Arkansas Rural Education Association Names Dr. Matt McClure as Next Executive Director

The Board of Directors of the Arkansas Rural Education Association (AREA) voted unanimously to approve Dr. Matt McClure as the organization's next Executive Director. McClure will succeed current Executive Director Dennis Copeland, who will retire in December after 47 years of dedicated service to rural schools across Arkansas including four as Assistant Director and five as Executive Director.



Dr. Matt McClure

Dr. McClure brings more than 25 years of experience in public education, legislative advocacy, and organizational leadership to the role. A nationally recognized education leader and the 2010 Arkansas Superintendent of the Year, he is widely respected for his ability to lead school systems, influence policy, and build strong partnerships that advance student success.

"Dr. McClure is uniquely positioned to lead AREA into its next chapter," said Dr. Nathan Morris, President of AREA. "His deep understanding of education policy, combined with his proven ability to build meaningful relationships with legislators and school leaders, will ensure rural schools across Arkansas continue to have a strong and effective advocate."

McClure previously served as Superintendent of the Cross County School District, where he led a successful fiscal turnaround, improved student outcomes, and implemented innovative instructional practices that helped position the district as a statewide leader. He has also worked extensively with state and national policymakers, testifying before the Arkansas House and Senate Education Committees and contributing to legislation that has strengthened digital learning and school improvement efforts.

Throughout his career, McClure has demonstrated a strong commitment to rural education. His leadership experience includes serving as President of ASCD, where he represented more than 175,000 educators worldwide and championed whole child education, instructional leadership, and professional growth. He also serves on the board of the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET), where he supports efforts to strengthen educator effectiveness and advance high-quality instruction nationwide.

In addition to his work in public education, McClure brings experience as an entrepreneur and organizational leader, having successfully built and managed multi-site operations. His background in strategic planning, governance, and organizational growth will further strengthen AREA's mission and expand its impact.

"I am honored by the Board's confidence and excited for the opportunity to serve Arkansas's rural schools in this role," said McClure. "AREA has made tremendous progress in recent years under strong leadership, and I look forward to building on that foundation to further support school leaders, advocate for students, and strengthen communities across our state."

AREA leaders expressed confidence that McClure will continue the positive momentum established during Copeland's tenure, strengthening advocacy efforts, expanding partnerships, and ensuring rural districts remain at the forefront of education policy conversations.

For more information about the Arkansas Rural Education Association, please visit www.ArkansasRuralEd.com.