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Goal: 😞 I can understand how text features help me gain meaning from a text.

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TALENTED TEACHERS LEAD THE WAY

By Lowell Milken, Chairman & Founder

This past year we have seen significant changes in education policy at the federal level, as well as in many states. As I reflect on the challenges and opportunities presented by these changes, I draw confidence from the growing number of teacher, school and district leaders who are in a position to speak knowledgeably and confidently about what they know works for teachers and students. It is critically important that we continue to press for the improvements we know prepare students for success in our global economy. It is equally critical that we identify and work to provide educators with the supports needed to prepare them to be successful in a job whose importance is only increasing.

in the state four years ago to the second-highest state recognition level for the past two years. The impact for students can be seen in 11th grade math, for example, where achievement increased from one percent to over 50 percent proficient.

Through implementation of the TAP System, 29 schools across 13 districts in Texas significantly outperformed their matched schools in math and reading performance. Students at Slaton Junior High, for example, eliminated the achievement gap in math this year, reaching the state average.

Since implementing TAP, Coalfield School in Morgan County, Tennessee, increased ACT scores to the highest in the district's history with the

“The only people who develop human potential and character as a calling are educators. This puts the men and women who become teachers and principals in a position of unique power for helping to secure the future for young people.” **LOWELL MILKEN** *Chairman & Founder*

An ever-growing number of educators in communities across the country are putting in the hard work to develop and implement successful innovations such as the TAP System that lead to improved classroom instruction. Many of these educators are teaching in our highest-need schools and have little patience for delay. Here are a few examples illustrating the urgency and importance of this work in high-need schools across the country.

Hmong College Prep Academy in Minneapolis moved from the lowest five percent of schools

average ACT score steadily increasing the last four years. This also happened last year in Iowa's Saydel Community School District which similarly achieved the highest ACT scores in its history.

West Goshen Elementary School in Indiana moved from a D on Indiana's A-F grading system in 2011 to an A in 2016. One example of what this meant for students is the increase in proficiency rates in fifth-grade math from 39 percent to 72 percent.

We see urgency in the area of teacher preparation as well. Our NIET-Arizona State University partnership program shows that students are three

times more likely to graduate compared to the national average. Our work with ASU and Texas Tech University has resulted in over 100 highly proficient new teachers being placed in high-need schools across Arizona and Texas.

As we think about the next generation of educators who will serve in our most challenging schools and work with students who will face the greatest barriers to learning, we must provide them with the opportunity to maximize their potential. Yet what kind of career does teaching offer them?

Teachers tell us that even the most committed and inspired among them experience barriers to their continued growth and that of their colleagues, and that the job itself must be improved. They want the ability to work collaboratively with colleagues, to receive high-quality feedback for improvement, to have a common language around what strong teaching looks like and to have support from mentors or teacher leaders in their buildings—particularly for new teachers.

At its core, TAP creates this environment and builds the capacity and authority of educators in the school to make key educational decisions. There are structures and processes in TAP

that apply district and schoolwide—weekly professional learning, field-testing strategies, teacher leader roles, observations and a research-based instructional rubric. These structures and processes are animated by the needs of individual teachers and students in the classroom. Teacher and school leaders drive decisions about how best to deliver support to every teacher and student.

In this moment of opportunity and challenge, I see teacher and school leaders working as a team to be the most powerful catalyst for change. Such teams will enable schools to take full advantage of the new flexibility provided under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act to ensure results for students.

It is time for policymakers, communities, school boards and other leaders to elevate the voices of successful educators, and provide them with both the flexibility and funding to increase their effectiveness and their students' learning. Just as educators develop the human potential of their students, let us make a commitment to develop the human potential of educators themselves. They truly hold the future in their hands.

“As we think about the next generation of educators who will serve in our most challenging schools, working with students who will face the greatest barriers to learning, we must provide them with the opportunity to maximize their potential.”

LOWELL MILKEN

Chairman & Founder







EE PASS

UNLOCKING EDUCATOR SUPPORT

The National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) offers educators access to an exclusive training portal with unprecedented support. EE PASS – the Educator Effectiveness Preparation & Support System – was developed by education professionals at NIET who leveraged their on-the-ground experience in advancing educator effectiveness with thousands of education partners across the nation.

EE PASS provides access to valuable professional development, training and certification resources through a single port of entry. These features include:



VIDEO LIBRARY

More than 100 hours of professionally filmed classroom lessons, including searchable video clips. Videos illustrate classroom practice across a range of skill levels and indicators in a split screen format showing simultaneous teacher and student observation. Additional footage includes leadership team meetings and coaching sessions.



DATA MANAGEMENT

Real-time access to evaluation data enables educators to connect observation feedback with professional learning, and supports consistency and reliability among observers.



EVALUATOR CERTIFICATION

Online video-based certification to support evaluator training and maintenance of skills.



NIET'S COMPANION VIDEO OBSERVER APP

Education leaders can record and upload observation footage to the portal for collaboration and feedback.



TRAINING MODULES

Interactive training experiences featuring specific indicators in the Teaching Standards Rubric as well as a variety of other topics that enrich educator evaluation and support.



NIET TRAINING ARCHIVES

Materials from NIET trainings, conferences and workshops across a range of topics that are tagged and searchable.

EE PASS is available to educators implementing TAP™: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement or using NIET's Educator Effectiveness Series. For more information about NIET and how your school can gain access to EE PASS, contact support@niet.org or visit us at www.eepass.org or www.niet.org.



CEO'S CORNER

A conversation with Dr. Gary Stark

As you reflect on the past year, what are some of the major developments in NIET's work? What can we look forward to over the next year?

The National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) has had an historic year in the expansion of new projects and services. Equally important are district-level efforts that are prioritizing educator effectiveness as an essential component of strategic plans. Our expansion of services reflects an understanding that educator effectiveness is the key school-based lever for ensuring the academic success of our nation's students.

