

ACHIEVEMENT FROM A3

Keep pushing the issue, students told

negative peer pressure. The Leap the Gap students said that can show up when minority students who achieve are labeled as "acting white." That negative peer pressure can lead minority students to not want to achieve and not take advanced classes.

"You look in the (advanced placement) classes and you don't see a lot of people who look like you," said Miatia McCrummady. "It's a factor if you're in one of those classes. You're wondering, 'What do my friends think about this?'"

Mbala-Nkanga said some teachers and counselors are one of the barriers to having minority students in advanced

classes.

"They say, 'Are you sure you want to take this class? Maybe you should try a lower level.' Then you have friends saying, 'Why are you doing this?' You're stuck between a rock and hard place."

Another barrier that came up in all the focus groups was the lack of understanding of and sensitivity to cultural factors at school. That lack of understanding manifests itself in stereotyping and in lack of respect for students from staff.

Students said some minority students also have to deal with low expectations at home.

"If your parents didn't graduate from high school ... (and

your dad's in jail, the importance of school from parents isn't there," said Nosa Iyoha, a senior at Pioneer High School. "In an unfair way, it becomes the teacher's, the counselor's, the administrator's roles to push students."

School board members Wednesday encouraged the students to keep pushing the issue.

"What saddens me is that we've heard this before," said Trustee Susan Baskett. "Until the community wraps their arms around it, it won't be solved. Keep pushing us."

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