

D.C. Auditor Cites Progress in Oversight of Charter Schools

For Immediate Release:

March 17, 2015

For More Information:

Office of the District of Columbia Auditor – Anovia Daniels, (202) 727-8991, Anovia.Daniels@dc.gov

District of Columbia Public Charter School Board – Tomeika Bowden, (202) 328-5543, TBowden@dcpcsb.org

Deputy Mayor for Education – Shayne Wells, 202-727-0693) Shayne.wells@dc.gov

Washington D.C. – Today the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor (ODCA) released a report on financial oversight of public charter schools by the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board (PCSB) and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), finding that both entities had room for improvement but showed significant progress in holding charter schools accountable for their use of taxpayer funds.

“Our review covered three school years, and by the third year, 2013, the D.C. Public Charter School Board had created a comprehensive database to track contracts, audits and other documents and help ensure that our publicly-funded charter schools are meeting their reporting requirements,” Kathy Patterson, D.C. Auditor, said in releasing the audit report, titled *Oversight Improvements Must Continue to Ensure Accountability in Use of Public Funds by D.C. Public Charter Schools*. “In addition, the efforts the Office of the State Superintendent of Education have made to develop statewide data systems will allow the District to accurately capture real-time student level data, improving accuracy, reducing burden, and allowing for increased flexibility in the payment process.”

The report recommends the Council move forward on legislation, introduced two weeks ago by Education Committee Chairman David Grosso and Councilmember Elissa Silverman, to require for-profit management firms to make public as much information as is now provided by non-profit charter management firms. It also recommends reviewing current policies on funding so that public dollars essentially follow students more timely when they move from one school to another, a change recently called for by Deputy Mayor for Education, Jennifer Niles.

“The Mayor has charged my office with developing an aligned LEA payment system for public schools that more accurately targets local resources to LEAs based on the students they are actually serving throughout the school year,” Niles said, referring to the funding received by Local Education Agencies including D.C. Public Schools, and each charter school.

Commenting on the auditor’s report, PCSB Executive Director Scott Pearson said the Board welcomed the review and while they did not concur with every finding and recommendation, they appreciated the acknowledgment of improved financial oversight. “The Auditor’s report highlights the continued progress PCSB has made in ensuring public charter schools are good stewards of taxpayer dollars,” Pearson said.

“We are encouraged that the D.C. Council, led by Councilmember David Grosso, has already introduced legislation to strengthen our authority to oversee charter school finances.”

Amy Maisterra, Interim Superintendent of the OSSE, also welcomed the review. “The report highlights necessary legislative changes that we agree will better ensure that funding follows students, allowing schools to timely and appropriately serve them.”

More specifically, the Auditor’s report found that:

- In school years 2011-13 the PCSB “did not consistently” complete all planned fiscal and operational oversight but “improved its overall monitoring during the three school years encompassed by our audit” including conducting annual compliance reviews for all charter schools in the sample reviewed for SY 2013.
- The OSSE accurately maintained records regarding the number of special education students, including Individualized Education Programs, a sample of which showed nearly all services were consistent with the plans.
- During the audit period, the OSSE did not adequately verify summer and residential program payments, a process that the agency has indicated can now be supported by its new Statewide Longitudinal Education Database (SLED).
- Currently D.C. law does not specifically authorize the OSSE to adjust payments to charter schools for students who entered, left or moved between charter schools during the school year and after the independent enrollment audit.
- The PCSB did not have current written fiscal policies and procedures to provide guidance to the charter schools regarding the schools’ day-to-day fiscal operations.

[Click here](#) to view the report in its entirety. Visit dcauditor.org or call 202-727-3600 for more information about this report or the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor.