



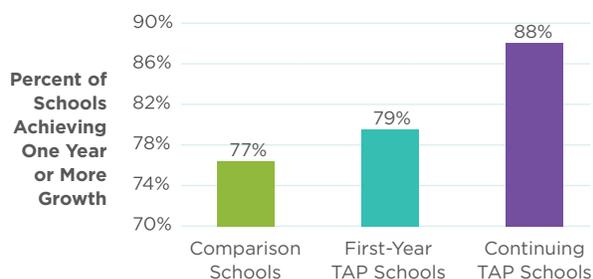
# EMPOWERING SCHOOL LEADERS: USING THE TEACHER INCENTIVE FUND TO INCREASE INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT AND IMPROVEMENT

States and districts across the country have used federal Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grants to support teachers in making continuous improvements in classroom instruction. TIF provides seed money to fund changes in the systems that support teachers so each educator, regardless of skill and experience level, receives support and is part of a collaborative school-based team. Since its inception, TIF has evolved to support a comprehensive approach that links data on teacher and student performance to professional support for instructional improvement for each individual teacher and the faculty as a whole.

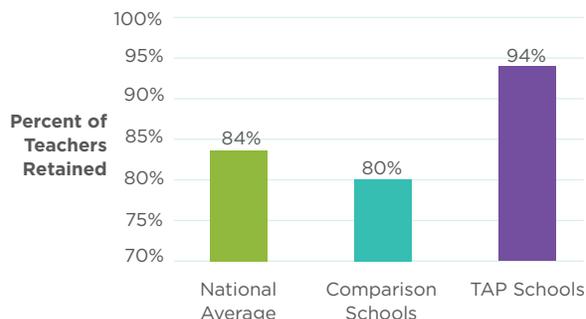
Administrators have found that this approach — particularly the development of teacher leaders to work with administrators in a school leadership team — supports significant and sustained increases in student academic growth in high-need schools. Nationally, schools using the TAP System to support this work have increased student achievement growth and teacher skill development faster than similar schools.

Administrators' direct experience confirms this data as they consistently report that teachers are improving classroom instruction, student academic achievement is increasing, achievement gaps are closing and it is easier to recruit and retain effective teachers in their high-need schools.

## NATIONALLY TAP SCHOOLS OUTPERFORM COMPARISON SCHOOLS

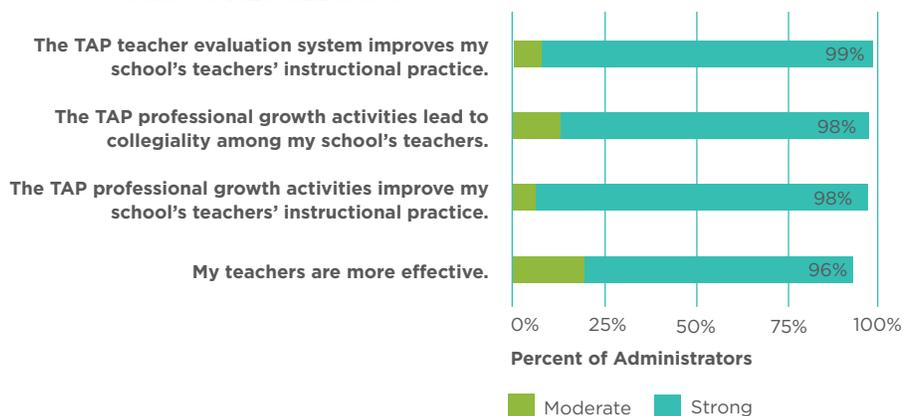


## NATIONALLY TAP SCHOOLS RETAIN MORE TEACHERS



Last fall, principals Ryan Siebe from Knoxville, Tennessee, Danny Mendez from Indianapolis, Indiana, and Gene Morrow from Grand Prairie, Texas, joined other administrators and teachers in visits with policymakers in Washington, D.C., to discuss the powerful student learning results achieved with support from TIF. They described the results of the work taking place in their schools and the ways that policy and funding could support this work.

## PRINCIPALS SEE IMPACT



The principals presented solutions that allow for local flexibility while at the same time build on proven research-based practices with demonstrated evidence of student achievement growth. Policymakers asked how their successful implementation of TAP, using TIF, could inform the new Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program authorized in the Every Student Succeeds Act.

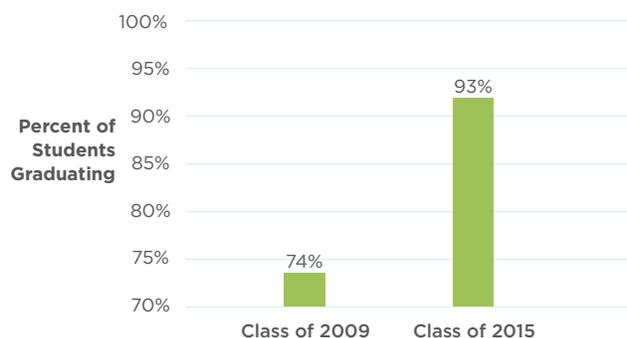
**PRINCIPAL RYAN SIEBE**, Carter High School, Knox County Schools, Knoxville, Tennessee

Before Carter High, Principal Ryan Siebe served as principal at another Knox County TAP high school, Austin East. He described how the TAP System provided these very different high schools — one serving a primarily urban high-need student population and the other serving a rural high-need population — with a structure to increase the effectiveness of classroom instruction across the building.

