

Mayoral Forum Yields Few Sparks

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While most Chicago Public School students were off for Martin Luther King Jr. Day, more than 250 high school students attended the first televised forum featuring the four major mayoral candidates. The meeting at WTTW yielded few sparks between **Miguel del Valle**, **Carol Moseley Braun**, **Gery Chico** and **Rahm Emanuel**, and hopefully resulted in some extra credit points for the students who showed up.



Four mayoral candidates, Rahm Emanuel, Miguel Del Valle, Carol Moseley Braun and Gery Chico take part in a debate for the first time.

Jose More/Chicago News Cooperative

A congenial tone prevailed at the event, which aired Tuesday at 7 p.m. during WTTW's "Chicago Tonight" program, with the candidates frequently stating how much they agreed with each other — a marked contrast from a series of editorial board [meetings](#) last week at which Emanuel was singled out for criticism.

The candidates were asked a range of questions from students, including their plans to add more police officers to the streets and what they'd do to reduce air pollution to help prevent asthma.

Most questions were addressed to one or two candidates, rather than all four, which allowed some candidates to skirt by more contentious issues. Questions were fielded by "Chicago Tonight" host **Phil Ponce** and Sun-Times columnist **Carol Marin**, and students were members of the nonprofit Mikva Challenge. There was also no time limit on candidates' answers.

While the candidates mostly gave canned responses from old campaign press releases, they did reveal some personal connections to issues raised by the students. At one point during the town-hall style meeting, a Gage Park high-school student asked del Valle what he would do to help reduce bullying of gay, lesbian, transgender and bisexual students. After he answered, Marin asked all the candidates to raise their hands if they had been bullied in high school. All but Chico raised their hands.

After the forum, six teenagers who had their questions answered by some of the candidates shared their thoughts about the event with reporters.

Taylor Brown, a Curie High School student and the honorary student member of the Chicago Board of Education, said she didn't feel like she had a better idea about where candidates stood on the issues.

"I actually don't think we got any information about the plans. We're still just getting the same basic numbers that they're going to give," Brown told reporters. "I feel as though we asked questions that required more detail. ... I still feel like it's the same shady, simple answers."

The five other teenagers nodded in agreement.