2022 ANNUAL REPORT







































MESSAGE FROM

Board President, Karlo Young and Executive Director, Jess Suriano



Dear **B.E.S.T.** Friends, During this season of r

During this season of reflection and gratitude, we want to thank you for your investment in the mission of the Baltimore Educational Scholarship Trust. This year, our 380 **B.E.S.T.** students, grades K-12, are joyfully learning and leading on their campuses, and we are grateful for the partnership with our eighteen independent Member Schools as we work together to elevate the young people we are so proud to serve.

B.E.S.T. is a game-changer in Baltimore. Our parent engagement, community connection, academic enrichment, leadership development, college-bound programming, internship pipeline and behind-the-scenes financial support all elevate the children and young adults we are so fortunate to call **B.E.S.T.** students. We remain steadfast in our mission and are thrilled to share our successes with you. These pages highlight the pillars of our work: SUPPORT, ACHIEVEMENT, LEADERSHIP, FAMILY, and CONNECTION, with an emphasis on our outstanding students, Alumni, Member Schools and partners.

B.E.S.T. is committed to positioning our students for the highest levels of success on their campuses and in the broader Baltimore community. Our work — with your support — celebrates their excellence; affirms their brilliance; amplifies their voices; insists on their joy; and champions their dreams.

We hope you will enjoy reading more about our beloved students, families, Alumni, funders and Trustees. **Your support is an essential part of the journey our students take, and we are grateful to have you in our corner.**

With deep gratitude,





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.

Table of Contents

| Support2 | Connection11 |
|--------------|-------------------------------|
| Achievement6 | Alumni13 |
| Leadership7 | With Gratitude16 |
| Family9 | Trustees and Member Schools18 |



B.E.S.T. staff with Karionie C. '30, McDonogh School, at the Kickoff to Summer Celebration

At our founding in 1987, **B.E.S.T.** was charged with identifying and supporting academically ambitious Black students from families with financial need in the Baltimore region who would thrive in an independent school. Today, we continue to support children seeking independent school admission in grades K-9 through strategic recruiting partnerships with public and parochial schools and other nonprofits and organizations in our city serving young people, including academic, arts and athletic programs. Following a comprehensive admission process each June through September, 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 additional Baltimore area educational options. Included is Independent School Entrance Exam (ISEE) preparation for students, an ISEE Exam, a Financial Aid Workshop for parents, a Member School Fair for B.E.S.T. applicants, and personalized, continuous guidance throughout the entire process.

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. Our programs and support are intended to enhance each family's independent school experience and create a deepened relationship with both **B.E.S.T.** and their Member School. We also seek to strengthen our relationship with our Alumni both in and out of college.

Please see below for a comprehensive list of our 2021-2022 Student, Family, and Alumni programs:

- College Application Essay Writing Workshop in partnership with Gilman School for rising seniors
- Member School Networking Zoom
- "College Admissions FAQ: From Ivy League to HBCU" Workshop for Upper School Families
- **B.E.S.T.**: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow Alumni Zoom Series
- FAFSA & CSS Profile Virtual Workshop for Senior Parents/Caregivers and Parents/Caregivers of College-Aged Alumni in partnership with Bryn Mawr School, Gilman School, and Roland Park Country School
- SAT/ACT Prep with Capital Educators for all **B.E.S.T.** Juniors
- B.E.S.T. Family Holiday Drive-Thru Celebration
- INROADS Information Sessions for College-Aged Alumni
- Virtual Wellness Workshop for Upper School Students
- B.E.S.T. Alumni at Member Schools Zoom
- "The Critical Importance of Belonging" Professional Development Workshop for Member School Administrators
- Bryn Mawr School B.E.S.T. Student Gathering
- Kickoff to Summer Celebration for Students, Families and Young Alumni
- New Parent/Caregiver Welcome Dinner featuring Current Parent Panel
- Maryland Zoo in Baltimore for Lower and Middle School Families
- Gilman Black Alumni Leadership Institute (GBALI) 21 **B.E.S.T.** students selected to the cohort
- Art of Leadership, a program of Art With a Heart 5 **B.E.S.T.** students selected to the cohort
- Summer Scholars for newly-enrolled rising Middle and Upper School Students
- · Alumni engagement

Summer Scholars

Summer Scholars, our five-week 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. At the core of the program, we seek to ensure that our newest members of the **B.E.S.T.** family are feeling connected to **B.E.S.T.**, each other, and the independent school community.

