



## **Education Coordinating Council**

**October 18, 2012**

**9:30 a.m.**

Los Angeles County Hall of Administration, Room 140  
500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, California 90012

Present: Jessica Chandler  
Renatta Cooper  
Felicia Cotton, representing Jerry Powers  
Mónica García  
René Gonzalez, representing John Deasy  
Leslie Heimov  
Helen Kleinberg  
Aubrey Manuel  
Eric Marts, representing Philip Browning  
Bryan Mershon, representing Marvin J. Southard  
Fernando Meza, representing Richard Martinez  
Judge Michael Nash  
Jane Newman, representing Ramon Quintana  
Fabricio Segovia  
Virginia Ward Roberts, representing Darin Brawley  
Joe Ybarra, representing Arturo Delgado

Guest: Michelle Vega, Fifth Supervisorial District

Chair Mónica García brought the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m., welcoming everyone and noting that Michele Bowers, the new superintendent of the Lancaster School District, will now represent that district on the Education Coordinating Council.

Felicia Cotton introduced Jesus Corral, the Probation Department's new senior director of education services, who expressed his eagerness about working with ECC members to improve educational and transition services for youth in the juvenile justice system. In August, he invited Garcia on a tour of the Challenger Memorial Youth Center, which comprises three probation camps and has been the target of recent improvements to instructional models, student-to-staff ratios, and other educational programs. Garcia summarized her impressions of the center, noting that all the staff she encountered seemed very knowledgeable about the court settlement mandating these changes, and displayed nothing but good intentions for their charges. She encouraged everyone to visit the probation camps to gain a first-hand impression of conditions there.

García thanked the Department of Children and Family Services for sponsoring today's refreshment costs, and announced that because of conflicting commitments, Jerry Powers, Philip Browning,

Marv Southard, and Arturo Delgado were absent today, though ably represented by their respective staff members. Garcia then asked ECC members and the audience to introduce themselves.

### **ECC Annual Progress Report**

The annual ECC progress report was submitted to the Board of Supervisors in August of this year; copies were included in meeting packets. Chair Garcia highlighted some of the major accomplishments of the organization and its partners during 2011–2012.

- Two Federally funded efforts were initiated to support high-quality early education for children from birth to age six: the Early Care Systems Infrastructure Project, which supports increasing access to early education for youngsters within the child welfare system, and the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant Project, which supports the expansion of child-care quality rating and improvement systems for providers serving children within the child welfare system.
- Considerable progress has been made in the area of improving educational programs for youth in the juvenile halls and camps, including the implementation of a new career/technical education program called “Building Skills” that focuses on 20 different construction trades, and a program called Advance Path Academy, which assists youth in making up lost academic credits quickly.
- With the leadership of the delinquency court, noteworthy positive movement has been made in the areas of reducing school-based arrests coming into the court system, as well as enhancing the successful transition of youth re-entering school after returning home from camp.

The report also reflects the extremely significant progress made in the area of improving school attendance, to be covered in the next agenda item. “Even though resources in schools are down,” Garcia said, “attendance is up and achievement is up. Where adults have relationships with students and are focused on whether those students are in class, the positive outcomes are there.”

### **School Attendance Task Force Report Implementation Highlights**

The School Attendance Task Force began as the Truancy Task Force a couple of years ago, Judge Nash explained, altering its name and focus as members realized that the group’s goal of increasing school attendance throughout Los Angeles County had to encompass issues broader than the somewhat narrow legal definition of ‘truancy.’ “We have a terrific group of stakeholders who are working hard to improve attendance by changing policies and how we do business,” Nash said. He gave special thanks to consultant/volunteer Sharon Watson, whom he characterized as “the heart and soul of the SATF as well as every other working group she’s ever been involved with.”

- Just after the task force released its February report, the Los Angeles City Council passed an **amendment to the city’s municipal code** changing law enforcement’s approach to citing students, and forbidding the issuance of ‘tardiness’ tickets to students on their way to school or already on the school campus. The amendment institutionalized reforms already in place within the Informal Juvenile and Traffic Court, the now-defunct third arm of the juvenile court. Since its passage, Watson reported, truancy citations have gone down by 42 percent.

