

HC*EXCELL History

During their plant dedication on April 20, 1990, Dr. Kojiro Yamoka, Chairman of the Tuff Torq Corporation, announced a \$50,000 gift to endow higher education scholarships which led to the founding of the Hamblen County Foundation for Educational Excellence and Achievement, (HC*EXCELL).



HC*EXCELL is a 501 (c) (3) independent education foundation with the **Mission** to promote educational excellence and achievement as a means of sustaining economic prosperity and improving the quality of life in Hamblen County.

From 1990 to 1995, the foundation was governed by a voluntary board which distributed scholarship funds and provided educator grants for Hamblen County teachers.

In 1996, the HC*EXCELL Board held a retreat that resulted in expanded board membership, updated governmental policies and development of a plan for the foundation's first capital campaign. Following these changes, HC*EXCELL broadened its program of work to include literacy and art education for both teachers and students.

In 1999, the foundation hired a part-time executive director to assist in implementing the first HC*EXCELL capital campaign, *A 21st Century Investment*. At this time, the Foundation established Teacher of the Year Awards, hosted a Knoxville Symphony Concert at WSCC Pavilion for over 4,500 regional 3rd-5th graders, and received the coveted Tennessee Historical Commission *Sequoyah Award* for their *Read 2000* initiative.

Between 2000 and 2004, HC*EXCELL continued to broaden literacy and arts programming, originated an education celebration banquet with a *Student Voices* presentation, convened the community to form a **Hamblen County P-16 Council** (the second P-16 Council formed in the state and the first local P-16 Council), launched a National Board Teacher Certification initiative, convened a partnership to host Hamblen County *Principal for a Day* project, created a collaboration to implement a *National Education Public Education Engagement Campaign* across ten counties and published the local campaign results in *Building A Knowledge Community*.

Additional activities during this time span included forming a partnership to host a multi-day Ruby Payne *AHA! Poverty Seminar*, providing *AHA!* educational materials, establishing the JTEKT Award to honor a business or individual who had gone above and beyond in supporting quality education and becoming the facilitator of the *Hamblen County Imagination Library* program. During this time, the HC*EXCELL Board also began work on "*Sustaining the Partnership*", the foundation's second capital campaign.



From 2005 to 2010, HC*EXCELL successfully assisted the Hamblen County School System in applying for and receiving city and county funds for the *International Center*, initiated collaboration meetings between local governments and the school board, partnered with the *Citizen Tribune* and HCBOE in publishing *A Journey Through our School Budget Process* and restructured the Foundation's public education grant program. In addition, worked with the Tuff Torq Corporation and HCBOE worked together to transition the Morristown Area Chamber of Commerce High School Leadership program into an in-school teen leadership curriculum course at Morristown Hamblen East and West High Schools. In 2006, HC*EXCELL sponsored an **Education Forum** to gather input on the impact of education on the community's workforce and quality of life, hosted a **Youth Summit** where students developed "**Big Eight Principles**", led *Give Kids Good Schools* campaign and developed and presented *You are a Stakeholder* video.

During 2007, the Foundation played a support role in sponsoring a **Regional P-16 Summit**, partnered with HC P-16 Council and HCBOE to support passage of the Education **Sales Tax Option Referendum** and co-sponsored “**Capturing Kids Hearts**” training for East and West High school principals, guidance counselors and Freshman Academy teachers.

In 2008, HC*EXCELL became a strategic partner and leader in the **Morristown Hamblen County Community Profile** project. The organization produced “*The Ripple Effect*” DVD, supervised a student conducted survey of 2,400 high school students on the “**Big Eight Principles**”, started the elementary **Junior Achievement Pilot**, co-hosted a **Regional Manufacturers’ Roundtable and Economic/Education Summit** to garner information on area workforce needs, partnered with the *Citizen Tribune* to publish a three part series on our Positive Youth Development project, conducted Hamblen County Imagination Library impact survey and hosted the first HC*EXCELL Wine Pairing.

In 2010 and 2011, the Foundation hosted free fundraising and grant writing seminars for non-profits and the school system, realigned Foundation work to support the Tennessee Diploma Project to improve student achievement, released the *Hamblen County Imagination Library report*, conducted an education engagement with West High students, co-produced the *Morristown Hamblen Community Profile*, participated in developing *Strategic Actions for Morristown Hamblen Community Profile* and convened education stakeholders to develop a tnAchieves partnership.

From 2012 to 2016, HC*EXCELL implemented a “*Cradle through Career*” campaign that focused on implementing initiatives on school readiness, elementary and middle school arts, workforce and leadership development and teacher appreciation; produced and circulated the *Hamblen County Diploma Project video*; led and partnered in the tnAchieves project to provide increased access and support for student post-secondary education; expanded the *JA BizTown initiative* and piloted an *Arts Build Skills* project.



During 2016, the Foundation celebrated 25 years as a *convener, collaborator, communicator, champion* and *challenger* of quality education in Hamblen County. President James Craine appointed a review committee to evaluate the Foundation’s work over the past quarter of a century. He directed the committee to use their assessment to develop a forward-thinking program of work coupled with a multiple-year funding strategy to present to the Board for discussion and implementation.



The result was HC*EXCELL’s five-year *SUCCESS* initiative. *SUCCESS* stands for *Strategically Utilizing Community Creativity Empowering Student Success*.

SUCCESS has five components of work:

- 🍎 **Ready by 6** endeavors to increase the number of children entering school prepared for success;
- 🍎 **Arts Build Skills** targets broadening student critical thinking and problem solving skills by increasing integration of the arts in the elementary and middle school curriculum;
- 🍎 **Workforce and Leadership Development** focuses on improving alignment of academic instruction workforce skills and access to hands on learning;
- 🍎 **Post-Secondary Readiness** strives for improved student post-secondary preparation and successful completion; and the
- 🍎 **Herbert S. Walters Fund** solicits and provides funds for teacher professional development, recognition and appreciation.