

Albuquerque Journal

APS signs pledge to help improve academic, social outcomes for ‘males of color’

Elaine D. Briseño / Journal Staff Writer, July 22, 2014

Albuquerque Public Schools signed a pledge Monday morning in Washington, D.C., to participate in a federal program that helps improve the academic and social outcomes for Hispanic and African-American young men.

The initiative is a collaboration among 60 school districts across the country, the White House, the Council of the Great City Schools and the U.S. Department of Education. The goal is to prepare “males of color” for college and other careers, and to lower dropout and suspension rates among that population, according to an APS news release.

APS board president Analee Maestas was at the signing. The district was among the 60 nationwide that have signed on.

“I’m pleased that APS was one of the first districts in the country that made this pledge,” she said in an APS news release. “I look forward to our focus on closing the achievement and opportunity gaps of all of our students.”

President Barack Obama officially launched the initiative Monday.

APS Superintendent Winston Brooks said, “Our job as urban educators is not to reflect or perpetuate the inequities that too many of our males of color face; our job is to eliminate those inequities – and that is what we pledge to do.”

APS chief of staff Joseph Escobedo said the first thing the district will do is pull and analyze its data. Keeping records and monitoring progress of this group of students is an important part of the initiative, as is working to transform high schools where such students have low graduation rates.

He said the next step is to meet with community members and groups to develop a specific plan.

The National Basketball Association has pledged to recruit 25,000 new mentors to work with at-risk students to help improve school attendance and academic performance. AT&T is giving the program an \$18 million boost to support mentoring and other programs. The local school districts will work to increase participation, and provide more access to quality preschools and advanced, gifted and honors classes for minority boys.