

Accelerating Learning and Literacy in Perry Township Schools (ALL)

Proposal Submitted under the Teacher and Leaders Incentive Fund

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Perry Township Schools

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Introduction

Perry Township Schools is applying for this Teacher and School Leaders Incentive Program (TSL) Grant in partnership with the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET), a national nonprofit with a record of success in helping high-need districts to increase educator effectiveness and student achievement. The continuation of this eleven-year partnership will increase teacher and school leader effectiveness and improve teaching and learning in this high-need district serving 24 schools impacting over 16,000 thousand students(one of the largest and the most diverse student populations in Indiana), 967 teachers, and 105 school leaders. The previous TSL grant awarded to NIET in collaboration with Perry Township and two other Indiana districts allowed Perry Township to implement the NIET TAP system with fidelity to increase instructional practice and raise achievement. This grant would enable us to continue the growth of educators and leaders while also targeting the gaps in our Black and Hispanic subgroups.

This collaboration will serve the 75% high-need, high-poverty student populations in Perry Township Schools (Absolute Priority Number 2), where all our schools exceed the 50% threshold. Rapidly changing demographics, with 31% of the district's students now English language learners, is the result of not only refugee populations, mainly from Burma, but also immigrant students that compose an English language learner population that has grown to over 5,00 students speaking 79 languages in 2023.

Over the last decade, Perry Township Schools has revised their evaluation systems to include multiple measures of performance, including student achievement, and also introduced performance-based compensation in various forms, including Indiana Teacher Performance

Grant funds. Perry Township Schools also partners with universities to implement elements of educator effectiveness programs in our schools (Competitive Preference Priority 2). A teacher residency has been established with Marian University to ensure a diverse and prepared pipeline of teachers. This initial work lays the foundation for greater success; however, there are still barriers to our specific populations' needs that this grant can support through intentional work with our underperforming student populations. Perry Township Schools additionally seeks this TSL grant to align and improve their human capital management systems using the NIET TAP system of performance-based evaluation to support and inform recruitment, retention, professional learning, career advancement, placement, dismissal, and compensation for teachers and principals (Absolute Priorities 1). The proposed changes will enable our district to increase equitable access to effective educators for our students in underperforming subgroups (Competitive Preference Priority 1) and improve retention of a diverse workforce (Competitive Preference Priority 2), benefitting high-need schools.

A. Need for Project (20 points)

(i) Identifying and addressing gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities

Perry Township Schools is a high-need district serving 24 schools impacting over 16,000 students (Appendix E, Absolute Priority 2). Our district serves one of Indiana's largest and most diverse student populations. 31% of the district's students are now English language learners. Our English language learner population has grown to over 4,000 students speaking 79 languages.

While we have made great strides in implementing our HCMS, student performance with our student subgroups remains subpar to their peers, particularly in the critical area of

literacy (Competitive Preference Priority 1). “We know the ability to read...(is a) leading indicator(s) of student success in life after high school,” said Dr. Katie Jenner, Indiana Secretary of Education. “Knowing that our educators are on the front lines of this important work, we must lean in and offer our educators additional support and training so they can provide the very best research-based instruction to our students. This opportunity will have a lasting impact on student outcomes for a diverse group of school partners throughout Indiana.” In 2023, Perry Township students in grades 3-8 scored 31-46% proficient on the Indiana State Achievement test, ILEARN, while the Black and Hispanic subgroups scored proficient within a range of 14-28% proficient (Competitive Preference Priority 1 and Appendix F).

The challenge we face as a system is how to improve our HCMS, including strengthening the practices of our teacher leaders, to better serve and positively impact our student subgroups (Absolute Priority 1). We plan to accelerate learning for our subgroup populations by improving our current HCMS with our ultimate vision of being a model urban school district for the state of Indiana and the entire Midwest region. To do this, we must raise the skills of our educators and attract new and diverse talent (Competitive Preference Priority 2). We are committed as a district to making the necessary changes to ensure this vision becomes a reality.

Teacher recruitment and retention continue to pose significant challenges in the education sector. As the demand for quality education rises, the supply of qualified teachers struggles to keep pace. Recruitment becomes a daunting task as educational institutions face difficulties in attracting highly skilled educators due to various factors such as low salaries, heavy workloads, limited career advancement opportunities, and inadequate support systems.

Additionally, retaining experienced teachers is a persistent challenge, as burnout, job dissatisfaction, and the allure of alternative career paths lead to high turnover rates. The consequences of these challenges are far-reaching, impacting the quality of education and overall student achievement. Addressing teacher recruitment and retention requires comprehensive strategies that address not only the financial aspects but also the professional development, well-being, and job satisfaction of educators.

While we have made strides in attracting and retaining talented educators, there remains work to be done so that our teaching population has cultural backgrounds and experiences that match our students. Table 1 below shows the difference between the ethnic diversity of our student population versus our teacher population (Competitive Preference Priority 2).

Table 1: Student Population vs. Teacher Population: Ethnic Diversity

| Race/Ethnicity | Student Population | Staff Population |
|------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| American Indian | 0.04% | 0.04% |
| Asian | 28.5% | 3.2% |
| Black/African American | 11.6% | 4.8% |
| Hispanic/Latino | 17.6% | 3.0% |
| Pacific Islander | 0.06% | 0.04% |
| Multiracial | 5.7% | 1.7% |
| White | 36.5% | 87.0% |

*based on data from the 2022-2023 school year

It is crucial to foster and develop our pool of educators to support our diverse student body effectively. A particular challenge we face is ensuring that our teaching staff reflects the

cultural diversity of our student population. This need is because many adults are still in the process of adjusting to life in this country and acquiring the necessary skills for employment.

To address this, we are working to establish local pathways that connect university programs with employment opportunities within the district. Doing so can create a more seamless transition for these individuals and enhance our ability to recruit educators who can truly connect with and understand our students' backgrounds. We have had early success in hiring diverse staff into entry-level roles and supporting them to advance through the career ladders. This grant will help to scale this idea district-wide (Competitive Preference Priority 2).

██████ story illustrates this journey. As a former refugee student, then a support staff member, and now a current teacher, █████ reports, "Working as an assistant teacher and interpreter at Southport High School, I was inspired to pursue a full-fledged teaching career. Witnessing students' determination to learn despite limited prior knowledge gave me the courage to return to college and pursue a degree. The support I received from teachers and staff was unparalleled. They became my motivation to reinvent myself" (Appendix F2).

Without a strong plan for change, most of our students will not have teachers throughout their K-12 experience representing their cultural diversity. We are committed to changing this since research shows the importance of teachers of color in raising academic performance and improving test scores, graduation rates, and aspirations to attend college among students of color (Carver-Thomas, 2018).

