



Education Coordinating Council

January 31, 2008

9:30 a.m.

The California Endowment Center for Healthy Communities

Yosemite Room

1000 North Alameda Street, Los Angeles, California

Present: Berisha Black
Carol Clem
Renatta Cooper
Julie Eutsler, representing Howard Sundberg
René Gonzalez, representing David L. Brewer III
Leslie Heimov
José Huizar
Rafael López
Aubrey Manuel
Machelle Massey
Judge Michael Nash
Trish Ploehn
Ron Randolph, representing Darline P. Robles
Bruce Saltzer
Nina Sorkin
Marvin J. Southard
Rick Tebbano, representing Christopher Steinhauser
Robert Taylor

Chair José Huizar brought the meeting to order at 9:38 a.m., wishing everyone a happy third anniversary of the ECC's first meeting. He then asked ECC members and the audience to introduce themselves, and welcomed Renatta Cooper, member of the Pasadena Unified School District's board of education, to the meeting.

Term of Officers

At this stage of building the ECC's momentum to implement its Blueprint for improving the education of foster and probation youth, **Marv Southard moved to extend the terms of the current slate of ECC officers—chair José Huizar and vice chairs Michael Nash and Berisha Black—through June 2009, the proposed sunset date for the ECC. Aubrey Manuel seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.**

Staff Updates

- A motion at the April 2007 ECC meeting established an ad hoc youth development work group to systematically look at Blueprint Recommendation 3, which calls for more foster and probation youth to be enrolled in summer and after-school skill-building and enrichment programs. The work group—involving ECC members, partner agencies, libraries, parks, the county arts commission, and others—has met four times to develop recommendations the ECC can implement. In general, discussions found that agencies do not communicate well with one another, and existing information services need stronger linkages.

Reinforcing the ECC's commitment to short-term action, the work group has announced a **countywide resource fair** on June 25, 2008, for system youth up to age 24, their caregivers, and those who work with them. Resources and information will be available on a broad range of topics, from early childhood education through transitioning out of foster care/probation and going to college. The California Endowment has generously offered the ECC its entire Center facility for this first-ever event. Youth development work group members have disbanded the ad hoc group and formed instead a planning committee for the resource fair. Anyone interested in participating on the committee or in the fair itself was asked to contact ECC consultant Michelle Barritt at mkbarritt@gmail.com.

- The ECC is also partnering with the Children's Law Center in the **Foster Care Awareness Campaign**'s sixth year in Los Angeles. Nominations for Foster Care Heroes—former foster youth who have attained success, as well as individuals or organizations that have made significant contributions to the foster care system—are now being accepted.

The campaign will also include, as it did last year, a Job Shadow Day, and applications for interested youth ages 16 to 20 are available on the Children's Law Center website. In addition to helping recruit youth who would benefit, Leslie Heimov asked attendees to identify businesses that could provide career-oriented job experiences. The job shadow date is being coordinated with a Northern California effort, but should take place during the third week of May, probably on May 21.

- Renatta Cooper, a member of the Pasadena board of education, reported that the ECC's 2006 **data match** between the **Pasadena Unified School District** and the Department of Children and Family Services has proved very useful in changing conversations about foster youth in that district, particularly with other board members. "Foster youth were getting blamed for everything," Cooper said. "We do have a large number, but it was nowhere near as high as people had assumed. Even allowing for an undercount, once people saw the numbers, it changed the dynamic of that conversation. We still have problems, but I haven't been at a meeting since that has blamed them on foster children."
- Pleased that these studies are being used to such good effect, ECC program director Carrie Miller presented preliminary **data match** results between the **Pomona Unified School District**, DCFS, and the Probation Department. DCFS and Probation caseload data from June 2007 was matched with November 2007 data from the Pomona district, finding 471 DCFS students and 155 Probation students in the district's total enrollment of 30,584. (Caseload mobility and minor errors that prevent records from corresponding are always issues; never-

theless, researchers felt the process resulted in a fairly accurate count.) A breakdown of the numbers of DCFS and Probation students by school was also included in the report.

