

A ROADMAP TO EDUCATION EXCELLENCE:
20 Years of Results



NIET

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

A ROADMAP TO EDUCATION EXCELLENCE: 20 Years of Results

For two decades, the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching has partnered with schools, districts, states, and universities to strengthen educator quality and help ensure all students—no matter their background or circumstance—have the opportunity for success.

NIET's work has influenced outcomes for a generation of students, shaped the careers of hundreds of thousands of teachers and school leaders, and helped encourage tremendous progress at K-12 schools and higher education institutions around the country. We are proud to have collaborated with more than 275,000 educators across the nation, continuously rooted in our belief that intentional, sustained investments in teachers and the leadership that supports them is essential to eliminating equity gaps and providing a brighter future.

Keep reading this magazine to see highlights from NIET's story so far and how those are shaping where we are going next. **We hope you will enjoy reflecting along with us.**

OUR MISSION:

Building educator excellence to give all students the opportunity for success.

OUR VISION:

We believe that every student in America can and should be taught by an excellent teacher and supported by effective leaders every year. We believe intentional, sustained, and high-quality investments in educators directly result in success for all students and are essential to eliminating equity gaps. As a result, NIET is committed to raising achievement levels for all students by focusing on the most powerful lever for change—teachers and the leadership that supports them.



Somerset High School, Somerset ISD, Somerset, Texas

Twenty years ago, we started this work with a dream of building a nationwide network of educators who collaborated deeply around great teaching and learning and who would fundamentally reshape the American education system. Now, in 2020, we have never been more encouraged by what's possible.

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Perry Township Schools

Perry Township's success is rooted in the district's decade-long approach to teacher excellence. The adoption and implementation of the NIET Teaching Standards Rubric has allowed every educator to speak from a common language, and district leaders have prioritized instructional support and career growth opportunities.

As a result of its work to put teacher leaders at the forefront of school improvement, Perry Township's students have narrowed achievement gaps, increased graduation rates, surpassed the state average on the state test, and made double-digit gains on the WIDA exam, which measures the abilities of multilingual readers. Southport Elementary School, where Mentor Teacher Heather Smigielski (pictured on the left) teaches, is an example of this success. Nearly 50% of the school's population are English language learners, and 85% of students classify as economically disadvantaged, but teachers have never settled for less than excellence. Southport students outperform the state average on the annual assessment, and the school has been rated as an A or B by the state every year since 2013. ●



NIET's framework is a game-changer for our district. It confirms that success is achieved when educators are trained to adapt their teaching methods to reach children regardless of nationality, socioeconomic background, learning disabilities, and personal challenges. NIET has empowered our educators to give their very best and be a catalyst for students to do their best."

Patrick Mapes

Superintendent | Perry Township Schools, Indianapolis, Indiana



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.

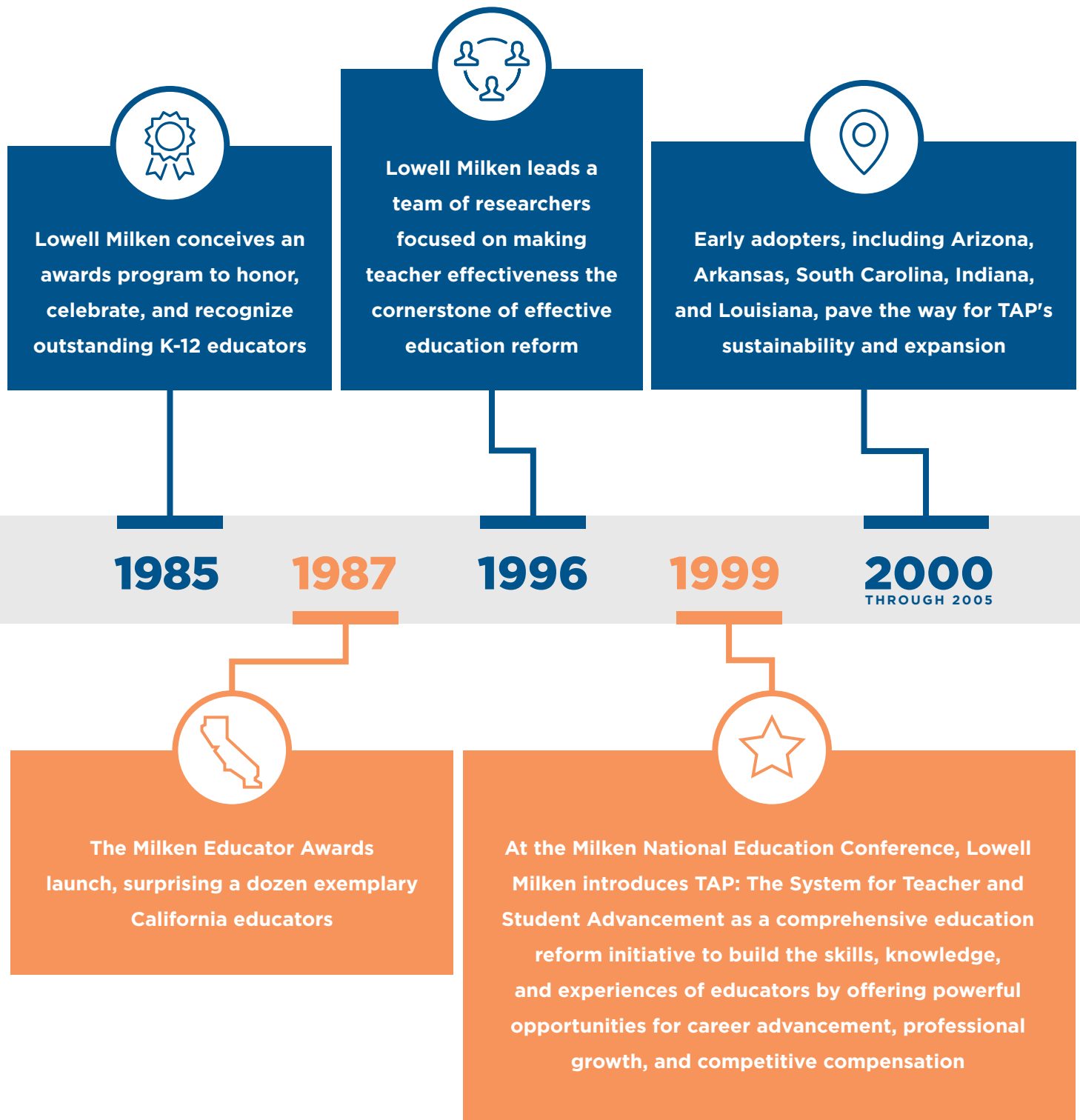
In schools that partner with NIET, teacher leadership is central to strengthening instruction and improving student achievement.

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. ●





1985-2009



The U.S. Department of Education awards a \$2 million three-year grant to implement and expand TAP in five states



New federal program aimed at supporting strategic compensation and human capital, the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF), is created; first TIF grants are awarded to partners implementing TAP

2003

2004

2005

2006

2009



The Fund for the Improvement of Education within the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement awards a \$1.8 million grant to implement TAP in additional schools in Arkansas, Arizona, and South Carolina



Addressing the Milken National Education Conference, U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings calls TAP "a new path to follow"



Arizona State University partners with NIET to revamp its teacher preparation program using the TAP System, marking NIET's entrance into higher education

NIET

THROUGH THE YEARS



At the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, U.S. President Barack Obama cites TAP as “promising work” in “an unprecedented commitment to ensure that anyone entrusted with educating our children is doing the job as well as it can be done”

2009

2010



Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) evaluation system is created based on NIET Teaching Standards

2011

2013



NIET is selected by the Texas Education Agency to support the development and pilot of the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS)

2014



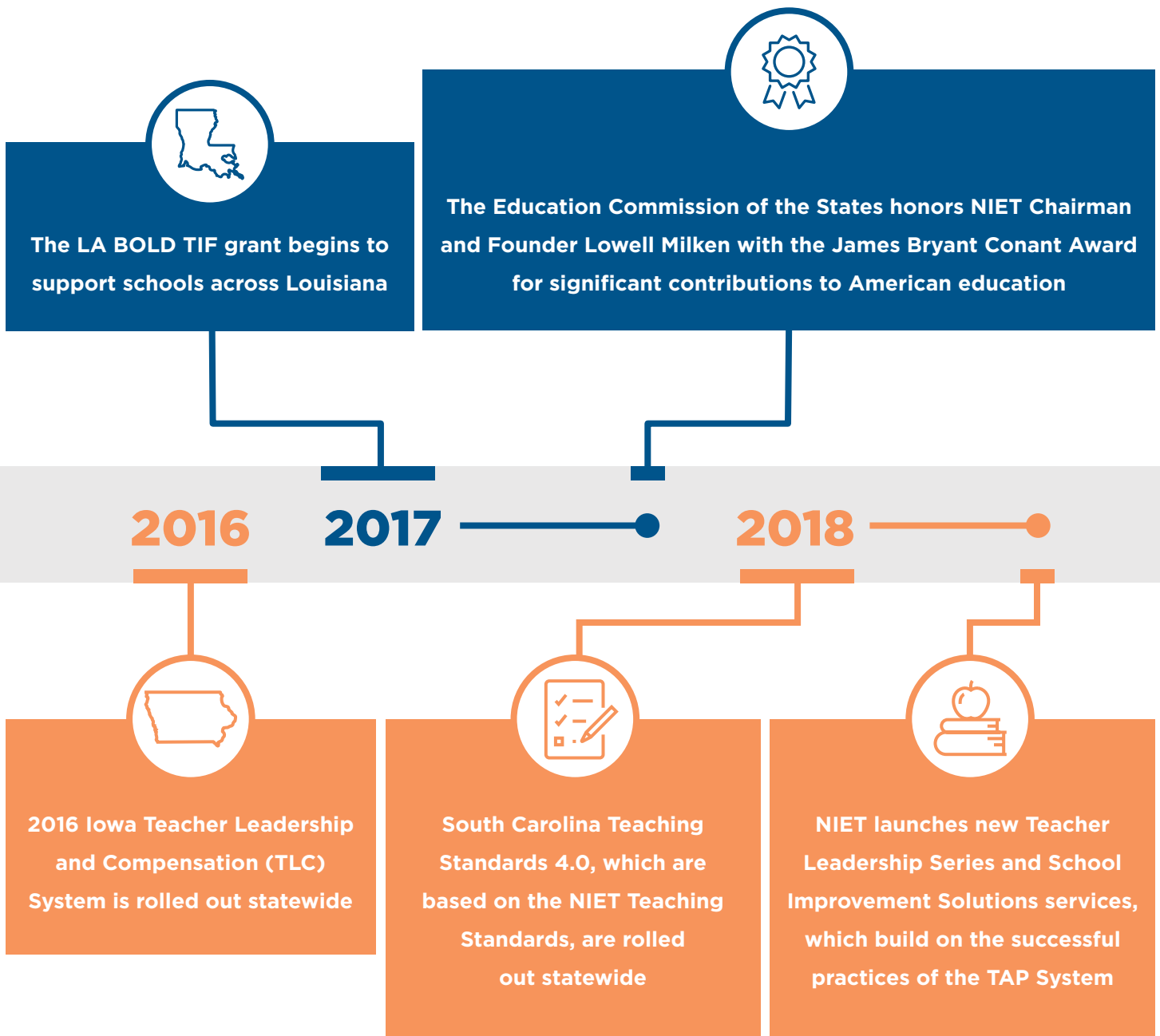
More than \$300 million in TIF grants are awarded to NIET partner schools across the country, doubling NIET’s impact to more than 20,000 teachers and 200,000 students by the 2011-12 school year



Federal Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) grants are awarded to NIET and two higher education partners - Arizona State University and Texas Tech University - providing new opportunities to support aspiring teachers



2009-2018



NIET

THROUGH THE YEARS



Iowa adopts statewide framework based on NIET Teaching Standards; Indiana passes law designating new state-level funding that supports teacher leadership



NIET begins pilot of a Principal Skills Rubric to further equip school leaders and help them receive high-quality feedback



The U.S. Department of Education awards NIET a Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program grant to support implementation of the TAP System across three Indiana school districts

2019

2020



NIET's higher education partnerships reach over 75 universities, ensuring more educators are prepared to be effective by embedding research-based principles into coursework and clinical practices, strengthening the connection between K-12 and higher education institutions, and placing high-quality candidates in high-need schools



NIET marks its 20th anniversary and celebrates supporting 2.75 million students and 275,000 educators over the last two decades, with new innovations and services that will support the next generation of educators and students

2019-2020



EXCELLENCE



FEATURE STORY

A 20-Year Track Record

OF TRANSFORMING AMERICAN K-12 EDUCATION

In every endeavor, people make the difference. Lowell Milken discovered this guiding principle when he was a student at Hesby Street Elementary School in California's San Fernando Valley. He was privileged to benefit from the leadership of outstanding teachers, namely his fifth and sixth grade teachers, Mr. Lou Fosse and Mr. Elliot Sutton. They were compassionate, caring, and brought content to life. Lowell and his classmates were encouraged to think independently, develop a deep awareness of their place in the world, and internalize qualities of character that are essential to developing productive citizens. Building the knowledge, skills, and experiences of people played such a central role in Lowell's success that more than three decades ago, he decided to honor the one profession that made all others possible: *teaching*.

THE BIG IDEA:

In 1987, Lowell Milken founded the Milken Educator Awards to recognize exceptional teachers with \$25,000 in cash prizes. The effort quickly grew into the nation's preeminent teacher recognition program, garnering the participation of every state and coalescing a national network of excellence that is more than 2,800 educators strong today.

After visiting thousands of Milken Educator classrooms, Lowell discovered that, while acknowledging excellence

was a worthy goal, a larger, ever-present problem remained: Access to an effective teacher was unequal, and far too many students were not receiving the quality educational opportunities they greatly needed and deserved. The quality of education varied not only from school to school, but from room to room. In high-need communities, the conditions were even worse. On the cusp of a new millennium, Lowell began to develop a bold initiative to transform American education by elevating and prioritizing teacher excellence.



Creating TAP: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement

Around 2000, the education community was divided between two opposing views for improving teacher quality. On one side were those tied closely to the status quo of rewarding advanced degrees and longevity over effectiveness.

On the other were those Lowell described as “so dispirited by the system” that they were prepared to abandon it altogether and build something new. Behind the scenes, Lowell was quietly developing a revolutionary third option, one that honored the essence of the education system yet sought to change its structure – placing talented teacher leaders at the center of efforts to improve schools.

This innovative, comprehensive approach was known as The TAP System for Teacher and Student Advancement. The TAP System was the result of extensive work with an expert team of researchers, discussions with an advisory board of educators and education leaders, feedback from hundreds of educators, and classroom observations.

“Good teachers are to education what education is to all other professions,” Lowell said during his introduction of TAP at the 1999 Milken National Education Conference. “They are the indispensable element, the sunlight and oxygen, the foundation on which everything else is built.” The TAP System focuses on attracting, developing, motivating, and retaining high-quality teachers through four key elements: multiple career paths, ongoing

applied professional growth, instructionally focused accountability, and performance-based compensation. This comprehensive approach is as relevant and revolutionary today as it was 20 years ago.

EARLY ADOPTERS

Upon Lowell’s announcement of TAP at the 1999 conference, education chiefs from Arizona (Lisa Graham Keegan), Arkansas (Ray Simon), and South Carolina (Inez Tenenbaum) expressed immediate interest in TAP implementation. Arizona became the first state to implement TAP in 2000, followed by South Carolina in 2001, and Arkansas in 2002. Partnerships exist in all three states today. Louisiana, one of NIET’s largest partner states, started implementation in 2003.

Early successes in these states fueled the quick expansion of TAP, as leaders across the political spectrum and at all levels of education – local to federal – showed strong interest and support. In 2005, Lowell Milken announced the formation of the TAP Foundation, which became the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching later that year, as a nonprofit public charity to manage the rapid expansion of the TAP System. Establishing this level of sustained, focused oversight of TAP opened the door to new partnerships in districts and schools across the country. *Continued Next Page*

HOW TAP WORKS:



TAP’s interconnected elements build in the tools and supports schools need to establish teacher leadership teams; guide conversations and protocols that define and support excellent instruction; and embed time for regular feedback, follow-up, mentoring, and strategy assessment and evaluation. Because individual educational needs drive implementation, TAP is able to work in any setting.



