



Students Rally Against Fresno's High Drop-Out Rate

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Rally cries rang out in front of the Fresno Unified School District.

Wednesday's lesson was dealing with drop-outs.

"We're addressing it from a racial justice point because there's an alarming 40% of our youth that are dropping out and the majority of those folks dropping out are low-income youth and youth of color," said Ernesto Saavedre,

And members of the group "Californians for Justice" think they might know why.

"It's a combination of a lot of things, a big one being discipline policies. The discipline policies, even though it doesn't say on paper, they directly affect low-income youth and youth of color disproportionately compared to other youth and their peers. And it also has to do with a lack of resources," Saavedre said.

Group members spoke in front of the school board Wednesday night sharing concerns and recommendations for change.

"There's no reason why there should be \$950,000 going towards on-campus police officers, when there's schools south of Shaw, mostly populated by kids of color and low-income students that need books and need quality teachers," Saavedre said.

District officials say while the city's multicultural population is positive in so many ways, it also presents challenges.

"Diversity of cultures and diversity of people create a huge challenge, especially in a system where the state determines the curriculum. It's an ongoing challenge that we take on front and center everyday, trying to make the curriculum and the connection between student and teachers as powerful and as engaging as we possibly can," Miguel Arias, with the Fresno Unified School District, said.

Wednesday the district appointed an "Associate Superintendent of School Services". They say that person will oversee the Department of Prevention and Intervention which deals with issues exactly like this.

District officials say they'll definitely take the group's recommendations into consideration.

They say, they've worked with "Californians for Justice" in the past and it led to more counselors in schools.