



TRANSITION TO VIRTUAL LEARNING

A hybrid environment — like that seen at DeSoto Parish's Mansfield Middle School — is now the norm for most of NIET's partners. Since March, NIET has been focused on ensuring that as educators get new tools to do virtual and blended learning, they know how to use those effectively. As an organization, NIET has refocused on effective teaching strategies and how to transform them for an online classroom — and we are sharing those strategies with educators across the country.

Teaching and Leading in a New Normal

NIET did not hesitate this spring to come up with new ways of supporting schools and districts across the country. Within a few days, NIET had canceled its national conference and was sharing webinars, specific strategies, and open resources that provided practical advice and considerations for how leaders and educators could make the most of the sudden shift away from in-person learning. NIET's transition and collaboration have created a foundation for how to best support educators in the months ahead as we learn what 2021 has in store.

Creating Remote Learning Resources for Teachers and Leaders

To address immediate needs, NIET launched a remote learning webpage to include the top resources for supporting a consistent, instructionally rich learning environment for students, adding new tools and resources as those were developed. Since launch, the remote learning site has been viewed 28,500 times. Additionally, NIET started releasing updates in a weekly newsletter that included new, accessible resources for remote teaching and learning in each edition, and was read by tens of thousands of educators.

To assist educators in adapting their practice, NIET released a set of no-cost, self-paced learning modules to help teachers center on effective teaching strategies and provided templates and tools to plan for virtual instruction. Additionally, NIET rolled out several short videos highlighting specific instructional strategies, such as how to best support diverse learners in the virtual space, how to provide quality feedback remotely, and how to utilize success criteria and exemplars in a virtual classroom. To help teachers understand what high-quality virtual instruction looks and sounds like, a new companion tool to the *NIET Teaching Standards Rubric* was released with strategies for effective synchronous and asynchronous instruction aligned to every indicator — and it became one of the most popular resources NIET has ever shared.

Professional Development in an Online Environment

As it became clear that remote or hybrid instruction would continue, NIET immediately began expanding training opportunities to include virtual options. NIET's National Summer Institute shifted to a virtual platform, ultimately serving 500 educators on best practices for remote instruction and support. District leaders also needed targeted advice. Tapping into the expertise of partner superintendents, NIET developed a series of articles and webinars focused on strategies for leading clearly and effectively from a distance. NIET's *2020-21 Planning and Support Guide* provided district and school leaders with guidance for multiple learning scenarios schools faced as they prepared for back-to-school.

In the fall, NIET expanded its online support to offer a three-part series focusing on high-quality remote instruction to prepare and support teachers and administrators. We are continuing to work with districts, and at the state level we have partnered with South Carolina and Louisiana to offer educators a series of targeted 90-minute virtual sessions focused on planning for virtual lessons, delivering high-quality virtual instruction, and creating an engaging virtual environment.

Impact

The impact of NIET's quick response to providing virtual support is clear. During the 2020-21 school year, more than 10,000 educators will be registered for online training through the South Carolina and Louisiana statewide partnerships, and thousands more have already received training over the past few months. Educators from around the country have utilized NIET's new suite of resources and services and shared what has been most helpful for them. In 2020, NIET expanded our reach beyond current partners to new areas and audiences, and our organization will continue supporting teachers, school and district leaders, and students who are navigating the next phase of teaching and learning — whatever that may look like.



28,500

number of times the remote learning page has been viewed since its launch

Key Resources and Partner Spotlights

Here are a few pieces of NIET's work during the pandemic that have been most effective at supporting educators across the country.

2020-21 Planning and Support Guide

Summer 2020 presented a unique circumstance for district leaders as they faced the unanticipated challenges of planning for an unknown fall semester. NIET quickly released the *2020-21 Planning and Support Guide* by the end of May. The resource included guiding questions and steps for creating a plan that prepared leaders for four different learning scenarios: all students attending school in-person, some students attending in-person while some attend virtually, all students attending school virtually, and students intermittently learning remotely.

Additional resources accompanied the tool, including spotlights on three specific planning challenges:

- *Unfinished and Continued Learning: Planning for the Recovery of Standards and Content*
- *Leveraging All Instructional Staff: Staffing to Support Continuity of Learning for Students*



NIET Specialist Angela Davis joined Principal Donnie Love at Plaquemine High School in Iberville Parish to analyze student work and teachers' planning materials.

- *Planning for Diverse Learners: Creating Plans for Re-entry That Maximize Accessibility for Diverse Learners*

NIET's *2020-21 Planning and Support Guide* has been viewed nearly 12,000 times, and has become a staple on district and state websites and in planning toolkits and articles across the web, including the Arizona Department of Education's guidelines, the Alabama Department of Education's *Roadmap to Reopening Schools*, the Minnesota Department of Education's guidance for 2020-21 school year planning, the Connecticut Association of Schools website, EducationNext.org, and more.

STATEWIDE VIRTUAL INSTRUCTION TRAINING IN LOUISIANA

This fall, the Louisiana Department of Education launched a new partnership with NIET to provide a training opportunity similar to South Carolina's but tailored to the resources and rubrics in use by Louisiana's schools.

In addition to providing synchronous training options after school and on the weekends, NIET is also designing asynchronous professional development modules to provide Louisiana educators with on-demand access to better understand what high-quality virtual instruction looks and sounds like.

The first training sessions filled up within 24 hours of the launch in

October, and the state's response to support teachers has been greatly appreciated. This partnership builds on NIET's longstanding work with Louisiana educators and current support for 300 schools across the state by now helping educators better grasp how to transform these teaching practices and use of high-quality curriculum into a virtual or hybrid setting.

