

For Immediate Release
January 20, 2005
Contact: Monica Garcia
(213) 215-1537

LAUSD BOARD PRESIDENT JOSÉ HUIZAR NAMED CHAIR OF THE EDUCATION COORDINATING COUNCIL FOR LOS ANGELES COUNTY

The Education Coordinating Council (ECC) was created by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors last November after the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Board of Education passed a resolution to work with Los Angeles County to bridge the services offered to foster care and probation youth.

“We have a tremendous task of educating and preparing today’s youth to meet the challenges of tomorrow. It is unacceptable that a significant numbers of foster care and probation youth are not adequately served by our educational and social services. We have an opportunity before us to change that by focusing on the development and implementation of a comprehensive plan of resources and services that will assist our youth in reaching their potential” said LAUSD Board President Huizar.

“This meeting was extraordinarily successful. There was an excitement that we’ve all come together to talk about these issues and that people are committed to trying to solve the problems for these youth who are under care of DCFS or Probation. The problems are serious, but, together, we believe we can solve them in a timely manner.” said Helen Kleinberg, Commissioner on the LA County Commission for Children and Families.

More than 22 education, health-care and government agencies signed on to work with LAUSD and L.A. County foster and probationary organizations to develop and implement a blueprint of services to our youth.

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“The collaboration of those around the table from various forces within our community was wonderful to see. It is my hope that the key issues facing foster and probation youth will surface and this body will be able to come up with solutions that work.” said Gloria Mamokhin, Coordinator-in-Charge, Countywide Services, Los Angeles County Office of Education.

Currently, about three quarters of children in foster care perform below grade level, more than one third are held back in school. The average reading level of probation youth in grades 9-12 is below the 5th grade. Almost 46 percent of foster youth fail to complete high school compared with 16 percent of non-foster youth. Once students leave the system, more than a third are likely to become homeless and/or become victims of crime. More than half are unemployed and one in five will be incarcerated within two years.

Miriam Krinsky, Executive Director, Children’s Law Center of LA adds, “The educational needs of the children in our community collectively with parents must be paramount in our priorities and efforts. The newly created ECC will enable all of us to turn the corner and improve educational attainment for our most vulnerable youth.”

As a member of the ECC, Huizar, along with local government agency representatives, educators, law enforcement and health care providers, will develop an Education Blueprint for foster and probation youth by December 2005. This Blueprint will explain the educational goals for our youth, with an action plan identifying responsibilities and indicators of progress. Gwen Bartholomew, founder of Grandma’s Angels states, “It is so fabulous that this diverse group of people and agencies has come together to improve the education of these special needs kids.”

The Honorable Judge Michael Nash of L.A. County Juvenile Court and Berisha Black, former Foster Youth and Emancipation Ombudsman for Foster and Probation Youth will be ECC Vice-Chairs along side Huizar.

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