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TAP: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement: examining the evidence



TAP EDUCATORS MAKE A DISTINCT DIFFERENCE

By **Lowell Milken**, NIET Chairman and TAP Founder

Over the last three decades, I have visited thousands of classrooms and engaged in discussion with educators working in diverse communities across the nation. I have consistently seen what research and my own personal experience confirm: that the educator in the classroom is the most important school-based element in student learning growth. Thus I was encouraged when Congress created a competitive grant program in 2006 to support innovation in the systems that support educators. For while educators understand that there is much they can do as individuals to improve their practice, they also understand that collaboration and teamwork are equally important to a school district's ability to ensure that every student has an effective teacher, every year.

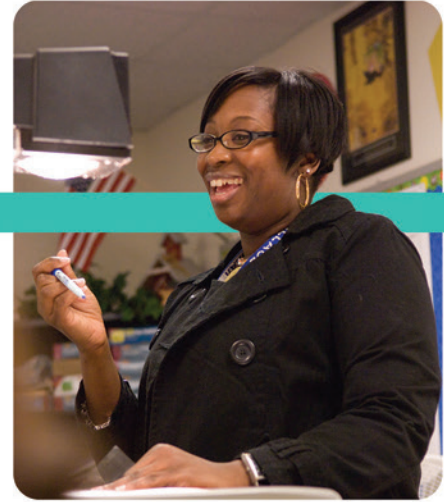
TAP educators are among the very first to implement new ways of supporting, developing, evaluating and promoting teaching talent. They have shown the power and potential of educators themselves to play an essential role in supporting growth and improvement in instructional expertise.

It is with great pride that I reflect on the work that TAP educators have accomplished with students, and the impact that their hard won success had on the recently enacted education law: the Every Student Succeeds Act.

The Every Student Succeeds Act makes a number of changes in education law that return significant control to states. The practical impact of these changes will only be seen as states and districts take action over the next several



Lowell Milken congratulates the 2016 TAP Founder's Award Winner, Southport Elementary.



years. For example, the bill eliminates the “highly qualified teacher” requirement and empowers states to define teacher effectiveness. Title II emphasizes many of the innovative solutions that are working in TAP schools, including teacher leadership structures, school-based professional development, evaluations based on multiple measures of effectiveness and performance-based compensation as approaches that states and districts could pursue.

For the first time, the bill would authorize into law the program known since 2006 as the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF). TIF was initially created as a funding stream for states and districts to improve educator effectiveness, and has evolved over the years to reflect many of the lessons learned at TAP sites. With this new bill, TIF is now known as the *Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program*. While there are some changes, the updated program maintains key elements of the current TIF initiative. This includes new evaluation systems based on multiple measures including student learning, teacher leadership roles and responsibilities, school-based professional support aligned to evaluation results, and opportunities for performance-based compensation.

Over the last decade, many teachers and administrators have shared their direct experiences of educator effectiveness reform with policymakers in an effort to explain what works in classrooms, schools and districts. While these

reforms are complex and each district is unique, there are common structures and approaches that have been proven in TAP schools to raise teacher effectiveness and student learning growth. The power of the personal experiences told by practicing educators about their schools and students, backed up by meaningful and sustained student achievement results over time, are reflected in key aspects of the new national education law.

This federal investment is a testament to your work, impact and commitment on behalf of educators and students. Our shared belief that powerful results on the ground can impact the national education debate was proven true this past year. We hope you will take a moment to reflect on what we have been able to accomplish together.

Of course, many challenges are still ahead as states and districts determine how they will implement the law and support educator effectiveness and student learning. We will continue to expand and refine our efforts to sustain and grow reforms that ensure every student has an effective teacher, every year. I hope that the recognition of your feedback at the federal level will encourage you to actively share your experience and perspective as states and districts move forward on these issues in the coming year. 🍌

THE STUDENT TRACK: MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA BEATING THE ODDS

Buoyed by his family, teachers and lessons learned from the TAP System, Quentin Hardrict Jr. is determined to never give up in the name of learning

“The odds are against you.”

That was the constant reminder that Demekia Love instilled in her middle son, Quentin, to motivate him to persevere in difficult situations. He lost his father when he was six years old. Love worked hard as a single mother to pick her family up, determined to never allow her children to become statistics. “What you do is a big deal for me,” she told her son.

Those words stuck with him as his family began to rebuild their home life. Paulette Crank, Hardrict Jr.’s paternal grandmother, remained in her home state of Illinois, but was deeply involved in his daily life. She provided much-needed love, encouragement and life lessons.

“My mom and grandma gave me my discipline,” he said.

He would need it. Understanding that a quality education would be her children’s ticket to success, Love placed them at Sojourner Truth Academy (STA), a pre-K-8 public charter school in North Minneapolis. The school’s six values hit home: respect, compassion, diligence, responsibility, integrity and perseverance. Unlike a traditional city school, the smaller charter school puts a sharp focus on individualized student-teacher interaction and roots its instruction in character building as much as it does academics.

Love quickly embraced the community, and the Hardrict-Love household became one of the school’s most supportive families.

When Hardrict Jr. entered the sixth grade, a new initiative would take shape at STA, strengthening the community of teachers and students even more.



Quentin Hardrict Jr. (left) and family, from left to right: cousin Kayla Adams, grandmother Paulette Crank, brother Quaylan Hardrict and sister Quenshae Love

STA began implementing TAP: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement in 2012. With the help of a federal Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant, STA leaders and faculty would hone their skills to create comprehensive systems of teacher leadership, professional development, educator observation and evaluation, and performance-based compensation.

At the heart of the TAP System was the leadership team — a group of teachers and administrators who would guide weekly professional development sessions based on student strategies that targeted individual needs. Those strategies would then be field-tested with a group of students and refined accordingly before being implemented in the classroom.

According to STA Executive Director Julie Guy, Hardrict Jr. reveled in this process and became one of the star field-testers. “We often engaged Quentin in field-testing,” said Guy. “He would be open and honest, letting us know when the strategies were good or if there were things that weren’t working. His input helped drive the implementation of strategies throughout the building.”