Students demographics in Pomona resembled those found in data matches for the Los Angeles and Pasadena school districts, except for the predominance of Latino students in Pomona. The percentages of DCFS and Probation students enrolled in special education classes were twice as high as for the district as a whole, with just over a third enrolled because of specific learning disabilities. Percentages of gifted and talented students were consistent with the Los Angeles and Pasadena studies, and Miller finds it very encouraging that gifted students exist at all within the DCFS and Probation populations. “We need to make sure we focus on those youth and their needs,” she said.

On California’s standardized tests, the percentages of DCFS and Probation students scoring as proficient and advanced in English and math were significantly lower than for the district as a whole; across all the school districts studied so far, a consistent 4 percent of DCFS high school students test as proficient and advanced in math. “This is not just an issue with foster youth,” Miller said. “Something is going on within districts that is causing these low scores.”

The Pomona data match looks for the first time at data on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), finding better results than anticipated. Approximately two-thirds of DCFS students and half of Probation students passed the CAHSEE, compared to three-quarters of the total district’s students. However, half the DCFS students and a quarter of Probation students had not taken the test—compared to one-third of overall Pomona students—for reasons that are not yet known. A preliminary analysis found no correlation between exam participation and attendance or suspension rates; Probation youth are suspended from school more often than anyone else, yet three-quarters still take the exam. “We want to look further,” Miller said. A completed data match report for Pomona will be distributed once information on attendance and suspensions is analyzed.

- The ECC’s next progress report on the implementation of its Blueprint recommendations goes to the Board of Supervisors on February 14, and members were asked to notify the ECC office by February 6 about any implementation activities to include. Following the submission of each of the three reports done so far, lead consultant Sharon Watson has gotten a flurry of phone calls from Board offices complimenting the ECC and acknowledging its progress. “It’s the first time I’ve experienced that kind of thing,” Watson said. “Not only that they read it, but that they also take the time to call and say how proud they are of this group.”

Response to School Superintendents’ Issues

On November 2, 2007, another in the ongoing ECC series of school superintendents’ meetings was hosted by Superintendent Darline Robles at the Los Angeles County Office of Education headquarters. More than 20 school districts attended, along with leadership from DCFS and Probation and Judge Michael Nash from the juvenile court. Participants held a candid discussion of what superintendents need from county agencies and the courts to better support the foster and probation students in their districts. A full summary of the meeting was included in member packets, as well as a sheet highlighting major discussion themes.

- ✓ **Transcripts and individual education plans** (IEPs) should be in the packets of youth transitioning from probation camps, so that appropriate class assignments can be made.
- ✓ Schools need to know students' **holders of education rights**.
- ✓ Schools need information on any **history of violent school behavior** or gang involvement that a student may have; schools also want a mechanism to provide probation officers and social workers with information about the child or the child's family situation or educational needs that should appear in reports to the court.
- ✓ A standardized way of awarding **partial and full course credits** needs to be determined.
- ✓ Many districts have **early childhood programs** that are experiencing declining enrollment; they are eager to serve DCFS youngsters and the children of DCFS and probation youth, and will give them high priority.

Nash said that a juvenile court committee consisting of county departments and other stakeholders will consider these items and attempt to resolve as many of them as possible. He wants to ensure progress prior to the next superintendents' meeting, and promised a report on these issues when the ECC meets in April.

In the ensuing discussion, Nina Sorkin pointed out that Federal law gives priority for Head Start enrollment to children in the child welfare system, allowing them to bypass waiting lists and be served immediately. "We should encourage foster parents to place them," Sorkin said. Participants in the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition program, which serves children from before birth through age five, could also benefit from preschool. Leslie Heimov suggested that the ECC generate a list of school districts having **early childhood education** programs, so that county departments and other agencies can facilitate the appropriate referrals. Steve Sturm from DCFS's education and mentoring section invited everyone to a meeting this afternoon that will work on strategies for getting youngsters into preschool programs; he promised a progress report to the ECC, and Nash requested that a report be made to him as well.

