

NIET

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING



NIET Research Summary

Examining the Evidence and Impact of NIET's Initiatives

2022-23

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National Institute for Excellence in Teaching

The National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Our vision is that every student in the America is 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. We have optimism about what every teacher and student is capable of, and we see them rise to new levels of success every day. 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.

For 20 years, NIET has provided support to states, districts, schools, and universities in recruiting, developing, supporting, and retaining educators in order to raise achievement levels for all students. NIET provides both on-site and virtual support across multiple aspects of educator effectiveness, including coaching, mentoring, educator evaluation, and professional learning for aspiring teachers, classroom teachers, and teacher, school and district leaders. As of the 2022-23 school year, NIET initiatives are impacting over 300,000 educators and more than 3 million students. For more information, visit www.niet.org.

Researchers at NIET and elsewhere have studied the effectiveness of NIET's initiatives. This document describes some of the most recent results that have emerged from research to date.



NIET Services

NIET services are structured around a core belief that every child deserves an effective educator, in every classroom, every day.

The TAP System for Teacher and Student Advancement

The TAP System is an educator-led, comprehensive school reform that establishes distributed and shared leadership structures for building educator excellence and increasing student achievement. The TAP System is focused on attracting, developing, motivating, and retaining high-quality educators. The TAP System creates opportunities for 1) multiple career paths, 2) ongoing applied professional growth, 3) instructionally focused accountability, and 4) performance-based compensation for educators. Through implementing these four interrelated key elements, NIET supports educators to build system-wide change at the school and district level.

School Improvement Solutions

Based on two decades of on-the-ground experience working with high-need schools and districts across the country, NIET's School Improvement Solutions (SIS) is designed to build on the strengths of local education agencies, creating a tailored approach to improve educator excellence through four key areas: 1) instructional excellence, 2) collaborative learning, 3) reflective culture and 4) collective leadership. NIET engages all SIS partners in a thorough site-based needs assessment, then works shoulder to shoulder with school and district leaders to develop a plan that incorporates key areas that lead to positive changes for schools, educators, and students.

Teacher and Leader Development

By restructuring the typical career and advancement pathways, NIET helps create opportunities for educators to advance while having a direct impact on the classroom. NIET provides training and on-site coaching and support to build educator excellence. Training and support include supporting district leaders with identifying and developing instructional coaches, principals, district administrators, and teacher leaders.

Rubric and Observation Systems

Based on nationally normed, research-based standards, NIET's Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric and NIET Principal Standards Rubric clearly define effective practices for instruction and leadership to foster collaboration around a common language and vision that correlates with student achievement. NIET's Educator Effectiveness Preparation and Support System (EE PASS) provides access to professional development, training, and certification resources, as well as a data dashboard to see real-time observation scores and reports.

Principal and District Support

To support principal growth and development, NIET has developed a Principal Leadership Series to support school leaders with integrating and implementing impactful practices aligned to the Principal Standards Rubric. These services are designed to build essential mindsets and skills that help principals elevate their practice and create a culture that advances instructional practice and improve outcomes for all students. Additionally, NIET works alongside superintendents and district teams to build instructional leadership and identify high-impact action steps to improve instruction.

Educator Preparation Partnerships

NIET works closely with universities to prepare a pipeline of exemplary next-generation educators. Specifically, NIET helps educator preparation programs using our Aspiring Teacher Rubric and Portal for Raising Educator Preparation (NIET PREP) to embed research-based, effective principles into coursework and clinical practices.

Impact of NIET Initiatives

NIET has a 20-year track record of success in improving educator, student, and school outcomes in high-need schools and educator preparation programs. The success of NIET's work is evident in the positive findings from evaluations of impact across multiple locations, as conducted by different researchers employing a variety of methodological frameworks. This section summarizes findings from selected new studies, then highlights selected findings from studies of NIET partnerships over the past decade.

