

NIET

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING



NIET Research Summary

Examining the Evidence and Impact of NIET's Initiatives

Winter 2020

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Table of Contents

NIET Teaching Standards Rubric and Observation System	4
NIET Teacher Evaluation Methods Compared to Traditional Evaluation Methods.....	4
Alignment of the NIET Teaching Standards Rubric and Achievement Measures	5
Educator Perceptions of the NIET Teaching Standards Rubric and Observation System.....	6
Teacher and Leader Development.....	7
Ongoing Applied Professional Development	7
Career Paths and Advancement	8
Impact of NIET’s Initiatives	9
K-12 Partnerships.....	9
Collegial and Collaborative Environments	9
High Teacher Retention Rates	10
Improvement in Teacher Instructional Quality.....	11
Improvement in Student Achievement	12
Higher Education Partnerships	14
Pre-Service Teacher Preparation	14
Improvement in Teacher Candidates’ Instructional Skills	14
High Employment Rates.....	15
Effective First-Year Teachers.....	15
Principal Preparation	16
Improvement in Principal Fellows’ Coaching Skills	16
Improvement in Principal Fellows’ Leadership Skills	16
High Employment Rates.....	17
Upcoming Projects.....	18
Sustaining Success: The TAP System’s Long-term Effects on Math Achievement in Arizona	18
Community Ties: Building Long-term Partnerships as a Pathway for Improving Human Capital in Rural Schools	18
Changing the Odds: Moving from Priority to Performing School	18
Conclusion.....	18
Acknowledgements.....	19
About the Authors	19
References	20

Table of Figures

Figure 1. Traditional Teacher Evaluation Scores.....	4
Figure 2. Observational Ratings of Teachers Using the NIET Teaching Standards Rubric.	5
Figure 3. Strong Relationship between NIET Teacher Observation Scores and Classroom Value-Added Scores.	5
Figure 4. Teachers Nationwide Report Support for NIET’s Teacher Evaluation System, 2005 and 2019.....	6
Figure 5. Teacher and Administrator Responses to the Statement, “ <i>I believe the NIET skills, knowledge and responsibilities standards and rubrics accurately define what is important in instruction,</i> ” 2019.....	6
Figure 6. Teachers Nationwide Report Support for Ongoing Applied Professional Growth, 2005 and 2019.	7
Figure 7. Administrators Nationwide Report Impacts of NIET Professional Growth Activities, 2019.	8
Figure 8. Teachers Nationwide Report Support for Multiple Career Paths, 2005 and 2019.	8
Figure 9. Teachers Nationwide Report Collegial Environment, 2005 and 2019.	9
Figure 10. Nationally TAP Schools Retain More Teachers.	10
Figure 11. Long-Term Louisiana TAP Schools Retain More Teachers.	10
Figure 12. Teachers in NIET Partner Schools Improve Instructional Skills Over Time.	11
Figure 13. Teachers Nationwide Report Impact of NIET Initiatives on Instructional Effectiveness, 2019.	11
Figure 14. Administrators Nationwide Report Impact of NIET Initiatives on Student Achievement, 2019.....	12
Figure 15. NIET-Supported Louisiana Schools Outperform Matched Schools in Student Achievement.....	12
Figure 16. DeSoto Parish High School Graduation Rate, 2009 to 2018.	13
Figure 17. DeSoto Parish LEAP Performance in ELA, Math, and Social Studies, 2019.....	13
Figure 18. NIET-TTU Teacher Candidates’ Average Instructional Effectiveness Scores Improve Over Time.	14
Figure 19. NIET-TTU Graduates Serve in High-Need Schools.....	15
Figure 20. Graduates of NIET-IHE Partnerships Receive Strong Ratings in First Year of Teaching.....	15
Figure 21. NIET-IHE Principal Fellows Improve Coaching Skills Over Time.....	16
Figure 22. NIET-IHE Principal Fellows Improve Leadership Skills Over Time.....	17
Figure 23. Principal Fellow Graduates Obtain a Leadership Role and Serve in High-Need Schools.....	17

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 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. 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.

NIET supports states, districts, schools and universities in recruiting, developing, supporting, and retaining high-quality human capital in order to raise achievement levels for all students. NIET provides both on-site and online support across multiple aspects of educator effectiveness through educator evaluation, professional development and teacher leadership. This support is delivered both on-site and online through a variety of services. As of the 2019-20 school year, NIET initiatives are impacting over 275,000 educators and more than 2.75 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 the research to date. Data collection and analysis efforts are ongoing, and the findings described here will be updated periodically as information becomes available.



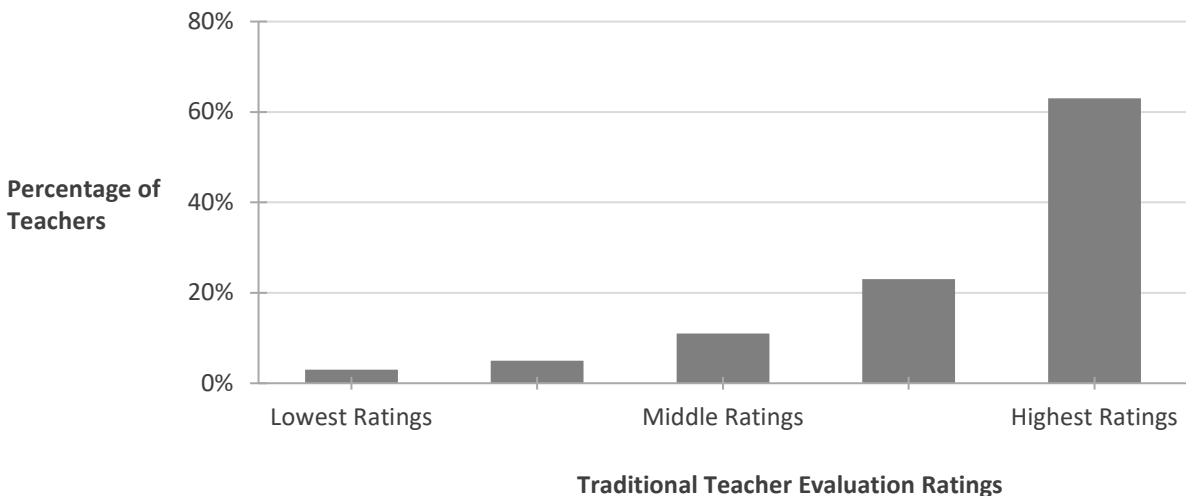
NIET Teaching Standards Rubric and Observation System

NIET focuses on the development of the educator through a structured, rigorous evaluation process built on the foundation of a nationally leading, research-based rubric, and a well-designed post-conference process. After over 1,000,000 observations across the last twenty years, NIET has found that teachers respond to a combination of clear, measurable indicators used to assess their performance and discussed with them with clear strategies on how to improve. This approach is the proper mix of accountability and support to help all teachers to improve and advance all students.

NIET Teacher Evaluation Methods Compared to Traditional Evaluation Methods

In order to improve the quality of classroom instruction, it is necessary to assess the quality of that instruction. Such assessment is also essential if teachers are to be held accountable for their work and for professional improvement. NIET has developed a comprehensive approach to teacher evaluation that ensures differentiated feedback for teacher improvement, in contrast to inflated ratings often found in other evaluation systems. Observational evaluations of teachers in NIET partner schools follow a bell-shaped distribution that much more closely matches what we know about how teachers differ from each other in effectiveness. In contrast to evaluation systems where the majority of teachers are rated at the highest levels (replicated in Figure 1), the NIET teacher evaluation system is capable of distinguishing variations in teacher performance (see Figure 2).

