBLEM: What Challenge Did the Program Try to Address?

In rural northeastern Tennessee, people are less likely to graduate from high school or attend college compared to the national average.

- Only 61% of people in northeastern Tennessee graduate from high school.
- Only 9% of people in northeastern Tennessee attend college.

THE PROJECT: What Strategies Did the Program Employ?

To help increase students' college and career readiness, The Niswonger Foundation used its i3 validation¹ grant to create the Northeast Tennessee College and Career Ready Consortium to provide students with greater access to, participation in, and completion of advanced courses. The Consortium is a network comprised of 29 high schools in 15 neighboring, rural districts, along with five local colleges. By scaling up local promising practices, the Consortium uses distance and online learning, in addition to college partnerships to increase offerings of Advanced Placement (AP), dual enrollment, and other advanced high school courses, with a specific emphasis on mathematics, science, foreign languages, and career and technical education. The grant also was used to create a regional coordinating body to analyze course supply and demand in the region and determine course needs; offer professional development for teachers in an effort to improve the rigor of courses; and provide college and career counseling to encourage college access and help students with the college

¹The Niswonger Foundation received an i3 validation grant supported by the U.S. Department of Education's Investing in Innovation program through Grant Number U396B100336 in 2010. Validation grants provide funding to support the expansion of projects that address persistent education challenges at the regional or national level. All i3 grantees are required to conduct rigorous evaluations of their projects. The quality of evidence required to demonstrate a project's effectiveness depends on a project's level of scale or grant type.

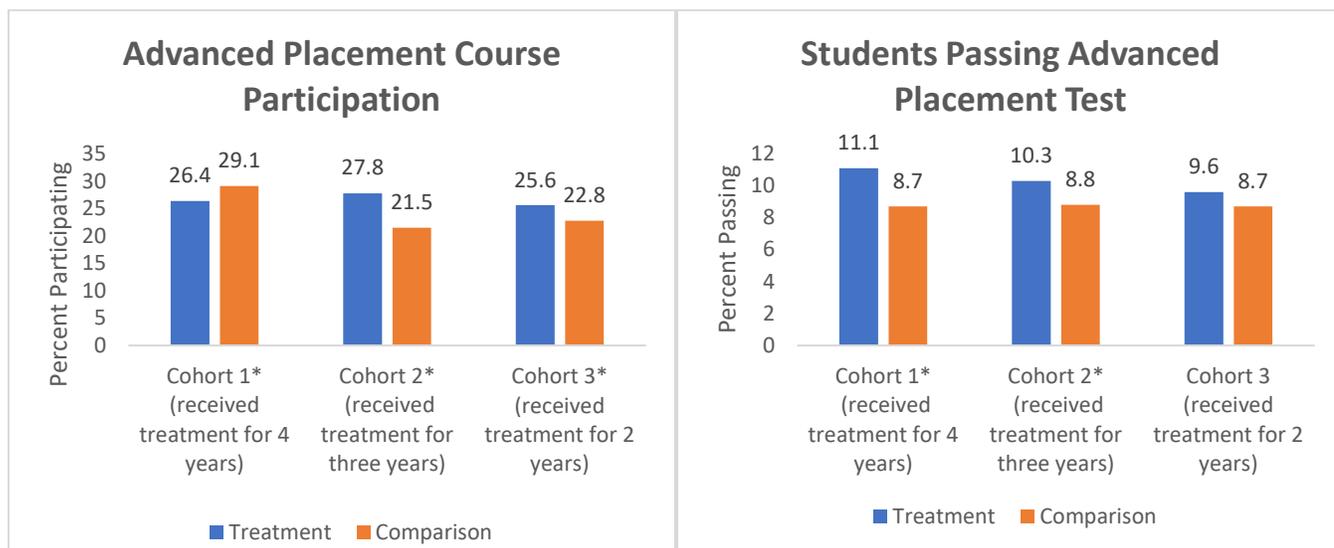
application process. A quasi-experimental design using propensity score matching was used to evaluate the program.