Results from Selected New Studies of NIET's Impact

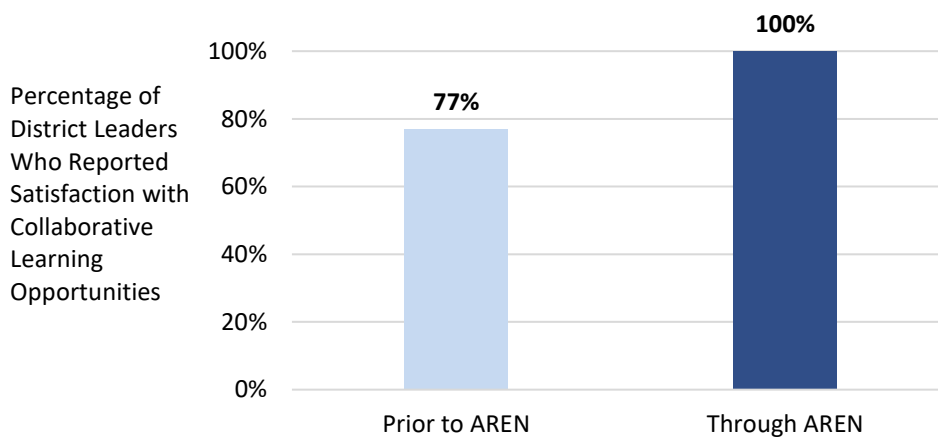
These selected studies focus on different aspects of NIET's work, including 1) providing training and support to build the leadership capacity of district and school leaders; 2) supporting schools and districts to establish or enhance their human capital management systems; and 3) delivering other tailored support and services to build educator excellence. Data come from partner schools and districts, NIET data systems, and state department of education databases. The new studies below highlight the impact of NIET's work on school leader, teacher, and student outcomes.

Building Educator Capacity in Rural School Districts in Arkansas and Tennessee

Arkansas Rural Educator Network

With support of the Walton Family Foundation, NIET started an innovative partnership called the Arkansas Rural Educator Network (AREN) in 2020. AREN districts receive support from NIET specialists to develop a customized, district-specific plan of support, which is designed based on a strengths-based needs assessment. Districts also receive on-site coaching, training, and support, along with opportunities to collaborate with leaders across the state. The AREN partnership has resulted in all district leaders being satisfied with the collaborative learning opportunities provided to them, compared to about three-quarters of district leaders before the partnership (Figure 1). The AREN partnership, now in its third year, includes 26 districts receiving NIET support to cultivate a culture of effective instruction and leadership.

Figure 1. AREN district leaders' satisfaction with collaborative learning opportunities increased.

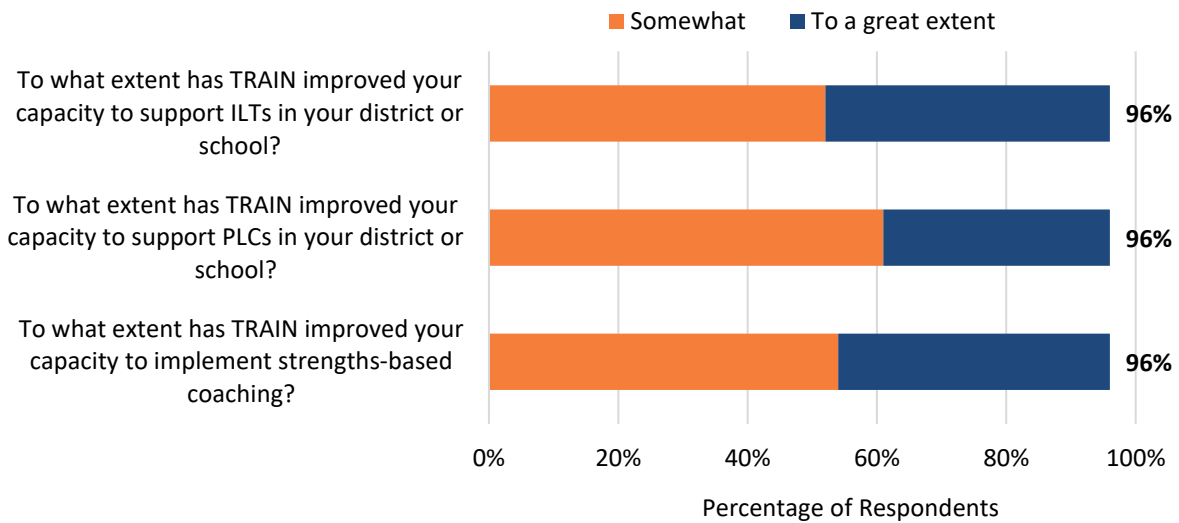


Tennessee Rural Acceleration and Innovation Network

To support Tennessee rural school districts with the challenges of teaching and learning during COVID-19, a partnership was established among the Ayers Foundation, NIET, the Ayers Institute for Teacher Learning and Innovation, and the State Collaborative on Reforming Education. The two-year partnership, named the Tennessee Rural Acceleration and Innovation Network (TRAIN), served 33 districts in total. District and school leaders participated in professional learning and received on-site support. Participants were highly satisfied with their experiences and reported a positive impact of TRAIN on

their capacity to support instructional leadership teams (ILTs) and professional learning communities (PLCs), as well as to implement strengths-based coaching (Figure 2).