“Sometimes my own teachers don’t believe the student achievement growth we are seeing,” explained Siebe, “but this is the kind of progress we’re making through a team-based structure to support classroom instruction and a common commitment to highly effective classroom practices.

“Using the structures provided by TAP, we have regular professional development sessions for every teacher every week focused on student academic data and specific needs. Our trained

### CARTER HIGH SCHOOL, KNOX COUNTY, TN GRADUATION RATE



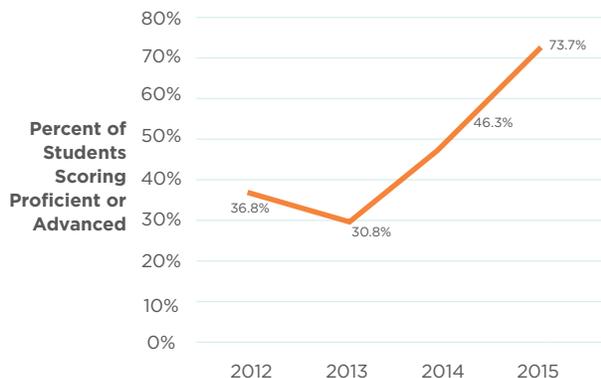
teacher leaders guide this school-based professional development and provide individual coaching in classrooms that is tailored to individual teachers and their students. The instructional rubric, with its detailed descriptions of strong teacher practices, facilitates feedback and support for improvement. Every teacher is recognized for increased skill and student performance, and teacher leaders receive additional compensation for taking on new roles and responsibilities directly tied to instructional improvement.”

Siebe’s faculty back home is supportive. “TAP works,” says Assistant Principal Angie Messer. “Since implementing TAP, teachers are having academic conversations outside the classroom. We are seeing and feeling changes in our craft.”

As a result, the school helped students to achieve more than a year’s worth of academic growth for two consecutive years — scoring a value-added growth score of 5 on a scale of 1-5 when compared to similar schools in the state. This progress earned Carter High the TAP Founder’s Award in 2014 and district APEX awards in 2012 and 2013. The school attracted broader attention when the Tennessee Department of Education named Carter High a “Reward School” in 2013 and 2015 for its placement in the top 5 percent for growth in the state.

To staff, the reason is clear. “TAP is a very organized way to teach,” explained TAP Mentor Teacher Jani Chollman. “You’re teaching with a purpose and the results come very quickly.”

### CARTER HIGH SCHOOL, KNOX COUNTY, TN PERCENT PROFICIENT/ADVANCED IN ALGEBRA 2



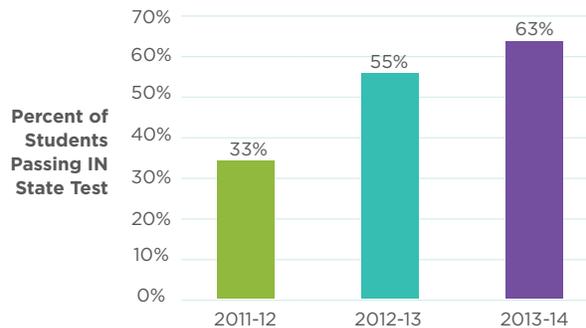
**PRINCIPAL DANNY MENDEZ**, Southport Elementary School, Perry Township Schools, Indianapolis, Indiana

Southport Elementary serves a rapidly growing English Language Learner (ELL) population that has expanded from less than 10 percent of students seven years ago to more than 55 percent today. In that same time frame, the free/reduced-price lunch population grew from 45 percent to 81 percent. Within the ELL population that Southport serves, approximately 300 students are refugees from Burma, many of whom were never allowed to attend school due to religious persecution in their home country. “You have not seen poverty until you see someone arrive with all of their belongings in a plastic bag,” explained Mendez. “Many of our students were grappling with a new language, as well as the whole concept of this thing we call ‘school.’”

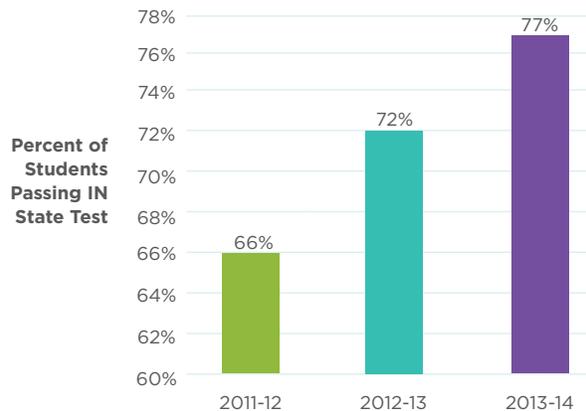
Southport adopted the TAP System in the 2011-12 school year, and has used the TAP structure and focus on classroom instruction and closing achievement gaps faced by its student population, particularly its English Language Learners, special education, and economically disadvantaged students. The Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning (CELL) at the University of Indianapolis is the lead partner to districts implementing TAP in Indiana. CELL has supported districts to use TAP to build a school’s focus of improving learning for all students by tailoring weekly professional development cluster meetings to specific needs, creating leadership roles to mentor others through TAP mentor and master teacher positions, implementing TAP’s teacher support and evaluation with rigor, and instituting a competitive compensation system to reward educators for increased skill and student performance. Mendez, who calls TAP a “perfect fit,” regularly attends cluster meetings, and his team of TAP leaders is open to new learning and achieving at even higher levels. As a result, Southport Elementary has made significant student achievement growth.

