

Leveraging Teacher Leadership to Accelerate Learning in Indiana

High rates of teacher turnover and persistent student achievement gaps are ongoing challenges for many schools in Indiana, similar to much of the country. Leaders have responded with a range of initiatives to strengthen teaching and to increase student access to effective teachers. One of the most promising is the development of teacher career pathways and distributed leadership models focused on strengthening classroom instruction. This approach was endorsed by the Governor's Next Level Teacher Compensation Commission in 2020. NIET's Indiana partners have used a variety of funding streams to invest in building capacity, including federal funds from a Teacher and School Leader (TSL) Incentive Program grant and state funds from Indiana's Career Ladder Grant.

Teacher Leader Expertise Is Reaching More Students

Since being awarded a federal TSL grant with NIET in 2019, Brown County Schools, Goshen Community Schools, and Perry Township Schools have strengthened their efforts to make teacher leadership a core strategy for improvement. The districts are ensuring teacher leadership roles are filled by highly effective teachers, allowing their expertise to benefit a greater number of students.

When hiring, district and school leaders communicate the support that all teachers receive, enhancing recruitment efforts. In a time of teacher shortages, teachers are choosing to join these districts, drawn by high levels of support and opportunities to advance in their



careers. The teacher leadership structure is not only helping to recruit talent to the districts, but it is also helping to increase the retention of effective teachers and increase equitable access as more students are taught by an effective teacher.

Teacher Leaders Have Supported Student Success Through the Pandemic

In early 2020, the Indiana Department of Education awarded Career Ladder Grants to five NIET partner districts: Whitko Community Schools, Muncie Community Schools, MSD of Martinsville, Michigan City Area Schools, and Nettle Creek Schools. Over the past year, these districts have been proof that creating teacher leaders and investing in their skills creates a powerful driver for improvement.

Teacher leaders have stepped in to help plan virtual, hybrid, and in-person lessons; identify learning gaps; bolster student engagement; and provide individual coaching

and support. In the process, they demonstrated the power of tapping into the expertise of teachers to help principals lead improvements in teaching and learning. They are a key part of each district's plan for academic recovery. During a time when there were a lot of unknowns, teacher leaders eased the burden for classroom teachers and enabled them to better support students.

Sustaining Progress in the Coming School Year

Teacher leaders in NIET's Indiana partner districts are leading the way: analyzing data, highlighting where individual teachers and students need support, and customizing strategies to address needs. These educators will strengthen schools for years to come. The structures and strategies put in place with the support of federal and state funds have enabled these districts to create more effective teaching and learning in every classroom while building cultures of growth and equity.