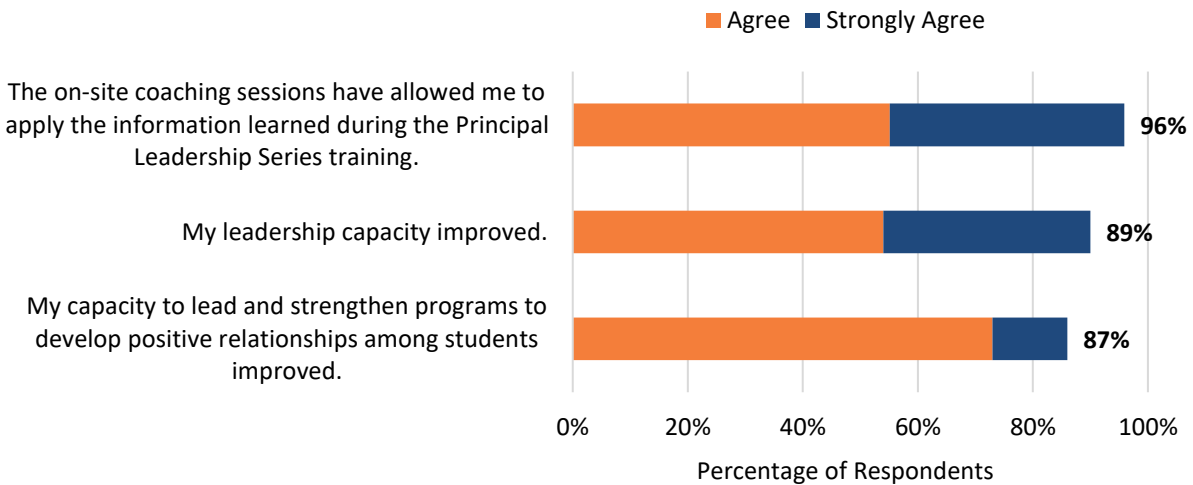
Figure 2. Participants reported positive impacts of TRAIN activities.



Supporting Principals and Other School Leaders in South Carolina

In 2020, NIET, in partnership with the University of South Carolina and the Branch Alliance for Educator Diversity, received a three-year grant from the federal Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) program to form the collaborative South Carolina Principal Leadership Network (SCPLN). SCPLN is a two-year cohort-based program designed to build and accelerate the leadership capacity of 150 school leaders from high-need districts in South Carolina. Through this initiative, school leaders participate in high-quality virtual professional development, quarterly on-site coaching, and quarterly networking opportunities via virtual communities of practice. As of September 2022, 171 school leaders from 78 schools in five districts have participated in SCPLN, exceeding the recruitment target by 14%. Overall, participants have reported positive impacts, as shown in Figure 3. Learn more about the program [here](#).

Figure 3. Participants reported positive impacts of SCPLN activities.



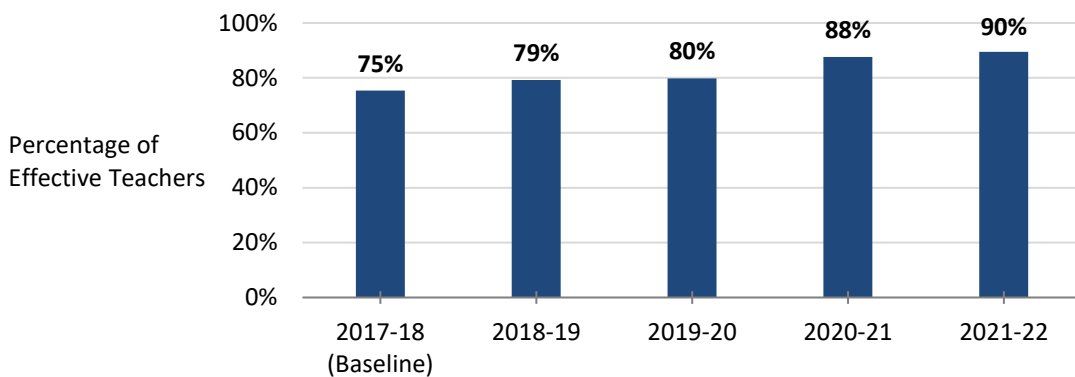
Increasing Equitable Access to Effective Educators in Louisiana High-Need Schools

