



2020  
*Annual Report*



# Message from Board President, Karlo Young and Executive Director, Jess Suriano

Dear Friends,

Each year in November, we pause to reflect on the year behind us, while looking forward with great optimism to all that lies ahead for our students, families and alumni. While this year has been different and challenging for our city, country and the world, our focus has not wavered: **SUPPORT, ACHIEVEMENT, FAMILY, LEADERSHIP** and **CONNECTION** remain the hallmarks of **B.E.S.T.** and the anchors of our work.

This fall, 371 Kindergarten – 12<sup>th</sup> grade **B.E.S.T.** students, in person or online, are engaged in learning and leading in their school communities. And **B.E.S.T.** continues to engage in meaningful, innovative programming to enhance and strengthen their experiences, including family engagement, college bound preparation, leadership development, and affirmational support. Through it all, though virtual for now, **B.E.S.T.** remains a constant, thanks to you.

We hope you will enjoy these pages celebrating our beloved students, families, alumni, funders and Trustees. Whether in person or in tiny squares on our computers, we stand with, behind and for our Black students – now and always.

With enduring appreciation,



Karlo G. Young  
Board President



Jessica Wolf Suriano  
Executive Director



## Our Mission

**The Baltimore Educational Scholarship Trust**, in partnership with our eighteen independent member schools, recruits and supports through the admissions process academically ambitious African American students with financial need from the Baltimore area. Once students are enrolled, **B.E.S.T.** positions them for success through academic preparation, character and leadership development, and support programs.

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# Support

## *B.E.S.T. Admissions*

At our founding in 1987, **B.E.S.T.** was charged with identifying and supporting academically talented African American students from families of lower income in the Baltimore region who have the ability to thrive in an independent school. More than three decades later, we continue to support children seeking independent school admission in grades K-9 through strategic recruiting partnerships with public and parochial schools and other non-profit organizations in our city. When a family is accepted into the **B.E.S.T.** program, they receive individual admissions counseling and support as they apply to our member schools, as well as a comprehensive overview of Baltimore area educational options. Included is Independent School Entrance Exam (ISEE) preparation for students, a Financial Aid Workshop for parents, and tailored, ongoing guidance throughout the entire process.



From left: Peggy Bittner, Director of Programs and Alumni Relations; Crystal Alston '96, Director of Advancement; Kim Dorsey, Admissions Associate; Jessica Suriano, Executive Director; Rachel Minnis, Development and Program Associate; Alecia Pridgen, Director of Enrollment Management; Jill Wood, Director of Finance and Operations

## *B.E.S.T. Student, Family and Alumni Support Programming*

**B.E.S.T. Programming is thoughtfully designed to provide meaningful opportunities for connection, leadership development, essential support and engagement. Please see below for a comprehensive list of our 2019-2020 student, family and alumni programs:**

- *The Lion King* Film Screening
- Annual Back to School Family Celebration
- Visit to the National Aquarium in Baltimore for Lower and Middle school families
- FAFSA & CSS Profile Workshop for Senior Parents and Parents of College-Aged Alumni in partnership with Gilman School, Bryn Mawr School and Roland Park Country School
- 7<sup>th</sup> Annual *Leaders on Leadership* Breakfast for Upper School students
- SAT/ACT Prep with Capital Educators for all **B.E.S.T.** Juniors
- “Maximizing the College Counseling Experience” Workshop for Upper School families
- *Harriet* Film Screening
- Legg Mason Women’s Leadership Network Mentor Day for Junior and Senior girls
- Alumni Networking Cocktail Party
- Family Holiday Party with Senior Speaker and Class of 2020 Celebration
- College-Aged Alumni Brunch at Miss Shirley’s
- INROADS Information Sessions for college-aged alumni – *Virtual*
- Summer Scholars 2020 – *Virtual*
- Class of 2020 Conversations – *Virtual*
- New Parent Welcome Event with Current Parent Panel – *Virtual*
- Parent and Alumni Listening Sessions – *Virtual*
- Gilman Black Alumni Leadership Institute – 20 **B.E.S.T.** students selected to the cohort
- Art of Leadership, a program of Art With a Heart- 4 **B.E.S.T.** students selected to the cohort

# Achievement



# Leadership

## Leaders on Leadership Breakfast

This annual Breakfast convenes **B.E.S.T.**'s leadership funders, Trustees and partners at The Center Club to spend the morning with our Upper School students. We are grateful to have this special time with our students and with the leaders in Baltimore who are essential in supporting the mission of our organization.



