

Education Innovation and Research Program (EIR)

Project Abstract

Applicant Name: Arkansas Department of Education (ADE)

Project Title: Arkansas Statewide Rural Literacy Study: Testing Evidence-Based High-Impact Tutoring at Scale

Type of Grant Requested: (select one) Mid-Phase X Expansion

Absolute Priorities the Project Addresses: (select all that apply)

X Absolute Priority 1-- Field-Initiated Innovations: Promoting Evidence-Based Literacy

Competitive Preference Priorities the Project Addresses: (select all that apply)

X Competitive Preference Priority 1— Returning Education to the States

X Competitive Preference Priority 2— Education Choice (High-Impact Tutoring)

Total number of students to be served by the project: 3000

Grade level(s) to be served by the project: 1-3

Definition of high-need students: Students performing at Level 1 on the Arkansas ATLAS Reading/ELA assessment and those identified as economically disadvantaged, eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, Medicaid, or other public assistance.

Brief description of project activities: ADE and partners will implement a statewide, school-randomized evaluation of Air Reading, a Science of Reading–aligned, virtual high-impact tutoring program providing 3–4 structured literacy sessions per week to struggling Grade 1 readers in rural Arkansas.

Summary of project objectives and expected outcomes: The project aims to improve foundational literacy outcomes, close rural achievement gaps, sustain high-fidelity tutoring delivery statewide, and generate strong causal evidence meeting What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) standards without reservations.

Summary of how the project is innovative: The initiative embeds Tier 1–Tier 3 instructional coherence, tests a dual-tutor workforce model (certified teachers vs. trained college students), and establishes a replicable, cost-effective framework for scaling high-dosage literacy tutoring across rural systems.

Other studies related to the proposed project: Neitzel & Storey (2024), Johns Hopkins University Center for Research and Reform in Education, Air Reading Randomized Controlled Trial (N=2,102), meeting WWC standards without reservations.

Proposed implementation sites: 100 rural elementary schools across Arkansas (NCES locale codes 32, 33, 41–43).

Organizations partnering with this project: Air Reading (implementation partner), Stanford University (evaluation partner), Arkansas institutions of higher education (tutor pipeline), regional education service cooperatives, and dissemination partners Forward Arkansas and Learning Heroes.