



## **Education Coordinating Council**

**July 31, 2008**

**9:30 a.m.**

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

Present: Yolie Flores Aguilar  
Berisha Black  
Ivy Carey, representing Leslie Heimov  
Olive Celis, representing Marvin J. Southard  
Carol Clem  
Renatta Cooper  
Liz Diaz, representing Rafael López  
Julie Eutsler, representing Howard Sundberg  
René Gonzalez, representing David L. Brewer III  
Peter Hidalgo, representing José Huizar  
Machelle Massey  
Trish Ploehn  
Ron Randolph, representing Darline P. Robles  
Bruce Saltzer  
Nina Sorkin  
Robert Taylor  
Jennifer Webb, representing Evelyn V. Martinez

Guest: Helen Berberian, Fifth Supervisorial District

In the absence of Chair José Huizar, Vice Chair Berisha Black brought the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m., asking that ECC members and the audience introduce themselves. She noted that Huizar was attending to a family matter, and Vice Chair Michael Nash was at a national conference of juvenile court judges.

- Black introduced ECC summer intern Gail Yen, a former foster youth reunited with her family two years ago and entering her senior year of high school in September, with excellent grades and plans to go on to a four-year college. The ECC hopes Yen will have a positive experience working in the ECC office and that the organization will also learn a lot from her.

- Caprice Young, president and chief executive officer of the California Charter School Association, has joined the ECC as a new member and plans to attend the October 30 meeting.
- Black announced that today is her last day with the Department of Children and Family Services ombudsman's office, and she will join Casey Family Programs on Monday as a constituency engagement liaison, working with youth and parents. She will continue to serve as ECC's vice chair.
- Lead consultant Sharon Watson has accepted the position of interim director of the Children's Planning Council for the next year or two, intending to spend three-quarters of her time with that organization and one-quarter with the ECC through its sunset in June 2009. "The Children's Planning Council was a wonderful innovation in 1992," said Watson, the Council's founding executive director. "Because of the work it's done, a lot of changes have had a positive effect on children and families since then, especially in terms of collaboration and data collection. The idea now is to reinvent the Council to be what it should be for 2008 and beyond. At the end of my interim appointment, we'll be searching for a permanent director who can continue to make things happen." She will start at the Children's Planning Council in mid-August.

### **School Superintendents' Meeting Report**

Ron Randolph, assistant to Los Angeles County Office of Education Superintendent Darline Robles, updated members on the June 18 school superintendents' dialogue, part of a series of twice-yearly meetings that ensure that school districts, county departments, and the courts are all in synch with regard to serving foster and probation youth. Minutes of the June meeting were included in member packets.

- The **exchange of information** between and among school districts, social agencies, and the courts continues to encounter difficulties, but Judge Nash—who chairs the superintendents' dialogues and has taken on the mantle of leadership with regard to coordinating the work of school districts and the courts—is determined that the process will become more effective.
- One troublesome issue for schools is knowing the identity of a foster or probation youth's **holder of educational rights**, the individual ordered by the court to authorize activities and documents on the student's behalf. Nash has instituted new protocols requiring the name and contact information for this person to appear on every minute order issued. Randolph believes this will make a big difference for school districts, helping them to work better with these youth, and Ivy Carey said that court clerks will be hand-entering this data until the court's information technology section adds the appropriate screen to its electronic system.
- As of January 1, 2009, juvenile court judges have agreed to order a **minimum stay** of five months for youth adjudicated to the probation camps. Especially in the field of education, where most students enter at a low achievement level, a shorter stay does not allow enough time to turn lives around. (The minimum stay does not apply to the juvenile halls, where youth stay temporarily until more permanent placements are decided on.) Nash has also assured everyone that minimum-stay requirements will be implemented only when the probation camp redesign has made appropriate services available for these youth.

- Nash is working with DCFS on protocols for **placement moves** that occur between court hearings, making sure the educational needs of the youth involved are addressed.
- In April, 36 education liaisons, teachers, and other school district representatives participated in a full-day **visit to the dependency court** to get a better idea of what happens there, the multitude of agencies involved, and the complexity of many proceedings. More visits are planned for superintendents and their delegates.

