

# SYMPOSIUM 2007: THE SEVENTH ANNUAL MEETING OF BAEO

PARENTAL CHOICE ADVOCATES: FIGHTING FOR CHANGE, ACHIEVING RESULTS

MARCH 22-24, 2007

PHILADELPHIA MARRIOTT DOWNTOWN

PHILADELPHIA, PA



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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome Message from the Board of Directors and President:

We are grateful to the more than 1,000 participants who joined us in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Our theme this year, Parental Advocates: Fighting for Change, Achieving Results, reflected the mission of BAEO: **To actively support parental choice to empower families and increase quality educational options for Black children.**

Featured speakers included Pennsylvania State Representative Dwight Evans and national award-winning teacher Linda Alston. Sessions like "The HipHop Project" and Project Graduation drew standing room only audiences.

Our key objectives to inform, inspire, and empower our guests were accomplished many times over. We wish to thank this year's participants, sponsors, and especially the volunteers who helped to make Symposium 2007 a transforming event.

Mark your calendars for Symposium 2008 in New Orleans, Louisiana from February 27–March 1.

In the Struggle,



Howard Fuller  
Chair, National Board of  
Directors

A handwritten signature in black ink that appears to read "Howard Fuller".



Deborah M. McGriff  
Chair,  
Symposium Planning Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink that appears to read "Deborah M. McGriff".



Gerard Robinson  
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# BAILEY AND SULLIVAN LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

**S**ymposium 2007 marked the fourth installment of the Bailey and Sullivan Leadership Institute (BSLI). In true BAEO fashion, we took this opportunity to "step it up a notch." The workshop sessions this year featured small group leadership coaching sessions where participants were able to discuss their personal and professional goals and aspirations, a nuts and bolts discussion of what it takes to carry out a sound strategic plan for non-profit organizations, and concrete stories of grassroots fundraising by educators.

At this year's BSLI Luncheon, we were honored to feature our first youth keynote speaker, Kristian Smith. Kristian is a Higher Achievement scholar who graduated from the program in 8th grade. After Higher Achievement, Kristian received a scholarship to attend Gonzaga College High School and is currently in his sophomore year. As an alumnus of Higher Achievement, Kristian is well-acquainted with the need to maintain access to learning opportunities over the summer.

Kristian is currently an intern in Washington, D.C. Council member Jim Graham's office and is a frequent speaker at Higher Achievement events. In addition to Symposium 2007, Kristian has spoken on a panel alongside U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer and Governor Bob Wise. Kristian also spoke at the 2006 Summer Learning Day Capitol Hill briefing with U.S. Senator Barack Obama.

This is how Kristian defined Fighting for Change with the BSLI luncheon audience of parents, educators and advocates:

To develop this speech, I reflected on a fundamental question: "What is education?" I believe that education is about empowering people.

But how do you empower? By making people informed. Then, you use that information, apply it to life, and evaluate new situations and concepts.

Education also empowers people by eliminating ignorance. Ignorance makes you a slave to your own mind, captive to your own limitations. Without education, the world is in chaos. There is a vacuum of reasoning. With education, people can expand the possibilities, grow, try new things, and advance society.

Unfortunately, right now in this country and around the world, educational empowerment is not universal. There are tremendous inequities in education. You see this injustice in every city. Some students can choose quality education and others are left behind in buildings that are falling down, where dreams and potential fade away.

I can speak best about my own neighborhood in Washington, D.C.. I want to describe two schools: one is a school of choice and the other is a school that too many students have to settle for, a disadvantaged school.

I am one of the lucky ones. I attend a school of choice: Gonzaga College High School.

- In this school, success is not only possible, it's expected. There is an atmosphere where people push you to be successful and you WANT to be successful. It is a supportive environment, with the resources to back it up.
- My classmates and I are prepared, motivated to succeed because we have the tools that are required to achieve success: quality teachers, challenging lessons, modern technology at our fingertips, and rewarding opportunities.
- Teachers at my school are encouraging people, real mentors. For example, my European History teacher taught me about how the economy works, which ignited a new passion for me. He demystified what drives our world. The economy is what makes it work.



*“It’s the youth keynote speaker that really impressed me. The idea of BAEO having a youth keynote speaker made me believe we really care about the children.”*

– Denise Pitchford

- Technology is critical to quality education. It's as simple as having working, up-to-date computers for students. The technology keeps us grounded in what's going on today and prepared for the future.
- Through my experience at this school of choice, I have taken the PSAT and am preparing for college. By the way, I've set my sights on Georgetown or Harvard, in case there are any recruiters in the room.

Now, let me describe the school that too many of the kids in my neighborhood must settle for – the disadvantaged school. I won't give it a name because it could be any of the thousands of unacceptable schools across this country.

- This school is inherently flawed, it's designed to fail.
- At these schools, modern technology is absent. And students get substandard education.
- The walls are literally crumbling around them. Sometimes there is no heat in the winter, lead in the water, and glass on the soccer field.
- It's the exception, not the rule, that students will succeed. Even if they do get straight As here, they will be unprepared for college, unequipped to deal with challenges they will face. In the end, they will end up in a mediocre job, making not enough money, wondering what happened to their life. In this scenario, there is an endless cycle of lost talent.

#### **WHY DOES THIS MATTER?**

- Substandard education is a detriment to society. It retards the progress of our society as a whole. Disadvantaged schools breed mediocrity, and possibly even crime.
- Just think – a student at this disadvantaged school could have cured cancer! But, because she didn't have the opportunity to choose her school, she didn't get exposed to science. Wasn't able to attend college. Couldn't go to med school. And, society suffers.
- When you can CHOOSE a quality education, students become self-sufficient and can help others.
- In short, fighting for change in education will allow students to fight for change in the world!

These remarks on Fighting for Change were followed by a summary of comments on Achieving Results. Kristian concluded his speech, and echoed the spirit of Lisa Sullivan and Deirdre Bailey, with this statement:

“In conclusion, fighting for change is larger than education. It's about trying something new and different, against the status quo. As the wise Mahatma Gandhi said, “Be the change you wish to see in the world.”



# BLACK PARENTS AND AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS: AN OASIS OF HOPE IN FOUR URBAN CITIES

**E**ager faces sprinkled Salon J for the "Out of School Time Fills the Gap" session. It provided Symposium 2007 attendees with the first public unveiling of data gathered from a year-long study funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

The goal of the Mott/BAEO study was to examine the opinions of 400 low-income and working-class Black parents about the quality and importance of public school and community-based afterschool programs (hereafter referred to as ASP). Cities represented in the study are Detroit, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. Each of these cities is home to a BAEO Chapter, and home to a robust ASP market.

Gerard Robinson, a principal investigator for the study, opened the session with a PowerPoint presentation that highlighted the importance of the study as well as general statistics about the study's participant pool. For instance, 70 percent of participants are mothers; 60 percent earn \$30,000 or less annually; 55 percent work part-time or are unemployed; 50 percent are single; and less than 10 percent earned a bachelor's degree.

After sharing this information with the audience, Gerard turned the presentation over to the other principal investigator, Leslie Fenwick. She shared with the audience some of the parents' thoughts about ASPs. For example, when parents were asked to express their belief about what an ASP can do, many agreed that an

ASP can "help bring our kids out of poverty." Other parents believed an ASP must focus on student achievement. One Philadelphia parent said it best, "I didn't get it [an education] and I want [my child] to get it, and that's my goal. I just want better grades." Other ASP activities that Leslie identified as equally important to parents include safety, positive role models, and constructive activities with peers.

To put a human face on ASP data, a representative from each city in the study served as a panelist. Yolanda Eddins, mother of six children who participate in ASPs, is a parent coordinator for Southeastern Village in Detroit. Eddins works with many Detroit parents, but she has a particular focus on black women with adopted children participating in ASPs.

When asked what makes an ASP strong, Eddins replied, "An informed parent is your best friend. If you can get parents to understand what an afterschool program can and cannot do for their child, then you are off to a good start."

For LaDonna Leazer, a parent and a teacher at the Business and Economics Academy of Milwaukee, educating children should be a very important aim of any ASP. "Our afterschool programs focus on many things. Money management is one of them. When

we teach our students how to think smartly about money, particularly the importance of saving and investing, we help their parents at the same time."



