



Education Coordinating Council

October 30, 2008

9:30 a.m.

The California Endowment Center for Healthy Communities
Redwood Room
1000 North Alameda Street, Los Angeles, California

Present:

- Carol Clem
- Renatta Cooper
- Julie Eutsler, representing Howard Sundberg
- René Gonzalez, representing David L. Brewer III
- Leslie Heimov
- José Huizar
- Yvette King-Berg
- Rafael López
- Aubrey Manuel
- Richard Martinez, representing Thelma Meléndez de Santa Ana
- Ted Myers, representing Trish Ploehn
- Judge Michael Nash
- Martha Trevino Powell, representing Nina Sorkin
- Ron Randolph, representing Darline P. Robles
- Bruce Saltzer
- Marvin J. Southard
- Robert Taylor
- Rick Tebbano, representing Christopher Steinhauser
- Jennifer Webb, representing Evelyn V. Martinez

Chair José Huizar brought the meeting to order at 9:45 a.m., asking that ECC members and the audience introduce themselves. He welcomed new member Yvette King-Berg, vice president of the California Charter Schools Association, to her first meeting, and noted that Trish Ploehn was in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, with the Board of Supervisors' children's deputies, reviewing a social services data management system. Darline Robles is in Sacramento.

Update on Early Childhood Education Policy Framework

On behalf of the Policy Roundtable for Child Care, Duane Dennis presented the child care policy framework developed as a result of a March motion by Supervisor Don Knabe and discussed by ECC members in April. The framework is an integrated approach to child care policy that

involves county departments, Los Angeles Universal Preschool, and First 5 LA, and includes a mechanism to explore legislative solutions to the chronic underspending of subsidized child care monies available in Los Angeles County. (In the last three years, over \$160 million in available funding has remained unspent, despite the many children still in need of subsidized child care.) Copies of the document—approved by the Policy Roundtable, the Chief Executive Office, and the county’s children and families’ well-being cluster on October 8—were included in member packets. It should be presented to the Board of Supervisors in November.

The framework will be overseen by Kathy Malaske-Samu from the county’s Office of Child Care, in partnership with other public and private entities. It includes four goals:

- Mobilizing county departments and stakeholders to incorporate access to high-quality child care and development services into services aimed at preventing child abuse and neglect, supporting family self-sufficiency, and promoting school and life success
- Advancing public policies at all levels of government—local, state, and Federal—that ensure that children and their parents receive the child care and development and family support services needed to build strong foundations for healthy, productive lives; and identifying opportunities for Los Angeles County to promote collaboration among service providers and advocate on behalf of needed legislative or regulatory changes
- Facilitating the capacity of child care and development service providers, both publicly and privately funded, to meet the child care and development needs of local families
- Updating the plan every two years, including input from the Policy Roundtable for Child Care, the Child Care Planning Committee, county departments, and community stakeholders

Future goals may include recommendations on countywide mechanisms to effectively integrate local, state, and Federal resources for child care and development services and to assure the maximum utilization of all such resources; and to promote collaborative efforts between child care and development services and school districts on the issue of school readiness.

Consultant Terry Ogawa, ECC’s point person on early childhood issues, emphasized that the proposal’s success will require collaboration from county departments, community partners, and “everyone around the table,” as she put it. “The county doesn’t oversee child care—no entity does,” Ogawa said. “The child care system is convoluted and confusing, which is why a policy framework is needed to bring it all together. It definitely requires a partnership of systems.” She acknowledged Malaske-Samu and her staff for putting together the framework, and Dennis and the Policy Roundtable for their hard work in its refinement.

In response to questions from Helen Kleinberg about how departments would be approached across the county’s new administrative cluster structure, Malaske-Samu explained that she has met with the departments named in the policy framework and obtained commitments from all of them to be part of the process. “We have that buy-in,” she said, “but we’ll need everyone else’s help, too, including other county commissions and committees. I’d like to make a presentation to the county’s Commission for Children and Families, for instance.” The framework will be one of

the first tests of working across clusters, but Malaske-Samu has firm support from the deputy chief executive officer in charge of the children and families' well-being cluster, Miguel Santana, and will work in tandem with the Chief Executive Office and departments. "I'm confident that we can make this happen," Malaske-Samu said.

