



Education Coordinating Council

July 27, 2006

9:30 a.m.

The California Endowment, Yosemite Room A
1000 North Alameda Street, Los Angeles, California

Present: Yolie Flores Aguilar
Berisha Black
Lorraine Bridges, representing Aubrey Manuel
Carol Clem
Reuben De Leon, representing Evelyn V. Martinez
Monica Garcia
José Huizar
Jitahadi Imara, representing Robert Taylor
Helen Kleinberg
Miriam Aroni Krinsky
Elizabeth Lem, representing Darline P. Robles
Judge Michael Nash
Terry Ogawa
Bruce Saltzer
Joan Smith
Scott Smith, representing Steve Gocke
Marv Southard
Machelle Wolf

Guests: Ressie Roman, Fifth Supervisorial District
Fabricio Segovia, Third Supervisorial District

Chair José Huizar brought the meeting to order at 9:45 a.m. and asked ECC members and the audience to introduce themselves. He thanked The California Endowment for hosting the meeting and Jessica Lieder, the Endowment's events coordinator, for her help with the arrangements. Huizar then welcomed new ECC members Monica Garcia, Board representative from the Los Angeles Unified School District; Robert Taylor, the county's new Chief Probation Officer; and Joan Smith, acting director of the Department of Children and Family Services. Huizar thanked David Sanders, outgoing DCFS director, for his tremendous leadership during the past three years and for his deep commitment to raising the educational achievement of Los

Angeles foster youth. Sanders has accepted a position with Casey Family Programs in Seattle, and the ECC hopes to have the opportunity to work with him again in his new role.

Huizar also acknowledged Susan Abagnale, director of the Los Angeles office of Casey Family Programs, who is moving back to Arizona. Casey has provided generous financial support to the ECC over the past two years, and Abagnale has made significant contributions to the organization's work. On behalf of the ECC, Huizar wished her well in the future.

Staff Updates

- The Board of Supervisors has requested twice-yearly progress reports on the implementation of the ECC's Blueprint. The first will be made on August 15 and will include actions taken today on the Board's June 13 motion regarding the development of an electronic educational record for foster and probation youth.
- Grantmakers for Children, Youth and Families will hold its annual conference this year in Los Angeles, September 24 through 27. The ECC has been invited to be part of a 'great ideas' roundtable scheduled for that Tuesday.
- To enroll in LAUSD's Beyond the Bell tutoring program, students must sign up for free and reduced-cost lunch programs by a certain date. Foster and probation youth, who enter the district throughout the school year, often miss that deadline. ECC staff is working with Beyond the Bell to relax this requirement for system youth, allowing simultaneous enrollment in the two programs for this upcoming school year.
- The SPA 7 Council is graduating a number of parents today from a leadership and advocacy training curriculum formed to help families in the foster care system reduce violence in the home and look at their children's educational needs. The 'voices to be heard' group will focus on sharing information with school districts in the SPA and making connections between school districts and DCFS.
- After questions at April's meeting regarding gifted students from the foster care and probation systems, Jacquelyn McCroskey presented aggregate data on the nearly 300 students so designated by LAUSD, broken out by grade level, ethnicity, and gender. More information is available on the ECC's website, at educationcoordinatingcouncil.org. McCroskey also said that a cross-university team of three doctoral students is proposing to gather further personalized data—the placement history of these youth, whether they have IEPs, whether a significant adult in their life values education, whether they have participated in enrichment programs, and so on—to examine the circumstances that have allowed them to succeed. Part of this study will be to clarify with LAUSD what it means to be designated 'gifted,' when students are first evaluated, how they are recommended for testing, and so forth.

Efforts to Bridge Data-Sharing Barriers

- To begin reducing what all agree to be the biggest barrier to meeting the system's obligations to children under the jurisdiction of the courts, Judge Michael Nash proposed a **blanket**

order to release foster and probation youth's educational records to DCFS, Probation, court-appointed special advocates, and children's attorneys. Nash sent the proposed order out for two rounds of comment to over 100 stakeholders, including the county's 80 school districts, and held a hearing on the issue on June 19. Representatives from the Los Angeles County Office of Education, LAUSD, the Children's Law Center, and the Alliance for Children's Rights spoke at the hearing, and the order was issued on that date. It became effective on July 15, 2006, and the 20 dependency and 27 delinquency courts are prepared to enforce it.

Nash recommended that the order's beneficiaries meet with school districts to develop procedures for requesting and transferring educational records, as implementation concerns were at the heart of the few objections voiced to the order. Nothing now stands in the way of a Memorandum of Understanding among the parties, and Nash said he would be available to consider further orders, if necessary, regarding the scope of the materials under order—deliberately left broad—and whether they can be shared with foster parents and relative caregivers.

