



Letter from the CEO

NIET partners,

When I was writing the 2019 Annual Report letter, I had no idea that just a few months later we would all begin to pivot in ways no one anticipated. While these pivots have been challenging, they have provided new opportunities and ways of thinking. **Today, NIET has successfully moved from pivoting to excelling in new work and new partnerships.** And yet, NIET has also stayed consistent and focused in our work to support educators and drive toward excellence. It has been this balance of staying true to our mission while transforming our efforts to meet the here and now that has made 2020 a success. This year's letter reflects on this journey.

Let's start with a reflection on our partners. We are grateful we work alongside **246 partners who have persevered through unforeseen challenges this year.** Some of our long-time partners were just figuring out teaching in a pandemic when they were hit by multiple hurricanes — and they quickly recovered to meet students' needs. We have worked alongside educators successfully navigating remote learning on a Native American reservation hit hard by COVID-19. We have worked with district leaders and principals who have remained laser-focused on instructional leadership in spite of the many pressing safety and operational needs. And we have had the chance to support more rural districts, where both resources and training were in short supply, and work alongside them as they started school safely. Most inspiringly, we have watched teacher leaders across the country become true guides for their peers on how to teach in 2020, doing everything possible to stay one step ahead. **Our partners have been and continue to be our inspiration and our focus.** While this year has been different, our collective resolve to grow students has never been stronger.

As I **reflect on NIET's team**, I see a group of able and agile superstars who have done whatever it takes to drive instructional excellence. We went from final preparations for our 1,500-person annual conference one week to providing virtual training, free webinars and professional development modules the next, including launching a website that has been accessed 28,500 times. We have continued to provide open resources for educators every week for the past nine months, all while launching virtual training for tens of thousands of educators across multiple states. These training sessions filled up fast — more than 3,000 teachers and principals in South Carolina and

Louisiana signed up within the first week — and have received overwhelmingly positive feedback.

More than anything, the NIET team has been a model of continuous improvement and lifelong learning, **and while how we go about this work may have changed, the “why” has not.** Great teaching is still great teaching, and NIET has embraced the work of developing more than 50 resources, trainings, templates, and tools to show what effective instruction looks like in a virtual classroom. We have been able to reach more teachers, leaders, and schools than ever before to share ideas for taking their teaching to the next level, whether virtual or in-person. We have developed new relationships with educators from Alaska to South Carolina while expanding our work with longstanding partners. In many ways, this experience as shown us new opportunities and new ways we can support teachers that we may not have discovered otherwise — and that is work we want to continue for the decades to come.

This year also gave us a chance to re-center on NIET's commitment to equity. **When we began 20 years ago, our work was — and still is — designed to ensure that every student, in every school, has an excellent teacher every day.** We all know that far too often, Black, Hispanic, and Native American students; English learners; students with special education needs; and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds face systemic barriers that impact our classrooms and limit students' opportunities for success. The TAP System for Teacher and Student Advancement was a bold idea to say there is another way, one that empowers teachers and builds capacity to create long-term improvement in schools. That concept, which is embedded in all of NIET's work, drives every single one of our team members. **We know that when we invest in teachers, we invest in equity.** The stories in this annual report will speak to the powerful impact we have had on student outcomes.

Thank you for the work you are doing, and please do not hesitate to let us know how NIET can continue to support you in whatever comes next.



Dr. Candice McQueen

Chief Executive Officer

National Institute for Excellence in Teaching