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. In addition to rigorous academic courses, Summer Scholars featured the following experiences:

- Field trip to Camp Hippodrome at The Hippodrome Theatre
- Day at Outward Bound for team-building and leadership development
- Story Telling Workshop with **B.E.S.T.** Alumnus, David Fakunle '05, Ph.D.
- "Black Joy: Claiming Your Power" Workshop with Michael Powell, Director of Community, Equity and Inclusion at the Boys' Latin School
- Leadership Sessions hosted by James Scott of St. Ignatius Loyola Academy and Elisha James, Director of Summer Scholars
- Virtual field trip to the Lillie Mae Carroll Jackson Civil Rights Museum
- Roller Skating Party





































Our thanks to Roland Park Country School; Summer Scholars Director, Elisha James, and the incredible faculty and interns; the Thomas Wilson Sanitarium for Children of Baltimore City, and STX. Their commitment of time, talent and treasure ensures the continued success of the Summer Scholars program.

A Grateful Farewell to Elisha James, Director of K-12 Student Life and Engagement, Roland Park Country School

After fourteen years of outstanding leadership, Elisha James has stepped down as the Director of the Summer Scholars program. During her tenure, she has impacted more than 230 **B.E.S.T.** students! A compassionate and thoughtful leader, she has been dedicated to ensuring that our summers are designed to remind our students of their brilliance. She has consistently hired and supported faculty and interns second to none, who have followed her vision of preparing our students fully for their transition to their new schools, so they can show up as their true, wonderful selves. She has been a partner, a leader, and an inspiration – always placing **B.E.S.T.** students and families high on her priority list, year after year. While Elisha will be missed, she has created a legacy and will be a permanent part of the **B.E.S.T.** family. Thank you, Elisha!



Special Funds

Stuart O. Simms President's Fund

The Stuart O. Simms President's Fund at **B.E.S.T.** was established to honor Stu Simms, Past Board President and Trustee Emeritus, for his unwavering commitment to the Baltimore Educational Scholarship Trust. The Fund provides transformational support for **B.E.S.T.** students above and beyond the existing support provided by **B.E.S.T.** and our Member Schools. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Psychoeducational Testing
- Significant Transportation Challenges
- Academic Supports

- Experiential Learning Opportunities
- Out of State Travel for College Visits





Zayda G. '22 spent the fall semester of her senior year at Friends School of Baltimore in Paraguay with support from the Stuart O. Simms President's Fund

Anthony Deering Cultural Enhancement Fund

Established and endowed by Trustee Emeritus, Theo Rodgers, to honor the memory of his friend Tony Deering, the Anthony Deering Cultural Enhancement Fund provides **B.E.S.T.** students enriching cultural experiences, including school-year and summer opportunities at Baltimore area cultural institutions and organizations.

This past summer, a select number of lower and middle school students enjoyed the opportunity to attend camps focused on cultural experiences and the arts. They participated in programming at Baltimore Center Stage, the Morton Street Dance Center, and Social Studio.







ACHIEVEMENT

We are So Proud of the B.E.S.T. Class of 2022







































































































Caleb N. '22 St. Paul's School for Boys, Senior Portrait

"It seems like just yesterday when as a family we were celebrating Caleb's acceptance into the **B.E.S.T.** Program, and now Caleb will be graduating from St. Paul's School for Boys in just a few short weeks. He is incredibly grateful for the support and experiences that he had as a **B.E.S.T.** Scholar. From the intensive yet engaging summer program at Roland Park Country School during the summer before his 7th grade year at St. Paul's to the **B.E.S.T.** sponsored SAT Prep with Capital Educators, B.E.S.T. has played an integral role in shaping who Caleb is as a scholar and human being. His eyes would light up whenever he realized that there was yet another B.E.S.T. Scholar sprinkled across the campus, and I know that he will carry those connections and relationships with him.

