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EMBARGOED UNTIL 6 AM PT/ 9 AM ET, TUESDAY, JUNE 20, 2017

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A First of its Kind Report Examines Resource Equity Across Oakland's Public Schools

The findings add up to a mixed picture for students in Oakland: there are some promising practices and challenges in both district-run and charter public schools.

The report points to a need for school and system leaders to collaborate to maximize the impact of their limited resources for students.

OAKLAND, CA, June 20 – Today, the [Oakland Achieves Partnership](#) and [Education Resource Strategies](#) released a new report, *Informing Equity: Student Need, Spending, and Resource Use in Oakland's Public Schools* [ATTACHED], taking the deepest look yet into the operations of public schools in Oakland, both district-run and charter. The report, based on data from the 2014-2015 school year, makes it clear that there are opportunities for improvement and mutual learning across the Oakland public education ecosystem.

“For anyone who cares about educational equity, this report raises significant questions for public schools, district-run and charters. What we see are significant variation still in how Oakland's public schools – both district-run and charter – are using resources to meet our dual needs for greater quality and equity,” said **Ash Solar, Executive Director, GO Public Schools Oakland, and member, Oakland Achieves Partnership**. “But there is a clear need for the incoming superintendent and other leaders in both district-run schools and in charters to do serious work together to understand and disrupt some of the patterns in this report to ensure that all our public schools -- district-run and charter -- serve all our students well. That work- the real work- must begin with renewed urgency now.”

“We were pleased to partner with a coalition of Oakland educators, district leaders, charter leaders, and education advocates on this study to provide a greater understanding of student need and resource use in public schools across the city,” said **Jonathan Travers, Partner, Education Resource Strategies**, “The aim of this project was to create a rich fact-base to inform a city-wide conversation about how to optimize the community’s investment in public education.”

“This report confirms that we have to do more to provide equitable opportunities in our schools, and it provides a foundation for educators across Oakland and District leaders to work together to better serve students. It is going to be the starting point for a series of conversations that I want to have about how we equitably educate our children and allocate our resources,” said **Dr. Kyla Johnson-Trammel, Superintendent, Oakland Unified School District**.

“This study highlights critical issues that the charter community must lean into if they expect to be taken seriously as public educational institutions committed to democracy, equity and justice for our city and its children and families. The findings of this study reveal the need for a hard pivot that reflects an authentic and material commitment to work with district leaders and the community to undertake serious changes,” said **Dr. Jeff Duncan-Andrade, Founder, Roses in Concrete Community School**.

The report examined district-run and charter schools in Oakland across three areas: (1) student need; (2) resource levels, and (3) resource use. The report reflects a snapshot of financial and student-level data from the school year 2014-2015, and except where stated, does not speculate on intentions.

Student Need

While district-run and charter schools enrolled similar numbers of English learner, low-income, and homeless students, the report found that:

- **District-run schools had a higher share of students receiving special education and provided special education services in more restrictive and costlier settings than charter schools and peer districts locally and nationally.** Twelve percent of students in district-run schools received special education services, compared to only 7 percent in charter schools, though there was significant variation across the sector. Additionally, compared to peer districts in California and nationally, the Oakland Unified School District placed 30 percent more of its special needs students in restrictive environments.
- **At key transition points, there were significantly different academic need levels between district-run and charter schools.** More high-performing students newly enrolled in charter schools at key grade levels-- 6th and 9th grades--, while low-performing students disproportionately newly enrolled in district-run schools.
- **District-run schools served a larger share of “late-entry” students who enrolled after October 1.** These students typically had greater needs and required additional support.

Resource Levels

- **The report also identified areas where funding could be better allocated and used across charter and district-run schools.** Among both district-run and charter schools, there was variation in the amount schools spend per pupil compared with their student need profile, showing that there is an opportunity to allocate resources across schools more equitably.

- **Charter schools also were hampered by state law that caps the amount of need-based funding they could receive.** This caused them to receive less funds to educate the English learners, foster youth, and low-income students they serve than their need would otherwise provide for.
- **OUSD spent \$1,400 more per pupil than charter schools on operating expenses.** This was after adjusting for the number of special education, low-income, and English learner students which district-run and charter schools serve.

Resource Use

- **Charter schools contracted teachers for about an additional hour per school day.** Charter schools had 14 percent more teacher time per day on average, than did district-run schools.
- **Additionally, the report showed that better city-wide facility planning is needed to use funds more effectively.** Oakland operates a portfolio of relatively small schools, and in cases where schools were unintentionally small, restructuring could save money. The city could also save through better facility planning for charter schools, which varied widely in the amount they spent on rent. For example, during the 2014-2015 school year, if Oakland's charters, who spent above the median rent, paid the median amount, they would have spent \$3.4 million less in rent.

The Oakland Achieves Partnership is hopeful that this data can support a community dialogue on how to address shared challenges facing Oakland's public schools. Through this data and conversations with stakeholders from around the community, several actions for further exploration have emerged, including:

- To ensure that school spending matches student need, explore opportunities for both the district and charter sectors to serve a more equitable percentage of students with higher needs, including needs related to special education, incoming proficiency and "late-entry" students. This includes increasing parent and student agency in choosing schools by increasing awareness of school options across Oakland, with a focus on families of students with greater needs.
- Change the state law that caps the revenue charter schools can receive based on their home district's limit.
- Articulate a city-wide strategy on the number and mix of district-run and charter schools to allow schools to operate at a financially-sustainable size—including sharing facilities across schools, and creating service sharing opportunities across charter schools and between district and charter sectors as appropriate—so that as a community we are using our limited public education resources to best serve children in the classroom

By working together, district-run and charter schools can better serve all students in public education. This report should serve as a resource for leaders to work together and ensure that all students have access to a high-quality public education, including Oakland's most vulnerable and disadvantaged students.

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The [Oakland Achieves Partnership](#) is a coalition of education and community organizations working to create a common set of indicators for understanding and improving student

success. Coalition members are Alameda First 5, Educate 78, GO Public Schools Oakland, Oakland Chamber of Commerce, Oakland Public Education Fund, Rogers Family Foundation, Urban Strategies Council, and United Way of the Bay Area. We envision an Oakland where students, regardless of background, are served equitably and receive a high-quality public education. To that end, we share information that inspires action, so that Oakland students have quality public schools. In addition to this report, we have completed public annual cradle to career reports as well as an in-depth report on school attendance.

[**Education Resource Strategies \(ERS\)**](#) is a non-profit organization dedicated to transforming how urban school systems organize resources—people, time, technology, and money—so that every school succeeds for every student. We have worked closely with nearly 40 school systems nationwide on topics that range from funding equity to strategic school design. Our signature project is a district “Resource Map” where we analyze budget, staffing, schedule and student performance data to understand how resource decisions align with goals. From our extensive dataset, we also provide research and practical tools to help school systems in their efforts.

[**Oakland Unified School District**](#) is dedicated to creating a learning environment where “Every Student Thrives!” More than half of our students speak a non-English language at home. And each of our 86 District-run schools is staffed with talented individuals uniting around a common set of values: Students First, Equity, Excellence, Integrity, Cultural Responsiveness and Joy. We are committed to preparing all students for college, career and community success.