Aubrey Manuel raised the issue of **school tardiness policies**, citing one recent case in which a student was ill in the morning, felt better that afternoon and came to school, only to be sent home again because he was late. If students are late more than three times, they are subject to citation. Especially in districts with high dropout rates, does this make sense? "Kids who show up at school should be accepted and encouraged to be there," Manuel said, "not penalized. Some older kids are responsible for caring for younger siblings when parents go to work early, but they still want to get to school. Punitive measures are not helping the dropout rate at the high school level, and they should be addressed."

School-related citations are dealt with by the busiest division of Los Angeles County's juvenile court, Nash explained, its 13 **informal juvenile and traffic courts**. This division began with the premise that minors with traffic infractions should not be treated in the same way as adults, but over the years its jurisdiction has been expanded by statute to encompass 'informal' court proceedings as well. Of over 170,000 citations handled there last year, only 25 to 30 percent were

actually related to traffic. Another of Nash's multiagency committees is studying the informal and traffic court, including the way in which school policies affect its proceedings.

With the presence of school police on many campuses, Nash sees a growing trend for schools to abdicate their responsibilities, with their prevailing response to truancy being, "Give 'em a ticket and send 'em to court," as he put it. Young people can be slapped with fines of up to \$400, only some of which can be translated into community service hours. "Last year we had 30,000 citations for truancy—I saw one kid cited for being an hour late to school," Nash said. "Why are these kids being shuffled over to the court to deal with?" In another case, a student had talked back to a teacher, threatening to tell her mother of a disciplinary incident, and the teacher asked the school police to cite the student for 'utilizing language likely to incite violence.' "We don't do things the same way as we did years ago," Nash said. "Years ago, a kid might have been suspended or gotten his butt swatted by the principal. I'm not saying we should go back to that, but schools took responsibility then. The courts are not the right place for this kind of thing." Nash will include school representatives and law enforcement personnel on the court committee studying these matters, and further discussion will likely be brought to the ECC.

DCFS's Jennifer Hottenroth acknowledged that the process to notify schools of a child's foster-care status is not yet operating as the department would like it to. Schools say they are not receiving the **1399 forms** that list holders of education rights and their contact information, and DCFS is reemphasizing that form with its staff. In two weeks, a training for DCFS managers will instruct them to ensure that Form 1399 is included in standard regional-office placement packets and that social workers also complete it during re-placements. In the DCFS training academies for new-hires, staff from the education and mentoring section review the form step by step, stressing the importance of knowing who the holder of education rights is and that role's specific responsibilities. An online training on AB 490 that covers the 1399 form is also available to all DCFS staff, and the department plans to make it mandatory.

Monica Enia from United Friends of the Children asked about efforts to **identify foster youth within the school system**. "Teachers don't know who they are. Is there some indicator that's not being accessed? Where do we stand with that?" No specific indicator exists, René Gonzalez said, but district data-collection efforts generate information on who and where these youngsters are so that partnerships with DCFS can better coordinate services to those sites. "To the extent that a teacher would need to know, we would inform them," Gonzalez said, "but it's not a blanket thing" because of the need for confidentiality. "It's the struggle we always have," Leslie Heimov chimed in. "Some youth don't want to be identified, and opportunities for careless mistakes exist when other students work in school offices and have access to files, as they often do. We have to protect these kids' privacy." In Long Beach, Rick Tebbano has talked to a number of foster youth who resist being labeled, and don't even want their school counselors to know their status. To distribute flyers for an upcoming emancipation workshop, for instance, after attorneys for the district told him that DCFS couldn't be given mailing labels directly, Tebbano asked his information technology department to generate labels for all students on record as having legal guardians. "We've got 1,500 system youth in the district, including 700 at the high school level," Tebbano said. "We may not get them all this way, but it's a start."

As a side note, Nash explained a recent change in terminology. “We don’t use *emancipation* for juvenile court kids any more,” he said. “That word has positive connotations, that we’re freeing someone for something, but that’s not the case with kids in the court system. We’re not freeing them—they’re leaving our system because they’ve aged out, and we know that a high percentage of kids who leave solely because of their age go on to negative outcomes. The appropriate terminology is *aging out*. We’re making that point at the local, statewide, and national levels, creating more credence for the usage throughout the country.”