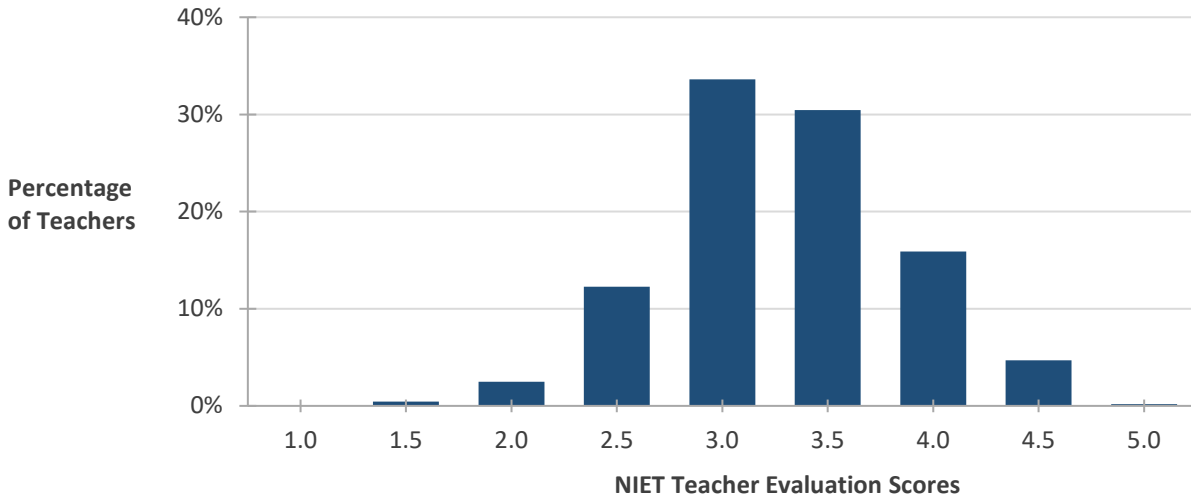
Figure 1. Traditional Teacher Evaluation Scores.



NOTE: The traditional teacher evaluation rating graph was based on teacher evaluations in five urban school districts reported in *The Widget Effect* (Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009). Scores on 3-point and 4-point scales have been interpolated to a 5-point scale using a cumulative probability density function based on reported data.

Teachers in schools that adopt the NIET Teaching Standards Rubric are observed in classroom instruction several times a year by multiple trained and certified observers on 19 indicators of instructional practice. These observers use a multidimensional, research-based set of standards and rubrics that are fair, transparent, and curriculum independent. Results are provided immediately as feedback to the teacher in post-observation mentoring sessions. The scores from all observations of these 19 classroom indicators are combined through a weighted average with seven responsibility indicators to create an overall Skills, Knowledge, and Responsibilities (SKR) score for each teacher. The overall SKR score ranges from 1.0 (unsatisfactory performance) to 5.0 (exemplary performance) in half-point increments, with a 3.0 representing proficiency.

Figure 2. Observational Ratings of Teachers Using the NIET Teaching Standards Rubric.



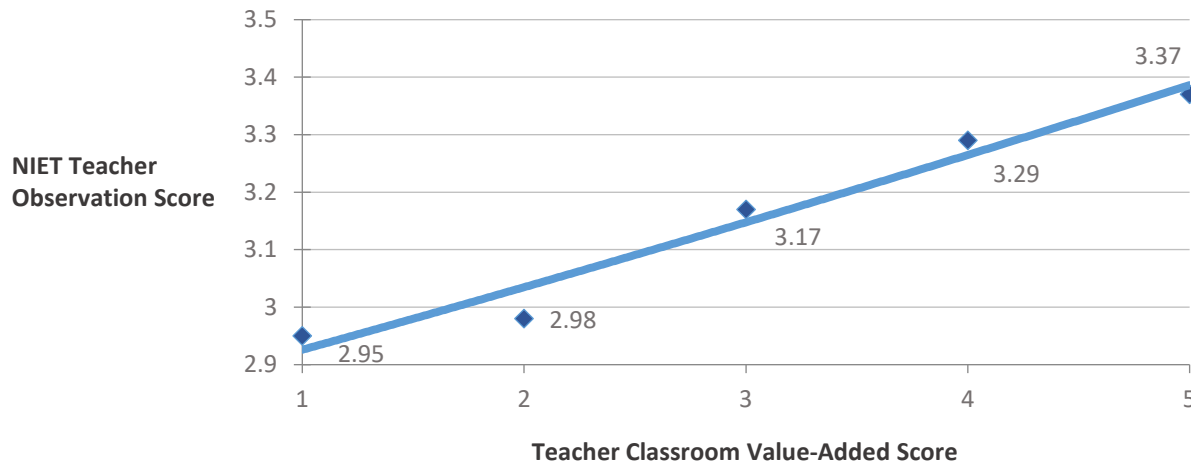
NOTE: NIET teacher evaluation score graph was based on over 7,000 teachers and approximately over 20,000 observations during the 2016-17 school year (Barnett, Hudgens, & Logis, 2018).

Alignment of the NIET Teaching Standards Rubric and Achievement Measures

Consistent with extant research (i.e., Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Sanders, Wright, & Horn, 1997), higher quality of instruction in the classroom is expected to lead to improved student achievement. Previous studies have shown positive correlations between the NIET teacher observation scores and student achievement as measured by classroom value-added (CVA) scores (Barnett, Rinthapol, & Hudgens, 2014; Daley et al., 2012). To examine this relationship, a bivariate linear regression analysis was conducted predicting the teacher’s observational score from the classroom value-added score, resulting in a significant finding, $F(1,4631) = 2959.87, p = 0.001$. The correlation between the observation scores and the classroom value-added scores was substantially and significantly large, $r = 0.62$. Further, approximately 39% of the variance in the observational scores was accounted for by the relationship with classroom value-added scores.

To represent the relationship between these scores, Figure 3 provides a trend line of how the two variables are related to one another. Using data from nearly 5,000 teachers across nine states, we observe a strong relationship between teacher observation scores and classroom value-added scores.

Figure 3. Strong Relationship between NIET Teacher Observation Scores and Classroom Value-Added Scores.

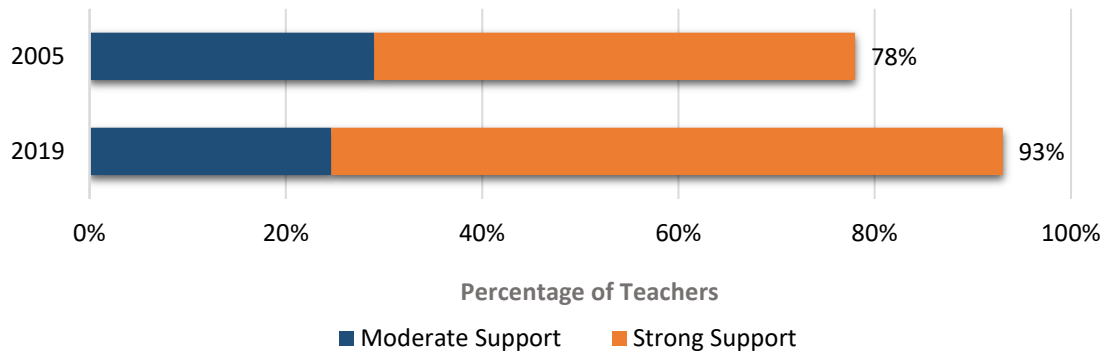


Further, Barnett and Wills (2016) found highly significant correlations between average SKR scores and CVA scores. The authors found that these correlations exceed the reported correlations across other observational measures used in large-scale research studies, providing evidence that the NIET Teaching Standards Rubric measures aspects of teacher practice that contribute to improved student test performance.

Educator Perceptions of the NIET Teaching Standards Rubric and Observation System

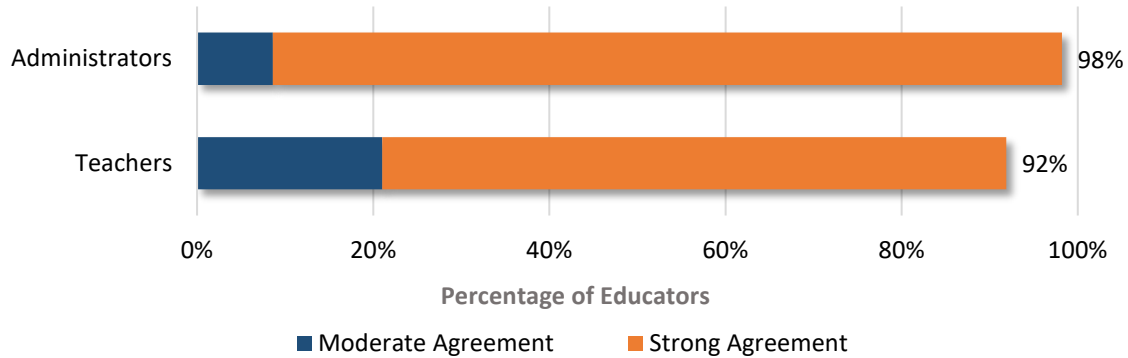
Every year NIET administers a survey to assess educator perceptions of NIET’s initiatives. As shown in the figure below, in 2019, 93% of responding teachers moderately or strongly support the NIET teacher evaluation system – a 15-point increase from 2005.