### **ECC Resource Fair Report**

After youth development program coordinator Michelle Barritt's presentation last year, ECC members talked about improving youth access to after-school and summer programs, and the youth development work group proposed a resource fair to bring people offering resources for foster and probation youth together with youth, their caregivers, and their caseworkers.

Following months of hard work, the Resource Fair took place on June 25 and was a huge success. It was attended by between 750 and 800 people, including 350 youth, and featured exhibitors in areas such as after-school programs, tutoring, mentoring, school and arts programs, community services, early childhood education, legal services, libraries, and college readiness. The California Endowment allowed the ECC the use of its entire facility, and the list of major monetary donors included José Huizar, who led off with a major gift, the Looker Foundation, supervisors Gloria Molina and Mike Antonovich, and the Association of Community Human Service Agencies. Sharon Watson also acknowledged the 50 or 60 volunteers from partner organizations like DCFS and Casey Family Programs who played an important role in the Fair's smooth operation. The event received much positive feedback, especially in the media, with articles in English in the *Daily News* and in Spanish in *La Opinión*, and a piece on Channel 54. (A program, a list of donors, and copies of media pieces were included in member packets.)

As much interest and learning was generated between exhibitors as with the youth and caregivers, Watson remarked. "We had different rooms with different themes—mental health, legal services, and so on," she noted, "and the exhibitors within those rooms were meeting each other for the first time, learning about resources."

Bruce Saltzer, who attended the Fair, sees it as an example of why the ECC is so successful under Watson's leadership. "We talk about goals and impact all the time," he said, "and we had that presentation a year ago talking about the different things going on in the county, and how ECC could enhance them. From that came the work group, which stressed the critical concept of information-sharing—but we also realized that no vehicle existed to share this kind of material. The Fair was extremely exciting, and we hope next year's event will be even bigger." He acknowledged and thanked Watson, Barritt, and program director Carrie Miller, and Berisha Black echoed his thanks to those involved in the event. "There should be many more to come," she said. "That was my first thought as well. We hope it continues to grow each year."

Nina Sorkin commented that she had spoken with one parent who came primarily to seek resources for a child entering middle school, but also brought three younger children aged eight months to four years. "She felt she was welcome and the kids were welcome," Sorkin said. "It wasn't just for young people finding out about education—it was a very family-oriented event."

## **Data and Information-Sharing Report**

In ECC's Blueprint, members agreed that data and information-sharing issues are the biggest barriers to helping foster and probation youth succeed in school. Without knowing what each agency does and coordinating their efforts, nothing really works. "We're chipping away at that problem," Sharon Watson said. "There isn't one large solution, but many small ones." The report on the ECC's approach to these issues began with the three data matches completed over the last six months; copies were included in member packets. Carrie Miller expressed appreciation to the county departments, school districts, and data analysts who worked on them.

- The **Long Beach Unified School District** has the second-highest population (after Los Angeles Unified) of foster and probation youth of any district studied so far, with 746 DCFS students and 621 Probation students. Consistent with other studies, the majority are enrolled at the elementary level, with an equal split of the balance between middle and high school. The highest number are in eighth grade, making them slightly younger than is typical. The percentage of African-American students is twice as high as in the general population, while the percentage of Latino youth is slightly lower, but still on the high side—to be expected, Miller said, with the overall demographics of youth in care.

The percentage of students enrolled in special education is consistent with other districts studied—21 percent of DCFS students and 20 percent of Probation students—but the percentage of students identified by the district as gifted and talented is slightly higher—29 DCFS students and 25 Probation students. "That's a large enough number to really pay attention to," Miller said. "We want those kids to sustain those high levels of achievement."

In middle and high school, standardized test scores are roughly consistent with other districts. Although system youth still perform at lower levels in Long Beach, their achievement mirrors the pattern of the general population, without the declines found in other districts; probation youth also perform at a higher level than elsewhere. Math scores for probation students are consistent with the trend of the general population, though DCFS student scores drop off. Sixty percent of system youth passed the high school exit exam, compared to 80 percent of the general population. "It's not what we want to see," Miller said, "but it's not as bad as some have speculated." In terms of attendance, DCFS students are absent from Long Beach schools an average of 12 days per year, and Probation students an average of 17 days.