Lorraine Bridges expressed her gratitude for the order, saying that foster parents had often been called upon to do the legwork of gathering transcripts and other materials for children's attorneys. Marv Southard hopes this will be an opportunity to integrate educational information into mental health treatment plans, sharing it with providers so they can track individual intervention outcomes, and using it in aggregate form to assess the efficacy of services.

Miriam Krinsky encouraged parties to move beyond whether or not the information may be shared with caregivers—that should be a given, she believes—and collaborate as ECC members to develop an MOU and new forms and procedures prior to the October meeting. LAUSD's Monica Garcia committed to working with Nash to set up a meeting before the end of August, saying that the MOU is one strategy for raising graduation rates and lowering dropout rates, as well as “a very important piece of connecting the dots” for foster and probation youth. According to Krinsky, the Children's Law Center has collected similar MOUs from large metropolitan areas around the country, and is happy to make them available.

Miriam Krinsky moved that the ECC, under the leadership of LAUSD, convene the entities involved in the blanket order to develop a Memorandum of Understanding that creates a process for sharing the educational records of foster and probation youth. Marv Southard seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

- Commissioner Trish Curry of the county's Commission for Children and Families, has long championed the idea of an **electronic health and education record** for foster and probation youth. Because of the different confidentiality issues affecting educational and medical records, these two components are being developed separately and will be integrated when each is operational. Last year, the nonprofit Children's Action Network completed a feasibility study, funded by The California Endowment, on a proposed Child Health and Education Electronic Record (CHEER). The study recommended a strategy for a health passport system to be established through DCFS's medical hubs. (That report is available at

childrensactionnetwork.org.) In the meantime, the Violence Intervention Program (VIP) has begun a pilot system at the LAC+USC medical hub that includes both health and mental health information and that should, in time, expand countywide. Children's Action Network executive director Jennifer Perry is working with DCFS and Dr. Astrid Heger of VIP to connect that project with CHEER, and both organizations are interested in adding educational record information to that joint electronic system.

With the help of Ressie Roman, Supervisor Antonovich's children's deputy, the Board of Supervisors on June 13 directed the ECC to move forward in establishing a public/private partnership to create an electronically based information system for the individual education records of youth under the supervision of DCFS and the Probation Department (Blueprint recommendation 8). The plan is to build incrementally on existing efforts in health and mental health, and start by identifying those data elements that can be shared easily. "In San Diego," Sharon Watson commented, "they were thrilled simply to know who the child's social worker was." Adding education information to the system being developed at the LAC+USC hub is a goal for this next year, starting with the schools in that geographic area.

Helen Kleinberg raised the issue of school districts' not understanding the various time constraints within the delinquency and dependency systems—information being needed by specific dates for court hearings or team decision-making conferences, for instance. She suggested that some mechanisms for red-flagging urgent requests and working with district clerical staff be developed.

Yolie Flores Aguilar moved that the ECC serve as the oversight body for the development of an electronic education record, and create a resource partnership to assist in its design. Marv Southard seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved. A list of agencies to be included in the resource partnership was distributed, and anyone else wishing to participate was asked to contact the ECC office.

Reports on Blueprint Implementation

At its May meeting, ECC members agreed to begin Blueprint implementation with short-term actions that use existing resources to bring about change, to use the ECC as a forum to resolve issues, and to hold themselves publicly accountable for Blueprint implementation.

- Amy Cooper distributed information resulting from Councilmember José Huizar's request to **City of Los Angeles** departments to report on whether they give priority to foster and probation youth in their programs, how many each department serves, which programs are targeted to this population, what caregiver outreach departments conduct, what barriers exist to serving these youth, what additional outreach and services could be provided with additional capacity, and what resources would be needed to expand. The chief obstacle seems to be identifying system youth, since many agencies do not track program participants in that way. A meeting of the Audit and Governmental Efficiency Committee is scheduled for August 7 from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m., and Huizar will address the report at that time, hoping to probe more deeply within several departments. Huizar's long-term goal is to allocate resources according to need, and he will share the map showing where foster and probation youth live within the city.

Marv Southard questioned the absence of the city's senior services department, since many seniors are relative caregivers for their grandchildren. Yolie Flores Aguilar suggested adding the city's WIB Youth Council as well and mentioned that the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors recently allocated \$5 million to its Community Development Department for a youth employment program specifically for foster and probation youth.

Terry Ogawa praised Huizar for his leadership, saying that getting city departments to respond is not easy, since they are not used to sharing information. She supported the inclusion of other programs in the report, and urged collaboration between the city and the county. "Employment funds need to target the kids who need them the most," Ogawa said.

In a partnership with the Children's Law Center to raise awareness of foster and probation youth, the city sponsored a month-long art exhibit of their work at City Hall, plus a press conference—covered by *La Opinión*—at which students read their poetry. Thanks to Assemblymember Mark Leno, the exhibit will be traveling to Sacramento beginning next week.