Linking children and families is at the heart of Reverend Donald Robinson's afterschool work at the Beacon House in Washington, D.C. In 1991, Rev. Robinson used his retirement money to open Beacon House to serve youth and families of the Edgewood Terrace community.

"Beacon House believes we have to meet the needs of families and the children holistically," said

Robinson. "We cannot work with the parent and leave the children out. We have to bring a community focus to our work."

Rev. Robinson concluded his remarks with an invitation for Symposium attendees to participate in one of his ASP training seminars in Washington, D.C.

Kia Dunlap-Bunch of the Philadelphia Public School District knows all to well the importance of making families and children a priority. She is a mother of four and an ASP coordinator for public school students who live in two Philadelphia housing projects.

"Children need something positive to do after school is out," said Dunlap-Bunch. "We provide them with educational and social activities that are expanding their horizons."

Overall, the session garnered a great question-and-answer exchange between Symposium attendees, principal investigators, and city panelists. It also provided a glimpse into the world of urban ASPs from those who use the programs.

To read an executive summary of the study, visit the BAEO website ([www.baeo.org](http://www.baeo.org)).

III. AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM: TARGET CITIES & POPULATION	City of Boston
<p><b>Overview of Cities</b></p> <p>The cities in this study share specific characteristics. Each is a large urban city that is part of a larger school district system. Their public education systems consist of one of the 100 largest school districts in the country. Each city's Black population is relatively high, and each city is a Black majority city population, and every Black school that did not qualify for Title I received full Title I funding. Each city also has a robust AP system.</p>	<p><b>City of Boston</b></p> <p><b>General Population</b></p> <p>Boston was the 10th largest city in the United States with 660,479 residents in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010a). Black residents made up 21.7% of the city population and White residents made up 51.1% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010b). In 2010, 40,000 residents, 11.5% of city residents were Black, and 10,000 residents, 27.2% and 27.5% were Black, respectively, and 64 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Black adults over the age of 25 had higher high school graduation rates (higher and 12% greater than the national average) and higher college graduation rates (higher and 12% greater than the national average) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The median family income in 2009 was \$71,000 and 27% of families lived below the poverty level.</p>
<p><b>Overview of Boston</b></p> <p>Overall, Black parents constitute over 10% of study participants. The remaining participants describe themselves African, Caribbean, Puerto Rican, or other. Approximately 60% of the study participants are female, 22% are fathers, and 18% are mothers. Parents are mostly Black, and most are Black by ethnicity. Approximately 40% are divorced, separated, or never married. About one third of the parents reported non-completing high school, and one third completed high school or more. About one third of the parents are in some form of educational, vocational, or professional training, and one third have completed college or more. Black parents are more likely to be employed than other Black families in this city or Black living in the United States in general. An intra-city comparison</p> <p>The 2010 U.S. Census reported that 34.7% of the Boston population are African American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010a). Black residents made up 21.7% of the city population and White residents made up 51.1% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010b). In 2010, 40,000 residents, 11.5% of city residents were Black, and 10,000 residents, 27.2% and 27.5% were Black, respectively, and 64 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Black adults over the age of 25 had higher high school graduation rates (higher and 12% greater than the national average) and higher college graduation rates (higher and 12% greater than the national average) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The median family income in 2009 was \$71,000 and 27% of families lived below the poverty level.</p>	<p><b>City of Boston</b></p> <p><b>AP Family Population by City Region</b></p> <p>Although 12.9% of the Boston parents are African American, the region is highly diverse. About 15% of parents are from low-income families with incomes less than \$20,000, and 20% of parents have less than \$30,000 in annual income (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). About 40% of parents have less than a high school diploma, and 54.2% work part-time or are unemployed. The child or children represented in this region are more likely to attend a public school. Close to 60% of the students attend a public charter school. Most parents live in a neighborhood in a public school-based APD school boundary 1 and 5 miles from home, and parents work 4 days per week in an APD boundary 1A, 1B, or 1C.</p>

# BAEO PRESENTS: THE HIP-HOP PROJECT

"The hip-hop workshop had many great ideas [that] I will take back to our schools and community in engaging and reaching young people. Please expand this workshop for 2008!"

Even though The Hip-Hop Project was not scheduled to start until 2:30 PM on Friday afternoon, Symposium participants from high schools started lining up at the door almost 30 minutes early in anticipation of not being able to get a seat if they arrived too late.

Isaac Ewell, Director of the BAEO-Gates Small Schools Project, organized the session. It began with a special screening of the award-winning documentary The Hip-Hop Project, which is the dynamic story of a group of New York City teenagers who transform their personal experiences into powerful works of art using hip-hop as a vehicle for self-development and discovery. The film traces the evolution of The Hip-Hop Project, an outreach program founded by Kazi, a formerly homeless teenager turned mentor. With the goal of developing a principled group of young artists, Kazi creates a safe environment in which he challenges young people to express themselves freely and to write music about the real issues affecting their lives.

The film looks intimately at the lives of Kazi and two of his students, Princess and Cannon, as they strive to overcome daunting life obstacles to produce a collaborative album. In a miraculous turn, Russell Simmons, hip-hop mogul and long-time supporter of the project, partners with Bruce Willis to donate a recording studio to The Hip-Hop Project. After four



years of collaboration, the group produces a powerful and thought-provoking album imbued with moving personal narratives and sharp social commentary. In contrast to the often negative characterizations of hip-hop and rap music, this is a story of hope, healing, and the realization of dreams.

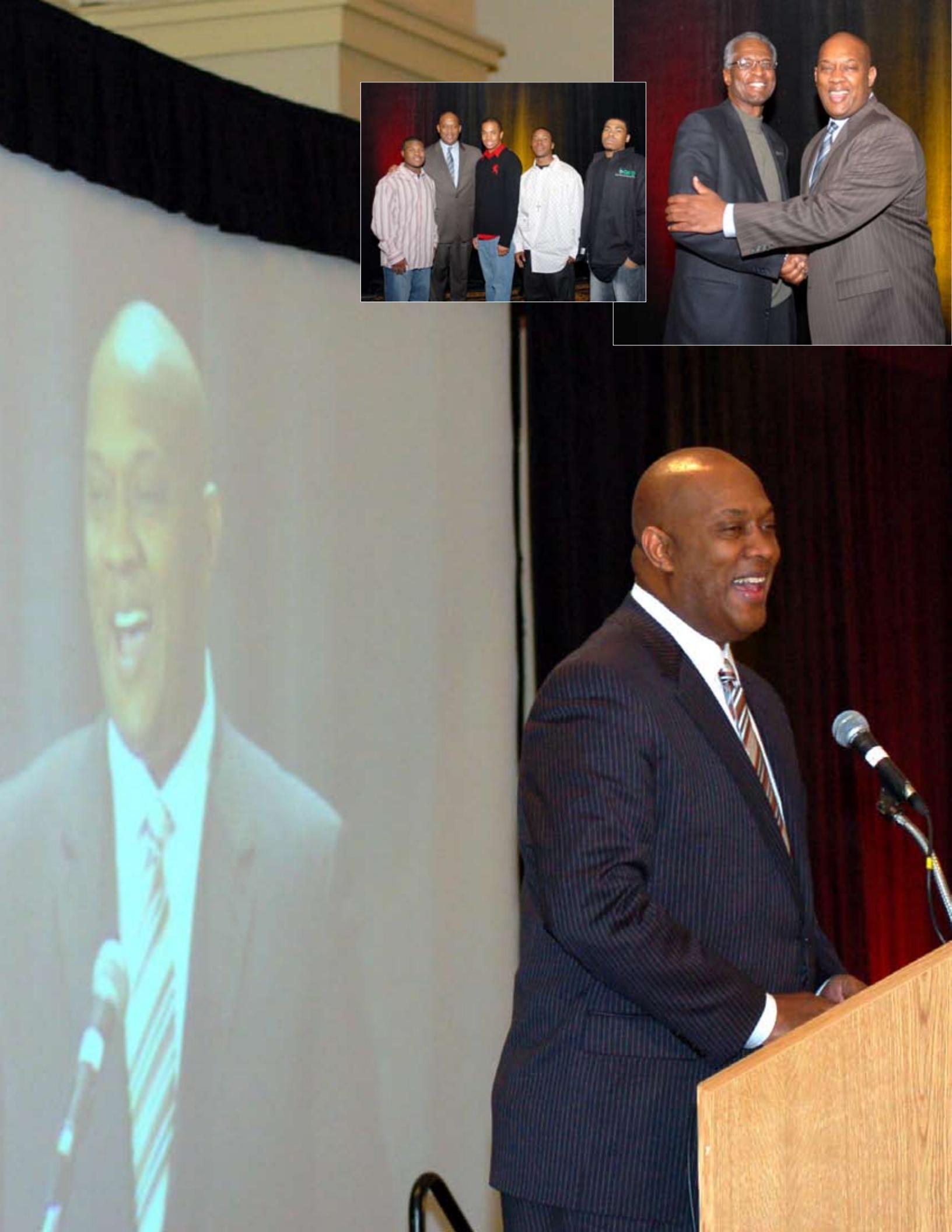
Immediately following the panel, Ewell facilitated a panel of hip-hop geniuses, who spoke about why they love hip-hop, how hip-hop has transformed them, and how they use hip-hop in their daily lives to reach and teach young people. The panel was made up of Donyale Reavis, an entertainment attorney and founder of an after/summer-school program called Hip-Hop Speaks, two students from the program, Camilla Greene, a member of the National Reform Faculty and a BAEO-Gates technical assistance provider, David T.C. Ellis, founder of The High School for the Recording Arts, and Dr. James Peterson, an English Professor at Bucknell University.