- About 1 percent of students in the **Montebello Unified School District** have active cases with DCFS (320 students) and Probation (125 students), which is consistent with other studies. The majority are Latino, evenly distributed among those speaking English only, those learning English, and those fluent in English. (Other districts' foster and probation students primarily speak only English.) Most Probation students are in high school, but the number of DCFS students in high school is significantly lower than in other districts.

Montebello has the single lowest percentage of DCFS students enrolled in special education—2.5 percent—of any district studied thus far, and Probation's 7.1 percent is also lower than usual, close to the 8.7 percent of the general population. (System students may be under-represented because they are not being properly identified, or programs may exist that deal with students differently; a pilot project that appears later on the agenda will explore this dis-

crepancy. Andrea Zetlin also noted that the high numbers of English-language learners may delay special education assessments, as the district may choose to address language issues first.) Also unusual is the fact that more DCFS students are identified as gifted and talented—3.4 percent—than are enrolled in special education. According to Zetlin, Montebello has for many years had a very strong orientation toward gifted and talented students.

In English-language arts testing, Probation students scored higher than DCFS students, which is unusual, and middle school test scores for both DCFS and Probation students did not lag far behind those of the general population. For Probation students, however, the transition from middle to high school proved a rocky one. In English-language arts, 22.2 percent of Probation middle-school students scored as proficient or advanced (compared to 29.8 percent in the general population), but in high school, that plummeted to 1.4 percent. Math scores were similar, dropping from 33.3 percent in middle school (higher than general population's 28.8 percent) to 3.6 percent in high school. With DCFS students, on the other hand, English-language arts scores improved from middle to high school. "What's working there that's not happening for probation kids?" Miller asked.

Another finding of interest is the disconnect between standardized testing scores and passing rates for the high school exit exam. Although Montebello's system youth overall have the lowest rate of proficiency in math testing of any district studied, its DCFS students have the highest rate of passing the math portion of the exit exam—73 percent, very close to that of the general population. "Something's happening there," Miller commented, "and we're thrilled we'll have a pilot site to find out what that is."

- The 2008 data match with the **Los Angeles Unified School District** found 8,300 DCFS students and 2,900 Probation students, the highest number of youth ever identified by LAUSD. A comparison of the 2008 data match with that done two years previously found that suspension rates for Probation youth had dropped by nearly half—from 77.8 percent in 2006 to 48.9 percent in 2008—and that DCFS suspension rates were consistent with that. The average days of suspension decreased as well, from 2.7 in 2006 to 1.8 in 2008. During those two years, standardized test scores in both English and math improved by 4 to 6 percent for elementary and high school students, with middle school students scoring only slightly lower in 2008. "These changes aren't huge," Miller said, "but on the whole they're moving in the right direction. A new agreement between DCFS and LAUSD allows for sharing data three times a year, which helps to identify kids early on and target them for services. Something's starting to work, and it's very encouraging."
- A **trend analysis** of the five data matches performed so far shows few differences in DCFS and Probation student performance that can be ascribed to the size of the district in which youth are enrolled, its bureaucracy, its location, or whether students attend big schools or small schools. In general, foster and probation youth perform consistently across districts that differ widely in their make-up. "There's something else going on," Miller said. "We've got some exciting partnerships with school districts now and we want to keep that up, taking it to the next level to help these kids succeed in school."

- Supervisor Gloria Molina of the First Supervisorial District is building on her recent education project with the Montebello school district and has formed a partnership with the ECC, DCFS, and the county's Chief Executive Office to develop two **pilot projects** for foster youth in DCFS's Belvedere and Pomona regional offices, working with Montebello Unified and Pomona Unified, respectively. The three components of the pilot are:
  - ① Creating a mechanism for electronically sharing education records and student information between DCFS offices and school districts
  - ① A comprehensive assessment tool for foster youth that will help develop specialized education plans based on individual student needs and strengths, following up on the implementation of these plans with a team approach involving school personnel, social workers, DCFS education consultants, caregivers, and the youth themselves
  - ① Educating caregivers and caseworkers on how to activate available services and supports within the youth's school district and community

Student evaluations using the newly designed assessment form begin on August 11. If the process succeeds during its pilot year, the goal is to roll out the model countywide.

