

# SYMPOSIUM

2013



Black Alliance for Educational Options

March 14-16, 2013  
The Peabody Orlando

## DOCUMENTATION REPORT



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# Reflections from BAEO Leadership

**O**n March 14-16, we kept our promise to inform, inspire and empower over 600 BAEO members and supporters from 29 states – the highest level of participation in six years! As always, the program was filled with incredibly inspirational speakers and dynamic concurrent session facilitators and special feature presenters. Participants used such words as *overflowing with talent, uplifting, recharged, engaging, hopeful, empowering, enlightening and reflective* to describe BAEO Symposium 2013 and its deep impact on their lives.


The Symposium's theme of **College Readiness: The New North Star** was transformational! BAEO unequivocally believes all children deserve high-quality K-12 educational options that prepare them to be "college ready" and earn a college degree – a key factor in closing the success gap, eradicating poverty, and transforming communities. Over the course of the Symposium – during casual conversations before and after sessions and during meals – participants increasingly connected the importance of K-12 education preparing students to be college-ready with BAEO's two primary objectives: to ensure that all Black children have access to high-quality educational options and that their parents are empowered to access those options. Participants concluded that college readiness is an essential, compelling purpose for BAEO's continuing struggle on behalf of our children and their families.

The Symposium featured sessions on the Common Core State Standards as a platform to re-imagine teaching and learning so that all student graduates from high school are prepared for post-secondary education. Several participants toured the Ocoee Middle School, an Apple distinguished school for its innovative uses of technology to improve student engagement and outcomes. Many participants enrolled in Apple's 21st century teaching and learning environment for using current technology and apps to help students meet the *Common Core State Standards*.

Over 100 rising high school juniors and seniors participated in our first ever, two-day **College Readiness and Success Boot Camp**, which was led by coaches from Beyond 12, an organization which provides high school and college students nationwide with personalized

coaching and technology for succeeding in college. Another Symposium-first was the **Elected Official Awards Ceremony** which recognized 16 elected officials from across the nation who actively supported policies and programs that give Black parents more high-quality choices for their children's education.

Symposium 2013 also provided an opportunity for BAEO to increase its social media impact, which allows our message to reach even more concerned citizens. During the first two days of the Symposium, BAEO had more Twitter mentions than we have had in six months and added 197 new members!

While viewing the pictures and reading the quotations in this Documentation Report, click the  to view video of the Symposium's event. You will be able to relive their messages and reflect on their meaning for your role in BAEO's mission in the education reform movement. We hope you will also share the video and pictures with your colleagues, parents, students, members of your faith communities, and elected officials.

As we prepare for BAEO Symposium 2014, stay connected with BAEO. Let us know the actions you are taking to create high-quality educational options for children of low-income and working-class Black families in your community so that high school graduates will be college-ready. Let us know of presenters and participants we should invite. We look forward to seeing you in New Orleans, Louisiana in March 20-22, 2014!



Howard Fuller  
Chair  
Board of Directors



Deborah M. McGriff  
Board of Directors  
and Chair,  
Program Planning  
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Kenneth Campbell  
President

# Convening Advocates of Parental Choice



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**650** Registered Participants from **26** States

Low-Income and  
Working-Class  
Parents  
**25%**

Other Ed Reform  
Advocates  
**24%**

Emerging Leaders  
Ages 16-36  
**21%**

Educators  
**19%**

Elected  
Officials  
**6%**

Clergy  
**5%**

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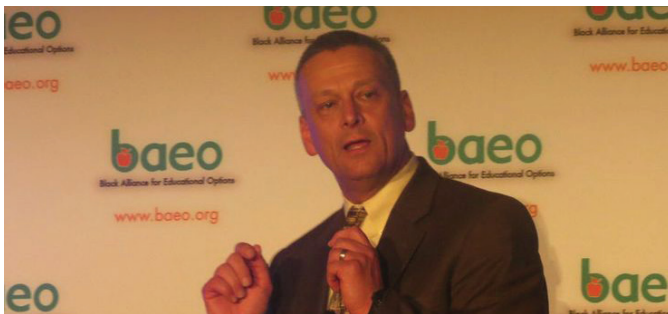
# Opening Ceremony and Dinner

Students from High School of Recording Arts open Symposium 2013 with a powerful performance!