Rafael López asked who would be responsible for tracking how child care monies are spent, given the large amount that has been returned over the past few years. At present, Malaske-Samu said, the Child Care Planning Committee here in Los Angeles County is the only entity in the state keeping tabs on what is spent and what is returned. Parent fees are of particular interest, since they are deducted from state reimbursements and therefore have an impact on the 'under-earnings' figure. A meeting on November 6 will begin discussing legislative options to correct the underspending problem. Approximately 50,000 children are income-eligible for child care subsidies in the county, and making sure that all of them are served is a priority.

Aubrey Manuel moved that the ECC endorse the child care policy framework as presented, and work with other groups to implement it successfully. Rafael López seconded the motion, and it was approved without objection.

Proposed Options Regarding the ECC's Projected Sunset on June 30, 2009

The ECC was created by the Board of Supervisors in November 2004 to coordinate efforts across organizations and jurisdictions so that the county's most vulnerable children—those served by the Department of Children and Family Services and the Probation Department—would not continue to be left behind academically. It was hoped that the institutional relationships formed during the ECC's five-year existence would prosper after the organization's scheduled sunset date of June 30, 2009.

To date, the organization has accomplished a great deal, completing at least several actions under every recommendation in the Blueprint that was developed during its initial year. It has done this using the somewhat unusual model of a consultant team of experts, hiring no permanent staff.

The ECC is not a fully independent body, functioning as it does under the fiscal umbrella of The Children's Planning Council Foundation, Inc., which also is the entity that contracts with the consultant team. In-kind support from the county and the Children's Planning Council (now The Children's Council of Los Angeles County) has been significant, but the ECC has no permanent funding source, and no financial or consultant commitments exist beyond June 2009.

During conversations about the organization's sunset date at the July meeting, ECC members made it very clear that they wish the ECC to continue and remain quasi-independent if at all possible. They proposed several possible options that staff subsequently discussed with ECC leadership, the Chief Executive Office, Board offices, and other stakeholders. Lead consultant Sharon Watson explained that several alternatives were considered:

- Sunsetting the ECC with the hope that its member institutions would continue the work described in the Blueprint

- Continuing the ECC as a quasi-independent council using a fiscal agent such as The Children's Planning Council Foundation, Inc.
- Becoming a project of another organization
- Becoming a project of the Chief Executive Office

"Some terrific institutional partnerships and relationships have been built," Watson said, "but people feel they're still a little fragile for the long term, and we all know there's lots more work to be done. No one wants us to sunset—the question is what form we should take for the future. Our funding from public and private sources has been almost exactly equal during our tenure, but it's extremely difficult to raise money for systems change across organizations. We may have tapped out our sources. These are hard times for the public sector—cities, school districts, the county—and for the private sector as well. As we consider our ongoing structure, we need to think about what our best chances are for financial support."

The two most viable options that have emerged are:

1. Continuing as a quasi-independent organization under the fiscal umbrella of The Children's Council Foundation, Inc. (the foundation's new name), with funding from county departments and the Board of Supervisors to be determined each year, contingent upon available funds
2. Becoming a project of the Chief Executive Office, through which the county would hire an executive director/point person for the ECC and fund a small consultant team to work with that person to achieve the ECC's goals

"I'm very intrigued by the second option," Watson said. "The county would be taking a gigantic step forward in recognizing the importance of education for the kids under its care, taking responsibility for that, and helping to fund it. That option would clearly institutionalize our work and ensure that it would be sustained." She opened the floor for discussion.

"The ECC has created a unique link between and among systems," Judge Michael Nash said. "I believe it's the best way we've ever had to communicate and coordinate efforts for kids' education in Los Angeles County. But we've just begun to scratch the surface. We still have many different areas we have to tackle, and the most stable source of support for maintaining the organization seems to be from option two. I'm not concerned about anything affecting the independence of this group—I doubt that county funding will prevent anyone in this room from speaking their mind. If it creates the most stable funding source to maintain our collaboration, then option two is the way to go."

Helen Kleinberg expressed concern about how much control the CEO might have over hiring the ECC's executive director. "I don't want us to become just another piece of the county structure with no independence and no control over staff," she said. "Who and how we hire makes a big difference. We've had an excellent consultant team, but without them, it could become difficult. The people in this room might not be stymied from speaking out, but I'm not sure things can get

done unless we have control over the person in charge of the organization. If we do go that route, we need to make some stipulations about that position and about our budget.”