Figure 4. Teachers Nationwide Report Support for NIET’s Teacher Evaluation System, 2005 and 2019.



Additionally, the majority of responding teachers and administrators moderately or strongly agree that the NIET teacher evaluation tool accurately defines what is important in instruction.

Figure 5. Teacher and Administrator Responses to the Statement, “I believe the NIET skills, knowledge and responsibilities standards and rubrics accurately define what is important in instruction,” 2019.



“Our work with NIET has allowed teachers to receive fair, standards-based evaluations on their performance. It has also allowed them to get useful feedback on their instruction – in the classroom and with their students. The feedback on planning, instruction, and feedback to students has been the most helpful.” (Louisiana Administrator)

Teacher and Leader Development

In addition to providing an evaluation system capable of differentiating teacher performance levels and providing detailed feedback for improvement, NIET delivers on-the-ground, job-embedded training and support for teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators.

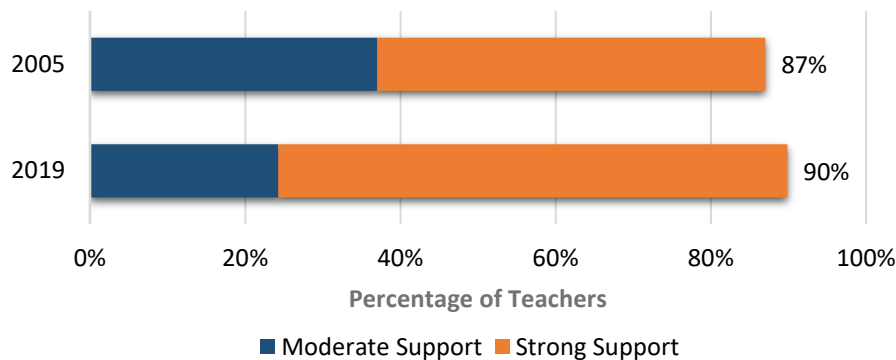
Ongoing Applied Professional Development

A challenge with typical professional development is that it is usually delivered off-site and is not tailored to an educator’s needs or specific student needs. According to a survey of more than 6,300 teachers across the country, teachers reported that they were not involved in decisions about professional learning and were not provided with adequate time during school day for professional learning (Learning Forward, 2017). In contrast, NIET surveyed teachers in spring 2019 and, with over 4,700 teachers responding, 81% were satisfied with their ability to influence decision-making and 93% of teacher leaders reported they participate jointly with administrators in decision-making.

NIET has supported school systems for over two decades to offer professional development that is on-site, job-embedded and relevant to teacher and student needs. In schools supported by NIET, teacher leaders facilitate weekly cluster group meetings during school hours where they examine student data, engage in collaborative planning, and discuss instructional strategies that have been field-tested in their own schools. Teachers benefit from access to a national NIET database of instructional strategies and their colleagues’ experiences. Professional development continues in the classroom as master teachers model lessons, observe classroom instruction, and support teachers’ pedagogical improvement.

NIET’s annual survey of teacher attitudes reveals that responding teachers support NIET’s teacher-led, ongoing, professional development.

Figure 6. Teachers Nationwide Report Support for Ongoing Applied Professional Growth, 2005 and 2019.



NIET’s annual survey also gauged administrators’ perceived impacts of NIET professional growth activities. Administrators were asked to rate agreement with statements related to changes they have seen as a result

Voices from the Field

“As a first-year teacher, I have seen tremendous growth in my teaching because of our weekly clusters and the feedback that I get from my observation. I believe that if you asked any teacher in this building, they would agree with my statement.”

-Louisiana Career Teacher

“There has been growth on all levels. Teachers have learned what is truly important for good teaching. The rubric and handbook are helpful tools for clarification. From an administrator point of view, I can say I have grown in my leadership.”

-Texas Administrator

“I truly enjoy our cluster sessions and the support/feedback I receive from my master and mentor teachers. I have never felt so supported in a positive way as a teacher. They gave me valuable input and made my efforts feel appreciated.”

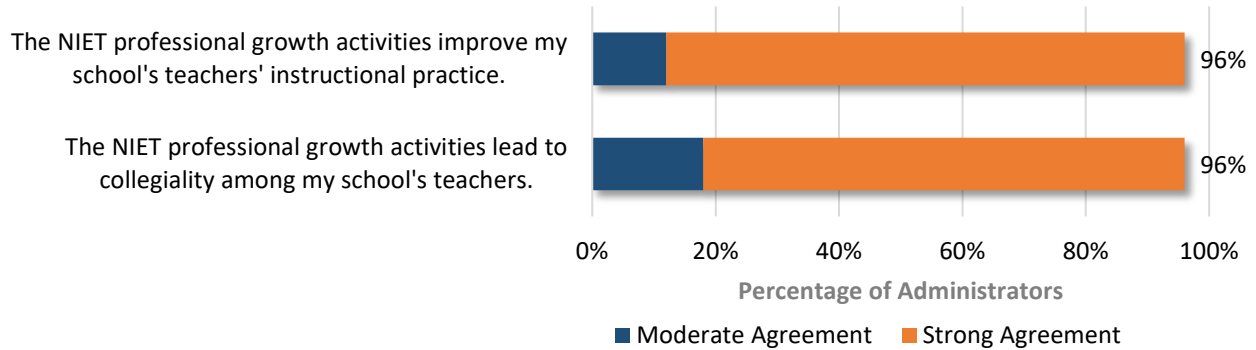
-Arkansas Career Teacher

“I was out of the school system for a few years. The support from the master teacher and the mentor teachers have put me back on track in the school system.”

-Indiana Career Teacher

of these activities. As illustrated below, in 2019, the majority of principals agree that NIET professional growth activities improve their teachers’ instructional practice and lead to collegiality among their teachers.

Figure 7. Administrators Nationwide Report Impacts of NIET Professional Growth Activities, 2019.

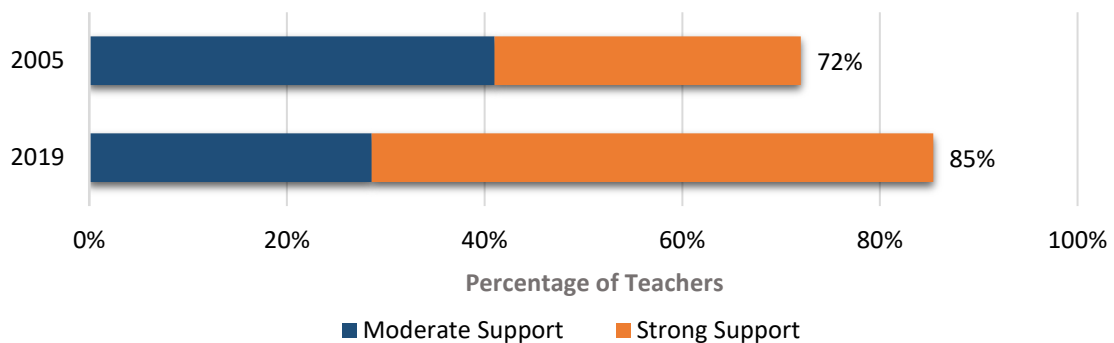


Career Paths and Advancement

According to *The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Challenges for School Leadership*, half of teachers are interested in teaching in the classroom part-time while taking on additional roles or responsibilities in their school or district (Markow, Macia, & Lee, 2013). Over the past two decades, NIET has developed over 30,000 teacher leaders through helping schools implement formal, instructionally focused teacher leader positions in hundreds of schools across multiple states (NIET, 2018).

