

Professional Learning Solution

Topic: Foundational Literacy

The National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to building educator excellence so that every student has the opportunity for success. NIET's mission is to elevate teacher and leader effectiveness, ultimately improving student achievement, and its vision is that every student in America is taught by an excellent teacher and supported by effective leaders each year. NIET has been a trusted partner to schools, districts, states, and educational organizations for over two decades. NIET empowers educators to implement best practices that close achievement gaps and foster student growth through proven research-based strategies, professional learning systems, and leadership support.

NIET's approach centers on the belief that sustained, intentional, and high-quality investments in educators significantly improve student success. This focus is essential for addressing equity gaps and ensuring all students receive a high-quality education regardless of background or learning needs. At the heart of NIET's work is an optimism about the potential of teachers, leaders, and students, reinforced by decades of measurable success in schools nationwide. Through research-based tools and professional development, NIET has consistently seen schools rise to new levels of excellence. NIET has expertise in supporting the implementation of multiple foundational literacy curricula on the Arkansas High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) list. For example, NIET has worked in the state of Louisiana to support teacher collaboration with a focus on implementing High Quality Instructional Materials in literacy with a focus on foundational literacy/science of reading for half of the districts in the state for the past five years. In another example, NIET is currently working with multiple districts and state leaders in Tennessee to improve foundational literacy instruction through the implementation of HQIM.

For this proposal, NIET brings the expertise and experience needed to support the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) in enhancing and maximizing the implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and enhancing foundational literacy through the Science of Reading. Our approach integrates High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM), data-driven instruction, and tailored intervention practices to support all learners, including students with disabilities (SWD) and English learners (EL).

NIET's professional learning solutions focus on building instructional coherence through multiple layers of training and support with various stakeholder groups throughout a system. NIET's Professional Learning System is anchored by two core components: Instructional Leadership Teams (ILT) and Cluster Professional Learning, designed to build leadership capacity specific to Foundational Literacy. These systems are critical to implementing effective, job-embedded professional development that directly addresses the needs of educators in literacy instruction.

Instructional Leadership Teams (ILT): ILT training equips school leaders with the ability to guide teacher leaders in delivering evidence-based instructional practices and using data to inform foundational literacy instruction. This leadership structure ensures that school teams can effectively support the integration of HQIM into core instruction, enabling educators to implement the Science of Reading with fidelity.

Cluster Professional Learning: NIET's Cluster model fosters collaborative, weekly professional learning sessions where teachers engage in new learning focused on embedding science of reading practices with classroom lessons. These sessions are grounded in intellectual preparation techniques rooted in the science of reading. Through HQIM and evidence-based practices, teachers enhance their ability to provide foundational literacy instruction to all students, including SWD and EL, while ensuring that functional skills instruction is embedded in their teaching.

NIET's comprehensive professional development approach includes ongoing, on-site leadership coaching to ensure that educators are trained in best practices and supported in integrating and sustaining these practices over time into foundational literacy instruction. In addition, structured coaching support strengthens the connection between training and implementation, fostering sustainable improvements in foundational literacy skills. NIET's professional development model will enhance teaching and learning for educators and students in the state of Arkansas.

Partnership Goals and Expected Outcomes:

NIET's proposed partnership with ADE aims to enhance educator capacity in three key focus areas of the solicitation: Foundational Literacy/Science of Reading, professional learning community development, and leadership support to enhance coaching of the science of reading. Training in these areas will be customized to fit the specific needs of districts and schools, with the sequence of professional development strategically planned for success. Each topic area will include quarterly training sessions, monthly leadership coaching, and site visits to ensure the effective transfer of learning developed from training experiences.

Focus Areas: Foundational Literacy/Science of Reading

Goal of Partnership: The primary objective in this focus area is to build the capacity of school and teacher leaders to effectively support the integration and utilization of High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) in literacy instruction. By developing robust job-embedded professional learning systems, teachers will gain the skills to implement practices aligned with the Science of Reading. Specific areas of focus include:

- Strengthening the foundational skills instruction in reading and literacy.
- Ensuring equitable access to foundational literacy skills for all students, including those with disabilities (SWD) and English learners (EL).
- Providing high-quality intervention practices that align with core instruction to support students needing additional assistance.
- Utilizing assessment data (e.g., screeners) to make informed instructional decisions and adjust teaching strategies based on student needs.

Expected Outcomes:

Throughout the partnership, NIET will use a variety of quantitative and qualitative data points to measure progress towards the following expected outcomes.

- Increased teacher proficiency in delivering evidence-based literacy instruction aligned with the Science of Reading framework.
- Improved access to foundational literacy skills for all student populations, with targeted strategies for supporting students with disabilities (SWD) and English learners (EL).
- Strengthened implementation of data-driven instructional practices, leading to measurable improvements in student literacy outcomes.
- Enhanced collaboration among teacher leaders, instructional coaches, and school administrators to sustain continuous improvement and adapt instructional strategies based on student progress.
- This comprehensive and targeted approach ensures that educators are fully prepared to implement PLCs effectively, leverage HQIM, and support all learners in achieving literacy goals. By investing in the development of educators, NIET's solution addresses both immediate and long-term needs, setting the stage for sustained academic growth across Arkansas schools.

Professional Learning Solution

Topic: Instructional Quality

The National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to building educator excellence to ensure that all students receive high-quality instruction and have the opportunity to succeed. With over two decades of experience supporting schools, districts, and states nationwide, NIET has established itself as a trusted partner in elevating teacher and leader effectiveness, ultimately driving student achievement and closing equity gaps.