In 2016, Lowell Milken traveled to Iberia Parish in Louisiana to present Devon Willis-Jones, then principal at Jeanerette Elementary School, with the prestigious Milken Educator Award. She earned the recognition in part because of the improvements her school had shown through partnering with NIET to provide teachers with leadership opportunities, job-embedded professional development, and meaningful feedback. Willis-Jones now works for NIET as a senior program specialist.

A FEDERAL BREAKTHROUGH

In 2006, NIET's leaders celebrated a major milestone in federal funding for TAP's reforms: the enactment of the multimillion-dollar Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF). The level of funding provided was unprecedented for the development and implementation of performance-based teacher and principal compensation systems in high-need schools.

Now formally authorized as the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program, or TSL, the initiative continues to align to the principles of NIET by funding key support structures for teachers, including career pathways that diversify roles and incentives to attract, support, reward, and retain the most effective teachers and administrators at high-need schools.

In 2010, more than \$300 million in TIF grants were awarded to NIET partner schools across the country, doubling NIET's reach to more than 20,000 teachers and 200,000 students by the 2011-12 school year. TIF funds continued to support TAP projects, and notably, NIET received a \$49 million grant in 2016 to support several districts and schools in Louisiana. In October 2019, NIET was awarded a \$47 million TSL grant to support partnerships in three Indiana districts.

Over the years, NIET has become a recognized and respected policy leader. Following the 2015 enactment of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), NIET's principles of effectiveness are now embedded into K-12 education law and aligned with federal requirements. NIET partners also use Title II funds to provide some of the highest-need schools in the U.S. with the resources necessary to attract, develop, motivate, and retain talented educators over the long term. ***Continued Next Page***



NIET'S GRADUATION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Part of the nation's focus on increasing educator effectiveness has been ensuring that teacher preparation programs have the right tools to equip teacher candidates for the challenges and expectations of the classroom.

In 2009, then U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan urged universities preparing new teacher candidates to make student outcomes the "overarching mission that propels all of their efforts."

At that time, the U.S. Department of Education projected that in 2014, up to 1 million teaching positions would be filled by new teachers.

NIET quickly identified the opportunity to lead and knew that pairing its research-based instructional rubric with real-time application in schools would give universities a valuable tool to help prepare their aspiring teachers for the classroom. Arizona State University (ASU) and Texas

Tech University (TTU) - home to two of the country's most forward-thinking teacher preparation programs - were the first to introduce NIET's rubric into their curricula. ASU began a partnership with NIET in 2009, and TTU signed on as a partner in 2013 through a federal Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) grant. ASU was also included in a separate SEED grant and was a natural fit given its proven results with TAP.

Not only did these projects strengthen instruction at the university level and help faculty create a common language around great teaching, but they also created a pipeline of teacher talent for K-12 schools.

What's more, the "grow your own" aspect of these initiatives has attracted community residents to teaching, inspiring these new teachers to give back to their hometowns, stay with area schools, and ultimately help students excel. *Continued Next Page*



To address a growing and significant shortage of teachers with expertise in STEM fields, Arizona State University and several high-need K-12 districts across Arizona joined NIET to design solutions with the support of a federal Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) grant in 2013. The partnership prepared highly skilled middle and high school math and science teachers, pairing intensive classroom preparation with quality training in STEM subjects, and placing these new STEM teachers in high-need districts and schools.

STATEWIDE PARTNERSHIPS

Starting in the early- and mid-2000s, states such as Minnesota and South Carolina looked to NIET's TAP System as a model for state legislation and policy. Minnesota's Quality Compensation (QComp) law, enacted in 2005, includes four components that closely reflect the key tenets of TAP: career ladder/advancement options, job-embedded professional development, teacher evaluation, and performance pay and alternative salary schedule. South Carolina approved TAP as a viable option for professional development funding. Over the years, Louisiana, Texas, and Indiana have also enacted state policies that reflect TAP's key elements.

2010 marked a milestone in the growth of NIET's state partnerships. The Tennessee Department of Education included NIET's teaching standards as the basis for feedback and observation, including them in the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM), which rolled out to districts statewide in 2011. By 2013, Tennessee was the fastest-improving state in the country on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), commonly known as the Nation's Report Card.

Based on the success in Tennessee, NIET was awarded a contract with the Ohio Department of Education to design training and support tools around the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES). The Ohio portal now includes

more than 12,000 certified evaluators who benefit from the sophisticated training system complete with video, modules, live-streaming, and more.

The growing number of partners seeking NIET's depth of expertise to develop and implement educator effectiveness systems inspired NIET to create broader Best Practice services in teacher leadership, professional development, observation and feedback, and strategic compensation systems. The power of NIET's offerings was and remains that they are customizable to meet the needs of states, districts, and schools while remaining rooted in TAP's proven principles.

NIET's expanded focus and flexibility paved the way for additional state partnerships, including with the Texas Education Agency through the development and pilot of the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) in 2014 and statewide launch two years later, and in being approved as an expert partner for Texas' state school improvement grants. NIET also began meeting with Iowa leaders and has since supported the rollout of the Iowa Teacher Leadership and Compensation (TLC) System in 2016 and launch of the NIET Iowa Instructional Framework, which provides educators with a common language to analyze, discuss, and improve classroom teaching.

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South Carolina's multi-year rollout of the South Carolina Teaching Standards 4.0 has allowed teachers to better grasp the expectations before they are fully implemented. Dr. Ann Shaw, a former South Carolina master teacher and Milken Educator, has led trainings across the state with both educators and higher education partners who want to ensure aspiring teachers understand the rubric before they have a classroom of their own.



Dr. Candice McQueen joined NIET as CEO in 2019, and she visited partners across the country in her first few weeks, including schools in Orangeburg Consolidated School District.

THE FUTURE OF NIET

NIET celebrates two decades of progress with former Tennessee Commissioner of Education Dr. Candice McQueen as its CEO. Dr. McQueen is leading a comprehensive, collaborative vision-setting and strategic planning process focused on ensuring that NIET continues to successfully partner with states, districts, schools, and universities to enhance educator excellence. She is also actively expanding NIET's reach and services with attention to innovative practices that provide equitable opportunities for all students.

Central to Dr. McQueen's vision are new innovations that build on NIET's most successful practices that have sustained the test of time. These include developing further support and tools specifically for principals and higher education leaders, as well as helping NIET's long-standing partners take their work to the next level. At each turn, NIET has remained committed to the principles that Lowell Milken outlined 20 years ago when he led a group of experts and educators to define great teaching and develop a system for supporting it. ●

NOW, THERE ARE MORE POSSIBILITIES THAN EVER
for how educators can discover their own excellence.

PHOTO GALLERY:

Celebrating Our Award-Winning Partners



NIET honors excellence each year through its Founder's Award. The award honors schools that have made exceptional efforts to implement and represent the principles of NIET and the TAP System for Teacher and Student Advancement, resulting in improvements to educator effectiveness and student achievement growth. Finalists for the award all receive a \$10,000 prize, with the winner receiving \$50,000.

In 2018, NIET Chairman and Founder Lowell Milken and then CEO Dr. Gary Stark honored some of NIET's longest and most successful partners as finalists: West Goshen Elementary School, Goshen Community Schools, Indiana; Abraham Lincoln Elementary School, Perry Township Schools, Indiana; Cross County Elementary Technology Academy, Cross County School District, Arkansas; Slaton Junior High School, Slaton Independent School District, Texas; and Mansfield High School, DeSoto Parish Schools, Louisiana.

Goshen Community Schools



EXCELLENCE



2018 Founder's Award Grand Prize Winner:

*West Goshen Elementary School,
Goshen Community Schools, Indiana*

Before TAP was implemented at West Goshen Elementary, the school was labeled a D on the state's A-F scale. The school serves around 350 students, of whom nearly two-thirds are Hispanic, three quarters of students receive free or reduced-price lunch, and nearly half are English Language Learners. TAP created a common language and structure around accountability and expectations to meet specific educational challenges. Teachers developed a no-excuses policy, drilling down into the data for each student and developing paths for success. After two years of working with NIET, West Goshen was given a B. By 2015-16, the school received an A and has maintained it in years since. Particularly impressive are West Goshen's efforts to close achievement gaps. In 2019, the iLEARN passing rate for students receiving free or reduced-price lunch was more than 8 percentage points higher than the state average in English language arts (ELA) and nearly 12 points higher in math. Similarly, English Language Learners surpassed the state average by more than 17 points in ELA and by more than 13 points in math.

We all believe that through working with NIET, we've created a culture of growing and learning for all of us. West Goshen teachers don't make excuses; we find strategies. We look at data, we make a plan, and we execute the plan."

Lori Line

Former principal at West Goshen Elementary
and District Executive Director of Talent
Development and Management



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ON THE FAR RIGHT



Avondale Elementary District

2019 Founder's Award Grand Prize Winner:

Wildflower Accelerated Academy, Avondale Elementary School District, Goodyear, Arizona

For eight years, NIET has helped Wildflower focus on data-driven decision-making and work innovatively to identify strengths and needs. Principal Dr. Araceli Montoya (middle right) helms a leadership team of master and mentor teachers as well as administrators to represent diverse voices at the table. From 2015-16 to 2018-19, Wildflower's 560 students have increased proficiency in English language arts from 40% to 56%, and from 39% to 63% in math. Third graders have moved from less than 50% proficient to approximately 90% in four years' time. In 2017, the "A" state-rated school ranked 3rd in Arizona for growth points earned in a K-8 setting. In 2019, Wildflower was named an "A+ School of Excellence" by the Arizona Educational Foundation for the second consecutive year.



Slaton ISD

2018 Founder's Award Finalist:

Slaton Junior High School, Slaton Independent School District, Texas

Before the implementation of the TAP System, Slaton Junior High - a rural school located 12 miles outside of Lubbock - struggled with attracting and retaining high-quality teachers and addressing the needs of its student population. Help came in 2014 when the Slaton Independent School District began implementing the TAP System districtwide in partnership with Texas Tech University (TTU) and NIET. The TAP partnership provided Slaton Junior High with the structure to put in place expert teachers. An added benefit to the partnership was the training of TTU teacher candidates, which created a pipeline of teaching excellence to feed into the school and district. Today, Slaton Junior High has a solid B in overall performance and school progress, and earned four district designations in 2019: academic achievement in English language arts/Reading, achievement in postsecondary readiness, and top 25% each in the state for comparative academic growth and closing achievement gaps.

Perry Township



EXCELLENCE



2018-19 District Award of Excellence for Educator Effectiveness:

Perry Township Schools, Indiana

In fall 2018, NIET named its first District Award of Excellence for Educator Effectiveness, an award that recognizes a district for extraordinary accomplishments in advancing educators and students. The winner receives a \$50,000 prize.

NIET's partnership with Perry Township Schools started with Southport Elementary (pictured below) and Abraham Lincoln Elementary in 2010. The schools' progress led Perry to expand NIET's support districtwide in 2012. Perry is the state's second fastest-growing district, in part due to a recent large influx of refugees, and 27% of its 16,000 students are English language learners. Now Perry has not just closed the achievement gap with Indiana on the state assessment, but the district also surpassed the state passing rate.


I never had the conversations about lessons like I have had in the last 6-7 years with the NIET partnership. They're impactful when you see results. At Homecroft, our growth has never been higher. That shows that what we're doing with the support of the whole township is huge for growing kids and getting them where they need to go."

Jody Matthews,

Principal of Homecroft Elementary School
Perry Township Schools





“ I’m honored to be reaping the benefits of the TAP System and more importantly to see the students reap the real benefits.” *Clay Corley, Superintendent*  *Pictured*

DeSoto Parish Schools

2019-20 District Award of Excellence for Educator Effectiveness:

DeSoto Parish Schools, Louisiana

Before DeSoto Public Schools began to implement NIET’s TAP System, student success was lagging. The district’s graduation rate in 2008-09 was 67.8%, and in 2010 the district was ranked #45 in the state. DeSoto was eager to reverse course for its 5,000 students, most of whom are economically challenged. As a result of fully investing in the TAP System, DeSoto earned its first ever “A” rating in 2016 from the state. In 2018, its graduation rate was 93.4% – well above state and national averages. In 2019, DeSoto ranked #12 for overall performance in the state. The country has taken notice: A 2017 study by researchers at Stanford’s Center for Education Policy Analysis placed DeSoto in the top 4% of school districts nationwide for growth in math and English language arts.



Jackson County Schools

2016, 2017, 2019 Founder's Award Finalist:

Dodson Branch School,

Jackson County Schools, Tennessee

When Dodson Branch School first partnered with NIET in 2013-14, the rural school, with almost half of its student population defined as economically disadvantaged, had plateaued with a 3 rating out of a 5 on the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS). With NIET's help, Dodson Branch built a stronger school culture, centralized around growing teachers in their practice and school capacity through formalized leadership roles. Over the past several years, the school has regularly achieved more than a year's growth and has a nearly 100% retention rate through attracting, motivating, and retaining teachers at all levels.



The NIET structure and coaching are directly connected to our success. We are better. We are now internalizing all those coaching moments and using them with each other.”

Tammy Woolbright

Former Principal and current Jackson County Schools District Elementary Supervisor



PICTURED BELOW,
ON THE RIGHT



Story of Success

ASCENSION PARISH PUBLIC SCHOOLS,
DONALDSONVILLE, LOUISIANA

District Context

Ascension Public Schools has worked to improve student academic outcomes through a variety of strategies over the last 15 years, with an intensive focus on building the skills of classroom teachers who serve students with the greatest barriers to learning.

While high-need students have experienced the most accelerated growth, results for all students in the district have improved dramatically. Ascension Public Schools is headquartered in Donaldsonville, Louisiana, approximately 60 miles northwest of New Orleans. The district spans 300 square miles and serves 23,400 students in 29 schools. Fifty-six percent of Ascension students are economically disadvantaged, and 45% are minority students. High-need students are heavily concentrated in a small number of schools that were historically rated as D or F schools.

In the 2006-07 school year, under the leadership of Superintendent Patrice Pujol (now Senior Executive-in-Residence at NIET), district leaders first partnered with NIET to support two high-need schools that had been identified by the state as needing improvement. The approach focused on providing intensive support for classroom instruction through TAP's core strategy of training teacher leaders and school administrators to provide instructional support for classroom teachers through school-based professional learning and coaching.

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*G.W. Carver Primary School; Ascension Public Schools;
Gonzales, Louisiana*



*Duplessis Primary School; Ascension Public Schools;
Gonzales, Louisiana*

Key Lessons

Success in the initial two schools led district leaders to expand the TAP System to 14 of Ascension’s highest-need schools over the next several years. At the same time, they began scaling some of the best practices of TAP across all 28 schools in the district. Here are key lessons learned:

DEVELOP A SHARED VISION OF GREAT CLASSROOM TEACHING:

The district’s highest-need schools struggled to provide high-quality rigorous instruction, particularly since students were often several grade levels behind. There was not a common understanding of what quality instruction should look and sound like. The district adopted NIET’s research-based description of strong teaching practices, creating a common language and expectations for instruction. The NIET Teaching Standards Rubric formed the foundation from which schools raised expectations for educators and allowed individual teachers to take greater ownership of their classroom practice and skill development. Use of clear and detailed descriptions of teaching practices also enabled the district to measure and support improvements. This success led to Ascension implementing the rubric across the entire district.

RECRUIT AND RETAIN HIGHLY EFFECTIVE TEACHERS IN HIGH-NEED SCHOOLS:

A key barrier facing the highest-need schools was recruiting and retaining effective educators. With the increased investment in teacher leadership and skill development, teachers in the targeted high-need schools began to make significant and sustained improvements in student learning growth. This attracted the attention of colleagues across the district and increased the number of educators interested in working in these schools. In addition, district leaders made a bold decision: the path

for those who aspired to be in leadership would be to work and excel in one of the targeted schools. By shifting the path to promotion for teachers to demonstrating success working in a high-need school, the district was able to draw talent to its highest-need schools. This also strengthened teacher and school leader knowledge of, and identification with, all students in the district.

DEVELOP EXPANDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATORS:

Teacher leaders based in each school provided everyday support for classroom teachers in addition to leading weekly meetings of professional learning communities. This continuous support and coaching strengthened the level of instruction across the building. Further, teacher leaders were encouraged to build their own leadership skills through training, on-the-job experience, and participation on the school leadership team. Principals increased their own knowledge and skill in leading instructional improvement and gained expertise in guiding their leadership teams to work collaboratively toward shared goals.