One member of the consultant team has expressed interest in applying for the director position, Watson said, so there could be continuity. Further discussions can address hiring details, although Leslie Heimov agreed that some mechanism for ECC to make recommendations regarding that process is a good idea. Watson herself was hired by a small group who organized the ECC at its inception—including Jed Minoff (at the time with Casey Family Programs), the children’s deputies from the third and fifth supervisorial districts, Kathy House from the CEO’s office, and Miriam Krinsky from the Children’s Law Center—and Watson hired the remainder of the team. Carol Clem suggested using the model of the Countywide Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee, whose board recently selected a new director out of a pool of applicants.

With regard to the organization’s budget, Watson noted that both DCFS and Probation have agreed to continue their funding, a commitment that Chief Robert Taylor reiterated. He also agreed with Judge Nash that option two is the better alternative. “It will require further discussion with the CEO,” he acknowledged, “but the CCJCC model is a good one with regard to staff. The executive director can then bring on whoever is needed, and RFPs could be issued for other work that needs to be done.”

From the audience, Candace Kavanagh suggested tapping corporate funding for private dollars. “I love the work of the ECC,” she said. “It’s a very attractive group for corporations to want to back, and that should be examined.” Marv Southard also mentioned potential funding through partnerships supported under the prevention and early intervention component of the Mental Health Services Act, whose planning process for the county is not yet concluded. “The stakeholder process is such that I can’t predetermine any decisions,” he said, “but I imagine that the stakeholders would support such an option.”

In answer to Rafael López’s inquiry about ECC’s place within the county administrative clusters, Watson said that preliminary discussions have contemplated a dual reporting structure, to both Miguel Santana (head of the children and families’ well-being cluster, where DCFS resides) and Doyle Campbell (head of the public safety cluster, where Probation resides). López cautioned against multiple ‘kings’ with two reporting mechanisms, stating that the ECC should shape decisions about that as well as the executive director position. According to Chair Huizar, the executive director would report directly to the ECC, with departments providing funding but no formal reporting structure. “The idea is to focus on the independence of this group,” Huizar said.

In the short time that deputy director Ted Myers has been with DCFS, he has been very impressed with the ECC’s plans and activities, and with its having the right people at the table. “This is a very effective and necessary body,” he said. “In general, child welfare hasn’t done very well in the education of its kids. We need to continue the ECC’s work, and the primary question is sustainability. This proposal [option two] delivers that. Many quasi-governmental models exist, and all have their pros and cons. Sharing governance and making decisions is always problematic, and Helen’s comments are valid. But I think this is doable, and DCFS wants to support the continuation of the ECC effort.”

Bruce Saltzer agreed with Judge Nash but also shared Kleinberg's concerns. "We should have some accountability to our funders," he said, "but I recommend that the executive director report to the ECC, and that it would be helpful to have the ECC involved in that position's selection. It's a significant detail." Once the group votes on an option, Watson said, updates in January and April will decide the fine points, so that all will be resolved by June.

Aubrey Manuel moved to adopt option two—that the ECC should become a project of the Chief Executive Office, through which the county would hire an executive director/point person for the ECC and fund a small consultant team to work with that person to achieve the ECC's goals. Chief Robert Taylor seconded the motion, and it was approved without objection.

Update on Education Reform at County-Administered Juvenile Halls and Camps

When the topic of education reform at the juvenile halls and camps came up at the ECC's January meeting, Chair José Huizar was particularly interested because of the City of Los Angeles's recent evaluation of its anti-gang programs, and the importance of addressing the re-entry of youth into communities following incarceration. At that time, the ECC approved in concept the recommendations of the county's comprehensive education reform committee, a body created by the Board of Supervisors in June 2007, chaired by Chief Probation Officer Robert Taylor, and involving several members of the ECC in an effort to strengthen education for youth in the probation system. The Board unanimously approved that committee's recommendations on October 14, when Supervisor Don Knabe expressed special appreciation to the ECC and the Children's Planning Council for their work in developing and promoting the final reform report.

Chief Taylor also thanked the ECC for its support of the education reform effort, which, he said, "plowed new ground for these often neglected kids who are castaways from the rest of the system. Rebuilding lives is important work, and the ECC has demonstrated that it cares about that." The ECC staff deserves special recognition, Taylor added, for helping to tease out action plans around the 35 recommendations approved by the Board.