The audience was very intrigued not only by how the film demonstrated hip-hop culture's ability to engage young people, but also how the distinguished panel talked about how hip-hop informs and motivates them.

One of the main objectives of the session was to present participants with proven strategies for meeting young people where they are and by exposing them to the broader and deeper side of hip-hop culture. To that end, the session was a success. Following the session, several participants requested that The Hip-Hop Project and High School for the Recording Arts programs be implemented in their schools.

Why is this relevant to education? With public education in a state of crisis there is a growing need for innovation in the classroom. Current education models and respective curriculum tools are not effectively and equitably reaching children from all socioeconomic classes. Learning is more effective when mediated through popular socio-cultural (culturally-relevant) tools with which students identify. Around the country and the world, educators have proven the success of mediated learning through critical pedagogical use of popular culture on a small-scale level. Since hip-hop is an accepted communication tool and an umbrella of mainstream youth popular culture worldwide, the enduring quality, accessibility, rich history, and universal acceptance of hip-hop culture among youth, it is a powerful pedagogical curriculum tool for educators to utilize across subject areas.





# FIGHTING FOR CHANGE WELCOME BREAKFAST

Pancakes, sausage and old-fashioned oatmeal were served with a side of reflection at the Symposium Welcome Breakfast as BAEO board member Pennsylvania Representative Dwight Evans (D-Philadelphia) paralleled today's struggle for quality education with the Civil Rights Movement.

As the group munched, Evans evoked memories of a time when African Americans couldn't even eat at the lunch counter of a diner.

"They weren't fighting for the lunch, but to have the chance to change," Evans said. "We're still at that counter, but can our kids read the menu?" he asked.

The question reverberated through the hall and was answered with a rumbling "ooohhh" of consternation from the audience. But the speaker did not give time for that communal exhalation to fall into murmurs of conversation. He called attention to Dr. Howard Fuller who stood stolidly holding up the back wall of the room. "We all must have a hero," Evans said of the BAEO founder and chairman. "I've watched him literally drive this issue single-handedly and he has been singly focused about black kids in the U.S."

Just before commanding the crowd to rise for a standing ovation, he shared that one of Dr. Fuller's most resonant quotes occurred when he stood in a room filled with White men and women who had just awarded him for his efforts in the school choice movement and said, "If you want to make change, African Americans must be a part of this room."

Several minutes passed before Symposium attendees quieted their rapturous applause and whistles.

But, Evans reminded them that the Symposium is not just a time to get together to eat nice food and talk about the past year; rather, its purpose is "rededication and renewal."

"To fight for change you must understand [what] you are fighting about," he said. "Sometimes we lose the focus of what the fight is about."

With statistics revealing that test scores of African American children continue to lag far behind that of white children in this country, and the consistent threat of incarceration and violent death of black male youth, "this battle is far from over," Evans said.

Kamesha and Tamara Callands, students at Philadelphia Charter High School, provided evidence for that statement with spoken word pieces that they performed before introducing Evans to the stage. These pieces included "Judge Me Not," "Listen Up" and "But You Did Not Hear Their Cry." During "Judge Me Not" they highlighted the effects of violence and urban life on school systems, and in a heartfelt plea, they told the crowd to "Do something." "Stop the violence please," they said.

But even with the realities and distractions of urban life that plague so many schools with large African American population, Evans said, "No one wants to hear excuses as to why our kids can't compete anymore." He pointed out that in today's global economy African Americans are no longer just competing with other Americans for economic stability. African Americans must compete globally.

He challenged the audience to continue fighting for the quality education that all children deserve, whether they are your own or someone else's. "How many of you will send your kids to these schools? Why not? If you can't send your kids to these schools why would you expect someone else to do so?" he asked.

"If you don't believe in the reason for change, there's no need to be here," he said before asking, "Are you prepared to do your part?"

First-time Symposium attendee Artisha Tyson said he didn't come off as the "average politician, making empty promises and boosting up himself." Tyson, who is the program coordinator for the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools in the District of Columbia, said she "enjoyed his global perspective on the importance of education."

Ida Flanders, a teacher at the K-8 public charter school Harambee, located in Philadelphia, was doubly excited about the workshops of the day after Evan's speech. She said, "The part that was outstanding was when he said the civil rights movement wasn't about the lunch."



# AWARD-WINNING TEACHER DIALS UP RESULTS FOR CHILDREN

In 2006, Linda Alston won the first \$100,000 Kinder Excellence in Teaching Award, and in 2007, she became the first teacher to present a keynote address at a BAEQ Symposium. Her speech was full of the faith she has in God and how that faith strengthens her belief in the abilities of underserved Black children in public schools.

The 25-year teaching veteran commended BAEQ for its work as she opened. "There is a spirit of excellence in this place. There is a spirit of commitment," she said before letting the audience know that her message would be a "powerful one."

Before she began to expand on her statement, the audience was surprised to hear the jingle of Alston's phone. They were more shocked to see her answer it.

"Hey girl," she sang into the phone. "Yeah I'm at [the] BAEQ Symposium. I'm the Key-note."

Apparently the woman on the phone line thought Alston's appearance was a waste of time. She repeated the caller's comments.

"They can't learn! They don't need choice!"

They have ADD!" Alston responded to her caller, the notes of her voice rising in angry consternation.

"Oh wait a minute, baby girl, you breakin' up," she said while promptly shutting the flip phone and dropping it on the lectern. She rolled her eyes, huffed and told the audience to watch out for individuals who have no faith and belief in Black children—people who believe it a waste of time to combat the systemic pitfalls of the public school system that remain even after the efforts of the Civil Rights Movement.

"Don't lose sight of the victory already won. You're on the right side of history," said Alston, who authored the book, *Why We Teach: Learning, Laughter, Love and the Power to Transform Lives*.

"Parents, encourage yourselves," she commanded. She said they should do all they could to help schools run more smoothly, including answering the phones in the school office. "Don't wait or expect anyone else to do it," she said. "Before anyone gave me an award, I encouraged myself."

Indeed, Alston needed a tremendous amount of self-encouragement to work in the poorest school in the state of Colorado. But she shared no sad stories, saying, "I'm there because I choose to be."

Instead, she invoked tales of the resilience of her children. One school day, the electricity was out in the building, leaving the classrooms dark, and the ability to do work nearly non-existent. But one child told her they could do work, saying "Look. There is the light," while pointing toward the sunlight streaming through cracks of the doorway.

"Our children will point us to the light," Alston said and went on to quote the lyrics of the Black National Anthem to display her hope in the future.

"Claim yourselves now and the victory that is yours."

The lunch audience left the hall in an excited fervor after Alston's speech. One attendee said she was "Inspirational, profound, and insightful. She is an educator who is an exemplar of everything that is good and right about being the consummate professional."





