

Letter from the Chairman

2020 marks 20 years of advancing the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching's mission of *building educator excellence to give all students the opportunity for success*. The act of "building" is crucial to establish a strong foundation, garner support, create change, and maximize impact.

NIET's initiatives stand the test of time because they leverage outstanding instruction to impact student learning. These structures are a stronghold for schools, especially during educational challenges, from natural disasters and economic declines to a pandemic that has fundamentally changed how educators teach and students learn.

That is particularly true this year. In their nimble response to COVID-19, NIET educators have used professional development "cluster" meetings to reset goals, reimaged teacher observation with virtual learning walks, and embraced technological strategies and tools to engage students in new ways. These practices will no doubt impact the delivery of instruction long-term for NIET partners, and the further elevation of teacher leaders provides schools with a human capital system that intentionally prioritizes student learning amid crises and challenges.

Structures of Leadership and Support Empower Teachers

What sets NIET apart is our system for developing educators as instructional leaders. Early in NIET's work, my meetings with talented teachers in classrooms across the country revealed one common finding: Attracting high-caliber educators is not enough. To maximize their influence, schools needed to give teachers the opportunity to hold formal leadership roles with the responsibility, accountability, and authority to drive instruction and accelerate student achievement. Today, NIET's teacher leaders are unifying faculty around a vision for excellence while providing job-embedded professional development and strengths-based coaching to create a culture of continuous improvement.

Earlier this year, I traveled to San Luis, Arizona, along the U.S./Mexico border to recognize Omar Duron, principal of Southwest Junior High School in Gadsden Elementary School District #32. A product of the community he serves, Omar is one of six district principals to matriculate through the TAP System's career path. He has mentored teacher candidates through NIET's partnership with Arizona State University. Southwest's professional development mirrors Omar's approach: data-driven, methodical, and reflective.



Rigor has intensified during COVID-19, demonstrating how a leadership *team* can adapt to changing circumstances as they strive to create change in students' lives.

Broad Coalitions Scale Up Success

Omar's example is powerful, though not unique. This report illuminates ways schools, districts, states, and universities develop talented teachers who will prepare today's students to be tomorrow's leaders. Indiana, Iowa, Arizona, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Texas serve as models for state initiatives. This year also brought new partnerships in Arkansas, Tennessee, Michigan, and Alaska. The federal Teacher and School Leader (TSL) Incentive Program and Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) Grant Program make leadership and support a national priority.

Two decades ago, we pursued a bold strategy to meet a crucial demand. Research and experience confirm the correctness of this approach, providing educators the tools to construct a foundation that meets the demands of a changing education landscape. We look forward with confidence and urgency to the next 20 years, as together, we create high-quality opportunities for all.

Lowell Milken

Chairman and Founder

National Institute for Excellence in Teaching