In Los Angeles County, between 3,500 and 3,600 youth are in Probation Department custody at any given time, a number equally spread between the juvenile halls and the probation camps. Youth in the halls are usually awaiting sentencing or trial, and average a stay of between 19 and 21 days. While some return to the community, many move into the county's probation camp system, one of the largest in the United States, for a longer period. (Taylor noted that even with the camp system's failings, youth who leave camp in Los Angeles County are less likely to reoffend than those incarcerated in the state system, by a factor of two to one.)

For many years, education in the probation system has used a cookie-cutter approach, Taylor said, applying the same comprehensive high school model to all youth and yielding outcomes that were neither equal nor fair. With the new reform package, the system now recognizes four educational pathways:

- A high school diploma (passing the California High School Exit Exam, or CAHSEE), an option most appropriate for 17-year-olds with more than 110 high school credits and adequate reading and math skills

- A GED (General Education Development) certificate, for those who don't have the credits but do have the skills to complete basic educational requirements
- Bypassing the traditional high school model to prepare for two- or four-year college, an option most appropriate for very bright students who lack the appropriate credits for graduation
- Career training and vocational education, responding to the desire of a significant number of probation youth to get a job on their release

Taylor expressed appreciation to the Los Angeles County Office of Education for its assistance in developing the groundbreaking memorandum of understanding—the first of its kind in the state, being crafted into legislation for other probation departments with associated education providers—and to Marv Southard from the Department of Mental Health, the county librarian, the public defender, the Chief Executive Officer, and the Children's Planning Council (now The Children's Council). A copy of the Board letter that summarizes all 35 recommendations was included in member packets, and the full report is also available. Strategies for achieving these recommendations through 275 different action steps have been mapped out and assigned to five operational teams, and an implementation report is due to the Board by the middle of December.

About \$621,000 from the Probation budget will fund the recommendations' initial implementation and an education coordinator to work with LACOE and other providers. "We embrace the notion of charter schools and we're opening a dependent charter school with LACOE at Camp Scott/Scudder," Taylor said. "Our vocational education committee is moving along, too, planning programs for these youth while they're with us and also after they transition into the community for more education or an apprenticeship. Some good models are out there." Certain data-sharing is occurring for the first time, he added, and a report card on the reform effort will be issued to the Board of Supervisors. "We'll be happy to come back and share that with you, too," he told the group.

Ron Randolph from LACOE emphasized that his agency's educational programs in the halls and camps emanate from state mandates, which call for the goal of all students attending high school and graduating. However, the distinct motivations on the part of students must also be recognized. Probation and LACOE must agree on goals and deliverables, transcending state mandates into the paradigm shift from incarceration to rehabilitation. "LACOE had to understand that the education piece is a vital component of rehabilitation," Randolph said. "It's not simply a moment in time when kids are in school, but part of a transitional plan to return them to the community and achieve the goal of reducing recidivism. If students know they won't graduate, if they lack the credits or the motivation, they can feel very defeated. We want to give them some hope to carry back into the community, so they feel that yes, they've made some mistakes, but they're not castaways, they're not defeated. To achieve that, we moved into the four pathways, broadening the education delivery system that LACOE currently provides with a multidisciplinary emphasis on identifying kids who fit into each approach."

Certain camps will deliver an emphasis on high school diplomas, for youth with that potential. Camp Routh will serve as a vocational training camp for boys, and Camp Scott/Scudder will house the dependent charter school, with LACOE personnel presenting an innovative curricu-

lum. “We need to keep our eye on the prize,” Randolph said. “We want to see as many kids as we can return to the community having graduated or earned high school credits, if possible moving into apprenticeships, paid apprenticeships, or jobs. Education is important, but the end result is for these kids to get jobs and move on with their lives. We hope these reform recommendations will help them get there, and we’re eager to get started.”

In the ensuing discussion, a representative from Public Counsel asked about links with outside schools, gang prevention agencies, and community-based organizations that might smooth the transition between camp and community. Taylor acknowledged that transition planning can be difficult, especially for youth with mental health issues who need to be in contact with an established provider to continue medication or address other issues. Some school systems—Pomona Unified is an example of a good program—help with that transition, visiting youth prior to their release and assessing them individually to ascertain the best placement for them (not automatically enrolling them in continuation or day school, for example). Probation is working with five other school districts to implement the Pomona model, including Los Angeles Unified, Pasadena Unified, Long Beach Unified, and Compton Unified. If a specific youth is at high risk for returning to gang involvement, his or her case may be managed by Probation’s gang detail or through one of the school-based probation officers located in 125 schools throughout the county. “I’m a big fan of that program,” Taylor said, “because of the daily interaction. The deputy probation officer meets with the parents, arranges parent counseling—all the things that the boys’ vice principal used to do at schools in the old days.”