# QUALITY EDUCATION OPTIONS SCHOOL TOURS

Symposium 2007 Quality Educational Options School Tours

- Blair Christian Academy
- Center School
- Imani Education Circle Charter School
- Julia R. Masterman Laboratory and Demonstration School

- KIPP Philadelphia Charter School
- Mastery Charter High School
- Anna H. Shaw Middle School
- W.B. Saul High School of Agricultural Sciences



# QUALITY EDUCATION OPTIONS SCHOOL TOURS

Thursday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> marked the annual pilgrimage of Symposium participants to visit local schools demonstrating quality education options to students and their families. This year, nine schools were selected to host the Quality Educational Options School Tours. Each school featured had a unique history, curriculum approach, and school culture.

## School Profiles

Symposium 2007 school tours offered an array of schools, and most importantly, provided participants with meaningful dialogue that we hope will be shared with colleagues and friends back home. This article includes a brief profile on each school visited.

### Center School

One of the most exciting aspects of this year's tours was the addition of a learning differences school, the Center School. The Center School instructs 90 students in a non-graded environment. One of the most fascinating aspects of the school is the role of parents, teachers, and students as co-creators in the learning process. The Center School is a fine example of how the school, community and family work together for the benefit of the child.

Center School was founded in 1989 by two parents, Kathleen Hunt and Susan Floyd, who recognized the need for a specialized program for students with reading difficulties and learning differences. Since then, Center School's intensive and supportive program has focused on the needs of elementary and middle school students who have met with failure in attempts to learn to read in more traditional settings. Students range in age from six to fourteen and are grouped by age and learning levels.

Center School students come from many different school districts in Philadelphia, Montgomery and Bucks Counties. This school provides small classes with highly skilled teachers, specialized instruction geared toward students who learn differently, and a supportive atmosphere conducive to the development of confident learners.

The core of Center School's philosophy is the belief that the ability to effectively use language is crucial to academic success. This principle is reflected in the curriculum, and students are given ample opportunities to develop reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. Small classes that are team taught by certified reading specialists enable Center School students to experience success. It is a safe environment that encourages students to take risks and make gains in their development. Center School also provides instruction in art, music, physical education, and science. In the area of parent education, Center School offers a lecture series on issues related to learning differences and has established a library of parent resource materials. Additionally, they consult with other education professionals regarding programs and services for their students.

### KIPP Philadelphia Charter School

Similar to the Center School, KIPP Philadelphia places communication between parents and teachers as a key factor to ensure student success. Parents Sheila Easley and Stephanie Robertson served as great tour captains by sharing their parental insight about their experience and philosophy on how to fight for quality instruction for your child.

Established in the summer of 2003, KIPP Philadelphia Charter School is a free, open enrollment public charter middle school that serves 301 students with 25 full-time staff members. Eighteen percent of students are Hispanic, 82% are African-American, and 91% qualify for the federal free-and-reduced-meal program. Most of the students come from the North Philadelphia and West Kensington neighborhoods. After their eighth grade year, students will seek entry into the city's top independent, magnet and charter schools.

At KIPP Philadelphia, students attend school from 7:30 AM to 5 PM Monday-Thursday, 7:30 AM to 3:30 PM on Fridays, two Saturdays a month for four hours, and three weeks in the summer. Every entering student has a home visit in the spring with a member of the school's staff, where all the school's rules and regulations are reviewed and questions about the school are answered. At the home visit all parents, students and staff members read and sign the Commitment to Excellence form that outlines the responsibilities of all parties in the education of the child. Teachers are available nightly via cell phone to help students with homework, and home visits are scheduled regularly to check in with both parents and students. KIPP Philadelphia Charter School has achieved some impressive academic gains with its students. Students who entered KIPP Philadelphia in its first year scored in the 17th percentile in math on the nationally normed TerraNova test administered that fall. On the TerraNova test given two years later, those students scored in the 70th percentile.

### Blair Christian Academy

Blair Christian Academy (BCA) and Daycare Center is a private, co-educational, evangelical Christian school which has served students and families since 1977. With the leading and provision of God, this unique educational ministry has flourished. Educators, administrators and parents work closely to touch the hearts, develop the intellect and build the character of young people in a safe, creative and nurturing environment.

Small class size and a staff of caring, capable teachers enable BCA to provide the one-on-one attention that helps students flourish in their unique skills and abilities. The faculty draws from diverse teaching strategies such as team projects, classroom discussions, field trips, and drama and fine arts to insure that every child is engaged. Events such as school-wide science fairs help to develop students' analytical skills, while annual international trips help expose students to a variety of cultures.

In addition to a challenging academic program, Blair offers a variety of extracurricular activities to engage students. These activities include: chess club, scrabble club, glee club, drill team, basketball, soccer, track and field, prayer club, mock trials, enrichment program, entrepre-

neurial program, and video production classes. Furthermore, Blair has a summer camp program for children 6-14 years of age.

The spiritual development of each student is paramount at Blair Christian Academy. Therefore, the Word is integrated into the content area and students participate in weekly chapel, Bible study and practical discussions designed to help them "live out" their faith. Ultimately, Blair Christian Academy students will make a difference in their communities.

### **Imani Education Circle Charter School**

High student academic achievement is the primary goal of Imani Education Circle (IEC) Charter School. Imani, the seventh principle of the Nguzo Saba, means Faith. The underlying philosophy of IEC is that a rigorous, integrative, constructivist curriculum, combined with historical and cultural richness of African heritage, will result in well-rounded and productive citizens.

IEC recognizes the importance of providing an environment that promotes intellectual, personal and social growth. The school provides students with an environment that will: offer a challenging academic program by emphasizing basic skills and fundamentals, while encouraging critical thinking and study skills; allow opportunities for students to use technological resources to pursue mastery of academic standards; promote high standards and expectations for student learning and teacher instruction; and offer a coordinated and integrated curriculum.

Students develop a stronger sense of self through the study of African history and culture. Learning and practicing the principles of the Ma'at and the Nguzo Saba will help them grow to become productive citizens. Students assume responsibility and consider the consequences for their actions and are expected to have respect for self, others, and the environment. At IEC, the spirit of unity (Umoja) prevails as we assist students in developing the skills that will enable them to resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner.

### **Julia R. Masterman Laboratory and Demonstration School**

Masterman is a public middle and high school (grades 5-12) serving culturally diverse, academically talented students from all parts of the city. Approximately 200 of the top students in Philadelphia are admitted to the fifth and sixth grade classes. From this group, about 120 students, the most outstanding from each class of excellent students, are admitted to the high school each year. A national "Blue Ribbon School," Masterman combines the best aspects of a small, selective high school with the more diverse curriculum and activities of a larger school.

The school was named for Julia Reynolds Masterman who established the Philadelphia Home and School Council and served as its first president. Consistent with the tradition of Ms. Masterman, the school has an extremely active community of parents. They have made great efforts to support academic and co-curricular programs through fund-raisers and social gatherings for families and staff members.

Masterman is the most highly ranked school in the School District of

Philadelphia. For the past three years, it has been cited by *Philadelphia Magazine* as one of the best high schools in the tri-state area. The students' scores on the PA State System of Assessment represent the top scores in the state with an average of 99% at or above grade level in reading and math. All students graduate taking Calculus and 100% of the students attend a four-year college. Eleven Advanced Placement classes are offered with 82% of the senior class taking an average of three classes. Community service projects are an integral part of the high school program and a senior project is required for graduation.

### **Mastery Charter High School**

Mastery Charter Schools is a growing network of middle and high schools in Philadelphia designed to fulfill the mission of preparing all students for success in higher education and the global economy.

Mastery's first school, the Lenfest Campus in Center City, was founded in September 2001 by a coalition of business, academic, and civic leaders. In 2005 and 2006 the School District of Philadelphia invited Mastery to convert two low performing District schools, Thomas Middle in South Philadelphia and Shoemaker Middle in West Philadelphia, into Mastery Charter Schools serving grades 7-12. Today, Mastery's three schools enroll nearly 1,000 students.

Mastery's program is unique in three essential ways. First, they utilize a mastery-based grading and promotion system that challenges all students to reach rigorous academic standards. Second, they explicitly teach problem solving and social-emotional skills so that graduates have the life tools to be successful in today's society and the global economy. Third, they integrate modern management and educational best practices to drive a results-focused organizational culture. Mastery insists on both high expectations and high support so all students can achieve success.

