

005-RFP-1660-2025-Leading Educators-Technical Proposal

Leading Educators Response to Iowa Department of Education

005-RFP-1660-2025 Literacy Grant Support Providers for the Iowa CLSD Grant

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Exhibit 1 – Transmittal Letter

July 11, 2025

Ms. Katelyn Howells
State Issuing Officer
Iowa Department of Administrative Services
1305 E Walnut Street
Des Moines, IA 50319

Greetings, Ms. Howells,

Leading Educators is looking forward to the opportunity to partner with the Iowa Department of Education. We share the department's vision of making sure all students have access to rigorous, grade-level reading and writing instruction. We partner with districts across the country to make professional learning relevant to the specific context of their teachers, leaders, students, and school communities.

Leading Educators is committed to learning alongside the Iowa Department of Education, demonstrating what is possible when teachers are prioritized, so they have the confidence to deliver robust foundational skills instruction to students and create classroom environments where all students thrive.

As the chief officer legally authorized to contractually bind Leading Educators, I present this proposal for consideration.

Best wishes,



Chong-Hao Fu
Chief Executive Officer
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Exhibit 2 – Executive Summary

Leading Educators (LE), having read and understood the terms and conditions of the RFP, including the contract provisions in Section 6; we submit this proposal response by the Iowa Department of Education's (IDOE) terms and conditions for this request for proposal (RFP) Leading Educators affirms its commitment to complying fully with these requirements and to partnering with IDOE in support of statewide literacy improvement efforts.

In alignment with the specifications of this RFP, LE proposes to provide comprehensive literacy services designed to build district and school-level capacity to implement evidence-based literacy practices within a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). Leading Educators has extensive experience delivering professional development and coaching to schools and districts, with support tailored to local needs and focused on enhancing literacy outcomes for all students, in early childhood and secondary settings, including those from traditionally underrepresented groups.

As part of this engagement, LE will assist districts in implementing a comprehensive approach to literacy that integrates reading, writing, and language development. LE will apply deep expertise in the Science of Reading from birth through grade 12, and will support the adoption and implementation of high-quality instructional materials, curriculum development, assessment strategies, and data-informed interventions. These services will be designed to improve instructional quality, strengthen educator practice, and promote equitable literacy outcomes.

LE brings extensive experience supporting state education agencies, districts, and schools to achieve system-level improvement. Our approach is grounded in research, shaped by the Science of Reading, and informed by a deep commitment to educational equity. We look forward to the opportunity to collaborate with IDOE to advance literacy achievement statewide.

Exhibit 3 – Experience

LE was established in 2011 as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. It has operated for 14 years and currently serves partners with school systems in 11 states. Since 2018, LE has supported system leaders and educators with the design and delivery of professional learning focused on a comprehensive approach to literacy. Our mission is to support equitable and excellent education for all students, and we believe that the people closest to the barriers to rigorous instruction—those within a school system—are the ones with the answers. Our partnerships with systems address this challenge; we share our expertise only after immersing ourselves in the district's context. LE's team of coaches, content designers, and project leaders combines the latest research in designing and implementing effective professional learning and coaching with deep practical experience in both areas to propel school leaders and their teacher teams to improve continuously.

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Leading Educators (LE) has a long record of successful partnerships with school systems. LE's results derive from rigorous research and meet high standards for evidence set by the Every Student Succeeds Act. We add to these findings with ongoing practical evaluations that approach rigorous research standards and continually expand data-informed findings about our impact. [A 2022 randomized controlled trial conducted by the RAND Corporation](#) studied our work using data from 40 schools across three school districts in the Chicago area during the 2018–2019 school year. The schools were part of the Chicago Collaborative, funded by the U.S. Department of Education's i3 grant. The analysis found that students attending schools randomly assigned to our professional learning program had statistically significantly higher test scores compared with students attending schools that were randomly assigned to the control group. The impact moves a teacher from being an average teacher to one who is better than two-thirds of their teacher peers at increasing student achievement. This study was a rare case in professional development research that earned a Tier 1 rating from *What Works Clearinghouse*.

[Another study of Leading Educators' impact was published in the competitive Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness in 2024](#). Participation in Leading Educators programming in three states significantly improved students' ELA and math proficiency. Across these two rigorous research studies, the effects are equivalent to six to eleven months of additional learning.

Over the past 10 years, LE has partnered with school systems to design professional learning that regularly engages teachers and leaders, building their knowledge and skills in content and effective instruction. LE has partnerships with three of the top 10 largest school districts in the country: *Los Angeles Unified School District, New York City Department of Education, and Chicago Public Schools*. Our most recent and current partners include the following:

Baltimore City Public Schools

Burlington Public Schools, VT

Charleston County School District

Cincinnati Public Schools

Cherokee County Public Schools, SC

Detroit Public Schools Community District

District of Columbia Public Schools

Fort Worth Public Schools

Districts in Greater Grand Rapids, MI

Houston Independent School District

Jackson Public Schools, MS

North Chicago Community District #187

Oakland Unified School District

Omaha Public Schools

Office of the State Superintendent of Education

Tulsa Public Schools

Yakima, Washington School District

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In 2022, Leading Educators partnered with Baltimore City Public Schools to design and deliver a Science of Reading fellowship for its educators. This fellowship focused on two pathways: one for teachers, where participants received ongoing professional development and coaching on small-group instructional practices, and another for facilitators of comprehensive literacy professional learning for adults. Additionally, Leading Educators designed systemic professional development for all K-5 teachers in the district, grounded in the five pillars of reading, with a specific emphasis on vocabulary and comprehension in the second year of partnership.

