



African American Youth Leadership Coalition

2026 African American Youth Leadership Conference

Report

Date: April 7, 2026

Location: Oregon State University, CH2M Hill Alumni Center, LaSells Stewart Center

Theme: Building the Generations: We are the Blueprint

Summary

The 20th Annual African American Youth Leadership Conference was a huge success, with over 875 middle and high school students from Benton, Lane, Lincoln, Linn, Marion and Polk counties attending. The event featured two keynote speakers, Dara Elkanah, a senior at Oregon State University and previous conference attendee, and Darlene Andrus, President of the African American Youth Leadership Coalition and conference founder. The conference included 15 workshops on topics such as Leadership, Self-Care, Money Management, STEM, and Belonging. A College/Trades Fair was available for high school students to explore options for their future. The conference was supported by nearly 130 volunteers and 14 sponsors. Students enjoyed breakfast and snacks that were available throughout the day, and a box lunch prepared by OSU catering. Approximately 160 student surveys were returned with 91% reporting enjoying the conference, speakers, workshops, food and location.

Attendance: 537 Middle School Students – 344 High School Students

Middle Schools

Agnes Stewart MS, ATA MS, Briggs MS, Cal Young MS, Calapooia MS, Cascade MS, Cheldelin MS, Claggett Creek MS, Crossler MS, EDGE MS, Franklin MS, Hamlin MS, Houck MS, Kelly MS, Kennedy MS, Leslie MS, Linus Pauling MS, Madison MS, Meadowview MS, Memorial MS, Monroe MS, Newport MS, North Albany MS, Parrish MS, Philomath MS, Prairie Mountain MS, Ralston Academy, Roosevelt MS, Seven Oaks MS, Shasta MS, Spencer

Butte MS, Stephens MS, Straub MS, Thurston MS, Timber Ridge MS, Waldo MS, Walker MS, and Whiteaker MS.

High Schools

A3 HS, Churchill HS, Claggett Creek MS, Corvallis HS, Crescent Valley HS, EDGE HS, Kalapuya HS, Lebanon HS, McKay HS, McNary HS, North Eugene HS, North Salem HS, Philomath HS, Roberts HS, Sheldon HS, South Albany HS, South Eugene HS, South Salem HS, Sprague HS, Springfield HS, Thurston HS, Toledo HS, West Albany HS, West Salem HS, and Willamette HS.

Community/OSU Volunteers: 25

Chaperones: 70

Workshops:15

Workshop Topics

Keep it Moving; Growth Mindset; Self Advocacy/Every Mind Matters; Leadership Motivation/Servant Leadership; Every Mind Matters; The Harlem Renaissance, Standing on Self-care; STEM; Connecting the Dots; Stepping into your Future; Money Matters; The Trades; College/Trades Fair; Elevate: Rising Above Expectations; Black Girl Magic; and Black Diamonds

Workshop Leaders: 28

Conference Sponsors: 14

Platinum Sponsors: ODE-African American/Black Student Success Grant, OSU-Larry Griggs Student Success and Belonging, BeBlac Foundation

Gold Sponsors: Oregon Trades Council

Silver Sponsors: Linn County Department of Health Services, Salem-Keizer School District, TrueLife Investments

Bronze Sponsors: Benton County Health Department, Linn Benton Lincoln Health Equity Alliance, Linn Benton – NAACP, and Safeway/Albertsons

Donors: Angel Harris Consultants, LLC, Capitol Auto Group, Crowned Eagle Consultants

Survey Comments:

- *I felt amazing – 6th grader*
- *Very good very comfortable – 7th grader*
- *Refreshing – 8th grader*
- *Amazing I love to attend these. – 9th grader*

- *This is the best experience I've ever had in Oregon. – 10th grader*
- *It felt inspiring to be reminded that I am not alone. – 11th grader*
- *I felt good and represented. – 12th grader*
- *I felt inspired and comfortable. – Unknown grade*



