



In Conversation

OMAR DURON

Omar Duron is superintendent of Somerton School District No. 11 in Arizona. He joined Somerton from Gadsden Elementary School District #32, where he honed his instructional leadership skills as a teacher leader and school leader.

How has NIET shaped your career as an educator?

NIET equipped me with the essential framework to excel as a teacher leader. The master teacher role changed my career by allowing me to work with teachers, identify the strongest and most impactful instructional practices in our building, and bring those practices to other teachers and classrooms. The master teacher role showed me the importance of modeling and co-teaching with an educator, and how to help each teacher incorporate student data and student work in their instructional planning. This experience paved the way for my journey into school leadership.

What is something you received through NIET's support that you wish every educator had, and why?

Our partnership with NIET created the structures and processes for teacher-driven collaborative learning with direct follow-up and coaching in classrooms. It helped elevate teachers into leadership roles that provided individualized support for classroom teachers

based on their students' needs. For me, professional learning that is focused on the needs of our students and teachers makes the biggest difference. Investing in teacher support is one of the most valuable decisions a district can make, as it directly contributes to improved student academic achievement.

Why did you decide to continue a partnership with NIET once you took on the role of superintendent in a new district?

Student learning growth was the biggest driver of that decision. Teachers work hard to improve classroom instruction every day for every student. The NIET structures and processes create a powerful support system for teachers and build a team culture where teachers know they can reach out and receive high-quality support.

What have you learned through being a teacher leader, a school leader, and now a system leader?

Building a growth mindset and a commitment to continuous improvement has to be backed up by real support. Teachers need

to know they are part of a team as we all embrace a commitment and a strategy to improve. Collaboration and opportunities to shape professional learning bring teachers into the process of driving that success and a willingness to try new things. Finally, it is essential to recognize the leadership potential in every teacher and encourage their continued professional growth, as it expands their ability to positively impact more students.

What should NIET focus on in our next 25 years?

NIET should continue its focus on strengthening teacher leadership and fostering collaboration across districts. Maintaining its forward-thinking approach towards innovation and technology is crucial. By advancing its commitment to equity, inclusion, and data-driven practices, NIET can ensure that all students receive a high-quality education and opportunities for success. Ultimately, NIET should continue prioritizing educator well-being and resilience to cultivate positive, sustainable school cultures. ●