



California Association of African American  
Superintendents and Administrators

# CAAASA **Conference** *Experience*

**LOEW'S HOLLYWOOD HOTEL - March 26<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> 2025**

## **PROMOTING BLACK STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: PROGRAMS & POLICIES TO FULFILL THE PROMISE OF BROWN**



*Columbia University Professor and Author, Dr. Bettina Love, CAAASA President Dr. Adam Clark, LAUSD Superintendent Alberto Carvalho, Executive Director of CAAASA Dwight Bonds.*

The 2025 CAAASA Professional Development Summit, held in the heart of Hollywood at the Loews Hotel, convened educators and leaders from across the state in a powerful showing of intentional commitment to educational equity. This year's conference theme, Promoting Black Student Achievement: Programs and Policies to Fulfill the Promise of Brown, stands on the shoulders of our work that began over one year ago during the 70th Anniversary Year of the Brown v. Board decision. We began our time of research, dialogue, data, and solutions with a resounding experience led by Chaplin David Anthony Johnson who transported us to the Lincoln Memorial as he mirrored the voice, fortitude, and passion of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s historic *I Have a Dream* Speech. Dr. Adam Clark, President of CAAASA, officially opened the conference, reminding us of how our work lives on through a legacy of unwavering educators and leaders and that we can advance education to promote Black student achievement.



**Plenary Speakers:**  
*Jennie Berkovich (Hazel Health),  
Jennifer Ybarra J.D. (CA Endowment),  
Dr. Donna Campbell (PSD Asst.  
Superintendent), Erika Jones  
(CTA), Dr. Karla Estrada (Asst.  
Superintendent LAUSD), Dr. Antonio  
Shelton (Superintendent Santa  
Monica-Malibu)*



*Dr. Antoine Hawkins (Supt. Evergreen School District), Namita Brown (F3Law), Dr. Debra Duardo (Supt. LACOE), Attorney General Rob Bonta, Dr. Angelo Williams (Deputy Director First 5 California)*



*Chaplin David Anthony Johnson embodies the words and spirit of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., performing I Have a Dream*

Keynote speaker, Los Angeles Unified School District Superintendent, Alberto Carvalho, continued the inspiration of the morning by sharing a personal story of how his dreams as a child who witnessed depression and oppression of all types are not far from the dreams of the students we serve. His words to remain unabashed about serving black children, immigrant children, and all marginalized children encouraged our work as advocates and equity leaders. Following the Superintendent, Dr. Bettina Love had us at the end of our seats and on our feet with her keynote address highlighting where history, politics, and education collide. As we set off to our workshops, Dr. Love implored us to stand in the gap of harm; not a “gap of achievement”- that for decades has continued to erode the spirits of our black students, creating the variance in outcomes we continue to witness. It was a conference launch that reached the minds, hearts, and spirits of us all, uniting us in community on the path to fulfill the Promise of Brown.

## **2025 CAAASA Pre-Conference**

### **Parent and Youth Summits**



The 2025 CAAASA Conference kicked off with an electrifying Pre-Conference including a Youth and Parent Summit that united families and educators from across California. This pre-conference event, facilitated on stage by Dr. Theresa Price, founder of National College Resources Foundation, showcased an impressive array of performances from elementary school students, who dazzled the audience with their talent and creativity around black affirming performing art. A key highlight of the summit was the inspiring keynote address delivered by White House Advisor, Chase Moore. Moore captivated the young audience with his powerful message on the importance of youth engagement and empowerment in shaping the future. Drawing from his own experiences, he emphasized the role that families and communities play in supporting young people on their journeys.

In addition to the inspiring speeches and performances, the summit offered a variety of educational workshops tailored for students from elementary through high school. These sessions provided practical skills and knowledge on topics ranging from academic success strategies to mental health awareness, blockchain technology, and leadership development. The collaborative atmosphere fostered by the workshops strengthened the bonds between families and educators, reinforcing the goal of the pre-conference to uplift the voices of youth and their advocates in the community.

## ***Unity Professional Women's Network***

The Pre-Conference series hosted by Unity Professional Women's Network, led by Dr. Patricia Brent-Sanco, was a dynamic success. Unity honored the legacy of Superintendent Dr. Shawna Dinkins (Lynwood Unified) while celebrating the strength and professional advancement of Black women and women of color. The event provided a platform for attendees to reflect on Dr. Dinkins' contributions to education and community leadership, inspiring participants to continue in service, uplifting the voices of the communities they serve. The atmosphere was both enriching and inspiring, as speakers shared their experiences and insights, fostering a sense of solidarity and community among the attendees.

The professional development sessions were particularly impactful, providing valuable tools and strategies for personal and professional growth as women. Attendees engaged in enriching discussions that addressed the unique challenges faced by women of color in various professional fields, while also celebrating their achievements and resilience. The series not only equipped attendees with practical skills but also ignited a collective commitment to advocate for equity and representation in all spheres of influence.