LE has learned, through its partnerships, that literacy learning and coaching are grounded in the science of reading and a comprehensive approach to literacy. We have requested that the following current and former partners provide reference letters regarding our work.

1. The **Kentucky Department of Education** partnered with Leading Educators from 2019 to 2021. The department and LE co-designed a guide to support school district leaders and teachers across the state to address the need for rigorous and standards-aligned practices for reading and writing instruction. The *Kentucky Reading and Writing Consumer Guide* outlined the approaches, tools, and recommendations for educators to commit to grade-level instruction successfully. **Micki Ray, chief academic officer**, provides a letter of recommendation about the partnership and the outcomes.
2. **Baltimore City Schools** has partnered with Leading Educators since 2019. From 2022 to 2024, Leading Educators supported the district to implement district-wide professional development grounded in the science of reading for all kindergarten through 5th-grade teachers. LE provided a comprehensive arc of learning with full-day sessions dedicated to deep learning about the five (5) pillars of reading, customized to the district's HQIM. In the last year, Leading Educators has trained and developed all 120 literacy coaches, K-12th grade, in the district to monitor literacy instruction across all schools and provide actionable feedback to teachers. **Dr. Joy S. Guthrie, coordinator of K-8 literacy improvement**, provides a letter of recommendation about the role of LE's support in the ongoing partnership.
3. Leading Educators supported **Tulsa Public Schools** from 2017 to 2022 in designing and delivering professional learning around the Core Knowledge Language Arts curriculum for teachers in grades K-5. During that time, we worked side-by-side with district leaders to make sure the professional learning was customized to the district context and to build the capacity of district leaders to design and deliver professional learning in the future. **Kelly Kane, the Executive Director of Elementary and Early Childhood Education**, provides a letter of recommendation about Leading Educators' measurable impact toward reducing the achievement gap between students in the highest and lowest quartiles of achievement.

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Exhibit 4 – Relevant Experience with Children and Youth (Birth to Grade 12)

Leading Educators is a professional development organization that focuses exclusively on the development and coaching of teachers, district leaders, and/or school leaders. As such, Leading Educators does not provide support directly to students of any age range or grade level. Below is an overview of our experience providing professional development and/or coaching to adults who work directly with students in each of these grade bands.

Birth – Age 5

Limited Experience	In a partnership with Tulsa Public Schools from 2018 – 2022, LE designed curricular-specific ELA learning cycles for early childhood teachers and trained instructional leaders to facilitate them.
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Kindergarten – 5th Grade

Extensive Experience	LE has designed and delivered curriculum-specific ELA professional learning and coaching as well as led large-scale trainings on the science of reading principles in several partnerships, including with Baltimore City Public Schools, Omaha Public Schools, and Harlem District 5 in New York City Public Schools.
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6th –8th Grade

Extensive Experience	LE has designed and delivered curriculum-specific ELA professional learning and coaching as well as led large-scale trainings on the science of reading principles in several partnerships, including with Baltimore City Public Schools, Tulsa Public Schools, and Charleston County School District.
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High School

Limited Experience	LE has designed and delivered curriculum-specific ELA professional learning and coaching to district-level instructional coaches in Baltimore City Public Schools.
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Exhibit 5 – Mandatory Specifications

Leading Educators guarantees that the goods, services, and personnel offered in its proposal are currently available and that the terms, including price, will remain firm through January 8, 2026.

- 5.1.1. Ability to deliver coaching, professional learning, and large-scale training.
 - Yes, Leading Educators has provided training and professional learning for audiences ranging from as small as 10 to as large as 1,000 participants over the course of multiple days.
- 5.1.2. Strong knowledge and application of the Science of Reading and MTSS frameworks.
 - Yes, please refer to Exhibits 6 and 11 for additional information.

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- 5.1.3. Commitment to serving diverse district types, including urban, rural, and suburban communities.
 - Yes, please refer to Exhibits 3 and 12 for additional information

Exhibit 6 – Knowledge Areas

Leading Educators offers professional learning rooted in the science of reading, enabling educators to develop a profound understanding of how students learn to read and write. Our training begins with the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986), which clarifies that reading comprehension stems from decoding and language comprehension. This foundation is extended through Scarborough’s Reading Rope (2001), which examines the strands of skilled reading, including phonological awareness, decoding, sight recognition, vocabulary, background knowledge, syntax, and reasoning. Educators learn to diagnose where breakdowns in reading may occur and use this analysis to refine instruction.

