

# ENSURING EVERY STUDENT HAS A GREAT TEACHER

*Federal grants support innovative improvements in systems for teaching and learning.*

As every teacher knows, teacher pay lags far behind other professions with similar preparation, and the majority of states are facing shortages of teachers in high-need subject areas. In response to a growing concern about the ability to ensure that every student has an effective classroom teacher, particularly in high-need schools, Congress created the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) in 2006. TIF was based on a growing body of research illustrating that existing pay structures do not reflect the work of excellent educators and, in too many cases, create an obstacle to attracting and retaining effective educators in high-need schools and subjects. NIET has worked with districts and states across the country to use TIF as a catalyst to improve systems and practices to recruit, retain, develop, promote and compensate teachers and school leaders.

The next generation of TIF, called the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program (TSL) in the federal Every Student

Succeeds Act (ESSA), provides a new opportunity to advance this work. Improving the teacher pipeline from preparation through advanced leadership roles relies on several research-based strategies that have been proven effective in districts awarded a TIF grant in partnership with NIET. These strategies include building strong leadership teams at the school level, training teacher leaders to work with administrators to strengthen instruction in every classroom, and providing all teachers with detailed feedback and support to improve their practice.

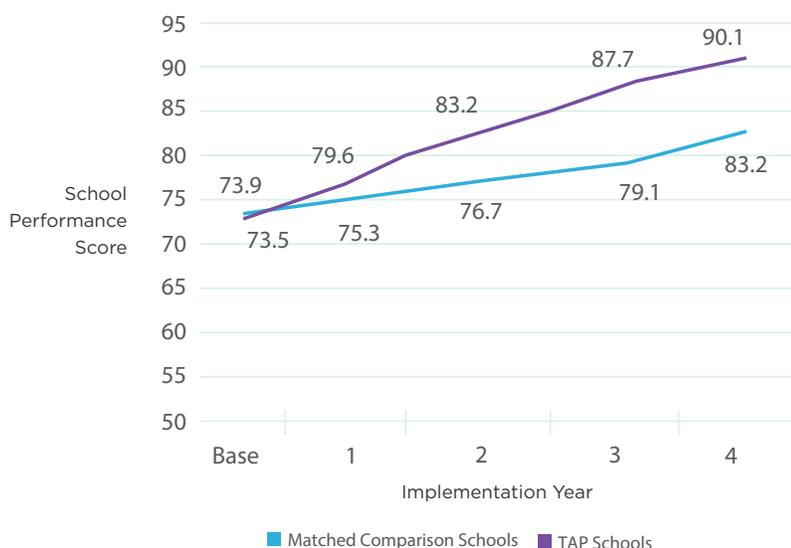
TIF helps districts enable effective educators in high-need schools and subjects to increase their compensation through additional pay based on multiple measures of effectiveness and for taking on new roles and responsibilities.

As a partner with districts in each of the five cohorts of TIF grants, NIET has played a key role in identifying what works—in terms of design and implementation. A new grant awarded to NIET and partner districts in Louisiana in 2016 is continuing this innovative work.

## *Louisiana*

Louisiana is home to a number of strong district implementations of TIF-funded improvements in instruction. High-need schools across the state, including elementary, middle, and high schools in urban, suburban, and rural communities, used TIF funds to implement TAP: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement. Districts used TAP

**FIGURE 1: LOUISIANA TAP SCHOOLS OUTPERFORM MATCHED SCHOOLS IN INTERACTIVE, INC., STUDY**



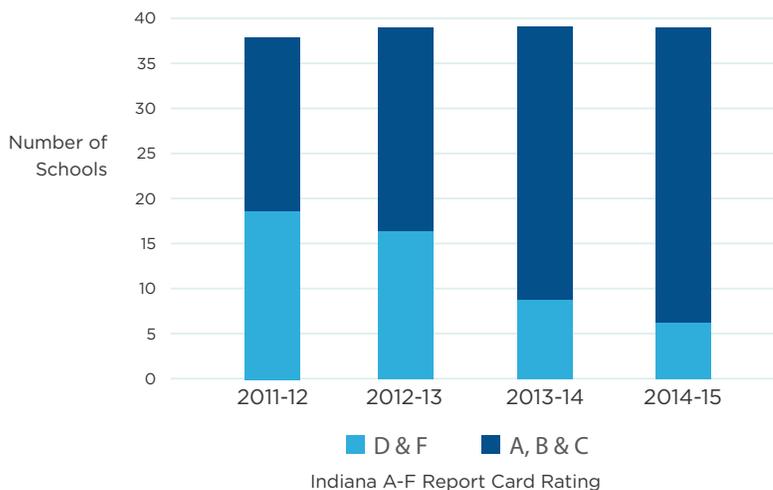
to transform the way they prepare, recruit, place, evaluate, compensate and promote teachers and school leaders. The state has used the most impactful work funded by TIF to guide significant changes in state policy and funding.

