

## Abstract

### Niswonger Foundation Educational Innovation and Research Proposal

**Project Title:** Rural LIFE: Literacy Initiative Focused on Effectiveness

The Niswonger Foundation (NF) submits this proposal to the U.S. Department of Education for a mid-phase grant. This proposal addresses *Absolute Priority 1—Supporting High Needs Students*, and *Absolute Priority 5—Evidence-Driven Practices*. We are applying as a rural applicant.

NF proposes to validate the use of personalized learning strategies focused on literacy in a group of schools and local education agencies (LEAs) in a rural region of Northeast Tennessee to improve academic achievement for students in grades 6-8. 18 school districts in Northeast Tennessee have committed to participate in the project. A majority of the schools in these districts are designated rural and 85% are Title I school wide. Approximately 19,700 students will be served by Rural LIFE-participating schools.

NF's proposed Rural LIFE project will build on the success of its previous i3 validation grant and improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement in grades 6-8 by: (1) adopting personalized learning strategies that meet the needs of all students; (2) providing teachers with support for personalized learning strategies focused on literacy; (3) establishing a shared services network (SSN) that supports continuous improvement and leverages economies of scale to support schools; and (4) providing teachers with formative assessment and data tools that they can use to improve their instruction and monitor student progress. Key Partners also include Insight Policy Research and the Friday Institute.