



For Immediate Release
January 31, 2020

School Consolidation Study Framework

Go Forward Pine Bluff (GFPB) is now prepared to fulfill its commitment of facilitating a study regarding the consolidation of the schools in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. Since the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) sponsored the community school consolidation discussion in June of 2018, GFPB has worked to understand the impact of engaging in such a process and ensure that our approach does not disrupt the fabric of the entire GFPB plan. Significant time has been spent learning from past community examples, continuing to implement the current education initiatives, and realizing we must prepare for future considerations beyond our control.

The GFPB education alliance composed representatives from each educational institution in Pine Bluff will continue to focus on the Leadership, Education, Accountability and Teach Pipeline plan promised to the citizens. The charter by which the GFPB Education Alliance operates precludes the membership from addressing consolidation as an action item. Further, it would be difficult for the superintendents that serve on this alliance to remain objective.

As such, strategically, we have assembled seven additional education stakeholders whose role is to analyze data regarding the feasibility of annexing/consolidating the three school districts. The task of the stakeholders further involves evaluating intended and unintended consequences on subtopics that will lead to an overall conclusion of the study. Progress reports and the final report will be distributed to the community at large. The committee will also provide reports to the Arkansas Department of Education, which has the responsibility of public schools.

The consolidation of schools is outside the scope of the GFPB implementation plan. We must emphasize our priority is to fulfill the 26 initiatives while assisting the community in being prepared in the event the state department of education decides consolidation is necessary. GFPB's role is to facilitate the professional consultation to the Pine Bluff community on this topic.

The following represents the consolidation study committee members:

Chair, Diane Gilleland - Professor of finance, Philanthropist and former director at Arkansas Department of Higher Education

Vice-Chair, Calvin Johnson – Retired Educator, Dean of UAPB education, Interim Chancellor at UAPB, Arkansas Representative

Joni Alexander, current Director of Community Outreach at Fordyce Bank & Trust, Pine Bluff City Council member and former educator.

Glen Barnes, Pastor of Pine Hill Baptist Church; Leader in the Juvenile Justice Center

Wanda V. Neal, President of the Pine Bluff NAACP

Mattie Collins, retired educator and director of Ivy Center for Education

Alan Frazier, Watson Chapel School Board President, financial estate planner

Spencer Robinson, former school district attorney

Lead Consultants

Fletcher Education Solutions, LLC

Trina L. Fletcher, Ph.D., Co-founder holds a bachelor's degree in Industrial Technology from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, a master's degree in Operations Management from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, a second master's degree in Engineering Management from George Washington University and a Doctorate degree in Engineering Education from Purdue University. She currently serves as an Assistant Professor of Engineering Education at Florida International University where she focuses on economics and finances in engineering and equity and inclusion within science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education. Prior to FIU, Dr. Fletcher worked with Lockheed Martin, Caterpillar, Johnson and Johnson, and served as a Director of Pre-college Programs for the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) where she planned and managed an annual \$2 million budget that provided free access to STEM education for over 10,000 minority students across 16 major U.S. cities. Dr. Fletcher is an avid Historically Black College and University (HBCU) researcher, currently holds a \$360,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to research the best practices in STEM at HBCUs and has authored several papers on women and girls of color in STEM.

Tina L. Fletcher, Ed.M., Co-founder holds a bachelor's degree in Political Science and African American Studies from the University of Arkansas and a master's degree in Secondary Teacher Education from Harvard University. She is a second-year education policy PhD student at the University of Pennsylvania where she studies minority male teachers, teacher certification exams, and the school-to-prison pipeline. Tina has completed internships with the Southern Education Foundation, the Congressional Black Caucus, and Office of the First Lady Michelle Obama. Her work experience includes serving as a high school social studies teacher in Washington, DC where she was named the 2010 Teacher of the Year. Tina has also served as a fundraiser for President Barack

Obama and the Memphis Grizzlies, a community engagement manager for DC Public Schools, and as a community engagement director for the city of Washington, DC.

Strategy: The committee in partnership with the lead consultant and UAPB Department of Education, will access information from the Arkansas Department of Education along with resources to be identified. Thereafter, the committee will evaluate the benefit, challenges, quantitative and qualitative cost associated with a consolidated school district. It is our belief this approach will allow the community to receive an approach that is empathetic yet focused on the evidence presented. The study will be housed at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff Department of Education. Many student organizations, retired and current teacher groups, parent associations and Education Foundations will be interviewed as a to understand if all data presented is reflective of the daily activities within the district. While we are not able to cover every issue possible, the goal is to conclude with a document that lends a solution to our educational landscape.

Case indicators and Factors Driving the Consolidation Study:

Enrollment Trends (state, regional, county, district, and school-level)

Funding (assets and liabilities)

Facilities Assessment (capacity, condition, current utility usage, inventory, safety)

Academic Opportunity (curriculum expansion, out-of-school time programming)

Employment (shortages, opportunities for growth, potential areas of loss)

ESSA index parameters scores

Timeline: 8 to 12 months

It is ideal that the committee completes phases of the session and have community meetings around what has been discovered. It is important that the community is aware of the discussion taking place and have a chance to provide input prior to the completion of the study.

Periodic findings of the feasibility study will be released to the public via community meetings. The meetings are to communicate and obtain feedback to ensure a large percentage of the challenges associated with each section of the study have been addressed.

As CEO of Go Forward Pine Bluff, I extend my appreciation to the committee members for their willingness to address such a dynamic question in our community. This is an exciting time in our community and I encourage all citizens to be involved in the process of change.