Figure 1 demonstrates the more rapid student academic achievement improvement of TAP schools over matched schools in year-to-year comparisons. This significant and sustained progress is enabling high-need TAP schools to close historic achievement gaps.

### Indiana

Forty-four high-need schools across Indiana used TIF funds awarded in 2010 to improve the way they recruit, support, compensate and promote teachers and school leaders. TAP schools made significant and sustained academic growth in the state's letter grade system, as seen in Figure 2. From school year 2011-12 to 2014-15, districts using the TAP System

**FIGURE 2: INCREASE IN STATE RATINGS OF INDIANA TAP SCHOOLS**



reduced the number of D and F schools, and increased the number of A, B and C schools. Over multiple years, improvement continued among TAP schools.

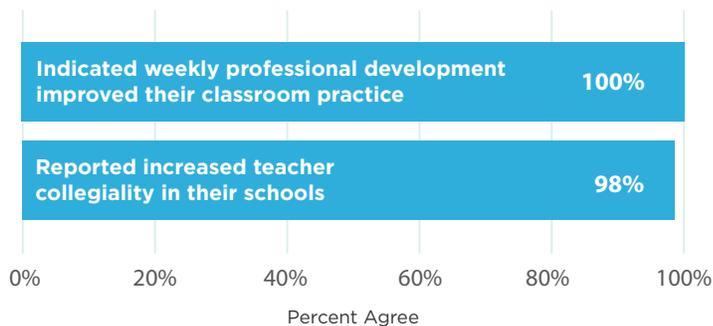
In addition to overall academic progress at the school and district levels, Indiana schools using TAP were also able to close historic achievement gaps. TAP schools reduced the achievement gap for black and Hispanic students in both reading and math by more than three percent. By comparison, matched control schools serving similar student populations saw the achievement gap widen in three of four groups of these students, in reading and math for black students and in math for Hispanic students. Overall, this difference resulted in a five percent reduction in the racial achievement gaps for TAP schools compared to similar schools.

### Iowa

Working with NIET under a 2012 TIF grant, two high-need school districts in Iowa used TAP to improve their systems for teacher observation, feedback, development and compensation. Their work provided a powerful example for the development and passage of the state Teacher Leadership and Compensation System. Higher expectations for classroom instruction were accompanied by significantly higher levels of support from administrators and school-based teacher

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**FIGURE 3: IOWA TEACHERS STRONGLY SUPPORT TAP SYSTEM ELEMENTS**



leaders. This resulted in higher student achievement, including one district making the highest average ACT score in its history. At the same time, teachers reported high levels of satisfaction with weekly professional learning, increased collegiality and an increased level of success in their work with students, as seen in Figure 3.

“TAP helped us focus and build our own capacity to support strong classroom teaching,” says Chris Coffelt, superintendent of the Central Decatur Community School District in Leon, Iowa. “As a school district, it helped us move forward much faster. TAP really did that for us. It gave us that opportunity to all be on the same page.”

#### **Minnesota**

Five high-need charter schools in St. Paul and Minneapolis are using a TIF grant to increase the effectiveness of their teachers and school leaders. As seen in Figure 4, school leaders report that TAP increases teacher instructional practice and makes teachers more effective in their schools.

**FIGURE 4: MINNESOTA ADMINISTRATORS STRONGLY SUPPORT TAP SYSTEM ELEMENTS**



These improvements have enabled the schools to help their high-need students make greater-than-expected gains over multiple years. Hmong College Prep Academy's High School, for example, moved from among the lowest performing five percent of schools in the state before the grant began to obtaining Celebration eligible status (second highest recognition in the state of Minnesota) four of the last five years. Proficiency in 11th grade math went from one percent the year before Hmong College Prep implemented TAP best practices to over 50 percent after four years.

