

Examining the Evidence: The TAP System Increases Student Success



Lake Marion High School, Orangeburg County
School District, South Carolina

Grounded in a clear, evidence-based approach, we evaluate our work with partners to answer the most important question: *Does it have an impact?* Over the last two and a half decades, research studies have illustrated the power of the core strategies of the TAP System to strengthen educator practices and increase both student learning growth and retention of effective educators.

These practices start with organizing and supporting teams of teachers led by teacher leaders (master teachers and mentor teachers) and integrating teacher leaders into school-level systems, including the instructional leadership team. Effective teacher leaders then provide collaborative professional learning, individual classroom-based coaching, and observation and feedback.

A HIGHLY COST-EFFECTIVE SYSTEM

In 2023, a groundbreaking independent study was released by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) demonstrating the multiyear impact of the TAP System across the state of South Carolina.

The NBER [study](#) found this comprehensive system of ongoing support and coaching led by

teacher leaders working with school leaders, combined with performance compensation for teachers, leads to improvements in student outcomes. “The Long Run Effects of a Comprehensive Teacher Performance Pay Program on Student Outcomes,” authored by Sarah Cohodes (University of Michigan), Ozkan Eren (University of California at Riverside), and Orgul Ozturk (University of South Carolina), studied South Carolina schools that implemented the TAP System with the support of federal Teacher Incentive Fund grants across multiple districts and multiple years. The study followed cohorts of eighth graders and found that the implementation of the TAP System had a significant impact on student academic achievement while creating longer-term benefits, including reduced reliance on social welfare programs and reduced arrest rates. The longer a student was exposed to the TAP System, the

greater the benefits. Researchers found the TAP System provided a 14-to-1 value for every dollar spent by the government: “Combining the benefits from reduced felony offenses and increased graduation results in an MVPF (marginal value of public funds) of 14, making TAP a very cost-effective program.”

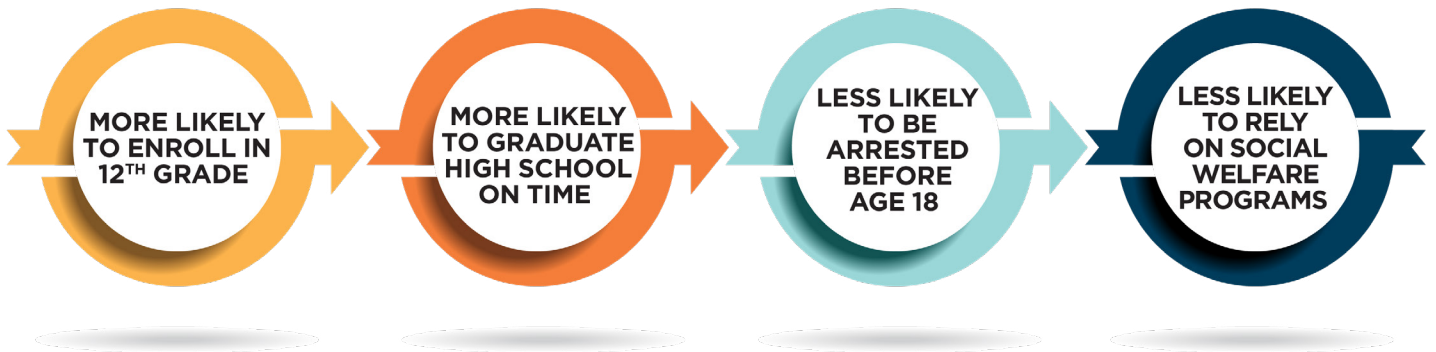
POSITIVE IMPACTS ON STUDENT LONG-TERM ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES

The NBER study authors found that eighth grade students exposed to the TAP System were three to four percentage points more likely to enroll in 12th grade and to graduate high school on time. Students exposed to the TAP System for a longer period in their middle school years also saw a greater effect. For example, the increased probability of 12th grade enrollment almost

\$14:1

TAP System
return on
investment

THE STUDY FOUND THAT EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS IN TAP SYSTEM SCHOOLS WERE:



quadrupled, from an increase of 2.1 percentage points after one year of exposure to an increase of 7.7 percentage points after four years of exposure.

In addition to student academic impacts, researchers found longer-term social and economic impacts. Students in TAP System schools were less likely to be arrested for a felony offense before the age of 18. The TAP System also decreased students’ likelihood of relying on social welfare programs in early adulthood.

The results from this working paper reinforce that the TAP System is a cost-effective strategy for improving short- and long-term outcomes for students — and is increasingly effective over time.

SUSTAINED IMPROVEMENTS IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

In 2024, another research study highlighting the impact of the

TAP System was published in the *Journal of Scholarship and Practice*, released by AASA, the School Superintendents Association. “Staying Power: English Language Arts Achievement After Installation of an Educator Effectiveness System” highlights the effectiveness of the TAP System beyond its initial implementation phase, showing significant and sustained improvements in student achievement.

The [study](#) followed 13 Indiana schools using the TAP System for seven years — a total of four years through a federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant and three additional years as the schools continued implementation after the grant concluded. The authors compared English Language Arts performances in these TAP System schools to those of schools that were similar in terms of student demographics and performance. Results showed that in each of the three years following the initial grant

implementation, the TAP System schools consistently outperformed the comparison schools.

25 Years of Impact Across School Settings

These studies build on findings from other research over the last two and a half decades, demonstrating the impact of NIET’s strategic staffing structures and comprehensive systems of support. Research shows that NIET’s support helps partners increase teacher effectiveness and retention, grow the instructional leadership skills of school leaders, and increase student learning growth. Positive results have been seen across a diverse range of communities and K-12 school settings, including urban, suburban, rural, tribal, public, and charter schools.

Building human capital within schools to implement data-driven



Orangeburg County School District, South Carolina

improvement processes leads to shifts in school culture, changes in beliefs and attitudes, and progress in student achievement. Our focus on changing schools begins with school leaders and teachers. We meticulously track our efforts for fidelity of implementation and feedback loops from educators, as well as the summative impact on instructional change and student achievement. The data-driven core elements of school improvement ensure our work continues to make an impact. We are proud of that growth and progress and look forward to sharing the results from the next 25 years. ●

“The TAP System offers sustainable benefits for schools, with evidence showing significant and lasting improvements in student achievement even after grant funding ends, making it a valuable investment for policymakers and educators alike.”

“Staying Power: English Language Arts Achievement After Installation of an Educator Effectiveness System,”
AASA’s Journal of Scholarship and Practice