

School reformer urges California to change teacher tenure rules

By Howard Blume, Los Angeles Times

Former District of Columbia schools Chancellor Michelle A. Rhee urged a Los Angeles audience of educators and parents to pressure state leaders to change teacher tenure and seniority rules.

Her appearance Wednesday night before an enthusiastic crowd of about 600 marked the third of four appearances statewide for Rhee, who is attempting to build a base of influence in California.

Rhee's 1-year-old organization, StudentsFirst, has worked in other states with governors and powerful legislators but not in California, even though her organization is based in Sacramento.

In her remarks and a question-and-answer session, Rhee took on "last in, first out" rules that govern teacher layoffs. She characterized this approach as "incredibly detrimental to students and schools," because gifted, less-experienced teachers are put out of work while less effective teachers with more seniority get to keep their jobs.

"California is one of the few states left that mandates in state law that layoffs happen this way," Rhee said. "What we're going to have to do is get politically active."

She added a glancing reference to Gov. Jerry Brown and state Democratic leaders: "It's clear we're not going to get invited in," she said. "Are you guys ready for this?"

Read the whole story