- In another achievement on the data-sharing front, Miller announced that the Los Angeles Unified School District's board recently voted to add DCFS, the Department of Mental Health, and Probation to the **LAUSD directory information** list. The directory, which is distributed at the beginning of each school year, contains specific information on students (unless their parents opt out) that can now be shared with those departments, enabling them to work with the district to identify students and make sure their needs are met. The school board's vote was seven to zero to make the change, said Yolie Flores Aguilar, who characterized the move as "a glimmer of progress" in terms of data-sharing. "We want to be much more intentional about what these kids need and how we can better integrate and collaborate," she said. "We have a real window of opportunity now, with the attention that the ECC has brought to the issue." Miller hopes that other districts will follow LAUSD's lead with their own directories, and is happy to provide any assistance necessary.
- Member packets include maps and detailed information on the **LAUSD early childhood education programs** in SPAs 2, 4, 5, and 6, created for the first time from LAUSD data and broken out by program type.
- A new generation of the state-required Child Welfare Services/Case Management System, or **CWS/CMS**, is being designed to be Internet-based, have two-way sharing capabilities with other systems, and include fields for educational and other data to be tracked by DCFS. Best of all, an authorized CWS/CMS revision will skirt the confidentiality roadblocks thrown up by the Federal governing body of the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems (SACWIS). The redesign will not be finished for several years yet, but Miller said she was "encouraged and hopeful" about its progress.
- Miller and others are working with the American Bar Association on changes to the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (**FERPA**) so information on foster and probation youth



can be more widely shared. “If that comes through within the next few months,” Miller said, “it’ll change the whole conversation with regard to confidentiality. We’ll keep you posted.”

- Several organizations are looking into **state legislation** to help with data-sharing, working toward a universal database so that information can flow freely between school districts and county departments. “We have a lot of kernels in the popper,” Miller said, “and if any one of them happens, we’ll be able to share data the way we want to in the near future.”

Following Miller’s presentation, Bruce Saltzer asked about the small percentage of special education students among the Montebello foster and probation population, asking that the pilot project there look at whether students are being properly tested and declared eligible for services. Test scores in Montebello are similar to those elsewhere, Miller said, even in districts where as many as 25 percent of system youth are identified as special education students. In response to a question regarding the rate of individualized education plans, or IEPs, in the Montebello district, Miller explained that data matches examine only data elements in student files; they do not count the overall number of assessments a district makes to determine whether or not students receive IEPs or are assigned to special education classes. The pilot project, however, can look at those broader statistics. (Nina Sorkin relayed complaints she has heard from parents about the time frame for an IEP evaluation, which school districts maintain is 60 school days from a request, not 60 calendar days.)

Machelle Massey urged the gathering of information on how test scores differ between youth who are stable for at least a year and those who move from placement to placement and school to school. Miller said that confidentiality issues often make it difficult to obtain that data, but the pilot project’s assessment tool deliberately tracks the numbers of placements and schools that individual students have experienced, and Miller hopes some conclusions can be extracted from that. One research study, she said, has found that school stability may be even more important than placement stability with regard to educational achievement. Helen Kleinberg also stressed the importance of looking at students’ emotional support system and the engagement of their caregivers, and Miller said questions in those areas make up another section of the assessment form. Martha Trevino Powell praised efforts to build the awareness of school principals about the foster and probation youth in their schools, so they might be more intent on meeting those students’ needs. “Part of what we’re seeing,” Chief Robert Taylor added, “is the coalescing of strategies, of lessons learned, in developing organizational models for positive results. I’d also like to study the significance of probation officers at school sites, working with families.”

