

# Parents prepare for new school year at 'Back to School Bash'

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Follow on Twitter | Posted: Saturday, August 6, 2016 11:45 pm

Parents from the Opelika-Auburn area geared up for the new school year at a Back to School Bash held at Greater Peace Baptist Church Saturday morning.

Girls' STEPS Inc. and Dad's League partnered to put on the event for the first time this year, providing parents with information about various resources in the area. Representatives from Auburn and Opelika city schools, the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Lee County, East Alabama Mental Health, Auburn University's outreach office and more lined the gym at Greater Peace in Opelika, providing parents with tips for helping their children succeed in the classroom.

Four sets of content sessions were also offered throughout the morning, including one by Dad's League Coordinator Antione Harvis about the importance of fathers in a student's life.

"I believe that's how we create breakthrough in a community is by strengthening and impacting that family unit, and I think a huge part of that begins with our fathers," said Harvis.

Amie White, a teacher at Opelika City Schools, also spoke to parents about how they can prepare their children entering their elementary and intermediate years. She highlighted the impact of parents showing up during the school day when students first enter school. Since teachers have such large classrooms, she noted that the one-on-one time with a parent can emphasize that the student is important and the parent is invested in the child's education.

"Let the kids see your face and let them know you and the teacher are working together even if you and the teacher have different personalities," White said.

Melanie Chambless, a member of the Auburn City School Board of Education, sees the benefits of a parent's presence in the classroom.

"As a parent, coming in to visit my child, and also a school board member, I'm just in awe about some of the things that we take for granted that we don't think about that other children in the school system don't have," Chambless said. "Being a parent, coming to the classroom and being with students that may not have parents who have the opportunity to visit the classroom, I'm there to not only support my child, but also to support others as well."

Other content sessions focused on NCAA updates and registration for student athletes, test preparation, and helping students who are showing signs of depression or other mental health needs.

Representatives from Auburn University, Southern Union State Community College, Alabama State University and



## Back to School Bash

Chelsea Neighbors speaks to parents about resources available at East Alabama Mental Health.

the University of Alabama also talked to parents about getting ready for postsecondary education, from ACT testing to letters of recommendation.

Overall, Chambless said, events such as these are necessary to help parents stay on track with what's happening in their students' education.

“A lot of times, especially the older that your kids get, the less information that parents receive from the students,” Chambless said. “It's very important because we have back-to-school events where kids get engaged and kids meet the teachers and kids learn what they need to do in the classroom,” but it's more difficult for parents to know what their role is and to feel like they are a part of the learning process.