In schools supported by NIET, skilled teachers have the opportunity to serve in formal teacher leader roles, receiving additional compensation for providing high levels of support to career teachers and increasing instructional effectiveness across the faculty. Teacher leaders and administrators form a leadership team that articulates school goals and supports each teacher in developing and achieving their own instructional goals based on their skills and their students’ needs. Teacher leadership roles also provide a pathway for teachers to make a greater contribution to the instructional excellence of a school without leaving the classroom. As shown in the figure below, data from NIET’s 2019 survey shows that 85% of teachers nationwide report moderate or strong support for the opportunity to take on additional roles and responsibilities provided in schools supported by NIET. The percentage of teachers reporting support for multiple career paths has increased over time.

Figure 8. Teachers Nationwide Report Support for Multiple Career Paths, 2005 and 2019.



Impact of NIET’s Initiatives

NIET supports states, districts and schools in attracting, developing, and supporting educators, as well as retaining high-quality human capital in order to raise achievement levels for all students. A notable success of NIET’s work is the positive results from examinations of the impact of its initiatives across multiple locations and conducted by different researchers using varied methodological frameworks (Algiers Charter School Association, 2011; Barnett, Hudgens, & Logis, 2017; Barnett, Hudgens, Logis, & Alexander, 2016; Barnett, Hudgens, & Alexander, 2016; Barnett, Rinthapol, & Alexander, 2015; Barnett, Rinthapol, & Hudgens, 2014; Barnett, Wills, Hudgens, & Alexander, 2015; Buck & Coffelt, 2013; Daley & Kim, 2010; Hudson, 2010; Schacter & Thum, 2005; Schacter et al., 2002; Schacter, Thum, Reifsneider, & Schiff, 2004; Solmon, White, Cohen, & Woo, 2007). The next section discusses several studies demonstrating the impact of NIET’s initiatives.

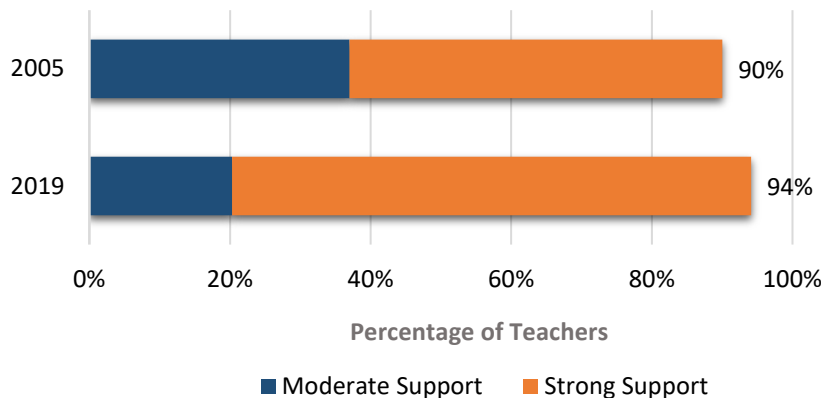
K-12 Partnerships

NIET works with K-12 partners across the country implementing TAP: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement, as well as providing support for observation/evaluation systems, professional development services for teachers, school, and district leaders, and customized training for schools to improve student achievement.

Collegial and Collaborative Environments

Some NIET partner schools elect to implement performance-based compensation systems. A criticism of performance measures and incentives for teachers is that such policies will result in competitiveness and a loss of collegiality among teachers. Notwithstanding, we find evidence of a high degree of collegiality in these NIET partner schools. NIET’s 2019 survey shows that 94% of teachers agree with statements reporting a high level of collegiality in their schools, and over 74% report strong agreement. Further, this evidence for collegiality has been remarkably high for over a decade.

Figure 9. Teachers Nationwide Report Collegial Environment, 2005 and 2019.



Voices from the Field

“Our partnership with NIET has created the structures that allow administrators to have crucial conversations with teachers about their instruction. It has given us a systematic way to approach what is good instruction for teachers.”

-Tennessee Administrator

“Our school performance score has increased 14 points in the past three years. We have improved due to the ability to grow teachers professionally and implement research-based strategies. This has led to increased student achievement.”

-Louisiana Teacher Leader

“We have increased teacher accountability for what is happening in classrooms. Our students are more engaged in the lessons that are being taught, which in turn means that we see fewer discipline cases. Higher engagement also means an increase in student achievement. Our teachers are using more academic language and are more knowledgeable of what it means to be an effective teacher.”

-Texas Teacher Leader

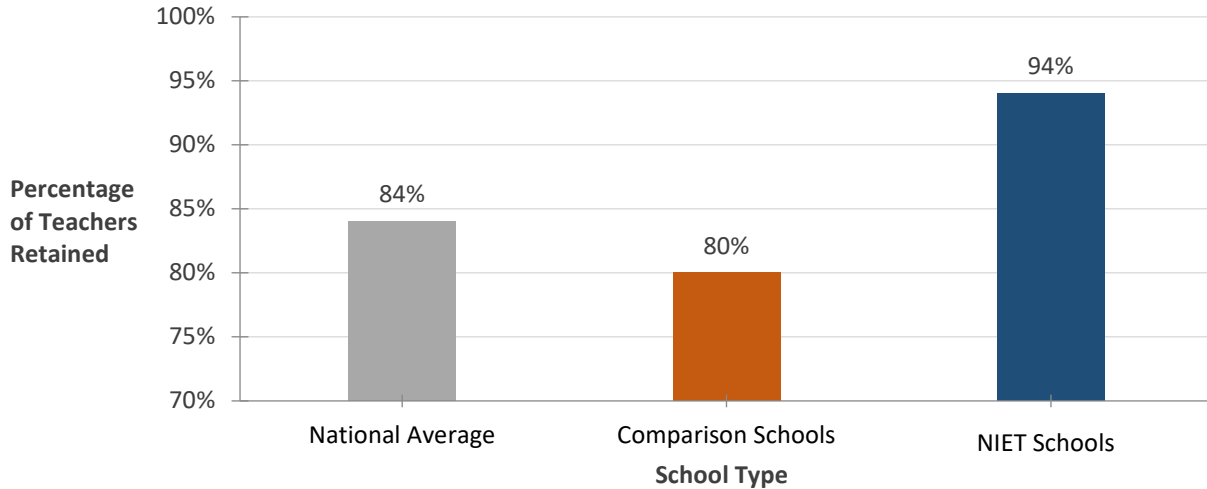
“I have grown more in the past two years than in my previous four years of teaching. NIET’s initiatives foster collaboration - both vertically and horizontally - and allow ample time to grow through professional development, coaching conversations, and cluster meetings.”

-Indiana Career Teacher

High Teacher Retention Rates

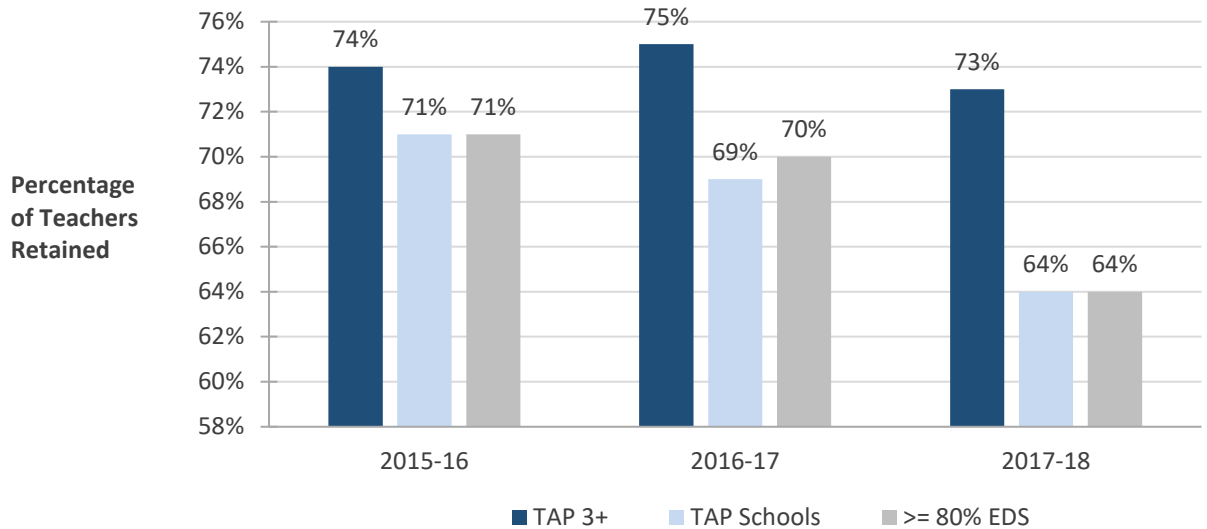
In 2014, Barnett and Hudgens examined teacher retention in schools implementing one of NIET’s initiatives, TAP: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement. Drawing from a dataset of over 12,000 teachers across ten states, the authors found that the teachers in TAP schools are retained at levels substantially higher than in schools nationally and in high-need schools, which are more similar to TAP schools, where approximately 95% of the students qualify as free and reduced-price lunch.