To support word recognition, we incorporate Ehri’s phases of word reading (1995; 2005), training teachers to assess student work and determine their phase—pre-alphabetic through consolidated. This informs targeted instructional planning to promote orthographic mapping through phoneme-grapheme instruction, decoding practice, and exposure to spelling patterns. We also draw on the Four-Part Processor model (Seidenberg & McClelland, 1989) to illustrate how the brain integrates phonological, orthographic, meaning, and context processes. Educators use this model to provide precise decoding feedback, fostering fluency and freeing cognitive space for comprehension.

Our comprehension approach is based on Kintsch’s Construction-Integration model (1988), emphasizing comprehension as an active process of integrating text with background knowledge and inference. Instruction includes sentence-level writing and structured tasks to support the development of meaning-making skills. We also emphasize academic language instruction, drawing on Truckenmiller et al. (2021), and structured discussions (Murphy et al., 2009) to build critical thinking and engagement.

Instructionally, our professional learning helps educators build tiered systems of support. We support the design of small-group instruction within Tier 1 and coach leaders and teams to increase intensity, frequency, and feedback cycles in Tiers 2 and 3. These tiered structures ensure that students receive more than just additional time—they receive targeted instruction aligned to their specific reading profile.

By aligning instructional decisions to the science of reading and embedding them in a coherent MTSS framework, we ensure that all students—not just those who arrive ready—are positioned to

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become proficient readers.

Please reference the table below for a more detailed overview of our experience and results:

Charleston Acceleration Schools	Evidence of Impact
<p>The Opportunity: A set of schools at the bottom of the state and district performance needed intensive instructional and leadership support to make a change.</p> <p>Who we served: 11 schools serving 4,320 students, 100% qualifying for free and reduced lunch, and 93% students of color.</p> <p>The approach: Design and deliver a comprehensive set of supports for existing teachers, teacher leaders, principals, and district leaders aligned to new high-quality instructional materials in English language arts and mathematics. Participants received an average of 26 hours of sessions and 13 hours of coaching, and teacher leaders led 32 hours of learning at their schools.</p>	<p>After the partnership, turnaround schools in Charleston reversed a multi-year decline and matched or exceeded district growth. Growth for these schools represents 5-9 months of additional learning in ELA and 4-11 months in math.</p> <p>We also implemented a more rigorous approach that uses a comparison group and statistical adjustments to get closer to understanding the impact of the partnership. Findings suggest that ELA gains can be attributed to the partnership's embedded support for high-quality curriculum adoption. In math, the comparison group did not show sufficient equivalence to the treatment group, which makes it harder to draw definitive conclusions about the extent to which the growth can be attributed to the program.</p> <p>Study timeline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Pre-intervention: 2018-19* for math and 2020-21 for ELA- Post-intervention: 2020-21 to 2022-23 for math and 2021-22 to 2022-23 for ELA <p><i>* Data from 2019-20 is not available due to COVID</i></p>
Houston ISD	Evidence of Impact
<p>The Opportunity: A mix of schools at the bottom of the state and district performance, and a set of schools that volunteered needed support to implement a new curriculum aligned to rigorous college/career-ready mathematical standards.</p> <p>Who We Served: 31 schools serving 24,998 students, 86% qualifying for free and reduced lunch, and 94% students of color</p> <p>The Approach: Support district-level instructional coaches and school leaders through coaching and professional learning sessions so they, in turn, facilitate ongoing learning for teachers in their schools. Participants received an average of 70 hours of sessions and 11 hours of coaching and</p>	<p>Supported schools that received coaching exceeded the growth of the matched comparison group. Gains attributed to LE represent 2-5 months of additional learning for students.</p> <p>This study used a rigorous matching analysis to identify a very similar comparison group, which provides stronger evidence that the growth was due to the partnership.</p> <p>Study timeline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Pre-intervention: Spring 2022- Post-intervention: Spring 2023

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were expected to lead 20 hours of content cycles.

Oakland USD

The Opportunity: Only 40% of the district's students read at grade level. Teachers need high-quality curricular materials, professional development, and coaching to strengthen their teaching practice and accelerate learning outcomes for all students.

Who We Served: 48 schools served 18,365 students, 66% of whom qualified for free and reduced lunch and 85% of whom were students of color.

The Approach: Support district leaders with a curriculum review process, stakeholder engagement, and launching and sustaining a professional learning system over a 2-year period in K-5. District leaders and coaches received an average of 22 hours of sessions, 30 hours of coaching, and 14 hours of support building conditions, and district coaches led 30 hours of learning at their schools.

Evidence of Impact

After the partnership, the OUSD ELA achievement gap with all other California schools decreased by 27%. The gap represents 7-13 months of additional learning for students.

More rigorous statistical methods found large, positive, and statistically significant effects of OUSD curriculum implementation and other district-level improvement strategies on ELA standardized scores. As expected, these effects were larger for schools with higher engagement, though the difference between the effects was not statistically significant. While the study cannot separate other factors occurring in Oakland schools at the time, this analysis was able to satisfy an important condition for trusting the results of Difference in Difference models, which allows additional confidence the impact was likely due to the program.

