

AU Downstate program draws crowd to urban education symposium

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More than 250 people attended the first Symposium on Urban Education, a collaborative presentation of Alfred University-Downstate, St. Francis College, and the Center for Integrated Teacher Education (CITE) on Oct. 3, at St. Francis in Brooklyn Heights. The program was designed to be a complementary component of the AU downstate literacy and school counseling graduate programs, and the St. Francis undergraduate teacher education program. The keynote speaker at the symposium was Jonathan Kozol, legendary activist, educator, and advocate for equality of urban schools. Current students, downstate alumni, field supervisors and faculty, as well as St. Francis faculty and administrators from the New York City schools attended the symposium. "Kozol, author of several classics in the field of education, including books "Death at an Early Age" (1967) and "The Shame of the Nation" (2005), is well-known for his scathing critiques of the inequalities between mostly white and wealthy suburban schools and mostly minority, poor urban schools. He was no different in his 'no holds barred' speech in which he took policy makers and the upper classes of country to task for their assumptions that minority students need to be educated differently than middle and upper class students," said Dr. Jay Cerio, director of the Alfred University-Downstate program. Cerio said Kozol ended his speech with encouraging words to the teachers in the audience and a plea to not sacrifice the joy and wonder of childhood, either in us or in the students. He then spent nearly two-and-a-half hours speaking individually with students and signing his books for them.