In fall 2016, with support of a U.S. Department of Education Teacher Incentive Fund grant, NIET partnered with schools in Louisiana where more than half of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. The goal of this project, named Louisiana Building On Leadership Development (LA BOLD), was to increase educator effectiveness and student achievement through implementing 1) professional advancement opportunities, 2) ongoing applied professional growth, 3) rigorous instructional evaluation and feedback, and 4) performance-based compensation. A [prior report](#) has highlighted the impact of the partnership across the first three years of the grant. The findings below show the impact of the partnership across the entire grant period.

Finding 1: Increase in the percentage of effective teachers.

The percentage of teachers who were rated as effective based on multiple classroom observations using the NIET Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric increased from 75% in 2017-18 to 90% in 2021-22.

Figure 4. The percentage of effective teachers in LA BOLD schools increased over time.



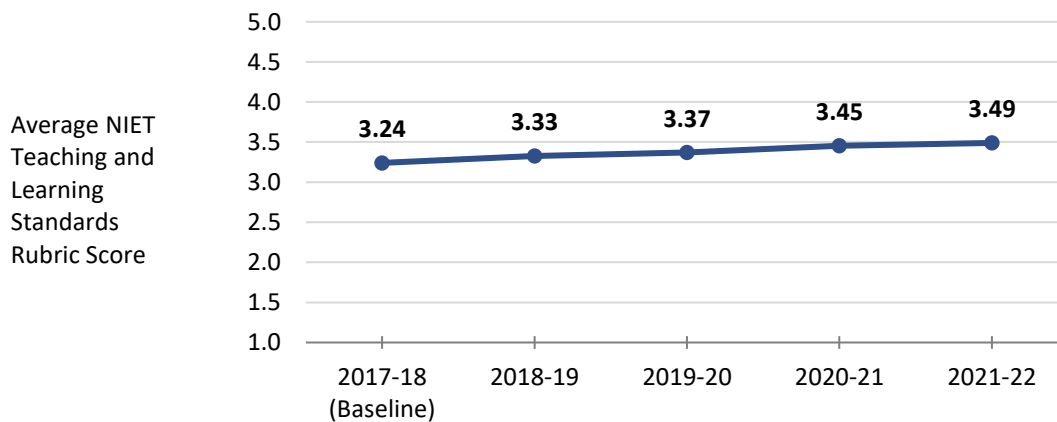
Finding 2: High percentage of effective teachers retained.

Each year, at least 80% of effective teachers were retained by their school systems. By the final year, 96% of effective teachers were retained.

Finding 3: Improvement in the performance of retained teachers.

Teachers who were retained by their school systems showed statistically significant improvement in their performance over time ($t(376) = 9.48, p < .001$) with a small effect size (Hedges' $g = 0.47$).

Figure 5. Teachers who stayed in LA BOLD school systems improved their performance over time.



By ensuring that teachers continue to grow their instructional skills and stay in the same school system, the LA BOLD partnership provides students a better chance of being taught by effective teachers.

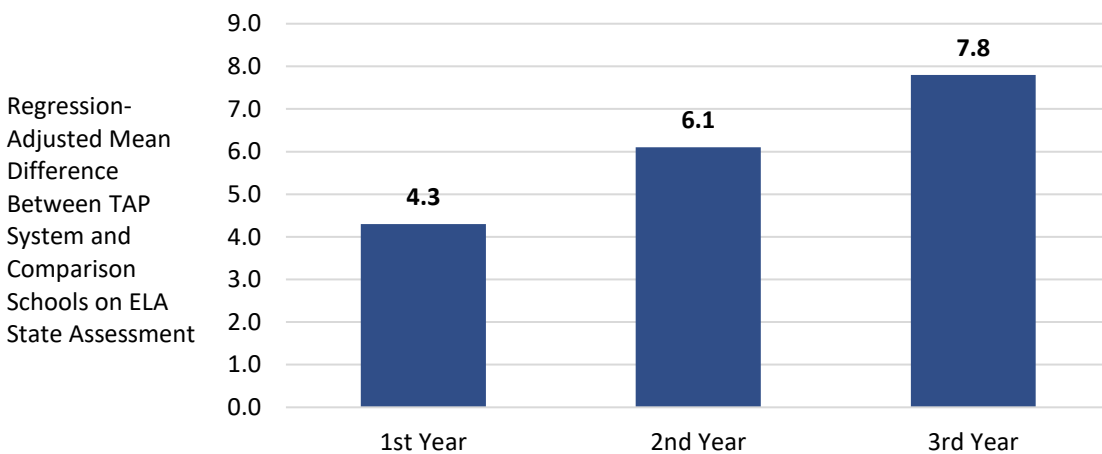
Improving English Language Arts Achievement in Indiana