Caleb is attending St. Mary's College of Maryland; the school was one that we visited on a B.E.S.T.sponsored college tour during the Spring Break of his 9th grade year. I fell in love with St. Mary's then and there; however, it took Caleb a little longer to fall in love with it too, and now the school which he is attending as both of our first choices was a school that he first toured because of **B.E.S.T.** Thank you so much!"

- Caleb's Mom

LEADERSHIP

2022 Stanley I. Panitz Leadership Award Winners:



Azari T. '23, Friends School of Baltimore



Arreyelle W. '23, The Bryn Mawr School

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 Azari and Arreyelle!

Leadership Luncheon with B.E.S.T. Board of Trustees Vice President

B.E.S.T. students were invited to attend *The Honorable Mabel Houze Hubbard Legacy Luncheon* of the Alliance of Black Women Attorneys of Maryland as guests of **B.E.S.T.** Alumna and Trustee, Tiffani Collins, Esq. '00 (pictured far left). Also joining the group was **B.E.S.T.** Alumna, Aissatou Boye '16 (pictured far right) who has remained in touch with Ms. Collins since her internship with Collins Legal Group, LLC when she was a high school student! This luncheon brought together an esteemed group of law professionals from the greater Baltimore area for an afternoon of networking and fellowship while celebrating The Honorable Angela M. Eaves, Judge of the Maryland Court of Appeals.



GILMAN BLACK ALUMNI LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

The Gilman Black Alumni Leadership Institute (GBALI) is a non-academic co-educational leadership program designed to expose Baltimore Area high school students to business, college, career and life concepts not typically addressed in the curriculum and pedagogy of most schools. Since 2005, the foundation of GBALI is the idea that success is defined by more than a career, and that a career is determined by more than academics. Emphasis is placed not only on educational and career choices but also on the importance of interpersonal relationships and accountability to oneself and others. GBALI students develop a more complete and stronger understanding of the connection between decisions, career, friendships and family. **B.E.S.T.** is proud to partner with GBALI in supporting our shared students. The 2022 cohort included 21 **B.E.S.T.** students.

LEADERSHIP



Each year, **B.E.S.T.** students participate in Art With A Heart's yearlong leadership program "Art of Leadership." The Art of Leadership program brings together 10th and 11th grade public and independent school students of diverse backgrounds to develop leadership skills and engage in dialogue across cultural barriers.

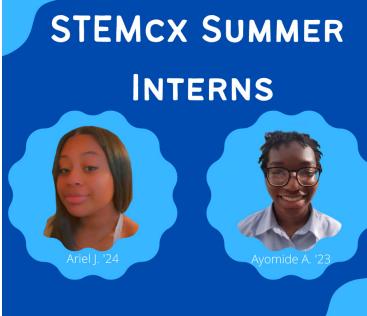
Through guest speakers and experiential opportunities, students are exposed to community challenges and develop fresh perspectives on how to address them. The program strives to motivate its participants to become leaders in the Baltimore community.

In 2022, through Molly Hathaway and Redmond C.S. Finney Leadership Program funding, **B.E.S.T.** sponsored 5 **B.E.S.T.** students to have this wonderful leadership opportunity.

STEMcx Partnership:

B.E.S.T. celebrates our students who were selected for paid summer internships through our partnership with STEMcx. William G. '22, Zara A. '25 and Dylan B. '23 participated in a Bioethics Internship provided by New York University School of Medicine. Ariel J. '24 participated in the Environmental Justice Internship provided by George Washington University, and Ayomide A. '23 participated in the Coding Internship provided by BlueVoyant. We are thrilled to have the opportunity to connect our students with such a terrific program.





FAMILY



FAMILY

CONNECTION

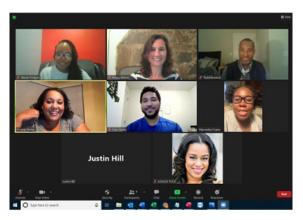
Connection is the true hallmark of our organization — connections between **B.E.S.T.** and our students, families, and Alumni; between **B.E.S.T.** and our eighteen Member Schools; between **B.E.S.T.** and our partner organizations; and between **B.E.S.T.** and the Baltimore community and beyond. An essential component of our programming is ensuring that our students truly feel connected — and celebrated!