Jacquelyn McCroskey commended René Gonzalez at LAUSD and the partnership between his staff, which provides individual supports for youth, and the district’s research staff, including Esther Wong, in performing LAUSD’s second data match. “When we do this work over time,” McCroskey said, “we see different things. The partnership between the program and data folks really makes a difference in the lives of these kids, and we’re starting to make progress. I hope many more school districts will head in this direction.” Gonzalez expressed his appreciation to the ECC for brokering relationships with different agencies. “We want to make sure we keep those relationships going,” he said. “We don’t want to rely on the ECC to maintain them, but to make sure that strong relationships between agencies continue to happen. That’s my fear about phasing ECC out.”

## **ECC Sunset**

The ECC is scheduled to sunset in June 2009 after five years of operation, and Berisha Black framed today's discussion as not intended to make decisions about any possible request to continue, but to provide feedback on options to consider as ECC members and staff meet with the Board of Supervisors and their deputies to talk about the future.

Sharon Watson outlined a brief history of the ECC, which she joined in July 2004 as a consultant. Her task was to interview stakeholders for input that would help define the work of the new organization and its initial structure and membership. The Board of Supervisors then created the ECC in November 2004, and its first meeting was held in January 2005. The organization's plan was to take a year to develop a Blueprint for raising the educational achievement of foster and probation youth, then spend the next three years implementing that plan, coordinating efforts across organizations and jurisdictions and encouraging people to work together to expand best practices and fill gaps in communities so that children are not left behind. Many hoped the Blueprint concepts and the resulting institutional relationships would continue whether the ECC existed or not. Since 2005, the organization has accomplished a great deal in terms of helping to broker, build, and nurture relationships among county departments, school districts, advocates, youth, and their caregivers, and has completed several actions under every Blueprint recommendation. The ECC has never hired staff, instead pulling together an outstanding team of consultants, and its fundraising efforts have all been targeted for the proposed sunset date of June 30, 2009. No financial or consultant-team commitments exist beyond that date.

Consultant Cecilia Sandoval facilitated the discussion, noting that formal recommendations would be presented at the ECC's October meeting. "In the meantime," she asked, "what points should ECC leadership raise with the Board offices? Do we believe the organization has sufficiently raised awareness around the importance of education for this population? Have we created relationships that will continue the implementation of the Blueprint? Should ECC sunset in less than a year, as planned? Should it continue?"

Black expressed her concern about how stable interactions would be without ECC's involvement. "I wish we were able to see these relationships stronger at this point," she said. "They're vital to the work." Nina Sorkin agreed, remarking that most relationships have been truly functional for only the past year or so. "It's premature to think that they'll be sustained without some leadership," she said. Trish Ploehn, who as director of DCFS is quite familiar with the daunting bureaucracy that makes up Los Angeles County government, believes that five years is a very short time, especially in terms of building relationships, in many instances, from scratch. "Five years isn't sufficient to have something developed and stabilized enough for it to survive on its own," she said. "Looking at what we've accomplished and what we still need to do—we've come a long way, but a centralized agency is still needed to maintain our progress."

"In government," Bruce Saltzer said, "it's not just about starting the job, but about finishing it. Raising awareness and creating relationships is only the beginning. Without an agency overseeing things, without staff, things can easily evaporate. We need to consider not only the nuts and bolts of the Blueprint and what's left to be done, but the general follow-up." A centralized body could be smaller than the current ECC, he acknowledged, "but visibility helps, especially in



sharing information. We want to make sure we're all doing as good a job as possible, and all these players make a significant contribution to that."

"You can put the seed in the ground," Chief Robert Taylor said about relationships, "but you also have to water it and nurture it. The sustainability of our efforts is critical, so that we look at where we are and where we want to be, and make the appropriate adjustments. We can't just walk away without developing a transition plan for what will replace the ECC and how it will roll out. Should it be a smaller version of the ECC? What kind of organization can ensure sustainability?" Olive Celis, attending her first meeting on behalf of Department of Mental Health director Marv Southard, said that she'd listened to all the data reports with interest. "We know where the students are, but now what?" she asked. "It's our responsibility to follow up and ensure that we make a difference for them."

