



Director's Message

For those of us in education, summer is a time of closing out the school year, engaging in summer activities, and beginning to think about the upcoming fall. It's a chance to take a deep breath, reflect, and plan. This year we've been engaged in the year-long Periodic Comprehensive Review (PCR) that all departments at App State go through every seven years. In a sense, then, the PCR is the summer process for CAP, just more in-depth this year.

This newsletter illuminates some of the stories laid out by data in the PCR. CAP and YES students are traveling on bus tours of colleges across the state and to DC. Yolanda is off and running with the Semillas Program which helps families learn about the American education system and the L.E.A.D. Student Coalition, while the Upward Bound team has finished its new student orientation. Students in our newest grant, On Ramp, participated in Career Connection Breakfasts to learn about possible careers in their communities from local professionals. The micro-credentials-completed numbers are piling up for ETL and GREAT STEM, and the results show in student-centered, outdoor focused learning projects and teachers being recognized for their innovative work. Finally, the GEAR UP team just hosted the Academic Innovation Conference. There were many great stories that we'll highlight in our next newsletter.

Learn more about our amazing team members. See the Employee Spotlights on Jessica, a veteran of Upward Bound (and a finalist for 4 Under 40!), and Nathan, new to College Advising Corps, both so bright and so well read! And, you really must spend some time with the advisers' perspectives. Their stories are revealing, compelling, and heroic, all at the same time. They are the successes we hope to help facilitate in our work.

I'm finding both the PCR process and the stories in this newsletter to be a glorious reflection of our values: systemic mindset, innovative thinking, self-authenticity, community of learners, and chasing joy.

- Jim Beeler,

Executive Director- College Access Partnerships

Newsletter Highlights

Welcome

- Director's Message
- Employee Spotlights

GEAR UP

- Summer Bus Tours
- L.E.A.D. Coalition
- Semillas in Watauga County

ETL

- ETL Update
- Educator Shoutouts
- GREAT STEM Update

Upward Bound

- 4 Under 40 Awards
- Orientation

On Ramp

- Announcing Partners
- Workforce Breakfasts

CAC

- 2023-24 KPI Results
- Welcome, New Advisers
- Latest Adviser Perspectives

YES

- Annual Middle School Trip
- Scholar Spotlight



Employee Spotlights

Let's get to know one of our Upward Bound Academic Coordinators, Jessica Dale!

1. How long have you worked with CAP?

Almost 5 years!

2. What's your favorite book/movie/album/song? Pick one and explain why.

Right now I can't stop listening to *TTPD* by Taylor Swift. IYKYK. A masterpiece of songwriting. 10/10.

3. What would your perfect/ideal day look like?

I would sleep in and then spend the day on the lake with my family. The sun is shining, and it's 77 degrees.

4. What fictional place would you like to visit?

Hogwarts, obviously.

5. What's something you'd like to do that you've never done?

I would like to go sailing on a sailboat.

6. Is there any additional info you'd like us to include?

I have read 54 books this year!



Let's get to know our College Advising Corps Assistant Program Director Nathan Kosmicki!

1. How long have you worked with CAP?

I have been working with CAP since November 2023, a little over six months at this point.

2. What's your favorite book/movie/album/song? Pick one and explain why.

At the moment my favorite book is probably *Bluebeard* by Kurt Vonnegut. At the heart of the book, it's a story about living for yourself and putting in the effort to enjoy things along the way. There are also themes of growth following tragedy all within the context of a comedic Vonnegut storyline. He is one of my favorite American authors.

3. What would your perfect/ideal day look like?

A perfect day for me would start late but not too late. Coffee on the patio before the sun begins to beat down. Following coffee, a brief breakfast with a nice walk amongst some cool trees would take us all the way to lunch. Lunch could be anywhere as long as there are friends and joy. The afternoon would really bleed into the evening with dinner happening at some point. Ending the night with my cats, my dog, and my fiancee.

4. What's something you'd like to do that you've never done?

I have never traveled to South America. I've been practicing Spanish for years and would love the chance to explore the South American continent. Che Guevara traveled through Argentina, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia on a motorcycle in the 1950s. That would be a pretty amazing journey to recreate.

5. Is there any additional info you'd like us to include?

I am a student of history and love connecting people with the places and things around them. Let's chat sometime.





Summer Bus Tours Underway

GEAR UP summer bus tours have begun! Throughout June and July, students will be visiting colleges and universities across North Carolina. Here are some photos from where they have visited so far:



GEAR UP students embark on summer bus tours across the state.