Given the difficulties that system youth experience and their desire not to be identified, Rafael López proposed the development of some formal protocols across districts to make sure that some information gets shared. “Between protecting these kids’ privacy and covering school districts for liability issues,” he said, “there has to be a middle ground. Informal efforts just won’t work in the long term. We’re doing better than we did a few years ago, but we need to keep our eyes on this.” Nash declared himself in complete agreement, and promised an attempt to address the issue.

Draft Recommendations for Comprehensive Education Reform at the Juvenile Halls and Probation Camps

In introducing Chief Robert Taylor’s presentation, José Huizar thanked ECC staff for raising the issue of education in the juvenile halls and probation camps. It has not traditionally been part of the discussion at the Los Angeles city level, but Huizar hopes to begin a dialogue there as the city undergoes an evaluation of its anti-gang programs and addresses questions raised by The Advancement Project’s report on gangs, which Connie Rice presented to the ECC in April 2007. An ad hoc city group on youth development is developing a clearer definition of intervention specialists, but the re-entry into society for young people—and others—following incarceration is an important area that needs to be grappled with.

Taylor reviewed the multidisciplinary effort to improve educational services in the halls and camps that was called for last June by Supervisor Don Knabe. Representatives from 10 agencies have met 11 times, hearing presentations from seven educational service providers and reviewing seven key reports—among them those from the ECC and the Children’s Planning Council—that were used as a foundation for the draft recommendations. As an adjunct to the county committee convened by Taylor, the ECC and the Children’s Planning Council brought together a group of community voices and others—including the county’s Commission for Children and Families, the Public Defender’s Office, the Association of Community Human Services Agencies, The Advancement Project, New Visions Charter School, Girls & Gangs, Helpline Youth Counseling, and a Children’s Planning Council parent representative—who provided input to the proposed plan. The Children’s Planning Council heard Taylor’s presentation last week, and it is being presented to the ECC today for comment, endorsement, or suggested amendments.

“The traditional model of comprehensive high school education doesn’t work well for all kids,” Taylor said. “Kids are in the halls for an average of 19 days. With a few days for assessments, that gives us a couple of weeks at most to do something for them. In the camps, though, kids are there for four months or more. We have a real opportunity to turn a light on for them there, raising their academic scores and improving their ability to read.” Youth in the probation system, all

neglected in some way, are almost universally at an educational disadvantage, yet this country's promise of a high-quality education cannot exclude them. Taylor takes seriously Probation's responsibility to rehabilitate youth so they return to their communities in better shape than when they left. More effective schooling is a part of that, reducing the number of youth at risk and improving their chances of success later in life. Data going back 20 years has established some powerful determinants of poor performance, and the proposed recommendations try to address them. "We have a unique opportunity to get kids back on track," Taylor said. "We won't be successful with them all, but we owe it to them and to their communities to do the best we can."

Within the lifetime of everyone in the room, technology has transformed society at a whirlwind pace, yet the way in which educational services are delivered in the halls and camps has not changed. "When kids leave, they must be prepared not only academically," Taylor said, "but also for the onslaught of challenges that life affords them in terms of family, peers, and mental health issues. We have to address that while we have them, using an integrated approach." Within the camps, Taylor views Probation as the linchpin in that process, interacting with the Department of Health Services, the Department of Mental Health, the Los Angeles County Office of Education, and others. "Everyone needs to be working in concert based on the assessments done to identify the youngster's service needs. We need to reduce obstacles to creativity and experimentation, and enrich the educational experience."

Taylor summarized the 36 key issues to be addressed as part of comprehensive education reform, which fall into seven main areas.