Mastery Schools exist to close the achievement gap between the minority students they serve and their national peers. On average, students enter Mastery testing two to three grade levels behind. Since opening in 2001, the school has eliminated the achievement gap in writing, and halved the achievement gap in reading and math.

Mastery's model is designed to ensure all students learn the academic skills they need for higher education and the personal and interpersonal skills they need for the global economy. In order to prepare students to thrive in today's global workplace, Mastery explicitly teaches problem-solving, workplace and self-management skills. Their motto is "Excellence. No Excuses."

### **W.B. Saul High School of Agricultural Sciences**

W.B. Saul High School is a nationally recognized leader in vocational agriculture. Saul graduates are leaders in many facets of agriculture and horticulture and hold positions as veterinarians, college professors, scientists at the United States Department of Agriculture, independent business owners and teachers at every educational level.

The school has evolved since its inception in 1943, expanding programs and facilities to keep pace with the ever-changing agricultural/horticultural industries. Today, the site includes eight buildings covering

150 acres and offers students 15 major agricultural classes. On any given day at W.B. Saul, visitors can see a wide variety of activities taking place across the school's campus. In addition to college preparatory academics, each student has two (9th and 10th grades) or three (11th and 12th grades) periods of agriculture every day.

The successful student at W.B. Saul has a strong interest in agriculture and a strong desire to participate in classes every day. When it comes to agriculture, students quickly learn that some things cannot be put on hold – a calf being born, crops that need to be harvested on their own schedule no matter what the weather, animals being cared for and fed every day.

With more than 22 million agriculture-related jobs in existence today, W.B. Saul students are in a fantastic position to immediately enter the workforce and compete for career opportunities. Internships and job-related connecting activities are available through the school to ensure that students are constantly learning and honing the skills they will take with them upon graduation.

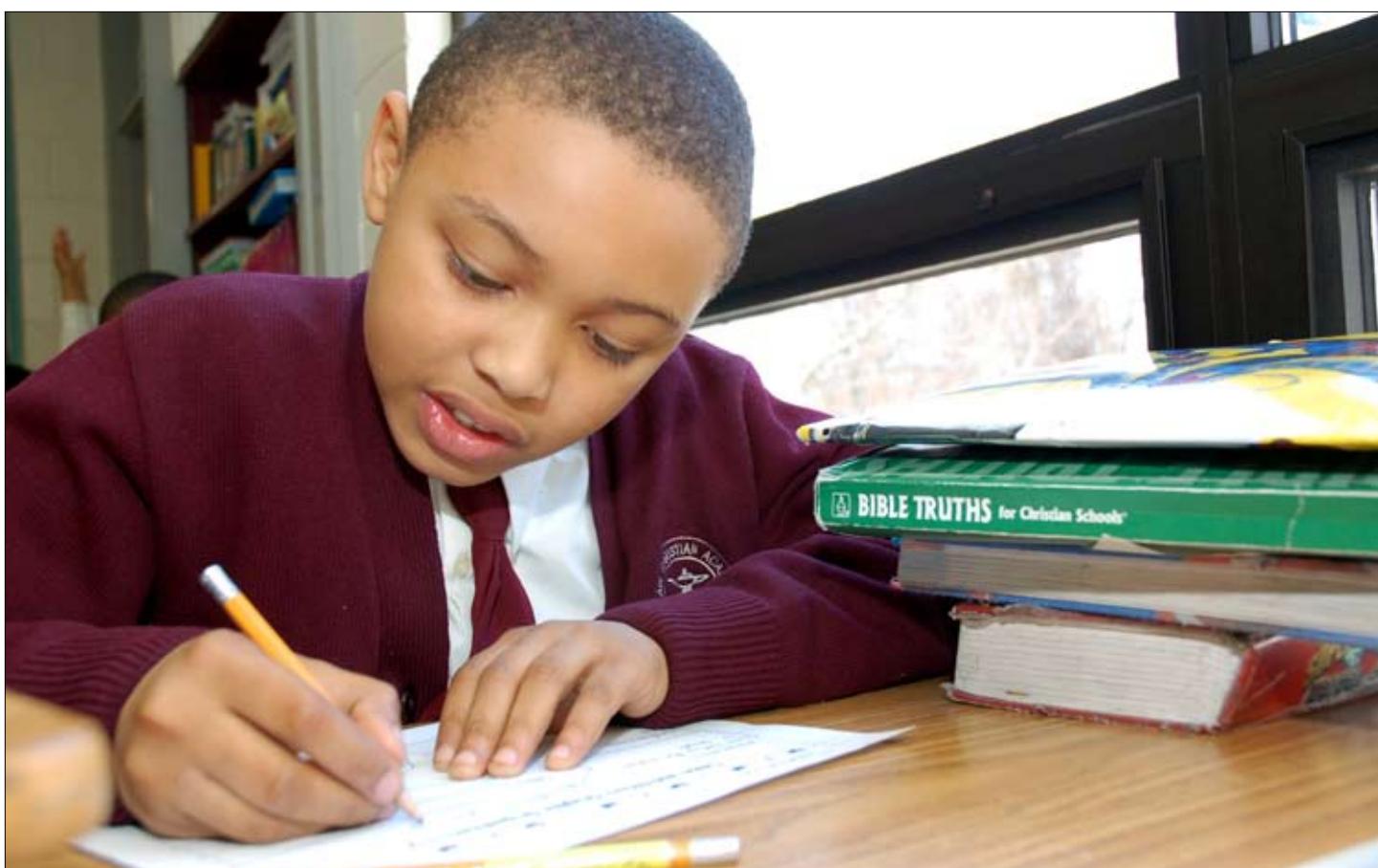
### **Anna H. Shaw Middle School**

Anna H. Shaw Middle School is one of the twenty schools in Philadelphia, which have been partnering with Edison Schools since 2002.

While very much like the other schools in demographics – 99% African-American, 100% free/reduced lunch – Shaw has distinguished itself with progressive and sustained achievement growth.

Principal Sharif El-Mekki has led the school to improved test scores every year for the last five years. Compared to 2002, when four percent of the students were proficient in math and seven percent proficient in reading, today eight times more students are proficient in math and five times more students are proficient in reading. Shaw made the Average Yearly Progress required by No Child Left Behind in 16 of 17 targets last year, missing only in special education. Continuous progress is being achieved in a school that only serves 7th and 8th grades, allowing only two years to make a difference.

In addition, Shaw is also working with Big Brothers Big Sisters on a mentoring program that brings adults from the University of Pennsylvania into the classrooms. "The positive attention is definitely a key component for our students' success," says Principal El-Mekki. "We look at their scores and we consistently see students who have access to people, not only to talk to, but also people to listen to them. At Shaw we see the power of mentorship and the impact it has on the students' overall achievement."



# GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING 101

Bennie Patterson, who works for the Technical Assistance and Learning Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and David Crowley, a staff member from Urban Underground (also in Milwaukee), spearheaded an in-depth discussion of how to organize a grassroots movement. The session was so popular that two additional sessions were conducted in order to accommodate the number of people who were interested in the information presented in the sessions.

Organizing is a critical tool when trying to make sure people have input into resolving community problems. According to Patterson, "Individual action rarely gets results." He said, "We tend to blame ourselves for problems that we face. We don't think other people have the same problems." He proposed abandoning the idea of trying to solve common problems individually and instead bringing people together to fight for change. This collective action gives people a sense of power that is needed to improve their communities and their own lives.

To effectively address problems facing the community there must be clarity about the underlying cause of the problem. One must be able to see all aspects of the problem and get to the underlying causes. Defining the real issues is critical to developing short-term and long-term strategies and tactics that will bring about solutions to the problems being tackled.

Once the problem is clearly identified, the next step is to focus on an objective. Once the objective is clear, the next step is agreeing on the overall strategy and tactics that are necessary to implement the strategy. The strategy should include an announcement of the campaign; a list of outreach activities towards a targeted audience; a plan for organizing; and a method to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions being taken.

Patterson also emphasized the importance of constantly paying attention to organizational considerations such as available resources, the impact of the campaign on the strength of the organization, and how to address any shortfalls in available resources, i.e. money and staff.