The model of TAP: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement is a catalyst for systemwide

change. It creates the comprehensive structures and collaborative supports needed to develop human capital across schools, districts and states. At the same time, many districts are looking for support to make improvements in specific areas of their teacher pipeline, including recruitment, professional and leadership development. Our work this year has supported improvements for teachers all along their career pathway.

Since its launch, the TAP System has grown significantly as a comprehensive educator evaluation and support model for increasing educator effectiveness. Through the use of elements of the TAP model, we are serving more than 200,000 teachers and 2.5 million students.

This year, we are furthering the goal of the TAP System to improve instructional practices and provide stronger teaching and learning experiences for students. We have done this by focusing on the details of how classroom practices can be improved and on the specific training, structures and support that enable teachers and school leaders to drive improvement. We have also expanded our Educator Effectiveness Series with an additional phase of trainings for participating schools.

In January we rolled out a new online training portal called the Educator Effectiveness Preparation & Support System (EE PASS). This portal is a significant step forward for a comprehensive platform design. It includes new features for improved navigation and user-interfacing, updated trainings and content, improved search capabilities and greater accessibility across multiple types of devices. In addition to the video library, database management system, training modules and other content, EE PASS houses the Video Observer App, which enables observers to record and upload video clips of classroom lessons to support collaboration and feedback.

We expanded our work to support school leaders with a multiyear partnership with Texas Tech University, which will advance graduate-level principal preparation and offer a training program supported by a federal Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) grant. We also hope to formalize the TAP Principal Standards and evaluation tool later this spring.

We are excited to see districts and states expanding their commitment and support for the key elements we know are the foundation for teacher and school leader success, as well as student academic growth. We are also looking forward to developing new and improved resources, services and support to enable K-12 schools and districts to build their own capacity to create and sustain these elements.

What are some of the highlights of the work taking place on the ground that you have seen in school visits this year?

One of the most exciting things is seeing how various districts and leaders are using the TAP System and their partnership with NIET to address their unique needs. For example, Goshen Community Schools in Indiana works with NIET to support nine TAP schools that began implementation in the

2011-12 school year. The district was part of a consortium implementing TAP through a federal Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant in partnership with the Indiana Department of Education and the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning housed at the University of Indianapolis. Since the completion of their initial TIF grant, Superintendent Diane Woodworth has maintained the core of the TAP System as an essential aspect of their district plan.

Goshen's financial and structural commitment to the TAP System can be seen throughout the district. I would certainly recommend this district to anyone who wants to see an operationalized TAP culture that not only builds on, but also goes beyond the grant-funded work. District administrators routinely attend cluster meetings and ensure all aspects of TAP are implemented. Additionally, the district's master teachers collaborate across schools on field testing. This district-level commitment is reflected in the strong results of teacher effectiveness and student academic growth. If you look across Indiana, there has been substantial and sustained progress in student learning at high-need schools implementing TAP in the state. There are three times more TAP schools that have improved their letter grade compared to similar schools.

TAP schools in Indiana closed achievement gaps more rapidly than similar schools. This resulted in a five percent reduction in the achievement gap between students of color and other students. Finally, Indiana TAP schools substantially increased their retention rates, reaching over 90 percent within the last year. The improvements teachers are experiencing are impacting their decision to remain in the field of teaching.

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DR. GARY STARK
Chief Executive Officer

This work demonstrates the sustained progress a district can achieve when placing educator effectiveness at the forefront of efforts to create transformational change. Leading our efforts to partner with districts in this work is NIET's president, Dr. Patrice Pujol. Dr. Pujol achieved remarkable success using TAP to drive academic improvement in high-need schools as superintendent of Ascension Public Schools in Louisiana. She has extensive knowledge of the design and implementation of successful reforms at the district level. We are excited by the ideas, energy and expertise she brings to our work with partners across the country.

NIET continues to be involved in state-level projects ranging from evaluation systems to coaching and online support. What has been your experience working with state departments of education, and how can state education agencies best support districts and schools in strengthening classroom instruction?

This past year NIET was selected to develop the new South Carolina Teaching Standards based on the NIET (TAP) Teaching Standards and to train educators statewide in the new standards. South Carolina decided to train higher education teacher preparation faculty first before training K-12 districts. This provided a successful rollout of the new standards. Higher education institutions introduced new teacher candidates to the standards even before districts began their training. Although we are in the early phases of this state-level launch, I am excited about the work ahead. State Superintendent Molly Spearman has a strong vision for improving instructional practice while also supporting educators every step of the way. NIET is appreciative of the partnership with the South Carolina Department of Education.

In Tennessee, this was our seventh year supporting the Department of Education in the implementation of the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model or TEAM evaluation and support system for educators. The NIET (TAP) Teaching Standards form the basis for the observation system under TEAM, and NIET was selected to train educators across the state when TEAM was introduced. We also developed an online portal for the state with resources to support evaluators and teachers using TEAM. For the last five years, we have trained and supported TEAM coaches who work statewide to provide coaching and support for districts using the model.

Over the last couple of years, we have seen how Tennessee has worked to anchor and sustain TEAM with the infrastructure and support needed to make it effective. Limited resources make this a challenge. However, districts are increasingly seeking support from TEAM coaches and working with them as partners to improve schools and support teacher and student growth.

The success of TAP across multiple states has provided valuable examples of the kinds of reforms that lead to increased educator effectiveness and student academic growth. This is particularly seen in high-need schools and districts. The work of TAP schools, and the best practices they have so successfully demonstrated, have led directly to states understanding what is desirable and achievable at the state level.

These state partnerships exemplify what is possible when state-level goals align with the work that schools are doing to improve instructional quality. In such circumstances, we see even greater opportunities for NIET to spark and support systemwide improvements in educator effectiveness best practices at the state, district and university levels.

Could you also discuss how NIET is working with higher education institutions to create stronger partnerships with K-12 districts? What will this mean for teacher candidates and their students, particularly in terms of the support new teachers will be receiving?

