

DOCUMENTATION REPORT

# SYMPOSIUM 2014



Black Alliance for Educational Options



MARCH 20-22, 2014

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## REFLECTIONS FROM BAEO LEADERSHIP

**Seize the Opportunities** was the theme for our 14th Annual Symposium held on March 20-22 in New Orleans, LA. Nearly 700 participants – the largest number in seven years – were challenged to use everyday decisions and actions to secure additional resources. They were also challenged to build relationships that improve Black children’s access to high quality educational options and that expand parental choice policies and programs for low-income, working class Black families.

The Symposium promised to inform, inspire and empower participants for their vital roles in BAEO’s mission. Our participants believed that BAEO delivered on that promise with three days of inspirational speakers, engaging facilitators of the concurrent sessions, and visits to high-quality schools serving low-income children and their families.

With this *Documentation Report*, we hope you will enjoy reading key quotes from presenters, viewing the pictures, and reading responses from participants about their take-always, resolutions and plans.

Symposium events began on Thursday, March 20, with the **Welcome and First Timers Orientation** on BAEO’s vision, history and initiatives. We are grateful to this year’s host region of Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi for their hospitality during the **Networking Reception** in which friends reconnected and all of us met new partners in the struggle.

The **Opening Ceremony and President’s Dinner** featured a fire starter presentation by Taleavia Cole of the Milwaukee Collegiate Academy. Dr. Steve Perry called us to action during his keynote address:

*“We spend too much time thinking about what we should be thinking about instead of doing something about it.”*

Two compelling documentary films followed Dr. Perry’s compelling keynote. Emerging leaders ages 16-35 discussed and engaged in a spoken word event after viewing **TEACHED** which exposes inequality in our nation’s schools. Others viewed **We the Parents** which documents the courageous efforts of parents to close their children’s failing school in California.

On Friday morning, nearly 100 participants visited one of four **high-quality schools** with proven track records for excellence. Back at the Hyatt Regency, Dr. Andre Perry engaged other participants in a community conversation about progress and challenges with **New Orleans Education Reform**. Throughout the day, seasoned coaches from **Beyond 12** and the **United Negro College Fund** facilitated our second **College Readiness and Success Boot Camp** for pre-registered high school juniors and seniors. Concurrent Sessions also focused on strategies for advocacy, mobilization, and closing the achievement gap, including sessions on the Common Core and Getting Deeper to the Core with iPad.



Friday's **Lunch and General Session** featured Derrell Bradford, Dr. Rod Paige, and the Rev. Dr. Marvin L. Sapp. Board Chair and Founder Dr. Howard Fuller and President Kenneth Campbell invited questions, comments and recommendations from members attending the **Annual Meeting of the General Membership**.

Dr. Fuller's keynote during the Board Chair's Closing Ceremony deeply moved all of us to Seize the Opportunities on behalf of our children:

*"If you leave the Symposium and go home and don't do anything to educate kids, you have failed us! Don't be a hotel militant."*

BAEO members in Tennessee have already begun to work with BAEO staff on plans for Symposium 2015. During the **Closing Reception**, they reminded us to mark our calendars for Symposium 2015 which convenes in Memphis on March 19-21.

By the end of the Symposium, 96% of the participants who completed an online survey believed that their attendance at the Symposium increased their knowledge and support for parental choice and/or transformational reform initiatives. We extend our deep gratitude to all presenters, facilitators, field organizers and BAEO staff who built on the Symposium's tradition of excellence to inform, inspire and empower our members and collaborators.

The struggle continues to improve access to high-quality educational options for our Black children throughout the United States. Thank you very much for your contributions to BAEO's vision and mission.



**Howard Fuller**  
*Chair*  
BAEO Board of Directors

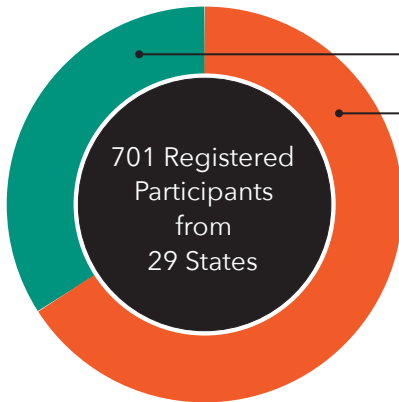


**Kenneth Campbell**  
*President*  
Black Alliance for  
Educational Options



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

# CONVENING ADVOCATES OF PARENTAL CHOICE



First Timer Participants 66%

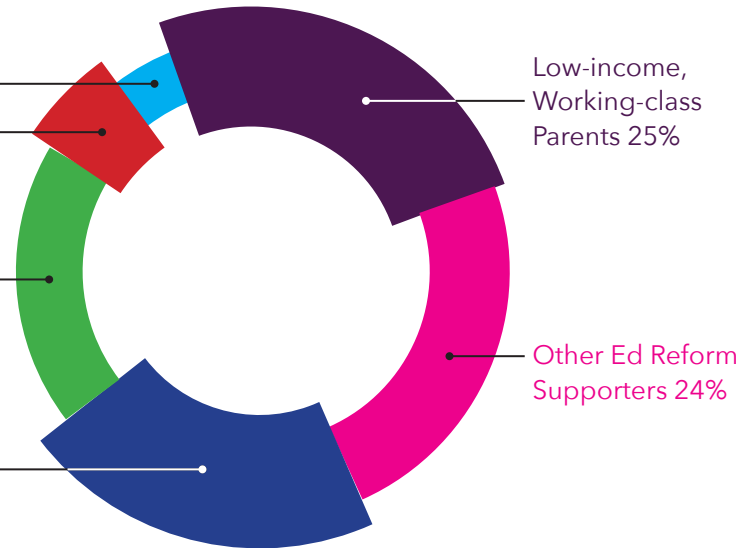
Returning Participants 34%

701 Registered  
Participants  
from  
29 States

Clergy 5%  
Elected Officials 6%

Educators 19%

Emerging Leaders 21%



Low-income,  
Working-class  
Parents 25%

Other Ed Reform  
Supporters 24%

## CREDITS

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## FIRST TIMERS ORIENTATION

Freedom is an illusion if we only get to choose from mediocrity, in our case if our children only get to attend mediocre schools. Dr. Fuller overviewed BAEO's history for advocating for changes in policies, funding and types of schools which support parents' right to choose the best schools for their children.



*"Wow! If this man ain't breaking education down! Education in America guarantees you nothing, but you have nothing without an education."*

*"Hearing Howard Fuller at Symposium makes me wish school choice critics would hear him too. He demonlised the 'Narrative.'"*





# OPENING CEREMONY AND PRESIDENT'S DINNER





# OPENING CEREMONY AND PRESIDENT'S DINNER



Our children are suffering and some are literally dying in our schools . . . because of what we're NOT doing what we must do. We are more interested in making friends with people who don't get "choice" and who are more interested in keeping their jobs than making differences for our children. Dr. Perry asked why are not fighting harder and using ourselves as our greatest asset for creating real change in local schools.

*"Dr. Perry, you're right.  
We're done making friends.  
We must make a difference."*

*"How come we are not fighting  
harder to get good schools?  
Our greatest challenge is in our communities."*

*"Dr. Perry killed it tonight!  
Wake up everybody!"*

. . . I got dreams to think about.  
I got goals that I want to achieve and  
I'm trying to put it in a way so that you  
can understand the situation that I'm facing.

My intelligence is being insulted by all  
the false accusations. I am tired of sitting  
here waiting listening to your expectations  
when the influence you showing me  
ain't the right presentation.

I mean you said you want me to learn,  
but like did you really mean that?  
And if you did then support us by encouraging us  
and pushing us to be our best self.