Most grassroots organizing efforts require more than just one organization to carry out the work. So, one of the most important skills an organizer needs is the ability to form coalitions between a variety of organizations. Coalition work is very difficult because it requires clear agreement on the roles and responsibilities of each group. Each organization must be willing to merge its individual goals and objectives into a common set of agreed-upon goals and objectives set by the coalition. Patterson explained the importance of a coalition agreeing on a set of principles, how they will operate together, who will be the messenger and what will be the message that will define and facilitate the struggle. So many coalitions fail because they do not pay attention to these key elements of coalition work.

The coalition must carefully plan and execute the agreed-upon strategy. Included in the planning has to be the identification of individuals who have the power to make the changes being sought by the coalition. Patterson told the group to look for both primary and secondary targets. Primary targets are people who can actually make the change. Secondary targets are the individuals who have the capacity to influence the primary targets. Organizers must be clear on the most effective ways to approach these individuals to achieve the desired results.

Crowley discussed the importance of using the right tactics to move the struggle forward. He emphasized how critical it was to be creative and flexible when employing tactics such as: media events, strikes, voter education and registration, lawsuits, and various forms of direct action. He also stressed the need during a campaign to continually engage in training, leadership development, reflection and research. These practices are necessary to continue strengthening the coalition as the campaign proceeds.

*Naryan Leazer, a member of Milwaukee's BAEO chapter, found the session enlightening. "Sometimes I work with groups that want to do something but don't know where to start. I can share a process to get other people involved," he said.*

# PROJECT GRADUATION

Graduation is a project that can only be completed with students, parents, and teachers – among others. During the session *Project Graduation: Getting More Black Students to Graduate*, David Jean of High Tech High and Mark Booker of We Teach and Tutor discussed how their programs approach this goal.

Ninety-nine percent of High Tech High's students graduate. The San Diego based network of schools achieves this feat using project-based learning which connects real world experience to the classroom. "It is an intimate approach," said Jean, a graphic designer by trade, who left the field to become a teacher.

Jean said project-based learning is not about memorizing text to regurgitate it without understanding. Rather, students are encouraged to own what they learn. "It's great to develop vocabulary, but they need to be able to explain what it means in their own language so they own it," he said.

Students use applied learning through real world immersion in order to think beyond the classroom. In one project, a group of students created HIV/AIDS awareness posters from scratch. They selected the photos, wrote the headlines, and used industry standard software, such as InDesign, to layout the posters.

Group projects are conducted with a number of visual rough drafts so that students get an idea of the conceptualization process. They may create documentaries or write a group poem made of their individual poetry.

But students are expected to do more than just apply their learning. They must be able to communicate the concepts behind design choices. To strengthen their communication skills, students must pass a speech class before moving to the next grade.

"The more you speak the more comfortable you become with speaking," Jean said to explain the theory behind this requirement.

High Tech High's social culture is built around teaching teams that support project-based learning. Instead of separating social science from literature and English, these three subjects are brought together to show how they integrate in real life. The same is done for math and science. The physics teacher is also the math teacher.



The school is also community focused, with each teacher serving as an advisory resource. "By the time they graduate my job is to make sure they know their options," Jean said.

Jean emphasized the village aspect of the schools. Each Friday there are community meetings hosted by advisory groups where kids can showcase their talent and deal with issues.

The students are empowered to use their skills. They must create resumes, go on interviews and participate in internships. When students graduate, they have been fully empowered to use their skills. However, project-based learning is not a cure all pill to the pains of the education system, according to Jean. There is little assurance that all students will do well in a project-based learning environment, especially since the approach is more geared towards visual and kinesthetic learners.

"It's like building a plane while you're flying," Jean said. He added, "People talk about buying homes and owning cars but they need to own their education."

On the opposite side of the country, Mark Booker from We Teach and Tutor in Baltimore, MD has held a variety of jobs, from teacher to admissions director to juvenile corrections officer. He told the audience, "You are the author of the book that will help students."

He used the Dr. Seuss classic *Green Eggs*

and *Ham* to discuss the importance of perseverance in helping kids graduate. "You must be "Sam I Am" to make things happen," he said. While Jean focused on teaching methods for getting students involved, Booker discussed the emotional, social and physical aspects of life that tend to divert students attention away from graduation as a goal.

"We are dealing with students who have challenges, conditioning, and circumstances to figure out how to finish high school," he said. "Sometimes, you have to look crazy to get people to pay attention."

According to Booker, Sam I Am's insistence that his friend try green eggs and ham was a little bit crazy, but was essential to achieving his goal. He said self-affirmations of your own importance can help you guide students to realizing their own importance.

"Even when people deny you, you must know who you are," he said.

Energy is the key to reaching graduation, and this energy doesn't happen without the "Sam I Am Approach." He said that teachers must convince students to start in order to finish.

# OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIPS AND SCHOOL VOUCHERS AT WORK

In an environment where safety was as much of a question as what shoes to wear to school that day, three parents knew they had to get their children to a better place. But with little money, options were scarce. In the Opportunity Scholarships and School Vouchers at Work session, Kim Carter-Stewart, Denise Little Johnson and Pamela Battles sat along with their children, Sheila, Herbert, and Carlos to discuss how scholarships have secured a better educational present and future for the high school students.

In Milwaukee, choice was a blessing according to Carter-Stewart. With violence a daily occurrence and a graduation rate below 50 percent in the local public school, the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) allowed her daughter Sheila to attend a private school. They chose Messmer High School.

Carlos Stewart, a tenth grader at Georgetown Day, said he was able to do whatever he wanted at his public school. His mother Pam broke into tears as she outlined her children's experiences in the Washington, D.C. public school system. She had to pick them up after school every day in order to ensure their safety, particularly that of her daughter's. She had been threatened, not just by other students, but by security personnel. When she graduated, she cried, not because of her accomplishment, but because she was happy to leave.

Pam knew she had to find another option for her younger children. She saw a commercial for Opportunity Scholarships in DC—another name for the voucher program—and won a scholarship for her son to attend Georgetown Day, a \$25,000 a year private school. The Scholarship covers 75 percent of the tuition and the school covers the rest.

Herbert Little, a twelfth grader at Bishop MacNamara in Washington, D.C. said, "I learned how to survive in public school. I would never knock public schools because I learned things there that I couldn't learn in private school."

However, his mother Mrs. Little was determined to change his environment, especially to fulfill her hopes of sending him to college. She applied and received the Capital Partners for Education Scholarship and said she was exceedingly thankful to God for her son's opportunity. "He's so involved in his school. Even the girls are different," she said.

Despite the change, attending private school was not without challenges.

The Littles were surprised at the amount of work Herbert was required to complete each night. "I used to call and say, 'You're giving my son too much homework,'" Denise said. Even more difficult was sending him to school at 6:30 am. Denise recounted crying whenever she shut the door behind him.

Herbert missed having fun with his friends in public school; eventually he did what he could to fit in. He found himself trying to be like everyone else and found it easiest to accomplish this by acting like the class clown.

"Being the class clown is cool, but not if you're doing it for other people." He came to this conclusion by his eleventh grade year when he began to change his ways. He took advantage of tutoring and mentoring services available through his scholarship and turned himself around.

Carlos has to rise at 6 AM each morning to ride the bus to school, remain at school until 8 PM participating in various activities, and is often awake until 1 AM to finish his homework. More often than not, he sleeps on the bus ride to and from school. But the travel time does not concern him much. "I'm using it as a stepping stone to get into college," he said. His mother Pam found that her biggest challenge was keeping him organized.

"Sometimes he's like a turtle," she said. "With no one to push him he won't do the work."

Sheila didn't just have to deal with travel concerns and transitioning to more difficult work and higher expectations when she transferred to Messmer. After her first year, the choice program reached its student enrollment capacity. State law mandates that enrollment in the MPCP be limited to no more than 15,000 students. This affected her and thousands of students in the program because they were unsure if they would be able to attend their current school the next school year.

A brisk campaign involving the Milwaukee Chapter of BAEQ, the Alliance for Choices in Education, parents, and students was launched with Sheila as a poster child.

"He's throwing away my dreams," she was quoted as saying in commercials and newspaper articles in the *New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*. The campaign was successful and in March 2006 a new law went to effect to increase the enrollment cap to 22,500 students and eliminate other provisions that kept low-income families from participating in the program. Sheila was able to return to Messmer the following semester.

