



Supporting State Leaders to Train Teachers

Most teachers had never faced a greater learning curve than when the COVID-19 pandemic forced them to confront the reality of virtual teaching — and it happened essentially overnight. At a national level, given the immediacy of the need, we saw different approaches to supporting educators in the shift to virtual and hybrid learning. While some states continued the traditional model of working through districts to provide support, others went directly to teachers and school leaders themselves and offered training to equip them with virtual instruction.

Both Louisiana and South Carolina quickly moved to make free, high-quality virtual instruction training available to thousands of teachers and principals statewide. About 3,000 educators in these states registered for sessions in the first week they were announced, and they provided applicable strategies. “This session taught the ability to take what we already know and do in the classroom and apply it to the same level of excellence in a virtual setting,” said one South Carolina educator.

In partnership with NIET, these

trainings have continued into 2021 and evolved to fit the new needs educators have while still allowing states to directly support teachers and leaders. In the spring, NIET’s partnership with the South Carolina Department of Education transitioned to offer a new training focused on blended and hybrid learning. The Louisiana Department of Education also partnered with us to offer educators training on best instructional practices and learning acceleration, particularly targeting those schools that have been identified as in need of improvement.

South Carolina Prepares for Blended Learning

The South Carolina Department of Education recognized that virtual learning was not just a one-time endeavor, and aspects of virtual and hybrid learning will continue into the future. To this end, the department partnered with NIET to offer a free training series, *Blended and Hybrid Learning: Student Engagement, Thinking, and Choice*, to all South Carolina educators. The trainings focused on how to teach in environments that involve both virtual and in-person components, and they were designed to support educators in all roles, including teachers, teacher leaders, school leaders, and district administrators. Higher education faculty and student teachers also participated.

In this two-module training, participants examined hybrid and blended instructional structures and strategies that support individual student needs and individualized learning. They analyzed planning, delivery, and assessment components of a lesson and identified steps to strengthen current instructional practices by offering students critical thinking opportunities and choice.

Louisiana Focuses on Learning Acceleration and Strong Instruction

In preparation for the 2021-22 school year, knowing that learning acceleration was the top priority after two challenging school years, the Louisiana Department of Education partnered with NIET to offer 2021-22 Best Practices for Louisiana Schools training. The opportunity supported schools in leveraging five essential components that drive professional and student growth:

- Instructional Leadership Teams
- Teacher Collaboration
- Teacher and Learning Standards
- Principal Standards
- Career Pipelines

Each of these components were covered in an individual training, often



delivered virtually, and districts were able to use Louisiana Super App funds or federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding to participate.

In addition to the Best Practices training, this fall Louisiana doubled down on efforts to accelerate learning by offering free access to the Louisiana Acceleration Series for the state's educators. The series, which will be offered both in-person and virtually through March 2022, includes six trainings that are designed to help educators target their instruction and coaching on the most effective strategies for accelerating student learning.

While these sessions build on one another, educators can take them individually. The trainings focus on the following areas:

1. Analyzing and Using Data to Meet the Needs of Students

2. Maximizing Collaborative Structures to Support Learning Recovery
3. Planning for Accelerated Learning Options and Individualized Learning
4. Strengthening Content-Specific Strategies for Learning Recovery in Math
5. Strengthening Content-Specific Strategies for Learning Recovery in ELA
6. Setting Up Effective Summer Learning Opportunities

The innovative and responsive tone that both South Carolina and Louisiana took to provide high-quality professional learning to educators, especially during unknown and shifting circumstances, is an example of how states can proactively create meaningful educator support that results in student success.