Study timeline:

- Pre-intervention: 2018-19*
- Post-intervention: 2021-22 to 2022-23

* Data from 2019-20 & 2020-21 is not available due to COVID

Exhibit 7 - Coaching Services

Leading Educators' approach to coaching and professional development is informed by an extensive research base on effective instructional strategies, adult learning principles, and implementation science. LE maximizes the impact of our support by prioritizing a set of research-based principles that undergird the adult learning and coaching we offer, which are characterized by being:

- Grounded in context, curricular resources, and learners' needs
- Focused on outcomes and data-driven
- Surrounded in cycles of continuous improvement, encouraging educators to continuously learn, practice, reflect, and adjust
- Affirming of the identities, strengths, and experiences our partners and participants bring

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Across these materials, our supports have included lesson internalization protocols, instructional walkthrough tools, aligned coaching guides, and professional learning arcs that help teachers and leaders apply the science of reading with fidelity and clarity.

Job-Embedded Coaching: Leading Educators (LE) provides personalized, job-embedded coaching to support the development of district leaders, content leaders, and teachers, helping them improve instructional practices and achieve system-wide impact.

Systems Leader Coaching	LE coaches district and school leaders to establish the conditions necessary for effective adult learning and student success. This coaching focuses on creating systemic structures that support teaching and leadership development, including skills like conducting classroom observations and providing meaningful feedback. By focusing on instructional leadership, we aim to drive improvement across entire school systems.
Content Leader Coaching	LE staff work closely with content leaders, instructional coaches, and specialists to deepen their content knowledge and coaching skills. Our coaching supports these leaders as they design and facilitate professional learning for their peers, ensuring that the instructional strategies they lead are aligned with curriculum implementation and school priorities.
Teacher Coaching	Embedded within curriculum implementation efforts, LE staff provide direct coaching to teachers, supporting the application of new instructional strategies in the classroom. This coaching focuses on real-time feedback and practice, helping teachers refine their approach to delivering high-quality, curriculum-aligned instruction

Leading Educators' coaching is always responsive to the needs we uncover through data. For instance, in our partnership with Harlem District 5 in New York City Public Schools, LE coaches support school teams and individual teachers based on instructional gaps revealed by classroom observations and student work analysis. In District 5 schools, coaches may flexibly lead whole group PD, model lessons, co-deliver lessons with teachers, plan and practice lessons with teachers, observe and debrief, pull up on progress data with teachers and leaders, or any number of other responsive strategies depending on the need and instructional gaps. These strategies are all in the name of fostering the effective use of research-based reading instruction in classrooms aligned to the HMH *Into Reading* curriculum. In just one year of this type of coaching, District 5 saw significant improvement:

- By the end of the 2023-24 school year, 38% of the district's students scored at or above

grade-level expectations for reading on iReady, **a significant improvement from just 14% at the start of the school year.**

- All grades saw proficiency at least double, and four schools **increased iReady scores by over 30 percentage points** from the beginning to the end of the year.
- Kindergarten and 1st grade showed the largest changes in students scoring at or above grade level with **43 and 33 percentage point increases**, respectively.

Exhibit 8 - Coaching Strategy

Leading Educators offers a coaching strategy designed to drive sustainable instructional improvement by aligning professional learning with the latest research in adult development, literacy science, and implementation science. Our strategy begins with an understanding that coaching must be more than occasional support—it must be structured, embedded, and sustained. Research shows that instructional coaching is one of the most effective professional development models available, surpassing other interventions in its ability to improve both teaching and student outcomes (Kraft & Blazar, 2018). This is why we specialize in building the capacity of district-based coaches (where appropriate) to become adept at using the five-phase debrief model to coach teachers within their building or district.

LE's coaching model places expert coaches in schools, either physically or virtually. Sibme, a video-based observation platform, is used to conduct classroom observations, lead data-informed debriefs, and support goal setting and instructional planning. Our five-phase debrief model—Praise, Process & Prioritize, Practice, Plan Implementation, and Close Out—is informed by the work of leading researchers, including Jim Knight, Elena Aguilar, and Paul Bambrick-Santoyo, which combines relational trust-building with tactical implementation support.

Teachers receive structured feedback rooted in student performance data and are supported in implementing specific instructional moves aligned with HQIM. Coaches assist teachers in analyzing student work, identifying misconceptions, and adjusting instruction to meet students' needs. We've found, consistent with Gearhart et al. (2006), that regular analysis of student artifacts during these cycles significantly deepens teacher learning and improves instructional decision-making.

To meet educators where they are, our support is delivered through a three-tiered professional learning model. First, System-wide professional development sessions establish shared understanding and baseline knowledge (Tier 1); next, targeted small group sessions, often facilitated as PLCs at the school, to address specific pedagogical goals (Tier 2); and personalized, one-on-one coaching addresses the unique



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challenges and strengths of individual educators (Tier 3). This framework, inspired by MTSS, ensures that all staff receive the level of support necessary for their role and needs, and that learning is directly connected to the curriculum and classroom practice.