THE NORTHEAST TENNESSEE COLLEGE AND CAREER READY CONSORTIUM MODEL

- **College-Going Culture.** College and Career Counselors work closely with high school counselors to implement college and career guidance services including: ACT test preparation, online course taking, college application completion, and Free Application for Federal Student Aid completion.
- **High Quality Instruction.** The Consortium provides professional learning, both in-person and online, to teachers in many subjects and areas specific to college and career readiness, including: Advanced Placement; dual enrollment; distance learning; career and technical education; and science, engineering, and mathematics. For example, AP teachers are encouraged to attend College Board trainings
- **Distance and Online Technology.** To ensure access to college preparatory courses, the Consortium coordinates online advanced courses for students who would otherwise not have access to these courses. The Consortium recruits, hires, and monitors online teachers. In addition, the Consortium offers online ACT Prep courses for students.
- **College-Level Courses.** Students receive more options for college preparatory courses through an increased offering of AP courses, as well as dual enrollment courses. The Consortium works with partner colleges to develop arrangements for dual enrollment courses.

Summary of Results

DID THE NORTHEAST TENNESSEE COLLEGE AND CAREER READY CONSORTIUM IMPROVE COLLEGE READINESS, ACCESS, AND SUCCESS?



*Results statistically significant

STUDENTS ATTENDING CONSORTIUM SCHOOLS ACHIEVED HIGHER ACT SCORES, PARTICIPATED MORE OFTEN IN AP COURSES AND SCORED HIGHER ON AP EXAMS, AND ENROLLED AND PERSISTED IN COLLEGE AT GREATER RATES compared to students in the matched comparison schools. More specifically, the Consortium made a positive impact in the following areas:

- ACT SCORES.** The Consortium’s Cohort 2 students, those participating in the program for three years, scored higher on the ACT compared to the comparison school students. This result was statistically significant.
- ADVANCED PLACEMENT COURSES.** All Consortium cohorts participated in AP courses at higher rates than comparison school students. In addition, cohorts 1 and 2 were more likely to score a 3 or higher on the AP exam compared to students not attending Consortium schools.
- COLLEGE ENROLLMENT.** All Consortium cohorts enrolled in college at higher rates than students at comparison schools. Some cohorts’ higher enrollment was statistically significant.² To be considered college enrolled, students were enrolled the fall semester after the end of 12th grade.
- COLLEGE PERSISTENCE.** Consortium students were more likely to stay in college compared to students at comparison schools. Specifically, Consortium students were more likely to persist for two consecutive fall semesters after the end of 12th grade – a statistically significant result.

² Note that the finding was not statistically significant for each cohort. Please see the [final report](#) for more detailed information.

Please see Appendices B and C for information about the evaluation's design and the quality of the evidence, respectively.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The Consortium's effectiveness is largely a result of Consortium leadership, resources and services to provide program infrastructure, and collaboration with school district partners.

- **CONSORTIUM LEADERSHIP.** The effective leadership resulted from: regularly convened Advisory Boards with stakeholders, frequent dissemination of information to staff, ongoing communication with school districts, and frequent professional learning participation by staff.
- **PROGRAM INFRASTRUCTURE.** To enable Consortium district partners to incorporate distance and online learning courses for students and professional learning for staff, the Consortium took responsibility for managing and maintaining the online technology. This served a critical role for district partners.
- **COLLABORATION.** Districts collaborated frequently with one another to share best and promising practices. This allowed districts to refine their AP curriculum, online courses, and distance learning.