(ii) Build on similar efforts to improve relevant outcomes using existing funding streams

Perry Township has already invested in the initial implementation of the NIET TAP System, such as the use of the NIET Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric and evaluation

process, school-level instructional leadership teams, and weekly teacher collaborative learning meetings (called clusters). We propose building on these investments and leveraging the structures already in place for now, an intensive focus on our student subgroups and our English language learners, in particular within the area of literacy (Competitive Preference Priority 1).

Perry Township Schools have actively fostered collaborative education by establishing community partnerships that support both schools and students. As a result, Perry Township Schools have improved in working with high-needs populations over the years by developing a robust evaluation system based on feedback and growth, ensuring continuous improvement in teaching practices. Perry Township Schools has also used our experience with district-level coaching roles that support leadership teams and teachers to address the needs of our student population. The district has structures of district-to-school support, accountability, and monitoring with Master Teachers and building leadership teams which would be strengthened through this project.

In previous years, Perry Township Schools effectively grew the NIET TAP system, leading to improved instructional practices and student achievement. Building upon this successful partnership and with the aid of the new TSL grant, the district aims to enhance the effectiveness of educators and school leaders, explicitly targeting performance gaps within the Black and Hispanic subgroups (Competitive Preference Priority 1).

Perry Township Schools cater to a high-need, high-poverty student population, with all schools surpassing a 50% poverty threshold (Absolute Priority 1). The demographic landscape has been rapidly evolving, with over 30% of students being English language learners. This

transformation is not solely due to the refugee populations, primarily from Burma, but also an increasing number of new refugees and immigrants from regions in Africa and Central America, resulting in a diverse student body that speaks 79 languages.

Over the past decade, the district has made significant improvements to its evaluation systems, incorporating multiple performance measures and emphasizing student achievement. Performance-based compensation, including Indiana Teacher Performance Grant funds, has also been introduced. In partnership with universities, Perry Township Schools have implemented effective educator programs, such as the teacher residency program established in collaboration with Marian University, ensuring a diverse and well-prepared pipeline of teachers.

While the district has made strides in addressing teacher recruitment and retention challenges, we acknowledge the need to overcome specific barriers faced by underperforming and underrepresented student populations. Through the utilization of the TSL grant, Perry Township aims to align and improve our human capital management systems. This comprehensive approach will encompass recruitment, retention, professional learning, career advancement, placement, dismissal, and compensation for teachers and principals. These proposed changes aim to enhance equitable access to effective educators for underperforming subgroups and promote workforce diversity, ultimately benefiting high-need schools (Absolute Priority 1 and 2, Competitive Preference Priority 1).

In pursuit of becoming a model urban school district, Perry Township Schools is committed to accelerating learning for subgroup populations. Our district recognizes the challenge of improving systems to better serve and positively impact these student subgroups.

Perry Township Schools' vision aligns with our dedication to implementing necessary changes to ensure an inclusive and effective educational experience for all students.

Perry Township Schools are acutely aware of the difficulty in attracting highly skilled educators due to various factors, such as low salaries, heavy workloads, limited career advancement opportunities, and inadequate support systems. The consequences of these challenges directly impact the quality of education and overall student achievement. Perry Township Schools recognize the need for comprehensive strategies to address teacher recruitment and retention, including financial aspects, professional development, well-being, and job satisfaction. While the district has made progress in attracting and retaining talented educators, we acknowledge the importance of further work to ensure a teaching population that reflects the cultural backgrounds and experiences of their students. Perry Township Schools have implemented a career ladder that has already resulted in internal candidates moving into greater positions. This process can be exemplified through [REDACTED] path in Perry Township. [REDACTED] stated, "When Perry Township Schools first partnered with NIET, I was skeptical that it would make a difference in my teaching. I discovered that the NIET framework not only vastly improved my instruction but also created a clear pathway for me to grow and develop as a leader. I would not have advanced from a career teacher to master teacher to assistant principal without the foundations and structures established in NIET." However, there is a need to continue cultivating a diverse teaching workforce and identify and articulate the gaps in knowledge and support for impacting new challenging populations. Attracting new talented teachers and retaining experienced teachers will only be enhanced through the support provided in this project. The district recognizes the ongoing need to

cultivate a diverse teaching workforce and to identify and address knowledge gaps and support for effectively impacting challenging student populations (Competitive Preference Priority 2).

By integrating with and leveraging existing funding streams, Perry Township Schools aim to create a comprehensive approach that maximizes the impact of community, state, and federal resources. Through our commitment to improving the human capital management system and becoming a model urban district, the district envisions positive outcomes for student subgroups and the overall educational experience in Perry Township.

(iii) Part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning

This Perry Township Schools proposal will fully support leveraging and improving the implementation of the research-based NIET TAP System model and use it to drive all human capital management system (HCMS) functions as they relate to our student subgroup populations (Absolute Priority 1). This work will continue to inform the state and other districts on how to create a culture of high expectations through a coherent set of strategies rooted in a common vision for instructional improvement. The project will increase the effectiveness of teachers and school leaders and improve each school's success in meeting the academic goals of our student subgroup populations, specifically within the area of literacy (Absolute Priority 1 and 2). Our goals and strategies are aligned with state policies, including recommendations from [Indiana Governor Holcomb's Next Level Teacher Compensation Commission](#), the Indiana state plan for ensuring equitable access to effective educators known as the Excellent Educators for All Initiative, recommendations for strengthening the teaching workforce from the state's Blue Ribbon Commission on Recruiting and Retaining Excellent Educators. The history of this work in Perry Township Schools and the ongoing success planned in this grant

provides an opportunity to demonstrate how these reforms can work at all levels of implementation and therefore provide a model for urban districts across the state and region.

The need for ongoing support and expansion through this project is summarized by incoming Perry Township Superintendent [REDACTED] “The work proposed...has the potential to make a meaningful difference in the success of all the educators and students we support.” In this grant, our district proposes continuing a partnership with NIET, a national nonprofit organization with a longstanding history in developing, implementing, expanding, and continuously improving comprehensive multi-layered performance-based compensation systems and human capital management systems for teachers, principals, and other school leaders, including communities in Indiana. This work has a strong track record of success in raising student academic achievement and closing achievement gaps for high-poverty students (Barnett, Wills, & Kirby, 2015; Buck & Coffelt, 2013; Daley & Kim, 2010; Hudson, 2010; Mann, Leutscher, & Reardon, 2013; Schacter & Thum, 2005; Solmon, White, Cohen, & Woo, 2007).

