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PRESS RELEASE

UNIFIED EFFORT AIMS TO ENSURE ALL CHILDREN IN ARKANSAS REACH THEIR POTENTIAL Equity Leaders Action Network to reduce racial disparities in early childhood systems

**Little Rock, Arkansas
July 5, 2016**

Jackie Govan, Equity Leaders Action Network (ELAN) Fellow for the State of Arkansas, has initiated a project that will promote racial equity by improving teacher competencies in working with African American male children. Working with a newly created state ELAN Advisory Committee, Ms. Govan will create and implement new professional development offerings for early childhood professionals that focus on working with children of color, particularly African American male children.

The ELAN project is a priority for the Arkansas Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSSCO), which strongly supports ELAN's ongoing principles and commitments. Jackie Govan, Director of the HSSCO said, "As a State, when we talk about equity, we mean that race should not be a predictor of health status, education, birth outcomes or the community conditions for young children." Ms. Govan, along with her state team, will take action to reduce disparities by influencing the choices and decisions made by the state's early childhood professionals in working with children of color. Ms. Govan will share learnings with practitioners in the state, and work to change early childhood policies and practices to support improved teacher competencies.

The ELAN is a project of the [BUILD Initiative](#), which for years has promoted early childhood systems work that identifies and addresses the root causes of disparities and supports state remedies to address them. A focused effort across 20 states, the District of Columbia and Guam, including Little Rock, Arkansas, the ELAN is composed of 38 fellows with responsibility at the state or county level for early childhood systems. Over the next three years, ELAN fellows will work together to identify, address and take action on inequities based on race, ethnicity, language and culture in our early childhood state systems.

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