

In Conversation:

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How did you learn about TAP and NIET, and what was it about this approach that made you want to help South Carolina's schools implement TAP?

I served as South Carolina's State Superintendent of Education for two terms (1999-2007), and each year attended the Milken National Education Conference. During one of the conferences, TAP was presented by Lowell Milken and the late Lew Solmon as a career ladder for teachers. Having been a classroom teacher myself, I immediately believed in the principles of TAP and wanted to initiate the program in South Carolina for our teachers. TAP allows teachers to pursue several levels of teacher leadership—career, mentor, and master teacher. TAP not only enhances the professional development of teachers, it also tracks the progress of student learning and growth.

How did the state build off the principles of TAP through policy and statewide initiatives?

During my tenure as State Superintendent of Education, I worked with several school districts to introduce TAP as a pilot project for teacher development. The school districts that implemented TAP with fidelity saw increased teacher effectiveness and student achievement. Although TAP has not been implemented in all of the schools in South Carolina, the seeds of TAP were instrumental in adopting

the NIET Rubric as the state teacher observation system, which is being implemented in the majority of school districts across the state.

What made NIET different from other partners?

NIET provides hands-on coaching to states interested in implementing TAP, and it collects and analyzes data that is the basis for the development of the TAP teaching skills, knowledge and responsibilities, and performance standards. NIET's school improvement solutions and teacher development are based on years of research and observation of teachers in the classroom. NIET celebrates the teaching profession and has a positive, collaborative approach to improving student achievement.

What do you think NIET should focus on in our next 20 years?

NIET'S focus should be to take TAP and NIET's Teaching Standards Rubric to scale in all states. Both TAP and the Teaching Standards Rubric need to be adopted as national models for improving teacher education preparation programs, teacher effectiveness, student individual learning, and academic growth. ●