L.E.A.D. Coalition

We are thrilled to announce the launch of the GEAR UP L.E.A.D. Student Coalition Program! This program is a transformative journey designed to cultivate the next generation of student leaders. Through a unique blend of experiences and opportunities, we empower students to positively impact their communities, families, and beyond.

GEAR UP plans to welcome the first cohort in the Fall of 2024, and the group will include approximately 36-40 students representing all districts. The nomination process is currently underway, and applications will be accepted and reviewed in September. The GEAR UP L.E.A.D Student Coalition Program is a commitment to building a brighter, more compassionate future. We can't wait to help create a ripple effect of positive change together.

Semillas in Watauga County

The final session of the Semillas Program at Watauga County Schools took place on April 20th, 2024. The last session was a heartwarming culmination of learning and empowerment. As each family gathered, there was a tangible sense of pride and accomplishment in the air.

With certificates of attendance in hand, they symbolized not just the completion of a program, but the beginning of a new chapter in their journey as advocates for their children's education. Armed with a deeper understanding of the intricacies of the US educational system, these families are now better equipped to navigate and support their children's academic paths. It was a moment of celebration, unity, and hope, marking the start of a continued partnership between families and their schools in fostering student success.



The first Semillas Program in Watauga County wrapped this spring. We're excited to announce that Semillas will be expanding to additional districts in Alleghany, Ashe and Burke County Schools in the 2024-2025 school year.

GEAR UP COLLEGE ROAD TRIP





ETL Update

The Empowering Teacher Learning (ETL) program and Gaining Retention and Effectiveness through Advancing Teacher-directed STEM Professional Learning (GREAT STEM) programs concluded their school years with many accomplishments to celebrate! All of these great accomplishments are made known to us because of the relationships built by our amazing navigators. Their dedication to their teachers can be seen in everything they do. It is our hope that you can sense the pride that we have for our teacher participants as we highlight their wonderful accomplishments this school year!

★ ETL participating teachers earned 277 micro-credentials this past school year. Educators selected a variety of micro-credential topics to pursue, including "Self-Regulation," "Neuroplasticity: Educators as Brain-changers," and "Understanding Types of Data," just to name a few. Teachers reported that their chosen micro-credentials taught them something new and that it aligned with the goals they had selected at the start of the year.

★ In the southwest corner of North Carolina, teachers from Cherokee, Macon, and Polk counties have been utilizing micro-credentials to engage their students in exceptional learning. In Polk County, teachers collaborated on a community project where students designed different models of outdoor classrooms. Using cross-curricular skills, students built their outdoor classroom models and presented them to the community. Community members then voted on a winner to be built with a donation from local businesses!

★ Shannon Hopper and Jeanne Ferran, teachers at Polk County Middle, were able to earn the micro-credentials "Design Real-World Learning Experiences" and "Creating Real-World Projects" (respectively) based on this project.

★ Adam Lowe from North Wilkes Middle School authored two winning grants, totaling \$10,000! Both are from the North Carolina Trailblazers Outdoor Club Program. One grant will fund a Trout Fishing Club that connects stream science and ecology to the joy of fishing.

The grant will provide fly rods and fishing supplies so any interested student can participate in the club. The other grant will provide the materials to construct a 1-mile nature trail on the school property.

★ Two Watauga County ETL participants received achievement awards: Hope Mough, Teacher of the Year at Bethel School, and Scott Carter, Watauga County Schools Principal of the Year from Cove Creek School. Mrs. Mough and Mr. Carter were joined by Chelsie Eldreth (CTE Teacher at Bethel and Valle Crucis Schools) and Valle Crucis School Principal Dr. Bonnie Smith as featured guests on the Wakin' Up In The High Country with Mark Norris radio show. As part of an amazing year, Hope Mough and Erin Thompson of Valle Crucis School were awarded Blue Ridge Energy Bright Ideas Grants. Erin used her grant to provide non-permanent vertical surfaces (NPVS) around the classroom to facilitate group discussion which she then used to complete the micro-credential "Designing Physical Environments with Purpose".

★ Also in Watauga County, graduating seniors returned to their elementary and middle schools dressed in graduation robes for "one last walk" before graduation. Sandra Ruppert, counselor at Green Valley School, coordinated a time capsule activity while her students were in the 8th grade. Part of their last walk included opening the time capsules to reveal a host of memories and advice from their 8th grade selves. Band and orchestra instructor at Cove Creek School, Lindsay Scarborough, was recognized for Watauga County Arts in Our Schools. She led the Watauga High School musical production of *The Music Man*, initiated the first annual 6th grade Beginning Band Camp in Watauga County to take place this summer, and is involved in leading several local community music events during the summer break. Valle Crucis School science teacher Dave Shack led his students into the river to perform water quality investigations using bioindicators.