NIET's mission is grounded in the belief that sustained, intentional investments in educator development lead to improved instructional quality and student outcomes. Through research-based strategies, professional learning systems, and leadership support, NIET empowers educators to implement best practices that enhance instructional quality and foster student growth. Our approach is optimistic and ambitious, rooted in the measurable success we have seen in schools nationwide. NIET has expertise in supporting the implementation of multiple curricula on the Arkansas High Quality Instructional Materials list for literacy, math and science. For example, NIET has worked in the state of Louisiana to support teacher collaboration with a focus on implementing High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) in literacy, math and science for over half of the districts in the state for the past five years. In another example, NIET worked with 28 districts in Tennessee to support math and literacy instruction with school leaders to improve the quality of coaching during the 2022-2024 school years.

For this proposal, NIET brings the expertise and experience needed to support the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) in enhancing instructional quality across schools by developing leadership capacity, data-driven instructional practices, and high-quality intervention strategies. NIET's professional learning solutions focus on building instructional coherence through multiple layers of training and support with various stakeholder groups throughout a system. More specifically, the focus of this partnership is to build leadership and instructional capacity in schools to deliver high-quality, data-driven instruction that supports all learners, including students with disabilities (SWD) and English learners (EL). NIET's Professional Learning System is anchored by two core components: Instructional Leadership Teams (ILT) and Cluster Professional Learning. Both components are designed to build leadership capacity, enhance instructional quality, and support job-embedded professional development tailored to the needs of educators.

Instructional Leadership Teams (ILT): ILT training equips school leaders with the skills to support teachers in delivering evidence-based instructional practices. This leadership structure is critical for successfully implementing High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) and ensuring that interventions are aligned with core instruction. Leaders develop the ability to analyze student data and support teachers in making informed instructional decisions that improve student outcomes.

Cluster Professional Learning: NIET's Cluster model fosters collaborative weekly professional learning focused on continuous improvement. Teachers engage in cycles of student work analysis, instructional modeling, and feedback, which are directly aligned with enhancing instructional quality. These sessions ensure that HQIM and data analysis practices are embedded in daily instruction and that teachers are equipped to provide high-quality interventions for all learners, including SWD and EL. NIET's comprehensive professional development includes ongoing, on-site leadership coaching to ensure sustained support for educators as they integrate best practices into their daily instruction. This coaching focuses on helping leaders and teachers transfer learning into practice, fostering continuous improvement in instructional quality.

On-site Leadership Coaching: Sustaining Instructional Quality: NIET's comprehensive approach includes on-site leadership coaching to ensure sustained support for educators. Through monthly coaching sessions,

NIET helps school leaders and teacher leaders apply what they have learned from NIET's training to support daily instruction. This hands-on support reinforces the connection between professional learning and classroom practice, ensuring continuous improvement in instructional quality over time.

Partnership Goals and Expected Outcomes:

The goal of this partnership is to build school and teacher leaders' capacity to strengthen instructional quality through weekly, ongoing, job-embedded professional learning in the following areas:

- **Building Leadership Capacity to Support the Implementation of HQIM:**
 - Through ILT training and coaching, school leaders and teacher leaders will be equipped to support the effective use of HQIM in all classrooms. This will ensure that instruction is aligned with rigorous, evidence-based standards and that teachers have the tools and strategies to support student learning.
- **Using Assessment Data to Drive Instruction and Provide High-Quality Intervention Practices:**
 - Teachers will learn to use assessment data to drive instructional planning, monitor student progress, and deliver targeted interventions. These data-driven practices will help teachers identify students' needs, adjust instruction accordingly, and increase opportunities for academic acceleration.
- **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) Based on Research-Based Adult Learning Practices:**
 - NIET will support the development of PLCs that focus on collaborative planning, unit and lesson preparation, and student work analysis. These PLCs will prioritize the integration of HQIM, data-driven instruction, and high-quality intervention practices to support all learners, including SWD and EL.
- **Access to Core HQIM for All Learners (SWD, EL, etc.):**
 - Educators will receive training on providing equitable access to HQIM for all students, including those with disabilities and English learners. This training will emphasize differentiated instruction to ensure that every student has the opportunity to succeed.

Expected Outcomes of Partnership:

Throughout the partnership, NIET will use a variety of quantitative and qualitative data points to measure progress towards the following expected outcomes.

- **Enhanced Instructional Quality:** Teachers will demonstrate increased proficiency in delivering high-quality, evidence-based instruction aligned with HQIM and Arkansas's Standards of Instruction.
- **Data-Driven Instruction:** Educators will use assessment data to plan and implement effective instructional strategies, leading to improved student outcomes and increased acceleration opportunities.
- **Effective Intervention Practices:** Teachers will implement high-quality intervention strategies aligned with core instruction, ensuring that all students receive targeted support.
- **Increased Leadership Capacity:** School and teacher leaders will be better equipped to lead professional learning communities and support the consistent implementation of HQIM, driving sustained instructional improvement.
- **Equitable Access to Learning Opportunities:** SWD, EL, and other diverse learners will have improved access to core instructional materials and receive the necessary support to thrive academically.

NIET's solution provides a comprehensive and sustainable approach to strengthening instructional quality, enhancing leadership capacity, and ensuring all students receive the high-quality education they deserve. By investing in educator development, this partnership will support immediate improvements in teaching and learning while laying the foundation for long-term academic success in Arkansas schools.