Hardrict Jr. began to notice the increase in teacher collaboration around common goals. “I knew that the things they were doing would benefit us in the future,” he said.

The extra support involved teacher leaders observing classrooms, co-teaching and working hand-in-hand with the classroom teachers to ensure that students understood the concepts. For Hardrict Jr., the additional help was essential.

His math teacher, Margaret Fitzgerald, became director of upper school teaching and learning as part of the TAP System implementation. After Fitzgerald took her leadership position, she devoted time to help him through the transition to a new math teacher and a new approach.

“She cared so much, and would find ways to make the day better,” Hardrict Jr. said.

Fitzgerald stayed after school to help him with his homework, all the while working alongside the new teacher to provide direct support on student needs. Throughout this process of greater teacher and student reflection, Hardrict Jr. and the other students were able to better identify their strengths and weaknesses and ask meaningful questions.

Guy attributes these characteristics to a “trickle-down effect” of the TAP System from teachers to students. “Kids became their own advocates,” she said. “The TAP System gave them the voice to ask questions they needed to ask.”

At STA, students learned questioning as a science and an art. To develop students’ higher-order thinking — an important skill to carry them through college, career and life — Guy understood that the effort needed to start with the way classrooms were structured, and that teachers needed to do the “heavy lifting.”

With the help of the TAP System’s rubric that details what questioning should look and sound like, teachers collaborated on strategies that would help their students think smarter. Their classrooms became places of discourse, where the teachers became the facilitators. Sentence frames were used to assist students in articulating their thoughts, and “turn-and-talks” allowed them to share their views with a peer.

The questioning techniques made students more reflective across the curriculum, and parents were seeing the results of the strengthened communication among teachers and students.

Love thought about transitioning her children into a traditional middle school, but the greater focus on teacher-student interaction through the TAP System convinced her to keep them at STA.

“The teachers moved together, worked together, communicated with each other and helped the individual student,” she said. “I really liked that.”

Hardrict Jr. went on to become salutatorian of his graduating class, an achievement that was not only personal for him, but also for his entire family.

When it was time for Hardrict Jr. to go to his neighborhood high school, Columbia Heights, he was well-prepared for the transition. Guy and the STA faculty made the school families aware that transitioning from a charter academy to a large, traditional public high school could be difficult, particularly without the proper support. Hardrict Jr. took comfort in the lessons he learned at STA, coupled with the fact that his older sister, Quenshae, was thriving at the high school.

Hardrict Jr. is now a sophomore at Columbia Heights and maintains a 3.6 grade point average. However, he admits that good grades do not come without hard work. “I have a few tough classes,” he said. He explained that the key is to “set goals, never backtrack and never get behind.”

He makes sure to place a top priority on doing his homework and turning it in on time. Other rules he lives by are to try his best, never give up, work hard — and ask questions. 📚



Quentin Hardrict Jr. with Margaret Fitzgerald

TEACHER LEADERS DIRECTLY IMPACT THE CLASSROOM

By Laura Roussel, NIET Senior Program Specialist and former Executive Master Teacher, Ascension Public Schools, Louisiana

My career as a teacher leader began in the classroom as a third-grade teacher where I spent eight years working next to eight-year-olds teaching all subjects. After several years of working in this role, I pursued my National Board Certification as a middle childhood generalist and was able to become certified within the first year of submitting my portfolio.

As a teacher, my reflections about my work slowly began to evolve from focusing on my own practices to focusing on how my practices yielded results for my students. This mindshift changed my daily reflections from “How did today’s lesson go?” to “How did today’s lesson impact student achievement?” All students that left my third-grade class showed significant gains. I began to collaborate and share with other teachers about how the practices that I chose were the practices that yielded the greatest gains for my students.

As I shared my practices with other teachers, I began to realize that leading from the middle, right there in the midst of the real work, is where I wanted to stay. I was a teacher leader. I instantly realized that no title could give me that honor. It was the work alongside my peers and our students that gave me this honor. Although I had received a master’s degree in educational leadership and was certified as a principal, I was drawn to the work that was in the classroom—in the “trenches.”

Soon, I was recruited as a master teacher in a failing school. After the school experienced several years of declining test scores, it was in jeopardy of being taken over by the state. Teachers were tired and untrusting that anything would work.

Since I valued the concept of leading by doing, I immediately found a spot in the classroom next to teachers and students. My day-to-day work as a master teacher consisted of working and teaching in many classes. I did not value simply visiting classes. I valued the work where my sleeves were rolled up and I was working alongside students and teachers. Teachers’ students became my students and *WE* began to work together to think about how our work was specifically impacting student achievement. I knew all 17 teachers’ students by name (over 200 students). I spent time talking about the students and their goals. I became strategic as I field-tested student strategies in order to ensure that these strategies would yield results, and then shared those strategies with teachers and students across the entire school.

As teachers tracked their data, we began to see a large number of students moving from one proficiency level to the next. This success built teachers’ belief that they could, in fact, positively impact student achievement. After the first year of working as a master teacher with these TAP structures, the school saw an eight-point gain. After three years, the school grew a total of 30 points and the culture of learning was revived. My work as a teacher leader was hard, but rewarding. I still wanted to stay as close to the work in the classroom as possible.

After three years of working as a master teacher, I moved into an executive master teacher position in which I supported 19 master teachers across eight TAP schools within Ascension Public Schools. Again, my work as an executive master teacher consisted of working alongside master teachers in classrooms with teachers and students. Although the scope of the work became larger, the focus did not change.



Laura Roussel leading a TAP Conference training session

My primary goal was to stay focused on the needs of the students as I worked closely with master teachers, mentor teachers and career teachers as they tracked student achievement, field-tested strategies, and shared practices in the classroom. Each day my work was embedded in a school with teachers and students. Whether I was field-testing alongside the master teacher, sitting in a leadership team meeting analyzing results, or co-leading clusters, the work was still in the trenches, right next to the students. Soon, these eight TAP schools in our district began to surpass other higher-performing schools. For example, in two years Pecan Grove Primary went from a D-label school to a B-label school. As a result, Ascension Parish was rated as the third highest-performing district in the state.