- Prior to the severe budget cuts that caused the closure of all Informal Juvenile and Traffic Courts this past June, those courts handled citations for truancy and other minor infractions by juvenile offenders. Those tickets are now being funneled to the Probation Department, and Nash introduced bureau chief Hellen Carter, who spearheads that diversion. Copies of the draft **citation diversion** protocol and a detailed PowerPoint presentation were included in meeting packets, as were citation statistics for 2009 through 2011 gathered by the Los Angeles School Police Department.

Since the closure of the IJTC in mid-June, approximately 17,000 citations have been written, a number that is significantly reduced from the same point in 2011. Carter hopes that the 65,000 citations issued in 2011 will decrease to between 45,000 and 50,000 this year.

The ultimate goal of the diversion process, Carter said, is for zero juvenile citations to end up going to the District Attorney's office for prosecution. Ticketed youth receive notices to report to community-based programs; if they successfully complete those requirements, their tickets are dismissed. If they fail to comply, they are referred to an internal program or appear before a hearing officer. (If youth initially deny the citation's charges, they receive a hearing as a first step, and tickets are dismissed if the hearing officer finds in favor of the youth. If not, they attend a diversion program.) If youth fail to respond or to complete the necessary programs, the final step is for their driver's licenses to be pulled, or for them to be prevented from obtaining a license when old enough. Monetary fines have been eliminated.

Details of the graduated community-based interventions required by the protocol are being finalized with the help of representatives from cities, law enforcement agencies, the Public Defender, the District Attorney, school districts, and others. The Los Angeles Unified School District has recently opened 13 Youth WorkSource Centers to offer diversion services, and Carter is in discussion with a number of city directors of public safety within the county to develop more programs. Twenty probation officers have been trained in a behavioral change program that Carter has used successfully in the past.

In response to questions, Carter explained that ticketed youth already under the aegis of the dependency court—about 400 youth so far—are referred back to the Department of Children and Family Services, and those receiving mental health services are referred to the Department of Mental Health. (Assessments determine undiagnosed mental health issues as well, but to date no youth have been so identified who were not already associated with DCFS.)

Kim McGill from the Youth Justice Coalition urged amnesty for the 300,000 outstanding tickets she said youth have been issued that have caused their driver's licenses to be pulled. "We don't have the structure or the resources to deal with that kind of volume," she stated. "People's lives are put on hold if they don't have a license—it's difficult to enroll in school, participate in a training program, or hold a job. And not having an ID can cycle you back into offender status."

Approximately 300 individuals a week—those who were cited when under age 18 and who did not comply with court-ordered penalties—request that their driver's licenses be reinstated, and Carter is happy to help in those circumstances. As of now, however, a lack of staff means that hearings for that purpose occur by appointment only, and solely at the Van Nuys court. She hopes that hearing facilities will be located in each supervisorial district in the future.

Carter closed by expressing her joy at being in Los Angeles this past year and in working with these youth, and Nash thanked her for “helping us to be smarter in how we deal with kids who commit minor offenses.”

- Emily Hernandez presented details of the partnership between the Los Angeles Unified School District and the Los Angeles Community Development Department that has created the 13 **Youth WorkSource Centers** whose kick-off celebration was held last week and which are now fully operational. (Information on the partnership and the location of the centers was included in meeting packets.) Since the second week of October, 1,100 youth—including 51 truancy diversions—have come through the centers to receive assessments and begin crafting personalized education plans. “We’re very proud of how it’s working,” Hernandez said, “even though we’re still ironing out some kinks. The families are very appreciative of the services we offer.”
- Hernandez, a member of the Marketing Campaign Workgroup, also called attention to the press release (in meeting packets) about September’s being officially designated **School Attendance Month** by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, the Los Angeles City Council, and the board of education of the Los Angeles Unified School District. Thirteen school districts in the county participated this year with special programs and incentives for students to come to school, all using the *I’m In* slogan and logo. Ruth Cusick noted that 2012 was LAUSD’s first year to work with the ECC’s School Attendance Task Force on this effort, and she hopes that many more school districts will sign on in 2013, when more advance planning is expected. A toolkit and other resources are available on the ECC website, and Hernandez encouraged school districts to check out “a great repository of shared best practices,” as she phrased it.