The TAP System enhances a school's continuous improvement processes through strengthening organizational routines, social and professional norms, and individual behavior. To examine the long-term impact of the TAP System, Leutscher, Barnett, Hudgens, Serdiouk, and Logis (2022) tracked student English/Language Arts (ELA) outcomes in 13 Indiana schools. These schools implemented the TAP System for four years with grant funding and continued implementation for three years after the grant ended. The authors compared ELA performance of these schools to those of 26 comparison schools selected through propensity score matching to identify schools like the TAP System schools. The baseline year was the last year of the grant funding period. For the three years after the grant, the authors compared the mean differences between TAP System schools and comparison schools.

Key Finding: Continued implementation of the TAP System after initial, grant-funded implementation resulted in improved English/Language Arts performance.

At baseline (i.e., the final grant year), the TAP System schools had a 0.7-point advantage in ELA performance. After using regression equations to account for the baseline advantage, the TAP System schools continue to outperform the comparison schools as shown by the regression-adjusted mean differences in Figure 6. Specifically, the TAP System schools outperformed the comparison schools by 4.3 points in the first year, 6.1 points in the second year, and 7.8 points in the third year. The results for all years had small to medium effect sizes, and the second- and third-year results were statistically significant. Overall, from the first year to the third year after the grant, the TAP System schools not only sustained improved outcomes but increased those outcomes in relation to the comparison schools.

Figure 6. The TAP System schools sustained and improved outcomes in relation to the comparison schools.



The current findings provide evidence for the sustainability and effectiveness of the TAP System's enhancements to schools' continuous improvement processes over time. These results complement previous studies that show evidence of improved outcomes during initial TAP System implementation (e.g., Mann et al., 2013). Overall, the findings show that these organizational improvements not only sustain improved outcomes but also continue to boost those outcomes after grant funding ends.

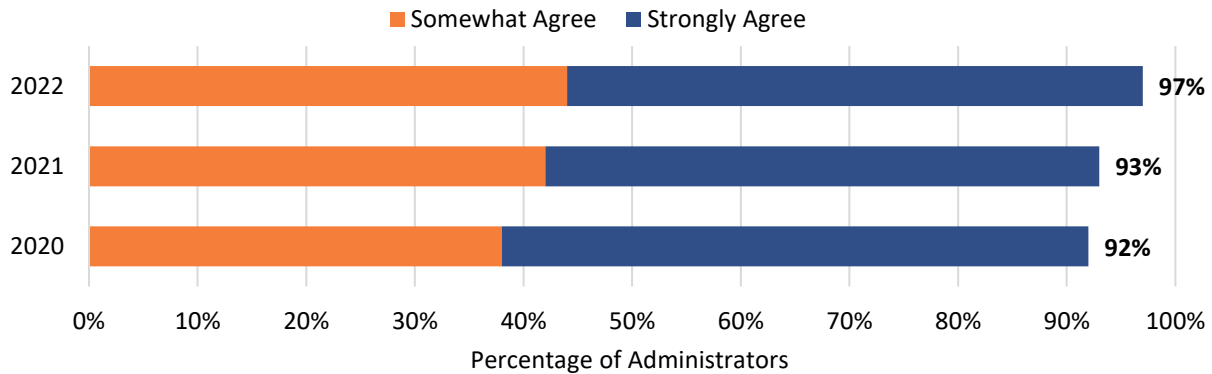
Educator Views of Professional Development and Their Intention to Stay in the Profession

Each year in the spring, NIET administers a survey to educators in NIET supported schools to gauge experiences and views of multiple topics, including professional development and teacher intentions to remain in the profession.