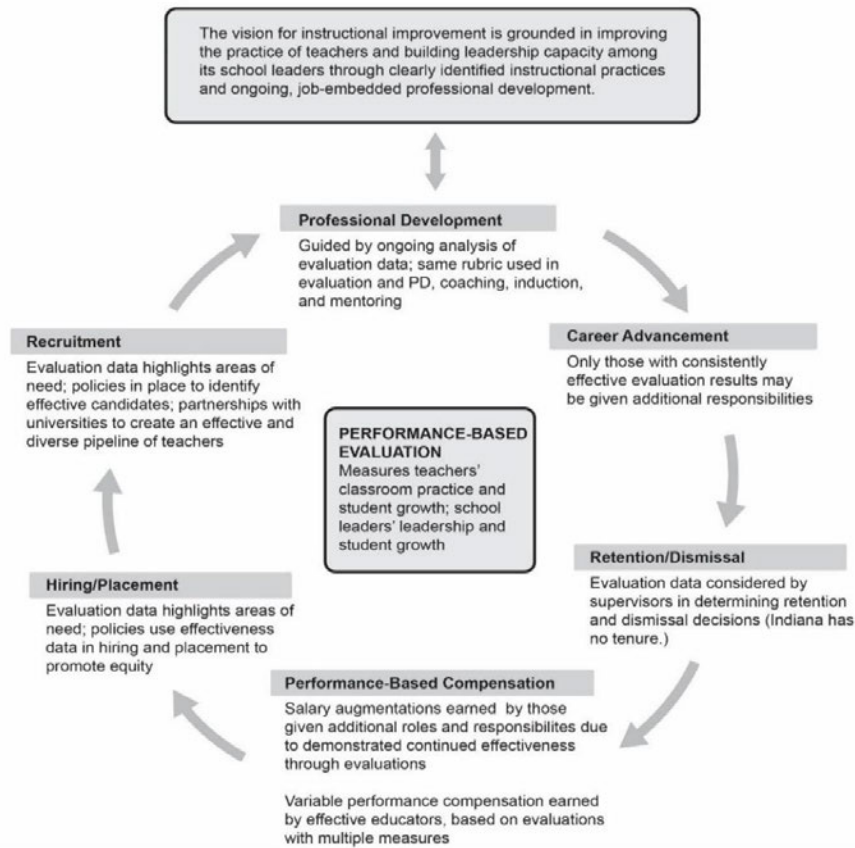
HCMS and Data Management System

The HCMS aligns with the district’s vision for instructional improvement (Absolute Priority 1) and is evidence-based (Appendix F3). Perry Township Schools will also have continued access to the NIET Educator Effectiveness Preparation & Support System (EE PASS), which provides access to valuable professional development, training, and certification resources through a single port of entry. Resources within EE PASS are updated (NIET recently added over 200 new videos, resources, and modules aligned to updated teaching and learning standards) and dedicated to improving teacher practices and student achievement. This update includes various features, such as NIET’s collections of more than 120 hours of professionally

filmed classroom lessons, footage highlighting the execution of leadership meetings and coaching sessions, all designed to improve teacher performance; NIET's publications, including the TAP Implementation Manual, TAP Evaluation and Compensation (TEC) Guide, Career Teacher Handbook, and TAP Leadership Handbook; and Training Modules that are interactive and user-directed training experiences on the indicators of the NIET TAP Teaching & Learning Standards Rubric as well as a variety of other topics that can be used to enhance the educator evaluation and support experience.

Perry Township also incorporates an interactive data management system referred to as Education Advanced, which generates more than 20 automated reports that can analyze the results of the teacher evaluations across the district, schools, groups of teachers (by grade level or by content), and by a range of dates as well as automatically calculates performance-based compensation and overall teacher effectiveness scores. Finally, Education Advanced provides an online platform for filling out and organizing specific forms, including feedback, reflection, and surveys on professionalism that support systemic changes in each school's contribution to the district's Human Capital Management System (HCMS). Figure 1 provides a visual representation showing that within NIET and the district's HCMS, there is alignment with Perry Township's vision for instructional improvement with clearly established decision points that use educator effectiveness data (recruitment, hiring, placement, professional development, advancement, compensation, retention, and dismissal).

Figure 1: HCMS Aligns with Vision for Instructional Improvement



Performance Based Compensation

Our proposal will expand and improve our performance-based evaluation system by adding a compensation structure. This will be linked to multiple measures of performance, including classroom practice and student learning gains. Perry Township Schools will allocate \$1,000 for teachers and administrators. These bonuses will be based on effective scores on evaluations and above average growth of the school’s student population when compared to Indiana urban school districts with like poverty and English Learner demographics. Teachers will be evaluated and earn PBC based on their teacher observation score (called Skills, Knowledge, and Responsibilities or SKR scores) over the average of multiple observations. Perry Township will determine the distribution of PBC based on the measures and weights assigned, with student achievement measures equaling at least 35%.

For taking on additional roles and responsibilities, teachers may increase their pay with salary augmentation of \$2,000 as a mentor teacher and \$3,000 as a master teacher. Teachers must remain effective in all areas to maintain their additional roles and responsibilities.

Administrator's effectiveness will be evaluated annually using the Perry Township Academic Administrator Rubric (Appendix F5). As with the weights assigned to teacher performance measures, the district will review the measures and determine specific weights of each measure of performance.

Improved Instructional Practices for Subgroups

In collaboration with NIET, Perry Township is embarking on a transformative educational journey to address the significant gaps in foundational literacy skills among our students. With a shared vision of empowering every learner to reach their full potential, we are leveraging the expertise of our district literacy specialist to spearhead this critical initiative. By harnessing their deep understanding of literacy development and evidence-based instructional strategies, we aim to provide targeted support to students who require additional assistance in building essential reading, especially those in our underperforming subgroups (Competitive Preference Priority 1). Through tailored interventions, personalized learning plans, highly effective Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol strategies, and ongoing progress monitoring, we are determined to bridge the literacy gap and ensure that all students in Perry Township have the tools they need to succeed academically and beyond.

(iv) Address the needs of the target population or other identified needs

This project is designed to address the specific needs of our underperforming subgroups and bridge the educational gaps for our Black and Hispanic students (Competitive Preference Priority 1). We recognize the pressing urgency to create an inclusive and equitable learning environment that empowers every student to thrive academically and personally. Focusing on

targeted interventions, fostering cultural sensitivity, and leveraging tailored resources, this initiative aims to foster a more equitable and supportive educational experience for all students, ensuring everyone has equal opportunities to excel and be ready for postsecondary success.

The current student population has also evolved as incoming refugees from African countries have surpassed our refugee population from Burma. Students born in Honduras and Central America are now the second-largest number of students in our EL demographic. This evolution requires our staff to learn and grow as we transform our effective EL practices to meet the needs of a new set of cultural and language needs. While the refugees from Burma had experience some formal education in the refugee camps, our current immigrant populations has had traumatic experiences, unsafe living environment, and little to no formal exposure to education. These gaps have caused many of our students to be illiterate in their native language presenting an even greater obstacle to foundational literacy growth in English.