Figure 10. Nationally TAP Schools Retain More Teachers.



The length of implementation of TAP corresponds with an increase in teacher retention rate, meaning that the impact of TAP increases with each additional year of implementation. A recent analysis conducted by the Louisiana Department of Education (2018) found that teacher retention rates were higher in schools that have implemented TAP for at least three years than in TAP 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; see Figure 11).

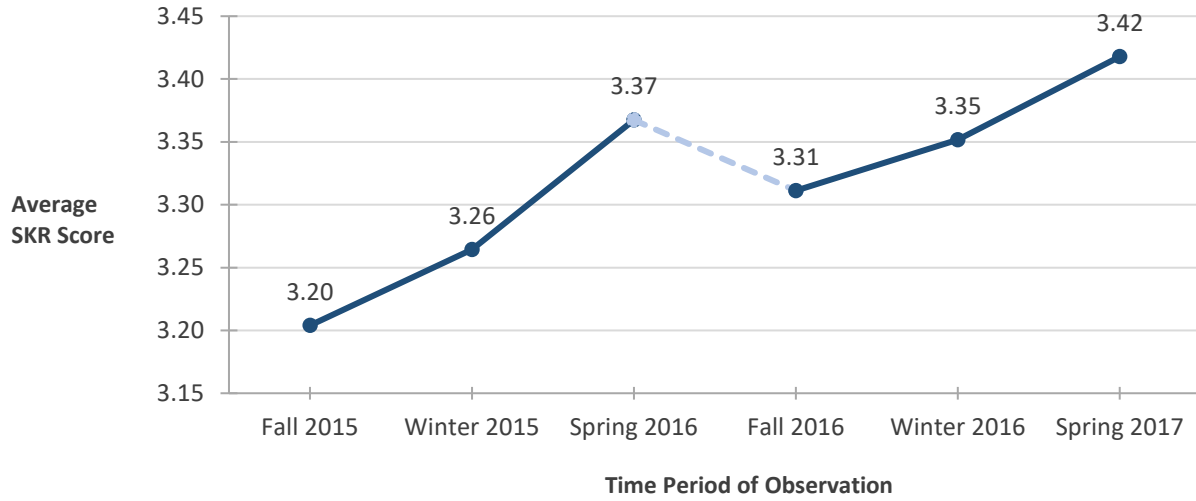
Figure 11. Long-Term Louisiana TAP Schools Retain More Teachers.



Improvement in Teacher Instructional Quality

Teachers in schools implementing NIET’s teacher evaluation system show steady improvement in observed skills during the school year and across school years. Prior studies have shown improvement in teachers’ instructional quality as measured by their SKR scores over a two-year period (Barnett, Hudgens, & Logis, 2017a; 2017b; Barnett, Hudgens, Logis, & Alexander, 2016) as well as over a three-year period (Barnett et al., 2018). Figure 12 shows a typical growth pattern in teacher instructional skills in schools supported by NIET; despite a slight dip over the summer, teachers continue to improve their instructional quality over time.

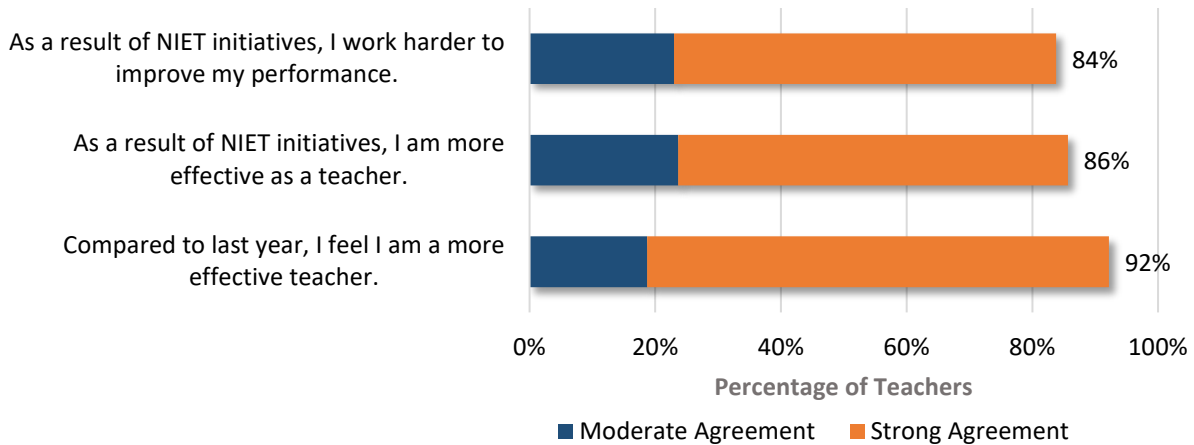
Figure 12. Teachers in NIET Partner Schools Improve Instructional Skills Over Time.



NOTE: Figure based on observations of 1,305 career teachers grouped into six periods including fall, winter and spring of the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years (Barnett et al., 2017b).

As shown in the figure below, results from NIET’s 2019 survey shows that over 80% of responding teachers reported working harder to improve their performance, being more effective, and feeling more effective compared to the prior year as a result of NIET initiatives.

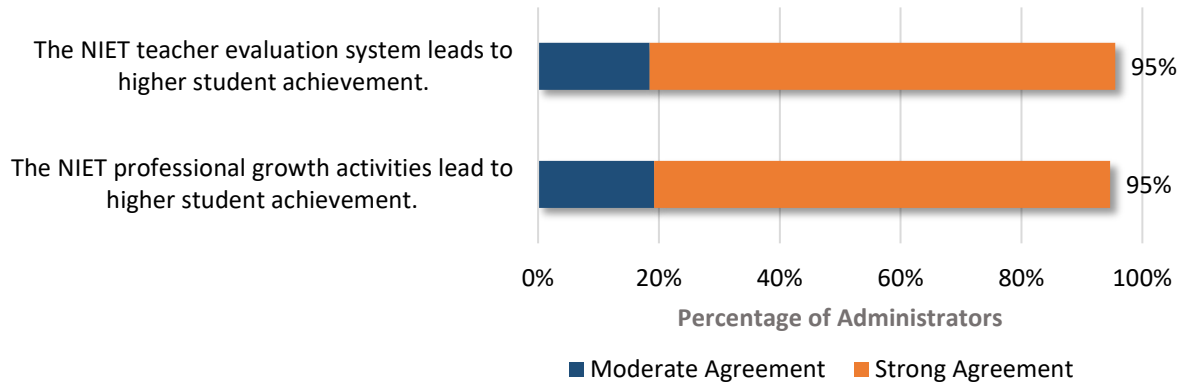
Figure 13. Teachers Nationwide Report Impact of NIET Initiatives on Instructional Effectiveness, 2019.