ALIGN DISTRICT AND SCHOOL-LEVEL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING:

At the district level, central office staff played a key role in designing, supporting, and prioritizing school-based professional learning. The direct involvement of district staff helped to create coherence between district-level initiatives and the work of school leadership teams. For example, working with school leadership teams to roll out new curriculum or other reforms in coordination and with the involvement of teacher leaders in each school assured that every teacher had the same understanding of the change and that deep implementation happened in every classroom. *Continued Next Page*



Duplessis Primary School; Ascension Public Schools; Gonzales, Louisiana

What's Next?

Ascension is sustaining momentum and making ongoing progress. Under the leadership of Superintendent David Alexander, Ascension continues to see growth and progress in its highest-need schools.

In 2019, Ascension was ranked No. 4 in the state on the district performance scores, continuing to earn an “A” from the Louisiana Department of Education. Investments in effective teachers and ongoing learning opportunities have created a structure of support that is an engine for continuous improvement. Ascension Public Schools is continuing to strengthen school culture and draw talent to its highest-need schools. These successful innovations continue to resonate in schools across the district, raising achievement levels for all students. ●

In Conversation:

INEZ TENENBAUM

FORMER CHAIR OF THE UNITED STATES CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION
AND FORMER SOUTH CAROLINA STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

How did you learn about TAP and NIET, and what was it about this approach that made you want to help South Carolina's schools implement TAP?

I served as South Carolina's State Superintendent of Education for two terms (1999-2007), and each year attended the Milken National Education Conference. During one of the conferences, TAP was presented by Lowell Milken and the late Lew Solmon as a career ladder for teachers. Having been a classroom teacher myself, I immediately believed in the principles of TAP and wanted to initiate the program in South Carolina for our teachers. TAP allows teachers to pursue several levels of teacher leadership—career, mentor, and master teacher. TAP not only enhances the professional development of teachers, it also tracks the progress of student learning and growth.

How did the state build off the principles of TAP through policy and statewide initiatives?

During my tenure as State Superintendent of Education, I worked with several school districts to introduce TAP as a pilot project for teacher development. The school districts that implemented TAP with fidelity saw increased teacher effectiveness and student achievement. Although TAP has not been implemented in all of the schools in South Carolina, the seeds of TAP were instrumental in adopting

the NIET Rubric as the state teacher observation system, which is being implemented in the majority of school districts across the state.

What made NIET different from other partners?

NIET provides hands-on coaching to states interested in implementing TAP, and it collects and analyzes data that is the basis for the development of the TAP teaching skills, knowledge and responsibilities, and performance standards. NIET's school improvement solutions and teacher development are based on years of research and observation of teachers in the classroom. NIET celebrates the teaching profession and has a positive, collaborative approach to improving student achievement.

What do you think NIET should focus on in our next 20 years?

NIET'S focus should be to take TAP and NIET's Teaching Standards Rubric to scale in all states. Both TAP and the Teaching Standards Rubric need to be adopted as national models for improving teacher education preparation programs, teacher effectiveness, student individual learning, and academic growth. ●





Photo courtesy of Marian University

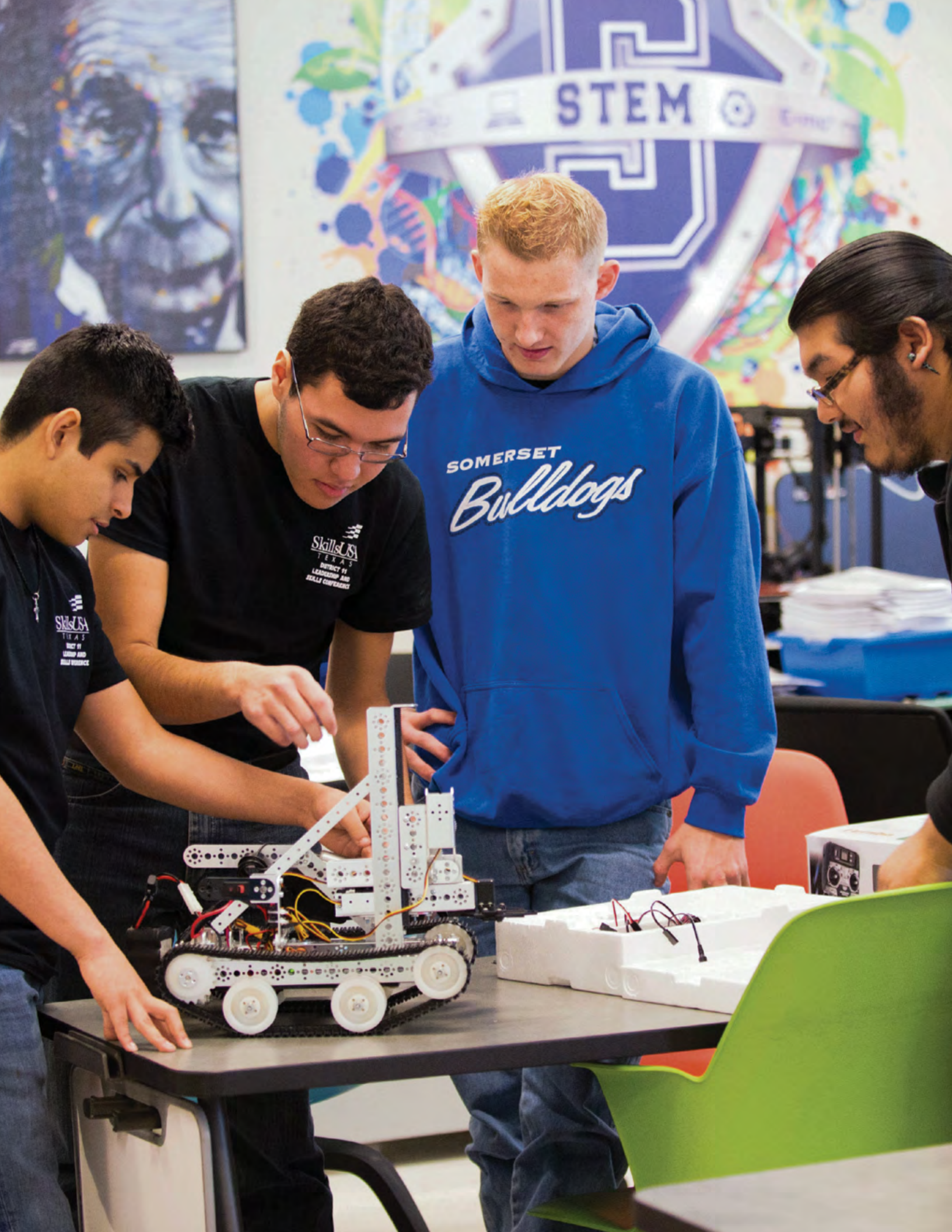
Bookend: Marian University

A few years ago, Marian University in Indianapolis began to re-envision what it looks like to have teacher candidates that were prepared for the opportunities and challenges of classrooms today.

Leaders shifted their model and began to more deeply collaborate with nearby districts. The faculty of Marian's Klipsch Educators College embedded the NIET Teaching Standards into their pre-service coursework, and now they are developing out

INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

comprehensive residency and clinical experiences, promising that students will perform at the “proficient” level or higher on selected NIET Rubric indicators upon graduation. As a result, nearby NIET partner districts like Beech Grove, Perry Township, and Decatur are vying to be first in line for Marian candidates, and the Klipsch Educators College nearly tripled its enrollment of incoming freshmen for the 2018-19 school year. ●



STEM

SOMERSET
Bulldogs

SkillsUSA
TEXAS
DISTRICT 11
LEADERSHIP AND
SKILLS CONFERENCE

SkillsUSA
TEXAS
DISTRICT 11
LEADERSHIP AND
SKILLS CONFERENCE



Somerset High School

Somerset High School in Somerset ISD exemplifies the district's commitment to closing achievement gaps and using an intentional, data-driven process to address students' needs. Somerset ISD, located just southwest of San Antonio, serves a school community where more than 80% of families are low-income and students face daily challenges.

Through implementing the research-based TAP System, teachers and school leaders across the district now have the structure to provide focused support, and they are able to create a nurturing and stable student-centered school environment. Teachers regularly collaborate around how they can maximize opportunities and make learning relevant, and students are realizing their fullest potential. Additionally, while the TAP System has created a pipeline for leadership, the district has also partnered with Texas Tech to establish a “grow your own” partnership for aspiring teachers and administrators. The results continue to show what is possible. In 2019, the district earned an A from the state of Texas for school progress and an overall letter grade of a B. ●



Teacher leaders have really helped elevate our progress. Just in the last few years, our campuses have met academic standards, and we are making some dramatic improvements. It couldn't be done without those teacher leaders on our campus. Integrating teacher leaders into our campus works, and the proof is in the results.”

Dr. Saul Hinojosa

Superintendent | Somerset Independent School District, Somerset, Texas



Dr. Josh Barnett has had a front-row seat to witness the learning and work unfold at Wildflower Accelerated Academy in Avondale Elementary School District, where school leaders make every decision based on data and what is best for students.

DATA-DRIVEN CORE ELEMENTS OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT:



Evaluation:

Using a system capable of differentiating educator performance levels and providing actionable feedback for improvement.



Professional Development:

Creating ongoing professional development opportunities.



Recruitment and Retention:

Ensuring the recruitment and retention of effective teacher leaders.



Focus on Environment:

Implementing a challenging, rewarding, and collegial environment focused on high-quality instruction and student learning.



The Evidence Effect:

DEMONSTRATED IMPACT

DR. JOSH BARNETT, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

In 1999, the TAP System was established after years of incubating an idea about how to most effectively transform schools. The central theory behind TAP is that an effective teacher is the most important school-based factor to increase student achievement—a finding that has been echoed over the last 20 years of implementation and a consensus among the extant school improvement literature.

Grounded in a clear, evidence-based approach, the TAP System has been evaluated to answer the most important question: Does it work? From 1999 to today, clear results illustrate the power of this initiative. In 2013, third-party researchers found that TAP schools significantly outperform comparison schools after two and three years of implementation. In 2019, another study published in the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* identified TAP as a key example of an optimum incentive pay program and highlighted its “large and significant effects” on math achievement. Every day, we hear stories of transformation from partners like Premont Independent School District in Texas, which 10 years ago was at risk for closure due to low performance. Last year, Premont earned a B rating from the state and was part of the governor’s state of the state address.

In short: Yes, the TAP System works. Building human capital within schools to implement data-driven improvement processes leads to shifts in school culture, changes in beliefs and attitudes, and progress in student achievement.

NIET’s initiatives are supported through the combination of rigorous research and on-the-ground experiences. Our focus on changing schools begins with each educator – each school leader, each classroom teacher. We meticulously track our efforts for fidelity of

implementation, feedback loops from educators, as well as the summative impact on instructional change and achievement. These data points are collected throughout our work with every partner – in real-time and at key milestones – to adjust as needed to ensure we stay on track toward changing behaviors and impacting students.

With this dedicated approach to collecting and reviewing both anecdotal feedback and data, NIET’s results stand out because of the decades-long track record of growth and success in raising student achievement in high-need schools.

The data-driven core elements of school improvement (*page 36, left*) are linked in each service NIET offers, and the commitment to these principles ensures our work continues to make an impact. And I would argue the quality of NIET’s team in implementing these processes is another key reason behind how our organization has set itself apart. Our world-class team of educators and specialists are uniquely gifted at making our research-driven approach accessible.

After 20 years, NIET’s work has expanded greatly in reach and offerings, with new services, more tailored approaches to meet schools where they are, and partners across 20 states. At the same time, nothing has changed in the focus of our work: building educator effectiveness to give all students the opportunity for success. We are as dedicated to excellence as we were upon inception, and the results resoundingly and repeatedly demonstrate the impact on instructional improvement, educator efficacy, teacher retention, and student achievement. We are proud of that growth and progress and look forward to sharing the results from the next 20 years. ●



Desert View Elementary, Gadsden Elementary School District, San Luis, Arizona

“

Since the implementation of the TAP model in our school district, I have noticed a shift in administration and teachers on all of our campuses. School leaders are becoming instructional leaders. Through the use of walkthrough data, observations, and student work, they are building and strengthening their knowledge around the implementation of the tier I curricula. As a result of this increased knowledge, school leaders are ‘going first’ and building capacity on their campuses through more intentional clusters, coaching, and most importantly the support needed for student success on their campus.”

Marian Althage

District-based Executive Master Teacher | Jefferson Parish Schools, Louisiana



Examining the Evidence

NIET's initiatives can positively impact student achievement, especially in schools that sustain partnerships for multiple years. For twenty years, NIET has worked with schools, districts, states, and institutions of higher education to raise student achievement, improve the quality of instruction, and increase the ability of high-need schools to recruit, retain, and support effective teachers.

ACADEMIC GROWTH

More of NIET's partner schools achieve at least one year's academic growth each year compared to similar schools.

COMPARISON SCHOOLS



FIRST-YEAR PARTNER SCHOOLS



CONTINUING PARTNER SCHOOLS



CAREER ADVANCEMENT

A large and increasing proportion of teachers support career advancement opportunities.

2005



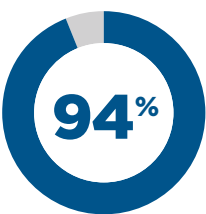
2012



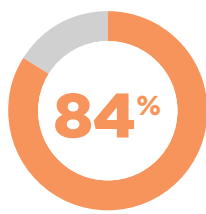
2019



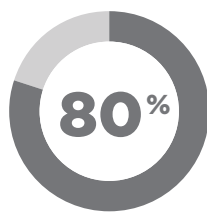
OUR PARTNER SCHOOLS RETAIN TEACHERS



RETENTION IN NIET SCHOOLS



NATIONAL RETENTION AVERAGE



RETENTION IN HIGH-NEED SCHOOLS

LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IMPACT TEACHER RETENTION



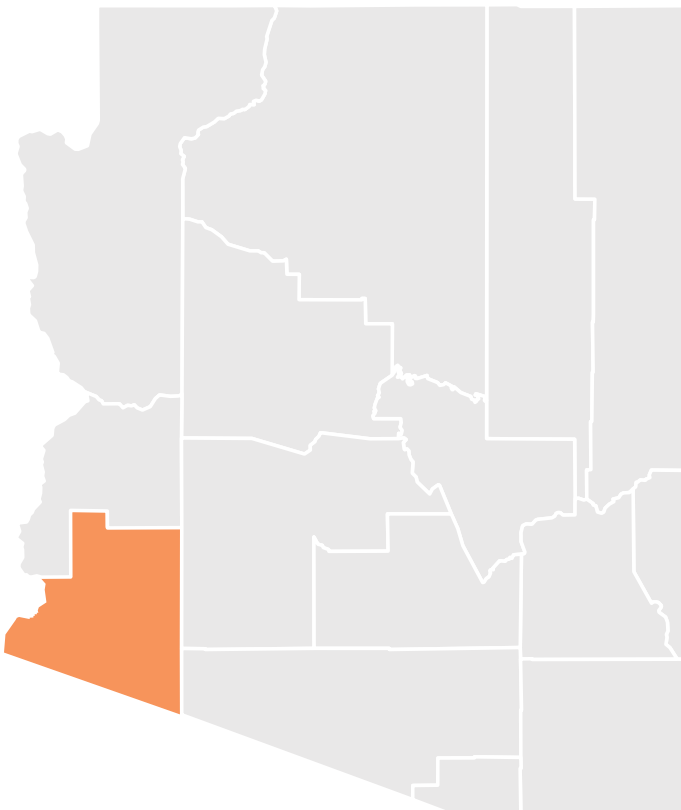
of teacher leaders report that the increased leadership opportunities afforded to them have motivated them to stay in the teaching profession longer.

CASE STUDY:

Gadsden Elementary School District

Five schools within the district earned an “A” letter grade in 2018-2019

These schools had never earned an “A” prior to starting their NIET partnership.