- ✓ **Governance.** Inconsistencies exist between California's Welfare and Institutions Code and its Education Code with regard to the responsibilities borne by the Probation Department and by LACOE, which runs the Juvenile Court and Community Schools (JCCS). The issue is complicated, and Taylor believes that agencies need to work more collaboratively to remove the ambiguity in the law, or that the legislature must be approached to change the law. "There should be a point person for every service a kid needs," he said. "That's Probation's responsibility. They're in our facilities and the juvenile court has charged us with taking care of them." With regard to youth's re-integration into the community after their stint in the halls and camps, Taylor praised the Pomona Unified School District's transition program. If charter schools are introduced, he also wants to place youth from communities where Green Dot charter schools operate, for instance, into camps that also have Green Dot schooling, using that alignment to ease the transition when youth return home.
- ✓ **Assessments and case planning.** The department is in the process of validating and updating its assessment tools. Again, Taylor said, "the world around us has changed, but what we're doing hasn't."
- ✓ **Instructional programs and delivery.** The traditional lecture/homework/testing model typically fails youth in the halls and camps, while interactive learning-by-doing would have more success. Youth should also have access to the educational pathways that are most appropriate for them—a high school diploma (passing the high school exit exam), a GED certificate, career technical education, preparation for two- or four-year college, or some combination.

- ✓ **Special education.** Assessments and services are needed for the one-third of probation youth with special education needs.
- ✓ **Number of regular teachers.**
- ✓ **Classrooms and equipment.** Ongoing maintenance and repair is necessary, as is the acquisition and upgrade of computers.
- ✓ **Educational funding.** The prevalence of learning disabilities and other special education needs in the halls and camps results in a significantly higher cost for education services, and average daily attendance (ADA) funds are inadequate.

Once the full education reform plan is presented to the LACOE Board and the Probation Commission in early February, it will go before the Board of Supervisors on March 11 and be showcased at the second Community Corrections Collaborative conference on March 17. Its strategies will be incorporated into the Probation Department's strategic action plan by the middle of May, and the resources to implement its recommendations would be approved by the end of the fiscal year, June 30. Target dates for each recommendation appear in the report, but Taylor acknowledged that much work is in store to identify education alternatives, issue Requests for Proposals, hold discussions with various providers, and go through the selection process. "This won't occur overnight," he said, "but we must acknowledge the problems we have with the current system and commit to moving forward."

In the ensuing discussion, Bruce Saltzer praised the plan as an "amazing, comprehensive work," commenting that it would be helpful to have a report at the end of the year on the progress made with each recommendation, including the barriers to implementation and any proposed solutions. "So many factors are involved," he said. "We need to make sure there's an ongoing process of evaluation." Nina Sorkin agreed, saying that it was a wonderful plan on paper, but that if barriers precluded the recommendations from going forward—or if financial constraints prevent implementation—it would be important for the ECC to know that.

When asked about implementation efforts already underway, Taylor said that he and Department of Mental Health director Marv Southard have been discussing screening tools for assessing mental health problems. The MAYSI-2 (Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument—Second Version) tool is standard, but other good options also exist. Taylor also reiterated the need for a more integrated assessment process during the first five days that a youngster is in juvenile hall. "Some kids come in having never had a regular physician," he said, "and never having been to a dentist. The first time they get proper care is when they're incarcerated. There's an opportunity there for us to try and make this kid whole—physically, mentally, in terms of cognitive skills." Language proficiency is identified during the standard assessment, and a recent survey determined that approximately 5 percent of probation youth are primarily Spanish-speakers. More than 10 percent of the staff in the camps and halls are bilingual, but the issue of providing services to a youngster who doesn't know English is an important one.

The comparison of educational outcomes and performance indicators in Section VI of the report shows that 81 percent of eligible Green Dot students obtain a high school diploma, as opposed to 42 percent of eligible JCCS students. "Green Dot kids come from communities with the same

risk factors,” Rafael López said, “and the Green Dot comparison is just one example.” He would like the recommendations to go one step further, not simply admitting that the comprehensive educational model isn’t working, but looking for other efforts to include. “LACOE and others need to think far differently about educational models,” López said. “RFPs and RFQs need to get some competition going for contracts to educate kids in the camps.” José Huizar asked about the reporting structure for educational providers, and Taylor explained that while a partnership between LACOE and Probation would identify providers (Green Dot as well as others), final decisions would be made by the director of educational services, a new position to be created within the Probation Department. The establishment of any charter school in the probation camps requires formal approval either from LACOE or from the state Department of Education.

