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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bentonville Schools to Expand into Artificial Intelligence Field
\$1.1 million Grant from the Walton Family Foundation Supports Advanced Studies

Ignite At a Glance

- 250 students currently enrolled in Ignite Professional Studies program within eight career fields.
- 350 community/business partners support Ignite.
- 100% of Ignite students graduate from high school.
- 98% of Ignite students receive six hours of college credit before high school graduation.
- 100% of Ignite students participate in professional internship opportunities.

Bentonville, Ark.—February 12, 2019—Bentonville Schools will expand its Ignite Professional Studies program to include advanced studies in robotics, artificial intelligence, biomedical and biotechnology. The expansion is possible thanks to a \$1.1 million grant from the Walton Family Foundation. The funding will encourage students across all socioeconomic backgrounds to consider a career in these fields.

“This gift from the Walton Family Foundation is a game changer,” said Bentonville Schools Superintendent Dr. Debbie Jones. “What our students are going to encounter in terms of medicine, intelligence from machines and genomics is something most students only experience in college or at a post-graduate level. This expansion will change the career trajectory for our students,” she added.

In addition, these monies will also be of notable support to the existing construction management program already offered within Ignite. The funds will allow for the purchase of equipment to help students better understand design and drafting within the construction industry.

The Walton Family Foundation works to improve the quality of life in Northwest Arkansas by supporting education, arts and culture, entrepreneurship and initiatives that help preserve the region’s sense of place. “An innovative program like Ignite is a perfect fit for the foundation’s goal to foster a world-class system of schools,” said Home Region Program Director Karen Minkel. “We want to help Bentonville and Northwest Arkansas become one of the best places to live and work in the U.S., and a high-quality education system is an essential part of that effort.” The grant will allow for further recruitment of low-income high school students and offers a post-graduation plan of action for each program participant.

About Bentonville Schools

Established in 1841, Bentonville Schools is the premier public school system in Arkansas serving almost 17,000 students in kindergarten through 12th grade. Twenty-one schools, spanning more than 140 miles across Northwest Arkansas, call the district home. Bentonville Schools is critically acclaimed for its academics, arts and athletics and is committed to excellence through innovative, inspiring learning experiences. For more information, visit **district.bentonvillek12.org**

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