The efficacy of this approach is well documented. In Baltimore City Public Schools, we partnered to design a science of reading fellowship that included biweekly coaching for district-based coaches and monthly PD for fellows. As a result, teacher proficiency on a curriculum-aligned observation tool increased from 24% to 56% in one year. District coaches, trained and supported by LE, showed a 64% improvement in their coaching proficiency scores. These results exemplify how our model strengthens instruction *and* builds lasting internal capacity.

We further support district and state leaders through strategic advising and co-design. Our teams facilitate bi-weekly planning meetings, conduct system diagnostics, and lead cross-functional “stepback” sessions to monitor implementation fidelity and make real-time adjustments. In all of this work, we apply principles from implementation science, particularly the importance of aligning professional learning with systemic conditions and continuously collecting data to refine supports. Our coaches are trained to use tools like the Sibme platform to analyze video-recorded debrief sessions, ensuring that feedback loops are robust and that coaches continually improve over time.

While Leading Educators provides full implementation support, meaningful collaboration with district partners is critical. We request that central office leaders participate in monthly planning sessions and walkthroughs one to two times per school year. We also encourage the engagement and support of school leaders and recommend that they participate in quarterly workshops and receive targeted leadership coaching when possible. Leading Educators’ coaching model for teachers typically includes monthly engagement in coaching cycles, averaging 3-5 hours per month.

Leading Educators’ core services are all delivered by its staff, expert facilitators, instructional leaders, and former educators with deep knowledge in ELA, math, and HQIM. While third-party consultants may be engaged in limited roles for specialized data or curriculum tools, all such relationships are managed entirely by Leading Educators to ensure the fidelity of our approach.

Ultimately, our coaching strategy reflects a belief in the power of educators and systems to grow when there is intentional support. We are not a vendor delivering one-off professional development; we are a partner in transformation. Our goal is to ensure that when our engagement ends, districts are left with a cadre of instructional leaders, a refined coaching infrastructure, and the conditions necessary for sustainable, high-impact teaching and learning.

Exhibit 9 – Approach

Science of reading-aligned instruction provides an inclusive, diagnostic, and evidence-based approach to literacy that supports students with diverse needs, including Multilingual Learners (MLLs), students with disabilities, and students with unfinished learning.

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For Multilingual Learners, structured literacy offers a predictable and cumulative path for building English language proficiency. Our training emphasizes explicit word recognition instruction, including phoneme-grapheme mapping, high-utility morphemes, and multisyllabic decoding, paired with oral language routines that develop syntactic awareness and academic discourse. Teachers are supported in identifying when language acquisition, not decoding difficulty, is the primary challenge. In some contexts, we also promote translanguaging strategies to honor students' full linguistic repertoire while ensuring instructional clarity in English.

For students with dyslexia, structured literacy ensures that phonological processing is explicitly addressed through routines that isolate, manipulate, and map sounds to print. For students with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) or language weaknesses, we prioritize structured vocabulary routines, syntax instruction, and oral rehearsal to increase linguistic precision and expressive language. We also prepare teachers to identify the profile of poor comprehenders, supporting them with strategies that reduce cognitive load and reinforce working memory, such as scaffolded summarization, chunked reading, and sentence combining.