Karlo Young, **B.E.S.T.** Board President;  
Jessica Suriano, **B.E.S.T.** Executive Director; Richelle Parham, Honored Speaker;  
Shane Tanzymore, St. Paul's School & **B.E.S.T.** '91, Alumnus Speaker



**B.E.S.T.** Alumni at *Leaders on Leadership Breakfast*

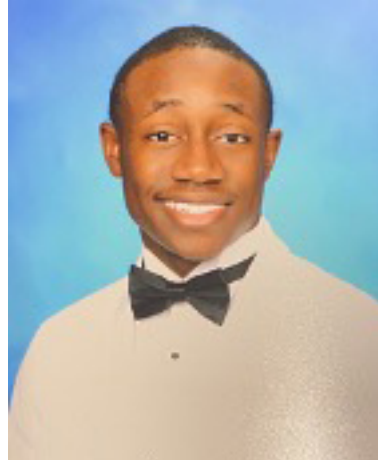


# Leadership

## 2020 Stanley I. Panitz Leadership Award Winners:



Serena C. '21, The Bryn Mawr School



Olu K. '21, The St. Paul's Schools

This award, in memory of the late Stanley I. Panitz, Founding **B.E.S.T.** Board Chair, is presented annually to two **B.E.S.T.** Juniors in recognition of their academic achievement, their demonstrated leadership in both their school and the broader community, and their strength of character.

*We are so proud of Serena and Olu!*



Alumni Networking Cocktail Party



Members of the Class of 2020 with Trustee Emeritus, Theo Rodgers at The Hippodrome Theatre before seeing *Hamilton*. We are so grateful to Theo for making this experience possible!



**B.E.S.T.** Upper School Girls with **B.E.S.T.** Trustee, Tim Lorber and **B.E.S.T.**'s Executive Director, Jess Suriano at Legg Mason's Women's Leadership Network Mentor Day

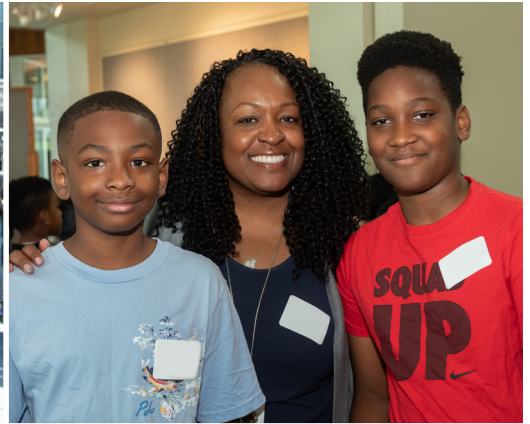


Tyshea W. '21 and Jonathan E. '21 with **B.E.S.T.**'s Director of Advancement, Crystal Alston '96, at National Association of Independent Schools People of Color Conference in Seattle, WA



Winter Break College-Aged Alumni Brunch at Miss Shirley's

# Family



# Family



# Connection

In March, when COVID-19 changed the ways in which we are able to engage with one another, **B.E.S.T.** created meaningful opportunities to remain connected to our students, families, and **B.E.S.T.** Alumni. We have shifted to virtual programming until we can be together again in person. Although we are not physically together, we remain connected as ever.

## Summer Scholars

Summer Scholars, our signature support and transition program, prepares our newly enrolled **B.E.S.T.** middle and upper school students for the demands and expectations of their new independent schools. An engaging curriculum comprised of academics, athletics, art, field trips, study skills, advisory and affirmational programming provides the experiences necessary to support a smooth transition for our students, and enables them to focus their energy and attention on their academic success as they begin at their new schools in the fall. Additionally, Summer Scholars provides our students with the opportunity to develop a rich network of friends and faculty who will stay with them long after the summer is over. This July, our faculty pivoted to create Summer Scholars as a *virtual experience*, weaving together all of the hallmark components of this essential and impactful program, including some new and exciting elements.

Our thanks to Roland Park Country School, Thomas Wilson Sanitarium for Children of Baltimore City, and STX for their incredible and abiding commitment to our students.



A highlight of this year's Summer Scholars Program: After reading [The Other Wes Moore](#), our Scholars were able to have a Zoom session with Mr. Moore, who answered their thoughtful questions and gave them advice and positive encouragement for their journey ahead.



Scholars participated in a Storytelling Workshop with **B.E.S.T.** and Friends School Alumnus, Dr. David Fakunle '05. We are grateful to Dr. Fakunle for bringing this impactful workshop to our students.