*"Salute to the youth, salute to the troops, salute to the schools that make the dreams come true!"*



Florida's Education Commissioner Tony Bennett, a long-standing proponent of parental choice and education reform, delivered a heartfelt welcome. He emphasized, "It's time for the closing argument in support of education reform. Our kids don't have time to wait."



**Tony Bennett**  
Florida's Education Commissioner

*"We have no time to waste . . . for setting high academic standards . . . and for forming school-family-community partnerships to support those standards."*



**Bishop Cheryl McBride Brown**

*"When you talk about what's going on, say, I'm there!"*

*"When you talk about school choice, say, I'm for it."*

*"Say your name! Say your name!"*

# Opening Ceremony and Dinner

**B**AEO recognized 16 elected officials from across the nation who actively supported policies and programs that empower Black parents to have high-quality educational options for their children, including ed reform pioneer, Annette Polly Williams.



**E**ach year, BAEO's Board Chair recognizes supporters who have made significant contributions to the ed reform movement.



Jeanne Allen, Founder and President, The Center for Education Reform receives the 2013 BAEO Board Chair Award



T. Willard Fair, President and CEO, Urban League of Greater Miami receives the 2013 BAEO Board Chair Award

## 2013 BAEO Elected Official Awards

### HALL OF FAME AWARD

#### KEVIN P. CHAVOUS

FORMER DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CITY  
COUNCIL MEMBER

#### DWIGHT EVANS

PENNSYLVANIA STATE REPRESENTATIVE

#### ANNETTE POLLY WILLIAMS

FORMER WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE

#### ANTHONY WILLIAMS

PENNSYLVANIA STATE SENATOR

### CHAMPION AWARD

#### MARCUS BRANDON

NORTH CAROLINA STATE REPRESENTATIVE

#### CHUCK ESPY

MISSISSIPPI STATE REPRESENTATIVE

#### ALISHA MORGAN

GEORGIA STATE REPRESENTATIVE

#### PATRICK WILLIAMS

LOUISIANA STATE REPRESENTATIVE

### ADVOCACY AWARD

#### AUSTIN BADON

LOUISIANA STATE REPRESENTATIVE

#### JOHN BARNES

OHIO STATE REPRESENTATIVE

#### VANESSA LOWERY BROWN

PENNSYLVANIA STATE REPRESENTATIVE

#### SAMPSON JACKSON

MISSISSIPPI STATE SENATOR

#### PATRICK JEFFERSON

LOUISIANA STATE REPRESENTATIVE

#### BILL PATMON

OHIO STATE REPRESENTATIVE

#### LEDRIKKA THIERRY

LOUISIANA STATE REPRESENTATIVE

# Symposium Sponsors

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Jerry Stephenson  
Anthony Williams  
Johnathan Williams



# First Timers Orientation

Over 400 participants attended the first timers orientation to receive an overview of Symposium, the history of BAEO and to learn more about the high quality educational options BAEO supports.



*"We like to have at least 25% of our participants be first timers so we can have people with new ideas and energies."*

*"One of the things you will always hear about BAEO is that we support all of the options."*



**650** Registrants

First-Time Participants  
**428 (66%)**

# Visit to an Apple Distinguished School

Principal Sharyn Gabriel conducted a tour of Ocoee Middle School, an Apple Distinguished School, for Symposium participants. The diverse student population of 1500 students use iPod Touches, iPads, iMacs, MacBook, Skype, and many other tools for immediate feedback on learning, to find information quickly, and engage in project learning.