Black History Month Student Mailings

Our **B.E.S.T.** students are MAKING HISTORY! During Black History Month, we sent beautiful coloring books and special journals to our students as a reminder that they are valued, appreciated, and loved. A special thank you to Alumnus and Trustee, Josh Perry '02, for donating some of the coloring books; and Alumnus David Fakunle Ph.D. '05 for his message which accompanied the journals.



"B.E.S.T.: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow" Alumni Zooms



B.E.S.T. Alumni convened over Zoom to hear an update on the internal and external work of the organization and the ways in which students and families are supported throughout their independent school experience. Alumni were excited to hear the care with which the organization continues to take a student-centered approach and the ways in which it is reflected every step of the way from Admissions to Programming and Enrollment Management, to Alumni Engagement and Advancement. Alumni shared their ideas and strategies for being an additional layer of support to students, parents/caregivers, and fellow Alumni.

CONNECTION

Bryn Mawr Student Get-Together

B.E.S.T. hosted a special gathering at Bryn Mawr School to celebrate our shared Kindergarten -12^{th} grade **B.E.S.T.** students and strengthen this wonderful community within the broader Bryn Mawr community. Students enjoyed breakfast refreshments in Bryn Mawr's graduation garden and worked together on an activity to help students get to know one another across all three divisions. What a wonderful event to foster a strong network for our students!



Kickoff to Summer Celebration

We were thrilled to reunite with our **B.E.S.T.** Families and Alumni for an evening of fun, food and fellowship to kickoff the start of summer! Hosted at the Odyssey School, families enjoyed food trucks, a DJ and tons of lawn games — and the highly anticipated chance to be together. Thank you to Qdoba for donating burritos for this fun family event!



New Parent/Caregiver Welcome Event

B.E.S.T. parents/caregivers of our newly-enrolled students gathered for a Welcome Event at Bryn Mawr School. A Current Parent Panel shared their experiences and fielded questions, providing a forum for new parents/caregivers to prepare for their transition into their new school communities. The evening was also a wonderful opportunity for new parents to get to know one another and form connections before the school year even begins. This annual event is centered on sharing words of encouragement and reassurance with our new families and creating meaningful connections across all of our Member Schools.



B.E.S.T. Staff Selfie at New Parent/Caregiver Welcome Dinner



Current Parent/Caregiver Panelists

ALUMNI

B.E.S.T. Alumni Back on Campus



William Ashford
Gilman School '97
Upper School Religion Teacher,
Chaplaincy Support, Head Track & Field Coach,
St. Paul's School for Boys



Dia ClarkPark School of Baltimore '06
Director of Athletics-Boys' Programs,
Park School of Baltimore



Farah Evans, M.Ed., LCPC
Bryn Mawr School '98
Director of Student Support Services
& Upper School Counselor,
Bryn Mawr School



Mercedez Evans
St. Paul's School for Girls '13
Admissions Associate,
St. Paul's School for Girls



Jibri McLean
Gilman School '13
Middle School Ancient History Teacher,
Calvert School



Elijah Muhammad
Friends School of Baltimore '12
Middle School Social
Studies Teacher,
Part-time DEI Coordinator,
The Odyssey School

B.E.S.T. Alumni Spotlights



Aniya Martin Bryn Mawr School '18 Associate Analyst in Wholesale Operations, Constellation Energy



Dr. Tovah Dorsey
St. Paul's School
for Girls '04
Emergency & Critical
Care Veterinarian,
Friendship Hospital
for Animals



Karlo Young, **B.E.S.T.** Board President and Peggy Bittner, B.E.S.T. Director of Programs & Alumni Relations joined Maxwell Costes '18. **B.E.S.T.** and Gilman Alumnus during his return to his alma mater Gilman School, to speak to both Upper and Middle School students about his life as a scholar athlete at the University of Maryland and strategies he uses to manage his own mental health and wellness, both on the baseball field and throughout his life. We are so proud of Maxwell as he launches his professional baseball career with the Baltimore Orioles.

INROADS Partnership



Thanks to our ongoing partnership with INROADS, Carrington G. '19 (far right) participated in the Johns Hopkins Carey Business School Summer Business Academy. **B.E.S.T.** Scholars = Future Leaders!