In May, Huizar's office led the city council in voicing support for state legislation regarding emancipation and higher education. With the governor's recent commitment of \$83 million to the foster care system, many feel that's all the investment the state will make, but 23 foster-care bills remain pending, and Miriam Krinsky encouraged everyone to remind their elected officials how critical those pieces of legislation still are. She will send a sample letter of support to the ECC office, which will distribute it widely.

Helen Kleinberg raised the issue of the Federal waiver recently obtained by DCFS that will allow flexibility in funding child welfare programs. Eight goals must be reached, and she suggested that DCFS share with the city its plans to reach those goals over the next five years, with an eye to working together. Joan Smith said that waiver planning is on the fast track, as implementation starts in January 2007. A plan will go before the Board of Supervisors in September, and will be shared with the ECC in August.

- The school district **data match** reports are available on the ECC's website, and Healthy City is working with Jacquelyn McCroskey to put the information in map format. McCroskey distributed maps of the locations of the almost 11,000 DCFS and Probation students enrolled in LAUSD as of January 2006, overlaid by city council districts and high school feeder patterns (showing individual high schools). Depending on whether or not services for those youth are centralized, Huizar thought that an additional overlay of local districts might be helpful—although the future of LAUSD governance and administration is admittedly in flux.
- According to Jitahadi Imara, recently appointed Chief Probation Officer Robert Taylor takes seriously the recommendations and work of the ECC, seeing the Blueprint as a key strategy in building an improved case management system for the **Probation Department**. He also believes that an integrated, cross-systems approach is the key to effective outcomes.

Recommendation 1—Probation has expanded the library initiative passed by the Board of Supervisors last December, giving library cards not only to all youth in juvenile halls and camps, as directed, but to all youth on probation or at risk of becoming so. This enables them

to access Internet-based tutoring for grades 4 through 12. The department is also reaching out to Los Angeles city libraries as well as the county system.

Recommendation 5—As probation youth move from middle to high school, the department is in its second year of requiring a transition meeting with parents and school officials to discuss proficiency standards, dress codes, academic and behavioral expectations, and so on. It also provides resources for youth to prepare them for high school, and asks high schools to assign advocate/mentors to help youth adjust.

Recommendation 6—Probation has begun building school collaborations and safe passages, and is working with the sheriff's department around high-risk school sites. Representatives have met with the county's Human Relations Commission and, in anticipation of school resuming in September, will also meet with superintendents and principals for contingency planning and building a team of youth advocates to intervene in potentially dangerous situations. At a promising meeting with LACOE and LAUSD, an attorney for LAUSD said no barriers exist to sharing information, and all agreed that resources and organizational differences would not be an issue in the possible co-location of LACOE, LAUSD, and Probation staff (and possibly DCFS) at a dedicated site.

- Lorraine Bridges said that the work of the ECC was being communicated at **foster parent association** meetings, and information was being mailed as well. Two state conferences are also coming up.
- At the **juvenile court**, two trainings have been held for dependency court judicial officers and attorneys. The 317(e) protocol that provides educational advocates has been redrafted for the delinquency court and distributed for comment, and it should roll out soon. Several workshops on educational issues are being planned for this year's Partnership Conference, on October 5, at the Los Angeles Convention Center.
- Using new Mental Health Services Act dollars, the **Department of Mental Health** has released an RFP for full-service partnerships, and is in the process of negotiating with providers to add about \$54 million in additional services from community agencies. An allocation of \$6 million will be made to directly operated programs. Contracts go to the Board of Supervisors in August and services will start in September.
- **Department of Children and Family Services** acting director Joan Smith assured everyone that the department is committed to moving forward with the vision of outgoing director David Sanders, and will remain active on the ECC. A team has been formed to ensure that case plans include education plans; social workers and caregivers will be held accountable, and team decision-making conferences will include educational efforts and issues. Training will increase on the importance of educational outcomes, and in raising expectations for students. DCFS's information bureau is ensuring that social workers are prompted to enter the name of the child's school in CWS/CMS, the department's electronic record-keeping system, so that tutoring, prep courses, and other programs can be accessed. An allocation of \$1.1 million has been set aside for a full-time educational consultant in each regional office.

