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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ForwARd Arkansas Strengthens Partnership and Transitions to New Phase
Will Now Implement Recommendations to Drive Improvement in Arkansas Education

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (June 10, 2016) – ForwARd Arkansas today announced it is entering a new phase and will begin implementation of its recommendations to drive improvement in Arkansas education.

“As we transition into a new phase of carrying out ForwARd’s vision, it is important to improve efficiencies, leverage resources and align our priorities,” said Susan Harriman, executive director of ForwARd. “Today’s show of support is validation of our strong aspiration to improve our state’s educational system and achieve our high-reaching goals.”

Following consensus from the Arkansas State Board of Education, ForwARd signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, Walton Family Foundation, Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) and board. With the agreement, all parties have committed to providing the support needed to achieve ForwARd’s vision of ensuring every student graduates prepared for success in college and the workplace.

Under the MOU, the foundations will provide three years of financial support, guidance, collaboration and oversight. The board and ADE will align and allocate matching in-kind support; provide access to data, tools and analytics; and designate a team for day-to-day support and implementation. As managing liaison, ForwARd will oversee administrative and core operations, programmatic functions, and development and implementation of ForwARd’s annual work plan. It will also report quarterly to the State Board of Education on its progress.

“With the help of thousands of Arkansans, ForwARd laid out recommendations to close our state’s achievement gap and make us a leader in public education,” said Commissioner Johnny Key of the Arkansas Department of Education. “We look forward to partnering with ForwARd and providing the necessary support, advocacy and leadership to achieve our shared priorities.”

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In August 2014, the State Board of Education voted to establish a strategic partnership with the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation and Walton Family Foundation to make Arkansas a leading state in education. Following in-depth analysis of Arkansas's education system and input from nearly 8,500 Arkansans, ForwARd unveiled *A New Vision for Arkansas Education* to meet this goal and dramatically improve student achievement in the state.

About ForwARd Arkansas

ForwARd Arkansas is a partnership of education, business, government and community leaders committed to improving public education in Arkansas. This partnership has conducted extensive research and continues to encourage statewide discussion and bold action to strengthen public education. ForwARd was established through a partnership between the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, Walton Family Foundation and Arkansas Board of Education. For more information, visit forwardarkansas.org.

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