Norma Sturgis from the Los Angeles Unified School District asked how the good things going on in the camps could continue in the school districts youth go to after their release. “Case planning is critical,” Taylor responded, “and that involves the multidisciplinary teams called for by the recommendations. Mental Health, Probation, and education all have a responsibility to build a case plan and provide services to these youth.” Ron Randolph stressed the individual needs of the student. “Should the youth go back to the school he came from? Was he being successful educationally and socially? What has he learned in camp? What has he achieved, and what does he want to do?” Randolph asked. “The interaction between the case manager, other agencies, and entities that have worked with the student—that influence doesn’t end when the kid leaves the hall or camp. It’s a very important function.”

In Pomona, Richard Martinez said, a Safe Schools–Healthy Students grant has allowed the formation of a student assistance program involving school-based probation officers and a guidance department. One big obstacle to student success, however, occurs when assistant principals who have expelled those students in the past believe they don’t belong back in that school. “That’s a challenge,” Martinez admitted. “But from the board of education down through district leadership to the assistant superintendents, we’re not buying into that mindset of ‘they’re not going to make it.’ From the top down in our district, we want students to have the opportunity for options. Yes, they’ve made mistakes, as Ron said, but they need to be able to come back. There’s been resistance to this, but it’s a directive from the top. Only those who commit a crime on campus will need to attend alternative schools. We have a 29 percent dropout rate in our district. It doesn’t help to say that we don’t want those students back.”

Marv Southard expressed his support for aftercare planning on release, yet knows how difficult it can be. “We’re working to sustain the gains youth experience in camp, but one thing we haven’t figured out yet is how to support kids in remaining substance-free in the community. That’s a gateway for problems and remains an issue for this age group across the board. There’s no magic answer. If youth start to experience complications in their lives, there’s a good chance that relapses will occur. We need to have a way of calmly dealing with that.”

Helen Kleinberg is excited about the progress being made, but has concerns about whether or not youth themselves participate in decisions about their educational pathway. “Are they involved?” she asked. “Can they change plans later? When is the point where they need to decide? Particularly if they have mental health problems and come into placement angry, that’s not always the best time to make lasting decisions. They may start on one pathway and not want to finish. Who helps them understand their options? For instance, I’m hearing that GEDs are not always acceptable to hiring managers. We don’t want to lead them down the wrong path.”

More than one-third of youth in the system have mental health issues, Taylor said, and need an Individualized Education Plan or an independent living plan. That continues to be a concern both at the camps and during release transitions. Assessments made by the multidisciplinary team—not only initially, but at various points leading up to release—are critical components in the evolution of a case plan. “Most folks involved in the system for a while know that people and times change,” he said. “Snapshots taken at different points will see a different person. For example, we now consider the new category of ‘transitioning adults,’ from ages 18 to 25, in acknowledgement of the fact that maturation seems to occur later today than in past years. A sixteen- or seventeen-year-old may have a different mindset than an older youth, and that mindset will change depending on their experiences. Sometimes assumptions get reversed and there are changes in plan. We need to take care of these students’ needs with individualized case planning, not relying on that cookie-cutter approach.”

Although Renatta Cooper agreed that the overall reform plan was a good one, she expressed concerns about the appropriate developmental receptivity of youth, depending on when they are approached. “The system needs to be receptive to moving them, perhaps even changing a placement based on the identification of educational or vocational goals,” she said. “That will be key. Adolescents change their minds, and it’s perfectly appropriate developmentally for them to do so. They need to have the focus necessary to make the most of these opportunities when they are offered them, and that may not be right when they enter the system. Someone needs to have the trust of the child and enough knowledge about him or her to know when the best time is to approach them about these choices. We need to keep that in mind.”