*"The school visit was an eye opener. Seeing how relaxed and comfortable the students were, their level of performance, and how tech-savvy the teachers were really impressed me."*



*"I could see how technology for teaching and learning can turn passive learners into engaged, life-long learners."*

## Getting to the Core with iPad

Presenters from Apple created a 21st Century teaching and learning classroom, demonstrating the use of iPads and a variety of apps to help students meet the *Common Core State Standards*. These standards require updated curriculum, coordinated professional development, and ready access to Open Education Resource materials.



*"I learned how to make a book read to you, how to split the keyboard, and how to work a white board app."*

*"Our family needs an iPad."*

*"The demonstrated apps and other tips were new for me. I'll take them all with me."*





# Symposium Planning Team



**Deborah McGriff**  
*Chair, Program Planning Committee*



**Kenneth Campbell**  
*President, Black Alliance for Educational Options*



**Jacqueline McGriff Cooper**  
*Chief of Staff, Black Alliance for Educational Options*



**Tiffany Forrester**  
*Policy and Research Director, Black Alliance for Educational Options*



**Robert Pavlik**  
*Symposium Consultant*



**Tracie Craft**  
*Mobilization and Advocacy Strand Leader*

## Documentary Film Screening

### American Promise

Filmmakers and parents, Michele Stephenson and Joe Brewster, turned the cameras on themselves as their son began school at a renowned independent college prep school. Symposium participants watched the family grapple with the meaning of a “good education,” the harsh realities facing young Black boys in today’s schools, and a steadfast desire to put their son on a successful path. *American Promise* has become a comprehensive, cross-platform campaign aimed at engaging parents, youth, educators and community leaders in efforts to close the achievement gap in education.



# College Readiness and Success Boot Camp

The first ever two-day College Readiness and Success Boot Camp kicked off with a documentary film screening of *First Generation*, which features Golden Globe nominee Blair Underwood narrating the story of four high school students who set out to break the cycle of poverty and bring hope to their families and communities by pursuing a college education. Over 100 rising high school juniors and seniors, many themselves first generation college applicants, viewed the documentary as a foundation for the a day-long Boot Camp for college readiness and success.

Two experienced college coaches from Beyond 12, an organization that provides high school and college students nationwide with personalized coaching and technology for succeeding in college, joined Bishop Cheryl McBride Brown and BAEO's Ethan Ashley, to facilitate sessions with the students that explored career hopes, college entrance requirements and personal strengths in developing a plan for college readiness and success.



*"Enjoyed meeting young people from all over and hearing about what they would like to do professionally."*

*"They made us be creative, and they pushed us to step outside our comfort zones with interacting and presenting."*

*"Your presentation made me think a lot about my career and plans after graduation. I have so many dreams, but I know I can't live them all. Our talk at the conference really gave me an insight on life – you really can't give up on your dreams and goals no matter what."*

*"The statistics affecting African-Americans were very informative."*



# Annual Seminar on Education Policy and Parental Choice

Elected officials and educators shared experiences and learned how legislative policy affects the development and implementation of high-quality schools of choice and how state and local leaders use policy and legislation to promote college readiness. Elected officials left Symposium with an understanding of effective parental choice policies and how these policies impact successful development and implementation of parental choice programs and initiatives.



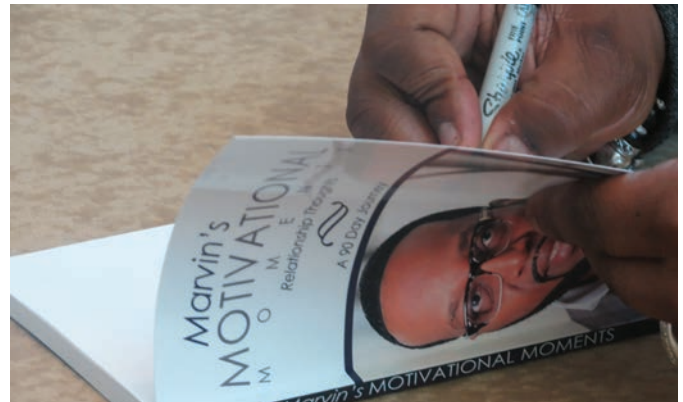
*"Great to hear that others endure some of the same suspicion and disrespect."*



