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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WHAT: Faith, Families & Schools Conference 2009
WHEN: Fri., September 25, 2009, 8:30 a.m.–3 p.m.; keynotes 9 a.m.–10 a.m. & 12:30 p.m.–12:50 p.m.
WHERE: Cromwell: Crowne Plaza Hotel, 100 Berlin Road (CT Route 372; I-91 exit 21)

Hundreds of CT Leaders, Citizens to Join Faith/Families/Schools Alliance

MIDDLETOWN, Conn. — Community, faith, and education leaders from around the state will gather at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Cromwell Friday as part of an ambitious plan to work together toward transforming education for Connecticut's children.

The second annual Faith, Families & Schools conference will build on a year-long effort to form partnerships with the aim of tackling the most pressing challenges in Connecticut's educational system, including the achievement gap between white students and students of color. The U.S. Department of Education, which seeks to encourage similar alliances across the country, has cited Connecticut's effort as a model.

"We're proud to have the support of the U.S. Department of Education," said Veronica Marion, co-coordinator of the CT Parent Information and Resource Center (CT PIRC), which is sponsoring the conference in collaboration with the State Education Resource Center (SERC) and the CT State Department of Education (CSDE). "In this tough economic climate, we need to take responsibility for solving problems together."

The faith, families, and schools alliance is based on the premise that each has complementary strengths that can contribute to students' success. Churches, for example, serve an important function when schools are closed and provide youngsters the opportunity to work side-by-side with people of different generations.

"We've long believed that families have a critical role in Connecticut's educational system," Marion said. "Now we've begun to appreciate that the families' churches and synagogues and mosques and other places of worship have a critical role to play, too. They're a big part of people's lives and they have a lot of good ideas."

More than 300 people are registered to attend the conference. George A. Coleman, deputy commissioner of the CSDE, will deliver the morning keynote address around 9:00 a.m. The Rev. Josh Pawelek of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Coalition for Equity and Justice will deliver the afternoon keynote at 12:30 p.m.

The conference also will feature panel discussions and dialogue sessions offering the different perspectives of faith and community organizations, of schools and educators, and of families. Participants will be invited to attend another session in March to follow up on the goals they have established.

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The State Education Resource Center (SERC) provides research-based professional development and resources to Connecticut educators, service providers, families, and other partners to support our vision: EQUITY. EXCELLENCE. EDUCATION.

The Parent Information and Resource Center (CT PIRC) is coordinated by SERC and is partially funded by a grant through the U.S. Department of Education. SERC and CT PIRC can be reached at (860) 632-1485, through their toll-free number for families at (800) 842-8678, and through their Web sites, www.ctserc.org and www.ctpirc.org.