## ***FULFILLING THE PROMISE OF BROWN***

Each day consisted of two Plenary sessions focused around a specific program or policy area impacting Black student achievement. Attorney General Rob Bonta, alongside Dr. Debra Duardo, Superintendent of LACOE, Attorney Namita Brown, and Dr. Angelo Williams, Deputy Director of First5 California, spoke to the multiple policies

and initiatives the state of California has in place to ensure the safety of immigrant families and the readiness of Districts to proactively address the latest concerns facing our communities. In addition to these policies,



## ***In honor of Dr. Shawna Dinkins***



Dr. Shawna Dinkins, was the Deputy Superintendent of Lynwood Unified and a champion of both CAAASA and NCOEE. She lived a life of service to children and their families and was an unwavering leader of educational equity. Her dedication to improving outcomes for black students & all students historically pushed to the margins is both honorable and inspiring. Let us honor her legacy by continuing the work in which she was so selflessly committed.



long standing community programs, when connected to schools can provide additive supports for families by fulfilling foundational needs our students must have met to ensure they are in the safest, healthiest mindset to learn.

Building on the integral power of policies, our Thursday sessions took a critical look at Desegregation since Brown, citing systemic challenges and success as it relates to Black Student Achievement. Panelists Dr. Carl Cohn, Dr. Adam Clark, and Ary

Amerikaner cited personal experiences and observations that highlight structures in place to pushback against desegregation efforts from Brown to 2025. Dr. Cohn noting that it is, "the rescue of historically underserved students that is the important work" as we are still in the battle of desegregation.

Speaking on SEL & Trauma in Schools and Communities of color, panelist Dr. Donna Campbell, Assistant Superintendent of Palmdale emphasized the importance of focusing mental health resources not just on middle and high schools where trauma is often revealed, but within elementary schools where students often experience trauma but do not yet have the language or capacity to express it in telling ways.



***Dr. Cheryl P. Hildreth (Supt. Washington Unified School District), Ary Amerikaner (Co-Founder/Exec. Director- Brown's House), Dr. Carl Cohn (Professor Emeritus Claremont Graduate University), Dr. Adam Clark (Supt. Mt. Diablo Unified, CAAASA President)***

## ***FULFILLING THE PROMISE OF BROWN***



***Dr. Reginald Jones Sawyer and Dr. Jacquelyn Ollison open Friday with the imperatives- Reparations and Black Studies Curriculum***



***From Left: Dr. Denise Collier (Superintendent LAUSD Region West), Andre Spicer (Superintendent LAUSD Region South), and Dr. Erin Simon (Assistant Superintendent, LACOE)***

Opening our final day together, Dr. Shirley Weber, Dr. Reginald Jones Sawyer, and Dr. Jacquelyn Ollison fueled us with hope for the futures of our students by enriching us with information on Reparations in California, the active process surrounding reparations, and current Black Studies curriculum resources unique to our state. Topics such as Black Utopias, The art of Black Leadership, and The Legacy of Black Lives Matter are just a sample of the richness of the Black studies curriculum. As Dr. Ollison highlighted- this work is about restoring and repairing harm and will continue without pause.

Closing our conference was our panel on Fulfilling the Promise of Brown: Proven Strategies and Solutions that work hosted by Asst. Superintendent Erin Simon with panelists Dr. Joaquin Noguera, Dr. Jaleel Howard, and Dr. J Luke Wood. Citing the success of Sacramento State's Black Honors College, Dr. Wood spoke to the power of intentionally resourced, culturally affirming programs and the correlation to student success. This approach is imperative to address the silence on Anti-Blackness, noted by Dr. Howard, that systemically plagues society and schools. Dr. Noguera poignantly closed us by drawing back to our history and leaning into the virtue of, "Ubuntu", because this work of racial and educational equity must be relational work if we are to succeed.



*Dr. J. Luke Wood, Dr. Joaquin Noguera, and Dr. Jaleel Howard speak to solutions that work on the path to Fulfill the Promise of Brown.*

## **SOLUTION BASED WORKSHOPS**

Over 80 enriching workshops that delved into a diverse array of topics aimed at fostering educational equity and excellence were conducted over three days. They included topics such as support for students of color in Mathematics, the Black Student Achievement Plan, the urgency of AI, Equity within literacy practices, and many more focused on strategic supports for black students.



Programmatic workshops on Micro-credentialing, retirement, and Resilience based Restorative Justice were also explored, presenting a pathway for attendees to gain specialized skills and knowledge. By providing a platform for these critical conversations, the conference aimed to equip educators and leaders with the tools and strategies needed to foster inclusive and liberating learning environments for students in systemically marginalized communities.

## **The Power of Community**

Amongst all of the panels and presentations, the success of the conference is also indelibly felt in the unity between conferees as everyone connected with colleagues past and present under the same mission; promoting Black student achievement. For all who registered for the conference, session materials will be available for viewing on the CAAASA website in upcoming weeks. If you were unable to attend the conference, you can visit the website below and become a CAAASA member to access resources from the 2025 Professional Development Summit as well as prior conference material.

## **SAVE THE DATE**

We will be reconvening next year for our Annual Conference March 18-20, 2026 in Anaheim, CA and we look forward to engaging with you again to strategically forge a path to fulfill the promise of Brown for children across the state.

# **SAVE THE DATE**

**Wednesday 3/18 - Friday 3/20/2026**



## **2026 CAAASA Professional Development Summit**

**Anaheim Marriott**

**700 West Convention Way**

**Anaheim, CA 92802**



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***Please visit us online at the information below to learn more about the service of CAAASA and our upcoming Professional Development opportunities.***

***The 2025 CAAASA Professional Development Summit was made possible by the co-sponsorship of Los Angeles Unified School District and Los Angeles County Office of Education CAAASA wishes to thank all of its sponsors for helping to make the 2025 Annual Professional Development Summit a tremendous success.***

**Click here to become a CAAASA member**

*To purchase photos from conference, contact Gregory Jones @*