Statewide Virtual Instruction Training in South Carolina

In August 2020, the South Carolina Department of Education and NIET partnered to offer educators the opportunity to participate in three 90-minute sessions focused on effective virtual teaching practices, and nearly 2,000 educators registered in the first week. These sessions are available at no charge, are easily accessible to all educators, and will be available throughout the school year to meet the demand of educators.

Feedback from participants confirms that these learning opportunities — centered on planning, instruction, and the environment — provide a clear understanding of what the *South Carolina Teaching Standards 4.0* rubric looks like when

applied to online teaching. The training offers ideas for how to plan, transform, and strengthen virtual lessons and how educators can improve student engagement and increase student achievement growth in a virtual environment.

After attending the training, one South Carolina educator said: “I’m feeling much better about where I’m headed this year.” Another educator noted that the training provides “simple strategies for teachers as they plan for virtual instruction!” Survey data so far indicates that the vast majority of participants find the training to be practical and effective at giving them the skills they need to take into their classrooms immediately.



NIET Specialist Claire Murray is one of our South Carolina-based team members supporting about 150 sessions this fall on high-quality virtual instruction.

ADDITIONAL NEW TOOLS FOR EDUCATORS



EE PASS iPad App

NIET offers educators access to an exclusive training portal with unprecedented support. EE PASS, the Educator Effectiveness Preparation & Support System, provides access to valuable professional development, training, and certification resources, including a video library, data management tool, evaluator certification, and training modules and archives.

This spring, NIET launched a new, free EE PASS iPad app that includes key features and off-line data syncing so educators can use the tool no matter what their connectivity looks like without losing their work. From the iPad app, educators can access teacher observations and scripting; a video and content library; educator evaluator certification; surveys; and reports. The iPad app is available to download now in the Apple App Store and further enhances NIET’s ability to assist teachers and coaches in navigating the virtual environment of modern classrooms.



Deep Dives: Transformation of Lessons from In-Person to Virtual

Educators know that transitioning to virtual teaching from the physical classroom setting is more than just a shift in modality. Teachers have

had to transform their in-person lessons for the virtual environment, and NIET released a set of deep dive resources that contain strategies for how to adjust instruction effectively. Each section of this resource explores an instructional indicator, how it is utilized in a high-quality in-person lesson, and then how it transfers to the virtual space.



Webinars and Videos

NIET has developed a series of webinars and videos highlighting our expert staff demonstrating specific virtual instruction strategies, and we are continuing to release those this fall. Topics include engaging students in a virtual learning environment through models and examples, leading virtual professional learning communities, co-constructing success criteria with students, providing high-quality feedback virtually, and supporting learners with diverse learning needs.

Videos are also available on the NIET website to support aspiring educators, and school leaders can benefit from the new Teddy Talk series, which features advice for principals from NIET’s senior advisor and former National Distinguished Principal Teddy Broussard. NIET’s recent videos have been viewed more than 17,000 times, and they provide advice and support for educators through a fresh medium that can be revisited time and time again.

Rubric Companion Tool for Virtual Instruction

The *NIET Teaching Standards Rubric* provides a road map for high-quality instruction and a common language for educators. As schools shifted to remote learning in early 2020, educators voiced a need for guidance around how the strong teaching practices within the rubric translate to the online environment. NIET developed a tool, the *NIET Rubric Companion for Virtual Instruction*, to accompany

the *NIET Teaching Standards Rubric* and describe what key instructional indicators should look like and sound like when teachers are planning and delivering virtual learning. The resource details specific practices and ideas for both asynchronous (on-demand) and synchronous (real-time) learning. Though designed as a complement to the *NIET Rubric*, it can help any educator deepen their understanding of high-quality virtual instruction. The tool has been viewed 5,000 times by teachers and leaders across the nation since its release in April 2020.

NIET K-12 Teaching Standards Rubric

COMPANION TOOL FOR VIRTUAL LEARNING

DOMAIN: INSTRUCTION

INDICATOR	PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTORS AT THE EXEMPLARY LEVEL	VIRTUAL LEARNING STRATEGIES	ADDITIONAL SYNCHRONOUS CONSIDERATIONS
Academic Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral and written feedback is consistently academically focused, frequent, and high-quality. Feedback is frequently given during guided practice and homework review. The teacher circulates to prompt student thinking, assess each student's progress, and provide individual feedback. Feedback from students is regularly used to monitor and adjust instruction. The teacher engages students in giving specific and high-quality feedback to one another. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide office hours for students to log in at designated times to receive timely feedback on assignments. Provide written feedback in a timely manner virtually through email or discussion platforms aligned to the lesson's objectives and success criteria. Engage in written discussions and check for understanding between students by making comments on one another's written responses in a collaborative document tool or platform. Have students share work with another student for feedback prior to submitting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model for students how to interact with one another and the teacher, and provide specific feedback aligned to the lesson's objective in breakout rooms and in the chat. Allow students to complete tasks at different levels and time frames, with some students remaining in the breakout rooms while others return to the main room to engage in a feedback discussion facilitated by the teacher (no lag time to lose engagement).
Grouping Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The instructional grouping arrangements (whole class, small groups, pairs, or individual; heterogeneous or homogeneous ability) consistently maximize student understanding and learning efficiency. All students in groups know their roles, responsibilities, and group expectations. All students participating in groups are held accountable for group work and individual work. Instructional group composition (in terms of race, gender, ability, and age, for example) is varied to best accomplish the goals of the lesson. Instructional groups facilitate opportunities for students to set goals, reflect on goals, and evaluate their learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide clear directions and responsibilities for group work. Consider whether the lesson lends itself to grouping students. Group composition should be considered to ensure strong virtual collaboration. Utilize self-assessment and peer assessment tools with group work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan breakout group strategies and composition to ensure strong management and pacing. Model breakout group expectations and assessment with each group. Set clarity around what is expected, when it is expected, and how groups will proceed in the main room.