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Achievement gap haunts elections

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Candidates for the Sequoia Union High School District, Redwood City Council and Redwood City School district elections last night heard an outcry from residents over the minority academic **achievement gap**.

“There is so much professional and personal growth happening in Redwood City right now,” said Norma Alvarez, a parent leader for Innovate Public Schools, the group which hosted the forum. “But right now, you’re more likely to find a Latino sweeping the floors than writing computer code.”

Falling behind

In Redwood City elementary schools, tests have shown that seven out of 10 Hispanic students are not meeting standards in English, according to a report prepared by Innovate Public Schools. In math, eight out of 10 Hispanic students are not up to school standards, according to the report.

“Summer programming and high-quality after-school programs with more enriching activities are key to shaping the future of our children’s success,” said Alisa MacAvoy, a Redwood City School District candidate. “No student in this community should receive any more or less than another.”

Rising cost of living

Another hot topic was the rising cost-of-living. The average rental price for a two-bedroom apartment in Redwood City is \$4,015 per month, according to an Innovate Public Schools report. Parents asked council candidates what they can do to ensure the town will remain a place where they can live.

“This is not just a Redwood City problem, it’s a regional problem,” said Redwood City Council incumbent Ian Bain. “I’d like the council to organize the city’s option to have the first right to buy old apartment buildings to be developed for affordable housing.”

Questions

Though curious as to why city council candidates were being included in a discussion of school matters, residents questioned them on what the city could do to improve their children’s education.

“The government in this town isn’t working the way it should be,” said council candidate Tania Sole. “City government and education are separate, and we need them to be merged and have them work as one cohesive unit.

Voter turnout

There was also concern about voter turnout. In 2014, only two out of 10 eligible Hispanic voters in San Mateo County voted, according to a UC-Davis study. Only one out of 10 eligible voters between the ages of 18 and 24 years old voted in the same election.

Council candidates Bain, Sole, Janet Borgens and Shelly Masur attended the forum. So did Alisa MacAvoy, Dennis McBride and Janet Lawson, who are running for the Redwood City School District board. Incumbent Carrie Du Bois and former East Palo Alto Mayor Laura Martinez, an appointed incumbent, for the Sequoia Union High School District board attended as well.

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