Improvement in Student Achievement

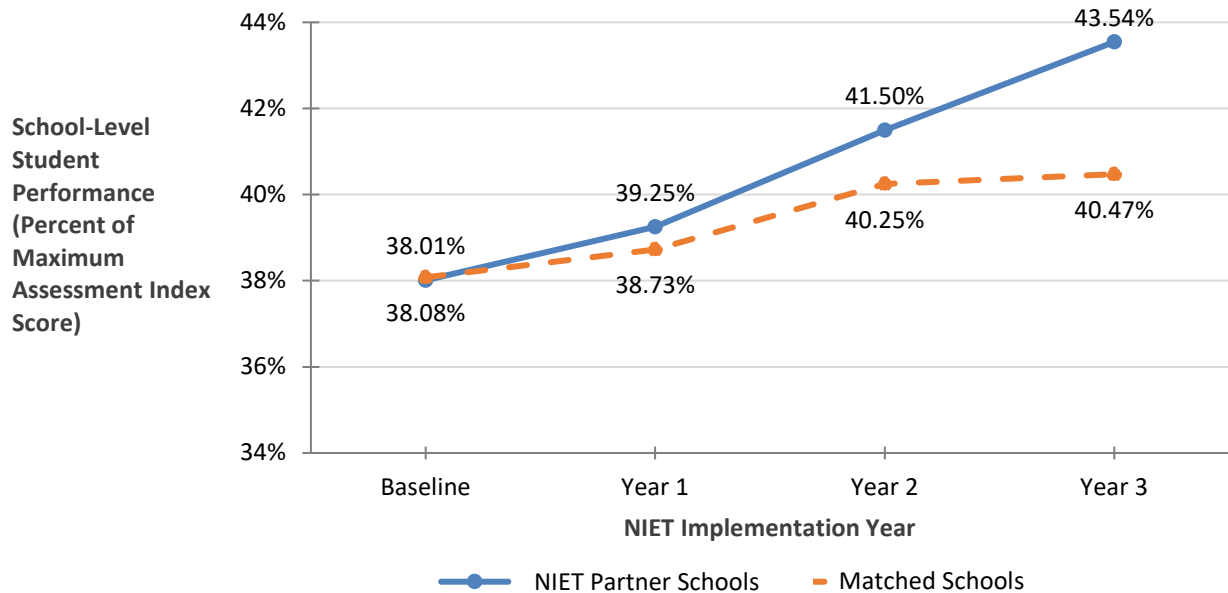
As illustrated below, data from the 2019 administrator attitude survey shows that 95% of responding administrators nationwide reported that the NIET teacher evaluation system and professional growth activities lead to higher student achievement.

Figure 14. Administrators Nationwide Report Impact of NIET Initiatives on Student Achievement, 2019.



The perceived impacts by administrators are substantiated by performance data. Barnett, Logis, and Hudgens (2019) employed a quasi-experimental design to examine the impact of the TAP System on student achievement in K-8 schools in Louisiana. As shown below, TAP and matched schools performed at similar levels before TAP implementation (i.e., at baseline), but TAP schools began to outperform matched schools in the first year of TAP implementation and the gap widened over time. By the third year, the difference in student performance between TAP and matched schools reached statistical significance. The improvement experienced in TAP schools by the third year of TAP implementation is above that typically found for other whole-school intervention programs or for reducing class size.

Figure 15. NIET-Supported Louisiana Schools Outperform Matched Schools in Student Achievement.

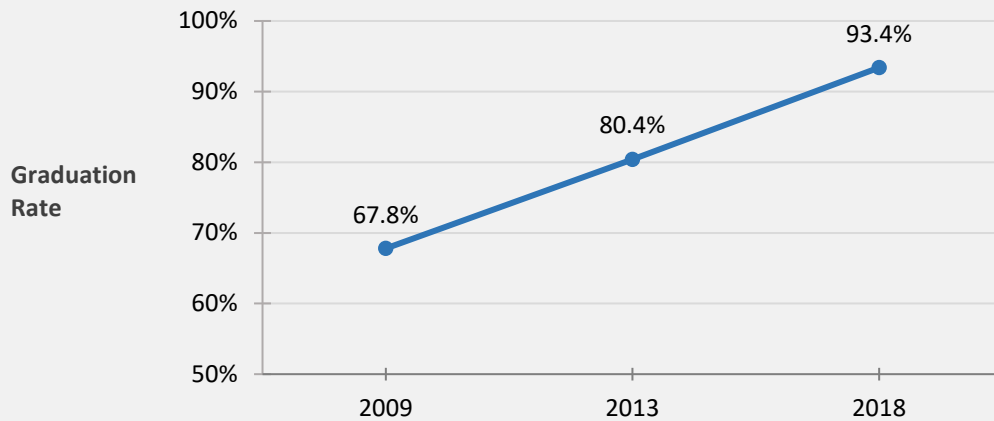


District Spotlight: DeSoto Parish Schools

In November 2019 DeSoto Parish Schools was awarded NIET’s District Award of Excellence for Educator Effectiveness. This is only the second time NIET has given this award, which honors school districts that have focused on supporting excellent instruction and improving student performance. Since partnering with NIET to implement the TAP System in 2008, DeSoto’s commitment to excellent teaching has improved student performance. Among their accomplishments:

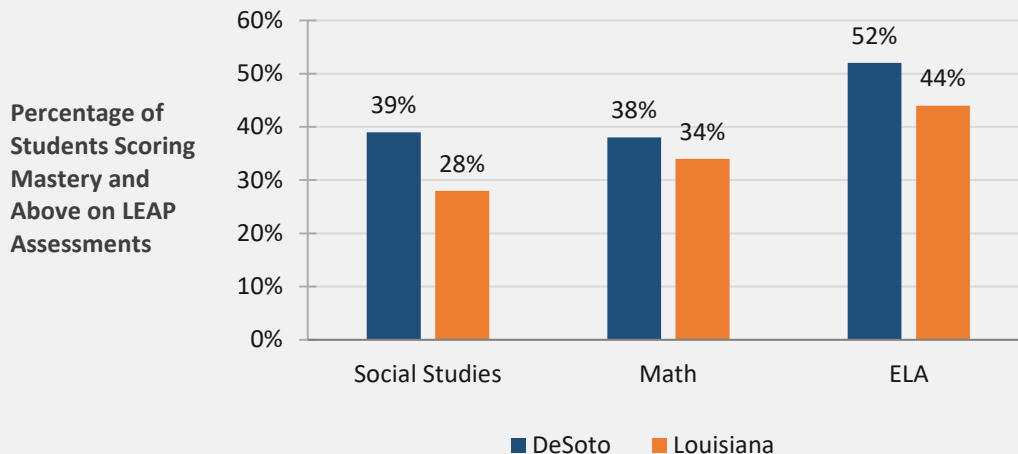
- DeSoto Parish has shown remarkable growth – moving from 45th in the state in 2009 to 12th in the state in 2019.
- In 2018, DeSoto’s graduation rate was 93.4% – more than 25 percentage points higher than its 2009 rate, and well above state and national averages.

Figure 16. DeSoto Parish High School Graduation Rate, 2009 to 2018.



- On the 2019 LEAP assessment, DeSoto Parish was in the top 10 most improved school systems in the state combining all grades and subjects.
- The percentage of DeSoto Parish students scoring Mastery and Above on the state assessment in ELA, math, and social studies has increased over time, and was above the state average in 2019.

Figure 17. DeSoto Parish LEAP Performance in ELA, Math, and Social Studies, 2019.



Higher Education Partnerships

NIET brings 20 years of experience supporting K-12 educators to its work with institutions of higher education (IHEs) to better prepare new teachers and principals for the expectations they will face in schools and classrooms. NIET is partnering with over 75 IHEs across the country. This work includes support for observation systems for the preparation of teachers and administrators, training for faculty, supervisors, cooperating teachers, and candidates, as well as ensuring alignment from coursework through clinical experience. Additionally, NIET provides support for new or redesigning programs (i.e. residency programs, induction programs, mentor teacher certificates). NIET also supports institutions of higher education with the NIET Portal for Raising Educator Preparation (NIET PREP), a subscription-based interactive web tool that provides access to professional development, training, and certification resources to provide 24-7 support.

Recent evaluations of partnerships supported by U.S. Department of Education Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) grants have shown positive impacts of training and preparing educators to be effective and placing them in high-need schools where they are needed the most. Details on the impacts of these partnerships are outlined below.