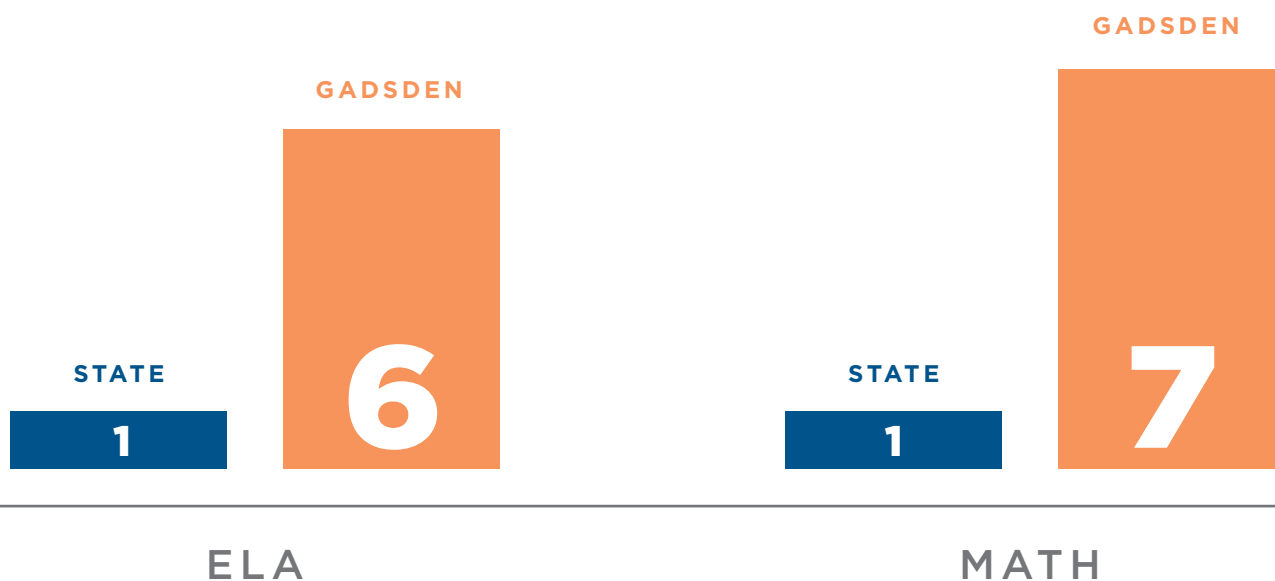
- 1 GADSDEN ELEMENTARY
- 2 CESAR CHAVEZ ELEMENTARY
- 3 DESERT VIEW ELEMENTARY
- 4 ED PASTOR ELEMENTARY
- 5 ARIZONA DESERT ELEMENTARY



Gadsden's long-term partnership with NIET has empowered a local, sustainable, and successful instructional leadership pipeline. Six of the district's eight principals started as master teachers. Gadsden's focus on human capital development through structured teacher leadership opportunities has provided principals with intentional training and mentoring to build an impactful leadership skillset. School and teacher leaders coach peers and provide professional development centered on instructional practice.

1-YEAR GROWTH IN COMPARISON TO THE STATE

Growth in percentage points for students passing the state assessment from 2018 to 2019



FEATURE STORY

Putting Best Practices into Policy

From its inception, NIET's work has been to understand and promote the conditions that are necessary for great teaching and learning to thrive. This is naturally of interest to leaders and policymakers, who bear responsibility for ensuring our education system serves all students. Through its two decades of work across states and districts, NIET has provided many valuable and innovative lessons that have informed policies at the federal and state levels that are designed to better support teachers and student learning. Here is a look back on how the principles of NIET's work and the successes of partner districts and states have led to noteworthy policy advancements.



Arizona Desert Elementary School, Gadsden Elementary School District, San Luiz, Arizona



Federal Investment in Comprehensive School Reform

In the wake of *No Child Left Behind*, which expanded school accountability to every state, congressional lawmakers became interested in innovative ways to accelerate teacher development in order to help schools meet ambitious student achievement goals. The TAP System, a comprehensive approach to build educator excellence and increase student achievement, was one program that caught the eye of congressional lawmakers.

TAP’s foundation in using research-based practices to create systems and capacity for continuous school improvement was key to policymakers. As a result, the core elements of TAP – which include multiple career pathways, ongoing professional development, aligned feedback and support for teachers, and performance-based compensation – became one of the primary influences for a new federal grant program: the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF).

Since its establishment in 2006, the TIF program, now known as the Teacher and School Leader (TSL) Incentive Program, has funded 131 projects that serve over 2,000 schools in more than 300 urban, suburban, and rural school districts in 36 states. Just like NIET’s work, the federal grant program remains focused on the research-based best practices for improving teacher effectiveness. TSL provides funding to develop performance-based teacher and principal compensation systems in high-need

schools that take into account student achievement gains and classroom evaluations. These grants also support human capital strategies, such as teacher career pathways that recognize, develop, and reward excellent teachers as they advance through various stages of their professional journey.

NIET has received numerous grants through the TIF and TSL programs that have made profound effects on its partner districts. The funds allowed for the creation of an infrastructure for professional learning and rewarded effective educators. These grants also provided NIET with opportunities to explore how to better support great teaching through teacher-led coaching and professional development.

Redefining Professional Development

Many of the lessons learned through NIET’s TIF grants played a pivotal role in informing the development of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which was signed into law in 2015. The law includes an updated definition of professional development, shifting the concept of professional development from one-off workshops to activities that “are sustained, intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused.” This definition provides a strong guide to schools on how to best structure professional learning in a way that truly facilitates teacher growth. *Continued Next Page*



Formalizing these roles and having teacher leaders in every building has been the fuel to get things done.”

Ryan Wise
Director | Iowa Department of Education



Leaders at the national and state level have taken notice of NIET's work, and principles are now in place throughout various grant programs, policies, and initiatives. Superintendent Pat Mapes (speaking) shared about how Perry Township has benefited from teacher leadership programs, which caught the attention of state Representative Bob Behning (left), who then advanced legislation in Indiana to further career opportunities for teachers.

IMPACT ON STATE POLICY

Compensation for Teacher Leadership and Teacher Performance

NIET believes that exceptional teachers should be rewarded for their expertise and ability to impact student learning. Great teachers also deserve career advancement opportunities that allow them to use their instructional expertise and earn additional compensation for taking on additional responsibilities. These principles of NIET's work have informed important state-led efforts to help ensure that excellent teachers are paid for their skills and accomplishments.

Enacted in 2014-15, the Iowa Teacher Leadership and Compensation (TLC) System is a landmark policy that solidified the state as a national leader on teacher leadership. The Iowa TLC System provides \$163 million in annual funds to help districts reward effective teachers with leadership opportunities and higher pay, attract promising new teachers with competitive starting salaries and more support, and foster greater collaboration so teachers can learn from each other.

As the new state system was under development, a TIF grant allowed NIET to work closely with Saydel and Central Decatur community school districts to provide a powerful, on-the-ground example of teacher leadership and compensation reform for others in Iowa. In particular, the grant demonstrated how rural schools could use teacher leaders to provide rich professional development and coaching to their peers, reducing the need to rely on a limited supply of external professional development providers.

More recently, Texas and Indiana have launched grant programs to support teacher leader roles, informed by NIET's track record of success in each state. In 2018, the Texas Education Agency announced a Teacher Leadership Grant program that offered up to \$4 million to create instructional teacher leadership roles at schools identified for improvement. In 2019, the Indiana State Legislature passed H.B. 1008, which authorized \$3.5 million in funding over two years for districts to implement career ladder programs. *Continued Next Page*



Frameworks to Support Instructional Improvement

What is good teaching? How do you foster good teaching at scale?

These are two fundamental questions states must answer if they want to nurture teacher growth in every school. In

the past decade, NIET has helped states answer these questions through the development and adoption of statewide frameworks for teaching. The NIET Teaching Standards Rubric, a set of holistic teaching standards that outlines expectations for teachers across various indicators, is currently in use in eight states.

Four states have adopted NIET's rubric in whole or in part based on the results of schools that implemented the TAP System through a federal Teacher Incentive Grant. In 2011, Tennessee launched a new system for teacher evaluation and support based on NIET's rubric, the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM). NIET supported the state by providing in-depth training and certification for tens of thousands of educators statewide over the summer of 2011, as well as offering an online portal for annual evaluator certification and video-based resources for teachers. NIET has since provided ongoing support to the state-level TEAM coaches serving school districts across the state.

In 2014, Texas piloted NIET's TAP System for teacher classroom observation in 50 school districts. Based on

the success of the pilot, the state contracted with NIET to help design the teacher observation and feedback portion of its revamped evaluation system, T-TESS (Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System). NIET also supported the state in building an online portal to house teacher evaluation data and resources.

South Carolina adapted, and then adopted, NIET's rubric as the South Carolina Teaching Standards 4.0 in 2018. As the state prepared to roll it out to all schools in the state, NIET provided training on the teaching standards to both districts and educator preparation programs to ensure alignment between teacher candidates' preparation experience and districts' expectations for quality instruction.

And just last year in 2019, Iowa adopted the NIET Teaching Standards as its statewide instructional framework. NIET has since provided training for schools and higher education institutions across the state on how to effectively use the rubric to improve teaching and learning. Through a set of teaching standards, teachers share a common language for great instruction and have a clear vision of excellent teaching that moves student achievement.

Continued Next Page



More than 130 districts leaders, university faculty, classroom teachers, and academic coaches all gathered together in Ottumwa, Iowa, for statewide trainings on the Iowa Instructional Framework in January 2020.

Initiatives to Support New Teachers

The first years of a teacher's career are perhaps the most critical to his or her professional development. In many schools supported by NIET, new teachers are provided intensive support systems and professional learning opportunities that help them develop into more effective teachers.

Since 2014, the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) has awarded over \$9 million in grants to teacher preparation providers and their school system partners to advance a shift to full-year residencies for all aspiring teachers. By 2020, Louisiana will have established a cadre of 2,500 trained mentor teachers that support yearlong residents. Based on NIET's track record of success in the state, BESE cited NIET as "a partner with proven experience" that could help districts train and implement mentor teacher roles. ●

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY

Twenty years ago, these conditions and opportunities were exceedingly rare in the average American school. Today, however, there are many districts and states that have made professional development a priority and advanced teacher leadership opportunities. The fact that these principles are reflected in federal and state policies is a promising sign that schools across our nation are increasingly providing teachers with the support necessary to grow their practices and help them impact student

achievement. These policies, combined with NIET's work over the years, have helped schools make strides toward the goal of ensuring every student has access to a teacher capable of providing an excellent and equitable education. While there is far more work to be done to reach this goal, the path forward is clearer than ever: If we invest in teacher leadership and meaningful professional development, educators - and their students - will thrive. ●



Alice Harte Charter School, InspireNOLA, New Orleans, Louisiana



Southport Elementary; Perry Township Schools; Indianapolis, Indiana

**NIET KNOWS THAT
TEACHERS LEARN AND GROW BEST**

when they are provided coaching and professional learning opportunities. Through peer teacher leaders, career advancement opportunities, and performance incentives, educators can feel acknowledged and rewarded for great teaching.

Roll Call: Checking in with NIET Teacher Leaders



Dr. Kenya Claiborne Roberts

Dr. Kenya Claiborne Roberts has served as an educator for 18 years, starting as a middle school math teacher and rising to become a master teacher in DeSoto Parish Schools.

She then brought her expertise to Caddo Parish, where she now serves as principal of Dr. Joseph Samuel Clark Elementary. She prioritizes joining cluster and professional learning meetings, and she knows the value of providing high-quality feedback to master and mentor teachers.



Our Teachers

NIET's work provides teachers the chance to make an impact outside of their classroom walls. Formal teacher leadership opportunities are inherent in NIET's model, and through those, educators can pursue whatever career path they choose.

“ In the master teacher role, I learned so much about reflection. Reflecting on how my TAP implementation impacted teacher growth, which impacted student growth, was the most powerful piece that helped me to be successful. I was able to learn so much about using student work to show student progress and determine what supports teachers and students needed to be productive and successful in the classroom. Because of the positive impact TAP had on my career, I moved into the role of a principal at a TAP school. This move was so exciting for me because I knew what I needed to do to help my master teachers be successful. Therefore, I can effectively coach my masters on how to coach teachers.”

Dr. Kenya Claiborne Roberts



PICTURED ON
LEFT PAGE

Joni Readout

Joni Readout is an instructional coach in Central Decatur Community School District in Iowa, where she has served in master and mentor teacher roles.

Through her leadership positions, Joni has been able to coach peers, try out new techniques for teaching, deliver weekly job-embedded professional development, and support the implementation of new curriculum using instructional strategies aligned to the rubric. Joni was named as a Milken Educator in 2017, and she has also been tapped to serve on the Iowa Governor's Teacher Cabinet.



“ In having the privilege and opportunity to share my teacher leadership story in a variety of settings, I have grown as a professional in knowing that I have a voice that matters at the state and national levels. I have grown as an educator because of the training, networking, and collaboration with NIET, specifically in my philosophy as a teacher leader. I learned that as a leader we have to go first. I have used this mentality and had success with the teachers I work with when I go first with a new strategy, idea, or plan.”

Joni Readout  *Pictured above, on the right*





Keisha Netterville

Keisha Netterville has grown from a career teacher into a master teacher, principal, and district superintendent for East Feliciana Parish, with support from NIET and fellow teacher leaders the whole way through.

Critically, she learned how to use data to streamline her vision for cluster meetings, school goals, and now district goals so every action was done with intention.



The support from NIET helped me to not only have purpose but also confidence as I met with and supported my colleagues instructionally. Now as a superintendent of schools, my vision for teaching and learning couldn't be clearer. Our transparency allows us to eliminate the 'fluff' and focus on what school leaders, teachers, and students need most."

Keisha Netterville Pictured right



It's quite simple: I am the leader I am today because of NIET's TAP System. ... All the TAP Rubric knowledge, experiences, and concurrent coursework in Arizona State University's iLeadAZ program helped me to lead others into the future with new instructional strategies and student strategies, which helped more and more of our children succeed. It has been an amazingly rewarding experience!"

Ben Smith Pictured left page

Ben Smith

Ben Smith began learning about the NIET rubric in his preparation program at Arizona State University before he started as a career teacher in Osborn School District.

He jumped at the chance for additional opportunities to support and lead his peers, and he found he was able to help ensure more students had the education they deserved through that process. In 2015, he began to serve as principal at Longview Elementary.



LaToya Turner

LaToya Turner started working with NIET in her third year as a career teacher in Lancaster ISD in Texas.

Over the past 12 years, she has grown as an educator into a mentor teacher role in Grand Prairie ISD, and through the Texas Tech University principal fellowship program, she became an assistant principal and now serves as testing coordinator in Grand Prairie.

“ I had learned that back then teaching was more about managing students. I didn’t really know the impact of intentional planning, building relationships, and follow up to ensure the growth in my teaching practices. I didn’t understand the effect that growing these practices would greatly impact student achievement. Through the partnership with NIET over these years, I now understand better what intentional and purposeful teaching is about and how to encourage other teacher leaders. ... I’ve learned through NIET that leadership is not about a title. It’s about empowering and inspiring the growth of others to make a positive impact on student achievement.”

LaToya Turner  Pictured above

Story of Success

LOUISIANA BOLD GRANTEES



EVIDENCE

The Context

In 2017, with the support of a five-year, \$49 million federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant, NIET partnered with local education agencies across Louisiana to make significant and sustained improvements in high-need schools through what became known as the LA BOLD (Louisiana Building on Leadership Development) network.

LA BOLD includes five school districts and four charter management operators – the parishes of DeSoto, East Feliciana, Madison, Orleans, Rapides and St. John the Baptist as well as New Orleans charters Eisenhower Academy, Landry-Walker High, McDonogh #32 Charter, Fischer Academy and Martin Behrman Academy – uniting a diverse group of 86 public schools in a comprehensive effort to improve student achievement by strengthening classroom instruction.

LA BOLD expands on NIET's long track record of work in Louisiana, which has grown from a TAP pilot state with five schools in 2003 to partnerships with 164 schools in 2016. Before seeking any external support, LA BOLD districts spent two years in collaborative conversations with fellow superintendents, NIET, and the state department of education to develop a common vision for their high-need schools. Further supported by data that shows students in Louisiana TAP schools have gained in student achievement faster than the state average, district leaders from the BOLD network decided to pursue a partnership with NIET as they charted a path forward.



Teachers strategize during cluster with District Executive Master Teacher Angela Davis (right) at East St. John High School in St. John the Baptist Parish Public Schools.

By creating coherence across school and district improvement initiatives, embedding professional learning, establishing roles for teacher leaders, and creating networking opportunities, NIET is providing ongoing, integrated support to LA BOLD partner districts, schools, and teachers to strengthen educator effectiveness.