Sorkin sees another core piece as well. "At every ECC meeting, members of the public come who are interested in these issues," she said. "Their voices need to be heard, too. We at the table have a vested interest in preserving the organizations we represent, but the public needs to have its concerns heard on education issues as well, and provides a different perspective."

Because organizations like the ECC are not being replicated anywhere else in the country, Zoe Corwin said that when she presents at national conferences, "I can't stop bragging about the efforts in this room. I think it would be a very interesting selling point to the Board of Supervisors to see how the ECC could be a model for other cities, counties, and states. This is a neutral playing ground, and I'm not sure how things would continue without it. It's like planning a party—if you get on the phone only with the DJ and the decorator, you won't have any food. Without everyone sitting at this table, big chunks of important services will be overlooked." Helen Kleinberg echoed Corwin's comments. "I can't think of anything that would function as effectively as this has," she said. "And though you guys have done a great job, there's a long list of things that haven't been touched yet—prevention, truancy, vast issues like that. Kudos to those who have done the work, but we're nowhere near putting an end to this."

Candace Kavanagh suggested proposing that the Board of Supervisors be asked to give the ECC half its budget, with the proviso that it be matched with private funds. As a national leader in this field, the ECC could spark the interest of both corporations and foundations, she believes. "We aren't done," Kavanagh said. "We can't stop now."

Sandoval solicited suggestions about structure, reminding the group that the ECC has no staff, only a group of consultants working under Watson's leadership. If the organization continues, is that the right structure to complete the work? Should the ECC become a project of the Children's Planning Council, move under another fiscal agent, or perhaps become its own independent nonprofit?

Taylor sees these questions as part of a transition discussion. If the ECC were made part of the Children's Planning Council—also a Board-created public/private partnership—would the CPC hire a staff member to coordinate ECC activities? Would an independent director be in charge? Staff and contract arrangements would be needed for the strategic planning efforts necessary to maintain and revise the ECC vision, especially around creating high-quality data services.

Saltzer would be reluctant to change the current ECC staffing structure, although he acknowledged that who the specific consultants are makes all the difference, and he would bow to their expertise. No commitment exists from the current team to continue, Sandoval reminded the group. “That doesn’t mean they won’t,” she cautioned, “but don’t take it as a given.”

In answer to an inquiry from Mabelle Massey, Watson reviewed details of the ECC budget. In-kind support from Los Angeles County is significant, including office space, computers, phones, meeting rooms, parking, and so on. The Children’s Planning Council, too, provides in-kind support by serving as ECC’s fiscal agent at no charge, keeping the books, cutting checks, and making formal contracting arrangements with the eight-member consultant team. “We haven’t had to spend money on anything other than staff and some minor expenses, which might increase a little in the future,” Watson said. “Even for printing the Resource Fair programs and other things, we raised specific private dollars.”

Costs during the first few years were less than they are now, during the Blueprint’s full implementation phase, Watson said, but the annual budget over the ECC’s five years has averaged between \$300,000 and \$350,000. With regard to public support, the organization has received approximately \$170,000 per year from the county, including the Board of Supervisors, DCFS, Probation—each department contributes \$50,000—and the Interagency Operations Group. In terms of private funding, Watson has raised about \$140,000 per year—\$450,000 from the W.M. Keck Foundation, \$160,000 from Casey Family Programs (during the ECC’s first two years), \$75,000 from the California Community Foundation, and a little bit from other sources. “If we’re going to become a permanent body,” Watson said, “we’ll have to work hard at this. We’ll need a permanent funding source—about \$300,000 to \$350,000 a year.”

