

Association and the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO) - held a private reception on school choice Tuesday night at the Indigo Lounge of An American Place restaurant.

The reception featured keynote speaker Howard Fuller, whom Urban League president James Buford called "a visionary." "Fuller is the founder and director of the Institute for the Transformation of Learning (ITL) at Marquette University and was a former superintendent of the Milwaukee Public schools from 1991-1995.

ITL and BAEO are both headquartered in Milwaukee, as is the Bradley Foundation, which was generously funded both projects (and is responsible for the Milwaukee school choice program).

The Bradley Foundation is considered one of the leading "right-wing foundations in the country, granting more than \$3.5 million from 1985 to 1999 to right-wing think tanks, affirmative action rollback projects and efforts to privatize the education system.

"The St. Louis Public School is not public education, it is a delivery system for it," Fuller said.

"We should never depend on a bureaucracy to save our children. Superintendents and board members come and go, but the only constant is the need for our children to be educated."

Speaking of the St. Louis Public Schools, Donayle Whitmore-Smith said "This is a crisis, and in a crisis you have to use emergency tactics. I don't know if our current administration is in a position to make some radical decisions."

A recent appointment by

Republican Governor Mat Blunt to the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, Whitmore-Smith is a member of BABO and is the director of School choice Missouri

If the house is on fire, you get everybody out of the house safely," Whitmore-Smith said. "Then you go back, put out the fire and rebuild." ...

While Fuller told success stories about school choice just blocks away the SLPS Board of Education meeting was taking place - and the board was in rare form. At one point, board president Veronica O'Brien had to remind the bickering members that the media was present at the public meeting.

On Dec. 5; Mayor Slay was set to present his plan for saving the failing district at the St. Louis Metro Children's Agenda forum on public education, but the meeting was canceled because of inclement weather, It is rescheduled for Dec. 14.

On Dec. 15, state Rep. Ted Hoskins, chair of the House Special Committee on School Choice, will host a committee meeting at Harris-Stowe State University.

Also as early as next week, the advisory committee is expected to announce its recommendations for SLPS to D. Kent King, commissioner of the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

For more information about the St. Louis Metro Children's Agenda meeting on Dec. 14, contact Belinda Boston at (314) 534.6015. For more information on the Missouri House Special Committee on School Choice's meeting at Harris-Stowe, call (573) 751-0.169.

- Additional reporting by Wiley Price of the American

**Urban League, RCGA make choice**

The Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis is touting school choice as the best option to save the district. The organization - along with Children's Education Alliance of Missouri, the Show Me Institute, the St. Louis Regional Chamber & Growth