*"Good story sharing and helpful for building relationships."*



# General Sessions



## Dr. Marvin L. Sapp

“Many of our children are repeating the lives of their parents and grandparents. Our challenge as adults is to remind our children they do not need to relive their family history. Their challenge is to go after their destiny.

... Our responsibility is to stretch ourselves to do things we have never done before for our children to get results we never thought we could. We need to engage in the processes of transformation of our thinking, relocation out of our comfort zone, isolation from people who hold us back, communication and separation.”



## Funders Panel

A panel of BAEO funders expressed enthusiasm for the growing national discussion and legislative support for parental choice and the increased community involvement in conversations about what school reform should look like. Their major area of concern was closing schools before districts are ready to open new schools they know will work.

The funders especially value grant applications from organizations that have passion and capacity for involving parents as active partners, building a broad base of political and parental support, and fulfilling their promises for delivering common work uncommonly well.

They praised BAEO for speaking truthfully, focusing tightly on its Mission, and working especially well with legislative, philanthropic and other education reform stakeholders. Their recommendations for funding BAEO's future included engaging with more rich Black people who are eager to give back as well as continuing to trust itself and giving witness to its important work.



# Concurrent Sessions

## Engaging Faith Leaders in Education Reform

Presenters: Pastor Jerry Stephenson, Pastor David Craig, Pastor Shane Floyd and Vernard Gant



*"I learned how my own congregation can benefit from some of the new education reform initiatives."*

*"This session empowered me as a pastor to resume the educational charge that was launched on behalf of those that gave their lives for others to have the freedom to receive a quality education."*



*"I learned ways to help other pastors understand that they must speak out and educate members about our ongoing civil rights movement to educate our children."*

*"The session gave me insight on how my congregation can benefit from some of the new education reform initiatives."*

## Organizing and Mobilizing Families in Support of Education Reform

Presenters: Liane Barnes Jackson, Sharhonda Bossier, Guerschmide Saint-Ange, Natasha Shannon



*"Listening to the stories of the parents who so desperately wanted to provide a better life for their children had the greatest impact on me."*

*"I now understand the need to develop strong relationships for reform in my community."*



*"This session provided me with a sense of courage and perseverance to fight and speak up on what I believe no matter what!"*

*"I walk away determined to make a difference not only in my child's life but in the lives of others in my community."*

# Concurrent Sessions

## Spicy Vegetables or Upset Stomach: Doing the Work of Common Core

Presenter: Shawn Hardnett



*"This session will help me train my faculty with on-going professional development focusing on Common Core implementation."*

*"I now know how to have my students think in more depth about what they learn."*

*"The ABC challenge made the entire group participate."*

## Realizing the Promise of the Power to Choose

Presenters: Rashida Evans, Valerie Evans and BAEO State Advocacy and Chapter Leaders



*"Starting college is good, but finishing college is more important."*

*"Access to the quality college information of this workshop is power."*

*"The interaction was vital, and the real life stories/testimonies made it relevant to what's happening NOW!"*

*"YES we need to understand the curriculum in our schools, and we have to teach our students how to get financial aid and navigate college."*



# Concurrent Sessions

## Stop the Miseducation of Your Children, Pull a Parent Trigger

Presenters: Doreen Diaz and Shirley Ford



*"I am excited that this topic is getting national attention."*

*"Very forward-looking. I will be following Parent Trigger to see what impact it has going forward."*

*"My 'Aha' moment was the parent involvement in some cities and how they assisted in moving politicians and legislation."*