Finding 1: Administrators in NIET supported schools believe that professional development has improved student learning

Access to relevant and high-quality professional development is important, especially during a time of crisis (UNESCO, 2020). Professional development is key for improving teacher effectiveness (Desimone 2009; Kraft & Papay, 2014; Yoon et al., 2007), which in turn drives student success (Chetty et al., 2014; Polly et al., 2015; Roth et al., 2019). Over 90% of administrators in NIET supported schools believe that the professional development activities at their schools have improved student learning, a percentage that has increased from 2020 to 2022 (Figure 7).

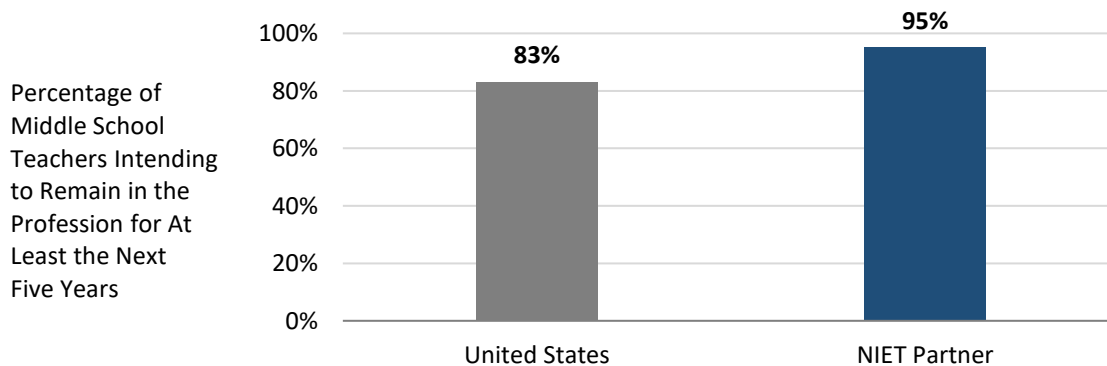
Figure 7. The percentage of administrators reporting professional development improved student learning increased over time.



Finding 2: Middle school teachers in NIET supported schools intend to stay longer in the profession

Some surveys have indicated that teachers are leaving the profession earlier than expected due to pandemic-induced stress and burnout (Liss-Levinson, 2021; Steiner & Woo, 2021). However, the results from the NIET survey administered during a pandemic year show a more positive outlook. Specifically, 95% of middle school teachers in NIET supported schools intend to stay in the teaching profession for at least the next five years. This percentage exceeds that for middle school teachers nationwide who were surveyed prior to the pandemic using the Teacher and School Leader International Survey (OECD, 2020; see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Nationally, a higher percentage of middle school teachers in NIET support schools reported an intention to stay in the profession for at least five years.



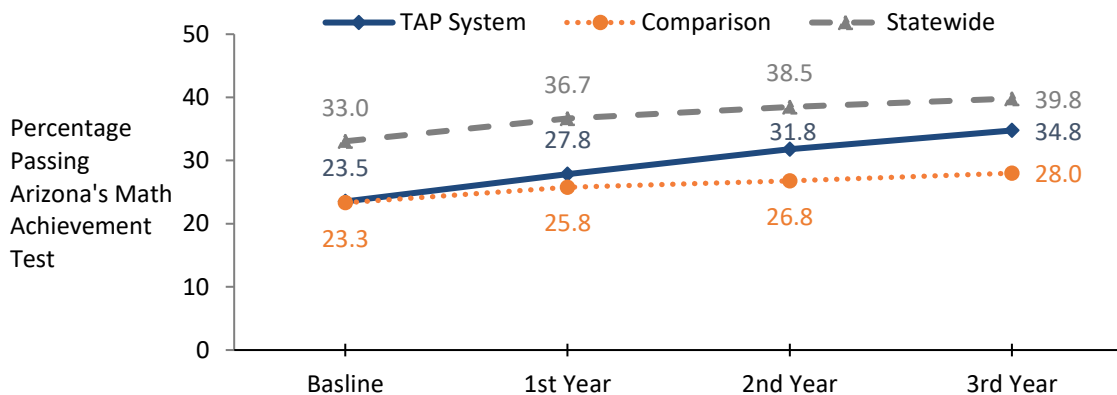
Results from Selected Prior Studies of NIET's Impact

This section summarizes selected prior studies demonstrating the impact of NIET services on student outcomes, educator retention, educator effectiveness, and educator preparation.