Even today, I pride myself in saying that I lead from the middle, as I work alongside educators in the classroom. I continue to sharpen my practices as a teacher of students and as a teacher of teachers. I invite any opportunity to analyze student work and field-test best practices. And most importantly, I have grown in my experience as an educator as I've watched my title change. My work still puts me directly in the place where I never want to leave ... the classroom. 🍀

CREATING SUSTAINABLE TEACHER CAREER PATHWAYS: A 21ST CENTURY IMPERATIVE



National Network of State Teachers of the Year

In 2015 the National Network of State Teachers of the Year (NNSTOY) released a report entitled **Creating Sustainable Teacher Career Pathways: A 21st Century Imperative**. The report highlights the need for new pathways for teachers to advance professionally and play new roles in distributed leadership teams and in building collaborative teams of teachers. NNSTOY interviewed leaders at NIET about the lessons learned through NIET’s work with schools, districts and states.

The report calls for a new teacher career structure that promotes high levels of teacher collaboration and strong professional communities. Further, the report explains these structures are critical to address the challenges of educating all students at high levels to meet the needs of an increasingly globalized economy. The report also states, “We need people who have expertise beyond manipulating information and data, but who can also think creatively and conceptually,

recognize patterns and make meaning as well as interact with symbols like data, words and visual representations. In that new world, employers will value the ability to collaborate, think critically and creatively, and work in teams.”

The TAP System is highlighted within the report as an exemplary initiative empowering teachers to develop creative solutions with their colleagues, facilitating teachers working together to problem solve, making meaning from a wide array of student learning data, and developing creative solutions to address our most critical educational challenges.

As noted within the report, **“TAP System schools show consistently high rates of student achievement growth,”** teachers show growth over time in the quality of their instruction, and the TAP System increases the recruitment and retention of highly effective teachers. ■





WHY OUR DISTRICT IS STRONGER WITH TAP PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Through the lens of Osborn Superintendent Patricia Tate and Curriculum Specialist Shannon Mann

The Big Picture

National studies show time and again that teachers welcome professional development — and even find it one of the most valuable parts of their jobs — if it is constructive and relevant to their classrooms. Research conducted by NIET shows 99 percent of TAP System teachers see the direct impact of professional development on student learning. Ninety-eight percent report that TAP’s professional development leads to increased collegiality, contributing to overall school morale.

But the question remains: How do you get there? While many schools have some type of professional development in place, not all are created equal. The most authoritative study furnished for the Institute of Educational Sciences concludes that most of the money spent nationally on professional development is wasted.

Prominent education organizations cite similar findings when training is not appropriately linked to teacher and student needs. According to the Center for American Progress, most professional development is “thin, sporadic and of little use when it comes to improved teaching.” TNTTP, formerly The New Teacher Project, made waves with *The Mirage* study, which brings to bear an alarming reality: districts spent on average \$18,000 per teacher, but these interventions did not result in significant changes in teacher practice or student outcomes.

The need for a holistic approach to preparing teachers has prompted districts to partner with NIET. TAP System professional development addresses the challenge by providing a powerful infrastructure for collaborative leadership through mentor and master teachers, a direct connection between the training and the classroom, and proper and regular follow-up.

Throughout the process, educators are given the tools to answer questions that Professor Laura Desimone at the University of Pennsylvania identified as essential to evaluating effective professional development:

1. Do all teachers experience high-quality professional development?
2. Does the professional development increase teachers’ knowledge and skills?
3. Do teachers use their knowledge and skills to implement new strategies in the classroom?
4. Do the new classroom strategies improve students’ learning?

Osborn School District No. 8 in Phoenix has put these principles into practice. The district is no stranger to professional development initiatives; it has used Collaborative Peer Teachers (CPTs) since 1993 and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) since 1998. TAP gave Osborn something different — focus.



Shannon Mann



Tate visits with Somerset Independent School District (Texas) Superintendent Saul Hinojosa at the 2015 TAP Conference

Osborn Superintendent Patricia Tate and Curriculum Specialist Shannon Mann spoke with *TAP in Focus* about how the TAP System enriches the professional development experience throughout the district. They pinpointed specific elements of TAP’s professional development that are yielding positive and sustained results in teacher retention and effectiveness as well as the ultimate goal: student achievement.

Common language and focus: “We got glasses.”

Osborn’s CPTs played a critical role in supporting instruction and curriculum across grade levels as well as mentoring teachers on content. However, according to Tate and Mann, there wasn’t a vehicle, such as the TAP Rubric, to provide a common language on what constitutes good teaching.

“Now we leverage that common thread and are using the same words,” Tate explained. “It helps us articulate a stronger goal, one that everyone understands. Together, in a collaborative system, we redefine our understanding of every indicator

and every descriptor. We are never done with this. But having a common vocabulary will get us there.

“We saw the power of implementing TAP that first trimester. TAP is what helped us focus. It was like we got glasses. We were already seeing, but adding the glasses helped us focus. It focused the principals, the master teachers and the classroom teachers. We were already rowing the same way, but then we got into a much better rhythm.”

Mann, a former math teacher at Osborn Middle School, said that putting a “hyper-focus” on pedagogy over content was a “big shift.” The support she was accustomed to receiving — first as a Teach for America instructor and then with Osborn’s Collaborative Peer Teachers and Professional Learning Communities — was strongly based in content. They had common planning twice a week, but, described Mann, it targeted “what to teach, not how to teach.”

The shift came at an important time, in 2010, one year before Arizona’s implementation of the new college and career ready standards were underway. With the TAP Rubric, the district not only had a mechanism for developing higher order thinking skills in their students, but they, too, were learning how to think differently. To Mann, it was “the perfect marriage. We were creating complex strategies and had the vehicle to get it out to teachers.”

Boots on the ground

With the new approach to instruction and collaboration, it was important for Tate to involve herself and the district in leadership team meetings and evaluation processes on the campuses.



We saw the power of implementing TAP that first trimester.



She said the significant increase in the time commitment was “huge.” She explains, “Our big investment was time: a boots on the ground, roll up our sleeves effort.”

