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Study of State's 12 Largest School Districts Shines Spotlight on Hidden Teacher-Spending Gap at Individual Schools

First-Ever Data Exposes Shortchanging of African-American, Latino, and Low-Income Schools, One Gap Between Two Schools in Same District Nears \$1 Million

OAKLAND, Calif. –The Education Trust-West today released “A Tale of Two Schools,” an unprecedented series of reports that further exposes the hidden teacher-spending gap within 12 of the largest school districts in California. The reports shine an even more focused spotlight on the previously invisible teacher-spending gaps first uncovered by the Education Trust-West in its February report, *California's Hidden Teacher Spending Gap: How State and District Budgeting Practices Shortchange Poor and Minority Students and Their Schools*.

Currently, California school districts publicly report only district-level teacher salaries, instead of what is actually spent at any individual school. A state bill, S.B. 687 currently awaiting decision from the Governor, would provide more transparency into school-by-school teacher spending and reduce the obscurities of this practice, known as “salary-cost averaging.”

“Salary-cost averaging gives the illusion of a fair distribution of per-pupil funding, when in reality the distribution of teaching dollars is anything but fair and equitable. This new series of reports shatters that illusion,” said Russlynn Ali, executive director of the Education Trust-West. “It is now clear that the current teacher-spending system amounts to a perverse subsidy to wealthier schools paid for by poor schools.”

“The reality is that African-American, Latino and low-income students in these districts are being shortchanged on school funding, in some cases by almost \$1 million dollars,” she continued. “And these patterns are hidden by deceptive budgeting and reporting practices.”

Now, for the first time, anyone will be able to draw back the teacher-spending curtain in California by using a Web-based tool, found at www.hiddengap.org that reveals the teacher-spending gap on any school, in any district, in the state.

In addition, the 12 district-specific reports reveal striking disparities:

- One comparison between two schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) found a difference of nearly \$1 million (\$956,056) in teacher-spending.

- One comparison between two schools in the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) found a difference of over half a million (\$534,204) in teacher-spending.
- One comparison between two schools in the San Jose Unified School District (SJUSD) found a difference of \$401,080 in teacher-spending.
- One comparison between two schools in the Sacramento City Unified School District found a difference of \$401,760 in teacher-spending.

“Often times people attribute low-performance to the make-up of a school’s population without ever examining factors like the huge teacher-spending gaps,” said Russlynn Ali. “But it is not just the size of the gaps that is so striking – it’s what these spending gaps represent that is so important. A school with high teacher-spending indicates that teachers at that school are more experienced, have more credentials, higher education levels, and have had more professional development. Thankfully there are steps being taken to correct this gross inadequacy.”

Following the Education Trust-West’s February *Hidden Teacher-Spending Gap* report, California Senator Joe Simitian (D-San Mateo) proposed legislation to require schools to include average teacher salaries for each school in the annual School Accountability Report Card. The bill, S.B. 687, cleared both houses of the state legislature with overwhelming support and currently awaits Governor Schwarzenegger’s signature.

“S.B. 687 is designed to give parents and concerned community members precise, accurate information about school spending,” said Senator Simitian. “From there, communities can decide whether that money is being put to good use. There may be perfectly good reasons to spend more on one kid in one place than another place, but those outcomes should be based on informed decisions, not based on chance. This is a discussion we need to have. You can’t have the discussion without the information. At the end of the day, this is all about equal opportunity.”

The new ETW reports provide school-by-school teacher-spending comparisons for all California schools within their particular districts. Individual reports were compiled for 12 of the state’s largest unified school districts: Elk Grove, Fresno, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Oakland, Sacramento City, San Bernardino City, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, San Juan and Santa Ana.

The report was funded by The Broad Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. For more information on this report, or to search the companion Web-based tool, visit www.HiddenGap.org.

About the Education Trust-West

The Education Trust-West is the West Coast partner of the national policy organization the Education Trust. The organization works for the high academic achievement of all students at all levels, kindergarten through college with an emphasis on serving low-income, Latino, African American and Native American students. The Education Trust-West works alongside policymakers, parents, education professionals, and business and

community leaders, in cities and towns throughout California, who are trying to transform their schools and colleges into institutions that genuinely serve all students. To learn more about the Education Trust-West, visit www.edtrustwest.org.

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