



Education Coordinating Council

April 26, 2007

9:30 a.m.

Exposition Park Intergenerational Community Center (EPICC)
3980 South Menlo Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90037

Present: Yolie Flores Aguilar
Berisha Black
David L. Brewer III
Lorraine Bridges, representing Aubrey Manuel
Carol Clem
Amy Cooper, representing José Huizar
Kim Foster, representing Helen Kleinberg
Monica Garcia
Leslie Heimov
Elizabeth Lem, representing Darline Robles
Richard Martinez, representing Thelma Meléndez de Santa Ana
Trish Ploehn
Bruce Saltzer
Sherri Sobel, representing Judge Michael Nash
Marvin J. Southard
Robert Taylor
Machelle Wolf

Vice Chair Berisha Black brought the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m. and asked ECC members and the audience to introduce themselves. She welcomed David Brewer to his first meeting, and noted that Chair José Huizar is participating in city budget committee hearings this morning and thus could not attend, and Vice Chair Michael Nash is in San Francisco.

Lead consultant Sharon Watson congratulated Yolie Flores Aguilar on her election to the Los Angeles Unified School District's board of education, and announced that Sherri Sobel was just named California Juvenile Court Judge of the Year, based in part on her work on educational outcomes for children and youth. This is the first time that a referee has received this award, and Sobel thanked the ECC and its partners for their support of the court's efforts around education.

Staff Reports

- The ECC office has relocated to the Chief Administrative Office Service Integration Branch building on Hill Street, and a flyer with the new address and phone number was included in

member packets. A second computer has been added, and director Carrie Watson now has her own e-mail address at cwatson@cao.lacounty.gov.

- Also in member packets were copies of the progress report on Blueprint implementation submitted to the Board of Supervisors on February 14, and minutes of the education dialogue with school district superintendents held on February 5. Both are available on the ECC's website. About 40 different districts attended the dialogue, and Sharon Watson expressed appreciation to the Los Angeles County Office of Education for co-hosting the meeting.
- ECC staff will try to provide between-meeting updates on the many activities going on with regard to Blueprint implementation. For example, LAUSD has committed to training local superintendents and school principals about foster and probation youth and their special needs, and the Department of Children and Family Services and the Probation Department are now working together on many school campuses to serve youth under each other's jurisdictions.
- The collaborative agreement to share the educational records of foster and probation youth with caseworkers, children's counsel, and court-appointed special advocates (CASAs) has been signed by all participants, and copies were included in member packets. The next step will be to work with children's attorneys, Probation, DCFS, and the schools to train personnel on using the release form.
- Data matches are planned this summer with the Pomona, Long Beach, and Lancaster school districts for both foster and probation youth.
- A small group has been looking at opportunities to integrate early care and education with child welfare, and will present recommendations for short-term countywide initiatives at the ECC's July meeting. Consultants Jacquelyn McCroskey and Becki Nadybal are meeting with various entities to discuss data on service needs, and Terry Ogawa thanked all the ECC's partners, including LAUSD, DCFS, Probation and First 5 LA, who have graciously shared their data and time.

Vice Chair Black encouraged everyone to report implementation activities to ECC staff so they might be posted and disseminated.

Los Angeles Unified School District Report: David L. Brewer

Monica Garcia introduced Brewer, who assumed his superintendent's position last November, describing him as a "leader, believer, and ally for the ECC." The \$7.5 billion that LAUSD spends annually serves more than a million children and families, Garcia said, and can be used to do business differently and increase graduation rates. Brewer "believes in children, children of color, and foster youth," she added, and Garcia is expecting great things as his agenda rolls out.

Brewer came to the district with a pledge to make its work data-driven, and has learned that approximately 18,000 foster children currently attend LAUSD schools. A family friend is a foster mother in San Diego County, and discussions with her have confirmed the thesis that numerous agencies must become involved in stabilizing this population, and that a strong com-

munity commitment is needed. “We can’t afford to waste these human beings,” he said. In exploring the option of boarding schools for at-risk children, Brewer visited the SEED Academy in Washington, DC, whose students have a 95 percent high school graduation rate and, more important, a college graduation rate of over 90 percent. “They stick with these kids all the way,” Brewer said. “You can’t just turn them loose at age 18 and expect productive citizens. They need help—they don’t have the same resources as their counterparts.” In conversations with SEED students, Brewer discovered that the facility’s stable and nurturing environment was important in allowing youth to concentrate on their studies, and that the boarding-school approach meant they could remain undistracted by any drama in their family households.