For More Information

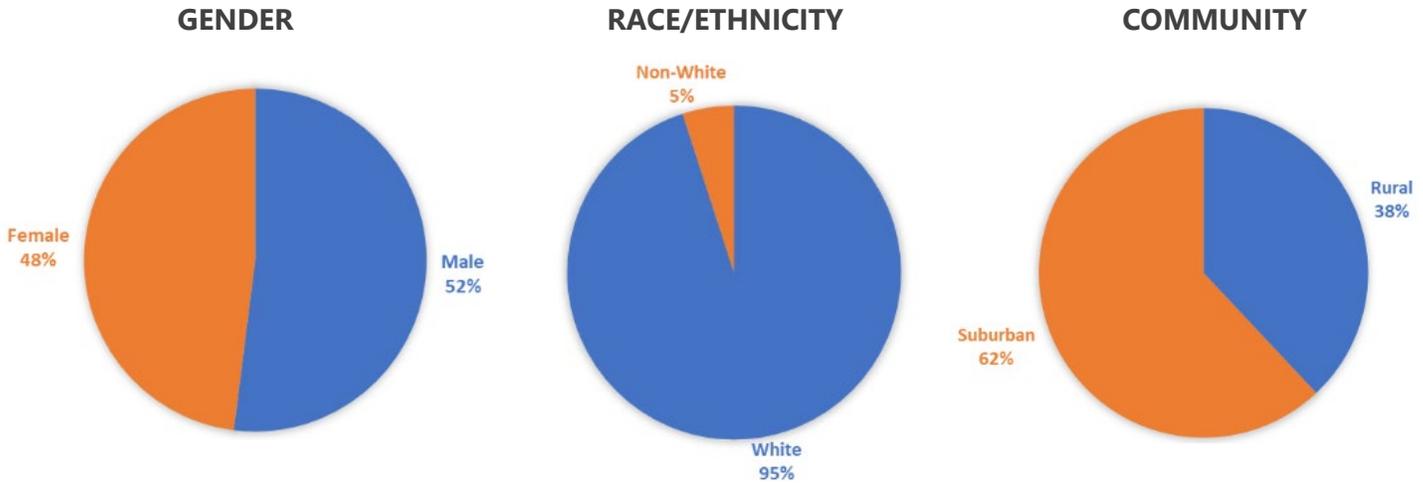
Evaluation Reports

[Final Findings from Impact and Implementation Analyses of the Northeast Tennessee College and Career Ready Consortium](#) (CNA Analysis & Solutions, 2016)³

³ The information and data for this result summary was collected from the most recent reports as of 02/10/2020: CNA (September 2016). *Final Findings from Impact and Implementation Analyses of the Northeast Tennessee College and Career Ready Consortium*. Retrieved from https://www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/Final%20Findings%20from%20Impact%20and%20Implementation%20Analyses%20of%20the%20Northeast.pdf

Appendix A: Students Served by the Project⁴

GRADE(S)													
PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12



HIGH-NEED STUDENTS

Free/Reduced-Price Lunch	English Learner	Students with Disabilities
55%	1%	7%

⁴ Figures below are for consortium school students, i.e. those served by the project.

Appendix B: Impact Evaluation Methodology⁵

RESEARCH DESIGN:

Design:	Quasi-experimental design (QED)
Approach:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The QED used propensity score matching to create a comparison group. ▪ The report presents evidence of baseline equivalence between the intervention and comparison groups of students.
Study Length:	Five years

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Study Setting:	Twenty-nine high schools and five colleges in northeastern Tennessee
Final Sample Sizes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Intervention Group:</i> 29 Schools ▪ <i>Comparison Group:</i> 29 Schools
Intervention Group Characteristics: ⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Free/Reduced Priced Lunch: 55% ▪ Individualized Education Program: 7% ▪ Male: 52% ▪ Minority: 5% ▪ Limited English Proficiency: 1%
Comparison Group Characteristics:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Free/Reduced Priced Lunch: 54% ▪ Individualized Education Program: 7% ▪ Male: 52% ▪ Minority 5% ▪ Limited English Proficiency: 1%
Data Sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student assessments ▪ Student high school transcript records ▪ Student college enrollment records
Key Measures:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ACT scores ▪ Advanced Placement participation and scores ▪ College attendance and persistence

⁵ These data reflect only the evaluation sample in the impact study, not the entire population served.

⁶ Page 63 of final evaluation report, Table 8.

Appendix C: Quality of the Evidence

WHAT WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW⁷

STUDY	RATING
The Investing in Innovation Fund: Summary of 67 Evaluations, Abt Associates, June 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Evidence of at least one positive, statistically significant impact on student outcomes

EVIDENCE FOR ESSA REVIEW⁸

STUDY	RATING
Not reviewed as of 02/10/2020	N/A

NATIONAL CENTER ON INTENSIVE INTERVENTIONS REVIEW⁹

STUDY	RATING
Not reviewed as of 02/10/2020	N/A

⁷ <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/FWW>

⁸ <https://www.evidenceforessa.org/>

⁹ <https://intensiveintervention.org/>

Investing in Innovation (i3) Grantee Results Summary

Validation, 2010-2015

The [Investing in Innovation Fund \(i3\)](#), established under section 14007 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, is a Federal discretionary grant program at the U.S. Department of Education within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE). i3 grants help schools and local education agencies work in partnership with the private sector and the philanthropic community to develop and expand innovative practices that improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, and/or increase college enrollment and completion rates for high-need students.

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