As assistant superintendent at the time, Tate created a system of what she calls “embeddedness,” in which district-level administrators would rotate campus to campus and participate in leadership team meetings and observations. Mann is a part of this process, spending a great deal of time on site to exchange feedback with educators and ensure that the schools are on track to achieving school- and district-level goals.

Before the TAP System, Tate spent no time on embeddedness. During the first year of TAP, she dedicated 40 percent of her time to it.

“I did more observations and post conference than our principals. I think I did 65 observations,” Tate said. “That was necessary for me to get a handle on what it looks like and help other people learn it.



Osborn Middle School

I needed to know and feel the intensity of all the processes and to learn the tool with such depth in order to apply it with the greatest effect.”

In subsequent years, the commitment has dropped to a still-substantial quarter of her time.

Tate affirms that the benefits to increased teacher retention and effectiveness as well as student achievement make the investment well worth it.

- Teacher turnover after the first year of TAP was 25 percent, partly due to the new way of doing business, but also to economic struggles educators experienced. The next year, turnover decreased to almost half—14 percent—and has remained low since.
- Osborn teachers’ skills, knowledge and responsibilities scores are improving year to year. In the 2011-12 school year, 27 percent of teachers had a score greater than 3.5 on TAP’s 1-5 observation scale. In the 2013-14 school year, that number increased to nearly 40 percent.
- Since the adoption of TAP, all schools in the district have increased their student growth percentile scores, and Osborn is the only urban Phoenix district with all A- and B-rated schools.

“TAP gave us a tool. The best was already here,” said Tate. “We didn’t get new teachers; we had our teachers doing better work because they were more supported in their work. TAP helped the best come out.”

Osborn Results

Only urban Phoenix school district will all A- and B-rated schools

A-F LETTER GRADES	2014		2013	
School Name	Total Pts	Grade	Total Pts	Grade
Encanto Elementary School	155	A	112	C
Solano Elementary School	144	A	142	A
Osborn Middle School	135	B	127	B
Clarendon Elementary School	131	B	132	B
Longview Elementary School	124	B	113	C



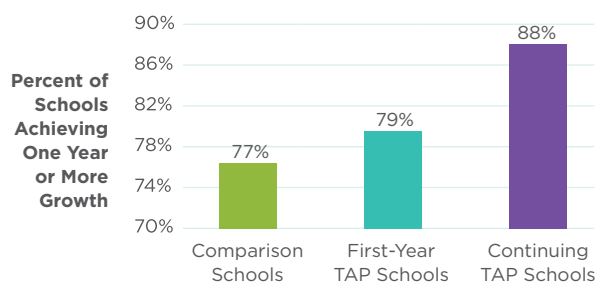
EMPOWERING SCHOOL LEADERS: USING THE TEACHER INCENTIVE FUND TO INCREASE INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT AND IMPROVEMENT

States and districts across the country have used federal Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grants to support teachers in making continuous improvements in classroom instruction. TIF provides seed money to fund changes in the systems that support teachers so each educator, regardless of skill and experience level, receives support and is part of a collaborative school-based team. Since its inception, TIF has evolved to support a comprehensive approach that links data on teacher and student performance to professional support for instructional improvement for each individual teacher and the faculty as a whole.

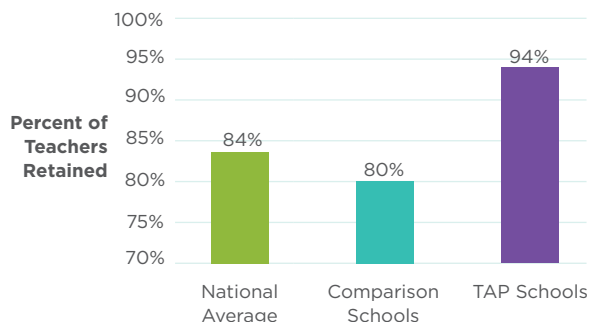
Administrators have found that this approach — particularly the development of teacher leaders to work with administrators in a school leadership team — supports significant and sustained increases in student academic growth in high-need schools. Nationally, schools using the TAP System to support this work have increased student achievement growth and teacher skill development faster than similar schools.

Administrators' direct experience confirms this data as they consistently report that teachers are improving classroom instruction, student academic achievement is increasing, achievement gaps are closing and it is easier to recruit and retain effective teachers in their high-need schools.

NATIONALLY TAP SCHOOLS OUTPERFORM COMPARISON SCHOOLS

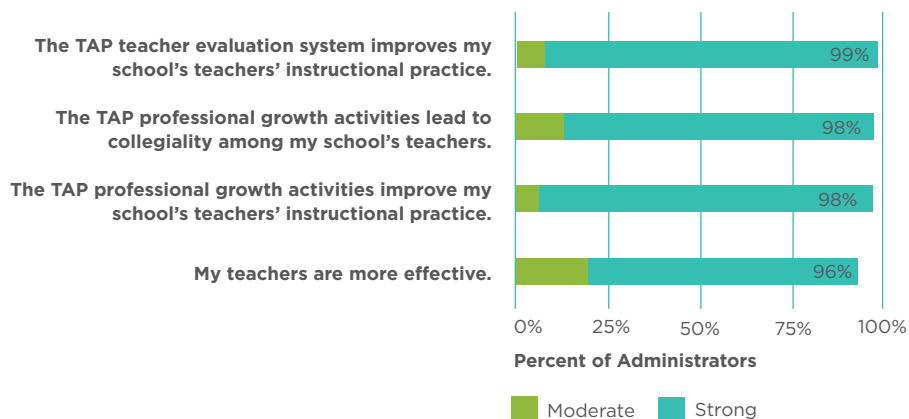


NATIONALLY TAP SCHOOLS RETAIN MORE TEACHERS



Last fall, principals Ryan Siebe from Knoxville, Tennessee, Danny Mendez from Indianapolis, Indiana, and Gene Morrow from Grand Prairie, Texas, joined other administrators and teachers in visits with policymakers in Washington, D.C., to discuss the powerful student learning results achieved with support from TIF. They described the results of the work taking place in their schools and the ways that policy and funding could support this work.