In answer to Saltzer’s question about a possible ECC move to the Children’s Planning Council and how it would play out with that organization’s future, Watson replied that ECC’s becoming a strong program under the CPC umbrella might work well. For one thing, it would switch fundraising responsibilities to CPC, although foundations and others could still request that their contributions go to the ECC, and negotiations would need to confirm that current county contributions to the ECC would continue through the CPC. In terms of membership, Watson recalled that José Huizar originally chaired the ECC as the president of the LAUSD school board. “When he moved to the Los Angeles City Council, we saw the value of a stronger partnership with the city,” Watson said, “and he was such an effective chair. We’d have to see how similar situations fit in—for instance, Judge Nash is already a CPC member. There would be some positives to the move, but we’d have to make sure we stayed independent.” One idea for the Children’s Planning Council that Watson has been contemplating is the creation of roundtables around each of the five outcomes areas for children—good health, safety and survival, economic well-being, emotional and social well-being, and achievement and workforce readiness. “If that happens, the ECC would fit beautifully into the achievement and workforce readiness slot,” Watson noted.

Kavanagh agreed that much of the ECC’s current power stems from its ‘one person, one vote’ structure. “Everyone’s on neutral territory at the ECC, even the county. If we take it under anyone else, would we keep that neutrality?” René Gonzalez, too, likes the concept of independence. “One value of the consultant group is that you can push the envelope. In data-sharing in particular, some organizations may have started out by saying ‘No, you can’t do that,’ but you didn’t

take no for an answer. You stuck with it and figured out a way. Only a neutral, independent party can do that. If you become part of an organization, there's always the threat that you might fall under more institutional constraints. That's why I'd promote the idea of a public/private partnership, or even an independent nonprofit organization."

Helen Kleinberg suggested putting together a transition group to look at all the options, researching especially the efforts of organizations such as Casey Family Programs in education. "We should see if there's a way to join each others' parties," she said. "I don't think anybody wants to see the ECC go away."

"If it's not broken, don't fix it—that's the gist of what I'm hearing," Sandoval concluded. "I'm also hearing a recommendation that a small group look at various options and consider the financing and type of structure required to continue with a consultant staff. All that needs to be part of the conversation with the Board offices."

### **Announcements**

- Machel Massey announced a youth conference on August 21 at the Cerritos Sheraton, urging caregivers and caseworkers to have their students attend. The conference, hosted by the Los Angeles County Office of Education's Foster Youth Services program, will cover transitions from middle to high school and from high school to "bigger and better things," as Massey put it. Brochures were available on the resources table.

Pat Levinson from Foster Youth Services clarified that her program serves youth in foster homes, group homes, and court-specified homes, and that the conference's intention is to target those youth. "We know relative caregivers will be interested, too," she said, "and we don't want to turn anyone away, but we need to meet the requirements of our grants. This is a small venue and we can take 150, maybe 200 kids. If you're a relative caregiver, please come see me." She thanked DCFS and Probation for their participation in the conference, which will provide workshops for youth and a track for caregivers as well.

- Foster Youth Services has transferred about 50,000 school records over the last five years, Levinson said, for foster youth and foster/probation youth. The program also provides trainings on AB 490, tutoring services for youth in group homes and foster care (including those placed with foster family agencies), a summer computer camp, and other cultural, recreational, and academic services.
- Chief Taylor announced that Los Angeles County is one of seven counties selected to participate in a program at Georgetown University's Center for Juvenile Justice Reform around youth at risk of 'crossing over' from the dependency to the delinquency court. Ploehn, Taylor, Nash, and Marv Southard recently spent a kick-off week in Washington, DC, and will use a breakthrough collaborative series model to focus on SPA 6. Next week begins the first set of conference calls, and Taylor hopes to have more to share by the end of the first year the team spends working together.

- Berisha Black said that the Casey Family Programs education breakthrough series she has been involved in will end in September. This effort has targeted DCFS's Pomona regional office, and participants hope to spread its findings countywide.
- Black also announced that Celebration Two, the ceremony for foster and probation youth with grade point averages not high enough for them to participate in June's Celebration One, will take place in August. "I was one of those youth," Black said with a smile, "and many of them have worked very hard. We provide scholarships to them as well, and I hope to do one personally next year. We need to continue to support these youth as they move on with their lives."

### **Next Meeting**

The ECC's next meeting is scheduled for:

**Thursday, October 30, 2008**

**9:30 to 11:30 a.m.**

The California Endowment

1000 North Alameda Street, Los Angeles, California

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 a.m.