



Access and Opportunity for All

Analyzing Enrollment Patterns to Support School Integration Efforts

Overview

L.A. Unified has an incredibly diverse student population, but not all schools reflect the same diversity of the 500,000 students we serve. School Board Member Kelly Gonez’s resolution entitled “Access and Opportunity for All: Analyzing Enrollment Patterns to Support School Integration Efforts” would explore the enrollment patterns of students in specialized programs, such as Special Education Programs, Magnets, Dual Language Programs, International Baccalaureate Programs, and Schools for Advanced Studies, to explore whether students have equitable access to these programs and how these efforts have impacted the demographics and concentrated needs of students at neighborhood schools, including particularly our highest-needs schools.

A research collaborative would analyze the enrollment, student mobility and academic outcomes of students in these programs and explore how district policies contribute to how diversity is distributed across our schools. With the data from this resolution and the insights of the research collaborative, we can begin a conversation about what steps we can take to promote diverse classrooms for all students.

The Board of Education will take action on the resolution at the October 1, 2019 meeting. This resolution is Co-Sponsored by Board President, Dr. Richard Vladovic. [See the resolution’s full language here.](#)

Diversity is Transformational

Research shows that all students thrive in diverse classrooms, both academically and social-emotionally. One of the most significant factors in the current racial achievement gap is segregated schools.¹ In more diverse schools, the achievement gap between student subgroups is less significant than those found in schools with a higher concentration of socioeconomically disadvantaged students². Similarly, when reviewing the college enrollment of students with similar socioeconomic backgrounds, students in more integrated schools are more likely to enroll in college than their peers in less diverse schools.³

Diversity doesn’t only benefit those students who are traditionally underrepresented - it benefits all students. Students in diverse classrooms experience deeper levels of learning, critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity,⁴ as well as affirming confidence in their own academic abilities and goals.

While research shows that diverse classrooms are better for all students, we should also be thinking about diversity more broadly, including socioeconomic diversity, native language, and academic ability.

¹ Sean Reardon, Demetra Kalogrides, and Kenneth Shores, “The Geography of Racial/Ethnic Test Score Gaps”, CEPA Working Paper No.16-10, May 2018

² Ann Mantil, Anne G. Perkins, and Stephanie Aberger, “The Challenge of High-Poverty Schools: How Feasible Is Socioeconomic School Integration?” in *The Future of School Integration*, ed. Richard D. Kahlenberg (New York: The Century Foundation, 2012), 155–222.

³ G. J. Palardy, “High school socioeconomic segregation and student attainment,” *American Educational Research Journal*, 50, no. 4 (2013): 714.

⁴ S. E. Page, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), <http://press.princeton.edu/titles/8757.html>;



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Impact of the Resolution

LA Unified proudly serves all students. As the second largest school district in the nation, a more comprehensive look at the enrollment patterns of our students will enable us to explore how we can better address the concentrations of need found across the district. While racial segregation is a persistent problem in many urban districts across the nation, this resolution will also explore the other ways student need and diversity are inequitably distributed. Our students with disabilities and English learners tend to be concentrated at particular schools. These high concentrations of students with diverse needs too often result in students not gaining from the academic and socio-emotional benefits of a more integrated school. These benefits are not only limited to those students with unique needs, but there is also an operational benefit for more integrated schools.

For example, schools that are facing declining enrollment may expand their special education programs to expand their site's enrollment. However, because of the concentration of students receiving special education services, the school nurse may spend the majority of their time fulfilling the requirements of the IEP process as opposed to coordinating supplemental health resources for all students and families.

As the district continues to strive towards more equitable resource allocation, it is prudent that we have data to explore how efforts to expand all program offerings is impacting the district's enrollment at schools with high-concentrations of need. This resolution is intended to be a start in the conversation on how we can ensure our schools have more racial and economic diversity.