We work with higher education institutions in multiple ways, but first and foremost we serve as a source of educator effectiveness best practices by providing tools and materials, resources, and training services that are developed from our on-the-ground experiences with schools across the country.

In addition to our school services, we have developed several grant programs that focus on advancing educator effectiveness in teacher and principal preparation programs. Currently, we have three SEED grants. One is with Arizona State University and two are with Texas Tech University. These projects focus on incorporating best instructional practices into the curriculum, designing coursework to best meet the needs of schools, preparing teacher candidates for being assessed along the way, and in turn, training them to be reflective about their practice. Our newest SEED grant is focused on a new principal mentorship and support system that provides principal candidates

with training to be highly effective in their new role.

The partnerships include teacher and principal preparation programs and TAP districts, which allow for powerful collaboration and learning at both levels. This is particularly important to prepare and recruit effective new teachers to work in some of the highest-need schools. As many TAP schools that work with higher education partners know, being able to place student teachers in high-need schools, align their teaching experience with what they are learning in coursework and create relationships and structures in a school that will support them in their first year, lead to far greater levels of success.

With this work, we are pioneering efforts to improve educator effectiveness at the pre-service level.

As a former teacher and school administrator, I know teaching can sometimes feel like an isolated and undervalued profession. At the same time, being a teacher and an administrator gave me a lifelong passion for improving education. In my current role, I see how critically important great educators are to the success of our students, and how improving the systems that impact teachers is the most important work in education today.

Because I believe wholeheartedly that teachers are the most important factor influencing a student's academic success, I have focused my work on improving support for educators. That includes building systems and structures based on developing talent and instructional leadership, and rewarding teachers based on their hard work. The TAP System

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The work to improve new teacher and principal preparation is gaining momentum across the country, particularly as we see new teachers struggle as they enter the classroom. Too many of them are leaving the field of teaching within their first few years.

While efforts to better recruit talented young people into teaching are essential, it is equally imperative that they receive the kind of preparation that will enable them to be successful. We can only change the perception of teaching as a professional and rewarding career when it is actually professional and rewarding to each individual educator. We look forward to expanding our partnerships with higher education institutions and states to ensure that new teachers are prepared to hit the ground running with highly effective instructional practices.

As someone who has been involved in improving education at all levels, what advice would you give to educators both new to and experienced in TAP and its best practices that would inspire them to stay the course?

continues to provide a powerful model for building a collaborative environment rooted in reflective practice, comprehensive feedback and support for developing high-quality instructional skills. TAP also creates an environment where great teaching is recognized, valued and placed at the center of efforts to improve schools.

NIET is a national public nonprofit with a primary mission to improve educator effectiveness. Given the vision of our founder, Lowell Milken, we have been steadfast in our commitment and advancement of this work for almost two decades. With the growth of our organization and our expanding partnerships, we now have thousands of professionals focused every day on this very important issue of educator effectiveness. We are leveraging the lessons learned from the TAP System to broaden our efforts and establish a national network of highly skilled educators. Our work is creating a catalyst to improve educator effectiveness that is impacting policy in states, districts and classrooms around the country. I am proud of this collective effort and look forward to the work ahead.

GROW YOUR OWN

NIET's partnership with the New Caney Independent School District and Texas Tech University takes on the teacher shortage – by honing talent from within.

From as early as he could remember, Raul Briones wanted to help people. A product of Texas' New Caney Independent School District (ISD) from elementary through high school, Briones headed to nearby Lone Star College to prepare for a career as a biomedical engineer. But shortly after he started his coursework, he realized that he wasn't cut out for the medical field. Briones visited a career counselor to talk through his options.

"I told the counselor about my goals of making a difference in the lives of others," Briones explains. "She said, 'Why not become a teacher?' That was an amazing turning point for me. I discovered that I could help people become successful in life."

Briones switched his major to multidisciplinary studies at Lone Star and then entered the teaching program at the University of Houston-Downtown (UHD). One day during his first semester, some students in his class were abuzz about a new opportunity through Texas Tech's TechTeach program. It was described as an intense, yearlong residency program that put students on the fast track to earning a teaching certification.

Participating districts were actively recruiting members of their communities to join the program and give back to the places they called home. Briones was intrigued. UHD's program offered only a semester of student teaching, and Briones was eager to experience a full year in the classroom. Already passionate to work in his community, Briones was fulfilling his student-teaching requirement as an instructional aide at Bens Branch Elementary School in New Caney ISD, his alma mater. Those few short weeks were eye-opening and rewarding.

"It's a great feeling to give back," he reflects. "It's only right."

The more Briones learned about TechTeach, the more he wanted to enroll. The residency program is implemented through a partnership among Texas Tech, the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) and network districts involved in NIET's TAP System for Teacher and Student Advancement. The TAP System is a comprehensive model for advancing educator effectiveness through teacher leadership and mentoring, job-embedded professional development, educator observation and evaluation, and performance-based compensation.

Driven by hands-on experience and performance-based assessments, TechTeach assigns each candidate to a participating school during the day to student-teach alongside the faculty. At night, candidates complete coursework online. The core of TAP lies in its instructional rubric of best practices, which university, school and district staff use as a foundation for their training and performance evaluations. Candidates are graded on the delivery of their lessons, submitted by video, which are measured against the rubric indicators.

These future teachers receive layers of support throughout the process. They are paired with mentors in the school buildings as well as a district Texas Tech site coordinator. The coordinator meets with the candidates weekly as a group to address their instructional needs and provide meaningful feedback to take into the classroom. In addition to receiving their certification at the end of the year, they have the opportunity to be hired by the district for a full-time teaching position.

The partnership, funded by the federal Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) program, reaps benefits for all involved. With its focus on outputs and the specific needs of schools in the state, Texas Tech is pioneering a model for the nation



to follow. Producing effective teachers ready on day one, in turn, better prepares students to be productive citizens and contribute to the economy.