Families can feel overwhelmed by a multidisciplinary team of experts, Kleinberg said. “Where is the educational advocate for the child?” she asked. “Who lays out the program? Even kids with mental health issues are capable of learning.” Janeen Steel is training deputy probation officers to involve the child and the parents directly, Taylor said, particularly with regard to dealing with parents and the rights of special-needs children. Sometimes, though, it isn’t easy. “Just yesterday,” he said, “a kid was injured during a football game at camp. We tried to reach the parent, but the contact phone number was no good and the address was no good. Sometimes these kids are throwaways. They have lots of needs, and we’re focusing on that.” The role of the educator

and the court-appointed holder of education rights in advocating for the child is vital, Randolph commented. The potential of the multidisciplinary team is achieved only with those individuals taking responsibility for identifying the best program for the particular youth.

Stacey Savelle asked if academic or relationship mentors who visit youth in camp ever transition with them to their homes or community placements. In the camps' Operation READ program, for example, volunteers work with students to raise their reading levels, often by two grade levels within six months. Those specific volunteers don't accompany youth into the community, Taylor said, but those with other mentoring programs can and do.

Bruce Saltzer praised Taylor's leadership on the reform effort and asked about resources that may still be needed, given the small amount of money available from the Probation budget. "How can you implement these recommendations without any funding?" he asked. "Some after-care resources exists, but what about working with families to support their child's transition?" Right now, Taylor admitted, the \$621,000 is coming from "the right pocket to the left pocket" to pay for the education resource person and two support staff, along with two outside contractors for a year's help with implementation. "As action plans develop, they may translate into costs," he said. "LACOE has expressed concerns about the financial burden, especially since implementation has not yet begun with community school partners. We have some program funds that can be used for mental health and various kinds of family therapy. The courts are also an integral part of this. If we go to a judge with recommendations, that judge will want to know our plan for a youth who is with us for three months. How is he doing as he goes through camp? What milestones is he experiencing? They want a report before releasing him into the community, to make sure that it safe to do so and that he's unlikely to reoffend."

Judge Nash echoed others' kudos to Taylor for what Nash termed an excellent plan. "If it gets implemented," he said, "we'll be far better off than we were before. If we need to adjust, I'm sure that can be done. We can't underestimate the value of multidisciplinary assessments for kids coming into camp, and the subsequent individualized case plans. They'll be reported to the court as soon as they are created, and the child's attorney will review them. The court and the attorneys need to do a better job of looking at these plans, advocating for them, and overseeing them. But we'll be eons ahead of where we are today. This is an extremely significant plan." (No court-appointed special advocates, or CASAs, exist in delinquency court, although Aubrey Manuel believes they would be very valuable.)

An audience member suggested identifying community-based and faith-based organizations that can help during youths' transition into the community. "Programs exist that can keep them active, that can keep them out of gangs, and we're ready and willing to accept them. But you need to reach out to us and find us. We need to build those resources together to help these kids." Candace Kavanagh offered data from a Massachusetts study three years ago on investing in pre-release planning as a mechanism for reducing recidivism, stating that it might increase buy-in from students and support personnel alike.

Tanya Walters, a Los Angeles Unified bus driver who takes students across the country for enrichment opportunities, spoke from the audience. "I have a community-based organization, a faith-based organization. I've been driving these kids for twenty years and I hear the scoop

directly from them—the C, D, and F students. It takes me and my team of bus drivers six months to a year to change the mindsets of these kids so they come up to earning As and Bs. It takes a community, and I'm more than willing to collaborate with people. I challenge these kids. I tell them, if you're willing to make a difference, if you're willing to change, approach me with an essay. They're writing essays for me in ten minutes. I'm challenging the organizations here in this room and I'm challenging the ECC. You have a team of drivers who see these kids every day, and we need your support. I see the kids in kinship care, the ones that don't want to be in a gang but do it simply to survive. Their teachers aren't there all the time. They want to do better, but they have no parents. Eleven cities from across the country are calling me now. I need everybody's help. I'm available, I have the bus. I'm changing kids' lives, one busload at a time."

Member/Staff Updates

- Leslie Heimov reviewed a program developed by the Children's Law Center to provide homework and study help to young people during the time they spend at the courthouse awaiting court appearances. The pilot, which uses Cal State Los Angeles students as tutors, began three weeks ago and will be expanded as soon as is feasible.
- Ted Myers provided an update on the Title IV-E capped allocation demonstration project, also known as the Title IV-E waiver, that is governed by memoranda of understanding between DCFS, Probation, and the state, and between the state and the Federal government. The goal of the waiver is to improve an array of services to children and families, giving participating counties (in California, only Los Angeles and Alameda) more flexibility in reinvesting funds into community-based prevention and early intervention services.