*From Lil-Bit (Taleavia Cole)*





# DOCUMENTARY FILMS AND DISCUSSIONS

## EDUCATION REFORM THROUGH FILM AND SPOKEN WORD

The stories and interviews in **TEACHED** revealed what happens to children and their communities when the children attend poor quality schools. The follow-up discussion raised questions and possibilities for equitable access to high-quality education for all children.

*"If you want to inform and inspire school reform, tell your stories."*

*"Great questions by future leaders with tons of talents. Thanks."*

*"Our goal is to be ladders, not just leaders."*



## WE THE PARENTS

**We the Parents** presented scenes from recent legal battles as well as commentaries from educators, journalists and politicians for the on-going story of parents who organized to transform a failing California school for their children.

*"This kind of parent action is what it's all about."*

*"If we do not check our own schools, who will?"*

*"I could listen to this powerful discussion panel again."*





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Kevin Hinton

Jennifer Littlejohn  
Monique Pittman  
LaShundra Richmond

Jerry Stephenson  
Keita Young

## HIGH-QUALITY SCHOOL VISITS

Based on proven track records and reputations for excellence, four high-quality schools in New Orleans were selected for our participants to visit. Nearly 100 participants visited these schools:

L.B. Landry - O.P. Walker College and  
Career Preparatory High School

Mary McLeod Bethune Elementary  
School of Literature and Technology

St. Augustine High School

St. Mary's Academy



## NEW ORLEANS EDUCATION REFORM: PROMISES, PROGRESS, POSSIBILITIES

Following Katrina, opportunities emerged for transforming one of the nation's worst school systems into one of the most promising. Education leaders and government agencies as well as parents created citywide organizations to expand and monitor high-quality charter and private schools. Evidence of effectiveness is growing, and issues of accountability, racism, and funding require attention.



*"We need more entities to help community organizations run quality schools."*

*"School autonomy is not an ideological mission, but a tool to serve the children.  
Where it stops serving, we have to modify it."*

*"Dr. Clark raised an excellent question —  
are we creating a group that is only good at taking tests?"*



# COLLEGE READINESS AND SUCCESS BOOT CAMP

For approximately 85 college-bound juniors and seniors, the Boot Camp addressed the questions and resources for enrolling in college as well and the self-discipline and support systems for graduating from college. Seasoned coaches from Beyond 12 and the United Negro College Fund guided the students to stay on top of their resources, rights and responsibilities.



*"It's important to have SMART goals, a weekly schedule and networks."*

*"I learned how to do tuition organizing with grants, scholarships and loans."*



*"I took away that there is not just a No to college. There is a Yes to going to and through college!"*



## CONCURRENT SESSIONS ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE

Advocacy organizations that make a difference simultaneously build their leadership, gather and share information openly, and build team relationships. They also plan for what to do when the work goes well or fails.



*"Focusing on people and relationships  
builds the foundation  
for both organizing and mobilizing."*



*"Women's as well as men's perspectives  
are needed for organizing effective change."*

## THERE'S ROOM FOR YOU AT THE TABLE

Many young adults feel the "call to the tables" of school reform, and they seek wisdom for being effective "at the tables." Panelists and participants focused on building intergenerational relationships, using time, engaging in dialog and networking.



*"I need to call out my peers in excellence.  
If I don't hold them accountable,  
who will?"*



*"The next generation of education reformers  
isn't messing around. They're focused."*





## CONCURRENT SESSIONS

# EDUCATORS AND THE FIGHT FOR CHANGE WITHIN AND BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Parents and community members are looking for competent, courageous, and relentless teachers to advocate for their children's learning.



*"We have to track student success rates with high standards and highly competent instructors."*

*"It was good to see so many young people doing amazing work to serve OUR children well."*

*"Educators need to partner with human resource agencies to conduct home visits and reinforce classroom learning at home."*

## LOUISIANA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM: GIVING FAMILIES HOPE AND A NEW OPTION

The Louisiana Scholarship Program provides public funds for children of low-income families to move from low-performing schools and to local private schools.