Bilingual Teachers Bridge the Gap

Pumping talent into the school systems yields a huge boon for districts, particularly those of high-need such as New Caney ISD. At a time when many states are facing teacher shortages, New Caney has an added challenge to find bilingual teachers. Those like Briones can “bridge the gap” between faculty members and the high population of bilingual students they serve, notes Monica McCann, Texas Tech site coordinator for the district.

“There’s a difference between a bilingual teacher and a quality bilingual teacher,” McCann says. “Quality teachers are hard to find. Getting TAP-ready teachers is a big benefit.” McCann directly refers to the advantage of being versed in the rubric, which she sees as a “lifelong learning tool.”

With experience as a TAP teacher in the district, she knows firsthand the value of seamlessly transitioning into an environment in which everyone is working

towards the same goals. “It’s so much easier to teach TAP from the beginning,” she explains. “Everyone is learning together.”

Briones was so enthusiastic about the prospects of TechTeach that he joined the program after finishing his first semester at UHD. He was placed at Tavola Elementary School on the bilingual track, then hired by the district after completion of the program. He hasn’t looked back.

“I have received the best training a student teacher can receive,” he says. “Learning the rubric is a game-changer. It completely details what a successful teacher needs to do in the classroom.”

Experiencing the full cycle of a school year has benefits, too, Briones adds, as it allows you to “dig down into everything you need to know as a teacher.” Besides instruction, this involves trainings, meetings and paperwork.

The program has also strengthened his ties to the community that helped shape him into the teacher that he is today. An English Language Learner himself with parents from Mexico, Briones learned



English mostly from attending ESL classes in the district. His parents only spoke Spanish, and to this day, speak little English. These experiences help Briones empathize with his students on a personal level.

“I am at the best place where I can be at this moment, remembering what it was like as a kid struggling to learn another language,” Briones says.

Briones is currently pursuing his master’s degree in educational leadership at the University of St. Thomas in Houston, where he is specializing in diverse language learners to maximize his impact on students in New Caney ISD. He says, “The best part is knowing that this is the beginning of my career.”

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RAUL BRIONES

The Student Track

*Catching Up with Allison Denise Scott
Special Education Teacher Candidate
TechTeach Cohort 2016-17
New Caney ISD, Texas*

Allison Denise Scott is a TechTeach candidate performing her yearlong residency at Porter Elementary School in Texas’ New Caney ISD. She is currently on the special education track teaching under the Positive Accommodations, Curriculum, and Emotional Support (PACES) behavioral program. She speaks with NIET about her experiences in TechTeach and the impact the program has made on her budding career.

NIET: When did you know that you wanted to become a teacher?

AS: I was interested in teaching in kindergarten or first grade at Shepherd Primary School, located in Shepherd ISD, 35 minutes north of New Caney. It was Career Day and my mother, who was a teacher at the time, gave me her apple book bag and let me borrow an old gradebook. After graduating from Shepherd High School, I studied mass communications at Lone Star College-Kingwood. I started teaching Sunday School at church and thought that maybe I would go into teaching as a career.

NIET: How did you learn about TechTeach?

AS: I heard about TechTeach at Lone Star College, where I received my AAT [Associate of Arts in Teaching]. We were told that through the program, candidates would be able to complete courses online and student-teach for a year. I was hooked. It was exactly the program I needed.

NIET: Many teacher preparation programs offer a semester or less of training in schools. Why do you think a yearlong residency is so beneficial?

AS: You get to experience the school year from beginning to end. We are there for the very first day of school and for the professional development a week beforehand. This allows us to see it and live it. We experience the first-day jitters right along with the other teachers—not being able to sleep the night before! Then we go through



Christmas and Spring Break to the end of school. Along the way we learn how to work with students and parents, addressing any concerns that they have, in addition to learning how to teach. This program is overly preparing me for what to expect!

NIET: How have you and your students grown since the beginning of the year?

AS: Lesson pacing and structure were identified as my areas of refinement. I've noticed that my lessons are more organized. Student growth is everything to me, both academically and personally. I started the program teaching second grade here and two of my second-grade students are in PACES. I learned how to provide extra scaffolding in my lessons to help

them progress, and I'm seeing gains made across the group of the five students in the program. I've also developed meaningful relationships with them. I am learning what makes them mad and happy. There was a resistant student in the beginning who is now warming up to me! I consider that a success.

NIET: What have you discovered about yourself in TechTeach and working in a TAP school that you may not have known otherwise?

AS: I didn't know that I was meant to be a teacher. I'm told that it looks like it comes easily, but it's hard! I've learned a lot about my own personal growth.

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.

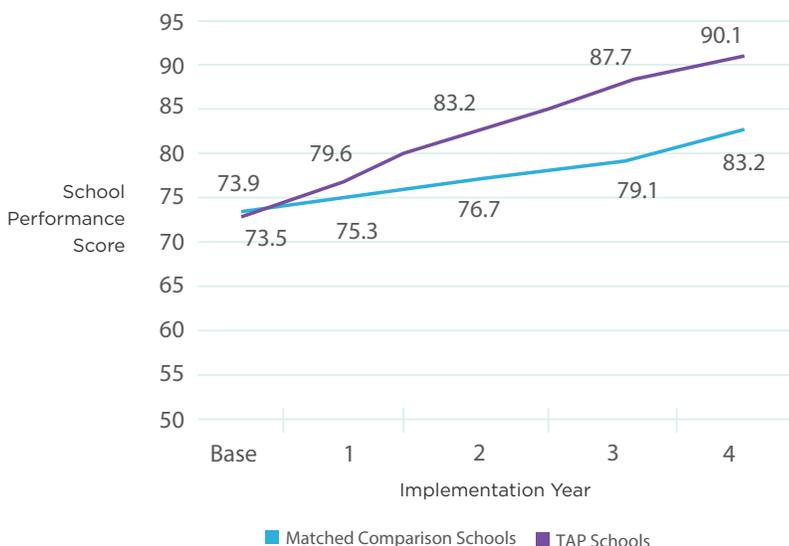
TIF helps districts enable effective educators in high-need schools and subjects to increase their compensation through additional pay based on multiple measures of effectiveness and for taking on new roles and responsibilities.