B. Quality of the Project Design (25 points)

(i) Demonstrates a rationale

Perry Township Schools has partnered with NIET to enhance its educational systems and improve teaching and learning outcomes for our student subgroups and specifically students who are black, Hispanic, and English Learners (Competitive Preference Priority 1). The collaboration focuses on three main areas. Firstly, we will support teachers in increasing skills in teaching literacy, specifically with students lacking foundational literacy skills (Appendix A1). This process involves developing teacher leaders' capacity and aligning systems such as professional learning, evaluation, coaching, performance-based

compensation, recruitment, placement, and career pathways. By doing so, we intend to provide targeted support for these students and ensure equitable educational opportunities. The additional Literacy Specialists will be vital to this work as they support teacher leaders district-wide along with our district leadership teams so that we use the best research-based practices in supporting our students. Literacy Specialists will support teacher growth by collaborating during professional development and growing the capacity of all teachers in using specific, high-impact instructional strategies that have been proven effective in improving foundational literacy skills for our students with the highest need (Appendix A1).

Secondly, the partnership seeks to build robust support systems for principals, enabling them to enhance their leadership skills and effectively assist teacher leaders and teachers in delivering quality classroom instruction to English Learners and other underrepresented students. This focus on leadership development aims to create a positive environment that fosters effective teaching and learning. Principals will learn collaboratively district-wide, alongside the Literacy Specialists, in district-level Instructional Leadership Team meetings on the action steps they can take specifically within their school context to improve literacy outcomes for student subgroup populations.

Lastly, the collaboration aims to establish or strengthen district-level processes and structures that promote professional learning and collaboration within schools. This support system will facilitate continuous improvement in outcomes for English Learner students and other underrepresented populations (Appendix A1). As part of this effort, we will hire two literacy specialists funded through the grant, ensuring intentional support within the HCMS for English Learner students and underperforming groups (Appendix A1).

The proposed application builds upon NIET's evidence-based TAP System and meets the priorities of the competition (Appendix A2). This proposal includes supporting teacher leader positions, providing training for teachers, principals, and district leaders, implementing performance-based compensation systems (AP1), and adopting innovative practices that promote individualized instruction for English Learners and underrepresented students (CP1). Additionally, the grant proposal includes access to NIET's services for building a positive environment and establishing relationships with university partners through induction support. This grant project will allow us to improve upon our TAP System implementation to truly meet the needs of all students in a way that will allow us to serve as a model urban district for the state and region.

The activities outlined in the TSL Grant are focused on ongoing professional development. The school schedules will be structured to allow time for professional development during the school day. We will strengthen a human capital management system incorporating performance-based compensation (Absolute Priority 1). We will also utilize the NIET EE PASS training portal as part of the teachers', principals', and district leaders' ongoing professional development. Furthermore, educators will have opportunities to participate in professional development based on specific district and school needs, including literacy and English Learner support meetings at the district level. Perry Township Schools will serve as a model district for the state and region by hosting site visits and facilitating professional learning for other districts in the region.

Evaluation, compensation, and data analysis will be crucial in this partnership. We will establish a Compensation Committee to provide recommendations on compensation

for teachers, principals, and assistant principals. We will collect school-wide and teacher-level student growth scores and other necessary data for performance-based compensation calculations. The Evaluation System, utilizing NIET rubrics (Appendix F4), will be further integrated into the human capital management system policies.

To support teachers and principals, ongoing professional growth activities will be provided with a focus on improving outcomes for English Learners and underperforming student groups. District leaders will ensure that teacher evaluators receive annual training, certification, and recertification. Teachers will receive three full classroom evaluations and post-conference sessions. Effective teachers and principals in all schools will have the opportunity to earn additional compensation based on their performance. In collaboration with NIET, the district staff will continue providing professional development opportunities for school and teacher leaders through training, coaching, conferences, and summer institutes. The district will also ensure that principal evaluators are trained and certified, strengthening their evaluation practices.

In summary, Perry Township Schools and NIET have partnered to enhance teaching and learning in the district. Through various initiatives, they aim to support teachers in instructing English Learners and underrepresented subgroups.

Professional Development to Meet Needs

Perry Township Schools will structure schools' schedules to allow professional development activities during the school day. We will create District Instructional Leadership Teams (ILT) structure that will meet monthly to collaboratively review progress toward grant goals, learn new strategies and leadership action steps to take to ensure the achievement of

goals, and make plans for application within each school context. These District ILT meetings will be planned and facilitated by district leaders, Literacy Specialists and supported by NIET to ensure our leaders have the capacity to analyze subgroup data and plan interventions related to the specific needs of underperforming subgroups. While the professional development structure is standard across schools, the alignment with grant project goals will be established by individual schools allowing the content to be driven by analysis of student and teacher needs. In addition, as part of the evaluation process, teachers participate in a post-conference meeting with their evaluator following the classroom observation. This post-conference, held within three days of the observation, provides the teacher with timely feedback and a specific model to address the individual teacher's area of reinforcement and refinement – real-time, personalized professional development.

We will also improve the following professional development structures and activities to more effectively include instructional support for student literacy outcomes:

- *Cluster Groups*. Every week, master and mentor teachers will lead career teachers in “cluster groups” or small professional development sessions. Cluster groups are grade- or subject-specific and typically have 5-8 members. Professional development will extend into each classroom as master teachers model lessons, observe instruction and support other teachers in improving their practice. Schools restructure their daily schedule to provide time during the regular school day for groups of teachers to collaborate on analyzing student data and learning instructional strategies to improve student learning. Strategies are selected by master teachers based on detailed analyses of student achievement data and are field tested or vetted in actual classrooms. After

master teachers embed Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) strategies, teachers use the strategies in their classrooms, then return to cluster meetings with pre- and post-test data from formative assessments to guide discussion and refinement after intensive focus on student work that is both qualitative and quantitative. (Note: The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) strategies are instructional techniques designed to support English language learners by providing a structured and inclusive learning environment. These strategies incorporate language and content objectives, comprehensible input, scaffolding, and meaningful interaction to ensure effective communication and academic progress for all students, particularly those with limited English proficiency.) The intensive focus on documenting, monitoring, and reflecting on data analysis in cluster would have a specific focus school and district-wide on EL student learning growth.

- *Individualized Coaching.* Master and mentor teachers follow up after cluster meetings to provide every teacher with one-on-one coaching using student work and data from our most struggling students as a foundation for this individualized coaching. These teacher leaders are provided training, authority, time, and additional compensation for these roles, and their work with classroom teachers is a key component of their responsibilities. School leaders receive individualized coaching and support from the NIET Senior Program Specialists based on school, teacher, and leadership team data and school performance reviews.
- *School-level Instructional Leadership Team.* A key professional development structure within schools is the school instructional leadership team (administrators, master

teachers, and mentors). This grant project will provide the resources and system-wide coherence to improve our current instructional leadership team practices. We recognize that while we have established this foundational structure, this grant project will provide us with the resources to improve our instructional leadership team's ability to meet the needs of our subgroup student populations within the area of literacy specifically. The leadership teams will analyze student and teacher data to determine school-wide areas of strength or weakness and trends by subgroup population. The data is used to determine professional development needs for individuals and groups of teachers in schools. As a result of the evaluation process, every teacher receives an area of reinforcement (strength) and an area of refinement (weakness) through the post-conference. This evaluation data also informs the development for each teacher of an Individual Growth Plan (IGP) focused on supporting our highest-need subgroups.

