



**NIET Chairman and Founder Lowell Milken visited the chemistry lab at Southport High School in Perry Township, where students were able to share how they have seen teaching improve during their time in the district.**

# Excellent Teachers. Effective Leaders. Every Day.

**LOWELL MILKEN, CHAIRMAN AND FOUNDER OF THE  
NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING**

**The vision of the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching is nothing less than to have every student in America taught by an excellent teacher and supported by effective leaders, year in and year out. Two decades of research and daily practice have confirmed time and again that the most powerful lever for eliminating equity gaps and raising achievement levels for all students**

**is outstanding teachers and leadership that supports them. Excellence and teacher leadership are integral to this pursuit: If we don't enlist exceptional teachers with the responsibility of developing the skills and knowledge of their peers, how can we ensure students schoolwide are receiving quality educational opportunities?**



This question brings me to my early experience with an outstanding teacher, Mr. Elliot Sutton, who came to shape my philosophy on education today. Mr. Sutton made sixth grade learning exciting, tangible, and relevant to our daily lives. His rigor matched his expectations. We met his demands not only because we wanted to do well by Mr. Sutton, but also because we knew that every day, our teacher was building the skills we would need long after we left his classroom. He modeled excellence. Imagine how much Mr. Sutton's impact could have been multiplied had he been given the opportunity to lead other teachers!

Fast forward to today, however, and the vast majority of teachers still work in silos. Those who have leadership roles are rarely part of a structure to hone them, let alone given the adequate time, accountability, and authority to effectively carry them out. This is not for a lack of volition: A 2013 MetLife survey showed that more than half of teachers are willing to explore leadership responsibilities, and NIET's own Educator Advisory Board has consistently shared over the years how hungry educators are for roles that allow them to lead adults, not just students. With the perpetual need to retain talent in the teaching profession, high-quality investments in building capacity at the school level make sense to give teachers what they crave and students what they deserve.

**In schools that partner with NIET, teacher leadership is central to strengthening instruction and improving student achievement.**

Principals don't "go it alone." Teacher leaders work with administrators to build school leadership teams that drive

the school's instructional program. Unlike other schools, daily collaboration is commonplace at NIET partner schools - both in meeting rooms and classrooms. Expectations to move every student forward are clear, and all educators work toward a shared vision for educational excellence. Educators are motivated because they are supported. Professional learning is directly tied to their needs and to the needs of their students. Contrary to most professional support, this learning continues beyond the scheduled sessions, with teacher leaders visiting classrooms freely to co-teach, model strategies, and provide actionable feedback. As teachers thrive, students achieve.

By establishing these structures, NIET partner schools have seen historic student achievement that stands the test of time. Similarly, high-performing schools that once plateaued now have the tools to pinpoint areas of need, set goals, and work as a team to soar to greater heights. Success can be achieved in every educational setting because it is led by educators who have the courage and conviction to do more, risk more, and share more. They are supported by leaders at all levels: principals who select and provide ongoing training and support; district officials who create and fund leadership positions, adopt a common language for instructional excellence, and involve teacher leaders in their initiatives; college of education leaders who prioritize leadership preparation and management; and state education leaders who champion these positions and define standards to ensure that teachers in these roles deliver measurable results. Only with these collective efforts can we create an education system characterized by highly effective teachers who are empowered to profoundly impact generations of students.

**This is excellence. ●**