★ Teachers participating in ETL are making an impact far beyond the four walls of their classrooms, and we are thrilled that they are being recognized for their efforts and accomplishments!



Educator Shoutouts

We are proud to highlight multiple ETL participants and their schools Teacher of the Year award recipients!

Tyler Robbins, Elkin City Schools

Hayley Trivette, Central Wilkes Middle School

Tyler Robbins and Marcus Wilmoth, both at Elkin Middle, have been selected for the North Carolina Principal Fellows Program. This program provides a pathway for 12 state school districts and the Northwest Regional Educational Service Alliance to train and support future principals through the Reich College of Education's Master of School Administration program at Appalachian State. Way to represent Yo-selfs and the Elkin Bucks, Tyler and Marcus!

GREAT STEM Update

As the academic year draws to a close, high school educators in Western NC who participated in the GREAT STEM program reflect on a year filled with notable accomplishments and professional development. Throughout the program, teachers embraced new instructional methods and collaborative projects that enhanced their approach to STEM education. By implementing innovative teaching techniques, educators were able to offer students a more engaging and relevant learning experience, resulting in increased student interest and academic performance.

Key practices adopted by GREAT STEM teachers included the use of exit tickets, think-pair-share activities, and the integration of global education concepts into their lessons. Through self-directed learning, teachers were able to design and deliver more challenging and stimulating lessons.

One teacher reflected that their participation in the program *"helped me look into options and research that were specific to the students I have and the topic I teach."* The program's focus on continuous improvement and peer collaboration fostered a supportive community of educators dedicated to excellence in STEM education, paving the way for future professional growth. As they prepare for the upcoming school year, these educators bring with them fresh perspectives and renewed enthusiasm gained from their participation in GREAT STEM, ready to inspire and captivate their students in innovative ways.



Upward Bound's Jessica Dale Finalist for 4 Under 40 Awards

College Access Partnership's staff member Jessica Dale was recognized as a finalist for the 8th annual Boone Area Chamber of Commerce 4 Under 40 Awards. She is honored in the Education Professional category. Jessica has been an Academic Coordinator with Upward Bound since 2020.

Reflecting on the nomination, she says, *"I feel honored to be nominated for this award. Upward Bound is an amazing program doing awesome work for youth in the High Country, and I am lucky to be a part of such a great team."*

For more info, you can read [this article](#) from the Watauga Democrat.



UB Academic coordinator, Jessica Dale attends the 4 Under 40 Awards as nominee in the Education Professional category

Upward Bound Orientation

Each Spring, newly accepted Upward Bound scholars and their families join current UB students at the annual Upward Bound Orientation. Graduating seniors are recognized, and grade-specific information is shared with the students. This year, Appalachian College Advising Corps advisers also led academic planning sessions and collaborated with the Upward Bound team to provide college access resources to those in attendance.

Read more about the experience in this recent [News post](#).



Workforce Connection Breakfasts

As On Ramp Appalachia kicked off earlier this year, several events called Workforce Connection Breakfasts began to take place. These events bring students face-to-face with a variety of professionals so they can learn more about possible careers in their own communities. Students have the opportunity to have open conversations over a morning meal and to learn more about careers and pathways available to them in their own hometowns.

As a partnership between multiple entities, Workforce Connection Breakfasts are designed and implemented by a group consisting of community college professionals, school district personnel, and workforce partners with support from the On Ramp team at Appalachian State University.

The goal of On Ramp is to identify students with little or no career or college aspirations and plans after high school and increase the number of these students that enroll and complete pathways at their local community colleges. The grant is structured to provide varying support to students at different times during their academic careers.

At a recent workforce breakfast in Ashe County, a student stated: "I literally do not think about career or next steps at all until somebody mentions a career fair and then, it's just walking around. This event actually lets me talk to people and see what is there in my community"



Students engage with local professionals during an On Ramp Workforce Connection Breakfast in Ashe County.

Announcing Partners

On Ramp Appalachia, CAP's newest grant program, launched this year and continues to gain momentum. The \$2.2 million Rural Postsecondary Economic Development (RPED) grant serves approximately 2,000 rural students in **Ashe**, **Burke**, **Swain**, and **Madison** school districts. Four community college partners in these corresponding counties include **Southwestern Community College**, **Wilkes Community College**, **Western Piedmont Community College**, and **Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College**. Learn more about the program [here](#).



NC Education Policy Fellowship Program (EPFP) April Graduation

Representing CAP this year at the NC Education Policy Fellowship Program (EPFP) were Gloria Medina, Rachel Nave-Lewis, Doug Thompson, and Holly Weaver. Corinne Smith serves as Coordinator of EPFP West Cohort. Read more about EPFP on [our website](#).