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



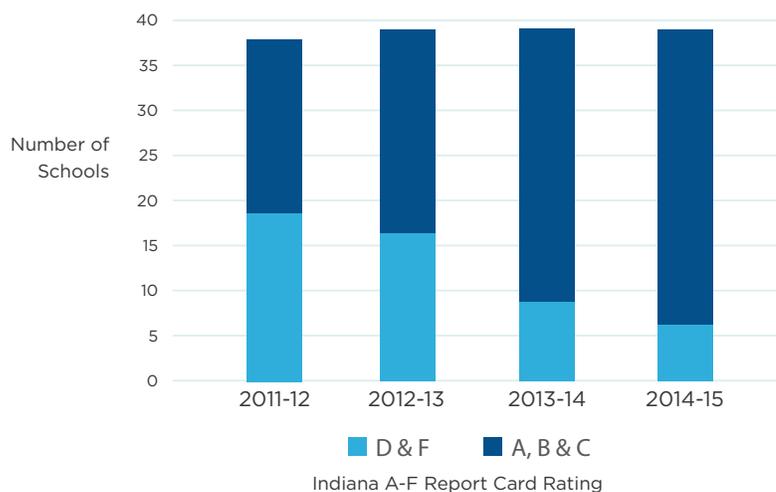
to transform the way they prepare, recruit, place, evaluate, compensate and promote teachers and school leaders. The state has used the most impactful work funded by TIF to guide significant changes in state policy and funding.

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.

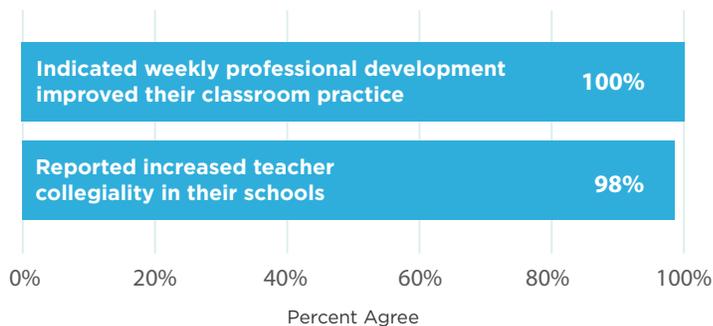
In addition to overall academic progress at the school and district levels, Indiana schools using TAP were also able to close historic achievement gaps. TAP schools reduced the achievement gap for black and Hispanic students in both reading and math by more than three percent. By comparison, matched 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

Higher expectations for classroom instruction were accompanied by significantly higher levels of support from administrators and school-based teacher leaders. This resulted in higher student achievement, including one district making the highest average ACT score in its history.

FIGURE 3: IOWA TEACHERS STRONGLY SUPPORT TAP SYSTEM ELEMENTS



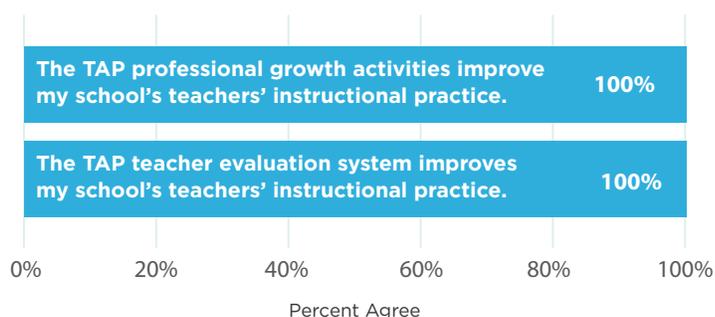
leaders. This resulted in higher student achievement, including one district making the highest average ACT score in its history. At the same time, teachers reported high levels of satisfaction with weekly professional learning, increased collegiality and an increased level of success in their work with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

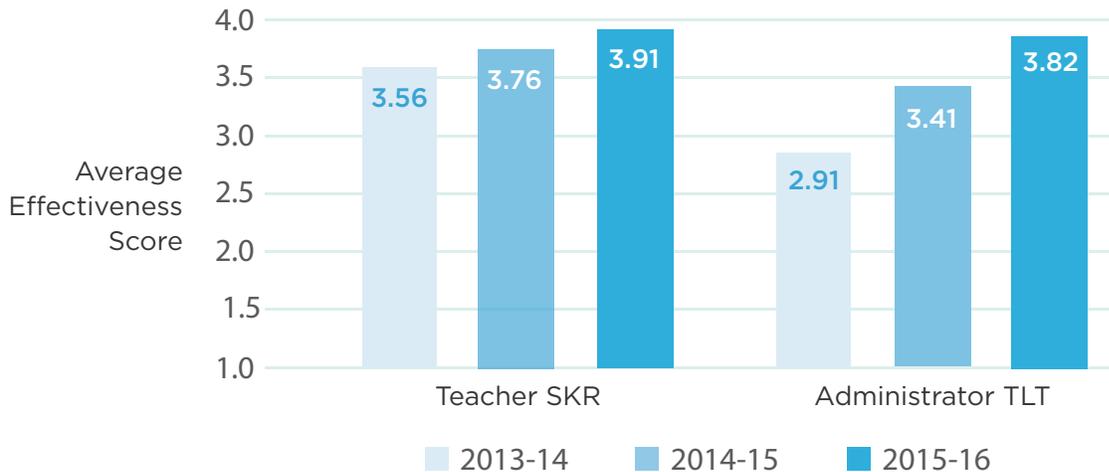


These improvements have enabled the schools to help their high-need students make greater-than-expected gains over multiple years. Hmong College Prep Academy's High School, for example, moved from among the lowest performing five percent of schools in the state before the grant began to obtaining Celebration 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.”

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.

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.”