Since the waiver began, DCFS has increased reunification rates for children in out-of-home care by 1.5 percent and decreased the rate of re-entry into out-of-home care by 2.9 percent. The median time for a finalized adoption has dropped by 3.5 percent to 32.4 months, and an increased access to permanency means that the number of children in care for 24 months or more has dropped by 14.2 percent. About 17,200 children are currently in out-of-home care—down substantially from 50,000 in 1998—and that number continues to drop, thus driving more resources that can be reinvested. In 2007–2008, the waiver's first year, child welfare reinvestments have totaled \$28.9 million, a figure that is expected to decline to perhaps \$10.6 million in the second year. Approximately \$49.2 million in total reinvestments are expected over the waiver's five-year period.

During these difficult financial times, Chief Taylor said, the waiver's reinvestment funds are critical to continuing promising programs and activities. "The first hit for Probation's budget was \$12 million at the beginning of the fiscal year," he said, "and conversations in Sacramento about reducing crime prevention dollars may mean even more cuts." The waiver is allowing the continuation of evidence-based practices such as several family therapy models and the nurse partnership program, which helps at-risk children prenatally.

- René Gonzalez announced that the Los Angeles Unified School District has received a \$2.2 million Safe Schools–Healthy Students grant for a collaboration between the district and the departments of Mental Health, Probation, and Children and Family Services in the George Washington Preparatory High School neighborhood, including its feeder schools at the ele-

mentary and middle levels. The grant-application process received leadership and support from Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke and her staff, and LAUSD is one of only a few districts in California to be awarded these funds. Gonzalez said the grant would provide opportunities to create an infrastructure to strengthen the collaborations already in place in the Washington Prep neighborhood and identify new ones; one focus will be on the high percentage of foster and probation youth there, plus the successful transition of probation students back into the community.

- Yvette King-Berg expressed her excitement about the involvement of charter schools with the ECC and the collaboration with Probation, LACOE, and others to serve the needs of students, especially those transitioning back into regular school who need services wrapped around them.
- Marv Southard announced that on November 7, delegates involved in planning for the prevention and early intervention component of the Mental Health Services Act will discuss the Early Start program—including \$3 million to prevent or intervene in school violence and \$40 million statewide to provide technical assistance to school districts, community colleges, and universities to respond to school violence—and the best use of local dollars to prepare entities to compete successfully for those funds.
- Carrie Miller called members' attention to materials in their packets, including an assessment form from the Pomona and Montebello school districts' pilot demonstration project. She also announced the second annual countywide Resource Fair, which has been scheduled for June 22, 2009, at The California Endowment. A flyer was included in member packets.
- Jenny Serrano from the Chief Executive Office announced a Request for Application to participate in the three-year Education for Homeless Children and Youth Grant Program sponsored by the California Department of Education, due on March 20, 2009. Further information was included in member packets.

Public Comment

- Jenny Vinopaul from the California State University system brought flyers and postcards about innovations in the College Pathways program, which supports foster youth going to college in the CSU system and at 110 community colleges. Resources are available for caregivers, educators, and policy-makers to ensure that foster youth beginning in seventh grade are aware of the A-G course requirements necessary for admission to the CSU and University of California systems.
- Jacque Lindeman from the California Youth Connection announced a community dinner in November to both share the results of more than 200 youth interviews performed to determine what resources youth were aware of, and to discuss recommendations to increase publicity about existing programs and opportunities. "This will be a chance for everyone to ask questions of the youth themselves," she said. "If you haven't received an invitation yet, please see me and I'll make sure you're on the list."
- Cheryl Darden from Los Angeles Universal Preschool expressed appreciation to the ECC for stressing the importance of early childhood issues within the broader picture of educational

success for children in foster care, in particular thanking DCFS and ECC consultant Terry Ogawa for help with the foster care initiative. LAUP is currently working on an outreach campaign to increase the participation of young children in high-quality preschool programs, and Darden would be happy to work with agencies to get the word out. Postcards and posters are available in English and Spanish, and she would appreciate any suggestions for distributing those materials and getting them into the hands of resource families. She can be reached at (213) 416-1934 or at CDarden@laup.net.

Next Meeting

The ECC's next meeting is scheduled for:

Thursday, January 29, 2009
9:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Location to be announced

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.