Brewer has committed to five guiding principles to help children in need:

- **Stay data-driven.** DCFS records show that the enrollment at Audubon Middle School, for example, is 30 percent foster children; a boarding school in that vicinity could serve a mix of at-risk students. Other data, such as that on homeless students, must be more formally tracked. (As many as 90 percent of students at Ninth Street Elementary are believed to be homeless, along with perhaps 10,000 students district-wide, but hard data is not available.)
- **Build the capacity of principals, counselors, and teachers to work with foster and probation youth.** To date, 600 foster youth advocates have been trained, and Brewer wants to push that capacity into the classroom, ensuring that school personnel understand the symptoms children may display. A recent survey found that 27 percent of sixth-graders, for instance, suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.
- **Implement change and innovation.** Twenty-first century techniques should be used at all levels of the district.
- **Involve parents and the community.** Educating children in Los Angeles is a shared responsibility, and parents in particular should be aided and empowered to participate in their children’s learning.
- **Create safe learning environments, both in schools and around them.** On school property, 3.3 violent incidents occur per 1,000 students, but outside of schools, that figure rises to 36.4. “Kids are getting shot on the streets,” Brewer said. “Neighborhoods must be made safer, and that’s going to take a very comprehensive, coordinated, and collaborative approach. No silos.”

Brewer expressed his appreciation for what the ECC and its partners are accomplishing, and looks forward to working with the organization.

Increasing Participation in After-School and Summer Enrichment Programs

At the ECC’s January meeting, members agreed to focus on one Blueprint recommendation at each of this year’s meetings. This morning’s concentration is on Recommendation 3, in the youth development area, which calls for more foster and probation youth to be enrolled with other students in summer and after-school skill-building and enrichment programs that provide opportunities to connect with nurturing adults. A version of this recommendation is also being proposed

as an objective under goal five—children and families’ well-being—of the overall strategic plan for Los Angeles County, which will be submitted to the Board of Supervisors in June. Representatives from thriving collaborative models were asked to make presentations today.

Citing Vice Chair Black’s mantra about involving foster youth, “Nothing about us, without us,” Michelle Koenig, the ECC consultant with responsibility for youth development, introduced **Fabricio Segovia**, a political science and Spanish major at UCLA who emancipated from foster care in 2005. Segovia related his middle-school experience with an after-school math and science club, which he joined in part to escape an unhappy foster home and in part to do better academically. Once he started competing with the club, his interest blossomed and he continued in the program through high school, ultimately being elected student body president. Success has continued during Segovia’s college career, and his younger brother is now following in his footsteps. The youth focus groups convened for the ECC’s *Through Our Eyes* report yielded similar findings, Koenig said: early connections to enrichment programs consistently help foster and probation youth perform better in school.

The **Children Youth and Family Collaborative (CYFC)** began in 1999 with the realization that about half of foster youth do not graduate from high school; to help remedy this, it started offering tutoring and mentoring to 25 youth, involving them in monthly field trips and other activities. The organization has since expanded, said president and chief executive officer Lydia Cincore-Templeton, and now runs over two dozen programs serving 2,000 youth in 12 schools (2 high schools and some of their feeder elementary and middle schools), with research showing that 98 percent of those who participate three times a week graduate from high school. CYFC’s partners include major colleges and universities, the Los Angeles and Compton school districts, DCFS, community groups, faith-based organizations, and the Los Angeles Police Department. All its funding comes from private sources rather than the county, which participating foster youth are astonished to learn. “They hate being a paycheck, and they hate being exploited,” Templeton said. “We believe in transparency at all levels.”

CYFC programs, which are all school-based, are never identified as being specifically for foster youth, and participants are recruited through various methods. Students receive comprehensive, standards-based tutoring, enrichment programs (in art, music, fashion, computers, and so on), and conflict resolution, including Hoops for Peace basketball games with the LAPD. In partnership with Casey Family Programs, CYFC is also beginning a literacy program for parents and launching additional projects at Audubon Middle and Dorsey High.