ONE DISTRICT, ONE VISION

Putting teacher talent first, Dr. Cade Brumley led a team of DeSoto Parish educators and their students to achieve their first-ever “A” rating, growing from 45th to 14th best-performing district in Louisiana.

Walk inside any school in DeSoto Parish, located just south of Shreveport, Louisiana, and you’ll feel a sense of urgency in the air as teachers work together to meet the needs of every student. The school’s instructional framework is dedicated to the task. At the helm is the principal, assisted by master and mentor teachers, who share in the duties of driving instruction.

Teaching behind a closed door may be the norm elsewhere, but here in DeSoto Parish, teachers exchange best practices through weekly professional development led by master and mentor teachers.

Forget the brief classroom walk-throughs that tend to limit principals in providing meaningful feedback to teachers for sharpening their craft. Teachers use a research-based rubric as the bedrock of their instruction, carefully crafted to provide a powerful tool to harness strengths, identify weaknesses and help all educators work towards continuous improvement. Teachers are observed on the rubric by the school’s leadership team of administrators, mentor and master teachers, receiving regular follow-up year-round.

And through this robust system of advancing educator effectiveness, teachers have the opportunity to receive performance-based compensation determined by their growth in the classroom and the progress of their students.

As the schools implement these supports—based on a national model known as TAP: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement—they remain focused on a singular mission. It’s a credo that

their superintendent, Dr. Cade Brumley, makes sure to instill in every employee of the district:

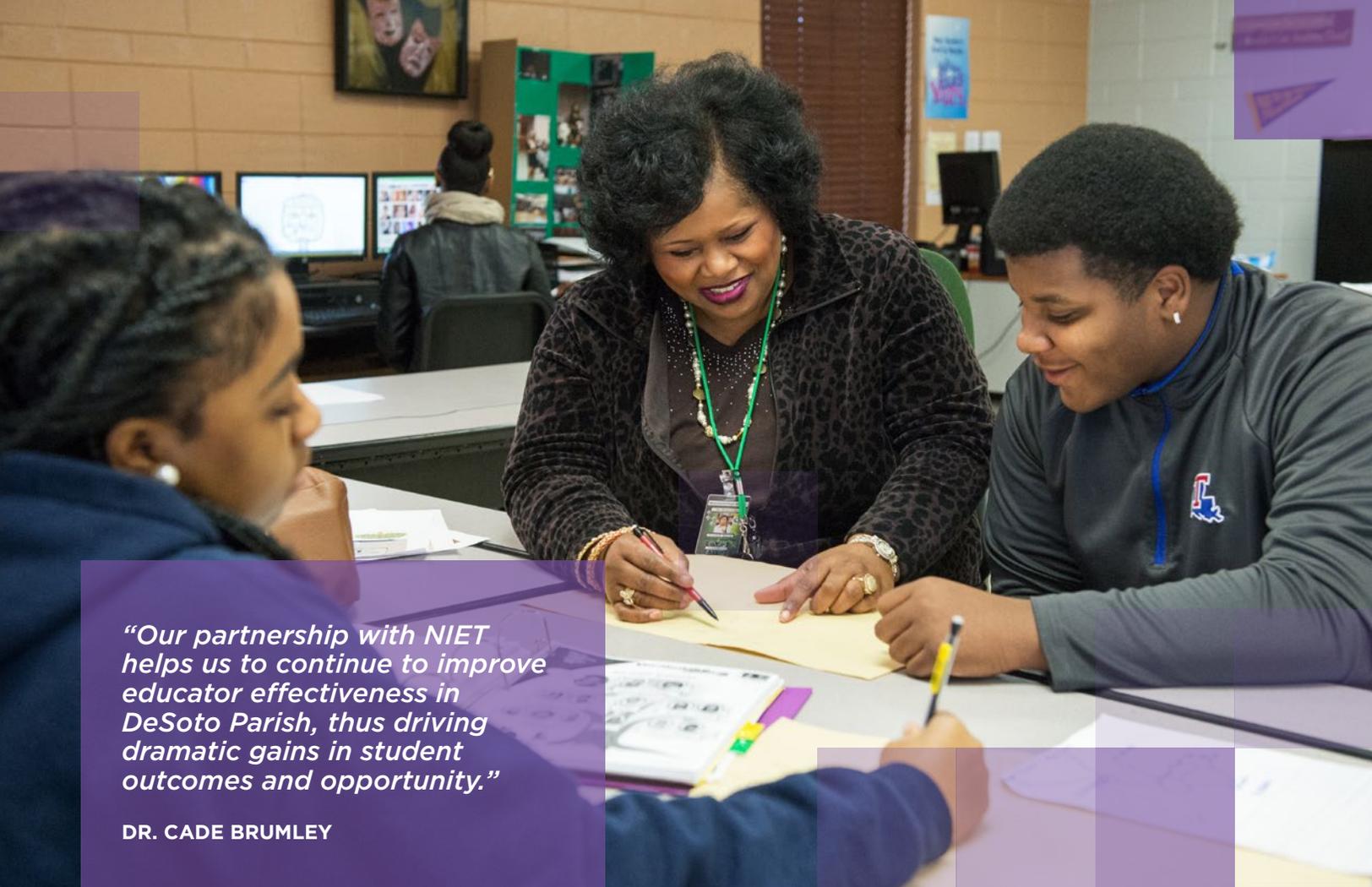
“DeSoto serves to care for our students, ensure their learning, and celebrate their graduation as citizens prepared to transform their dreams into realities.”

The vision is embedded in the work of every staff member in the school buildings to district administrators and Brumley himself.

“Every decision we make advances our district toward this mission,” he explains. But he quickly notes that he cannot do this work alone. “I’m flanked by an amazing leadership team and a talented instructional staff.”

