

# Scott praises 'aggressive' reformer chosen for top education post

By [Travis Pillow](#) | 06.21.11 | 11:32 am

The state Board of Education today approved Gerard Robinson, a hard-charging reformer currently serving as Virginia's education secretary, to be Florida's next education commissioner.

Robinson has a track record of championing school choice and other reform efforts. He was previously president of the Black Alliance for Educational Options, a group that supports vouchers, charter schools and other alternatives for low-income minority students.

In Virginia, he joined then-Florida Education Commissioner Eric Smith in a crew of five top education officials called "Chiefs for Change," which had the blessing of former Gov. Jeb Bush and was described [here](#) by *Education Week*:

The five chiefs said that even though they work on important policy issues through the [Council of Chief State School Officers](#), they felt the need to push a subset of policies through a separate group. Pastorek said the five want to "set ourselves apart and pursue a much more aggressive path toward success." It's not a partisan agenda, he said, but a "cutting-edge, pushing-the-envelope way of putting children at the top of all of our decisions." Bennett said the five have "kind of started our own union, a children's union," in which the interests of students trump those of adults. <#>

How does that translate into a list of policy bullet points? The five education leaders put these at the top of their list: "value-added" ways of evaluating teachers and principals; more rigorous accountability systems based not on inputs but results; raising academic standards; and expanding school choice.

Here's Scott's statement on Robinson's appointment: <#>

**Tallahassee, Fla.** – Governor Rick Scott today commended the State Board of Education for selecting Gerard Robinson, a nationally recognized leader in school choice, as Florida's next Education Commissioner. Robinson currently serves as Secretary of Education for the Commonwealth of Virginia. <#>

*With a focus on improving learning and earning opportunities for students, Robinson has been responsible for assisting the Virginia Governor in developing and implementing policy agendas for Virginia's PreK-12 and higher education. As Education Secretary, Robinson has worked effectively with organizations and stakeholders to improve student learning and ensure a productive working environment for adults. He successfully worked to achieve legislative approval of the Virginia Governor's K-12 Opportunity to Learn initiatives related to charter, virtual and college laboratory schools.*

*Previously, Robinson was the president of the Black Alliance for Educational Options, a national nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that actively supports parental choice to empower families and to increase quality educational options for Black children.*

*"Gerard brings to Florida a long and remarkable set of accomplishments in innovation and*

*proven results that will help us continue putting children first, improving our schools and ensuring Florida has the best-educated workforce,” Governor Scott said. “His leadership as an experienced education reformer and advocate for school choice and closing the achievement gap is exactly what Florida needs to reach the next level of education reforms that will benefit both our students and the businesses of our state.”*

### **About Gerard Robinson**

*Robinson was the president of the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO). BAEO is a national nonprofit, nonpartisan organization whose mission is to actively support parental choice to empower families and to increase quality educational options for Black children. Prior to his position at BAEO, Robinson served as a senior research associate for the School Choice Demonstration Project at the University of Arkansas from 2006 to 2007, and as a senior fellow at the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University from 2004 to 2006. As a senior fellow, he assisted in reform efforts related to Milwaukee’s private and public school choice programs and provided testimony before a Wisconsin legislative hearing on “Closing the Achievement Gap.” Robinson is on the board of the following organizations: the Policy Advisory Council at the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools; the Advisory Committee for the Program on Education Policy and Governance at Harvard University; and the Georgia GOAL Scholarship Program.*

*Robinson’s professional endeavors have included numerous initiatives involving urban school reform and policy development. As executive director of a nonprofit organization in New York City, he opened a charter school in New Jersey. He participated in the crafting of public policy through his fellowship with the California State Senate, as a resource person in the Virginia General Assembly and the U.S. House of Representatives, and as a legislative liaison for the superintendent of the District of Columbia Public Schools. Mr. Robinson also was an elementary school teacher in Los Angeles and a teacher in the Pre-College Academic Program at St. Peter’s College in Jersey City, New Jersey.*

*For the past several years, Mr. Robinson has given formal and informal presentations about education and public policy before audiences in the United States and abroad. Forums include: the John F. Kennedy School of Government; the NAACP; the Toussaint Institute; the Curry School of Education; UVA School of Law; the Brookings Institution; Teach for America; the Lexington Institute; the Commonwealth Foundation; the National Archives and Records Administration; the Humanities Council of Washington, DC; the Virginia Public Policy Institute; the Close Up Foundation; Howard University School of Law; the Cato Institute; the Black Issues in Higher Education Conference; the Community Teachers Institute; the Harvard Graduate School of Education; the Stanford School of Business; the Congress for the New Urbanism; the Minnesota legislature; the Institute for Humane Studies; the American Legislative Exchange Council; the U.S. Department of Education; a White House Education Conference; the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation; the Alliance for Catholic Education; the Thomas B. Fordham Institute; and National Public Radio’s Talk of the Nation; and CSPAN. Mr. Robinson also discussed the merits of the American public school choice movement at the Summer Institute for Educators held at Oxford University in England, and examined policy issues with university personnel at the Higher Education Institute held at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. Other international travel includes the Dominican Republic, Egypt, Gambia, Germany, Haiti, Israel, and Senegal.*

*Mr. Robinson’s publications include: “The Color of Success: Black Student Achievement in Public Charter Schools,” Issue Brief for the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (2008–coauthored with Edwin Chang); a biographical entry for Mayor Walter E. Washington*

*and Drs. Roscoe C. Brown, Jr. and Walter J. Leonard in the African American National Biography (Oxford University Press, 2008); "Urban School District Takeovers: Theory and Practice," in The Congress for New Urbanism Education Report (2007); "More than Homework, a Snack, and Basketball: Afterschool Programs as an Oasis of Hope for Black Parents in Four Cities," prepared for the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation (2007); "A Survey of School Choice Research," published by the Institute for the Transformation of Learning, Marquette University (2005); "Freedom of Choice: Brown, Vouchers, and the Philosophy of Language," in D. Salisbury and C. Lartigue (Eds.) Educational Freedom in Urban America: Brown v. Board After Half a Century, 13-52 (Cato Institute, 2004); and "Can the Spirit of Brown Survive in the Era of School Choice? A Legal and Policy Perspective," Howard Law Journal, volume 45, 281-336 (2002). Mr. Robinson received a Master of Education degree from Harvard University, a Bachelor of Arts from Howard University, and an Associate of Arts from El Camino Community College. He is married and has two daughters.*

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