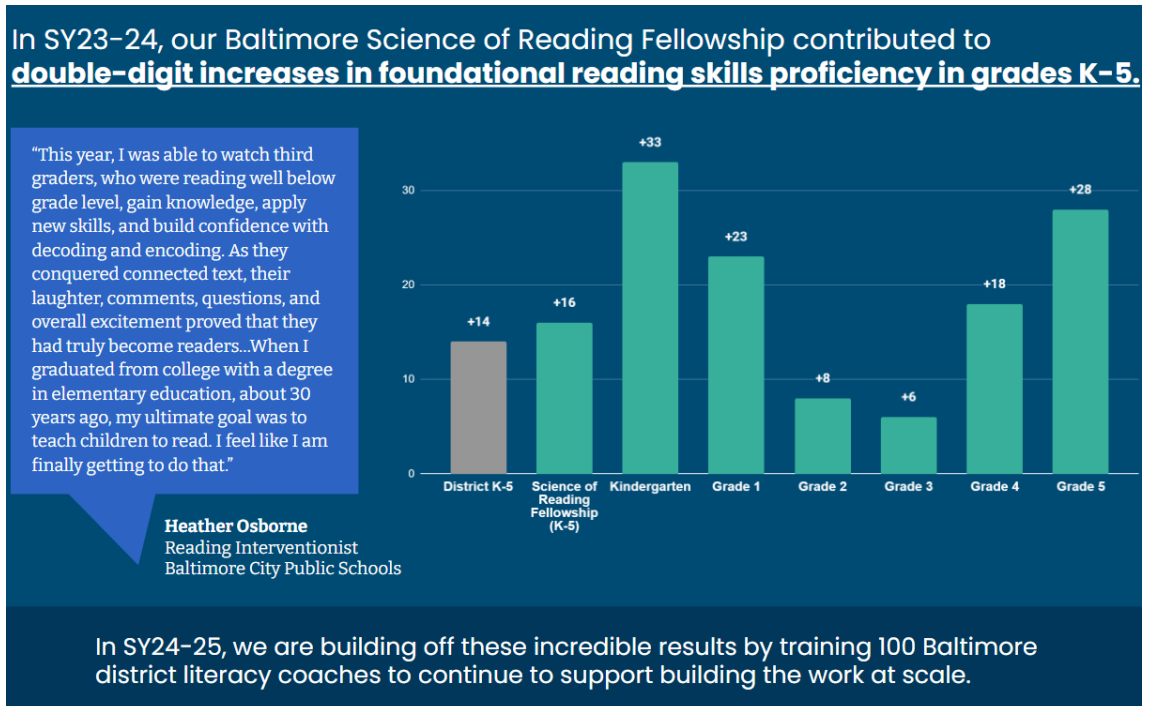
Examples of Approach

Baltimore City Public Schools

Since 2022, Leading Educators has partnered with Baltimore City Public Schools to design and deliver a science of reading fellowship for a group of its educators. This fellowship focuses on two pathways: one for teachers, which focuses on ongoing professional development and coaching, and another for

facilitators, focused on adult learning and training educators in the science of reading.

Additionally, Leading Educators designed systemic professional development for all K-3 teachers grounded in the five pillars of



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reading, with a specific emphasis on vocabulary and comprehension.

As a result of this work in Baltimore, we have seen impressive changes in Science of Reading Fellows' practice, with 24% of participating teachers rated as proficient on a curriculum-aligned observation tool at the beginning of the year, compared to 56% of teachers as proficient in the second half of the year. Each teacher received regular bi-weekly one-on-one coaching focused on the implementation of their curricular resources and monthly professional development.

Alongside these work streams, LE also developed a team of district literacy coaches and implemented a curriculum monitoring and coaching system. Leading Educators provided content and systems training to these district coaches, focused on our teacher role-play-centered debrief approach, and monitored their ability to facilitate coaching conversations aligned with our framework. Coaches submitted video recordings of their debriefing sessions, and our team scored them in accordance with our coaching rubric, resulting in a significant 64% improvement in their coaching proficiency.

Charleston County School District Acceleration Schools

Since 2021, Leading Educators has partnered with Charleston County School District to support a multi-year turnaround effort for 10 board-identified schools, Acceleration Schools spanning grades K-12. This work included supporting the adoption and roll-out of the EL Education curriculum in Acceleration Schools as well as supporting consistent, high-quality implementation of the curriculum through ongoing training, leadership coaching, quarterly customized professional development sessions for all ELA teachers and leaders. This work has also included the development of adult learning materials focused on curriculum-aligned instruction for school-based instructional leadership teams and professional learning communities.

The CCSD and LE partnership has yielded significant results for students in the Acceleration Schools. After four years of partnership, turnaround schools in Charleston reversed a multi-year decline and matched or exceeded district growth. 78% of Schools LE supported in ELA surpassed their 2019 (Pre-Pandemic) state scores in 2022. Growth for these schools represents 5-9 months of additional learning in ELA. By 2022, two (2) schools supported by LE exited the state's Comprehensive Support and Improvement Status, and during the same period, two (2) schools exited priority status. In year three (3) of its partnership with LE, the district is celebrating a milestone for Acceleration Schools. Nearly half of the schools were removed from the state improvement list.

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Exhibit 10 – Deliverables

Leading Educators (LE) provides a suite of structured reports and deliverables to support transparency, guide implementation, and document progress across all phases of a project. These materials are aligned to the specifications of the RFP and reflect LE's commitment to data-informed planning, instructional improvement, and sustainable system change.

Below is a sample of some of the core reports and deliverables that LE provides as part of its engagement with individual school districts. (Example deliverables provided in the Appendix)

District Collaboration and Data Sharing Deliverables

- Communications Log [pages 1-2]
- Customize Google Site for Content Storage and Access [page 3]
- School and System Conditions Reports [pages 4-5]
- Customized Data Reports + Dashboards [pages 6]

Professional Development Content and Train-the-Trainer Deliverables

- Literacy Instructional Audit Report [page 7]
- Session Design and Learning Arcs [pages 8-10]
- Train-the-Trainer Facilitator Materials [pages 11-15]
- Participant Handouts [pages 16-22]
- Participant Learning Assessments [pages 23-25]

Coaching Deliverables

- Coach Development Arcs of Learning [pages 26-28]
- [1:1 Coaching Sessions with Coaches](#)
- Customized Walkthrough Tools [page 29]

Exhibit 11 – Personnel

Organization Name: Leading Educators, Inc. – 501(c)3 nonprofit

Contractual and Technical Representative: Brielle Brewick, Director of Account Management

Address: 220 N. Green Street, Suite 417, Chicago, IL 60607

Phone Number: (504) 300-9010

Email Address: partnerships@leadingeducators.org

LE has a team that specializes in the Science of Reading and can provide their support toward a full and comprehensive consultation with the Iowa Department of Education and its stakeholders. The following team members have experience in the Science of Reading and provide support to LE partner districts with coaching and professional learning support:

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Dr. Mitchell Brookins, Managing Director (employed with LE since 2020)

Dr. Brookins is the Managing Director of Networks for Leading Educators' Science of Reading and Early Literacy partnerships with school districts across the country. Dr. Brookins has a B.A. in Elementary Education and Religious Studies from Illinois Wesleyan University, an M.A. in Teacher Leadership from Roosevelt University, and a Ph.D. in Educational Administration from the University of New Orleans.