Pictured (L-R): Rachel Nave-Lewis, Doug Thompson, Corinne Smith, Holly Weaver.



2023-24 School Year KPI Results

We are excited to announce that our advisers...

- ★ Engaged with 48% of families in our service area (1,832 parents/guardians)
- ★ Met one-on-one with 83% of seniors in our service area to discuss plans for life after high school (3,352 seniors)
- ★ Recorded that 62% of seniors (2,433) submitted at least one college application, and 22% of seniors (832) submitted at least three college applications
- ★ Assisted 48% of seniors (1,744) with the FAFSA
- ★ Recorded 45% of seniors (1,663) submitted the FAFSA

Welcome, New Advisers

So far, we have 8 new advisers who will be joining our team for the 2024-25 school year:

- ★ Courtney Gragg, Watauga High School (Boone, NC)
- ★ Lila Newman, Brevard High School (Brevard, NC)
- ★ Joey Vadeboncoeur, Wilkes Central High School (Wilkesboro, NC)
- ★ Paige Georgeou, Mitchell High School (Bakersville, NC)
- ★ Isabella Mowery, McDowell High School (Marion, NC)
- ★ Jaden Shorette, Andrews and Hiwassee Dam High Schools (Andrews and Murphy, NC)
- ★ Noelle Blackwell, Erwin High School (Asheville, NC)

Latest Adviser Perspectives



"I don't know..."

I stayed pretty consistent with my answer whenever I was asked what I wanted to do with my life, "I don't know" with an uneasy laugh. I'd stayed on a pretty structured path for my entire life, until I didn't. I graduated High School with every academic honor possible, continued on to a 4-year university, but once I got there, the "I don't knows" started.....

[READ MORE](#)



Because We Have a Purpose

Growing up in a multicultural household provided me with a unique perspective, seamlessly transitioning between two worlds until my introduction to elementary school. It was then that I realized the societal tendency to categorize individuals as "different." My initial placement in ESL classes led my mother to advocate for my education, emphasizing my ability to comprehend both English and Spanish.....

[READ MORE](#)



What The CAC Has Done For Me: What the CAC Has Allowed Me to Be

For a moment I would like to tell you a story about a girl's journey from self-doubt to unshakeable confidence and how it is a testament to the transformative power of determination, resilience, and the willingness to embrace challenges head-on. As the girl embarked on her professional career, little did she know.....

[READ MORE](#)



Started from the bottom, now I'm here!

What if I told you that I was born into an abusive family? You probably would have never guessed that about me. Life was rough in the beginning, then around the age of 16, I went to live with family friends who soon became like parents to me. They were the first ones to show me what the word "family" truly means. They encouraged me to follow my dreams of pursuing higher education....

[READ MORE](#)



Annual Middle School Trip

For three days and two nights, YES rising 7th and 8th graders hit the road to visit schools and have some fun. The range of schools included Lenoir-Rhyne, the Morganton campus of the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics (NCSSM), and Episcopal High School, a private boarding school in Alexandria, Virginia. The volume level of the van went from silent and nervous to chatter and up to loud laughter and animated conversations! Scholars conquered the challenge of an escape room in Richmond, VA, rode the Metro in Washington DC, had a moment on the jumbotron at a Washington Nationals baseball game, and visited the National Museum of African American History and Culture to continue our discussion after 8th grade students read *The Hate U Give*.



YES scholars embark on their annual middle school trip and travel to DC, Virginia, and across North Carolina



YES scholars embark on their annual middle school trip along the East Coast

Scholar Spotlight

YES is proud of our first-year scholar at Wilkes Community College, Eli Greene, and his two teammates, Chance Mastin and Dusty Sigmon, for their 1st Place finish in the [Team Works](#) category at the SkillsUSA State Conference in April that was held in Raleigh, NC. Eli is earning a degree in Building Construction Technology at the Wilkes campus and is enjoying every minute while also working a construction job throughout the school year. The team is heading to the SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Competition in Atlanta, GA that runs from June 24-28, 2024!

Upcoming CAP Events

- ★ **Upward Bound Summer Academy**
June 9th - July 19th

- ★ **GEAR UP Summer Bus Tours**
June 24th - 28th & July 15th - 19th

- ★ **CAC Summer Training**
July 8th - 12th & July 15th - 19th

- ★ **NCCEP Conference**
July 22nd - 24th

- ★ **ETL Summer Convening**
July 25th - 26th

- ★ **National GEAR UP Week**
September 23rd - 27th