One event during School Attendance Month was Student Recovery Day, which took place on September 14. This year’s effort was LAUSD’s fifth, concentrating on 13 of the highest-need school sites with the highest dropout rates, in proximity to the 13 new Youth WorkSource Centers. Over 700 volunteers reported to these schools, received a short training, and formed teams for home visits, phone banking, and community and business outreach. The ten to fifteen home-visit teams at each school received lists of dropouts—about 17,000, district-wide—with their home addresses mapped out, and started knocking on doors to personally encourage students and their families to return to school. Additional teams visited neighborhood businesses (about 700 in all) speaking to proprietors about the importance of school attendance and leaving posters behind.

Over 1,200 students were recovered this year, bringing the total of five years of LAUSD events to 4,233 recovered students. (From the audience, Eugenia Wilson asked if tracking was done to see if those students continued to attend school, but Hernandez acknowledged that resources don’t presently exist to do that. “That’s on the to-do list,” she said.)

“This is the kind of personalization and decentralization we want every day,” Mónica Garcia said, “creating a culture of expectation for these kids. There can be a lot of helplessness and shame about this issue in our families. If someone reaches out, folks respond.”

“For our PSA [pupil services and attendance] counselors,” Hernandez added, “every day is student recovery day. That’s what they do. The follow-up for this kind of thing is extremely

important. Each home-visit team produces a written report about every student they contact, and the school's PSA counselor follows up, does an assessment, and helps come up with an education plan and an appropriate placement for the student." Especially for youth returning from probation camps, where lower student-to-teacher ratios are the norm, Renatta Cooper stressed the importance of supporting youngsters in a transition back to the classroom. The point is to help returning students find the program that fits them best, Garcia said, whether it be alternative or continuation schools or regular high school.

Aubrey Manuel related his experience with limitations on enrollment hours at a particular school because of budget cuts, commenting that the School Attendance Month slogan *I'm In* could be revised to *Let Me In*. "It can be very challenging for working parents to be there at the right time," he said. "Every school district should have an enrollment policy that's easy. If the school doors are open, enrolling your kid should be possible."

- The **Data-Sharing and Information Subcommittee** of the School Attendance Task Force involves representatives from schools districts, Los Angeles County, law enforcement, the community, and others, co-chair Jennifer Hottenroth explained. The group has been examining ways to electronically share information about Department of Children and Family Services and Probation Department youth among agencies, and has studied systems used in Riverside County, Sacramento, and San Diego. Plans are currently on schedule to launch a data-information pilot project between DCFS and the Los Angeles Unified School District next month, through which LAUSD staff can access information on DCFS children enrolled in their schools, and upload information on individual students' attendance, grades, and so on, to be viewed by DCFS.

"This is the earliest stage of our broader vision for a multi-agency system," Hottenroth said. "One of the unifying elements of every system we studied was a formal policy work group or steering committee that met regularly to deal with questions regarding the kind of information agencies can see, firewalls, confidentiality issues, etc. We would like the ECC to help us with that, to support this kind of system, and to assist with creating a work group to take the idea beyond the LAUSD/DCFS pilot."

In the ensuing discussion, Hottenroth clarified that the pilot includes only children enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12, not those in early education programs, and involves only youngsters with open cases in the dependency court (in other words, not families who participate in voluntary family maintenance services through DCFS). Jessica Chandler raised the issue of the 400 foster youth who are pregnant and parenting, half of whom are not on track to graduate from high school. Graduation tends to be a hurdle for all foster youth, Hottenroth stated, and the pilot's tracking of attendance and credits should allow for early-intervention targeting prior to students' entering high school. Leslie Heimov mentioned that the Berkeley Center, where child welfare information is aggregated, allows data on pregnant and parenting teens to be captured. "Then maybe we can make sure their babies get enrolled in kindergarten, too," she commented.