Student Outcomes

- Changing the Odds: Moving from Priority to Performing School. Hudgens and Hall (2020) examined the early impacts of one school's implementation of a customized school improvement service. After one year of support, Mellichamp Elementary, once designated by the state as in need of additional support and improvement, no longer had a priority label. At Mellichamp, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations on state assessments increased from 2018 to 2019 for all subjects. Additionally, Mellichamp teachers expressed increased satisfaction with their school environment from 2018 to 2019 on a state-administered survey. Results highlight the importance of building supportive partnerships and aligning support services to the needs of individual schools. Learn more about the results [here](#).
- Sustaining Success: The TAP System's Long-term Effects on Math Achievement in Arizona. Leutscher and Barnett (2020) investigated the long-term impact of the TAP System on the percentage of students passing Arizona's math achievement test after at least three years of TAP System implementation. Three related school-level, quasi-experimental studies were performed using propensity score matching to generate comparison groups and regression models controlling for school fixed effects. The figure below presents the average percentage of students passing Arizona's math achievement test for the TAP System schools, the comparison schools and schools statewide. The TAP System schools improved performance at a higher rate than the comparison schools and reduced the gap with the state. Overall, the results show that the TAP System does sustain effectiveness and that two years of accumulated effects are needed for statistically significant results to consistently manifest.

Figure 9. TAP System schools improved performance relative to comparison schools and schools statewide.



- Teacher Incentives and Student Achievement: Evidence from an Advancement Program. Eren (2019) investigated the Louisiana TAP initiative from its inception in 2005-06 through 2010-11, principally as a performance-based compensation model. Twelve high-need schools that adopted the TAP System during the study period comprised the treatment group, while 21 future-adopter schools (adopted the TAP System in years after the study period) constituted the control group. After controlling for baseline year, grade, school, and student characteristics, Louisiana TAP was associated with a statistically significant increase in math achievement during the second year and beyond after adoption. The study found no evidence supporting alternative explanations (student

mobility, teacher mobility, or preadoption achievement trends). Overall the study presents “strong evidence that TAP increases student achievement, at least in math” (p. 886).

- Findings from a Two-year Examination of Teacher Engagement in TAP Schools across Louisiana. Mann, Leutscher, and Reardon (2013) examined the impact of the TAP System across 15 schools in Louisiana. A one-to-one nearest-neighbor matching algorithm with replacements was created to select a comparison school for each TAP school. There was no significant difference between the TAP System schools and their matched comparison schools in the pretreatment year. However, results of the study indicate that in the four primary subjects assessed, the TAP System schools significantly outperformed their matched counterparts: ELA: $F(1, 6421) = 6.334, p = 0.012$; Mathematics: $F(1, 6421) = 86.386, p < 0.001$; Science: $F(1, 7084) = 31.792, p < 0.001$; and Social Studies: $F(1, 7085) = 87.411, p < 0.001$. Further, the TAP System schools significantly outperformed comparison schools across time, $F(1, 24) = 5.30, p < 0.05$.

Educator Retention

- TAP Strategic Planning Report. An analysis conducted by the Louisiana Department of Education (2018) found that teacher retention rates were higher in schools that have implemented the TAP System for at least three years than in the TAP System schools in general or in other demographically similar schools (i.e., schools in which 80% or more of the students are classified as economically disadvantaged).
- Staying Power: The Impact of the TAP System on Retaining Teachers Nationwide. Barnett and Hudgens (2014) examined teacher retention rates in schools that implemented the TAP System during the 2010-11, 2011-12, and 2012-13 school years. Contrary to national trends, the authors found that TAP System schools retained 14% more teachers than similar high-need comparison schools and 10% more than the national average. Furthermore, the results indicate teachers retained in the TAP System schools become more effective over time as measured by classroom observation and value-added scores.

Educator Effectiveness

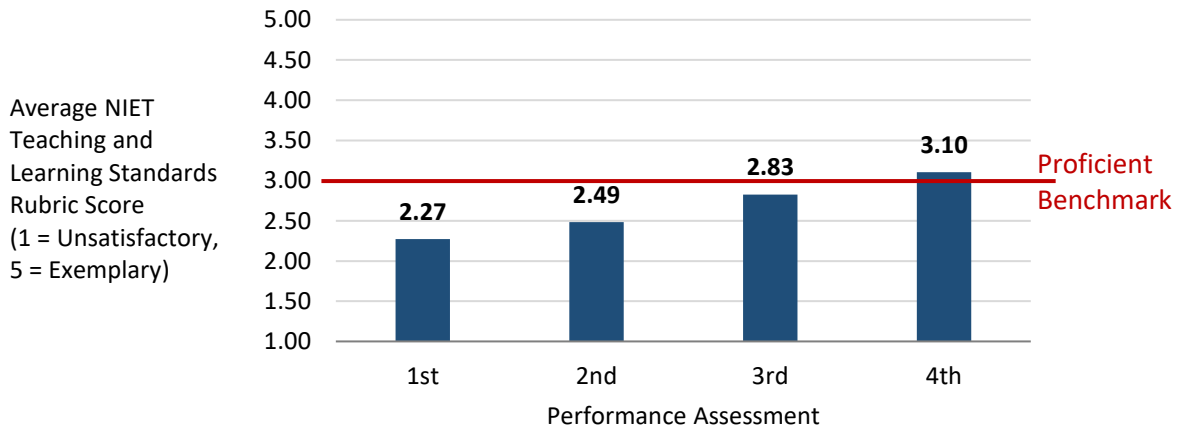
- Leading the Way: Administrator Experiences Implementing a New Educator Effectiveness and Support System. Hudgens, Logis, Leutscher, Hall, and Barnett (2021) examined school administrator experiences during a federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant that enabled a partnership between NIET and 12 Louisiana school districts serving almost 34,000 students. In an effort to improve student outcomes, this partnership enacted a plan to strengthen each district’s human capital management system. The improvement system incorporates professional development delivered via teacher leaders and employs a rigorous evaluation rubric and performance-based compensation to improve educator effectiveness. Investigation of school-level administrator perspectives from the fourth year of this grant indicated administrators’ satisfaction with core elements of the grant initiative and their belief in its positive impacts on educators and students. These perceived impacts aligned with teacher-reported experiences. Other reports about this partnership can be found [here](#) and [here](#).
- Community Ties: Building Long-term Partnerships as a Pathway for Improving Human Capital in Rural Schools. Leutscher and Barnett (2020) investigated the impact of a federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant award that facilitated the implementation of an educator effectiveness support system in a rural Arkansas school district. Results from the first three years of the grant indicate progress toward improving teacher effectiveness, increasing teacher retention, and impacting student achievement. Specifically, the percentage of teachers rated as effective increased, the retention rate for effective teachers improved, and the attrition rate for all teachers declined. Finally, student performance on state standardize assessment indicated improvement in all subjects and

outperformance of comparison districts. Learn more about the partnership and additional results [here](#).

Educator Preparation

- Growing Your Own: Revolutionizing Field-based Teacher Preparation to Generate Effective Teachers in High-need Communities.** Logis, Hudgens, Hall, Leutscher, and Barnett (2021) examined the impact of a grow-your-own teacher preparation model developed through a partnership among NIET, a university teacher preparation program, and two school districts serving high proportions of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The NIET Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric was embedded in university coursework and used to evaluate teacher candidates during clinical training to create a common language around instruction among teacher candidates, university faculty, and district partners. Findings demonstrate successful training of teacher candidates who graduated with strong instructional skills, gained employment in schools within partnering districts, and received effective ratings as teachers of record.

Figure 10. Instructional skills among teacher candidates improved over time.



- Breaking the Mold: Impact of a Multi-state Competency-based Principalship Program.** Logis and Chan (2020) evaluated the impact of the Leadership Instruction for Teachers (LIFT) Program – a collaboration among NIET, Texas Tech University, and 12 high-need school districts across Texas and Louisiana. The LIFT Program aimed to improve a principal preparation program through a competency-based fellowship and university preparation. The fellowship offered future school leaders hands-on experience in collaboration with highly skilled veteran school leaders. Evaluation of the impact of the LIFT Program showed successful recruitment of high-quality principal candidates into the program, improvement of candidates’ leadership and coaching skills, and positive perceptions toward the program. Learn more about the LIFT Program [here](#).

Conclusion

NIET’s initiatives stand out because of the more than 20-year track record of growth and success in raising student achievement in high-need schools and educator preparation programs. The research evidence also reveals several key reasons for our positive impact: a tailored approach to meet individual school and district needs; educator evaluation systems capable of differentiating educator performance levels and providing detailed feedback for improvement; and the creation of a challenging, rewarding, and collegial environment focused on high-quality instruction and student learning.

Acknowledgments

The authors gratefully acknowledge the input and information provided by NIET partner schools and educator preparation programs, including the willingness of educators to respond to NIET's surveys and participate in focus group meetings. We are also indebted to the work of all of the NIET team members who work with partnering schools each day.

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