*"It's not about me.  
It's about the children."*

*"The engagement  
and role playing were great."*

*"I will take more action when I encounter  
those who do not understand choice."*



## CONCURRENT SESSIONS GETTING TO THE CORE WITH IPAD

Apple's iPad accelerated teaching and learning effectiveness for meeting and exceeding the *Common Core State Standards*.



*"Blended learning is quickly developing, and the quality is improving. It's a real tool and not a gimmick."*

*"I love all the apps, and I'm thinking how I can use them with my students. Really enjoyed. Thank you!"*

## WHY SHOULD I SUPPORT COMMON CORE?

The *Common Core State Standards*, though not without misunderstanding and controversy, are stimulating community conversations about rigorous curriculum for building the capacity of Black children to succeed in college and careers.



*"When I return home, I plan to convene learning sessions across the city to educate parents about CCSS and tie into the business community."*

*"Following the example of our presenters, I need to talk in layperson's terms about the what, why and how of CCSS."*





## LUNCH AND GENERAL SESSION



*“Be excellent. Don’t care who gets the credit. Don’t try to be the smartest person in the room.”*



*“When God gives you a platform, use it for others!”*



*“Fourteen years is such a short amount of time for BAEO to have accomplished all that is has.” –Secretary Paige*



*“Availability of high quality options is possible for EVERY child in America.”*



## ANNUAL MEETING OF THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP

BAEO is financially solvent to continue as the nation's only Black-led organization advocating for the rights of low-income parents to choose the best schools for their children. The Board of 27 members reconstituted itself into 7 members to reflect diversity in gender, age and geographical location needed for BAEO's continued leadership in school reform for Black children and their families. BAEO changed from a coalition of independent chapters in large cities into an organization that adapts itself to national priorities for its Mission.



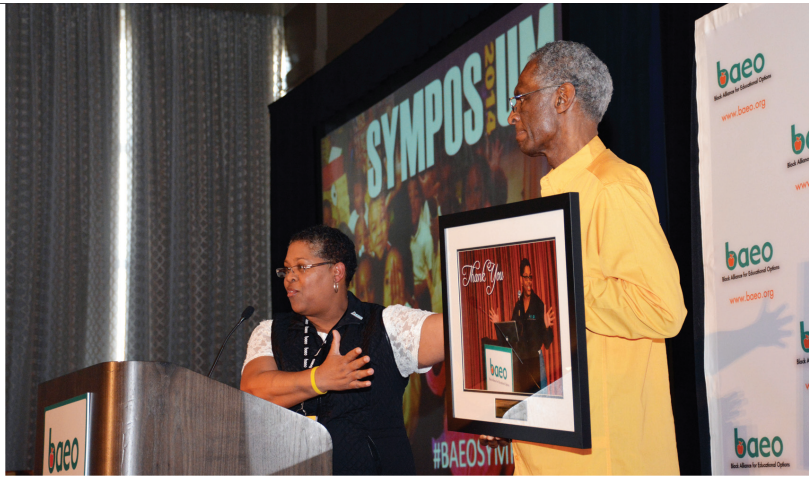
*“Thank you, Howard and Ken, for standing up for our children!”*



*“The Symposium has the most honest conversations I have ever heard about Education.”*



## BOARD CHAIR'S CLOSING CEREMONY



*"Dr. Fuller lives it . . . The Struggle Continues! Tell no lies and claim no easy victories. Face the brutal truth with an undying faith that we will overcome. Seize the time and the opportunity!!"*



*"Thank you BAEO for being our voice for choice."*  
Parent Sean Maurice



*"We seized opportunities to change our name, leadership team, curriculum, facility, and staff for our unwavering mission to prepare our scholars to consider and complete college."*  
Teacher Kwamee Green

## CLOSING RECEPTION



*"Can't wait until next year to be with others passionate about educating our children!"*

## 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.



# SYMPOSIUM

2015  
15<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY



Black Alliance for Educational Options

**MARCH 19-21, 2015**

**The Peabody Hotel  
Memphis, Tennessee**

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DATE**