"The ECC was created to improve educational outcomes for all kids in the juvenile court system," Judge Nash said, "and this pilot is a huge move in the right direction—one of the most significant steps this county has ever taken. We started the battle seven years ago to have the ability to share information and to do so electronically. We're starting on a small basis:

LAUSD/DCFS today, the rest of the county tomorrow. I hope we can expand this to all school districts and to kids in probation as well as DCFS. It's a gigantic first step."

Joe Ybarra from the Los Angeles County Office of Education mentioned that a data-sharing system is now in the pilot stages in the court schools, and he hopes to expand that system in future to include foster youth.

Keeping any electronic system up to date on children's placement moves is vitally important, Helen Kleinberg stated, especially since it still can be very difficult for schools to obtain appropriate records for enrolling students. (The electronic pilot will update information weekly, René Gonzalez said.) Nash agreed, noting that protocols have recently been put into place in the juvenile court requiring a detailed report to be filed with the court within three days of any child's changing placement. "It asks whether the kid is changing schools and why," he said, "whether McKinney-Vento is applicable, if the kid is *going* to school, if the records have been sent, if there's an IEP [individualized educational plan] that the new school will follow up on, or if they'll do a new one—all that kind of thing. The catalyst for requiring this kind of report was realizing that we weren't tracking what happens to kids who are taking psychotropic medication when they change placements, and we obviously expanded it to other areas as well. DCFS started filing these reports in August or September, and Probation should start in November."

**Aubrey Manuel moved that the Data-Sharing and Information Subcommittee's recommendation for a resolution to establish a countywide foster youth student information system in Los Angeles Council (included in meeting packets) be approved. Renatta Cooper seconded the motion, and it was approved without objection.**

- Ruth Cusick, a member of the **Exclusionary School Discipline Work Group** of the SATF, presented information on the Dignity in Schools Campaign, a national coalition whose Los Angeles chapter includes the Youth Justice Coalition, the Children's Defense Fund, the American Civil Liberties Union, and others. The model code released in 2009 by the national coalition—an executive summary was included in meeting packets—is now undergoing a community engagement process involving presentations and focus groups prior to its being finalized, and is available for comment online as well.

Kim McGill from the Youth Justice Coalition highlighted elements of the model code applicable to youth in Los Angeles County:

- For young people returning home from lockup, a significant barrier continues to be an inability to obtain IEPs, test scores, transcripts, and other educational records from their schooling while incarcerated.
- Many school districts fail to assign credits for classes that students do not complete because of changes in placement, and McGill encouraged the adoption of policies ensuring that every hour that students are in their seats, they are earning credits.
- Discipline in continuation, alternative, and charter schools tends to be more punitive than elsewhere and needs to be better tracked. Students also need to be aware that they have the right to a hearing.

Ramiro Rubalcaba, a former graduate of Los Angeles's Garfield High School who went on to teach and serve as dean there, distributed a PowerPoint presentation—included in meeting packets—about the implementation of the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) approach at Garfield beginning in 2007.

“Even back when I went to Garfield, it wasn't known to be great in academics,” Rubalcaba said, “and was generally considered an unsafe and unwelcoming school with lots of gang activity. In 2007, it was on a year-round schedule with three tracks and about five thousand students. We had fights every day, and had suspended 613 students in the 2004–2005 school year. In 2007, [the] central administration [of LAUSD] told us to lower our suspension rates. They provided the PBIS training and literature, and almost literally forced us into these meetings, where we partnered with school police and local law enforcement. There was a lot of push-back, but the turning point for me was when I heard of a young man who had killed his parents and then shot up his school. What did he have to say? *I would rather be wanted for murder than not wanted at all.* That brought about a change in me,” Rubalcaba went on. “Here at Garfield, this will stop, I decided. We will deal with our problems and correct our behavior. Suspensions don't work—they're a school-sanctioned holiday at best.”