Olivia B. Bertucci, Senior Director (employed with LE since 2021)

Olivia Bertucci is a Senior Director of Programs for Leading Educators' Science of Reading partnerships. She brings over 10 years of experience in early literacy instructional expertise to the organization, serving as a kindergarten teacher and an instructional specialist. Ms. Bertucci has a B.A. in Early Childhood Education from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, LA, and an M.A. in Educational Leadership from Xavier University of Louisiana.

Dr. Heather Zuerblis, Senior Director (employed with LE since 2023)

Dr. Zuerblis is the Senior Director of Programs for Leading Educators' recently launched rural network of support for Science of Reading and early literacy support. Before joining Leading Educators, Heather spent over fifteen years as a classroom teacher, literacy instructional coach, and systems-level leader in the DC area. Dr. Zuerblis earned her doctorate in Educational Policy & Leadership, with a concentration on Early Literacy Intervention, from American University.

Naima Richardson, Senior Director (employed with LE since 2023)

Naima Richardson is Senior Director of Programs for Leading Educators' Science of Reading partnerships. She has served as an educator and instructional leader for 20 years. Before joining Leading Educators, Naima served as an assistant principal/instructional coach, where she provided professional development and weekly debriefs that led her teacher team through a curriculum restructuring, resulting in improved student performance on state assessments. Ms. Richardson holds a Master of Science in Educational Leadership from Baruch College and a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership, Politics, and Advocacy from New York University.

Jennifer Sierra, Director of Content & Coaching (employed with LE since 2019)

Jennifer Sierra designs and facilitates learning experiences focused on elevating understanding of how brains learn to read and supporting educators to apply instructional strategies. She also coaches educators around their planning and practice to ensure that all students receive high-quality literacy instruction and become strong readers, and supports school teams to work toward systemic change. Ms. Sierra holds a B.S. in Child Development and an M.A. in Teaching and Curriculum, both from Michigan State University.

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Dr. Kate Ulrich, Director of ELA Content & Coaching (employed with LE since 2023)

Dr. Ulrich is an expert in curriculum design and delivers effective instructional coaching on ELA content. Before joining Leading Educators, Dr. Ulrich served as the Director of Curriculum and Instruction and Assistant Principal at a school in South Atlanta. Kate earned her doctorate in Leadership and Learning in Organizations from Vanderbilt University. Her research focused on examining how community-based organizations that utilize multi-stakeholder models can impact local education in rural communities.

Exhibit 12 – Geographical Regions Serviced

Leading Educators is fully prepared to provide literacy services to any school district or educational agency within the state of Iowa, as specified and outlined in this RFP. Our flexible service delivery model, national reach, and experience in supporting diverse educational contexts position us to meet the needs of districts regardless of size, geography, or population demographics.

Leading Educators can support:

- All Iowa Local Education Agencies (LEAs), including rural, suburban, and urban districts.
- Districts within all nine Iowa Area Education Agency (AEA) regions, including those in remote or underserved communities.
- Any subgrantee districts identified by the Iowa Department of Education based on strategic need, priority populations, or funding designation.
- Geographically diverse districts, including but not limited to:
 - Des Moines Public Schools
 - Cedar Rapids Community School District
 - Sioux City Community School District
 - Council Bluffs Community School District
 - Davenport Community School District
 - Marshalltown Community School District
 - Waterloo Community School District

Leading Educators' approach includes both in-person and virtual service options, enabling us to deliver responsive and equitable support across the state. Our team has deep experience in adapting to local context while maintaining fidelity to research-based practices. We are

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committed to reaching educators and students wherever they are and ensuring the highest standard of service delivery.

Exhibit 13 – Professional/Organizational Services Overview

Leading Educators' mission is to sustain the teaching, leadership, and conditions for every student to succeed in school and in life. Students need consistent access to grade-level instruction from well-prepared educators to realize their full potential. For the past 13+ years, we have partnered with some of the fastest-improving districts in the country to give their educators the tools, skills, and confidence to offer students real opportunities and produce real results. Whether developing teacher leaders or sharpening the skills of content leaders within the central office, we know how to build capacity for world-class teaching. When you add relevant support, academic focus, and shared learning and planning to teachers' enthusiasm and experience, you build a foundation that can adapt to evolving standards and student needs. We've helped school systems achieve lasting change so students and teachers thrive today and beyond.