Mona Gil de Gibaja with **Casey Family Programs** said that the purpose of Casey’s neighborhood-based prevention initiative is to collaborate with child welfare agencies and other stakeholders to reduce the number of children in foster care—slashing it in half, nationwide, by 2020—and to prevent child abuse and neglect in specific geographic communities. Its pilot program, based at Norwood Elementary in SPA 6 and Fries Elementary in SPA 8, is determining the risk factors that families encounter within those school enrollment zones and performing a survey of family strengths and needs. It will then map existing services and link families to supports that will prevent them coming into the child welfare system. A similar survey and mapping process will be done with foster youth in middle and high school, so they and their families may be connected to needed supports. An evaluation piece is built in to the initiative, and Casey would

like to expand into the secondary and tertiary levels of prevention as well. Former DCFS director David Sanders is now Casey's executive vice president for systems improvement, and Gil de Gibaja said the organization would rely on his "visionary ways" and on partnerships with CYFC, DCFS, and others to achieve its goals.

Chief Probation Officer Robert Taylor spoke about the *Gridiron Gang*, a 2006 movie about the football program at Camp Kilpatrick, and the work needed to persuade outside schools to allow their teams to play probation boys. "Ninety-eight percent of the kids in our camps are redeemable," Taylor said, "but not everyone sees that right off. They're in the system not because of any failing of their own, but because of the failings of their parents, their schools, and their peers." Taylor introduced Sean Porter, head of the camp's sports programs (played by Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson in the film), who explained the difficulties he had in finding opponent teams because of interscholastic competition rules. LACOE was a much-appreciated first partner, and the Kilpatrick team ultimately traveled to small schools all over California, usually religious, where parents were often not receptive to the idea of their children playing against 'bad elements.' "But changed behavior was part of our objective," Porter said. "The first year we played at Brentwood Academy here on the Westside, we were invited back as the homecoming opponent the following season." Positive interactions showed players that despite their deprived backgrounds, they could compete with children of privilege and be productive when they left camp. "It takes relationships, which are built on trust," Porter said, "and trust develops when they see positive results. We need to convince the kids themselves that they are redeemable—keep beating the drum until they hear us. Deliver what you promise, and they'll come back."

Civil rights attorney Connie Rice presented the **Advancement Project's youth gang reduction strategy**, which began with inquiries posed by Los Angeles City Council members about how many young people in their districts had been kept out of gangs for at least five years by city programs. No one in city government could tell them. The Advancement Project's study brought together 27 experts, including attorneys, pediatricians, public health officials, police, and child development specialists, who have proposed a mental health solution—not one simply of suppression—to the question of tackling the gang violence problem.

"Los Angeles is to violence," Rice quoted one expert, "as Bangladesh is to diarrhea and cholera." Children don't worry about getting shot on the way to school in all neighborhoods, but in areas that have been left behind for 100 years, the containment and suppression paradigm has proved useless. "We can't arrest our way out of this," Rice maintains. Over the past 10 years, 450,000 children under the age of 18 have been victims of violence; 100,000 have been shot over the past 30 years. Over 12,000 have died in the past 15 years, and 15 law enforcement officers have lost their lives. In the city of Los Angeles alone—the scope of the report—300,000 children are trapped in gang-saturated zones, 120,000 of them in zones of persistent violence. Of the 700 gangs and 40,000 gang members active citywide, between 7 and 8 percent are persistently violent. "We're stuck on stupid," as Rice put it, when mass incarceration is the first and only response, and nonviolent offenders return to their communities having learned violence in jail.

"This is not unsolvable," she went on, "but solutions need to be done the gang experts' way." Comprehensive, holistic, health-based strategies, addressing the root causes of violence, must be wrapped around gang-saturated communities to make them healthier. Effective private interven-

tion programs exist, and the city, county, and school district together spend a whopping \$958 million a year on the issue. “But no one’s job description,” Rice said, “includes being part of gang violence reduction strategies that wrap around communities. That is what’s needed.” Violent gang crime costs the taxpayers and victims over \$2 billion every year, not including property crimes. If gang homicides were reduced by 20 every year for five years, \$100 million would be saved.

And wraparound strategies work. With \$300,000 left over from his election campaign, plus privately raised matching funds, former city councilmember Martin Ludlow decided one summer to saturate ‘the Jungle,’ a battleground for four feuding gangs in his district, with midnight swimming, midnight soccer, tutoring, reading programs, hip-hop contests, and other activities. “Every kid there was safe for 12 weeks,” Rice said, and shootings and assaults were reduced to zero. The effort was admittedly complex, involving school facilities, the Department of Water and Power, the recreation and parks department, and numerous other city and county departments, along with budgets for overtime, liability agreements, insurance, and so on. Applying similar strategies while adding economic development and other services could systematize the effort, and address the public health emergency that gang violence presents.

“But who gets rewarded for joining a roundtable that does this neighborhood by neighborhood?” Rice asked. “The community has to co-pilot with you, and civic and faith-based funding needs to be built in. Where’s the budget for that?” Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa has proposed a gang plan with a comprehensive footprint, she said, but it’s not enough. The county’s chief administrative officer, David Janssen, knows how to reorganize job descriptions, and Rice suggested sweeping changes to worker incentives. “Get out of your Dilbert cubicle,” she said. “Get out of city hall. You don’t get promoted if you can’t prove you contributed. This isn’t about your career, it’s about solving this long-term problem.” Los Angeles County, too, needs to make this happen at the regional level—gangs don’t stop at city limits. “This is about their hearts and minds and the way they think about themselves,” Rice said. “And it’s about politics. We may know what to do on a micro level, but this is about systems.”

Rice invited everyone to view the project’s complete report at <http://www.advanceproj.org>, and to do everything possible to push for its implementation. According to Amy Cooper, a five-member ad hoc group chaired by councilmember Tony Cardenas—and just joined by ECC Chair José Huizar—is making recommendations for a process to evaluate the billion dollars spent by the city on prevention and intervention programs for gang members. “The ECC should weigh in on this,” Cooper said. “If we want to see profound change, that committee needs to hear from you.” The group meets weekly, and ECC members are welcome to participate.

Discussion

In terms of implementing Recommendation 3 on a systematic level, what partnerships need to be formed, commitments made, and barriers eliminated? Research shows that foster and probation youth lose an average of two months of academic achievement over the summer, while other youth gain a month through travel, camping, museum visits, and other enriching experiences. Over time, that gap becomes cumulative, and system youth can’t regain that ground. Nurturing

relationships are often the key to progress during the summer, Sharon Watson said, and the ECC must consider the big picture, not just raising attendance figures for scattered programs.

- Bruce Saltzer suggested a coordinated, collaborative approach to developing an overall comprehensive plan, establishing an ad hoc work group that would identify needs, barriers, resources, and opportunities, and recommend a plan of action.
- Monica Garcia encouraged bold and aggressive thinking toward creating a five-year plan and identifying the political will called for by the Advancement Project's report. Quantifying budgets and how many children should be served is one thing, but behavioral and attitudinal changes are also part of the solution, often before actual specifics.
- Amy Cooper reported that Mayor Villaraigosa's budget commits to providing 10,000 summer jobs this year—a dramatic expansion from 7,500 last year and 2,900 in 2005—and she hopes that number will at least quadruple by 2012. Foster and probation youth could receive priority for those jobs this summer, and more systematic connections should be made to let youth know they exist. Flyers were distributed for the city's summer youth employment program, which includes 31 centers for WorkSource California (age 18 to 24) and OneSource California (age 16 to 21), as well as Hire LA 18-24. For students who have failed the state high school exit exam, another program offers eleventh- and twelfth-graders exam preparation classes in the morning plus work experience in the afternoon. Last year, 1,500 youth participated and 700 subsequently passed the test. Further information on city programs is available on the city's website or by calling its 3-1-1 information number.
- Noting the lack of a centralized database for program resources, Leslie Heimov said that advocates trying to locate opportunities for a 14-year-old student interested in art, say, are often reduced to simply calling around. Can the ECC help gather resources into one place, perhaps creating some kind of web-based directory like the independent living program's online model? Heimov also encouraged the inclusion of more career-focused opportunities. Unlike most job fairs, which tend to be directed toward lower-level employment, this year's 'job shadow day' during May's foster care awareness month will give students exposure to law firms, architects' offices, and banks, she said.
- Sherri Sobel praised the "extraordinary progress" the ECC has made since its inception, encouraging more communication with the courts who deal with foster and probation youth every day. Youth need to find and pursue their interests, build adult skills through activities and employment, and learn the basics of budgeting time and money. "We are these kids' parents," she said, "and we need to gear them toward adulthood."
- Heimov brought up a continued lack of understanding among caregivers and social workers on the need for permission for foster youth to take part in extracurricular activities. No court order, social worker's note, or LiveScan clearance is necessary. AB 408 guarantees foster children's right to participate in normal activities, under a 'prudent parent' standard.
- Elizabeth Lem announced that, following the passage of Proposition 49, LACOE has established technical assistance for districts providing after-school programs, which are now operational in 1,200 elementary and middle schools, including 500 in LAUSD and 180 in the