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Key Lessons

Part of the benefit of the LA BOLD network has been the ability to leverage initiatives that align state, district, and school goals, which maximizes their impact. Case in point: Louisiana's transition to new high-quality curriculum. Three and a half years in, LA BOLD districts have become a powerful model for how to create school-based professional learning systems that connect what to teach (new curriculum) with how to teach it (instructional practices). Here are three key takeaways from the LA BOLD project that could benefit other school and district leaders:

PRINCIPALS MUST BE THE LEAD LEARNER:

School leaders need to build strong instructional teams that include a variety of perspectives. In order for teacher feedback to be useful, though, principals must be deeply familiar with the curriculum itself, be able to articulate how the content connects back to standards and instruction, and elevate strong implementation.

EMBRACE THE ROLE OF MENTOR TEACHERS:

Teachers' own expertise is invaluable. Mentor teachers – full-time classroom teachers with several hours of release time to support peers – play a critically important role in the implementation of new curricula, especially as experts in their respective content areas. This knowledge makes teacher leaders particularly effective, as they typically have more buy-in with their peers than school leaders.

DON'T GO IT ALONE:

LA BOLD districts were experiencing challenges managing change. However, with the support and expertise of a diverse network of peers navigating the same shift, these districts have been successful. NIET developed networking opportunities for BOLD partner schools, and as a result, schools in the network are making greater strides in curricula implementation and, while student and teacher populations vary, educators are learning from each other.





Educators in the LA BOLD network, like these at Bethune Elementary in Orleans Parish Public Schools, have been using cluster to further their curriculum implementation.

What's Next?

Schools in the LA BOLD network are showing tangible results. In 2019, two LA BOLD districts (DeSoto Parish and East Feliciana Parish) placed in the top 10 most improved systems in the state across all grades and subjects in statewide testing. A third district, Madison Parish, earned top-growth status among African American students, economically-disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities.

As the LA BOLD project enters its final year of implementation, integrating key lessons and best practices into school culture, budgets, and systems to ensure the long-term sustainability of the work is paramount. NIET's approach is fundamentally about building capacity for educators to lead, and LA BOLD districts will continue to set the example. ●

In Conversation:

CHRISTINA JAMISON | GRAND PRAIRIE PRINCIPAL FELLOW

Christina Jamison has served as an educator and master teacher in both Dallas ISD and Grand Prairie ISD, and she is now part of NIET and Texas Tech's Leadership Instruction for Teachers (LIFT) program, which prepares aspiring leaders through job-embedded, on-site training in addition to learning the theoretical framework for effective instruction and leadership. The LIFT program is an example of NIET's ongoing work with higher education institutions and their district partners to create a common language and understanding of what effective instruction and school leadership look like, promote feedback to teacher and principal candidates through a research-based rubric, and strengthen these partnerships so that district schools that need it most will have access to the highest-quality educators. Through the LIFT program, Christina serves as a principal fellow and administrative intern at John Nance Garner Fine Arts Academy in Grand Prairie.

How has NIET shaped your career as an educator?

NIET is the reason that I became a master teacher. Prior to 2011, I had only experienced being a classroom secondary math teacher. During the seven years of coaching and evaluating teachers from the lens of a master teacher in two different districts, I was able to label best instructional practices and expand my reach of student success from about 100 students to many more. Because of NIET, I also found the value of teacher support. Since I was the teacher who did well, I was left alone. I rarely had anyone in my classroom giving me constructive criticism or praise. The master teacher role showed me the importance of modeling and co-teaching with an educator that is knowledgeable about best practices. While in this role, I also got to see a glimpse of all of the variables in running a school – good and bad – which encouraged me to advance my career to administration.

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

The NIET support from our regional coaches was the best thing. The individualized training based on the

needs of our district and school was extremely helpful.

I feel like that model was directly aligned to the master teacher-career teacher design, which every educator should experience. Professional development specific to the needs of a teacher's campus and culture is the most beneficial to teacher growth and student achievement.

What have you learned through being a teacher leader?

I have learned several things. First: Good teaching is intentional. Many teachers who struggle with classroom management and/or academic rigor do so due to their lack of planning. I never valued planning as much as I do since working alongside teachers. Secondly, a well-run school that is academically sound and culturally proficient is collaborative throughout. Collaboration in leadership improves buy-in to schoolwide systems and initiatives. Collaboration in classroom instruction leads to greater student achievement. Finally, a growth mindset is important for the work of an educator. Without this principle, educators cannot adapt and adjust to the ever-changing needs of today's students and their families. We all must be willing to learn and try new things. ●



“Being able to be a leader of professional development on my campus has allowed my students to grow exponentially.”

Christina Jamison shared her experience as a teacher leader and growth into administration during a panel at the U.S. Capitol.



We're always working towards a solution, and we're making great growth because of that. NIET creates a school where people want to be."

Jessica Stacy
Principal



Bookend:

Cross County Elementary Technology Academy

CHERRY VALLEY, ARKANSAS

Since working with NIET, CCETA has undergone a full culture shift. Through weekly professional learning meetings, pre- and post-conferencing and strategy development, teachers refine instruction for students and teachers alike based on data. Now, novice teachers perform at a higher level in a shorter amount of time than before the NIET partnership, and the district works to recruit and develop teachers in partnerships with two nearby colleges.

CCETA's state rating improved from a B in 2016-17 to an A in 2017-18 and maintained its A in 2018-19. Year after year, CCETA students outperform students statewide on the ACT Aspire assessment in literacy, math, and science. In 2018-19, CCETA was recognized as a Reward School, achieving in the top 5% in Arkansas for growth. Similarly, CCETA surpassed the state average on the ESSA School Index, which measures growth in meeting federal benchmarks for performance. ●

tomorrow will be... Saturday

February

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	

Question



Greater than, Less than, and equal to

: Less than

: Greater than

: Equal to

The alligator always wants the Bigger number





Wildflower Accelerated Academy

Educators at Wildflower Accelerated Academy in Avondale Elementary School District have never stopped pushing themselves to reach the next level of excellence. For nearly a decade, NIET's comprehensive model has helped Wildflower focus on data-driven decision-making, open doors to innovation, and work as a team to reinforce strengths and tackle areas of need.

This approach represents the school's motto, "all accelerate all kids," commonly known as the "Wildflower Way." Principal Araceli Montoya benefits from having a leadership team, made up of master and mentor teachers as well as administrators, to represent diverse voices at the table. No decision is made in a vacuum, and every decision is student-centered. ●



What's beautiful about NIET's work is the scientific basis to see problems, consider solutions, process ideas, and have an opportunity to solve issues."

Dr. Araceli Montoya

Principal | Wildflower Accelerated Academy, Goodyear, Arizona



Hayward Jean joined fellow Orangeburg teachers and leaders to collaborate on what the next phase of learning looks like. Mellichamp Elementary was one of NIET's first partners to implement School Improvement Solutions, and after the first year, state test results showed fourth and fifth grade students made multi-point jumps in both English language arts and math.

The Power of Partnerships

BY HAYWARD R. JEAN, PRINCIPAL OF MELLICHAMP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
ORANGEBURG CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT, ORANGEBURG, SC

President John F. Kennedy once said, **“Partnership is not a posture but a process – a continuous process that grows stronger each year as we devote ourselves to common tasks.”**

Perhaps the greatest example of this type of partnership is NIET's partnership with Mellichamp Elementary School. In my eight years as principal of Mellichamp, I have never before engaged in



an instructional partnership that is as invested in building teacher capacity. NIET has demonstrated to us that sustainable school success can be achieved through powerful reflection.

Mellichamp is located in rural Orangeburg, South Carolina, near two historically black colleges and universities. Out of 32 schools in the district, Mellichamp has the highest poverty rate. Eight years ago, I was appointed to lead this school, which is well-respected in the community for supporting students' basic needs. However, persistent academic challenges had led to a consistent "At-Risk" rating by the state.

While maintaining our high standard of providing for children's basic needs, it was necessary to assemble all of Mellichamp's instructional leaders - administrators, lead teachers, and influential support staff - to revisit and refine our instructional priorities. In my experience, it is important for all staff to understand that providing a high-quality education is itself a basic need, just like food, clothes, and shelter. Mellichamp's culture immediately shifted, and student performance improved. We even earned the school's first Palmetto Silver Award for academic performance. While this was an awesome accomplishment, we knew that the effort to maintain and sustain this momentum would take an even greater commitment. As we searched for data-driven programs that would help us continue our growth, we actually experienced a decrease in student achievement.

SUSTAINING A SHIFT

After seeing programs come and go, it became clear to us that the greatest factor in raising student achievement is the teacher. At that point, my team and I decided to stop buying programs and start building people. Our School

Improvement Solutions partnership with NIET was formed to create a system for continuous improvement. NIET helped us build a culture of reflection, strength-based teaching, collaboration, student engagement, and student ownership.

From the start of the strengths-based needs assessment given by NIET's Dr. Ann Shaw, I knew we were in for a collaborative partnership unlike any other. Dr. Shaw's initial conversations weren't about students as data but how our instructional systems and practices align with the shared vision for our scholars. The conversations were centered on highlighting the best practices of our faculty and staff, and we developed a plan together with our entire school community to build our capacity and sustain a culture of continuous improvement.

The professional development offered by NIET provoked instructional conversations that launched an authentic and rich professional learning community. The sounds of students collaboratively creating their own student success criteria was evidence of teachers and students having a laser focus on communicating, interpreting, and meeting the expectations of the standards. For me, the opportunity to walk with NIET specialists in and out of classrooms, and discuss the areas of reinforcement and refinement was empowering.

This is a new beginning for Mellichamp Elementary School as we are taking our partnership with NIET to the next level through the TAP System. We are grateful for the greater effect we are able to have on our scholars' lives as a result. We often say, "We put the 'champ' in Mellichamp!" NIET is a partner that helps us to fulfill this motto daily for our scholars because the greatest champions we can be are "champions for children!" ●

A Nationwide System of Support

Over the past two decades, NIET has built strong partnerships nationwide. Our work has helped support more than 275,000 educators across 8,500 schools in 20 states, including more than 75 educator preparation programs. Here's a glimpse of our engagement efforts and progress with state partners over the past two decades:

1. ARIZONA

NIET has partnered with 100 schools across 27 districts and works alongside Arizona State University and Northern Arizona University to support educator preparation. This work has been backed through a variety of sources, including an \$11.5 million Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) grant.

2. ARKANSAS

NIET has helped encourage progress in 21 schools across eight districts, including two rural school districts through an \$8 million TIF grant.

3. CALIFORNIA

NIET has worked with 10 schools across three school districts, including Lucia Mar and Rim of the World United School District, which has refocused on ensuring students in its mountain community receive a world-class education and has brought in NIET to help support its teacher development.

4. INDIANA

NIET has worked with 97 schools in 23 districts across the state and works closely with advocates to advance teacher leadership opportunities, including through a new \$47 million Teacher and School Leader (TSL) federal grant to support teachers and improve students' academic success

in three partner districts: Perry Township Schools, Goshen Community Schools, and Brown County Schools. NIET also works closely with Marian University, a partnership that will be furthered through a new Teacher Quality Partnership program grant.

5. IOWA

NIET initially received a \$9.5 million TIF grant to support districtwide TAP System implementation in two districts. NIET also has longstanding partnerships with 11 districts and now supports 78 districts statewide to implement the NIET Iowa Instructional Framework, which will further teachers' professional growth. Twenty-nine higher education institutions have also been engaged on the rollout of the framework.

6. LOUISIANA

NIET has supported 420 schools, including those in traditional public school districts and charter management organizations, and is partnering with dozens of schools and the Louisiana Department of Education on a \$49 million TIF grant to improve educator effectiveness, called the LA BOLD network. NIET also works closely with five higher education institutions to ensure the principles of great teaching are embedded in preparation.

7. MINNESOTA

NIET partnered with 34 schools across the state, including five charter schools serving high-need students through a \$13 million TIF grant.

8. OHIO

NIET designed training and support tools around the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System and built a customized training portal for Ohio evaluators that has helped certify 12,000 evaluators.



Perry Township Schools, Goshen Community Schools, and Brown County Schools celebrated the award of a \$47 million federal grant in October 2019.

9. PENNSYLVANIA

NIET has worked with 14 schools in Pennsylvania, including two high-need schools in Harrisburg School District to encourage teacher collaboration and strong leadership teams.

10. SOUTH CAROLINA

NIET has supported 47,000 teachers in over 80 school districts statewide, collaborated with 30 higher education institutions on teacher preparation programs, and partnered in the development of the South Carolina Teaching Standards Rubric 4.0. NIET also received a \$10 million TIF grant to implement TAP in Orangeburg County Consolidated School District Three.

11. TENNESSEE

NIET helped develop a statewide educator evaluation system (Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model), based on the NIET Teaching Standards Rubric, and provides continuous support to teachers statewide through an online portal. Additionally, 20 school districts have partnered with NIET to receive targeted support for key schools and initiatives, including five high-need districts through a \$15.1 million TIF grant. NIET also works with six institutions of higher education to support educator preparation.

12. TEXAS

NIET has collaborated with 131 schools across 29 school districts statewide to implement the TAP System. Through a \$12 million SEED and a \$7 million SEED grant, NIET partnered with Texas Tech University to support schools across Texas and embed the NIET framework and key principles into coursework and clinical field experience for both aspiring teachers and aspiring leaders.

NIET has also been able to support educators in other states, including:

Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Nevada, Wyoming, and Washington, D.C. ●

FEATURE STORY

20 Tips We Have Learned

FROM THE LAST 20 YEARS

The team at NIET has had the opportunity to learn from and alongside some of the best educators in the country for the past two decades. Along the way, we have gained significant insight into how best to support and prepare effective teachers and leaders and how intentional, sustained investments to develop these individuals directly lead to student success.

We wanted to recap 20 lessons we have learned from the past 20 years that can benefit our partners, supporters, and the broader education community. Whether you are a teacher, principal, district or school leader, or otherwise invested in educator excellence, we hope that these lessons will be useful to your own work.



NIET's conferences have been popular since the very beginning—with some familiar faces each year. Teddy Broussard, now NIET's senior trainer, joined the organization in 2013 as executive director of the Louisiana Teacher Advancement Program and continues to provide training and assistance to teacher leaders and principals across the country. Here at one of the earliest conferences in 2003, Teddy always has been focused on building educators' leadership skills.



Desert View Elementary School; Gadsden Elementary School District; San Luis, Arizona

1

Make great classroom teaching the centerpiece of every school. It is easy to get distracted by the next new program or initiative, but focusing on the most important work of schools – great teaching and learning – is the most direct path to giving all students the best opportunity for success. Keep the main thing, the main thing. Invest in the most powerful levers for change – teachers and the leaders who support them.

2

Engage a broad group of stakeholders, especially those who are working day in and day out with students, to design and implement instructional changes and improvements. Buy-in from those directly involved in implementation is crucial to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of new practices.

3

Create opportunities for innovation. For example, grants can give educators the ability to try new approaches. Federal, state, and outside funding can provide early support for innovative practices and help scale the most effective initiatives. At the same time, it's essential that districts have “skin in the game” and commit their own resources to ensure the long-term sustainability of new ideas and programs.

4

Assess the needs AND strengths of each school and district, and let those drive your efforts. While NIET has developed research-based practices and structures, these tools are most effective when implemented in ways that address the unique needs of students and capitalize on the strengths of the community. No school or district operates in the same way.

5

Invest in building the skills and knowledge of new teachers, and recognize the importance of educator preparation programs in strengthening the talent pipeline. The early years of preparation play an outsized role in determining whether a teacher gets off to a strong start or struggles and potentially leaves the profession.



Cross County Elementary School; Cross County School District; Cherry Valley, Arkansas

INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE

NIET is committed to raising achievement levels for all students, and the most important in-school factor for determining student success is teacher quality. The following advice covers effective teacher preparation, coaching, collaboration, and more, all seeking to advance NIET's vision that every student is taught by an excellent teacher.

6

Develop a common language and understanding around excellent instruction based on a research-based instructional framework or rubric as the foundation for observation, feedback cycles, and coaching.

7

Adopt research-based practices, tools, and protocols or collaborative structures to enhance teachers' ability to transfer the work of learning teams into daily instructional practice. Such practices may include setting clear, measurable goals for collaborative learning teams that align with district and school goals; developing research-based learning strategies in response to students' needs; providing ample time for teachers to incorporate the learning strategies into their planning; analyzing student work; and tracking individual student progress toward mastery of the standards.

8

Support teachers through structured collaborative learning opportunities, coaching teachers in their classrooms, engaging in a strong observation and feedback cycle, and helping teachers understand the connection between their instructional practice and student outcomes. The most effective collaborative learning structures focus on linking instruction to curriculum and bringing coherence to all initiatives by showing how they fit into a comprehensive instructional approach.



TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Developing teacher leadership roles is not always easy, but it is worthwhile. Creating a network of effective and empowered teacher leaders builds trust among classroom educators, eases the implementation of new initiatives or reforms, and ultimately improves student outcomes. Here's what we've learned about how to most effectively create leadership and mentoring opportunities for educators:

9

Develop teacher leader roles designed to systematically and reliably improve teaching and accelerate student learning. To accomplish this, teacher leaders should have significant responsibility for managing and implementing research-proven, high-impact levers for improving instruction; leading collaborative learning teams; conducting formal observations to provide actionable feedback to teachers; modeling effective instructional practice in classrooms; and engaging in classroom-based coaching.

10

Leverage teacher leaders to encourage consistency across major instructional improvement initiatives. Teachers often suffer from “reform fatigue,” not only because of the amount of change they are being asked to accommodate, but also because new initiatives are frequently rolled out to teachers across multiple platforms in disconnected ways. Many of NIET’s partners have found that teacher leadership roles offer a strategic opportunity to create more coherence. Teacher leaders can field test new strategies, and these leaders can leverage school-based professional development to help other educators integrate new strategies into their own classroom practice.

11

Select teacher leaders who have the right set of accomplishments, skills, and dispositions to succeed. Instructional teacher leadership roles are highly demanding positions that require commitment to the unique nature of “hybrid” leadership. Achieving success in such roles requires a relatively rare combination of skills and attributes. Therefore, it is important that such leaders are competitively selected from a robust candidate pool based on explicit job-related criteria.

12

Provide teacher leaders with training and ongoing support focused on specific job responsibilities, such as leading collaborative teams or conducting formal observations to provide instructional feedback.

13

Create and protect release time. Teacher leaders need sufficient, dedicated release time daily and weekly to fulfill their specific job responsibilities. Moreover, it takes time for teacher leaders to develop the relationships, trust, and credibility necessary to have maximum impact on classroom practices and student learning. Leaders must give new investments in teacher leadership time to pay off, rather than expecting big results after only one year.

PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP

Principals set the tone and direction for their school's leadership team. They must balance varied and often evolving priorities and audiences, from students and families to teachers and the local community. A school principal's vision and leadership are essential to the success of every teacher and student that comes to school each day, and the most effective principals tend to exhibit similar traits.

14

Expect principals to be instructional leaders. They need to create, revise, or sustain a school vision of excellence and equity for all students, and instruction must be at the center. Principals have to effectively communicate the “why” behind the strategic priorities, monitor progress, celebrate successes, make strategic adjustments, and support collective ownership of school strategic priorities and goals. They must be able to analyze data, prioritize student and teacher needs, and make tough student-centered decisions, including on course schedules and teacher assignments and responsibilities. Every initiative should tie back to instruction.

15

Develop principals who can create and/or utilize a leadership team structure that builds leader capacity to recognize instructional rigor, support teacher effectiveness, and make decisions that lead to student success. Leadership team structures are driven by student and teacher data and inform action steps. To successfully lead instructional teams, principals must strategically develop their own leadership skills, as well as the skills of other campus leaders, through professional development opportunities.

16

Provide support and coaching for principals. Principals are lead learners. They need feedback and guidance from district leaders through a research-based leadership framework to grow their leadership skills. Using this framework both as a reflective tool for principals to examine their own practice and as the basis for robust feedback allows principals to hone in on the central mission: to improve teaching and learning.



DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

Strong leadership at the district level results in a robust system of educator support that can ultimately improve student achievement across multiple schools and grade levels. Support for the implementation of any new educator development initiative at the district level is essential and can go a long way to drive success at the school level.

17

Create and communicate a vision and framework for rigorous instruction, and set strong expectations for implementing it. In order to achieve the vision, districts must set ambitious goals and monitor ongoing progress. Success will grow over time, building collective efficacy across all the schools in the district. District leaders have to communicate and support schools in implementing a clear and coherent instructional framework that encompasses all instructional initiatives into a cohesive whole.

18

Reposition the district instructional staff to create significant support for principals and schools. Districts should dissolve silos across departments and bring teams together around topics such as curriculum, assessment, school improvement, accountability, human resources, and federal programs to align support for schools. Districts need to redefine instructional roles at the district office so that the majority of principal supervisors' time is spent actually coaching principals and school leaders to improve teaching and learning.

19

Make strategic use of existing resources to fund the instructional vision, priorities, and support systems necessary for schools to improve teaching and learning. Even when dedicated state or federal funds are not available, thoughtful use of current resources can assure funding for the instructional vision and priorities. Budgeting practices – such as aligning general fund dollars to instructional priorities, implementing a robust analysis of return on investment to determine which initiatives to continue funding, and using collective decision-making to strategically braid federal resources – can help develop a robust budget to support the district's key objectives.

20

Examine teacher and principal compensation structures to identify strategic opportunities to differentiate compensation based on added responsibilities and job performance. Factors including teacher leadership roles, teacher and leader effectiveness measures, improved student achievement outcomes, and hard-to-staff schools and subjects are all considerations that can contribute to the design of strategic, differentiated compensation systems that will ultimately help the district attract and retain quality educators. ●



One of NIET's values as an organization is continuous improvement, as we constantly strive for a higher level of performance in all of our work. We know our partners do the same. NIET is grateful for all that we have accomplished – and learned – over the last 20 years.

Great Teaching and Learning In Action



Martin Rainey (far left) with Queensborough Elementary School Leadership Team

Caddo Parish Public Schools

For school leaders to see the relevance of new learning, district leaders and support should accompany them in the school and classrooms, in the context that matters most to them, to ensure connections and transfer of learning.

That has been the major success factor in Caddo Parish's transformation. District executive master teacher Dr. Martin Rainey debriefs with Queensborough Elementary School Principal Marc French and the leadership team to analyze next steps after a learning walk.



Orangeburg Consolidated School District

NIET has supported districtwide implementation of the South Carolina Teaching Standards 4.0 for partners like Orangeburg, where Dr. McQueen visited multiple classrooms at Rivelon Elementary School before NIET specialists led districtwide training in the afternoon. Based on these learning walks, NIET specialists can give tailored feedback to school leaders and suggest how they can further their use of the rubric.



Gadsden

Schools in Gadsden have undergone an intentional shift around instructional excellence, which includes a focus on rigorous content. Students (left) at Arizona Desert Elementary School work together in groups to analyze and discuss a Frida Kahlo text.

Somerset ISD

Dr. Gary Stark, former CEO of NIET, visited a Barrera Elementary classroom with Master Teacher and Milken Educator Award recipient Amber Simpson, who is now a specialist at NIET. As a master teacher, Amber facilitated weekly professional development meetings, during which she coached faculty on systematically tracking their students' progress and developing action plans to reinforce strengths and address areas of improvement. This work is complemented by observing educators in the classroom, modeling and testing new instructional techniques, introducing curriculum and assessing students' learning along the way.



Story of Success

CHINLE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT,
APACHE COUNTY, ARIZONA

District Context

Chinle Unified School District, located in northeastern Arizona in the heart of The Land of the Diné, is a cornerstone of its community.

Almost all of its 3,500 students are Native American, primarily members of the Navajo Nation. The district includes seven schools: one high school, one junior high school, five elementary schools, and one pre-K center. Chinle's immersion in Navajo philosophy, culture, and language provides a powerful connection to families in the community and enriches students' learning experiences.

Despite its prominent role in the local culture, Chinle faces a myriad of challenges. Its remote setting means that students live as far as 50 miles from school, and some students live in areas without running water or electricity. District buses cover over 1 million miles a year, including a significant number on unpaved roads. Many students rely on the school district for clothing, outside support, and food – and about three-quarters of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

In the past, Chinle teachers felt isolated in their classrooms and struggled to help their students to excel. Academic achievement levels were significantly below state averages and lagged behind other reservation districts. The district struggled to meet multiple, sometimes conflicting,



Chinle Elementary School; Chinle Unified School District; Chinle, AZ

expectations from tribal government, state, and federal accountability systems. Superintendent Quincy Natay summarized the challenges they faced: inconsistent leadership; no clear vision or reliable curriculum; and no processes for communications or evaluation of programs. In short, Chinle needed a strategic plan.

Key Lessons



PARTNERS

In partnership with NIET, Superintendent Quincy Natay launched a five-year strategic planning process with a focus on building staff ownership in the district and empowering students to become more global citizens and effective decision-makers. The strategic planning process brought into sharper focus the importance of family and community in educating young people and supporting their dreams to become leaders and community builders. The following takeaways were critical to Chinle's success:

ENGAGE FAMILIES AND THE COMMUNITY:

One of the first steps in improving the school-to-home connection was to engage with families, identify needs, and find practical and immediate ways to address those needs. For example, a pressing need was food, particularly over the weekend. Superintendent Natay worked with a local food bank to create a program for schools to offer a weekly food bag for families. This was followed by other steps to engage parents and community members with the schools and make clear that the district was committed to families and students as a true partner in their growth and success.

BUILD A CULTURE OF HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTION:

Chinle worked with NIET to build a culture of high-quality, shared instructional practices and a structure for collective leadership. This included developing school leadership teams, professional learning led by teacher leaders in each building, and the use of research-based teaching standards. Teachers are now supported by school leaders and a cadre of teacher leaders trained as academic coaches. School-based coaches also meet at the district level, building collaboration across schools.

MAINTAIN A COMMITMENT TO BEST PRACTICES:

District and school leadership teams have focused on identifying and growing exemplars within their own system and raising up those mastery-level practices for every teacher. This practical and focused approach was rooted

in student and teacher data. To maintain the high level of effort and motivation required to do this work well, Superintendent Natay holds focus groups with teachers at each school every month, providing an opportunity to raise challenges and work on solutions together.

What's Next?

Chinle students have made substantial academic gains.

Three years ago, only six classrooms approached state averages in reading and math. In 2019, 34 classes were recognized for approaching mastery, with 24 of those classrooms meeting or exceeding state averages on the state test. Between 2015 and 2019, student passing rates nearly tripled in ELA and doubled in math. This helped move Chinle to be the highest performing reservation district and is closing the achievement gap between students in this high-need district and students in more affluent districts across the state.

Chinle's success in setting and reaching ever-higher goals is powered by the skills, knowledge, commitment, and collaboration of its teachers, school, and district leaders. Together they continue to engage the community, families, and students to achieve at high levels and support their vision for the future. ●

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. ●





Bookend: DeSoto Parish Schools

MANSFIELD, LOUISIANA

Mansfield High School in DeSoto Parish Schools has experienced historic educational achievement with the implementation of the TAP System, moving from a D to an A-rated school.

Master teacher Anesha Ross (left), now assistant principal at North DeSoto High School, was part of a team who led the change. According to Principal

Toras Hill, equally important to the school's progress is the staff's process: Faculty focuses on developing a growth mindset for individual students and teachers alike that has been essential to reaching benchmarks. In 2019, in addition to an overall A rating, Mansfield High School also earned an A for growth from the state of Louisiana. ●





Texas Tech College of Education

Scott Ridley was a visionary with the courage and persistence to revolutionize the way educators are prepared to be successful in the classroom. Dr. Ridley was a dynamic dean of education who believed that the best means for equipping teacher candidates was strengthening connections between teacher preparation faculty and their school communities.

He served as dean of the College of Education at Texas Tech University and the associate dean in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University, and he was a founding member of Deans for Impact. ●



Taking reasoned risks to pilot innovations and acknowledging that we do not ‘know it all’ removes the barriers (and the weight) associated with the status quo. I know from experience that we can continue to improve the effectiveness of educators. ... We continue to learn and grow as a society, therefore our educator preparation programs must continue to evolve.”

Scott Ridley

Former Dean of the Texas Tech College of Education



OUR FIVE KEY LEARNINGS:

- 1 Teachers are and always will be the most critical factor for student success. Continued investment in teachers is non-negotiable.**
- 2 We must build coherence in core instructional elements: standards, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and evaluation and feedback.**
- 3 Schools need to be structured to prioritize instructional excellence.**
- 4 Teacher preparation sets the foundation for effectiveness.**
- 5 District and school leaders are the key to sustained success.**



NIET's Next 20 Years: Continuing to Lead

DR. CANDICE MCQUEEN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

NIET was born out of innovation. We grew out of a need for a bold and effective response to the persistent problems facing students, teachers, and communities. While much of our approach may seem like common sense now, when we first started sharing these ideas 20 years ago, they were radical. Create an evidence-based definition of great teaching. Give educators regular and high-quality feedback based on those principles. Develop teacher leaders and empower them to support their peers. Move away from structures that pay teachers purely based on years of experience or advanced degrees, and reward those who are changing students' outcomes and taking on more responsibilities. Make professional learning more collaborative and relevant to teachers' daily work and do away with sit-and-get seminars. Connect what students are expected to learn with how teachers are expected to teach. Listen to what the research says, even if it means taking a hard look at what we have been doing.

It was a shift that recognized this underlying truth: if we want to gauge teachers' effectiveness, we have to look at what students are learning. That is what matters.

As this magazine outlines, NIET has helped our partners make great classroom teaching the central focus of their school. We have been responsive to research, addressed educators' needs, seen what is happening in classrooms across the country, and shown proven results.

We have been successful because the cornerstone of our approach is learning and working together with our

partners. And that is what will allow us to continue to innovate for years to come.

In 2020, we are launching the next phase of NIET's work. We have a suite of resources and trainings focused on principals, district administrators, higher education faculty, and other leaders to help them align to the excellence we have articulated for teachers. We have been digging into tools and strategies that can create instructional coherence across standards, curriculum, classroom practice, assessment, and evaluation and feedback. We have been listening to educators about what they most need and actively collaborating with the education community to address the challenges of our classrooms today – and in the future. These reflections have given us vision for what is next.

The next year – and the next 20 – hold tremendous promise.

Our commitment is to continue to reflect, grow, and achieve success alongside our partners – in other words, to innovate. We will always be the lead learner and continuously push ourselves to reach the next level of excellence. We are passionate about giving more students the chance to receive a world-class education through equipping and empowering the adults that work with them every day, and we know if we do that, anything is possible. We can truly create opportunities for all students.

We can't wait to share the next 20 years with you. ●

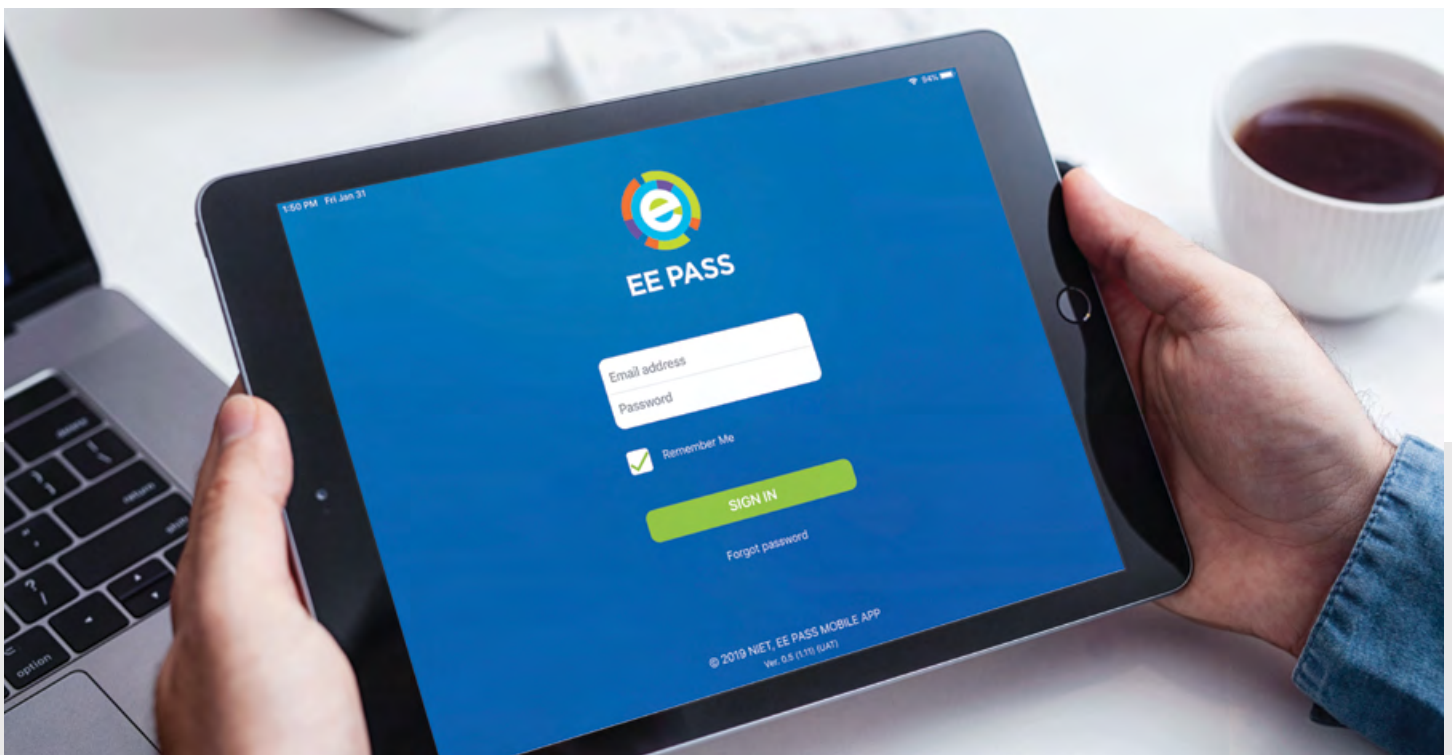
Professional Learning

WE'VE GOT AN APP FOR THAT

For 20 years, NIET has provided educators with powerful, in-person professional learning opportunities. NIET field staff across the country have been instrumental in developing the skills and knowledge of educators and leaders ... but what happens outside the school building? Recognizing that an educator's learning does not - and should not - stop when in-person support ends, NIET began offering supplemental training materials soon after its founding. These supplemental materials were provided via cutting edge technology for the early 21st century: DVDs sent by mail with an accompanying trainer's manual to a school's master teacher.

