From its inception, NIET’s work has been to understand and promote the conditions that are necessary for great teaching and learning to thrive. This is naturally of interest to leaders and policymakers, who bear responsibility for ensuring our education system serves all students. Through its two decades of work across states and districts, NIET has provided many valuable and innovative lessons that have informed policies at the federal and state levels that are designed to better support teachers and student learning. Here is a look back on how the principles of NIET’s work and the successes of partner districts and states have led to noteworthy policy advancements.
Formalizing these roles and having teacher leaders in every building has been the fuel to get things done.”

Ryan Wise
Director | Iowa Department of Education
IMPACT ON STATE POLICY

Compensation for Teacher Leadership and Teacher Performance

NIET believes that exceptional teachers should be rewarded for their expertise and ability to impact student learning. Great teachers also deserve career advancement opportunities that allow them to use their instructional expertise and earn additional compensation for taking on additional responsibilities. These principles of NIET’s work have informed important state-led efforts to help ensure that excellent teachers are paid for their skills and accomplishments.

Enacted in 2014-15, the Iowa Teacher Leadership and Compensation (TLC) System is a landmark policy that solidified the state as a national leader on teacher leadership. The Iowa TLC System provides $163 million in annual funds to help districts reward effective teachers with leadership opportunities and higher pay, attract promising new teachers with competitive starting salaries and more support, and foster greater collaboration so teachers can learn from each other.

As the new state system was under development, a TIF grant allowed NIET to work closely with Saydel and Central Decatur community school districts to provide a powerful, on-the-ground example of teacher leadership and compensation reform for others in Iowa. In particular, the grant demonstrated how rural schools could use teacher leaders to provide rich professional development and coaching to their peers, reducing the need to rely on a limited supply of external professional development providers.

More recently, Texas and Indiana have launched grant programs to support teacher leader roles, informed by NIET’s track record of success in each state. In 2018, the Texas Education Agency announced a Teacher Leadership Grant program that offered up to $4 million to create instructional teacher leadership roles at schools identified for improvement. In 2019, the Indiana State Legislature passed H.B. 1008, which authorized $3.5 million in funding over two years for districts to implement career ladder programs. Continued Next Page
Frameworks to Support Instructional Improvement

What is good teaching? How do you foster good teaching at scale?

*These are two fundamental questions states must answer if they want to nurture teacher growth in every school.* In the past decade, NIET has helped states answer these questions through the development and adoption of statewide frameworks for teaching. The NIET Teaching Standards Rubric, a set of holistic teaching standards that outlines expectations for teachers across various indicators, is currently in use in eight states.

Four states have adopted NIET’s rubric in whole or in part based on the results of schools that implemented the TAP System through a federal Teacher Incentive Grant. In 2011, Tennessee launched a new system for teacher evaluation and support based on NIET’s rubric, the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM). NIET supported the state by providing in-depth training and certification for tens of thousands of educators statewide over the summer of 2011, as well as offering an online portal for annual evaluator certification and video-based resources for teachers. NIET has since provided ongoing support to the state-level TEAM coaches serving school districts across the state.

In 2014, Texas piloted NIET’s TAP System for teacher classroom observation in 50 school districts. Based on the success of the pilot, the state contracted with NIET to help design the teacher observation and feedback portion of its revamped evaluation system, T-TESS (Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System). NIET also supported the state in building an online portal to house teacher evaluation data and resources.

South Carolina adapted, and then adopted, NIET’s rubric as the South Carolina Teaching Standards 4.0 in 2018. As the state prepared to roll it out to all schools in the state, NIET provided training on the teaching standards to both districts and educator preparation programs to ensure alignment between teacher candidates’ preparation experience and districts’ expectations for quality instruction.

And just last year in 2019, Iowa adopted the NIET Teaching Standards as its statewide instructional framework. NIET has since provided training for schools and higher education institutions across the state on how to effectively use the rubric to improve teaching and learning. Through a set of teaching standards, teachers share a common language for great instruction and have a clear vision of excellent teaching that moves student achievement.

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PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY

Twenty years ago, these conditions and opportunities were exceedingly rare in the average American school. Today, however, there are many districts and states that have made professional development a priority and advanced teacher leadership opportunities. The fact that these principles are reflected in federal and state policies is a promising sign that schools across our nation are increasingly providing teachers with the support necessary to grow their practices and help them impact student achievement. These policies, combined with NIET’s work over the years, have helped schools make strides toward the goal of ensuring every student has access to a teacher capable of providing an excellent and equitable education. While there is far more work to be done to reach this goal, the path forward is clearer than ever: If we invest in teacher leadership and meaningful professional development, educators – and their students – will thrive.

Initiatives to Support New Teachers

The first years of a teacher’s career are perhaps the most critical to his or her professional development. In many schools supported by NIET, new teachers are provided intensive support systems and professional learning opportunities that help them develop into more effective teachers.

Since 2014, the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) has awarded over $9 million in grants to teacher preparation providers and their school system partners to advance a shift to full-year residencies for all aspiring teachers. By 2020, Louisiana will have established a cadre of 2,500 trained mentor teachers that support yearlong residents. Based on NIET’s track record of success in the state, BESE cited NIET as “a partner with proven experience” that could help districts train and implement mentor teacher roles.
NIET KNOWS THAT
TEACHERS LEARN AND GROW BEST
when they are provided coaching and professional learning opportunities. Through peer teacher leaders, career advancement opportunities, and performance incentives, educators can feel acknowledged and rewarded for great teaching.