

Teens to New Mayor: Keep Us Safe

By Tina Sfondeles - Dec 12, 2010



“We want to feel safe everywhere we go.”

That simple message was one of many sent to Chicago’s mayoral candidates by a group of 200 Chicago Public Schools students Saturday. The students want a city “where it’s safe to play outside and do what you want rather than sitting on the floor.”

The students sent the message while attending the “Listen UP! Youth Convention” at DePaul University. The teens were all involved in the Mikva Challenge, a non-profit civic leadership program that encourages low-income city youth to actively participate in the political process.

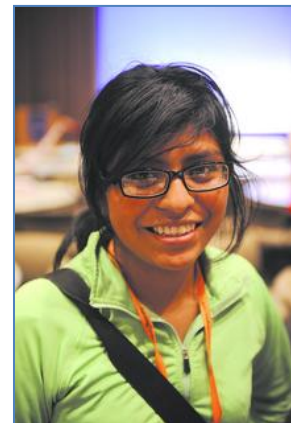
Crime — including domestic violence, sexual assault and gangs — was high on the top 10 agenda items they want candidates to address.

In votes taken at the convention, 37 percent of students said having high school classes on healthy relationships would help reduce the numbers of sexual assault cases. Thirty-one percent want to hold support groups for survivors of sexual assault.

DuSable Career Academy senior Azairian Cartman, 18, said if sexual assault was no longer a very real concern, “the women I love would be able to go outside without fear of a perpetrator coming and trying to sexually assault them. . . . Women would be strong, emotionally and physically. They could let their kids out and be safe.”

Students were also worried about the inconsistent quality of education within CPS and the lack of a student voice at the schools. Thirty percent said schools should create demographically diverse student councils that would meet with the future mayor and CPS officials.

“The lack of a student voice does affect us,” said Uno Garcia High School junior Karina De La Rosa, 16, of Little Village. “We want to know what’s going on with our schools, and how they make decisions that affect us.”



The teens also wrote about their dreams for the future of Chicago. One group of students wrote they wanted a city where “gangs and gunshots would be something you only saw on TV, and bullying, depression, drop-outs, drug use and selling would be a thing of the past.”

Solutions and more from Saturday’s convention will be posted on dearmayor.com.