(ii) Relevant literature review, project implementation plan, and appropriate methods

This grant project will leverage existing elements of the TAP System and work toward improvement in key areas within the broader HCMS to improve practices for teachers and administrators that positively impact student subgroup learning outcomes, especially in literacy. The TAP System has an extensive record of effectiveness that spans multiple states, including Indiana. In 2010, NIET began working with a group of high-need schools across Indiana to improve student academic achievement by focusing on supporting effective instruction. With the support of a five-year federal Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant, the schools created support structures for teacher and school leader effectiveness through the implementation of the NIET TAP System. The grant impacted 44 schools that employed over

4,000 educators and provided instruction to over 59,000 students. During the grant, the percentage of schools with the highest schoolwide growth score more than doubled by the end of the grant (Leutscher et al., 2013). A follow-up study showed that sustaining the TAP System’s support structures not only sustained improved student outcomes but also continued to boost those outcomes after grant funding ended (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Indiana TAP System Schools Outperform Comparison Schools

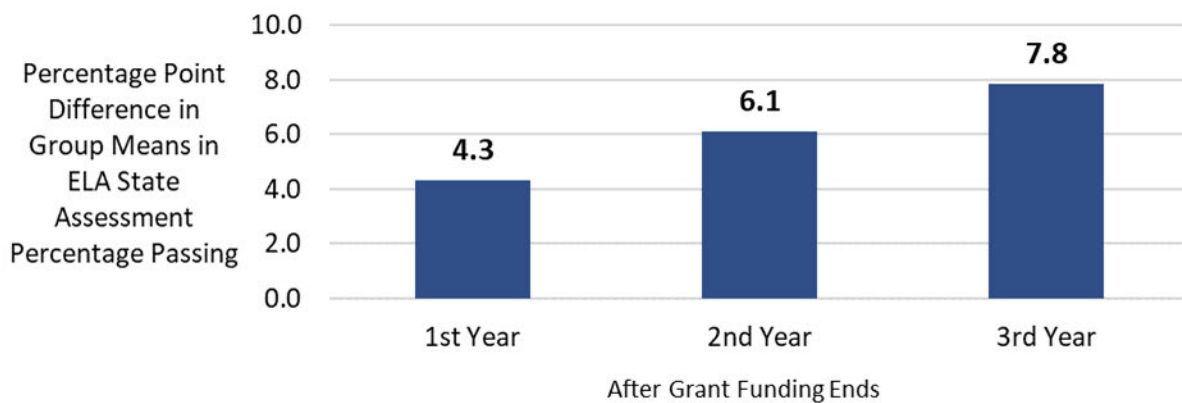


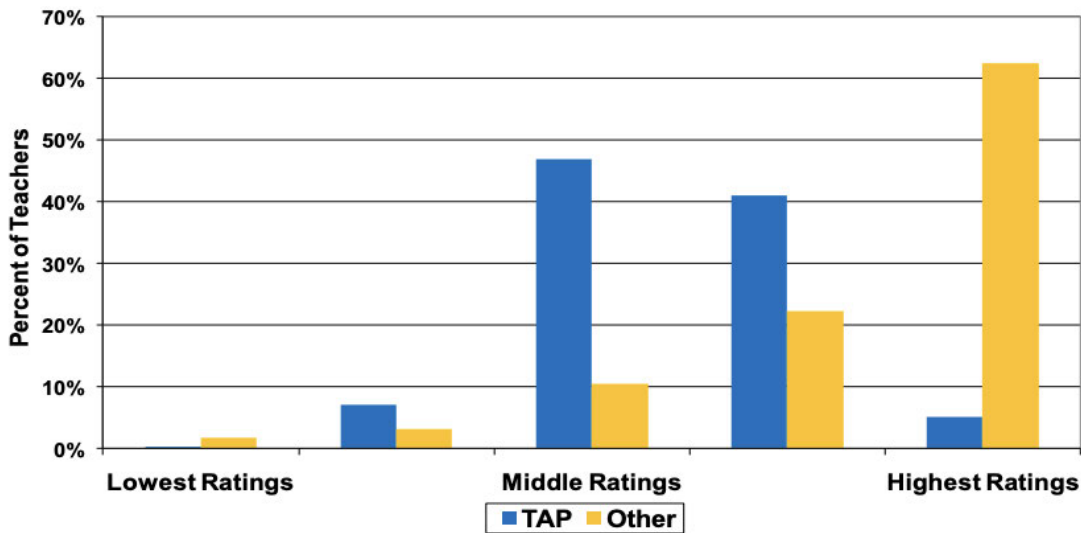
Figure 2 Note: After regression adjustment for baseline group differences, ELA state assessment percentage passing difference in means between the TAP System and comparison group, three post-grant years.

A report by Education Trust: Building and Sustaining Teaching Talent illustrates how NIET works with districts to continually refine and improve their systems for improving classroom teaching in high-need schools (Almy & Tooley, 2012). A report from the Center for American Progress, entitled *Aligned by Design*, describes NIET’s work to help districts to define the skills of an effective classroom teacher and integrate this vision across systems for evaluation, school-based professional learning, and compensation systems (Jerald, 2009). This

report also describes TAP’s success in creating distributed leadership teams led by school leaders with the active involvement of teacher leaders through career advancement opportunities.

Among the most challenging aspects of this work is to build agreement that proficient teaching practice scores in the middle of the performance rubric, providing room to identify and grow toward exemplary practice. When compared to inflated evaluation results elsewhere, Perry Township School’s use of the NIET Teaching and Learning Standards rubric (Appendix F4) is better able to differentiate instructional practice, as shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: TAP’s Observation Rubric Differentiates Effective from Ineffective Teaching



The NIET Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric aligns with Indiana’s expectations for college and career standards. As teachers move toward exemplary, they move from teacher-directed to student-centered instruction and ownership of learning. Through the HCMS changes in this project, Perry Township Schools will improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students. Perry Township will also increase access to highly effective

teachers for the highest-need students within schools and ensure that between schools, its highest-need schools have equitable access to highly effective leaders.

(iii) Methods of evaluation that provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment

The project evaluation will be led by NIET's Research and Evaluation Department, which has extensive experience supporting large-scale evaluations of education programs (Appendix B: Resumes of Key Personnel). The evaluator will collaborate closely with key project personnel to lead a formative and summative evaluation with two purposes: 1) to provide Perry Township Schools with timely data to improve the project for the populations served and 2) to assess the overall impacts of the program.