On top of seeing her child in a situation that would allow him to succeed in life, Pam Battles received one more shock as part of her participation in Opportunity Scholarships—a call from the White House. The first time a White House representative called, Pam hung up the phone on the woman, thinking it was her sister playing a joke. Someone from the Opportunity Scholarships office had to call her to tell her it was the real deal, and Pam found out that she was being invited to the State of the Union Address.

"Who would have thought I would be sitting next to the First Lady?" she asked surprisingly.

"All of this was through the Opportunity Scholarships," she said.

# BAEO ON THE MOVE

## THE BOARD CHAIR DINNER: AN EVENING OF MISSION, PURPOSE AND THE ARTS

The Symposium 2007 weekend came to an explosive conclusion with a powerful message by Dr. Howard Fuller, Chair of the Board for BAEO, a special recognition for Pennsylvania Representative Dwight Evans, and a round of cultural performances by students from Imhotep Institute High School. More than just great food, participants were treated to a serious call to action and a reminder that our children can accomplish anything.

Here's a glimpse of the evenings activities and an excerpt from Dr. Fuller's call to action:

I have been asked more than once: What is BAEO and what kind of organization are you? Are you an education reform organization?

Let me answer those questions tonight.

What kind of organization are we?

The Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO) is a national, nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization whose mission is to actively support parental choice to empower families and increase quality educational options for Black children.

Are we an education reform organization?

BAEO is not an Education Reform Organization. We believe education should be reformed in America and we believe parental choice is a critical lever of change. We believe parental choice is not a new thing in America. We believe that the issue is not parental choice. It is who has it and who doesn't. It is clear to us that folks with money already have choice.

We have said it over and over again that if you have money in

America and schools do not work for your children you are going to do one of two things: (1) Move to communities where traditional public schools work; (2) Or you are going to put your children in private schools. Come to think of it, some of these folks move AND put their children in private schools. In other words, choice is widespread in America unless you are poor.

Am I lying when I assert that in this country the only people who are forced to keep their children in schools that do not work for them are poor and working class parents? They go where they are told and if they protest they are accused of being against public education. They are forced to stay in schools where the teachers who teach in them would never put their own children in them and if the parents protest they are accused of being anti-teacher.

Am I mis-stating the facts when I assert that in a very real sense all over this country low income and working class parents are being told to shut up, and be thankful that we allow your children to attend these schools that don't work, and by the way the reason



*“Dr. Fuller, your passion will last a lifetime.  
We will keep the fire burning.  
No matter how many storms we may face.”*

they don't work is because you as parents are not doing your job. In fact, we could be doing a much better job if you would send us better children.

Am I making up stuff when I assert that if we protest we are said to be tools of the "right wing." If we raise our voices we are said to be agents of the conservatives who want to destroy public education. If we question why our families are not given the choice that the people who vote to keep them from having it are able to have choice for their children, we are simply blown off. We are called hypocrites by the very people who pontificate and deny us freedom while they exercise the greatest amount of freedom to insure their own children are educated. I ask you who are the hypocrites?

So let me return to the question. Is BAEO an education reform organization? No, BAEO is not an education reform organization. We are an organization of freedom fighters that recognize that one key element to our people gaining freedom is the radical restructuring of education in America using parental choice as a key weapon. Our goal is not reform. Our goal is freedom. We fight to reform in order to be free. Education reform including parental choice is not an end for us. It is a tool. It is a method. We must always be focused on purpose not method. When you get fixated on method instead of purpose you will become a protector of the status quo. Our purpose is freedom. One of the methods that move us toward freedom is education reform. And we believe true educa-

tion reform is not possible without parental choice....

I would suggest that the ability of a person to be "free" in its truest sense in this country is dependent to a large degree upon his or her being able to attain a point of relative economic independence. Relative economic independence is impossible without a source of income. For most of us, that means a decent job. And in most instances a decent job is impossible without an education.

So let me repeat myself. BAEO is a part of the movement for parental choice because it is the critical element for real education reform to happen in America. Real education reform puts us on the pathway to freedom.

Now I have mentioned another key word: MOVEMENT. The movement for parental choice is a protest movement. We are protesting the lack of choice for low income and working class families.

Piven and Cloward in their book *Poor Peoples' Movement* stated that, "a protest movement involves a change in the consciousness and the behavior of people."

In order for us to be a factor in this movement, and the movement to be a factor in changing the current reality for our children, there must be a change in our consciousness and our behavior....

As BAEO members and supporters we must quit sleep walking while our children are systematically being deprived of the education they need to be able to transform their world. We must change



our level of awareness about what is actually happening. In truth our children are where they are today because of us, because our level of collective consciousness has not moved us to demand a change.

We have the level of awareness that can only be called docile, submissive and obedient. They say go to schools that fail, we say yas suh boss, they say you have no right to choice we say –sho' u right (not the way Barry White used to say it). We must rise to a new level of consciousness. Since consciousness emerges from the operations of the brain, some of our people will require brain reprogramming or maybe even a brain transplant.

But changing consciousness means nothing if we don't change behavior....

We have to do something. We must begin to take whatever actions are necessary to rescue our children. We must adopt the attitude and the behavior of Harriet Tubman & Malcolm X.

In order to have a successful Movement we must have "Movement People."

What are the characteristics of "Movement People?"

Movement people are not patient people. We must not be accepting of policies, procedures, individuals and/or organizations that continue to fail our children, but at the same time we must be enduring, ever present, persevering for as long as it takes. The race goes not to the swift but to those who endure until the end.

Movement people are resilient people. We must never go into a fight thinking we will lose but we must be resilient when we do. We cannot become "depressed." We must go back again and again. The price of freedom is diligence.

Movement people do not operate in a world of illusion. We must face up to the reality of our condition while maintaining an unbending, belief in our capacity to overcome whatever obstacles are put in our way.

Movement people are committed to the mission. It is the mission that must drive us-not our personal relationships, our differences, our petty disputes, our different work styles, our personal animosities - Unity without uniformity.

Movement people have courage and the fortitude to push for what you believe is right no matter who opposes you. No matter what the price. BAEO is an organization of freedom fighters.

And as such, our organization must remain organically connected with, and indeed reflect the righteous anger and the frustration of our people.

How does social change take place? It takes place because a relatively small group of dedicated people commit themselves to a cause. We have committed ourselves to a righteous cause, the rescue of our children from the path of destruction in order to put them on a path to dignity, a path to freedom....



# BAEO CAFÉ: PUTTING QUALITY PRINCIPLES TO WORK

During the BAEO Café, representatives from New York Department of Education and Milwaukee's Institute for the Transformation of Learning (ITL) discussed how they applied BAEO principles to the charter school application and evaluation process in their respective cities. The seven principles, which were developed to serve as a guide to the development of quality educational options, address issues such as student proficiency and performance levels, educational environment, human and financial resources, leadership and accountability, community relationships, continuous learning, and contribution to the Parental Choice Movement.

Mashea Ashton, formerly the New York Department of Education's Director of Charter Schools, decried the unorganized evaluation of charter schools that plagued the department before she arrived in 2005. With assistance from the former Associate Director, Andrea Zayas, she worked to establish a concrete framework for determining the strength and effectiveness of school programs.

School leaders applying for a charter in New York are required to outline their educational standards, but with no existing evaluation structure, the board could not determine quality levels, said Ashton, who is now the Director of New Leaders for New Schools. Ashton and Zayas began looking for examples of what quality looks like.

"We wanted a deeper level of what quality means," said Zayas, who left the NYDOE to establish her own charter school. After reviewing a number of different standards, Ashton and Zayas determined that the BAEO principles were most focused on quality. They began to look at how the principles fit into the three stages of New York's charter school application process, developing compliance standards that focused on how the school vision was communicated in the application, oversight of the school's operation, and whether the outcome of the vision and operation should lead to charter renewal.

High and low qualitative standards were outlined in order to rate performance levels. A high performing school was determined to have 75 percent of its students meeting proficiency levels, medium performance capped at 60 percent, and the lowest level, included any schools functioning with 50 percent or lower proficiency. These measures are now used in the charter renewal process which occurs every five years.

"Too many times there were surprising things over what authorities expected. Now they're moving towards how we can hold all schools accountable," Zayas said.

But the New York charter school system is highly effective. According to Ashton, in the last nine years, 58 charter schools have been opened and only three have lost accreditation.