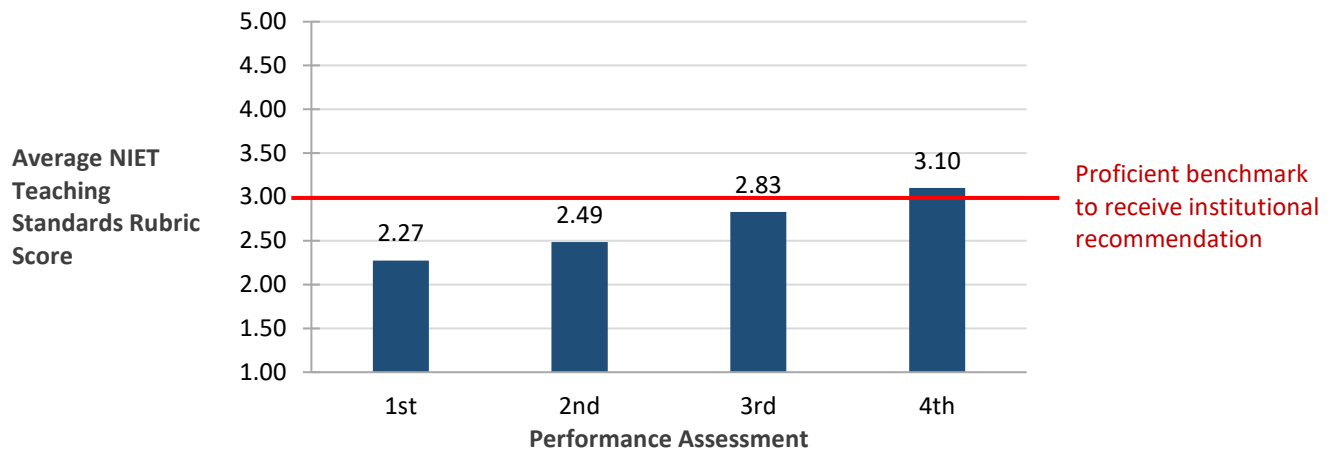
Pre-Service Teacher Preparation

A 2013 SEED grant facilitated a partnership among NIET, the College of Education at Texas Tech University (TTU), and five school districts in Texas. To reach the goal of strengthening initial teacher preparation, the NIET Teaching Standards Rubric was embedded in university coursework and in clinical training to create a common language around effective instruction among teacher candidates, university faculty, and district partners.

Improvement in Teacher Candidates' Instructional Skills

During the yearlong clinical experience, teacher candidates received four formal evaluations using the NIET Teaching Standards Rubric. As part of the evaluation process, teacher candidates conducted a self-evaluation by reviewing their lesson and student work against the Rubric. Site coordinators also held one-on-one meetings with teacher candidates after every classroom observation to provide feedback on one area of refinement and one area of reinforcement using the Rubric. The process is aimed at growing teacher candidates' instructional skills through self-reflection and providing specific, actionable feedback. On average, teacher candidates' instructional skills improve over time. Additionally, improvement from the first to the fourth performance assessment was statistically significant, $t(48) = 19.05, p < .001$. By graduation, average scores demonstrate instructional skills above proficiency.

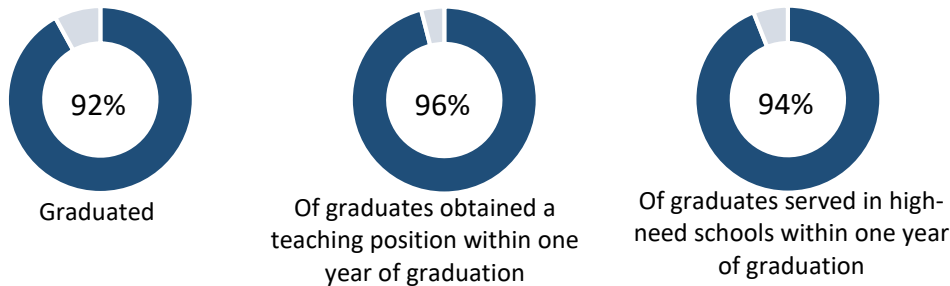
Figure 18. NIET-TTU Teacher Candidates' Average Instructional Effectiveness Scores Improve Over Time.



High Employment Rates

The cohort graduation rates of teacher candidates ranged from 75% to 100%. Overall, 92% of teacher candidates graduated. Within one year of graduating from the program, 96% entered teaching and 94% served in high-need schools.

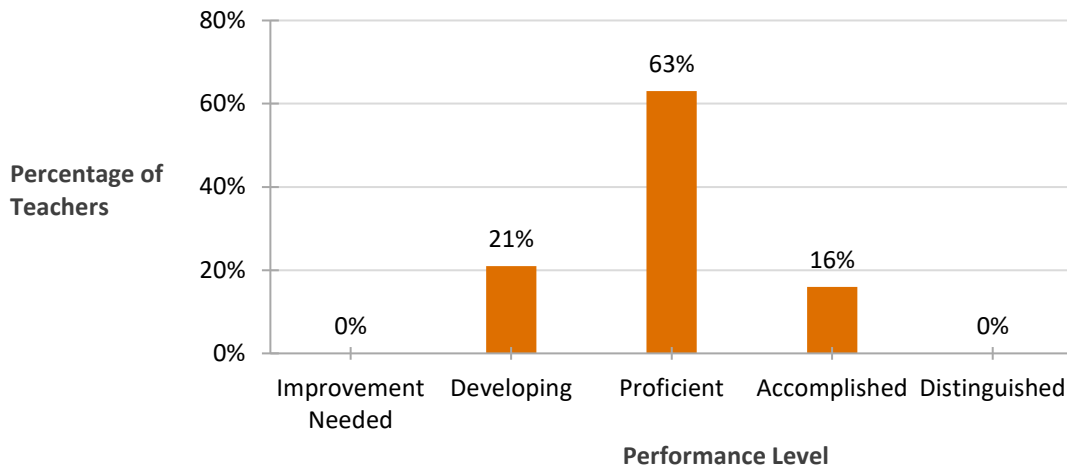
Figure 19. NIET-TTU Graduates Serve in High-Need Schools.



Effective First-Year Teachers

The teacher evaluation system that is adopted by schools across Texas, the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS), was created with the help of NIET. As a result, teacher candidates’ experience with the NIET Teaching Standards Rubric helps to prepare them for the evaluation process when they enter their career. The T-TESS rubric consists of 16 dimensions that make up four domains similar to the NIET Teaching Standard Rubric – Planning, Instruction, Learning Environment, and Professional Practices and Responsibilities. There are five performance levels under T-TESS: Distinguished, Accomplished, Proficient, Developing, and Improvement Needed (Texas Education Agency, 2016). As illustrated below, 79% of teachers reported that they were performing at a Proficient level or above in their first year of teaching.

Figure 20. Graduates of NIET-IHE Partnerships Receive Strong Ratings in First Year of Teaching.



“I was hired mid-year and was able to hit the ground running. I was familiar with the expectations, requirements, resources, software, etc., that the district uses. Because of this I was able to place more of my focus on analyzing student data and utilize what I learned and apply it in my classroom. The classroom management techniques, teaching strategies and reflections that I learned in the pre-service training also helped me this year to have a very stress-free working year. My classroom was running smoothly and students were engaged, learning, and excited about coming to my classroom.”
 (NIET-TTU SEED Graduate)

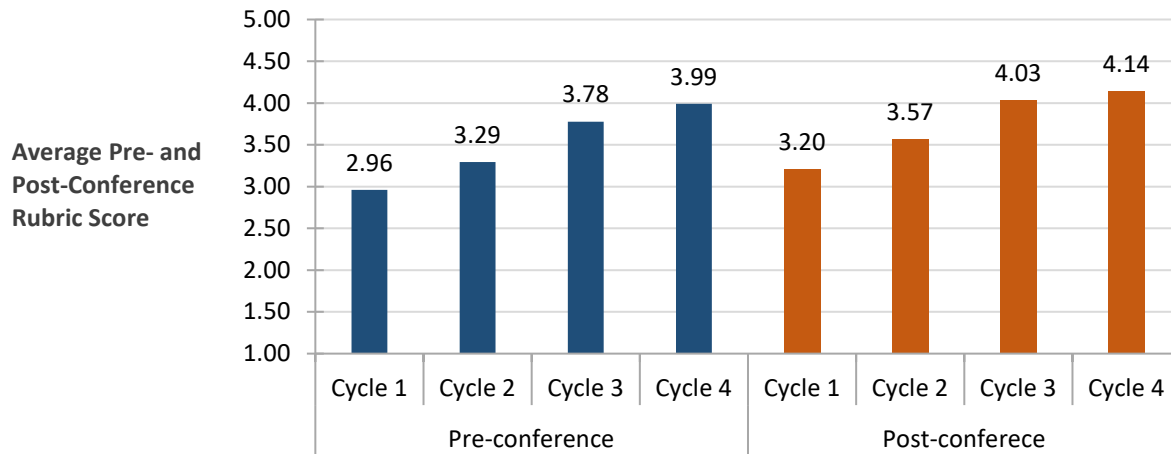
Principal Preparation

A 2015 SEED grant facilitated a partnership among NIET, Texas Tech University, and 12 high-need school districts across Texas and Louisiana to improve a principal preparation program (the *Leadership Instruction for Teachers* or the LIFT Program). This collaboration includes (1) a rigorous selection process for the purpose of increasing the probability of selecting exceptional leaders to serve in high-need schools, (2) a yearlong, job-embedded clinical experience that serves as the foundation for the program, and (3) job-embedded coursework that has been aligned with the national and state leadership standards. Candidates admitted to the program took courses while simultaneously serving as Principal Fellows in a different school within their originating district during a yearlong, clinical experience. Over the entire grant period, this partnership prepared 46 aspiring principals.

