

# Teachers hear about importance of urban educators

Robert Simmons knows the challenges of inner city education.

As a product of Detroit, the assistant professor of Loyola University Maryland also teaches high school in Southeast Washington.

“Some of the things African-American boys say is, ‘We want teachers who care for us, believe in us and expect as much from me as anyone else,’” Simmons told a crowd of educators Oct. 7 at Loyola University Maryland’s Timonium campus. “They don’t want to be viewed as angry. I think it’s important that we don’t misinterpret the hurt for anger.”

Simmons, who is black, delivered the keynote speech for Archdiocese of Baltimore community school educators at a professional development workshop co-sponsored by archdiocese of Baltimore and Loyola. Called “Being a scholar in Catholic schools in Baltimore: Lessons Learned from an incarcerated father, an elite Jesuit high school and my scholarly agenda,” Simmons’ speech touched on many issues facing teachers in urban areas.

Simmons helped organize the event.

“This is truly a labor of love for me because I went to a Catholic school,” Simmons said.

The archdiocese found the workshops a great outlet for educators.

“We are interested in your issues,” Camille Brown, associate superintendent, told attendees. “We’re here to listen and share with you today.”

After Simmons’ talk, attendees took part in a series of workshops that addressed topics such as responding to cultural issues, teaching teachers how to love, successful strategies for working with immigrant families and creating great learning communities.

Simmons said the Catholic education he received had long-lasting impact on him. He cautioned that young people in urban cities experience marginalization, criminalization and incarceration.

Simmons believes Catholic schools help liberate the minds of urban area students so they can better contribute to the U.S. democracy and said that Catholic schools are important in inner cities because of the emphasis on service, justice and commitment to community. He said research shows that Catholic schools work for students of color because of order, discipline, high academic expectations, caring and committed faculty and parental interest and involvement.

A focus on the basics in Catholic schools, he said, keeps young men out of potential trouble.

“In these schools,” Simmons said, “these children spend more time on literacy than anything else.”