The evaluation is designed to provide timely and insightful answers to four key research questions by collecting and examining quantitative and qualitative data (Table 2). The first research question (RQ1) assesses program implementation fidelity. The remaining three research questions assess the impacts of program implementation, specifically whether the program impacted teacher outcomes (RQ2), school leader outcomes (RQ3), and student academic achievement (RQ4). These research questions and associated evaluation methods will guide the evaluation of the program's effectiveness in accordance with the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA).

The evaluation process will include ongoing communication between the evaluator and key project personnel through quarterly update meetings, allowing for a review of plans, progress, and preliminary data. The evaluator will provide timely summaries of findings from analyses of program implementation and impact data. For example, monthly meetings with the project director will involve discussions of program data and artifacts. In contrast, educator

effectiveness and student achievement data will be examined and shared with key personnel annually. At the conclusion of the grant, the evaluator will assess the overall accomplishment of goals and conduct a thorough analysis of lessons learned.

Table 2. Evaluation Research Questions, Data Sources and Timing, and GPRA Alignment

| Research Question | Applicable Sub-questions | Data Sources and Timing | GPRA Alignment |
|---|--|--|-------------------------------|
| RQ1. How well is the project being implemented, and to what extent is implementation sustainable? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To what extent have the project components been implemented with fidelity? ● What contextual factors support or inhibit the fidelity of implementation of the project? ● What contextual factors support or inhibit the sustainability of the project? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Program data and artifacts collected and reviewed during monthly project director check-ins ● Implementation fidelity measures assessed annually ● Interviews/focus groups conducted annually with district and school personnel ● End-of-year surveys administered to district and school personnel | GPRA D |
| RQ2. What are the effects of participation in the project on teacher outcomes? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To what extent do teachers report and show improvement in their instructional practices? ● To what extent are effective teachers retained? ● To what extent are participating schools able to hire teachers from ethnically or racially diverse backgrounds? ● To what extent are teachers from ethnically or racially diverse backgrounds retained? ● To what extent do teachers from ethnically and racially diverse backgrounds equitably receive performance-based compensation? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Training and support surveys administered each grant year and summarized annually ● Observation ratings based on the NIET Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric collected and summarized annually ● Educator rosters that include educator demographics collected and summarized annually ● District and school records related to position vacancies, new hires, and educator demographics compiled annually ● School-level educator performance-based compensation data compiled annually ● Interviews/focus groups and end-of-year surveys administered to district and school personnel annually | GPRA A, B, C, D, E, F, G, & I |

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| <p>RQ3. What are the effects of participation in the project on principal and other school leader outcomes?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To what extent do school leaders report and show improvement in their leadership skills? ● To what extent are effective school leaders retained? ● To what extent are participating schools able to hire school leaders from ethnically or racially diverse backgrounds? ● To what extent are school leaders from ethnically or racially diverse backgrounds retained? ● To what extent do school leaders from ethnically and racially diverse backgrounds equitably receive performance-based compensation? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Training and support surveys administered each grant year and summarized annually ● Observation ratings based on the Perry Township Academic Administrator Evaluation (Appendix F5) collected and reviewed annually ● Educator rosters that include educator demographics, collected and summarized annually ● Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) Rubric scores recorded annually ● District and school records related to position vacancies, new hires, and educator demographics compiled annually ● School-level educator performance-based compensation data compiled annually ● Interviews/focus groups and end-of-year surveys administered to district/school personnel annually | <p>GPRA A, B, C, D, E, F, & H</p> |
| <p>RQ4. What are the effects of participation in the project on student achievement</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To what extent do participating schools improve performance on state assessments? ● To what extent do participating schools narrow achievement gaps? ● To what extent do participating schools improve student achievement compared to a matched comparison group of schools? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● State assessment data at the school and district levels compiled annually ● School ratings (e.g., letter grades) compiled annually ● School and district characteristics compiled annually | <p>NA</p> |

Project Reporting

The evaluation will be "utilization focused" (Patton, 2002), meaning that the evaluator will provide feedback to make the project more successful, sustainable, and replicable. The evaluation will include regular communication between the evaluator and the district. The evaluator and school district representatives, including our project director, will hold update meetings or conference calls at least quarterly to review plans, progress, and preliminary data. If applicable, the evaluator will provide an annual report to district representatives presenting and analyzing critical data regarding project implementation, progress toward objectives, and intermediate outcomes. The evaluator and district representatives will also share findings at conferences, including the Effective Educator Development (EED) Grantee Summits and the annual NIET National Conference.

C. Quality of the Management Plan (25 points)

Perry Township will serve as the fiscal agent for the proposed Accelerating Learning and Literacy in Perry Township (ALL) grant project. Perry Township has served successfully as the fiscal agent to a number of other large federal grants and, partnering with NIET, will use the same strategies to assess human resource needs for this grant and to implement a clearly defined timeline, strategies, responsibilities, and milestones for accomplishing project objectives. The Management Plan in Table 3 below (Appendix F6) describes Perry Township and NIET's structure for meeting the goals and objectives of this project on time and within budget. It is organized into two major sections: Project Tasks, Responsible Parties, and Milestones by Year.

Table 3: Management Plan, Responsibilities, Timeline, and Milestones

| Project Tasks | Responsible Parties | Milestones by Year | | |
|---|--|--------------------|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Human Capital Management System | | | | |
| Establish district teams to meet monthly assessing progress of meeting stated goals of the TSL grant and provide new learning. | Project Director (PD), District Administration (DA), School Leaders (SL) | X | | |
| Convene collaboration meetings with higher education partnerships to develop pathways for diverse teaching candidates. | DA | X | X | X |
| Incorporate performance into the teacher compensation package. | DA | X | X | X |
| Identify and implement strategies to incorporate the vision for instructional improvement, as defined in the NIET Instructional Rubric (teaching standards), into recruitment and hiring practices. | PD, DA, NIET | X | X | X |
| Review evaluation and retention data to ensure alignment with established performance measures. | DA | X | X | X |
| HCMS enhancements | | | | |
| Hire two Literacy Specialists | PD,DA | X | | |
| Develop systems to recruit and hire a diverse staff which has a cultural background similar to our students. | DA | X | X | X |
| <i>Career Advancement</i> | | | | |
| Assist uncertified diverse staff which have a cultural background similar to our students in obtaining professional licensure. | DA,SL | X | X | X |
| <i>Professional Development</i> | | | | |
| Develop the capacity of our school leaders to examine and analyze subgroup data. | DA | X | X | X |
| Design interventions based on subgroup data analysis. | SL | X | X | X |

| | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Literacy Specialists (LS) support teacher growth by providing training and resources backed by the Science of Reading. | LS | X | X | X |
| Senior Trainers visit district bimonthly to provide on-site implementation, consultation, technical, and management support. | NIET Senior Trainers | X | X | X |
| Evaluation | | | | |
| Creating the PBCS Committee to allocate specific weight given to student growth measures for purposes of performance pay | DA, PBCS Committee | X | X | X |
| Based on the PBCS Committee recommendations, upload weights to the NIET Performance Data Management System | NIET | X | X | X |
| Calculating Student Growth | | | | |
| Frequent monitoring of student subgroup performance and growth | DA, SL, LS | X | X | X |
| School-wide Student Growth Scores calculated and provided | Indiana Department of Education | X | X | X |
| School level Enhancements | | | | |
| Members of DA, SL, and LS will attend the NIET Summer Institute and NIET Natl Conference and Training. | DA, SL, LS | X | X | X |
| Districts will work with NIET to disseminate information about and the success of the schools to key stakeholders. | DA, PD, NIET | X | X | X |
| Utilize updated NIET Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric to address the specific needs of our underperforming subgroups. | DA, SL | X | X | X |
| District will work with NIET to develop a plan for sustaining and expanding the best practices beyond the life of the grant. | DA, PD, NIET | X | X | X |
| Teachers | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|--------------|---|---|---|
| School Leadership Teams (SLT) provide ongoing applied professional growth related to updated NIET Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric to teachers. | SL, SLT | X | X | X |
| Weekly professional development to address specific literacy needs of subgroups. | SL, SLT, LS | X | X | X |
| Districts reward effective teachers in participating schools with performance-based compensation. | DA, PD, NIET | X | X | X |
| Principals | | | | |
| District staff and NIET provide professional development for principals to address specific literacy needs of subgroups. | DA, NIET, LS | X | X | X |
| DA provide ongoing applied professional growth related to updated NIET Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric. | DA | X | X | X |
| District rewards effective principals with performance-based compensation. | DA | X | X | X |

The project provides a team of seasoned and committed leaders and practitioners who understand what it means to collaborate internally and externally toward mutual goals. This proposal builds on the experience and expertise of the team listed in Table 4 (see Appendix B for resumes and job descriptions).

Table 4. Table of Key Personnel

| Key Personnel | Qualifications - Duties |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Perry Township Schools | |
| ██████████ | ██████████ the Superintendent of Perry Township, will serve as an escalation point for any issues that arise in implementing |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>this grant, as well as work with senior staff at NIET and Perry Township</p> |
| <p>■■■■■</p> | <p>■■■■■ the Assistant Superintendent of Career Preparation, will serve as the Principal Investigator and evaluate the impact of the interventions and provide information to the district leadership team. She has experience managing large federal grants, working with multiple schools, and strong expertise in implementing the TAP System.</p> |
| <p>■■■■■</p> | <p>■■■■■ the Assistant Superintendent of K-12 Services, will serve as the Project Director and manage all aspects of the initiative. He has experience managing large federal grants, working with multiple schools, and strong expertise in implementing the TAP System.</p> |
| <p>■■■■■ and ■■■■■</p> | <p>■■■■■ the Director of Elementary Education, and ■■■■■ the Director of Secondary Education, will work with the PD to ensure strong implementation across each of the Perry Township Schools.</p> |
| <p>■■■■■</p> | <p>■■■■■ Chief Financial Officer, will serve as Grant Manager and oversee grant budget-related activities, including expense reimbursement and annual reporting.</p> |
| <p>Literacy Specialist Positions (to be hired)</p> | <p>The Literacy Specialist Position will work with the Master Teachers and Administrators, delivering Professional Development to ensure strong implementation in the schools and support training while supporting the construction of intervention systems.</p> |
| <p>National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET)</p> | |
| <p>■■■■■</p> | <p>■■■■■ Midwest Director, has more than 20 years of experience in the field of education and more than a decade of experience with Indiana TAP System districts. She will support Perry Township Schools with training, coaching, and support.</p> |
| <p>■■■■■</p> | <p>■■■■■ Vice President of Research and Evaluation, is experienced in data collection and analysis, disseminating findings from large-scale interventions, and grant management, including projects with the U.S. Department of Education. She will support grant evaluation and management efforts.</p> |

■■■■■ has extensive experience as a superintendent and will provide leadership when issues arise and connect with senior NIET staff. ■■■■■■■■■■ will serve as the project's principal investigator and will provide primary oversight and direction. Daily management and coordination of this project will ultimately be the responsibility of ■■■■■■■■■■ the Project Director, who will work most directly with the school leaders and NIET. This responsibility will include three subsets of activities to ensure the goals and objectives are achieved on time and within budget: oversight of grant execution, management of grant activities, and work to implement the proposed HCMS improvements in the district (Absolute Priority 1). The Project Director will communicate weekly with key district points of contact and NIET personnel to ensure effective and proactive management. ■■■■■■■■■■ and ■■■■■■■■■■ will support the implementation across all school sites . ■■■■■■■■■■ has extensive experience at the district and state level government related to financial oversight. He will support the financial aspects of the grant as the CFO of Perry Township Schools. The literacy specialists are the critical connection between leadership and the work being done in the schools to improve literacy outcomes for student subgroup populations.

Perry Township Schools will use cost-control mechanisms involving work, budget planning, and systematic review. Perry Township Schools believes that detailed work and budget planning are paramount to effective control of any project's costs, systematic reviews of actual performance against those plans, and the ability to make adjustments as required. Actual accomplishments and their costs will be compared to the planned workflows and budgets. Each quarter, we will generate financial reports allowing us to monitor expenditures and review progress toward outcomes. The staff qualifications identified in Table 4 represent the full range

of skills to guarantee quality and timely work on all tasks. The time commitments these key personnel will devote to this grant are adequate to implement the project effectively.

In addition, upon notification of funding, Perry Township will convene a TSL Advisory Committee that will include: Project Director, district administrators, school leaders and teacher representatives. The TSL Advisory Board will meet annually to provide a consistent platform for a systematic review of the status and improvement of the TSL project. Based on the TSL Advisory Committee's findings and with the approval of the U.S. Department of Education (ED), changes or adaptations will be made in the implementation to guarantee that all of the project's objectives are met.

D. Adequacy of Resources (30 points)

(i) The likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement

Sustainability necessitates a steadfast dedication from key district and school leaders to actively participate in the ongoing development of our system. It also calls for alignment with both state and district priorities. In line with this, Perry Township Schools will utilize the NIET Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric, an officially approved evaluation tool in the state. This rubric has been successfully piloted in various districts across the state. Our efforts are fully in sync with the Indiana equity plan and state policies to augment the teacher workforce and student achievement.