“It’s not that we weren’t working as hard as we could before we had the resources of the TIF grant to try TAP,” explained Mendez, “but the focus and structure TAP gave us to systematically improve classroom instruction led to dramatic results. We quickly realized, for example, that rather than additional ELL specialists, our resources were better spent supporting the classroom teachers who have ELL students

### SOUTHPORT ELEMENTARY, INDIANAPOLIS, IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER TESTING TRENDS



### SOUTHPORT ELEMENTARY, INDIANAPOLIS, IN FREE/REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT



for six hours a day. Investing in their skills and growth turned out to provide a stronger result in terms of student learning growth. The growth has been substantial for our most challenging student subgroups.”

At the district level, Southport and Abraham Lincoln, the two TAP schools in Perry Township, have helped pave the way for all 17 district schools to use the TAP evaluation process, providing a model for how the TAP System can be used to leverage best practices across a district.

TAP schools across Indiana and from other states have visited Southport to observe their clusters and leadership team meetings. These visits are beneficial to both Southport schools and the visiting teachers. Videos of classroom lessons and clusters have also been made available on the TAP System Training Portal and for other purposes to support learning in TAP schools across the country.

Both TAP schools in the district have shown dramatic improvement since implementing the TAP System in the 2011-12 school year. On the state report card, Abraham Lincoln went from an F in 2011-12 to a B in 2013-2014 while Southport Elementary improved from a C to an A during the same time frame. Both schools earned a value-added score of 5 on a 1-5 scale for the 2013-14 school year. This means that students are achieving more than a year’s worth of academic growth compared to similar schools in the state. The state responded by highlighting TAP as a model for districts to consider in reviewing teacher evaluation systems.

**PRINCIPAL GENE MORROW, JR.,** David Daniels Academy, Grand Prairie ISD, Grand Prairie, Texas

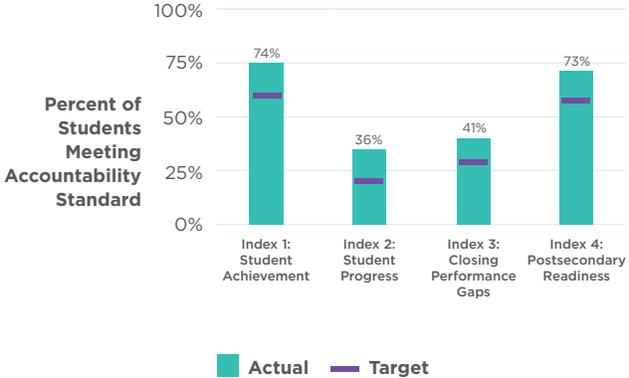
With decades of experience leading schools, David Daniels Academy Principal Gene Morrow Jr. knows the challenges teacher turnover can present to student learning growth, particularly in high-need schools. He shared with policymakers how the TAP structure has helped to reduce teacher turnover by creating a more collaborative and supportive school environment. The school culture helps every teacher to grow and thrive, and support student success in his school.

Morrow also described the new challenge that arises when other schools or district leaders see the results his teachers and teacher leaders are achieving using TAP elements.



U.S. Senator John Cornyn (left) and Principal Gene Morrow Jr. Photo credit: Gene Morrow Jr.

**GRAND PRAIRIE ISD, GRAND PRAIRIE, TX  
EXCEEDS ALL ACHIEVEMENT TARGETS IN 2014-2015**



“I took what could potentially be a real challenge — when my highly effective teacher leaders were recruited to new schools or became principals themselves — and addressed it by creating a very strong pipeline of effective teachers, many of whom have the potential to be teacher leaders in my school. When I have turnover in teacher leadership positions now, I have full confidence that there is someone highly effective to step into that role. While I want to keep my leadership team together, I don’t have that feeling of dread I used to have when a really effective person left. It’s an opportunity to work with someone to step up into that role.”

This high-caliber team of teachers and leaders has supported strong student achievement results in Grand Prairie.

Morrow credits the weekly TAP professional development cluster and leadership team meetings for keeping the faculty on task. A particularly sharp focus is put on field-testing strategies with groups of students and providing quality feedback on classroom instruction. “Having worked at a number of different TAP campuses over the years, I have found that TAP’s structure is a powerful talent identification and leadership development tool,” he said. “I have also found that this structure works in different school settings since, by design, TAP is driven by the needs of teachers and students in each individual school.”