In beginning the PBIS process, school staff reviewed historical Garfield data, looked at current literature, and formed a Discipline and Safety Committee that included all stakeholders. “Even the school code of conduct was punitive in nature, we found,” Rubalcaba said. “Everything was negative.” The group then formalized their plans in writing and committed to faithful implementation. Staff received professional development training, meetings were held with students, parents received formalized training to support the approach at home, and the new concept was shared with external partners. PBIS's motto of Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Responsible was adopted, and **suspension was taken off the menu of disciplinary actions.**

**Since then, Garfield's school culture has changed profoundly,** from arguably toxic to overwhelmingly positive. It is considered one of the most welcoming schools anywhere for parents, has been highlighted numerous times in the media, and has served as a model school for certain new legislation. Suspensions have dropped to a single incident in 2010–2011 (a box-cutter brandishing is a state-mandated suspension) and one in 2011–2012, and, remarkably, the Academic Performance Index of the school as a whole has jumped by 75 points. “We don't have ‘bad’ students at Garfield High School,” Rubalcaba said. “We have only good students who sometimes make bad decisions.”

Garfield's population was reduced by the opening of two new high schools in its area, and it made the switch back to a traditional school calendar. “The district had to change, too, to let Garfield change,” Chair Garcia added. “We didn't change the kids, though—we just changed the way adults were having relationships with the kids.”

“It was definitely collaborative,” Rubalcaba confirmed. “The students are our clients, and we always remember that their parents are the most important teachers in their lives.” After completing the requisite training, about 100 parent volunteers appear each morning at the school to greet arriving students, helping to create a positive environment.

Other schools have adopted the PBIS approach, and LAUSD as a whole reduced its instructional days lost to suspensions from 46,006 in 2010–2011 to 26,286 in 2011–2012, a 44 percent drop. On a four-year scale, Garcia said, “our graduation rate is between 45 and 65 per-

cent. The more instructional days we lose to suspension, the less sense that makes. Students will choose education when all the pieces are in place for them.”

- The **Free Bus Pass Campaign Work Group** provided a legal-sized handout reporting some of its research, which co-chair Kim McGill encouraged everyone to read. The long-term goal of the group is to obtain free Metro passes for all students in Los Angeles County from kindergarten through college. “In 2011, there were 7,622 citations to youth under 18 on the Metro system, many for fare evasion,” McGill told attendees, “and there have been 4,696 this year so far. We’re getting agreement to create a diversion program for transportation ticketing, and that’s a very important move that we encourage you to talk through in your agencies.”
- Judge Donna Groman will attend the ECC meeting in February to report on efforts to facilitate the re-entry process from juvenile court schools to regular schools; she is reaching out to all 81 school districts in Los Angeles County and working with LAUSD, in particular, to ensure that its policies are not imposing barriers to those transitions. Groman is also leading an effort to reduce the number of school-based arrests and to provide an alternative to the school-to-prison pipeline, based on a model developed by Judge Steven Teske in Clayton County, Georgia.

### **Possible Impact of November Ballot Measures**

Pedro Salcido, legislative liaison for the Los Angeles Unified School District, distributed a handout on the potential financial impacts to LAUSD of Propositions 30 and 38, two education funding measures on this November’s ballot. He also reviewed a chart of LAUSD’s unrestricted revenue per child from 2007–2008 through 2012–2013 comparing the statutory cost-of-living increases mandated by Proposition 98 (deferred by the legislature since 2007) to actual funding, along with the loss in dollars expected if Proposition 30 fails at the ballot box. “To close a \$15 billion deficit,” Salcido said, “legislators have wagered trigger cuts on the backs of students and educators throughout the state. This is a time of huge uncertainty.”

- If both Proposition 30 and Proposition 38 fail, LAUSD would face severe mid-year cuts to per-pupil funding in the 2012–2013 school year. These cuts would continue in 2013–2014 and beyond, possibly reducing instructional days from 175 to 160 per year.
- If Proposition 30 passes, revenue would be generated to the state general fund for public education, and LAUSD would avoid further state cuts to its adopted budget for the 2012–2013 school year. Some instructional days could be restored, and the number of unpaid furlough days for employees could be reduced. However, this would not address budget deficits in future years.

