

Investing in Innovation

As a partner in multiple federal grants, NIET is working across the country with educators who are on the cutting edge of educational improvement. The solutions being developed through these multiyear projects are shared at the regional, state, and national levels, and bring direct practitioner experience to policymakers and thought leaders in education. This provides an important way to elevate solutions designed and field-tested by practitioners in policy conversations.

In South Carolina, NIET is supporting the development of a network of principals serving high-need schools. The partnership includes school districts across the state, the University of South Carolina, and BranchED, a nonprofit focused on recruiting and retaining educators of color. The South Carolina Principal Leadership Network (SCPLN) project, funded through a three-year federal Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) grant, is changing the ways that principals are supported by creating a

network of principals who take part in collaborative learning with peers and are supported by expert coaches to apply the learning in their own school. To date, more than 100 school leaders from 51 schools across five districts have participated in this work to build collaborative networks and grow the instructional leadership skills of principals.

In Louisiana, NIET is completing work through the LA BOLD (Building on Leadership Development) project — funded through a five-year federal



Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program (TSL) grant — to create professional learning systems at the school level that are also supported at the district level. Over 300 teacher leaders, along with school leaders at each campus, have been trained as coaches and facilitators of collaborative learning teams of teachers. When Louisiana rolled out new Tier I curriculum to strengthen the use of high-quality instructional materials, this network of experts in each school played a critical role in the successful use of these new, more rigorous materials by teachers. In addition, LA BOLD partners have developed more effective ways to support principals as instructional leaders, in part by elevating the role of principal supervisors as coaches

for principals.

In 2020, NIET kicked off another federal TSL project through a partnership of public school districts and charter schools in Indiana. The grant funds are enabling schools across the state to develop career pathways as part of systems for professional learning and growth. The work in these districts is providing a powerful model for other districts that are working to develop career pathways under a new state grant program.

Also in Indiana, a five-year Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grant called “The Marian Promise” is bringing together NIET, Marian University, and three south Indianapolis area districts to recruit and prepare aspiring teachers to work in schools serving large numbers of low-income students.

This project is strengthening the bridge from teacher preparation into the classroom experience, ensuring both teacher candidates and teachers in their first two years receive more extensive preparation and ongoing mentorship as they begin their career.

By investing in people, and creating structures and systems that support collaborative work and coaching in-person and online, NIET and our grant partners are improving teaching and learning and increasing the percentage of high-need students with effective educators. Working together, we are strengthening relationships and networks across districts and states to better understand and use evidence-based practices that promote student success.

NIET Awarded New Federal Grants in 2021

In October, NIET learned we have been awarded or are part of three federal Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program awards that kick off this school year.

Texas: NIET has been awarded a three-year, \$12 million TSL grant to partner again with BranchED and four Texas school districts (Crockett, Gladewater, Slaton, and Somerset ISDs) to increase teacher and school leader effectiveness and improve teaching and learning in 19 high-need schools. This grant was designed to combat the learning loss caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and help accelerate student achievement in some of Texas’ highest-need communities.

Through this grant partnership,

called Texas IMPACT (Improving Management Systems for Principals and Classroom Teachers), educators will receive support from NIET and BranchED, a Texas-based nonprofit dedicated to diversifying the teaching profession and intentionally addressing critical issues of educational equity. The IMPACT districts represent diverse geographic regions across the state and will serve as models to other small districts within their regions, statewide, and nationally on how to strengthen support for educators.

Indiana: NIET will partner with Beech Grove City Schools on a three-year, \$4.8 million TSL grant to increase teacher and school leader effectiveness, attract a more diverse group of educators, and improve teaching and learning in all five schools. Beech Grove will implement the TAP System

across the district as part of the grant, which was designed to address significant learning gaps, particularly those between different student populations, by improving classroom instruction and building school cultures that support equity, inclusion, and student engagement.

Arizona: NIET is partnering with Arizona State University and Mesa Public Schools for their grant to expand ASU’s Next Education Workforce (NEW), which aims to transform the traditional model of education staffing in schools by ensuring every child is taught by a collective group of highly effective educators. For this grant, NIET will lead two key components: refining the current NEW observation tool and MPS Portrait of a Graduate Look-Fors, and support the creation of the NEW compensation model.