Dear [Name and address],

As the world becomes more competitive and complex, our nation’s future depends on the education of all our young people. West Virginia is determined that students will be ready for the world that awaits them. The West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE), along with its key partners, has embraced the six key elements of 21st century learning and, through a systemic approach, is implementing a learning model that assures West Virginia students will have the knowledge and skills needed to succeed and prosper today and tomorrow.

As the WVDE pursues this vision, it is also committed to ensuring that students who have been unable to demonstrate the requisite foundation knowledge and skills will receive the targeted instruction and supports necessary to make the vision a reality for all.

During the recent school year, selected educators and community members met as a task force to consider the vital elements of moving to mastery and beyond those students whose progress is challenged by disabilities, impoverished environments, and insufficient expectations. The group considered longitudinal state assessment data of these students, their common needs, the research on closing achievement gaps between these students and their peers, and processes and infrastructure that could support a system that addresses the needs of these students.

The Task Force created the Strategic Plan to Improve Results for Students in High Need Populations which has been widely distributed to groups across state. Seventeen Priority Recommendations emerged from the work of the group and are included in both the Strategic Plan and its Executive Summary. The evolution of the Task Force into a permanent Consortium for Closing the Achievement Gap is one of those recommendations. The Consortium is intended to be an active group that includes broad representation. It will be expected to react to issues presented to it and serve to communicate to the broader community that progressively closing the achievement gap requires the involvement and support of multiple stakeholders.

This Consortium will eventually be a working group of 25 - 30 members appointed by the State Superintendent of Schools from the following constituencies:

- Community members representing the targeted populations
- County and school administrators
- Parents representing the targeted populations
- Teachers at all programmatic levels who work particularly with students in the targeted populations
- Students from the targeted populations who are in postsecondary education
- West Virginia Department of Education

The Consortium will

- Receive and react, on an annual basis, information regarding progress toward student achievement, including graduation
• Receive and support development and updates to the “Closing the Achievement Gap Report”
  created by the WVDE

• Serve to advise the WVDE on issues, concerns and recommended changes

• Support the implementation of initiatives and programs to improve results for the targeted
  populations

• Communicate the work of the Consortium through its own networks and those the Consortium
  establishes

I am inviting you to be a member of this Consortium for Closing Achievement Gaps because of your
expertise, experience and commitment to the educational success of students who are challenged by the
various conditions of their lives and need to achieve mastery of core academic knowledge and skills to
participate confidently and successfully in the 21st century.

The West Virginia Department of Education is planning the first meeting of the Consortium to be
November 28, 2007 at the Marriott Hotel in Charleston from 9:30am to 3:30pm. Meeting and travel costs
for all Consortium members will be the responsibility of the WVDE.

The WVDE anticipates that this first meeting will be followed by four meetings during the startup year of
2008. These meetings will use both technology and face to face options. The organizational structure,
goals and specific focus areas will be largely determined by the group.

I hope you will accept this invitation to be a Consortium member and contribute your experience,
expertise and commitment to this vital effort. If you have questions or comments, please contact Dr. Lynn
Boyer, Executive Director of the Office of Special Programs, Extended and Early Learning at (304)558-
2696 extension 53241 or lboyer@access.k12.wv.us. Registration information for this first meeting is
included and should be submitted by November 5, 2007.

Sincerely,

Steven L. Paine
State Superintendent of Schools

SP:LB:jly
c:/MyDocuments/Dr.PaineConsortiumInvitation