The proposed project is poised for success through its strategic focus on enhancing principals' and teacher leaders' capacity, aligning systems, and providing targeted support for English Learners and underrepresented students. The collaboration between Perry Township

and NIET, leveraging evidence-based practices, ensures a strong foundation for improvement. Improvements in the integration of evaluation, data analysis, and the allocation of literacy specialists funded through the grant further enhance the project's potential. Ongoing professional development, structured schedules, and access to external resources contribute to a positive and effective learning environment for all staff.

The collaborative efforts between Perry Township and NIET hold significant potential for system change and improvement. The project's comprehensive approach, focus on targeted support, commitment to evaluation, and emphasis on ongoing professional growth create a strong foundation for driving positive outcomes in teaching and learning for English Learners and underrepresented, underperforming student groups.

(ii) Build local capacity that address the needs of the target population

The proposed project has a strong potential to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population. The collaboration between Perry Township Schools and NIET focuses on enhancing educational systems and improving teaching and learning outcomes, explicitly targeting English Learners and underrepresented student populations.

By developing teacher leaders' capacity and aligning various systems, the project aims to support classroom teachers in effectively instructing English Learners and underrepresented students. This approach creates a sustainable framework within the district to address the unique needs of these student populations and ensure equitable educational opportunities.

The partnership with NIET also seeks to strengthen support systems for principals, enabling them to enhance their leadership skills and effectively assist teachers in delivering

quality classroom instruction. By focusing on leadership development, the project empowers principals to create a positive environment that fosters effective teaching and learning, thereby improving the overall services provided to the target population. The collaboration also will assist in refining district-level processes and structures that promote professional learning and collaboration within schools. This support system facilitates continuous improvement in outcomes for English Learner students and other underrepresented populations. Another factor contributing to the project's potential success is the inclusion of a literacy specialist funded through the grant. This deliberate allocation of resources to address the specific needs of English Learners and underperforming groups demonstrates a commitment to providing targeted and intentional support. The expertise and guidance of the literacy specialist will enhance instructional practices at all levels and further improve educational outcomes for these students.

The project's emphasis on ongoing professional development, structured school schedules to allow time for training, and access to NIET's services for building a positive environment all contribute to building local capacity within Perry Township Schools. By equipping teachers and principals with the necessary knowledge, skills, and support, the project enables them to effectively address the needs of the target population and expand services to meet those needs.

The proposed project will build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population. Through targeted support, leadership development, establishment of support systems, and ongoing professional development, the project equips educators and administrators with the tools and resources needed to effectively

serve English Learners and underrepresented students, thus enhancing the overall services provided by Perry Township Schools.

(iii) Resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant

Our sustainability plan includes elements that will ensure this project’s long-term sustainability and success: building buy-in, creating capacity through training and support, increasing educator skills and driving student growth, and establishing financial sustainability. To demonstrate our commitment to sustainability, Perry Township Schools is providing *more* than 50% in-kind matching contribution (see budget narrative and Appendix D). The transition of the structure of the school day, personnel time and effort, and implementation of the HCMS make up the in-kind contribution; thereby, we are demonstrating our commitment to implementing these improved systems by shouldering these costs. After this grant ends, schools within Perry Township Schools and district leaders will have built instructional capacity for equity among all students demonstrating achievement scores without disparity and effectiveness among the faculty members in implementing the instructional practices that support the achievement of all student cultures. As Perry Township Assistant Superintendent [REDACTED] stated, “(The TSL Grant) will strengthen our work around ensuring all students have access to effective teaching and learning at all times across our district” (Appendix C5)

This grant project will intensively focus on improving literacy outcomes for Perry Township’s subgroup student populations. Indiana's recent adoption of the science of reading marks a significant milestone in transforming literacy education within the state. By mandating the use of evidence-based curriculum materials and emphasizing phonetic instruction, Indiana is taking proactive steps to improve reading outcomes for its students that will provide

continued support for literacy initiatives created in this project. This commitment to the science of reading will create sustainable reading initiatives that provide students with strong foundational skills, ensuring they have the tools needed to become proficient readers. With dedicated funding and a focus on teacher training from Indiana coupled with the work of this project, Perry Township can build a foundation to make a lasting impact on literacy education, empowering students and educators alike.

The Perry Education Association (PEA) teachers' association plays a vital role in supporting teachers with a growth mindset and addressing the needs of our high-need student population. Their support and collaboration contribute to the sustainability of the project by fostering a culture of continuous improvement and professional growth among educators. This culture is evidenced through PEA President [REDACTED] letter of support, where he states his excitement for "the potential of this grant to support our efforts to strengthen our systems and structures for improving classroom instruction" (Appendix C7).

Partnerships with Marian University and the University of Indianapolis are instrumental in not only increasing the teacher pipeline but also diversifying it. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] stated, "...we are excited to continue supporting and building our relationship with Perry Township School District in order to develop highly trained educators..." (Appendix C3). These partnerships strengthen the sustainability of the project by ensuring a robust supply of qualified and diverse educators who are equipped to meet the unique needs of our students. By actively engaging with these institutions, we create a collaborative network that fosters ongoing professional growth.

As a foundational partner, NIET will continue to provide support beyond the grant period, assisting in the operation of the project. However, as Perry Township Schools builds its own training capacity and instructional expertise, the reliance on external support from NIET will decrease over time. ■■■■■ NIET Chief Executive Officer, stated in his letter of support, "Perry Township Schools has put in place several elements of this system over the last decade. Building on that work, this proposal will enable the district to raise the bar even higher." (Appendix C1). As the role of NIET support will lessen based on this capacity growth, implementation costs will be substantially reduced after the project period, contributing to fiscal sustainability.

Indiana's provision of state funds for teacher performance pay reinforces the project's sustainability. The state legislature's consideration of new proposals for performance-based compensation for teacher leaders and funding for teacher career paths aligns with our sustainability goals. These initiatives ensure ongoing financial support for the project and align with the state's commitment to equitable access to excellent educators.

Ongoing communication efforts will build awareness, understanding, and support for the educator evaluation and support system, including the performance-based compensation system among teachers, principals, and other school personnel. Three primary strategies to involve key stakeholders and build lasting support include: 1) Advisory Board. We will use the aforementioned Advisory Board to provide a consistent platform for a systematic project status review and stakeholder communication. 2) School Leadership Teams. To regularly communicate information about the HCMS and PBCS to a site-level basis, Perry Township Schools will use School Leadership Teams, comprised of teacher representatives and facilitated by the school

principal. 3) Communications Plan. Perry Township Schools will disseminate information through newsletters, websites, social media, and public forums such as school board meetings throughout each year. School principals and master teachers will distribute information at staff meetings, during in-service days, and through campus newsletters, school websites, and social media accounts.

The work done to build consensus around higher standards for every student has been an enormous challenge. Having invested heavily in this work, Perry Township Schools is well positioned to make strong classroom instruction for every student and teacher, K-12, their focus, and enable every student, and especially the highest need students, to experience academic success, close persistent achievement gaps and succeed in college, career, and life.