## Growth Mindset for the Common Core State Standards

Presenter: Eduardo Briceño



*"I discovered I am growth-minded."*

*"New learning strategies must be taught for the Core Standards."*

*"Changing my words as a parent can influence my children's growth and effort."*

*"My school is implementing ideas from the workshop on how to get adolescents fired up."*

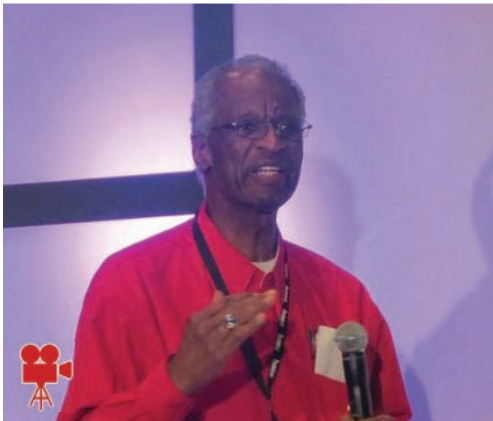
# Closing Ceremony

## Closing Remarks from the Board Chair

“Our children are our most precious gift from God. It is our responsibility to love them, to nurture them, to care for them and make sure that every one of them is educated.”

“I am pleased we were able to inform, inspire and empower, but I want you to be angry . . . Angry about the conditions our children face every day. I get mad every time I look at the data about our kids. But what makes me madder is that we aren’t mad. We’re too busy or too afraid to speak truth to power when our kids need us!”

“BAEO must be a fighting organization. We’re tired. We’re tired of seeing our children oppressed. And we are not going to let our children be oppressed another day.”



*“Dr. Fuller brought tears to my eyes with his motivation & set me on fire all over again.”*

*“Once again, BAEO provides opportunities to open your eyes, see the struggle, and learn how to change things.”*

## Closing Reception

### Da Wright Way Brass Band

Students in the Da Wright Way Brass Band from the Sophie B. Wright Charter School entertained participants with the sounds of New Orleans. BAEO Symposium 2014 will convene in New Orleans on March 20-22.





## VISION STATEMENT

Low-income and working-class Black families are empowered to choose a high-quality primary and secondary education for their children that enables them to pursue the college or career path of their choice, become economically independent adults, and engage in the practice of freedom.

## OUR MISSION

The mission of the Black Alliance for Educational Options is to increase access to high-quality educational options for Black children by actively supporting transformational education reform initiatives and parental choice policies that empower low-income and working-class Black families.

## CORE VALUES

### **It's all about OUR children.**

We are passionate about improving the futures of Black children; this passion motivates our work.

### **Black children are inherently intelligent and talented.**

We are unwavering in our belief that when provided access to equitable and adequate resources and when engaged daily by caring and committed adults, Black children can and will achieve at the highest academic levels.

### **Social justice**

Equal access to high-quality education options is essential to realize our nation's unmet promise of justice and equality and to enable Black children to fully participate in and benefit from economic and civic freedom. Wealthy families have always had choice in education; low- and moderate-income families deserve the same choices.

### **Urgency**

Black families and students cannot wait for schools to improve. Families, leaders and policymakers must act now to provide families with access to high-quality educational options, using all available means, including traditional public, private, charter schools, homeschooling, and other options.

### **Unapologetic**

We are unapologetic in our belief that the changes we seek require engagement and/or leadership by the Black community on behalf of the Black community.

### **Diversity through a narrow strip of unity**

Common commitment to high-quality educational options for Black children allows BAEO to encompass gender, generational, partisan, and ideological diversity.

### **Respectful and caring relationships**

We treat our colleagues and members with commitment, honesty, transparency, and respect.



SAVE  
THE DATE

# SYMPOSIUM 2014



Black Alliance for Educational Options

## MARCH 20-22, 2014

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Questions contact: [events@baeo.org](mailto:events@baeo.org)