

# Story of Success

LOUISIANA BOLD GRANTEES



EVIDENCE

## The Context

**In 2017, with the support of a five-year, \$49 million federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant, NIET partnered with local education agencies across Louisiana to make significant and sustained improvements in high-need schools through what became known as the LA BOLD (Louisiana Building on Leadership Development) network.**

LA BOLD includes five school districts and four charter management operators – the parishes of DeSoto, East Feliciana, Madison, Orleans, Rapides and St. John the Baptist as well as New Orleans charters Eisenhower Academy, Landry-Walker High, McDonogh #32 Charter, Fischer Academy and Martin Behrman Academy – uniting a diverse group of 86 public schools in a comprehensive effort to improve student achievement by strengthening classroom instruction.

LA BOLD expands on NIET's long track record of work in Louisiana, which has grown from a TAP pilot state with five schools in 2003 to partnerships with 164 schools in 2016. Before seeking any external support, LA BOLD districts spent two years in collaborative conversations with fellow superintendents, NIET, and the state department of education to develop a common vision for their high-need schools. Further supported by data that shows students in Louisiana TAP schools have gained in student achievement faster than the state average, district leaders from the BOLD network decided to pursue a partnership with NIET as they charted a path forward.



*Teachers strategize during cluster with District Executive Master Teacher Angela Davis (right) at East St. John High School in St. John the Baptist Parish Public Schools.*

By creating coherence across school and district improvement initiatives, embedding professional learning, establishing roles for teacher leaders, and creating networking opportunities, NIET is providing ongoing, integrated support to LA BOLD partner districts, schools, and teachers to strengthen educator effectiveness.

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# Key Lessons

Part of the benefit of the LA BOLD network has been the ability to leverage initiatives that align state, district, and school goals, which maximizes their impact. Case in point: Louisiana's transition to new high-quality curriculum. Three and a half years in, LA BOLD districts have become a powerful model for how to create school-based professional learning systems that connect what to teach (new curriculum) with how to teach it (instructional practices). Here are three key takeaways from the LA BOLD project that could benefit other school and district leaders:

## PRINCIPALS MUST BE THE LEAD LEARNER:

School leaders need to build strong instructional teams that include a variety of perspectives. In order for teacher feedback to be useful, though, principals must be deeply familiar with the curriculum itself, be able to articulate how the content connects back to standards and instruction, and elevate strong implementation.

## EMBRACE THE ROLE OF MENTOR TEACHERS:

Teachers' own expertise is invaluable. Mentor teachers – full-time classroom teachers with several hours of release time to support peers – play a critically important role in the implementation of new curricula, especially as experts in their respective content areas. This knowledge makes teacher leaders particularly effective, as they typically have more buy-in with their peers than school leaders.

## DON'T GO IT ALONE:

LA BOLD districts were experiencing challenges managing change. However, with the support and expertise of a diverse network of peers navigating the same shift, these districts have been successful. NIET developed networking opportunities for BOLD partner schools, and as a result, schools in the network are making greater strides in curricula implementation and, while student and teacher populations vary, educators are learning from each other.





*Educators in the LA BOLD network, like these at Bethune Elementary in Orleans Parish Public Schools, have been using cluster to further their curriculum implementation.*

## What's Next?

**Schools in the LA BOLD network are showing tangible results. In 2019, two LA BOLD districts (DeSoto Parish and East Feliciana Parish) placed in the top 10 most improved systems in the state across all grades and subjects in statewide testing. A third district, Madison Parish, earned top-growth status among African American students, economically-disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities.**

As the LA BOLD project enters its final year of implementation, integrating key lessons and best practices into school culture, budgets, and systems to ensure the long-term sustainability of the work is paramount. NIET's approach is fundamentally about building capacity for educators to lead, and LA BOLD districts will continue to set the example. ●