Milwaukee has the highest teen birth rate in the country. Add statistics where one in five children live in a two-parent household, one in 10 are incarcerated as well as a 34 percent high school graduation rate, and the need for quality educational options has reached a point beyond imperative, according to Cory Thompson and Kenan Grennel of Marquette University's Institute for the Transformation of Learning. "We are at the bottom of the rung in spending; bottom of the rung in achieving achievement without appropriate resources," said Thompson.

The organization, founded by Dr. Howard Fuller, is a pre-cursor to the Black Alliance for Educational Options. After the Symposium BAEO-Gates teams worked to develop the BAEO principles: It seemed only natural to apply them to ITL's accreditation mission for the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program and charter schools. ITL became an accrediting institution in 2006.

ITL established an accountability board with Fuller heading a twelve-member panel of education experts. Ten standards of accreditation were developed using the BAEO principles. These standards include requirements for out-

lining the school philosophy and objectives, building community involvement, a school climate conducive to learning, organizing administration and governance, recruiting and developing a professional staff, developing a results-oriented curriculum, selecting instructional materials, providing for student services and physical facilities, and identifying approaches to planning and management.

Eighteen schools have sought accreditation through ITL. According to Grennel, some school's seeking accreditation have a noble mission of informing African American children of their history. However, this mission alone is not adequate in the face of expectations that require students to have a dearth of knowledge about a variety of subjects including math and science. In order to ensure that schools seeking accreditation are well prepared, ITL operates as a connection of subcommittees that evaluates different aspects of each program.

One of the subcommittees evaluates the requirements for expert staff and educators to run the schools. The question of teacher certification had become a point of contention. With 87 percent of Milwaukee's teachers and school administration in need of a license, the Department of Education reported that certification was not required to be considered a qualified educator.

However, Thompson said that for the ITL, highly qualified teachers are necessary, and these individuals tend to be lifelong learners—a quality required in order to become and remain certified.

But even with all their efforts, threats seem to abound from individuals arguing against choice programs.

# SYMPOSIUM 2007 SPECIAL FEATURES GO THE EXTRA MILE TO INFORM AND INSPIRE

**S**ymposium 2007 provided a host of special features for participants to enjoy. This year's special features included some faithful favorites, such as complimentary massages and the Cultural Bookstore. While some special features maintained the BAEO standard, others such as the BAEO Boutique and Cyber Café received an "Extreme Makeover: Symposium Edition."

The BAEO Boutique was surrounded by several exhibitors who shared information and merchandise with participants in the first ever Symposium Exhibit Hall. In the Cyber Café, participants not only stayed connected to e-mail, but learned more about the Internet and the use of computers through workshops led by BAEO's own Walter Aaron.

In addition to picking up BAEO gear and staying technologically savvy, participants were "flexible" as they learned how to stretch, bend and breathe with Yoga & Pilates instructor Diane Davis.

Lastly, participants kept their spirits charged and ready to serve during the first Symposium Sunrise Prayer Service. The service, led by BAEO board members Dr. Vernard Gant and Kocoalouise Pembleton-Smith, gave participants a sincere reminder of who has called us to this mission of serving Black parents and children.

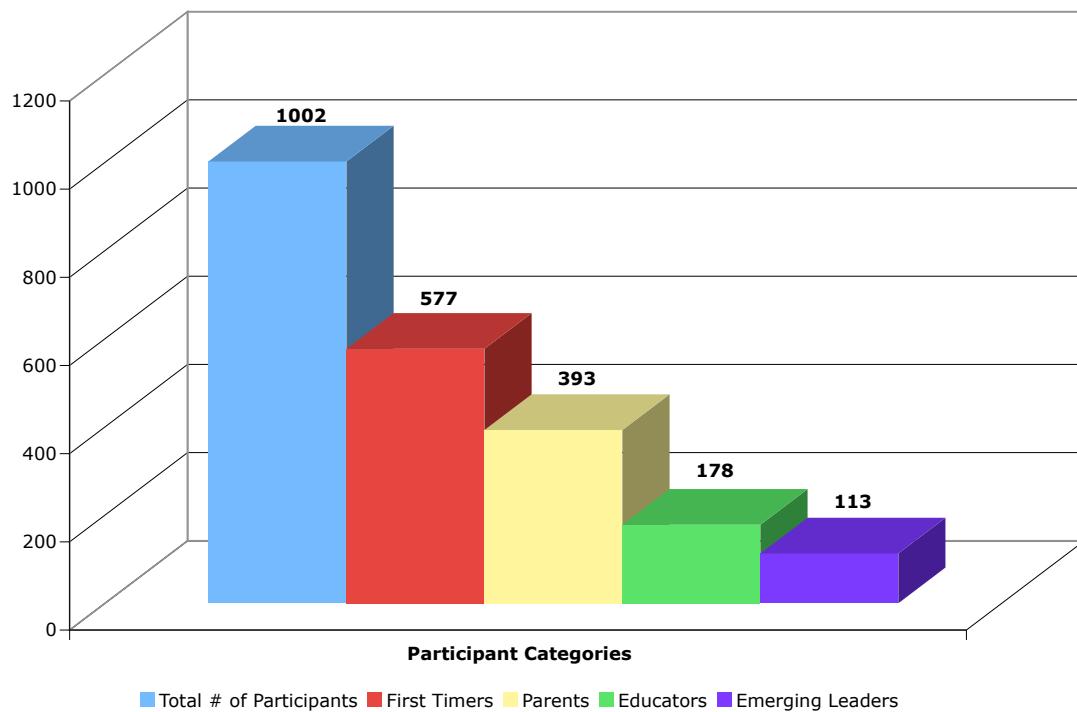
In all, the special features for Symposium 2007 not only enriched the program, but undoubtedly set a new standard of excellence for Symposium 2008.



# PARTICIPANT PROFILE AND MEMBERSHIP IMPACT

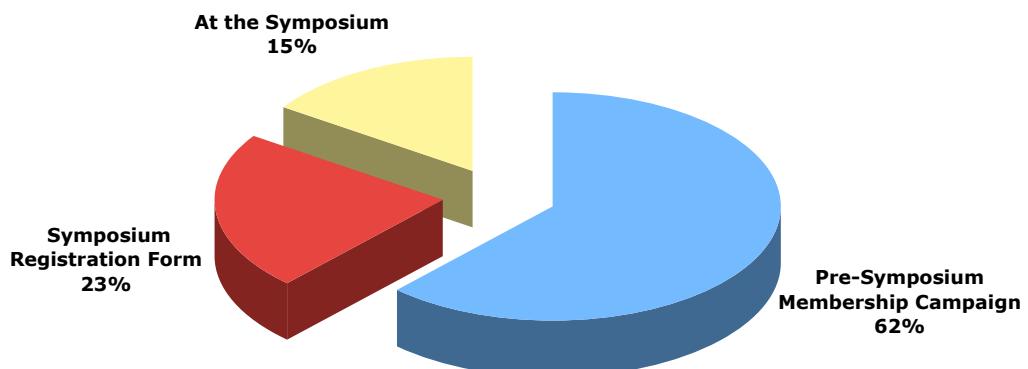
Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love, hosted 1,002 strong who embraced the theme Parental Choice Advocates: Fighting for Change, Achieving Results. This year's registration marked a milestone for BAEO and the movement by convening the largest number of Black parental choice advocates. Ninety-two percent of participants rated Symposium 2007 very good to excellent. Below are several Measures of Success.

## Participant Profile



## Membership Impact

New, Renewed and/or Upgraded Memberships



# SPECIAL THANKS AND APPRECIATION

## **SYMPORIUM PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Deborah McGriff  
*Chair, Milwaukee, WI*

Nicole Johnson  
*Symposium Staff, Washington, D.C.*

Reina Byrd  
*Symposium Staff, Washington, D.C.*

Danielle Wright  
*Symposium Staff, Washington, D.C.*

Dwight Evans  
*Philadelphia, PA*

Andrea Foggy-Paxton  
*Baltimore, MD*

Howard Fuller  
*Milwaukee, WI*

Karlena Glenn  
*Washington, D.C.*

Rick Moses  
*Philadelphia, PA*

Tola Thompson  
*Washington, D.C.*

Judith Smith  
*Milwaukee*

Virginia Walden-Ford  
*Washington, D.C.*

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