

## Officials talk as youths ask the questions

By April Simpson, Globe Staff | March 8, 2007

More than two dozen city officials and local teenagers came face -to -face at a forum yesterday to discuss issues including school funding and standardized tests.

A panel of youths listened intently as a moderator read their prepared questions, and city officials told them that certain public schools, such as Boston Latin, are resource-rich because of a thriving alumni network and that the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment Test is important for assessing the quality and rigor of core curriculums.

The adults did most of the talking and the youths the listening in the exchange, which was part of a day-long effort sponsored by the Boston Centers for Youth & Families to address the teenagers' concerns. The two groups are trying to build a stronger partnership as summer approaches, hoping that the young people will come to a greater understanding of the policies that affect them.

Sam Yoon, an at-large city councilor, said his nonvoting constituents do not have to invite city officials to a forum to have their interests tackled.

"I think we need to do a better job to reach out to you," Yoon said.

About 200 youths and youth workers, representing community organizations such as City Roots and The Center for Teen Empowerment , turned out for the event at Wentworth Institute of Technology.

Kwame Horsley , 17, said that he appreciated the opportunity to meet with local leaders but that the hour-long session failed to touch on an important issue -- school safety.

"There's a lot of questions that still need to be answered," said Horsley, a junior at English High School. "If the schools are so dangerous, what are we doing to make them safer?"

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