Depending on factors such as time, resource availability, and existing initiatives, LE works with districts to craft partnerships of all shapes and sizes. LE customizes the focus areas for training and the modes of delivery to each partner's needs, requirements, and constraints. When a district has an existing professional learning strategy, LE can plug into that strategy and design and deliver targeted training. When a district needs help creating or refining a professional learning system to support a continuous instructional improvement strategy, LE can begin with assessments and discovery to help establish professional learning priorities and a plan for acting on them.

Our partnerships are customized to the current district context, instructional needs, and calendar. The engagement can range from supporting the development and roll-out of a comprehensive instructional improvement strategy with district and school leaders to assisting districts in operationalizing their strategies at the district, school, and classroom levels. LE's work with districts and schools focuses on helping leaders understand content, curriculum, and specific instructional strategies aligned to the college-ready instructional shifts and state standards.

Strategic Advising: Leading Educators (LE) partners with district leaders to refine and operationalize their professional learning strategies, ensuring continuous instructional improvement across the system. Our work is tailored to build a common understanding of current conditions, co-develop strategic tools, and engage in collaborative design that positions districts for sustainable growth.

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System Diagnostic	We conduct a comprehensive analysis of professional learning systems through activities such as school/classroom walkthroughs, student work reviews, and empathy interviews with key stakeholders. These processes help district leaders identify high-priority learning needs and better understand the conditions that are enabling or hindering professional learning. This diagnostic work includes synthesizing data to provide actionable recommendations that align with district goals, LE's Enabling Conditions, and LE's Partnership Conditions framework.
Strategy and Implementation Planning with Progress Monitoring	LE collaborates with district leaders to co-develop a clear professional learning strategy that supports continuous instructional improvement. Together, we create an action plan for operationalizing this strategy, including data-driven reflection protocols. We regularly assess progress, adjust course as needed, and plan for scaling efforts to ensure the sustainability of the professional learning initiatives.
Collaborative Design Sessions	LE experts work side-by-side with district instructional leaders to design impactful professional learning experiences for teachers and leaders. This collaborative process ensures alignment with district priorities while leveraging system data and best practices to foster instructional leadership and improve student outcomes.
Professional Learning: Leading Educators (LE) collaborates with district teams to design and deliver curriculum-aligned professional learning that promotes sustained instructional improvement. Our approach emphasizes long-term impact, coaching, and the development of educators through cycles of continuous growth.	
Cycles of Continuous Improvement	LE supports the design and implementation of iterative learning cycles that target key instructional strategies aligned with district priorities. These cycles involve collaborative planning, classroom implementation, and assessment of student outcomes, allowing for real-time adjustments and continuous learning. Both LE staff and school-based leaders, with LE support, can facilitate these cycles

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Classroom Walkthroughs	LE provides brief training for small groups of educators, followed by guided walkthroughs that allow participants to observe instruction in real classrooms. These walkthroughs are paired with reflective discussions to analyze teaching practices and identify opportunities for growth.
Train-the-Trainer Workshops	We equip instructional leaders, coaches, and coordinators with the tools to facilitate continuous improvement cycles. These workshops focus on developing leaders' capacity to coach their peers, fostering sustainable professional learning communities within the district.
Professional Learning Sessions	LE designs and leads sessions that help teachers internalize curricula, adapt instructional practices, and focus on standards-based shifts. These sessions support educators in implementing high-quality instructional materials and strategies to improve student outcomes, building on the lessons from our long-term partnerships.

Job-Embedded Coaching: Leading Educators (LE) provides personalized, job-embedded coaching to support the development of district leaders, content leaders, and teachers, helping them improve instructional practices and achieve system-wide impact.

Systems Leader Coaching	LE coaches district and school leaders to establish the conditions necessary for effective adult learning and student success. This coaching focuses on creating systemic structures that support teaching and leadership development, including skills like conducting classroom observations and providing meaningful feedback. By focusing on instructional leadership, we aim to drive improvement across entire school systems.
Content Leader Coaching	LE staff work closely with content leaders, instructional coaches, and specialists to deepen their content knowledge and coaching skills. Our coaching supports these leaders as they design and facilitate professional learning for their peers, ensuring that the instructional strategies they lead are aligned with curriculum implementation and school priorities.
Teacher Coaching	Embedded within curriculum implementation efforts, LE staff provide direct coaching to teachers, supporting the application of new instructional strategies in the classroom. This coaching focuses on real-time feedback

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and practice, helping teachers refine their approach to delivering high-quality, curriculum-aligned instruction.

In its most powerful partnerships, LE provides the services above in a coordinated and cohesive continuous improvement cycle approach that can produce significant results. This full-service support is customizable and steeped in context to determine which mix of the above methodologies best fits the district's needs.

Leading Educators has supported the district- and school-level implementation of multiple high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) aligned with the science of reading. Our team has designed and facilitated professional learning tied to the following curricula: EL Education (K-8), Wit & Wisdom (K-8), Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA), HMH Into Reading, Foundations (Wilson), Heggerty, and UFLI Foundations (University of Florida Literacy Institute).

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Attachments

Addendum One

Addendum Two

Resumes

Letters of Support