# Connection



Virtual field trip to The Hippodrome Theatre



***Thanks to B.E.S.T. Summer Scholars, Lillie Carroll Jackson now has her place in the collection at Black Past.*** We are so proud of our 2020 Summer Scholars and faculty members for making this possible and for bringing well-deserved attention to a Baltimorean who stood for justice and civil rights.

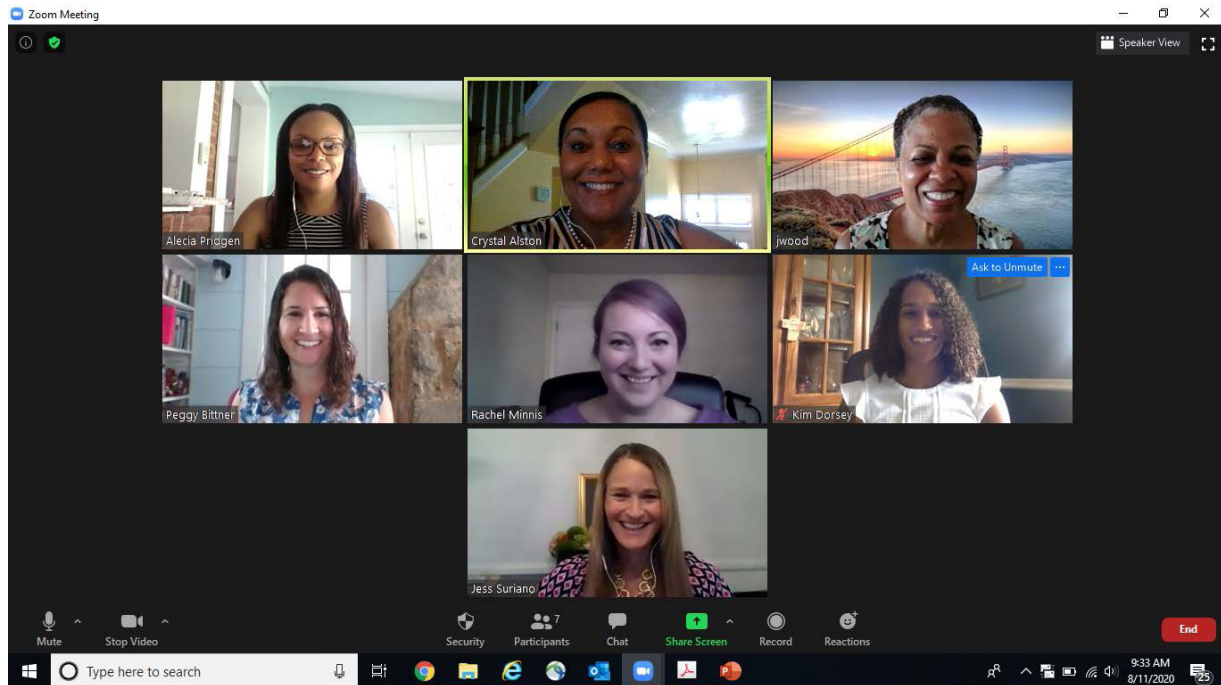


In order to get the new school year started with some encouragement from the **B.E.S.T.** team, a back-to-school goodie bag was mailed to all **B.E.S.T.** students in August, including blue light glasses!

# Connection

## To our B.E.S.T. Families

Even though we cannot be together in person yet, we are always here for you. ***We miss you!***



Click the image above to search the **B.E.S.T.** Owned Business Directory.

Contact Peggy Bittner, Director of Programs at [\*\*PBittner@besttrust.org\*\*](mailto:PBittner@besttrust.org)  
if you are a **B.E.S.T.** Student, Parent or Alumnus and would like your information included!

# With Gratitude

**B.E.S.T.** thanks our generous funders for their unwavering commitment to our mission. ***Now more than ever***, your belief in our students is a gift for which we are immeasurably grateful.

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# With Gratitude

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This list includes all donors to the Baltimore Educational Scholarship Trust during the 2019-2020 giving year (July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020).

If an error has been made, please accept our sincere apology and notify Crystal Alston '96 at 410.752.2225 or calston@besttrust.org.

*Thank you to our partners:*



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We want to thank our Member Schools for their incredible support of our shared students and families. For the 2020-2021 academic year, they are providing over \$8.5 million in financial aid to our 371 **B.E.S.T.** students in grades K-12. We are grateful to have such wonderful, committed partners.

## B.E.S.T. Member Schools



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