Overview

The National Laboratory for Education Transformation, NLET, is a high-level research and development organization devoted to redesigning American education through inter-disciplinary and inter-sector cooperation. NLET's mission is to harness portions of the vast reservoir of untapped American intellectual capacity in order to transform 20th Century education into 21st Century learning.

NLET believes that the capacity for redesigning American education and redefining learning lies in the successful innovations and methodologies to be found in research universities, in scientific discovery, in new business and data processes and systems, and in government research and development. Central to NLET's mission is the application of scientific rigor to thoroughly investigate and accurately describe the current state of education, applying what is learned to the existing education system, and using the same research results to design, test, and pilot new solutions.

NLET's goal is to assist in significantly raising student achievement and student engagement while, at the same time, lowering costs and the dependence on expensive outdated organizational structures. NLET's work specifically includes researching and developing mechanisms by which the individualization of education will promote each student's ability to take more responsibility for their own work. Meanwhile, NLET believes that accountability systems must tie individual learning to specific student growth while providing meaningful aggregate insights for states to improve overall system performance.

NLET fosters the creation of research and development partnership networks, forged to identify and to explore solutions for persistent education problems that remain unsolved. In its first National Science Foundation (NSF) funded project, NLET formed partnership alliances with the University of Texas Austin's Learning Technology Center, the UT Austin Texas Advanced Computing Center, the University of California Santa Cruz Center for Educational Research in the Interest of Underserved Students (CERIUS), the Computer, Computational, and Statistical Sciences Division of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, and the San Jose Unified School District.

In this first project, rich school district data is reconstructed in an agent-based modeling simulation of longitudinal school district student math performance which, in turn, will be visualized in such a way as to examine how the agents (students) progress through their math education in relationship to a variety of other factors. By introducing new forms of computational modeling and fresh visualization techniques to examine education systems and their effects on individual learning, NLET and its partners hope to inaugurate a powerful set of tools to assist the individualization of student learning. NLET intends such research to exemplify more modern ways of examining an education system whose problems have often been intractable and removed from the direct involvement of students in their own learning.

NLET is led by Gordon Freedman, who has a fifteen year history of working in and analyzing all aspects of the American education system, as well as collaborating with international organizations, governments and institutions in the wider arena of comparative educational practice and policy. Freedman is a Fellow at SRI International, and he was a Fellow at the University of California Berkeley's Center for Studies in Higher Education (CHSE). From 2005 through 2011, Freedman served as Vice President for Global Education Strategy at Blackboard, Inc., the leading education technology corporation, where he established the Blackboard Institute. He is the principal organizer of the California Student Bill of Rights ballot initiative. Freedman founded NLET to create an organization that could look three to five years into the future, acting as a broad social, research and organizational platform for the transformation of technology, systems, and methods to adapt education to the knowledge economy and to youth culture.