PRINCIPALS SEE IMPACT



The principals presented solutions that allow for local flexibility while at the same time build on proven research-based practices with demonstrated evidence of student achievement growth. Policymakers asked how their successful implementation of TAP, using TIF, could inform the new Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program authorized in the Every Student Succeeds Act.

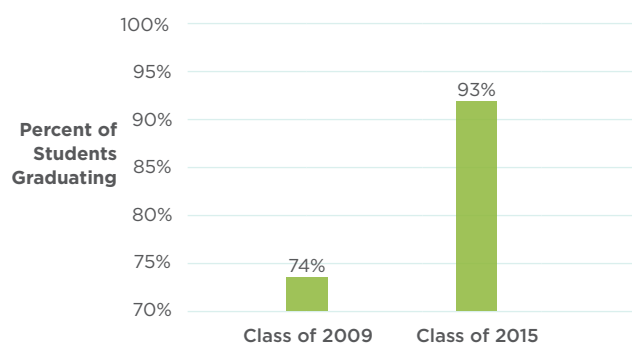
PRINCIPAL RYAN SIEBE, Carter High School, Knox County Schools, Knoxville, Tennessee

Before Carter High, Principal Ryan Siebe served as principal at another Knox County TAP high school, Austin East. He described how the TAP System provided these very different high schools — one serving a primarily urban high-need student population and the other serving a rural high-need population — with a structure to increase the effectiveness of classroom instruction across the building.

“Sometimes my own teachers don’t believe the student achievement growth we are seeing,” explained Siebe, “but this is the kind of progress we’re making through a team-based structure to support classroom instruction and a common commitment to highly effective classroom practices.

“Using the structures provided by TAP, we have regular professional development sessions for every teacher every week focused on student academic data and specific needs. Our trained

CARTER HIGH SCHOOL, KNOX COUNTY, TN GRADUATION RATE



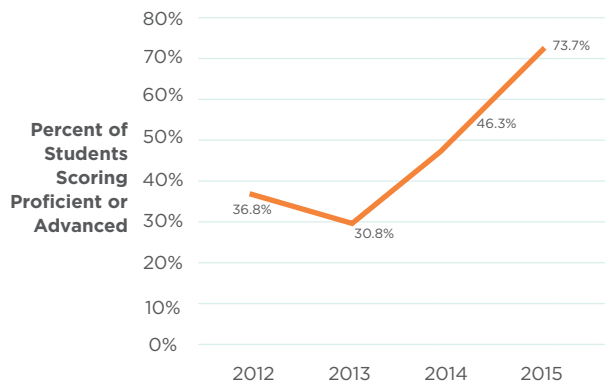
teacher leaders guide this school-based professional development and provide individual coaching in classrooms that is tailored to individual teachers and their students. The instructional rubric, with its detailed descriptions of strong teacher practices, facilitates feedback and support for improvement. Every teacher is recognized for increased skill and student performance, and teacher leaders receive additional compensation for taking on new roles and responsibilities directly tied to instructional improvement.”

Siebe’s faculty back home is supportive. “TAP works,” says Assistant Principal Angie Messer. “Since implementing TAP, teachers are having academic conversations outside the classroom. We are seeing and feeling changes in our craft.”

As a result, the school helped students to achieve more than a year’s worth of academic growth for two consecutive years — scoring a value-added growth score of 5 on a scale of 1-5 when compared to similar schools in the state. This progress earned Carter High the TAP Founder’s Award in 2014 and district APEX awards in 2012 and 2013. The school attracted broader attention when the Tennessee Department of Education named Carter High a “Reward School” in 2013 and 2015 for its placement in the top 5 percent for growth in the state.

To staff, the reason is clear. “TAP is a very organized way to teach,” explained TAP Mentor Teacher Jani Chollman. “You’re teaching with a purpose and the results come very quickly.”

CARTER HIGH SCHOOL, KNOX COUNTY, TN PERCENT PROFICIENT/ADVANCED IN ALGEBRA 2



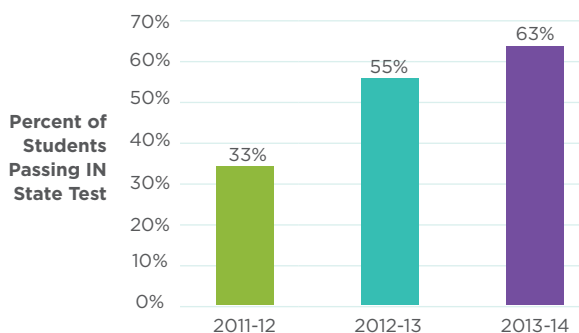
PRINCIPAL DANNY MENDEZ, Southport Elementary School, Perry Township Schools, Indianapolis, Indiana

Southport Elementary serves a rapidly growing English Language Learner (ELL) population that has expanded from less than 10 percent of students seven years ago to more than 55 percent today. In that same time frame, the free/reduced-price lunch population grew from 45 percent to 81 percent. Within the ELL population that Southport serves, approximately 300 students are refugees from Burma, many of whom were never allowed to attend school due to religious persecution in their home country. “You have not seen poverty until you see someone arrive with all of their belongings in a plastic bag,” explained Mendez. “Many of our students were grappling with a new language, as well as the whole concept of this thing we call ‘school.’”