Improvement in Principal Fellows’ Coaching Skills

Throughout the school year, each Principal Fellow coached two teachers through four POP Cycles – Pre-conference, Observation, and Post-conference. During each cycle, Principal Fellows were videotaped and rated on a 1 (Approaching) to 5 (Exemplary) scale using pre- and post-conference rubrics. As shown below, Principal Fellows showed significant improvement in coaching skills at pre- and post-conferences, $t(40) = 10.65, p < .001$ for pre-conference and $t(40) = 9.13, p < .001$ for post-conference, from Cycle 1 to Cycle 4.

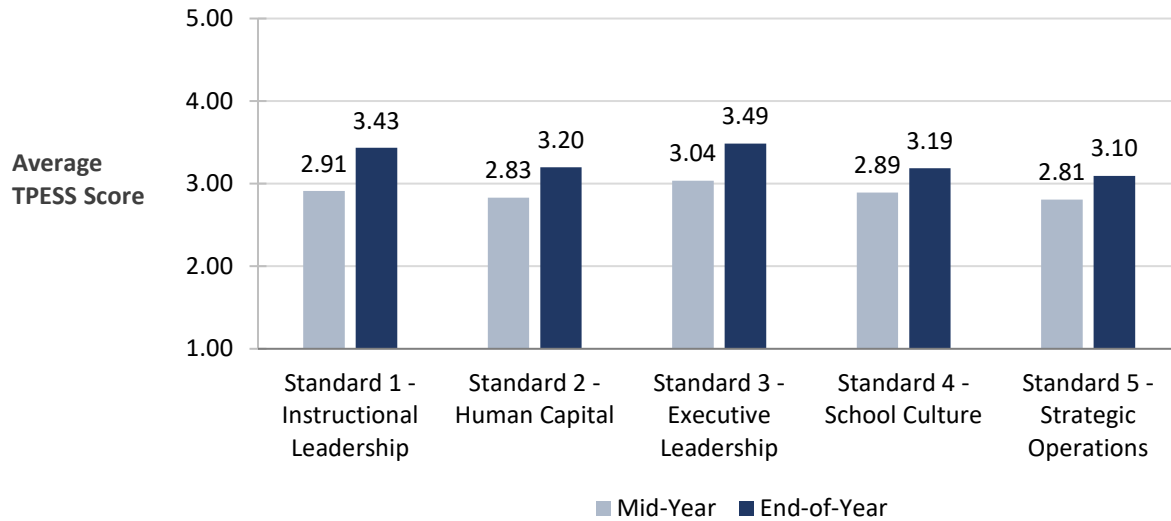
Figure 21. NIET-IHE Principal Fellows Improve Coaching Skills Over Time.



Improvement in Principal Fellows’ Leadership Skills

Principal Fellows were also evaluated by Principal Mentors twice during their yearlong clinical experience, at mid-year and end-of-year, under the Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System (T-PESS) rubric. The T-PESS rubric consists of 21 indicators that make up five standards aligned with the Texas Principal Standards. There are five performance levels under T-PESS: Not Demonstrated/Needs Improvement, Developing, Proficient, Accomplished, and Distinguished. As shown below, Principal Fellows significantly improve their skills on all T-PESS standards: Instructional Leadership ($t(33) = 4.37, p < .001$), Human Capital ($t(33) = 3.40, p < .01$), Executive Leadership ($t(33) = 3.10, p < .01$), School Culture ($t(33) = 2.23, p < .05$), Strategic Operations ($t(33) = 2.45, p < .05$).

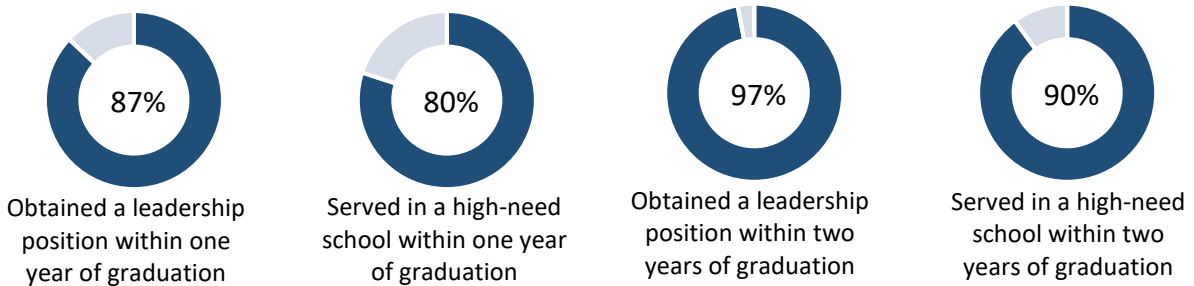
Figure 22. NIET-IHE Principal Fellows Improve Leadership Skills Over Time.



High Employment Rates

Overall, 87% of graduates obtained a leadership role and 80% served in high-need schools within one year of graduating from the program. Among those who graduated two or more years ago, 97% obtained a leadership position and 90% served in high-need schools in their second year post-graduation. Moreover, 90% of graduates stayed in their originating district for at least two years upon completing the program.

Figure 23. Principal Fellow Graduates Obtain a Leadership Role and Serve in High-Need Schools.



“By far, the opportunity to spend every single school day as an assistant principal is the most valuable piece of the LIFT Program...The job-embedded program gave me the opportunity to have first-hand experience in a variety of areas.” (Principal Fellow Graduate)



Upcoming Projects

[Sustaining Success: The TAP System's Long-term Effects on Math Achievement in Arizona](#)

Long-term sustainability of effects from educational and social programs have become increasingly important to policy makers and grant funding agencies. This study examines the long-term impact of a comprehensive school reform model, TAP: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement, 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 are performed using propensity score matching to generate comparison group and regression models controlling for school fixed effects. The results show that TAP does sustain effectiveness and that two years of accumulated effects are needed for statistically significant results to consistently manifest.

[Community Ties: Building Long-term Partnerships as a Pathway for Improving Human Capital in Rural Schools](#)

This study examines the impact of a federal Teacher Incentive Fund-Cycle 5 grant award that facilitated the implementation of an educator effectiveness support system and higher education partnerships in a rural Arkansas school district. Preliminary results from the first three years of the grant indicate progress towards improving teacher effectiveness, increasing teacher retention, and impacting student achievement. Specifically, the percentage of teachers rated as effective has increased, the retention rate for effective teachers has improved, and the attrition rate for all teachers has declined. Finally, student achievement, based on state standardized assessment results, indicates improvement in multiple subjects and outperformance of comparison districts.

[Changing the Odds: Moving from Priority to Performing School](#)

Identification and examination of successful strategies for fostering and sustaining improvement among the lowest-performing schools have become increasingly important as a result of federal ESSA guidelines. A mixed-methods evaluation was conducted to systematically collect, analyze and share information about the context, activities, and early impacts of one school's implementation of NIET's customizable School Improvement Solutions. After one year of support, this school, once designated by the state as in need of additional support and improvement, no longer has a priority label. Evaluation results highlight the importance of building supportive partnerships and aligning support services to the needs of individual schools.

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. The research evidence also reveals several key reasons for our positive impact: an evaluation system capable of differentiating teacher performance levels and providing detailed feedback for improvement, ongoing professional growth in classroom practice using student and teacher data to guide improvement, recruitment and retention of effective teachers, and the creation of a challenging, rewarding, and collegial environment focused on high-quality instruction and student learning.

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 The logo for the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) features the letters "NIET" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.


 The full name of the organization, "NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING", is written in a smaller, grey, all-caps, sans-serif font to the right of the "NIET" logo.

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