Proposition 30 generates funding through increases for seven years in personal income taxes of up to 3 percent for joint filers earning over \$250,000 per year, plus a quarter-cent increase in the state sales tax for four years. Of the \$6 billion expected to be raised, \$5.4 billion would go to K–14 schools, \$250 million to the University of California system, \$250 million to the Cal State system, and smaller pots to parks, developmental services, etc.

- If Proposition 38 passes, LAUSD would still face immediate budget cuts, potentially including the loss of 15 instructional days, since the new funding would not begin until after the

2012–2013 academic year has ended. For the 2013–2014 school year and at least 12 years beyond, the district would receive additional fixed funding of \$1,000 to \$1,400 per student.

Proposition 38 increases personal income taxes for 12 years for all but low-income earners, from 0.4 percent at the bottom of the range to 2.2 percent for individuals earning more than \$2.5 million. Funds generated would serve as an educational-grant type of program, with 70 percent allocated for hiring new personnel, 12 percent for technology and training, and 18 percent for low-income children.

- If both propositions pass and their provisions conflict, the measure with the highest percentage of votes in the affirmative would take effect.

The LAUSD school board has gone on record as supporting both initiatives, Chair Garcia said. “Or hello, our house is burning—send water,” as she put it. “If Proposition 30 goes down, the bottom falls out of this state,” she added. “Our schools can’t be okay without our state being okay. We’ll be 51st in the nation in per-pupil spending [including the District of Columbia] if it doesn’t pass. Voter turnout is incredibly important in this election.”

For those needing further clarification, Salcido recommended LAUSD’s Budget Realities website at <http://budgetrealities.lausd.net/>, which includes a community toolkit about the propositions.

### **Member/Staff Updates**

- Chair Garcia presented a draft letter of support from the ECC for the Los Angeles Unified School District’s Federal ‘Race to the Top’ grant application. The \$40 million grant could potentially save 1,300 jobs in the district, and although the teachers union has yet to sign on, the application will likely be submitted soon.

**Helen Kleinberg moved that the letter of support be approved and forwarded for signature to ECC co-chair Judge Michael Nash. Leslie Heimov seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.**

- Trish Ploehn called members’ attention to the handout (in meeting packets) listing education legislation that Governor Brown has signed, and reported on the unfortunate delay in hiring an ECC director and other staff resulting from the over 1,000 applications received this past summer. She hopes to have staff on board by early 2013.
- Hellen Carter invited ECC members to participate in a Probation Department training scheduled for December 5 at the Rosemont Avenue location in Santa Clarita. “We’re trying to change the departmental culture,” she said, “and we’re bringing in national trainers that I’ve worked with for years. They’ll be teaching ways to identify individual learning styles, temperament, and behavior, both in the kids we serve and in ourselves. Darlyne [Pettinicchio] is bringing in parenting-style and child development specialists, too. We need to get staff to understand that it’s not just the kids who need to change. We are change agents, learning to readjust our role.” Anyone interested in attending the training should contact Carter at the Probation Department.

### **Public Comment**

- Angela Vazquez announced that the Advancement Project is fully endorsing Proposition 38, a portion of whose funds will go to create a California Early Head Start program with a priority point system for enrolling children in the child welfare system. She encouraged everyone to access the Advancement Project's website for more information.
- Adrienne Popeney brought flyers about United Friends of the Children, an organization helping to prepare foster youth for college and post-college success. UFC provides one-on-one case management to high school and middle school students, involving them in free tutoring and other programs. Referrals are accepted for students in the seventh through ninth grades who have open cases with the Department of Children and Family Services. If cases close while students are in UFC programs, they remain eligible.

### **Next Meeting**

The next ECC meeting is scheduled for:

**Thursday, February 14, 2013**

**9:30 a.m.**

*Location to be determined.*

Judge Nash characterized today's gathering as "one of the best ECC meetings ever" because of the number and quality of efforts currently underway. "We've created a monster here," he joked. "Agencies are stepping up, and I can't say enough about our community partners. They are unbelievable advocates, very passionate—an inspiration to all of us to improve the way we're serving kids, particularly with regard to school issues. We're on the right track more than ever before. Congratulations, all, and thank you, thank you."

There being no further public comment, the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.