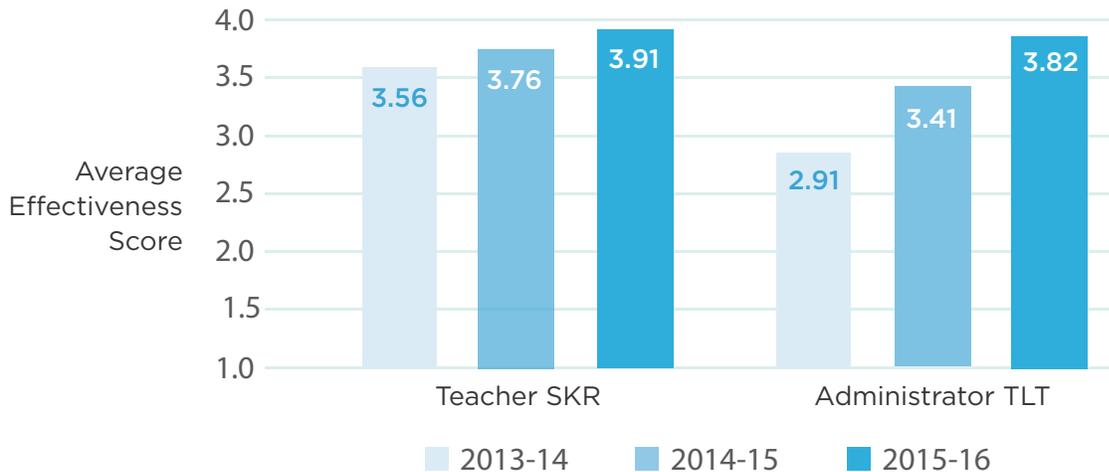
“One of the things I really like about our professional development and our cluster meetings is that there's an opportunity to implement what you're learning immediately,” says Dr. N'Jai-an Patters, upper school mentor teacher at Sojourner Truth Academy. “It's tested on the kids in the building so we know that it works with our population of students, and it's something that you can take back to your classroom the next day, the next week—and then get immediate feedback on. It's really dynamic, it's always changing, but it feels immediate and it feels really connected to something that we're doing in our building, with our kids specifically.”

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**FIGURE 5: INCREASES IN TENNESSEE TEACHER & ADMINISTRATOR EFFECTIVENESS**



**Tennessee**

In 2012, a cohort of rural Tennessee schools won a TIF grant to improve teacher and school leader skills. These districts helped teachers and administrators become more effective. The overall teacher observation scores (Skills, Knowledge and Responsibilities or SKR), and the overall administrator observation scores (TAP Leadership Team or TLT) increased steadily from school year 2013-14 to 2015-16, as seen in Figure 5.

**Moving Forward**

Lessons learned across multiple sites in more than 10 states are reflected in NIET’s most recent TIF-funded project awarded in 2016. Louisiana BOLD is a partnership between NIET and 89 schools across six parishes and six charter schools. The funds will allow the districts to use practices and structures that have been tested, adjusted and proven effective in high-need schools and classrooms. They include:

- Using research-based teaching standards to guide classroom instruction
- Developing school-based professional learning
- Creating teacher leadership opportunities
- Working with school leaders to build distributed leadership teams
- Integrating performance measures into compensation systems

- Supporting new teachers to enter classrooms and be effective on day one

Local superintendents are eager to put these practices into action.

“We see tremendous value in working with other districts on this initiative,” notes Kevin George, superintendent of Saint John the Baptist Parish. “This will enable us to learn from others and to demonstrate the impact across multiple communities.”

The grant project will also promote equitable access to effective educators in alignment with the Louisiana State Equity Plan.

NIET’s partners in this work include the parishes of DeSoto, East Feliciana, Madison, Orleans, Rapides and Saint John the Baptist. NIET is also partnering with New Orleans charter schools including Algiers Technology Academy, Eisenhower Academy, Landry-Walker High, McDonogh #32 Charter, Fischer Academy and Martin Behrman Academy.

“Louisiana districts have made consistent progress over a number of years using the TAP System to improve classroom instruction,” says NIET CEO Gary Stark. “The new TIF grant will continue this work while providing a clear connection with best practices identified by the state, including new teacher training, leadership development and a focus on equity. I am excited by the opportunities in this grant to anchor and sustain progress.”