

In Conversation:

CLAY CORLEY | DESOTO PARISH SUPERINTENDENT

DeSoto Parish Schools in northwest Louisiana has kept its focus on educator effectiveness across three district leadership transitions. When Clay Corley began his role as superintendent in 2018, he used the moment as an opportunity to refocus and go deeper. At the time DeSoto began to implement TAP in 2008-09, student success was lagging. The district's graduation rate that year was 67.8%, and in 2010, the district ranked #45 in the state. Thanks to educators' work, that has changed. In 2016, DeSoto earned its first "A" rating from the state, and on the 2019 LEAP test, DeSoto Parish ranked #12 overall.

How has NIET shaped your career as an educator?

As superintendent of a TAP district, I appreciate the systems approach to improving student achievement. Each of the four principles embraced by NIET (instructional excellence, collaborative learning, reflective culture, and collective leadership) is addressed in a very proactive, systematic way on every campus across our district. As a leader, it is comforting to know that each of these four key levers to improving student outcomes is being addressed every day to a high degree of effectiveness.

What is something you received through NIET's support that you wish every educator had, and why?

No matter what the level of support provided by NIET has been, it has always been first class. From the tools and resources provided through EE PASS, to the one-on-one support provided by our NIET support team, we could not ask for a more personal, yet professional, partnership. Personally, I feel like the most vital piece of support NIET brings to the table is the challenge to be better.

Why did you decide to continue DeSoto's partnership with NIET once you took on the role of superintendent?

One of my greatest concerns as a school system leader is ensuring equality across the district. Through our partnership with NIET, and by closely following the practices established through the TAP System, I have peace of mind in knowing that all of our children are being impacted in the same way across our system.

What should NIET focus on in our next 20 years?

I believe the investment being made in leadership, through the Teacher Leadership Series and the development of the Principal Skills Rubric, will be a gamechanger for ensuring that our leaders are equipped with the skills and resources to impact growth in not only themselves, but ultimately in the teachers and students they serve. I believe by placing a greater focus on leadership development, the same cycle of growth and expectation for teachers makes its next stop at the principal/aspiring principal's door. By focusing on growth of our leaders through the same lens we use to improve teachers, we will create one voice, one language, and one common set of expectations. ●