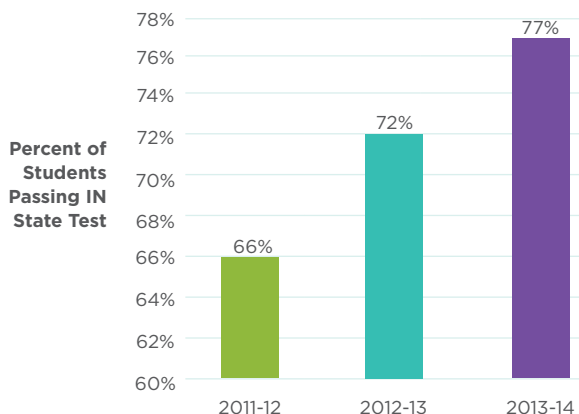
Southport adopted the TAP System in the 2011-12 school year, and has used the TAP structure and focus on classroom instruction and closing achievement gaps faced by its student population, particularly its English Language Learners, special education, and economically disadvantaged students. The Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning (CELL) at the University of Indianapolis is the lead partner to districts implementing TAP in Indiana. CELL has supported districts to use TAP to build a school’s focus of improving learning for all students by tailoring weekly professional development cluster meetings to specific needs, creating leadership roles to mentor others through TAP mentor and master teacher positions, implementing TAP’s teacher support and evaluation with rigor, and instituting a competitive compensation system to reward educators for increased skill and student performance. Mendez, who calls TAP a “perfect fit,” regularly attends cluster meetings, and his team of TAP leaders is open to new learning and achieving at even higher levels. As a result, Southport Elementary has made significant student achievement growth.

“It’s not that we weren’t working as hard as we could before we had the resources of the TIF grant to try TAP,” explained Mendez, “but the focus and structure TAP gave us to systematically improve classroom instruction led to dramatic results. We quickly realized, for example, that rather than additional ELL specialists, our resources were better spent supporting the classroom teachers who have ELL students

SOUTHPORT ELEMENTARY, INDIANAPOLIS, IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER TESTING TRENDS



SOUTHPORT ELEMENTARY, INDIANAPOLIS, IN FREE/REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT



for six hours a day. Investing in their skills and growth turned out to provide a stronger result in terms of student learning growth. The growth has been substantial for our most challenging student subgroups.”

At the district level, Southport and Abraham Lincoln, the two TAP schools in Perry Township, have helped pave the way for all 17 district schools to use the TAP evaluation process, providing a model for how the TAP System can be used to leverage best practices across a district.

TAP schools across Indiana and from other states have visited Southport to observe their clusters and leadership team meetings. These visits are beneficial to both Southport schools and the visiting teachers. Videos of classroom lessons and clusters have also been made available on the TAP System Training Portal and for other purposes to support learning in TAP schools across the country.

Both TAP schools in the district have shown dramatic improvement since implementing the TAP System in the 2011-12 school year. On the state report card, Abraham Lincoln went from an F in 2011-12 to a B in 2013-2014 while Southport Elementary improved from a C to an A during the same time frame. Both schools earned a value-added score of 5 on a 1-5 scale for the 2013-14 school year. This means that students are achieving more than a year’s worth of academic growth compared to similar schools in the state. The state responded by highlighting TAP as a model for districts to consider in reviewing teacher evaluation systems.

PRINCIPAL GENE MORROW, JR., David Daniels Academy, Grand Prairie ISD, Grand Prairie, Texas

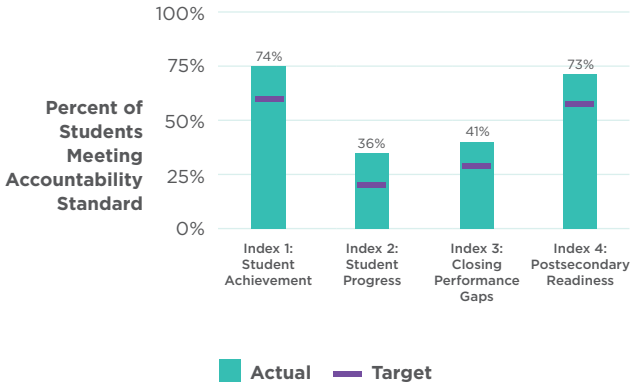
With decades of experience leading schools, David Daniels Academy Principal Gene Morrow Jr. knows the challenges teacher turnover can present to student learning growth, particularly in high-need schools. He shared with policymakers how the TAP structure has helped to reduce teacher turnover by creating a more collaborative and supportive school environment. The school culture helps every teacher to grow and thrive, and support student success in his school.

Morrow also described the new challenge that arises when other schools or district leaders see the results his teachers and teacher leaders are achieving using TAP elements.



U.S. Senator John Cornyn (left) and Principal Gene Morrow Jr. Photo credit: Gene Morrow Jr.

**GRAND PRAIRIE ISD, GRAND PRAIRIE, TX
EXCEEDS ALL ACHIEVEMENT TARGETS IN 2014-2015**



“I took what could potentially be a real challenge — when my highly effective teacher leaders were recruited to new schools or became principals themselves — and addressed it by creating a very strong pipeline of effective teachers, many of whom have the potential to be teacher leaders in my school. When I have turnover in teacher leadership positions now, I have full confidence that there is someone highly effective to step into that role. While I want to keep my leadership team together, I don’t have that feeling of dread I used to have when a really effective person left. It’s an opportunity to work with someone to step up into that role.”

This high-caliber team of teachers and leaders has supported strong student achievement results in Grand Prairie.

Morrow credits the weekly TAP professional development cluster and leadership team meetings for keeping the faculty on task. A particularly sharp focus is put on field-testing strategies with groups of students and providing quality feedback on classroom instruction. “Having worked at a number of different TAP campuses over the years, I have found that TAP’s structure is a powerful talent identification and leadership development tool,” he said. “I have also found that this structure works in different school settings since, by design, TAP is driven by the needs of teachers and students in each individual school.”

THE FUTURE OF TEACHER PREPARATION: A NEW TEACHER'S EXPERIENCE

Lorialle Haynes teaches second grade at Collier Elementary School in the Littleton Elementary School District #65 outside Phoenix. Her school serves a high-need student population with a large percentage of English Language Learners (ELL). She is in her second year of teaching, having participated in the Arizona State University (ASU) teacher preparation program. ASU's teacher prep program uses the TAP teaching standards, evaluation process, and partnerships with high-need districts — many using TAP — to support new teacher candidate development.

This year, Haynes participated in two high-profile policy panels, one at the state level and one with the U.S. Department of Education. She told policymakers:

“In my first year, my principal couldn't believe I was a first-year teacher. My exposure to the TAP rubric in my coursework at ASU and in my student teaching experience at a TAP school put me head and shoulders ahead of expectations. I looked at the evaluation rubric before my first observation and thought, ‘I've got this.’

