



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

James Reddish

Little Rock Regional Chamber

jreddish@littlerockchamber.com

(501) 377-6007

Report on four Pulaski County public school districts finds readiness to undertake high school transformation

Ford NGL model offers systemic change that could result in increased performance for all students, teachers, parents, and partners.

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (May 1, 2019) – In January of this year, the Little Rock Regional Chamber, in partnership with the Jacksonville North Pulaski School District, Little Rock School District, North Little Rock School District and the Pulaski County Special School District, enlisted the services of Ford Next Generation Learning (NGL). NGL is the education initiative of the Ford Motor Company Fund, to explore a high school transformation model for the four districts in Pulaski County. The model is focused on preparing all students to be both college and career ready upon graduation. The goal of the Phase I study was to assess opportunities and feasibility across the four districts, highlight existing pockets of excellence, and provide a recommended path forward.

The costs of the Phase I study were underwritten by Entergy Arkansas. Laura Landreaux, president and CEO of Entergy Arkansas said, “Achieving educational excellence for our future generations is critically important for moving Arkansas forward. As a part of the business community invested in the educational and economic development success of our state, we saw this as a great opportunity to facilitate the progress and potential of our students and workforce.”

The results of that report were released today and include a conclusion that the four Pulaski County public school districts, along with community and business partners, are in a strong position to undertake this transformation to improve student outcomes for all students in the districts.

“This historic partnership between the four districts has been tremendously energizing and productive,” said Jay Chesshir, president and CEO of the Little Rock Regional Chamber. “There are pockets of real excellence in each of these districts and schools, and we believe Ford NGL is the right model to help scale and spread that good work for the benefit of all students in the county.”

- More -

“The partnership with Ford NGL, the Little Rock Regional Chamber, and our colleagues in LRSD, NLRSD, and PCSSD will transform opportunities for our scholars in the Jacksonville North Pulaski School District and all of Pulaski County,” said Dr. Bryan Duffie, Superintendent of the Jacksonville North Pulaski Schools District. “Further, this endeavor represents the commitment of multiple organizations to enhance career and college opportunities for all scholars in Pulaski County. JNPSD looks forward to the partnership and continued progress with Ford NGL.”

According to the report, “Based on our research, observations, and analysis, we believe Pulaski County districts are at a unique juncture and on the verge of community-connected education transformation. The local and regional workforce presents various high-wage, high-skill opportunities for students. Community leaders, educators (secondary and post-secondary), and employers in Pulaski County are interested in transformation and see this moment in time as the stars aligning for the change that this community needs.”

“I am really excited about the prospect of moving forward with the Ford NGL solutions. It is critical for all the Pulaski County districts to come together to better prepare and support our students,” said LRSD Superintendent Mike Poore. “This model will deliver real, relevant learning that will create a win for students, parents, educators, and the business community.”

“Our goal is to help students to become successful, productive adults by any means possible,” said Bobby Acklin, Superintendent of the North Little Rock School District. “We appreciate the representatives from Ford NGL who came into our school to gather good information that can be used to better prepare our students for careers.”

The report was informed by data collected over a four day visit by the NGL team to the community. They held meetings with school leaders, teachers, parents, students and alumni from all the high schools; district and state education officials; school and community advisory board presidents; teachers association representatives; leaders from UA Pulaski Tech; state legislators; chambers of commerce; and business and community leaders.

"We look forward to working with our colleagues in the other public school districts of Pulaski County as we engage in Phase II of NGL," said Dr. Charles McNulty, Superintendent of the Pulaski County Special School District. "We're also excited about the continued substantial engagement of the business community and their efforts to provide our young people viable and empowering educational experiences."

The report outlines an inclusive community planning process for the districts to follow should they choose to move forward with this initiative. These include community visioning sessions and a representative master planning committee of over one hundred business and community members who would, in partnership with teachers and district officials, help write a master plan to guide the transformation efforts of the individual districts.

Over the next few months, representatives from each of the four districts will begin working through the process of identifying if and how they elect to proceed with the report's recommended path forward.

To view the full Phase I report and learn more about this initiative, visit www.littlerockchamber.com/ngl.

About Little Rock Regional Chamber

The Little Rock Regional Chamber is the principal business-driven leadership organization responsible for fostering the economic growth and development of the Little Rock region to ensure that business and industry may operate profitably and enhance the earning opportunities and quality of life for every citizen. To learn more, visit LittleRockChamber.com or find the Chamber on social media @LRChamber (Facebook and Twitter) or @LittleRockChamber (Instagram).

About Jacksonville North Pulaski School District

The Jacksonville North Pulaski School District, established in 2016, serves more than 4,000 students in grades K-12th. The district consists of 320 certified staff members, with 47% holding advanced degrees and 283 classified staff members. We believe great educators and curriculum are important cornerstones to student success. Our teachers and staff are some of the best the state has to offer. Each staff member is behind our vision to be: “the model district where every learner is valued and empowered to become a successful, contributing member of society.”

About the Little Rock School District

The Little Rock School District is the largest district in the state with more than 23,000 students. LRSD has the distinction of being home to two national Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence; more than 181 teachers with National Board Certification; Arkansas’s only K-8 STEM Academy; and, historically, the most National Merit Semifinalists in the state. LRSD is also home to the 2019 Arkansas Teacher of the Year, 2018-19 Boys State Tennis Champions and 2018-19 Boys Swimming Champions.

About North Little Rock School District

The North Little Rock School District and the community will provide for achievement, accountability, acceptance and the necessary assets in the pursuits of each student's educational success. To learn more, visit www.nlrsd.org

About Ford Next Generation Learning (Ford NGL)

Ford Next Generation Learning (Ford NGL) applies a collaborative, community driven approach to transform the high school experience. Created and managed by Ford Motor Company Fund, Ford NGL promotes and supports a career academy model that uses Community-connected Learning (Ford NGL CCL) experiences to engage students with the real-world problems and challenges faced by local employer partners. Ford NGL member communities form a network dedicated to preparing students for college, career, lifelong learning, and leadership. Communities share best practices and experiences and support each other in a united effort to continuously improve, increase student achievement, foster workforce and economic development, and make a positive impact on community prosperity. To learn more about Ford NGL, becoming a Ford NGL Community, or the new Powerful Partnership Series, please visit www.fordngl.com or Info@FordNGL.com.

###