- Rhonda Jones, educational outreach director for the Los Angeles office of **Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic**, distributed information from that organization, which has been providing audio textbooks for the K–12 curriculum since 1948 and has for the past 11 years also been serving the learning-disabled population, with 109,000 available titles.
- Tony Walker announced the opening of the **New Village Charter School**—specifically for young women in the foster care and probation systems—which was founded as a collaboration between St. Anne’s, Excellent Education Development, and the New Visions Foundation. Many group homes have nonpublic schools, but this is a charter school, the 101st approved by the LAUSD school board. (After some controversy, a single-sex waiver was granted by the state’s board of education so the school may access public funds.) Following a \$1.5 million renovation, the facility will open September 6 with 80 ninth- and tenth-graders. Eleventh and twelfth grades will be added in subsequent years, with room for more than 200 students in all. Only 25 are currently enrolled, and Walker encouraged anyone knowing interested youth to inform them of the weekly orientations held on Tuesdays at 4:30 and 6:00 p.m. at St. Anne’s. Young women from outside the Belmont cluster are welcome, though transportation is often an issue for students traveling greater distances. Walker will e-mail the New Village brochure to the ECC office, which will help disseminate it from there.
- Jason Lesner from the **Fulfillment Fund** outlined that organization’s college access program for disadvantaged youth, a classroom-based curriculum with scholarship and tutoring components. Small learning communities at Crenshaw, Locke, and Manual Arts High Schools have high populations of foster youth, and the Fulfillment Fund looks forward to partnering with the ECC as it explores how best to serve them.

After thanking everyone for their updates, Sharon Watson announced that, as a result of additional funding from the Board of Supervisors and in anticipation of raising private dollars, the ECC has retained two additional consultants to serve as point people for overseeing the work in the child and youth sections of the Blueprint. Current ECC program director Carrie Watson will oversee the data and information-sharing recommendations, since those should be handled centrally; she has been supporting the data work group since the ECC was formed.

- ⊗ Terry Ogawa—who is leaving her position as executive director of the city’s Commission for Children, Youth and Their Families, who previously served as the city’s child care coordinator, and who, prior to that, directed a child care resource and referral agency—will spearhead early childhood education efforts.
- ⊗ Michelle Koenig—after seven years at St. Anne’s, most recently as director of its transitional housing program for foster and probation youth—will head efforts around youth development.

To determine priorities within each program area, meetings will be held with community groups and agencies that have already reported progress to see where they need help, what new ideas they are generating, and where they may need the ECC to facilitate solutions. A full report will be presented in October. In the meantime, Chair Huizar encouraged everyone to share their progress in Blueprint implementation across agencies—especially any obstacles they may encounter.

Caregiver Issues

- AB 490 (Steinberg), which went into effect in January 2004, was meant to help close the educational achievement gap for children and youth living in out-of-home care. Among the rights it guaranteed were a child's right to remain in his or her school of origin following placement disruptions, immediate enrollment in a new school (while the school awaits materials normally required for enrollment), the transfer of records within two calendar days, and credit for full or partial course work. Because in many cases these provisions are being ignored, a letter has been drafted by the Children's Law Center and the Association of Community Human Service Agencies for foster parents and other caregivers to give to school officials, outlining the requirements of the legislation. The draft Bruce Saltzer presented had signature blocks for the secretary of the state Department of Education and the director of the state Department of Social Services, but a more local approach is now being considered, with the letter appearing on ECC letterhead, perhaps, and being signed by LACOE and other local leadership. Darline Robles has already expressed support and it is hoped that other school districts on the ECC will agree to add their signatures.
- Timelines for Individual Education Plans (IEPs) continue to be a concern. Sil Orlando from Optimist Youth Homes explained that LAUSD procedures instituted about a year ago have compromised the educational rights of many nonpublic school students with special education needs, often delaying IEPs and subsequent services for three to six months. Alan Eskot, Optimist's director of education, gave the details. After a referral, schools have 15 days to hold an SST (student study team) meeting and send a permission form for testing and evaluation to the child's parent. Once the form is sent, an IEP meeting must be held within 60 days. If parents don't receive or understand the paperwork, or children are moved, no IEP meeting occurs. Prior to the change in LAUSD rules, nonpublic schools were helping parents with this process, but now the district has instructed them not to—thereby stretching the permission process from a week or two to sometimes up to four months. Problems are compounded for students attending nonpublic schools who are part of public schools on traditional schedules by the fact that no SST or IEP meetings are scheduled in July or August, and students may move over the summer. In addition, LAUSD has ceased the option of dual-enrolling students in public and nonpublic schools, which Eskot said was "not in the spirit" of AB 490.

Bruce Saltzer moved that the ECC request school districts to increase efforts to meet Federally mandated IEP timelines. Marv Southard seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Public Comment

- A representative from the Los Angeles chapter of California Youth Connection noted that education is one of that organization's four priorities and will be addressed at its upcoming policy conference; it is happy to be involved in the ECC's work.
- The New Vision Foundation's Center for Educational Opportunity works with families, social workers, and holder of education rights to place exceptional students in private or

charter schools where they receive full scholarships and funding for books and anything else they need. One hundred percent of those youth have graduated and gone on to college.

Next Meeting

The ECC's next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 26, 2006, at 9:30 a.m., at The California Endowment facility.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 a.m.