According to Roger Lowenstein from the Los Angeles Leadership Academy, about 20 percent of youth in the camps have IEPs, a much higher figure than in the population as a whole, and several education models deal with those students successfully. He suggested looking at the concept of charter boarding schools, citing in particular the success of the SEED Academy in Washington DC. The ECC heard a report on SEED from David Brewer, superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District, in April of last year, and ECC staff are continuing to work with Brewer and with Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke on the boarding school concept for foster youth. “One at the camps is a great idea,” Sharon Watson said. “We’d be very supportive.” The Broad Foundation has found that combining group home funding with average daily attendance funds would support operations, Lowenstein said, although some legislative tweaking would also be necessary. Legislation was needed in Washington, DC, as well, Carrie Miller reported, to allow for a separate funding stream for SEED, but California’s educational system is structured differently and changes in the law here could be problematic. SEED remains interested in pursuing its model in Los Angeles, however.

“We all want what’s best for kids, however it’s delivered,” said LACOE’s Pat Levinson, whose Foster Youth Services section works to transition youth back into their community schools on their release from the camps and halls. Average reading and math scores for these teens hover at the fourth- and fifth-grade level, and that issue will not be resolved, she believes, by changing the identity of who delivers services in the camps. “With all good intentions, we’re not meeting the needs of these kids,” she said. “We’re fighting over who’s in charge.” She expressed serious reservations about Probation’s creation of a director of educational services position and its assumption of educational responsibilities. “What’s next,” she asked, “mental health?” Probation and LACOE should instead work together to implement existing protocols, especially with regard to transitioning youth. “This report is more smoke and mirrors than what’s actually needed for children,” Levinson concluded. “I’m very concerned about that.”

Although he and Marv Southard work closely together, Taylor joked that they certainly didn’t want each other’s jobs. “I don’t have a problem working with him, nor paying him money for services my kids need,” Taylor went on. “We’re talking about [Probation’s] being a broker for services, something we can’t do now. We’re stuck with a given service provider. We can’t look at performance outcomes and demand a certain quality of service. If we continue down the road we’re on, we’ll continue to have the same results. We need to change.” In terms of academic scores, Taylor stated that the camps’ Operation READ program can raise student reading levels by as much as two grades, even in the few months during which youth participate.

School districts are required to serve children living within their boundaries, Levinson said, and court schools are the same. Students in camps are a captive audience, undistracted by outside activities or an after-school social life. "But that doesn't mean that every child in camp attends school every day," Levinson said. Some juvenile hall transcripts show a child taking five or six classes with attendance varying from 14 to 20 days in the same period. "Why aren't they in school every day? They're getting a haircut, or they're on KP," she said. "I'm not saying that LACOE should be the ultimate provider of education, but I am concerned that Probation will be making educational decisions. Consider other providers, but not under the aegis of Probation."

Although audience member Candace Kavanagh believes the Probation recommendations will improve academic outcomes for deserving high-risk youth, she cannot endorse Probation's hiring of a director of educational services, who would need to be both highly qualified and highly paid. "Leave education to the certified educators," she urged. "People go to school for many years to learn to educate. This might be a situation where Probation doesn't have to be a point person, and the educators can remain responsible."

Machelle Massey also has concerns about the Probation Department's "wanting to take over," as she phrased it, and defended the education she got while in the juvenile justice system. "I was in and out of Nidorf Hall for three years," she said. "There's lots of bashing going on, and we definitely need change, but I got a better education in juvenile hall than I ever did in LAUSD," primarily because she was forced to be in class every single day. "There was nothing else to do," she said. "There may be other things going on now, but I didn't have that. For most of these kids, a comprehensive high school is a big problem. They need structure and discipline. [In the hall,] you had to be in school. You weren't ditching, you weren't doing all the things kids are doing in regular school. For me, it was the control" that led to success.

