



On April 12, 2007, more than 4,000 students, parents, educators and businesses joined Governor Crist at the Capitol to support educational options for all Florida students...

Last Thursday, the 2007 "Many Faces, One Dream" Rally was held at the State Capitol in Tallahassee to thank legislators for their support of educational options for all of Florida's children. The rally participants included more than 4,000 students, parents and educators who rode on buses from as far away as Miami, an eight-hour trip, to join legislators and business leaders for the rally.



The rally began with a five-block march from the Civic Center to the Capitol Courtyard, in which students, parents and educators

participating in Florida's school choice programs marched along the streets carrying large signs displaying the names of their hometowns and the theme of the rally - "Many Faces, One Dream." It was an unbelievable sight to see the 4,000 participants - a record-breaking number - make their way through the streets and into the Capitol Courtyard to show their tremendous support for the scholarship programs that have positively impacted the futures of thousands of Florida's low-income children.

Cheers erupted from the Capitol grounds as Gov. Crist reaffirmed his support for educational options and his dedication to a quality education for all of Florida's children. Rev. H.K. Matthews, a hero of the civil rights movement, spread his enthusiasm amongst the overwhelming number of school choice supporters when he stated "All of us who are here want what's best for our children, our parents and our state," adding "giving poor families school choice is a continuation of a dream that black leaders envisioned 40 years ago." In addition, Speaker pro tempore Dennis Baxley and Senator Alfred "Al" Lawson expressed their continued support for educational choices and the 2007 legislation proposed.

Additionally, moving testimonies were given by Sharonda Perkins, the mother of a CTC scholarship recipient from Tallahassee, and Alberto Garrido, a five-year CTC scholarship recipient from Hialeah. Both revealed how Florida's educational options have provided a second chance at an education and a future through the eyes of a parent and student.

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The rally was also an opportunity for families to meet with their state legislators. Following the rally program, many of the scholarship students and parents, met with their legislators to share their positive experiences with these programs and encourage them to expand options currently available. The 2007 proposed legislation includes a bill to expand the eligibility of CTC Scholarships to students who have been placed in foster care, enabling foster children who have lived in multiple environments during the previous year to receive a scholarship even if they were not counted as full-time students during that year. This bill also adds CTC Scholarship eligibility for youth who were counted as full-time equivalent students at any time during the previous year in a Department of Juvenile Justice educational program.

The 2007 "Many Faces, One Dream" Rally sponsors included the Florida Chamber of Commerce, Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO), Hispanic Council for Reform and Educational Options (HCREO), The Coalition of McKay Scholarship Schools, National Coalition of Latino Clergy & Christian Leaders, Florida

Alliance for Choices in Education (FACE), and the Florida State Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

The "Many Faces, One Dream" Rally brought awareness to the general public and legislators of the importance of educational options in Florida. The rally highlighted how these programs are greatly benefiting thousands of low-income children in Florida and creating a well-educated workforce, paving the way for a more productive, prosperous Florida. The event also generated a great amount of press coverage, including articles in *The Gainesville Sun*, *The Tallahassee Democrat*, *The News-Press*, *Orlando Sentinel* and *The Florida Times-Union*, and television coverage on all the major networks statewide.

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