Mailing out DVDs was a great first step in continuing educator development. However, as technology advanced, so too did NIET's commitment to ensuring that all educators had access to supplemental training materials. NIET built on its data management systems over the first decade of the 21st century, and in 2008-09, the organization rolled out its first online portal that gave educators at every level access to trainings and support any day or time, as their own schedules allowed. It also included online evaluator certification. The high demand for such a customizable tool soon led to the creation of 11 different portals.

NIET launched the Educator Effectiveness Preparation & Support System (EE PASS) in 2016-17 to combine its existing portals, streamlining an educator's online experience. EE PASS is a subscription-based interactive web tool that provides real-time access to individualized trainings and support in order to improve instruction and evaluation. At their fingertips, educators can gain real-time access to the latest trainings and supporting resources to improve their instruction and support the professional development of their colleagues.





EE PASS provides access to valuable professional development, training, and certification resources through a single port of entry. These features include:

RESOURCE LIBRARY

Educators can choose what they would like to learn from a continuously updated resource library of videos, documents, templates, and so much more.



A CLOSER LOOK:

- **468 resources** from the NIET National Conference, including PowerPoint slides, clips, and handouts from trainings.
- **23 modules** or interactive training experiences, featuring specific indicators in the Teaching Standards Rubric and a variety of other topics.
- **36 documents and templates** to support collaboration and feedback.
- **36 clips** that illustrate a range of topics from classroom practice to leadership team meetings and coaching sessions.

VIDEO TRAININGS

Educators can learn from experts to further understanding and effectiveness in various areas.



A CLOSER LOOK:

- **EE PASS currently houses 50 videos** including footage from classroom lessons, pre- and post-conferences, cluster meetings, and leadership team meetings.

CERTIFICATION

EE PASS streamlines the evaluation process to certify teachers and evaluators online.



A CLOSER LOOK:

- Since 2017, a total of **17,344 teachers and administrators have been certified** through EE PASS.

Other Features:



REPORTING

Educators can access in-depth reports about progress throughout the year.



SURVEYS

Specifically designed surveys allow educators to gain insightful information into various areas of the education profession.



OBSERVATIONS AND EVALUATION

Real-time access to evaluation data enables educators to connect observation feedback with professional learning, and supports consistency and reliability among observers.

INDIVIDUALIZED DASHBOARD

An individualized dashboard provides each educator with updates and alerts about important content, feedback, and progress reports.



A CLOSER LOOK:

- **38,150 educators** currently benefit from the individualized support provided through EE PASS.

NEW EE PASS FEATURES

NIET remains committed to offering educators the most relevant, timely, and useful professional learning materials. This spring, NIET is releasing new tools and features—and more updates are on the way.

1

AN IPAD APP WITH OFFLINE FUNCTIONALITY

To increase access to high-quality resources, NIET is releasing a version of EE PASS for iPads. The new iPad EE PASS app allows educators to move seamlessly between observation and feedback tools on a variety of devices, and they can watch videos, scan through instructional resources, complete their evaluator certification, and script and score observations right from their tablet.

Educators will have access to these high-quality resources regardless of their location's internet connectivity. Many features will remain available while offline, with EE PASS syncing their work the next time they connect online.

2

A NEW PRINCIPAL STANDARDS RUBRIC AND RESOURCES

One of NIET's newest offerings is a Principal Standards Rubric and observation training to help principals maximize their role as instructional leaders. The Principal Standards Rubric comes with a variety of online resources and videos in the EE PASS portal as well as an evaluator certification process. Materials for principals and principal evaluators have been added to EE PASS under a new "principal leadership" parent tag - making the resources easy to find and customize.

3

NIET PREP: DRIVING EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATOR PREPARATION

NIET's new Aspiring Teacher Rubric includes 12 indicators most relevant for aspiring teachers, and through an extension of the EE PASS portal called NIET PREP, those teacher candidates as well as their supervisors and higher education faculty will have access to online resources and a data management system to help ensure effectiveness on day 1. ●

FEATURE STORY

Preparing for Excellence:

HOW NIET'S CONNECTIONS HAVE REVOLUTIONIZED TEACHER AND LEADER PREPARATION

NIET's work to equip educators for excellence starts before they ever enter a classroom of their own.

Through its 20 years of work to define great teaching via the NIET Teaching Standards Rubric and its extensive K-12 partnerships, NIET has been uniquely positioned to support how educators are prepared for the classroom. In working with school districts to develop stronger support systems for teachers, many educators and school leaders articulated the challenge of the gap between how they were prepared to teach and the actual demands they faced in the classroom. Districts wanted to know where they could hire educators who understood the expectations of NIET's rubric on day one.

In response, NIET began to work with district partners to build stronger connections to the teacher preparation programs supplying most of their new teachers. Strengthening the partnership between districts and teacher preparation programs has had a number of benefits:



Instructional skills that districts expected of classroom teachers can be integrated into the preparation program's clinical experiences and course work.



Teacher candidates can be placed in high-need schools for their clinical experience, learning alongside experienced mentors.



Teacher candidates with experience at a high-need school may be more likely to choose to work there.



High-need schools can get a first-hand look at potential new hires in action, better informing their hiring strategies.



Teacher candidates training in NIET and ASU's STEM-based partnership were given training in related content areas as part of their educator preparation.



My principal couldn't believe I was a first-year teacher. My exposure to the NIET rubric in my coursework at ASU and in my student teaching experience at a partnering 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.'**

Loralle Haynes

Second grade teacher at Collier Elementary School,
Littleton Elementary School District in Phoenix, Arizona

Creating – and sustaining – this bridge between school districts and higher education institutions has ultimately led to stronger educator preparation programs that better prepare new teachers for the challenges and opportunities they will face in their district and classroom, and it has also allowed districts to grow their own workforce. “Teacher candidates know about teaching, they know how to plan a lesson, they know how to assess student learning and they can manage student behavior,” said D. Gale Stocks, a site coordinator at Texas Tech’s TechTeach Program. *“Our teacher candidates come out more like a second-year teacher than a first-year teacher. If that’s not a revolution in education, what is?”*

NIET has worked with over 75 universities nationwide to help prepare aspiring teachers to be successful as new classroom teachers, particularly in working with high-need students. Across these partnerships, NIET helps educator preparation programs embed and align research-based, effective principles into coursework and clinical practices. While this work is now embedded in NIET’s approach, it was two innovative partnerships in 2013 that began to fully unpack what is possible in educator preparation.

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THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX TO ADDRESS CRITICAL NEEDS

In 2013, two federal grants helped to propel NIET's work at two universities: Texas Tech University (TTU) and Arizona State University (ASU). The grants, funded through the Supporting Effective Educator Development or SEED program, each addressed a particular challenge in teacher preparation. The partnership with TTU was focused on teacher shortages in rural areas, while the ASU project was designed to address the shortage of teachers with STEM expertise in high-need schools.

Texas Tech University – TAP Connect

Rural school districts in Texas have faced significant teacher shortages. Not only do districts struggle to recruit new teachers, but they also find it increasingly difficult to retain their most effective educators as they compete with urban districts offering higher salaries. The challenge in Texas is heightened given the rapidly growing need for teachers who can work with English Learner students.

A partnership between TTU and rural K-12 districts – facilitated by NIET – has taken a new approach to teacher training. One of the most innovative components of the partnership is a “grow-your-own” model. High school graduates who go on to earn an associate’s degree can then be recruited by their local school district to be part of a unique 2 years + 1 year preparation program. Teacher candidates are provided with a full year of intensive teacher preparation combined with classroom

experience, resulting in a Bachelor of Science degree and teaching certification. This model has allowed districts to develop a teaching workforce that is embedded in the student communities they serve. Among candidates graduating from the program, 96% obtained a teaching position within one year of graduation and 94% of those are teaching in Title I schools.

In addition to strengthening the preparation of teacher candidates, the inclusion of NIET in the partnership has enabled schools to create leadership roles for experienced teachers, further developing the instructional capacity of the faculty to support new teachers as they take on their own classroom. Advanced certification through TTU provides teacher leaders with training in literacy, STEM, and leadership – enabling them to support teachers through job-embedded, school-based professional learning. *Continued Next Page*



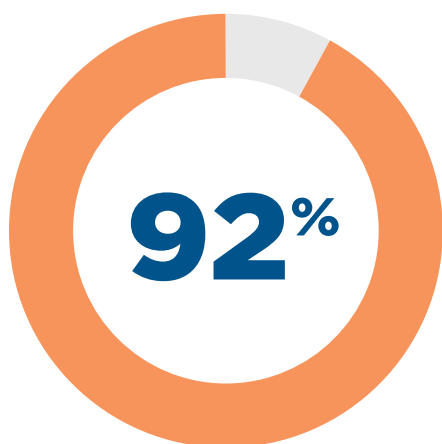
Corey Atkins started in Texas Tech's LIFT program when he was teaching in Grand Prairie ISD as a way to grow his leadership abilities. He now serves as an assistant principal at Maple Lawn Elementary School in Dallas ISD.



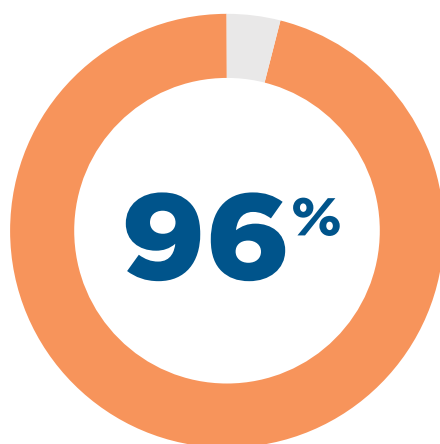
Texas Tech University Instructor Michael Richardson contributes feedback during an educator preparation convening with NIET staff, K-12 leaders, and higher education personnel.

TTU-SEED GRADUATES

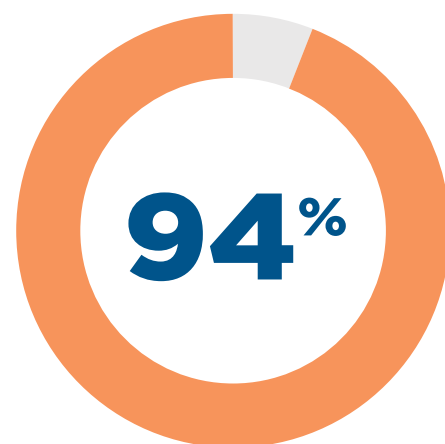
The majority of TTU-SEED graduates serve in high-need schools



GRADUATED



**GRADUATES OBTAINED
A TEACHING POSITION
WITHIN ONE YEAR
OF GRADUATION**



**GRADUATES SERVED
IN HIGH-NEED
SCHOOLS WITHIN ONE
YEAR OF GRADUATION**

Arizona State University – Planting the SEED

Arizona's high-need schools, like many in the nation, have struggled to recruit and retain effective STEM teachers.

ASU and NIET approached the challenge by pairing intensive classroom preparation with quality training in STEM subjects, in part through partnering with ASU's Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering, and placing these new STEM teachers in high-need districts and schools, where they were paired with a strong mentor teacher. ASU and NIET also worked together to design support structures in each school to help retain STEM teachers as well as provide opportunities for professional growth and advancement into leadership roles. The innovative practices pioneered through this partnership have been integrated into both clinical practice and coursework in ASU's Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College.

On average, ASU teacher candidates performed above expectations by graduation and were ready to enter the classroom. The partnership's strategic approach to recruitment, training, and placement has proved highly effective.

THE NEXT STEP: DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LEADERS

NIET's partnerships highlighted another area for improvement in educator preparation. Great school leaders are essential to student success, but too often, principal preparation has been lacking, with few on-the-ground training experiences.

In 2015, NIET and TTU created an innovative competency-based fellowship for principal candidates in high-need school districts across Texas and Louisiana. The 15-month

program offers future school leaders hands-on experience in navigating the daily tasks and challenges of school leadership in collaboration with highly skilled veteran leaders and university preparation. After completing a rigorous selection process, principal fellows are placed in schools to serve as an interim assistant principal during the yearlong, job-embedded clinical experience. During this time, fellows take TTU courses that are aligned to key components of success, including data-driven decision-making, instructional leadership, and human capital development. Each fellow is mentored by a high-quality principal coach and a university coach, and the principal is also given feedback and opportunities for growth over the course of the placement.

The program has shown that it successfully recruits high-quality principal candidates and improves their leadership and coaching skills, with 80% serving in a high-need school within one year of graduating. The familiarity with the on-the-ground situations better prepares the fellows to be effective from day one after their training is over.

"The principal fellows program has grown my leadership skills," says Amanda Rodriguez, a former principal fellow and current principal at Juan Seguin Elementary School, a Grand Prairie Independent School District school. "I am now able to go right to a teacher's classroom, sit, observe, watch the interaction of that adult with those students, and ...coach that teacher into her understanding of where she's at, where her students are at, and what she needs to do to grow them and get them to where they need to be."

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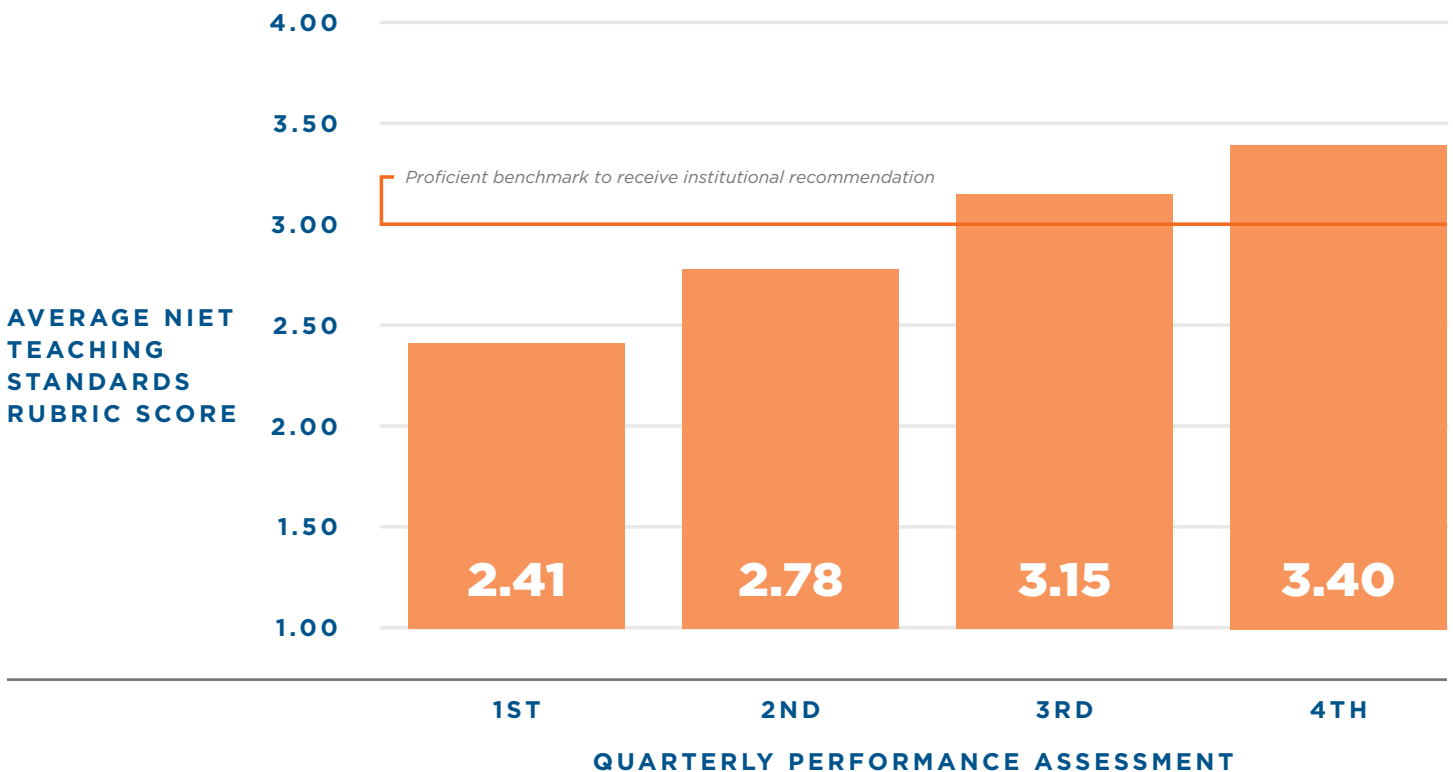
When ASU teacher candidates are placed at NIET partner schools like Copper Trails Middle School, where the rubric is already in place, their transition to a classroom of their own is seamless. Student teachers become comfortable with the rubric and can practice delivering high-quality instruction during long-term residencies, where they are mentored by educators who have the same expectations for great teaching and learning.