Probation and education working together is the main problem now. "Changes aren't being made because we're bickering and fighting," Massey said. In her experience, many of the draft recommendations are already being done, such as the assessments that youth undergo. "Probation may say they can do it better, but I want to see where the money will come from. How will they implement all this and make things better for youth? Bickering back and forth is not helping these kids. We need to help each other change, but I'm opposed to Probation's taking control of the education piece."

In contrast, Heimov views the fact that Probation is now saying that "the buck stops with them" is a positive step in that department's recognition of its responsibility for the whole life of the child. Someone needs to take control, Helen Kleinberg believes, in the same way that parents can with regular schooling. "We're moving to a system where you get a choice as to the type of school to send your child to," she said. "We need to see that those options are available for these kids as well, and get them to where education works for them." Lilian Coral from the Children's Planning Council co-facilitated the ad hoc joint work group with Sharon Watson, and said that its discussions centered less on the Probation Department taking over education than on who would set the standards and hold providers accountable. "It came down to having an objective individual take responsibility for that," she said. "Can education providers be objective enough to set their own standards and hold themselves accountable? That was the big issue."

With any inter-agency conflict, audience member Eugenia Wilson said, “The winner is not the child.” Caregivers need sufficient training and support to handle difficult children, and children need to know what their choices are and how to advocate for themselves. “With all this bickering, the child is losing and the years are passing by,” she added. “They’re aging out, or dead, or in jail. We need to focus on the child and following through on their individual plans.”

Because students’ time in camp is limited, Mickey McKinney from Public Counsel views transitions as key. Youth come from disadvantaged families and communities, and the brunt of the responsibility after their release is borne by parents or service providers, in suitable placements or transitional housing, who may not be educated or savvy enough to navigate a multifaceted, disconnected system. “The community piece is a very important piece of the puzzle,” McKinney said. “I work as an advocate for this population, and I suggest that you partner with advocacy agencies that will go into transitional housing programs to provide training about how to access the services you’re talking about. Twenty percent of these kids have emotional disturbances, and they re-enter the community with no Medi-Cal reinstatement and no access to medication. They can’t be active participants in their own education. Advocacy agencies bear those responsibilities, and a partnership would be nice.” School programs, too, Heimov said, should connect to the programs in the camps, since students are returning to a similar workload in the community.

In wrapping up the general discussion, Huizar noted the differences expressed with regard to the governance piece of Probation’s recommendations, and members considered the possibility of breaking that out of any ECC endorsement of the plan. Carol Clem was one of several members who believe that governance is embedded throughout the recommendations. The Public Defender’s Office has worked on educational issues with clients and as a county agency for over five years, she said, and in direct negotiations with LACOE, “we’ve pushed on points over and over again, and LACOE just pushes back. We’ve filed numerous compliance complaints with the Department of Education, and we’ve never had one deemed ‘unfounded’ by the state. I appreciate that LACOE is upset about this,” Clem said, “but I’m opposed to bifurcating that issue.”

Judge Michael Nash moved that the ECC approve the Probation Department’s education reform recommendations in concept, including the governance piece and the suggestions made during this meeting’s discussion. Aubrey Manuel seconded the motion and it passed on a 15-2 vote. Huizar reminded members that the ECC is one of many bodies providing input on the report, and other opportunities to express opinions still exist.

Public Comment

Monica Enia announced that flyers were available for three programs sponsored by United Friends of the Children:

- ✓ UFC’s summer internship program needs organizations to take interns for eight weeks during the summer, paid or unpaid, to give them a hands-on, meaningful work experience in the field of their choice.
- ✓ High school seniors in foster care may be eligible for \$15,000 in college scholarship funds over five years; in this program, the UFC also provides guidance and support to students to aid their transition into and out of college. The January 31 submission deadline is flexible.

- ✓ UFC's college readiness program is recruiting foster youth in grades seven through nine to receive help with academic planning and exploring college options, as well as enrichment activities, guidance, tutoring, and developmental support services.

Next Meeting

The ECC's next meeting is scheduled for:

Thursday, April 24, 2008

9:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Children's Bureau's Magnolia Place
Hoover and Washington, Los Angeles, California

The meeting was adjourned at 11:42 a.m.