Their effectiveness and cohesion are reflected in their historic growth in Louisiana, spanning virtually every area while serving a student body of whom 67 percent are economically disadvantaged:

- “A” State Rating
- Ranked 14th out of over 70 districts in academic performance, up from 45th in 2010. Every school improved its performance score.
- 96 percent graduation rate, up 20 points since 2013
- Largest ACT growth in Louisiana
- Identification of gifted and talented students more than doubled
- Top 10 district in Louisiana for improving outcomes for special education students
- Twice named to the National Advanced Placement (AP) Honor Roll



“Our partnership with NIET helps us to continue to improve educator effectiveness in DeSoto Parish, thus driving dramatic gains in student outcomes and opportunity.”

DR. CADE BRUMLEY

Building a competent team to achieve these remarkable results did not happen by accident. At the district level, Brumley puts a significant investment in the hiring process, centralizing applications and placing “great emphasis on recruiting a talented pool of applicants,” he notes.

“Our human resources department is constantly looking at alternative ways to employ the best people,” Brumley says. “Those most qualified are passionate, curious and intelligent, with an eye on improving student outcomes as an ultimate goal.”

After they are selected by a school-based hiring team, teachers go through an “onboarding” process, in which they receive a targeted level of support during their first year in the district. From day one, they are briefed on the district’s key principles, vision and expectations. These elements are reinforced at the district office and at the schools where they are assigned throughout the duration of their tenure. Through the instructional benefits offered via the TAP System, coupled by a district effort to develop competitive compensation packages and unify the schools under a strong vision, Brumley aims to retain effective teachers over the long haul.

The system of support embedded at the district and school levels motivates talented educators to stay. It helps to alleviate the typical challenges such as changes in leadership, disjointed goals, revolving “education fads” and decreased budgets. Brumley explains that other district leaders may take a budget, then decide how to spend it. That, he says, is a mistake. It should be the other way around: “Because we prioritize our mission, we fund it.”

Brumley readily admits that this process has not been without difficulties; he has faced tough decisions. Over the last few years, his revenue decreased by 40 percent due to the area’s economic decline, complicating negotiations. Calling himself “logical and practical,” Brumley never wavered from his target of “putting talent in front of our children.”

There’s no room for complacency. Brumley sees these results not as a destination, but as an opportunity.

“We’re not done yet,” he says. “Every moment must matter for our students.”



“Every moment must matter for our students.”
DR. CADE BRUMLEY

In this spirit, Brumley is relentless in pursuing innovative avenues that advance his vision. Some of those include robust outside partnerships, such as the continuation of work with the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET)—the organization that manages and supports the TAP System. The partnership has benefitted from grants from the Teacher Incentive Fund and School Improvement Grant programs of the U.S. Department of Education, as well as state and local funding for educational excellence.

“Our partnership with NIET helps us to continue to improve educator effectiveness in DeSoto Parish, thus driving dramatic gains in student outcomes and opportunity,” Brumley says. The district has been recognized nationally by NIET for its success in increasing the effectiveness of classroom instruction and building district and school systems to support these improvements.

In addition, DeSoto Parish Schools recently partnered with Northwestern State University in Louisiana— Brumley’s alma mater—to help prepare teacher candidates for the classroom. At both middle and high schools, the district joins the

university in training candidates over the summer for a yearlong residency placement at those schools. At year’s end, the candidates are certified by the university and have the opportunity to be hired by the district for the following year. Brumley sees this partnership as a proactive way to “recruit our own students,” grow talent from within, and meet the demands of high-quality instruction.

This 360-approach to learning is not surprising coming from Brumley, who is a lifelong educator and learner himself. At six years old, in front of his first-grade classroom, he announced his aspirations to become an educator. Since that time, he has worked as a teacher and principal, in the Caddo and Sabine parishes respectively, before serving in DeSoto Parish in 2010 as assistant superintendent. In 2012, he was elevated to the top role.

“I am completely humbled to serve in this job and do this work that I do each and every day for students and DeSoto Parish as a whole,” Brumley says. “I don’t take this job lightly and don’t disconnect from the work we get to do and the opportunities we get to expand on our mission.”



EXAMINING THE EVIDENCE

NIET's Initiatives Improve Educator Effectiveness and Student Achievement

At the 2016 American Educational Research Association (AERA) national conference, the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) presented five research studies. These studies illustrate the impact of NIET's partnerships on student achievement, teacher and school leader effectiveness, retention of effective educators, new teacher preparation and school climate.

- Narrowing the Gap: Examining Achievement Gaps in Indiana TAP Schools
- Impact Evaluation of the TAP System in Orangeburg School District Three (South Carolina)
- Building Relationships With School Partners and University Faculty to Enhance Teacher Preparation
- Measuring and Assessing Classroom Instruction: Properties of TAP Observational Rubric Scores
- Voices from the Field: Teachers' Reported Experiences Amid Education Reforms

In addition to the research studies presented at AERA demonstrating the impact of TAP on educator effectiveness and student achievement growth, two additional research papers were released focusing on the impact of TAP in high-need schools in rural Tennessee and high-need urban schools in Phoenix, Arizona.

Increasing Student Learning Growth in Rural Tennessee Communities

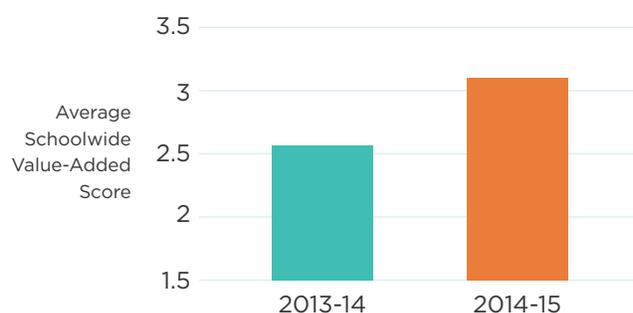
With support from a federal Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF-4) grant, NIET partnered with five rural

Tennessee school districts to implement TAP in 11 schools beginning in the 2012-13 school year. The first year (2012-13) was a planning year; implementation of the TAP System began during the 2013-14 school year. Barnett and Hudgens (2016) examined the impact of TAP implementation on teacher and administrator effectiveness and student achievement.