Dr. Ken Britt, senior vice president and dean of the educators college at Marian University in Indianapolis shares ideas with Dr. Candice McQueen and higher education leaders during a feedback session hosted by NIET.

ASU-SEED TEACHER CANDIDATES

improve instructional skills over time.





A student teacher from South Carolina State University leads a class of students at Dover Elementary School in Orangeburg, South Carolina.

SHARING AND SCALING INNOVATIVE PRACTICES WITH UNIVERSITY PARTNERS

A 2019 federal Teacher Quality Partnership grant is supporting an innovative partnership between NIET, a group of Indiana school districts, and Marian University's Klipsch Educators College. The partnership will build on The Marian Promise, a year-long program with a focus on addressing key shortage areas at the elementary and secondary levels including special education, English language learning, and STEM subjects.

Students participating in The Marian Promise will complete the program with a Master of Education (M.Ed.) and teacher certification, and with an enhanced concentration in these key shortage areas. District partners are highly interested in building the STEM capabilities of elementary

teachers and recruiting candidates with a degree in a STEM subject at the secondary level to best prepare their students for the 21st Century workforce.

Aspiring teachers with a major in a STEM subject, or other high-need subject area, learn alongside mentor teachers in a high-need school through a teacher residency. The partnership with NIET will create a new teacher induction program in the partnering school districts, strengthening their efforts to recruit and retain effective teachers in high-need subject areas. Through this program, new teachers and their mentors will be supported to strengthen instructional practice, establishing an induction model for new teachers in each of the districts. ***Continued Next Page***



UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS PROVIDE KEYS TO THE CLASSROOM

The innovative work funded through grants is being shared and brought to greater scale through work with a growing number of higher education partnerships. With support from NIET, institutions like Southeastern Louisiana University are continuing to build on this work and continuously improve the preparation of teacher candidates. In 2017, Southeastern decided to expand its use of NIET's instructional rubric, embedding the indicators and domains in teacher candidates' coursework. This has helped teacher candidates gain confidence and understand what will be expected of them as teachers, and it helps them make connections across the rubric before they take on a classroom of their own.

Dr. Paula Summers Calderon, dean of Southeastern Louisiana University's College of Education, summarized the difference this can make: "NIET's approach truly is a comprehensive system based on tangible evidence and full feedback loops - not just a tick sheet of numbers and ratings."

The first year as a teacher or principal does not have to be a trial by fire. While there will always be challenges, we can do far more to prepare and support new teachers and principals to be successful in their early years. NIET's work with higher education is continuing to grow, and the next phase of this work will expand on these innovations. ●



PHOTO GALLERY:

How Teachers and Leaders are Shaping NIET's Future



Lori Line works with teacher leaders in her previous role as principal at West Goshen Elementary School, Goshen, Indiana

From the very beginning, NIET's work has been built around partnerships and collaboration. Teachers and leaders play an active role in shaping what a partnership with NIET looks like, with their strengths, needs, and goals for students at the heart of each service.

Educators' feedback has helped NIET at each step of our growth, and with that in mind, NIET developed two groups to be sounding boards and advisers. The Educator Advisory Board, a group of practitioners and administrators who share real-time advice and ideas, and the Steering Committee, consisting of key officials and state and national leaders, have provided counsel to NIET's leadership as they design the next phase of our work.



STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Bob Behning

Indiana Representative and House Education Committee Chair
Director of External Affairs, Marian University Klipsch Educators College, IN

Dr. Kenith Britt

Dean, Marian University Klipsch Educators College, IN

Dr. Paula Summers Calderon

Dean, Southeastern Louisiana University College of Education, LA

Dr. James Gray

Chief of Schools, Jefferson Parish Schools, LA

Dr. Saul Hinojosa

Superintendent, Somerset ISD, TX

Dr. Tonia Howard

Chief of Leadership Development and Special Programs,
Lancaster ISD, TX

Hayward Renel Jean

Principal, Mellichamp Elementary School, Orangeburg CSD5, SC

Lori Line

Executive Director of Talent Development and Management,
Goshen Community Schools, IN

Patrick W. Mapes

Superintendent, Perry Township Schools, IN

Dr. David Mathis

Deputy Superintendent of College and Career Readiness, South Carolina Department of Education, SC

Dr. Nathan Morris, Superintendent, Cross County School

District, AR

Julie Thompson

Executive Director of Elementary Education, Knox County Schools, TN

Dr. Jennifer Tuttleton

Executive Director of Talent Pipeline, Louisiana Department of Education, LA

EDUCATOR ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

Dr. Chris Burkett

Gamecock EdQuarters Executive Director,
University of South Carolina College of Education, SC

Corrie Callahan

Master Teacher, Abraham Lincoln Elementary School,
Perry Township Schools, IN

Angela Davis,

Executive Master Teacher,
St. John the Baptist Parish Public Schools, LA

Robert Hill

Head of School, Alice M. Harte Charter School,
InspireNOLA, New Orleans, LA

Christina Jamison

Principal Fellow and Administrative Intern,
John Nance Garner Fine Arts Academy, Grand Prairie, TX

Dr. Araceli Montoya

Principal, Wildflower Accelerated Academy,
Avondale Elementary School District, AZ

Lauren Moore

Master Teacher, West Goshen Elementary School,
Goshen Community Schools, IN

Alex Patterson

Mentor Teacher, Dodson Branch Elementary School,
Jackson County Schools, TN

Sarah Szymanski Tomic

Teacher and Instructional Coach; Milken Educator,
Pikes Peak Elementary School, Harrison School District,
Colorado Springs, CO

Sheena Washington

U.S. History and Anthropology Teacher; Teach Plus Fellow,
International High School at Largo,
Prince George's County Public Schools, MD

Amy Whittington

Principal, South/North Elementary School,
Central Decatur Community School District, IA



Lauren Moore

Lauren Moore (pictured above) has shown the power of teacher voice through her roles as master and mentor teacher, as well as through her policy fellowship with Teach Plus.

The opportunities she had as a teacher leader empowered her to advocate for others to have the same chances to grow professionally, and she actively worked to advance legislation in Indiana that creates funding and policy support for career ladder structures like the TAP System.

“

I don't know another way to teach other than the TAP rubric. It works for students and makes sense for kids. This is the way in which I teach and breathe. It becomes the way you teach as an educator. You want things to work for kids. That's what I'm going to keep doing. At the end of the day, that's what's important.”

Lauren Moore



Educator Advisory Board

The Educator Advisory Board meets with NIET leadership, including Founder Lowell Milken and CEO Candice McQueen, during NIET's annual conference. Mentor Teacher Alex Patterson (below) has worked at Dodson Branch School for 14 years, teaching nearly every grade during that time. During the 2019 conference, he shared how having a structure and opportunities for teachers to learn from an expert is so critical to rural schools, where often there is only one teacher for an entire grade or subject.



Knox County Schools Executive Director of Elementary Education Julie Thompson shares at the NIET 2019 annual conference.





Dr. Paula Summers Calderon

Higher education leaders are able to share unique insight about NIET's work. Dr. Paula Summers Calderon, dean of the College of Education at Southeastern Louisiana University, shared how teacher candidates' exposure to the NIET rubric indicators throughout their coursework helps them gain confidence and understand what's expected of them as teachers, and they become comfortable with evaluation and assessment.

“

Our teacher candidates are so used to that and know exactly what needs to be done and what kind of feedback needs to be given. They know how to get the students to answer their own questions rather than be given the answer. They just do it as second nature.”

Dr. Paula Summers Calderon

Dean of the College of Education, Southeastern Louisiana University

 Pictured above, middle right



Robert Hill

Robert Hill serves as head of school at InspireNOLA's Alice M. Harte Charter School, which has grown its own pipeline of administrators through the NIET teacher leadership structure.



We take pride in advancing teacher leadership and educator effectiveness. We have been blessed with the opportunity to provide our teachers with resources and a credible system that impacts student achievement directly.”

Robert Hill

Head of school at InspireNOLA's Alice M. Harte Charter School

 Pictured below



Story of Success

SLATON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT,
SLATON, TEXAS

District Context

In a town of about 6,000 people, Slaton Independent School District (ISD) has an outsized role in the community, and educators say their peers feel more like family than coworkers. Slaton ISD is located about 30 minutes southeast of Lubbock in the panhandle of Texas and serves 1,270 students. Over 70% of students in Slaton ISD are minorities, and 81% are economically disadvantaged. The district consists of four schools: two elementary schools, one junior high school, and one high school.

Although the sense of community in the district is overwhelmingly positive, Slaton ISD does face challenges as a small district. District leadership has long been committed to providing high-quality academic opportunities to students but has sometimes struggled with how to make that a reality. One of Slaton ISD's longstanding and most persistent challenges was attracting and retaining high-quality teachers while surrounded by larger school districts that boast higher pay and more resources.

To combat this challenge, Slaton ISD began a partnership with NIET in 2014. This collaboration provided district leadership with the structure to introduce new career pathway options via teacher leadership. No longer did teachers need to look to neighboring school districts for opportunities to advance their careers. Instead, these

teachers now had opportunities to become a mentor or master teacher, taking on responsibility for leading job-embedded professional learning for their peers, as well as the opportunity to earn additional compensation based on effectiveness. These roles and responsibilities have provided incentives for new teachers to join Slaton ISD and for current teachers to remain in the district – attracting and retaining highly effective educators, all while maintaining the community feel that makes the district unique.

Key Lessons

Five years after introducing teacher leadership roles, Slaton ISD now has a strong pipeline of instructionally focused leaders. Teachers have moved from classroom teacher to teacher leader roles, and from teacher leader roles to the principalship and district administration. Here are four lessons learned from Slaton ISD's experience creating its leadership pipeline:

PROVIDE NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHERS:

Highly effective teachers are a valuable resource to any district, but especially to a smaller district like Slaton ISD. The district has learned that career advancement opportunities can be a powerful incentive to retain teachers who want to advance their careers and earn additional compensation but may not necessarily be interested in an administrative role.



DELIVER HIGH LEVELS OF CUSTOMIZED SUPPORT:

Now that Slaton ISD has a strong cadre of teacher leaders and instructionally focused school leaders, the support given to teachers is both high-quality and highly customized. Teachers benefit from a level of individualized support that may not be offered in a larger school district, or one that does not have a structure of teacher leadership.

CREATE A SENSE OF OWNERSHIP FOR TEACHERS:

Teachers in Slaton ISD have a strong sense of ownership in the district and trust in its leadership. This is in large part due to the fact that they have seen some of their peers move into leadership roles. Teachers know their school

and district leaders have an in-depth understanding of the students in their classrooms and the level of instruction that they aim to provide.

FOSTER A GROWTH MINDSET:

Educators in Slaton ISD know they can always reach out to each other to collaborate and discuss best practices. Everyone is committed to a growth mindset that encourages continued learning and developing their skills as educators. From the career teacher who applied to be a teacher leader instead of retiring, to the master teacher who earned her master's degree through a district-sponsored program to become a principal, Slaton ISD has prioritized teacher growth to benefit its students.

Continued Next Page



Slaton ISD Mentor Teacher Sherri Rodriguez (right) and Master Teacher Katie Negen (middle) collaborate during NIET's 2019 annual conference.



Students gathered at Slaton Junior High School; Slaton Independent School District; Slaton, Texas



What's Next?

As Slaton ISD continues to develop its leadership pipeline, district leadership has identified an area for additional growth: The district is expanding its partnership with NIET to provide on-the-job training and support for principals.

Principals are working to build highly effective school leadership teams in which administrators and teacher leaders work together to increase instructional capacity across the building. Training for principals is also focused on how they can best support the teaching faculty to implement high-quality curricula and differentiate instruction to help ensure all students are on a path to meet college and career standards. ●

In Conversation:

JOHN WHITE | FORMER LOUISIANA STATE SUPERINTENDENT

John White was Louisiana superintendent of schools from January 2012 to March 2020. During that time, he launched Louisiana Believes, the state's plan to ensure every child is on track to a college degree or a professional career. White worked to unify the state's early childhood system, modernize curriculum, professionalize educator preparation, provide pathways to prosperity for all high school graduates, and provide families with expansive school options. In 2019, Louisiana students ranked first in the nation for improvement in 8th grade math on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Over the decade spanning Superintendent White's tenure, Louisiana's growth outpaced the nation, ranking in the top 10 states for improvement on every NAEP test.

How has NIET changed the teaching landscape in Louisiana?

NIET has helped school leaders build strong systems for teacher collaboration, goal-setting, and observation and feedback. It has also created clear pathways to leadership for excellent teachers. Additionally, school systems are recognizing how to create incentives for teachers who take on additional roles and how to attract, support, and retain the most effective teachers and leaders in rural and high-need schools.

What makes NIET different from other partners?

NIET is a teacher-centered organization that uses research to help schools establish structures for professional growth and advancement. NIET's systematic approach benefits educators and students.

What should NIET focus on in our next 20 years?

Educators are struggling to ensure that all students, including those who are not yet at grade level, are able to succeed. Master and mentor teachers could provide much-

needed support to ensure that teachers are equipped to meet all students' needs.

Why did Louisiana pursue a partnership with NIET, and how has the state built off our collaboration through policy and statewide initiatives?

Since 2003, school systems throughout Louisiana have been partnering with NIET to strengthen educator support and establish structures for professional learning. From the federal Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant awarded in 2010 to the state-supported partnership in Caddo Parish, Louisiana school systems have used the TAP System to build teacher leaders who are equipped to coach and support their peers.

In October 2018, the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education passed policies that established credentials for teacher leaders, including a mentor teacher ancillary certificate to ensure those serving in the role of mentor teacher are well prepared to support others. NIET became a state-approved provider of mentor teacher training in August 2019. ●





Bookend: Our Team

Our incredible team is at the heart of what we do each day, and they set us apart. They are educators who have had years of experience leading this work first-hand, and they spend hours each week walking alongside teachers and principals through the halls and classrooms of schools, asking questions and building capacity to help them grow.

At NIET, we believe we can work with any school to help them take what they are doing to the next level – no matter where they are. We know because we’ve seen success in all kinds of schools, from Phoenix and New Orleans to rural Tennessee and tribal reservations. We have incredible optimism and belief in what teachers and students are capable of – and we wake up every day excited to see them reach their highest expectations. There is so much in store for the next 20 years. ●



NIET Chairman and Founder Lowell Milken introduces the TAP System for Teacher and Student Advancement at the 1999 Milken National Education Conference, setting the stage for a revolutionary reform to ensure that every American student is guided by the kind of professional worthy of the name 'teacher.'

NIET | NIET.ORG