“Of course, I spoke a lot with friends from other teacher preparation programs and schools. They struggled with the lack of support in their first year in their schools. They were nervous about being observed and felt overwhelmed by the evaluation standards. Where I was fully prepared for my evaluation and understood exactly what the observer would be looking for, they had no idea what to expect. There was such a contrast between my experience and what they were facing in their first year.

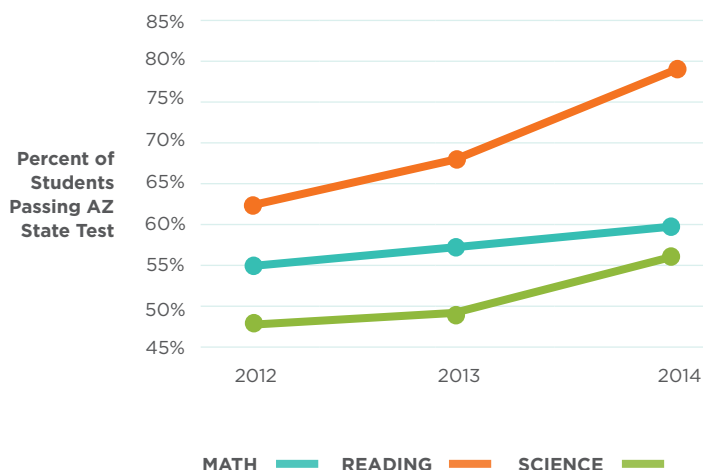
“Looking back on it, I am not surprised that every member of my preparation program cohort is still teaching, and we are all still in the high-need schools in districts working in partnership with ASU and NIET. It's a model that really works. I was so excited to have the opportunity to share my experience with the U.S. Secretary of Education and his staff in Washington, D.C.”




Lorialle Haynes and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (2009-2015)

Photo credit: Lorialle Haynes

COLLIER ELEMENTARY, PHOENIX, AZ STUDENTS PASSING AZ STATE TEST IN 4TH GRADE





In fall 2015, NIET joined nearly 50 education organizations to launch a national Teach Strong initiative to elevate and transform the teaching profession. The goals of Teach Strong are to ensure that there is a highly skilled, competitively compensated, unequivocally proud teacher in front of every classroom, and that schools are organized to support high levels of educator effectiveness. This report describes key actions required to make this a reality in communities across the country.

SMART, SKILLED AND STRIVING: TRANSFORMING AND ELEVATING THE TEACHING PROFESSION

By Carmel Martin, Lisette Partelow and
Catherine Brown of the Center for American Progress

“Imagine a school where teaching is considered to be a profession rather than a trade. The role of teachers in a child’s education — and in American culture — has fundamentally changed. Teaching differs from the old ‘show-and-tell’ practices as much as modern medical techniques differ from practices such as applying leeches and bloodletting.”

– Judith Taack Lanier, former Dean, College of Education, Michigan State University

Lanier’s words, written in 1997, were prescient. Today, a decade and a half into the 21st century, this transformation is well underway, even if her vision has yet to be fully realized. The professional expectations for today’s teachers are undoubtedly high. They must work to prepare students for new economic realities, use new and innovative pedagogical techniques and technologies, adapt their instruction to meet students’ increasingly diverse needs, and adjust to recent policy reforms that directly affect their practice. These changes have reshaped teaching, making it a more difficult and demanding profession. At the same time, however, research is demonstrating the powerful effect that teachers can have on student learning and illuminating the ways in which great teaching is more important than ever before.

Unfortunately, the ways in which schools and school days are organized — and the ways in which school systems have been designed to train, support and develop teachers — have not kept pace with the tectonic shifts in teachers’ daily realities, making it difficult for teachers to succeed in their profession. The public’s perception of teaching is equally out of date, preventing the full realization of Lanier’s vision to elevate the profession’s standing in American culture.

Systemic change is critical for the future of the U.S. teacher workforce and the nation’s students. No simple policy fix will be enough to move the system as a whole, especially since so many of the institutions responsible for educating, training and setting policy for teachers operate in isolated silos that are often disconnected from teachers themselves. Rather, the nation must take a comprehensive approach to improve all parts of a teacher’s career, beginning with the selection of a college major and continuing through retirement.

This far-reaching agenda will affect not just how teachers are recruited and trained, but also the fundamental ways in which schools are organized. These changes can set in motion a virtuous cycle by which better training and working conditions enhance the experience of being a teacher, attract more people into the profession, and elevate the status of teachers overall, thereby improving the profession. It is a transformation that begins with recruitment and selection into teacher preparation programs and continues on to new teacher training and support, professional development, compensation and opportunities for career advancement.

FIGURE 1

The virtuous cycle: Attracting and retaining great teachers



Each of the following changes is integral to this shift toward a respected, modernized and elevated teacher workforce:

- Ensure that teacher preparation programs select teacher candidates carefully and purposefully. In order to cultivate the best teacher workforce possible, teacher preparation programs must address the lack of selectivity fueling the false perception that teaching is not a career that will challenge and reward top students. This change must be made in conjunction with efforts to recruit excellent teaching candidates from diverse backgrounds.
- Require teacher preparation programs to improve coursework and offer higher-quality clinical training experiences. Once admitted into a teacher preparation program, prospective teachers should receive a rigorous and comprehensive education that prepares them for the challenges they will face in the classroom, including through high-quality clinical experiences. In addition, states should be required to collect and publish data on the effectiveness of their teacher preparation programs, which would then allow states to develop a system for shutting down programs that are not adequately preparing students for the challenges of the classroom.
- Improve licensure exams to make them a more meaningful bar for entry into the teaching profession. Licensure exams must be improved and refined to ensure that they are rigorous and rooted in the kind of skills and knowledge that teachers need to succeed in the classroom.
- Raise teacher compensation to professional levels and differentiate pay according to effectiveness and leadership responsibilities. In order to recruit excellent prospective teachers into the field, teachers' salary trajectories must be brought in line with those of other professionals, which means higher starting salaries; faster salary increases, especially for high-performing teachers; and the opportunity to earn more by taking on additional responsibilities.
- Invest in new teachers by supporting their professional growth early on. To improve the working conditions for beginning teachers, states should require districts to provide a more gradual on-ramp to a full-time teaching experience by offering high-quality induction programs, intensive coaching and mentoring, co-teaching models and experiences, teacher residency programs, and/or a reduced course load for beginning teachers.
- Redesign school schedules to support improvements in teacher practice. Following the models of high-performing nations, U.S. school districts should thoughtfully increase the amount of time teachers have available to improve their practice — time that could be spent observing highly effective teachers, collaborating and planning with colleagues, coaching, mentoring, and engaging in other forms of professional learning.
- Improve professional development by aligning it to the needs of students and teachers.