city's L.A.'s BEST program. The interagency advisory council for this effort meets regularly, and those interested are encouraged to contact Sue Schatz at schatz_sue@lacoed.edu.

- Kelly Kagan said that the New Visions Foundation's Center for Educational Opportunity has over the last five years placed 80 foster youth in independent or charter schools, all of whom have graduated and been accepted to college. The center's first student is graduating from MIT this year, and the foundation is expanding the program into the San Francisco area. New Village Charter School, on the campus of St. Anne's, also has the goal of sending graduates to college, and provides superior academics and diverse enrichment activities for its students, half of whom are pregnant or parenting girls.

Solutions are necessary at both the system and program levels, and the ECC is in a unique position to connect various efforts and make sure people understand foster and probation youth's need for extracurricular activities. "It's not going to be solved piecemeal," said Sharon Watson. "This area is ripe for our leadership, and we need a cohesive strategy with one or two major goals. That's the approach that's worked for us so far." **Bruce Saltzer moved that an ad hoc work group look at the Blueprint Recommendation 3 systematically, identifying available resources, their accessibility, and their countywide awareness profile, then bring recommendations back to the ECC as a whole. Monica Garcia seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.**

Mental Health Services Act Update: Marv Southard

"Today's presentations all deliver the same message," Southard said. "Wonderful programs are out there, but systems don't work well to get us to our goals. The idea is to redesign those systems to serve the needs of children better, and the Mental Health Services Act is one effort that the public has supported." The MHSA is transforming the mental health system through five components:

- ✓ Community services and supports, for people already disabled by mental illness (currently being implemented, with \$130 million being spent)
- ✓ Prevention and early intervention
- ✓ Infrastructure
- ✓ Workforce development
- ✓ Housing

Between \$60 and \$80 million will be available for prevention and early intervention, and guidelines for this component are expected from the state in July. Given the need for services, however, Southard fears that unless that money is used strategically, it will yield only a slightly larger, little-changed system. To avoid that, most planning for this component will be done at the service planning area (SPA) level, rather than centrally, and it is hoped that the plans will meet as much as possible the needs of the SPAs. The Department of Mental Health is currently getting the word out to communities about opportunities to participate in the collaborative planning process, which will address the six mandated focal populations:

- ✓ Underserved cultural groups (by race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation)
- ✓ Individuals undergoing their first mental 'break'

- ✓ Children and youth in stressed families dealing with substance abuse, domestic violence, and so on
- ✓ Individuals undergoing traumatic events or conditions
- ✓ Children and youth at risk of school failure
- ✓ Children and youth at risk of involvement with the juvenile justice system

Once guidelines are finalized, Southard plans a fuller presentation. Proposed timeliness for the planning process are posted on the DMH website, and he will keep everyone informed.

Public Comment

- At the May 17 ‘Success is Our Future’ banquet, the names of four graduating foster children will be announced who will receive funds from the Probation Department to help pay for college. These monies are being directed through the ECC, and Jed Minoff expressed appreciation to staff for their help. He also looks forward to the ECC’s expertise in supporting these youth through their continuing education.
- Pat Levinson of LACOE’s Foster Youth Services announced a foster youth transition conference on August 8, 2008, that will focus on youth moving from eighth to ninth grades and on youth moving on after high school. Levinson encouraged anyone wishing to participate in this community event next year to contact her or Machel Wolf.
- Audience member Wendy Barry, who is active in the field of entertainment marketing, expressed her excitement about today’s presentations, especially those from the Children Youth and Family Collaborative and the Advancement Project. She offered her connections within the industry and corporate America to help in any way she could.

Next Meeting

The next ECC meeting is scheduled for:

Thursday, July 25, 2007
3:00 to 5:00 p.m.
The California Endowment, Redwood Room
1000 North Alameda Street, Los Angeles

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.