The authors drew from Skills, Knowledge, and Responsibility (SKR) scores as a measure of teacher effectiveness. To be considered effective, teachers must have received an SKR score of 2.5 or higher on a one to five scale. In 2013-14 and 2014-15, 100 percent of teachers met the SKR effectiveness criteria.

As teacher and administrator effectiveness improved, authors examined the impact on student achievement. Examining value-added scores across time, they found 10 of the 11 schools remained stable or improved. Further, across 2013-14 and 2014-15, the overall schoolwide value-added average increased from 2.55 to 3.09, as seen in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: TENNESSEE TAP SCHOOLS INCREASE STUDENT LEARNING GROWTH



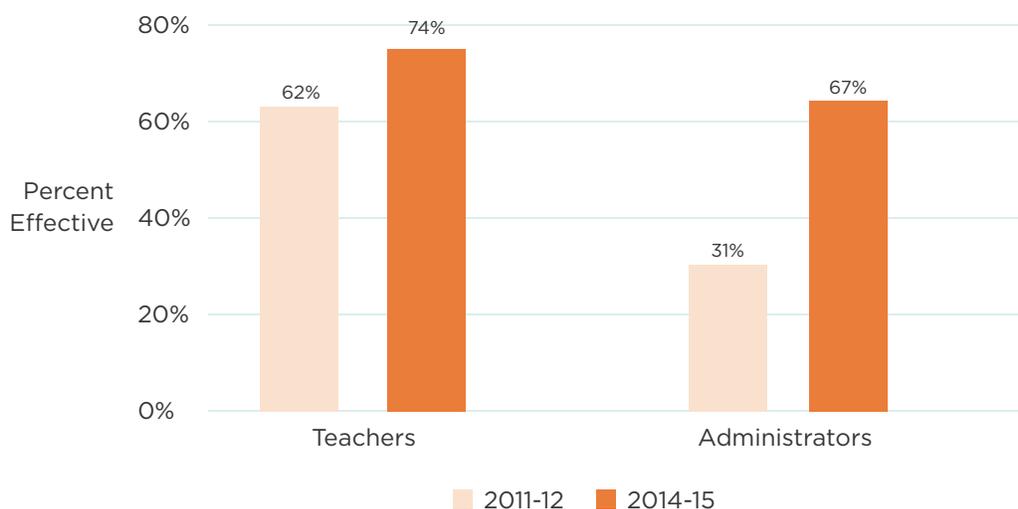
Increasing the Effectiveness of Teachers and School Leaders in High-Need Arizona Schools

With support from a U.S. Department of Education Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF-3) grant, the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University (ASU) partnered with NIET, 10 Arizona public school districts, and the Arizona Department of Education to implement the TAP System in 58 schools. Titled the Arizona Ready-for-Rigor (AZRfR) Project, the grant provided the participating schools with continuous assistance and support from master and mentor teachers, professional development opportunities and competitive payouts based on effectiveness ratings generated through classroom observations and growth in student achievement.

The ASU College Research & Evaluation Services Team's assessment of the project's impact revealed successes in the following five areas:

1. **Increases in Teacher Effectiveness:** Teacher effectiveness was based on SKR scores, schoolwide value-added scores and classroom value-added scores (if applicable). The percentage of teachers deemed effective increased from 62 percent in 2011-12 to 74 percent in 2014-15, as seen in Figure 2.
2. **Increases in Administrator Effectiveness:** Administrator effectiveness was based on four measures for principals and three measures for assistant principals. The percentage of administrators deemed effective increased from 31 percent in 2011-12 to 67 percent in 2014-15, as seen in Figure 2.
3. **Increases in Retention of Highly Effective Educators:** The percentage of teachers who met effectiveness criteria in one school year and were retained into the next school year was examined. The percentage of effective teachers who were retained into the next school year increased each year.
4. **Improvements in School Culture:** Teachers responded to a survey on working conditions. The percentage of teachers responding favorably on elements of school culture increased from 46 percent in 2011-12 to 78 percent in 2014-15.
5. **Improvement in Student Achievement:** Arizona schools received A-F letter grades as part of the accountability grading system for all public charter and district schools. For schools that began implementing the TAP System in 2010-11, the number of schools earning an A increased from 0 (of 9) in 2010-11 to 3 (of 9) in 2014-15.

FIGURE 2: ARIZONA READY-FOR-RIGOR TEACHER & ADMINISTRATOR EFFECTIVENESS





5 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT NIET



1 NIET trained higher education faculty at institutions across South Carolina on a new rubric.

The new South Carolina Teaching Standards 4.0 is based on the TAP Rubric. NIET is training higher education faculty, district and school leaders statewide.

2 NIET has built multiple online portals for states, districts and university partners ...

... including web-based education platforms for the states of Tennessee, Texas, Ohio and South Carolina. This experience is reflected in the new Educator Effectiveness Preparation & Support System (EE PASS) portal which allows educators to access an expansive library of teaching tools, video examples and trainings.

3 In addition to supporting TAP System schools and districts, NIET works with districts to implement a variety of initiatives advancing educator effectiveness.

NIET's newest grant partners include districts using a range of approaches, including the Educator Effectiveness Series training and resources in the EE PASS online portal, as well as the comprehensive TAP System.

4 The NIET Teaching Standards have been adopted by leading teacher preparation programs.

The NIET Teaching Standards have been adopted by teacher preparation programs across the country including more than 10 leading universities. With a grounding in the NIET rubric through coursework and field experiences, teacher candidates are better prepared to be effective as they enter their own classrooms.

5 NIET evaluates and communicates to national audiences the impact of innovative work to advance educator effectiveness.

The Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program and the Supporting Effective Educator Development grants were authorized in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), providing a continuing source of funding for state and district innovation.

TEACHER EXCELLENCE → STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT → OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

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An initiative of the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching

TAP is funded in part by multiyear Federal Teacher Incentive Fund grants awarded to the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching.

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