B.E.S.T. TRUSTEES AND STAFF

B.E.S.T. is grateful for the leadership, governance, and incredible commitment of our Board of Trustees. Our Board is comprised of the Head of School of each of our eighteen Member Schools, as well as community leaders from all industries in Baltimore.

We are especially proud that our Board's leadership includes five **B.E.S.T.** Alumni. We welcome Keyia Yalcin '02 to our Board this year.

Keyia Yalcin '02, St. Paul's School for Girls Howard University, BBA in Business Administration, 2007 Georgetown University, MA in Real Estate Development, 2012 Owner, Real Estate Development & Management — The Yalcin Group Owner, Fishnet Restaurant



Additional Alumni Trustees

- Tiffani S. Collins, Esq. '00, Friends School of Baltimore
- Nikki J. Kerman, Esq. '04, Park School of Baltimore
- Joshua R. Perry '02, Calvert School, McDonogh School
- Ashlee S. Tuck '02, Roland Park Country School



Black Trustee Dinner

In October 2022, Trustee Emeriti Theo Rodgers, Stuart Simms, and Vernon Reid hosted a Black Trustee Dinner to discuss ways to further elevate the organization, including our engagement of Alumni and other next generation supporters for **B.E.S.T.**

The B.E.S.T. Staff Celebrates Our Alumna Colleague

B.E.S.T. celebrates Crystal Lee Alston '96 for her induction into the Garrison Forest School Hall of Excellence. The Hall of Excellence was created to recognize extraordinary members of the Garrison Forest community who have made significant contributions to the School and to the community.

Crystal Lee Alston '96

Crystal joined GFS as a day student and a Baltimore Educational Scholarship Trust (**B.E.S.T.**) Scholar in 1992 for Ninth Grade. Crystal won the Alumnae Award at Commencement and has been involved with Garrison Forest in the following capacities: first-ever Vice President of the School; member of the first Black Student Union as well as Forum and the Badminton team; Class News Agent; Alumnae Board member; Class Fund Agent; and 2016 Reunion Co-Chair. A current member of the Garrison Forest Board of Trustees, she serves as the Chair for the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee and previously chaired the School Life Committee. She was hired as Director of Alumnae Affairs at Garrison Forest School immediately following her graduation from Loyola University Maryland and was later promoted to Director of the Fund for Garrison Forest and then Associate Director of Development. Crystal became Associate Director of Admission in July 2011. In 2004, Crystal became the first **B.E.S.T.** Alumna to serve on their Board of Trustees, and in July 2014 she became its Director of Advancement.



Jessica Suriano, Executive Director (left) and Peggy Bittner, Director of Programs and Alumni (right) celebrate with Crystal

In 2016, she was named one of "40 under 40," by the Baltimore Business Journal.

IN MEMORIAM

In Memory of Blanche Rodgers

In 2002, the Baltimore Educational Scholarship Trust established the *Theo C. Rodgers Emergency Fund* in honor of Trustee Emeritus, Theo Rodgers. He and his wife Blanche cared deeply about the ability of our students to continue on their educational journey, regardless of external challenges, which informed the creation of the Fund. Blanche's support of **B.E.S.T.**, alongside Theo's, has been significant and abiding, and we are forever grateful for her impact on our mission.

The *Emergency Fund* provides emergency assistance grants to **B.E.S.T.** Member Schools to support students whose families experience a financial crisis and are at risk of not meeting their tuition obligation. An *Emergency Fund* grant provides payment for the students' tuition, enabling them to remain enrolled at their independent school despite their family's unexpected hardship.

Following the passing of Ms. Rodgers in June of this year, Mr. Rodgers and their daughter Marjorie selected **B.E.S.T.** and the Baltimore School for the Arts to be considered for memorial contributions.

At the time of this publication, **B.E.S.T.** has received **\$100,000** in memorial gifts to the *Emergency Fund*. We have humbly and with love renamed the Fund the *Rodgers Family Emergency Fund*.



With deep gratitude, we acknowledge the donors to the *Rodgers Family Emergency Fund* in Memory of Blanche Rodgers:

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Michael J. Weinfeld

Terrance and Kourtney Whitehead

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