To ensure teachers are getting the kind of professional development opportunities they deserve, districts should be required to demonstrate how they are shifting their professional development dollars toward models that are designed to meet teachers' personalized improvement needs, are aligned to high-quality evaluation systems, and are aimed at improving student learning outcomes.

- Provide more opportunities for teachers to assume leadership roles. Career ladders and compensation structures that reward effective teachers who take on additional responsibilities within their schools with higher pay would bring teaching in line with other careers where high performers can expect increases in salary and responsibility. Leadership roles could include mentoring new or struggling teachers, planning or facilitating professional development, observing teachers and giving feedback, or working with school leaders to hire new teachers or make decisions related to curriculum, instruction or resource allocation.
- Reform tenure by setting a high bar for attaining it and streamlining due process. In order to bring the tenure process in line with the needs of the ever-changing teaching profession, due process protections must

be streamlined and the bar for achieving tenure must be raised by linking it to teacher performance and extending the timeline for attaining tenure status.

- Ensure that school leaders receive training in how to support teachers. Motivating teachers, driving instructional improvement schoolwide, providing objective and meaningful feedback, making thoughtful hiring decisions, creating a positive school culture focused on student learning, and supporting the development and advancement of their best teachers are all crucial aspects of school leaders' jobs. Principals and other administrators must receive training and support in how to carry out these roles effectively.

This report envisions a modernized teacher workforce made up of professionals who must compete for a spot in their preparation programs, work relentlessly to finish their clinical experiences with high marks, study late into the night to pass their licensure exams, and dedicate themselves fully to their craft so they can earn greater responsibilities, higher compensation and tenured status. These changes, if brought to fruition, will establish a modernized and elevated teacher workforce. What's more, these changes have the potential to transform the profession's reputation and improve teaching and learning for millions of students across the U.S. 🇺🇸

Carmel Martin, Lisette Partelow, Catherine Brown, The Center for American Progress.

This excerpt is republished with permission from the Center for American Progress. The full report can be found online.

TAP: THE SYSTEM FOR TEACHER AND STUDENT ADVANCEMENT

EXAMINING THE EVIDENCE

In 2015, four studies demonstrating the power of the TAP System were presented at the American Educational Research Association national conference. These studies showed the impact of TAP on student achievement, teacher effectiveness and teacher retention, as well as strong support from teachers for the TAP System. These studies include:

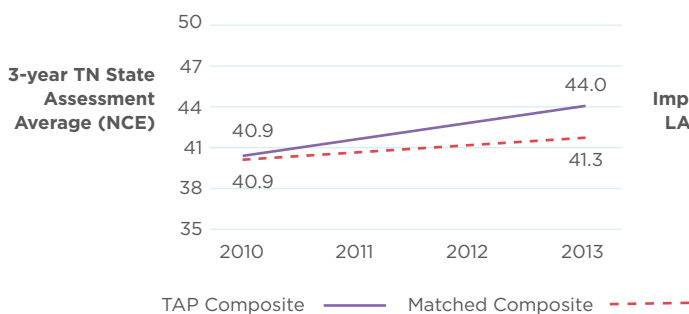
- *High-Needs, High Flyers: The Impact of Teacher Incentive Funding Across Louisiana*
- *Leading by Example: Impact Evaluation of the TAP System across Knox County Schools*
- *Stayers, Movers, and Leavers: Impact of the TAP System on Retaining Teachers Nationwide*
- *Real Perspectives on Tough Issues: Teacher Attitudes about Teaching*

These new studies further demonstrate a consistent pattern of multiple researchers

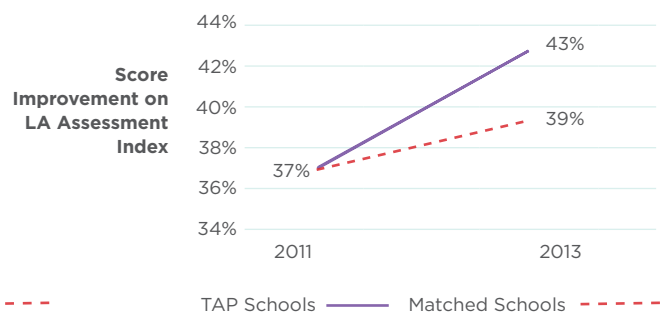
investigating TAP in multiple locations using multiple methods. Selected graphs and charts from these most recent works are inserted below.

What is evident from these new studies and those previous is that the TAP System stands out because of its track record of growth and success spanning more than a decade in raising student achievement in high-need schools. The research evidence also reveals several key reasons for TAP's positive impact: an evaluation system capable of differentiating teacher performance levels and providing detailed feedback for improvement, ongoing professional growth in classroom practice using student and teacher data to guide improvement, recruitment and retention of effective teachers, and the creation of a challenging, rewarding and collegial environment focused on high-quality instruction and student learning. For more information on these studies and other research for TAP, please visit NIET.org.

TENNESSEE TAP SCHOOLS OUTPERFORM COMPARISON SCHOOLS



LOUISIANA TAP SCHOOLS OUTPERFORM COMPARISON SCHOOLS



If you would like more information about the results described within this report or other data related to the TAP System, please contact Josh Barnett at jbarnett@niet.org.





TAP leaders share implementation results and impact
Photo credit: U.S. Department of Education



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TAP™: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement
An initiative of the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching

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