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Monday, September 04, 2006

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High-Spirited Convocation Opens School Year

A gathering of world-class educators...

On a scale of one to 10, the energy and enthusiasm levels at Fair Park Arena on Aug. 9 had to be at least a 25 as Superintendent Dr. Stan L. Mims led employees of the Birmingham City School System at the annual convocation.

Dr. Mims had technicians crank up the music and led the approximately 5,000 employees in a hand-clapping rendition of "Ain't No Stopping Us Now."

"Folks, from where I'm standing, you are absolutely beautiful," Dr. Mims told the crowd. He said the school spirit and pride were evident because so many faculties and staffs were wearing school T-shirts and holding banners.

"I know I am in the midst of some of the top world-class educators in the world," Dr. Mims. He said leaders can pontificate "but, unless we have our team with us, we can't achieve anything."

Members of the Carver High School JROTC posted the colors and led the crowd in saying the Pledge of Allegiance. Epic Elementary School Principal Vicki Stokes sang a medley of "God Bless America" and "Battle Hymn of the Republic."

Board of Education Member Phyllis Wyne told the employees that the district and partners that will include the Birmingham Public Library and Birmingham Regional Chamber of Commerce will kick off a new literacy effort in a few weeks. "Read to Be Remarkable" will be a community-wide reading program.

"We want everyone to read as if their lives depended on it," she said.

Board of Education President Odessa Ashley said, "I am ecstatic this morning because we are going to move from good to great."

Keynote speaker Dr. Eric Cooper, president of the **National Urban Alliance** for Effective Education, told the crowd that they are following a calling. "It is not really a job. It is a mission," he said.

Dr. Cooper, whose organization is working with Hayes and Woodlawn high schools and the schools that feed into them, said educators must work on behalf of all children. "I am here to say that virtually every child is capable of graduating from college or high school ready for the job market."

He said Down Syndrome children with IQ's of 70 can become professionals if they are educated and encouraged the right way. But society expects less from children who are poor, African-American or in special education.

"You are fighting institutional racism" by teaching those children, he said.

"We as educators have to become advocates for all our children," Cooper said.

He said Birmingham's educators must build their own confidence along with that of their students. "Change in Birmingham first begins with hope," he said. "Hope leads to determination."

Cooper said he is confident that Dr. Mims will lead the district to become more successful. "This is the school year that will say to America we are the Magic City," he said. "Come see our magic."



Dr. Eric Cooper

BCS Administrators Start the School Year with Boot Camp

Administrators receive words of encouragement from noted educator Dr. Hrabowski...

If your image of a school principal is of someone who wears business clothes and has a very business-like demeanor and attitude, you would have found the opening session on Principal Boot Camp held Aug. 3 and 4 quite interesting.

To begin with, the principals, assistant principals and other administrators of the Birmingham City Schools were wearing fraternity and sorority T-shirts, jeans, sweat pants, sneakers and other casual clothing. Superintendent Stan L. Mims had on a red fraternity sweatshirt, jeans and sneakers. And everyone in the room participated in a six-minute calisthenics routine designed to get the administrators' blood pumping.

Boot Camp, a combination of team-building exercises, inspiring speakers and educational sessions, continued with a series of games led by Dr. Mims. He directed the participants to divide themselves into groups of 10, followed by seven, 25, nine and three.

Then the participants were divided in half, with the groups facing each other for a game of "man, wolf, gun." The game is similar to the childhood favorite "rock, paper, scissors" except that the groups had to choose which item they would mine on mesa.



Mrs. Allen, Chief of Staff gets autograph from Dr.