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Closing Achievement Gap at Core of New Alliance

Tonight at 5 p.m.; PTA, Spelman College, Atlanta Public Schools
announce partnership at press conference; kick off weekend of events

ATLANTA (February 15, 2008) – Every school year a gap in academic achievement persists across the U.S. between minority and disadvantaged students and their white counterparts. That’s why closing the achievement gap is at the heart of a unique alliance of four key parent, teacher and education institutions—the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA), Georgia PTA, Spelman College Education Department and Atlanta Public Schools (APS).

Tonight, leaders of all four organizations will kickoff a lineup of events by announcing this unprecedented alliance at a press conference at Spelman College at 5 p.m. in the Albro-Falconer-Manley Science Center. The effort aims to create pilot programs, community-based projects, and resources within our communities to close the achievement gap for underrepresented children.

“PTA was founded by parents who fought for social justice issues more than 110 years ago. Although times have changed, our focus has not. But addressing the achievement gap can’t mean ‘business as usual’ because every community is different. Partnering with Spelman and APS is going to give us the opportunity to create ‘out of the box’ tactics to make every child’s potential a reality,” said Warlene Gary, PTA’s national chief executive officer.

After the announcement, hundreds of parents, educators, and other child advocates are expected to participate in a town hall meeting at 6 p.m. at Spelman’s Sisters Chapel. National experts are slated to sit on a panel at the meeting, called “Closing the Gap, Opening Doors,” that will take an honest look at the achievement gap from a variety of perspectives while examining ways to close it for urban and underserved students.

"Spelman College is honored to recognize one of our own, Selena Sloan Bulter, class of 1888, in this exciting event to establish a college-based PTA model designed to focus attention on the importance of parent involvement in schools nationwide. I am certain that Ms. Butler would be pleased to know that her work to establish PTAs throughout African American communities in Atlanta, the state of Georgia and nationwide are being revitalized in the 21st century. This is a wonderful commemoration of her legacy," said Beverly Daniel Tatum, president of Spelman College.

“We have lived through many changes during the history of Georgia PTA. Our purpose, our mission and our policies remain the same... For us to give to all children, regardless of whose

children they are, a faith in goodness, beauty, honor in the rightness of the universe and in God,” said Leslie Cushman, Georgia PTA’s president.

The featured panelists will include:

- **Karen B. McLean Donaldson** (Moderator)
Professor and Chairperson, Education Department, Spelman College
- **Warlene Gary**
Chief Executive Officer, National PTA
- **Angela Ferris Watkins**
Professor, Department of Psychology, Spelman College
- **Arletta T. Brinson**
Executive Director, Office of Student Programs and Services, Atlanta Public Schools
- **Norman H. Thomas, Sr.**
Former President, Georgia Parent Teacher Association
- **Morna Gailor**
Parent, Morningside Elementary School PTA

On Saturday, February 16, representatives of the organizations will honor Selena Sloan Butler, one of National PTA’s founders and a Spelman alumna, in a special gravesite ceremony at Oakland Cemetery at 10 a.m. Following the ceremony, representatives will take part in a rededication rally of Selena Sloan Butler Park just blocks away.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Friday, February 15

(Note: Events are at Spelman College; 350 Spelman Lane S.W. Atlanta, GA 30314-4399.)

5 p.m. – Press Conference (open to media and public); Location: Albro-Falconer-Manley Science Center

5:20 p.m. – VIP reception (open to media)

6 p.m. – Town Hall Meeting (open to the public); Location: Sisters Chapel

Saturday, February 16

10 a.m. – Special ceremony at Selena Sloan Butler gravesite at Oakland Cemetery; 248 Oakland Avenue, SE (open to the public)

10:30 a.m. – Rededication Rally of Selena Sloan Butler Park; 98 William Holmes Borders Drive NE, Atlanta, Georgia 30312 (open to the public)

About PTA

PTA comprises more than 5.5 million parents and other concerned adults devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of parent involvement in schools. PTA flourishes in more than 25,000 school communities nationwide by harnessing the energy and talents of millions of volunteers to be: voices for all children; relevant resources for families and communities; and champions for the education and well-being of every child. PTA is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Membership in PTA is open to anyone who is concerned about the education, health, and welfare of children and youth.

Spelman College

Founded in 1881, Spelman College is the only historically Black college in the nation to be included on the U.S. News and World Report's list of top 75 "Best Liberal Arts Colleges —

Undergraduate," 2005. Located in Atlanta, Ga., this private, historically Black women's college boasts outstanding alumnae, including Children's Defense Fund Founder Marian Wright Edelman; U.S. Foreign Service Director General Ruth Davis; authors Tina McElroy Ansa and Pearl Cleage and actress LaTanya Richardson. More than 83 percent of the full-time faculty members have Ph.D.s or other terminal degrees and the student-faculty ratio is 12:1. Annually, nearly one-third of Spelman students receive degrees in the sciences. The students number more than 2,186 and represent 43 states and 34 foreign countries. For more information regarding Spelman College, visit: www.spelman.edu.

About Atlanta Public Schools

Atlanta Public Schools are changing children's lives every day. Under the leadership of its Superintendent, Dr. Beverly L. Hall, Atlanta Public Schools is becoming one of the nation's highest performing urban school systems. In 2007, all 62 APS elementary schools made Adequate Yearly Progress, the only urban district in the nation to achieve that distinction. All APS students benefit from the district's focus on teacher quality, intensive math and science instruction, single-gender middle schools, high school small learning communities, and its nationally-acclaimed Project GRAD program. Although 75 percent of the district's 51,000 students live below the poverty line, APS accepts no excuses for poor academic performance. Atlanta Public Schools is also one of Atlanta's largest employers with 6,650 full-time personnel, including 3,643 teachers. For more information visit www.atlanta.k12.ga.us

About Georgia PTA

The Georgia PTA serves as a link between the national organization and membership within the state. A person who joins a local Parent Teacher Association automatically becomes a member of the National PTA and the Georgia PTA. The Georgia PTA represents over 330,000 members at the state legislature, state board of education and other education and child-focused organizations; provides support and training for local PTAs through workshops and publications; coordinates special projects to promote the welfare of Georgia's children and youth, and much more. Georgia PTA is also the proud state to be home of two of three founders for National PTA.