

Community tells superintendent their goals for schools

SCHOOLS from Page 1
“Is this fair? No!”

According to Dominguez, the district also only took into account five criteria on the index set out by the Community Coalition, InnerCity Struggle and the Advancement Project, who created the Equity is Justice resolution.

LAUSD evaluated schools based on parents' income, students' access to “green” spaces, and the number of students who are non-native English-speakers, in foster care or homeless. Dominguez said it left out other factors such as students' exposure to violence, their reading levels and graduation rates, which also shifted funding away from schools in need.

“My dream is to be the first person in my family to go to a four-year university,” Haslem said. “I want to attend UC Berkeley and become a theoretical physicist.”

“But how can I do that if our district doesn't acknowledge the challenges that we, as African-American and Latino students, face in South Los Angeles.”

The coalition set out a checklist of three goals for South L.A. schools they would like King to help meet: an “all hands on-deck” approach to improving student performance at Dorsey High School, a full implementation of the student need index as the coalition mapped out in 2014 and the addition of three restorative justice counselors at each school.

The counselors' aim would be to re-



With several high school students looking on, Los Angeles Unified School District Superintendent Michelle King explains to members of the Community Coalition the funding problems the district faces.

Courtesy photo

solve conflicts through dialogue and trust building practices rather than “pushout” methods such as suspension, which causes students to fall behind academically and thus contributes to low graduation rates.

Daniel Madrigal, a senior at Fremont High School who also spoke at the meeting, said there is only one restorative justice counselor at his school to meet with more than 2,000 students, “let alone, to teach teachers positive discipline and how to be there for students.”

Dominguez expressed disappointment that King did not make an outright promise to meet the three goals outlined in the meeting, but said he was heartened by the collective passion of students and parents.

King, for her part, reminded the audience, “LAUSD is like a big ocean liner ship. When you try to turn an ocean liner ship, you can imagine how much effort it takes to do that.”

She also affirmed her commitment to working toward all students in the district meeting the course requirements required for admission consideration in the UC system, a goal that is harder for South L.A. students to reach due to circumstances.

“Some of my peers face drugs, gang violence and not even having a stable economic system at home,” Madrigal said. “How can a student concentrate and study hard when they're too busy focusing on all of that?”

UNDER-FUNDED SCHOOLS

Community tells new superintendent their goals for South L.A. schools

By ANNE ARTLEY
Contributing Writer

SOUTH LOS ANGELES — Parents, students and educators told new Los Angeles Unified School District Superintendent Michelle King that their schools were underfunded during a town hall meeting March 30 at the nonprofit Community Coalition.

King was invited by the coalition to hear about the specific needs of schools in South L.A., and how they would like to see

her incorporate them in to her list of priorities.

The coalition is suing LAUSD for mismanagement of the funds, most of which were supposed to go to the highest-need schools. Instead, the lawsuit alleges the district used the money for special education, a program it is already legally required to provide for without the new funding.

Most important to those attending the meeting was the fact that their schools did not receive the funding they expected under the “Equity is Justice” resolution, which the LAUSD Board of Education passed in 2014. The motion set out a “student need index” that identified the most under-resourced schools that would benefit from an influx of state funding that gives the district an additional \$1 billion per year.

Crenshaw High School, for example, was allocated \$1.1 million in the original plan and only received about \$303,000, according to Miguel Dominguez, a community organizer for the coalition.

“We didn’t even get half of the money owed to us,” said Takara Haslem, a junior at Crenshaw High School, addressing a packed room at the town hall.

See SCHOOLS, Page 4



Michelle King



South Los Angeles residents crowded into the Community Coalition headquarters March 30 to hear new Los Angeles Unified School District Superintendent Michelle King talk about her goals for schools in the area. Residents told the superintendent their schools weren't receiving the funds they should be receiving.

Courtesy photos