



## **Education Coordinating Council**

**November 7, 2013**

**1:30 p.m.**

Los Angeles County Hall of Administration, Room 739  
500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, California 90012

Present:

Philip Browning  
Jesus Corral, representing Jerry Powers  
Arturo Delgado  
Mónica García  
Bryan Mershon, representing Marvin J. Southard  
Martha Trevino Powell  
Fabricio Segovia  
Erika Torres, representing John Deasy  
Virginia Ward-Roberts

Guests: Michelle Vega, Fifth Supervisorial District  
Judeana Velasquez, Fifth Supervisorial District

Chair Mónica García brought the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m., welcoming everyone and thanking the Department of Children and Family Services for sponsoring today's refreshment costs. Jerry Powers and Marv Southard were not able to attend because of meeting conflicts, and Judge Michael Nash was unexpectedly called to a family medical emergency.

Garcia asked ECC members and the audience to introduce themselves.

### **Report of Superintendent, Los Angeles County Office of Education**

The Los Angeles County Office of Education is charged with educating students incarcerated by the delinquency courts, and Superintendent Arturo Delgado reviewed the education reforms that have taken place over the past few years at juvenile halls and probation camps. When Delgado assumed his position, Camp Scott/Scudder was already transitioning from a traditional form of education to a project-based, integrated approach—very positively received by students—with an emphasis on experience-based learning rather than textbooks. In addition, as part of a lawsuit settlement, programs at the Challenger Memorial Camps have also changed to increase accountability, to concentrate on matching student academic levels to the type of work asked of them, and to refocus expectations if student reading or math levels are low. Credit recovery has also been stressed, since for many students, Delgado said, “If they can’t graduate, what’s the point?” The County’s Board of Supervisors has recently released funding for career/technical education programs and portable buildings to expand them, which has renewed interest in school from students and produced a real shift in tone.

“None of this could have been done without greater communication between LACOE and Probation,” Delgado stated. With Probation’s creation of an education coordinator position to bridge that gap, more students have graduated, reading levels have risen, and staff have been restructured to better understand students’ lives before, during, and after their experience in camp—including connecting with the school districts students return to upon their release.

The Road to Success Academy at Camp Scott/Scudder was a 2013 Golden Bell recipient (an award made by the California Schools Boards Association to recognize innovative and successful programs), and planning is in effect to roll out the Academy in seven other camps in 2014. LACOE has also developed an internal grants program through which juvenile halls and probation camps can apply for small amounts of funding for new programs.

Another major change has been the renegotiation of camp teachers’ formerly 12-month contract, which called for them to take vacation time throughout the school year. Especially with a population already in turmoil, a succession of substitute teachers created a sense of uncertainty that did not contribute positively to the educational experience. The new 11-month contract substitutes vacation compensation for opportunities to make extra pay during the year, and requires teachers to take vacation during the five-week summer break.

During the 2013 summer period, LACOE brought in the Children’s Defense Fund Freedom Schools program, which approaches education through language arts and emphasizes the relationships among teachers, probation officers, and students to celebrate who they are as young people. Data from the summer is now being studied to assess students’ academic progress, and Delgado expects the Road to Success Academies to experience Freedom Schools next year.

### **Local Control of School Funding for Foster Youth**

Superintendent Delgado briefly reviewed his experience with trends in education, which he believes shift every ten years or so in California. “Accountability was a buzzword with No Child Left Behind during 2000 to 2010,” he said, “and now we’re entering a decade of innovation and changes in how we fund education.”

The Local Control Funding Formula, enacted in October 2013, lifts restrictions on most categorical funding streams for school districts, allowing them to use monies in whatever way they see fit to serve targeted students. “LACOE will monitor the school districts in Los Angeles County and hold them accountable for their plans,” Delgado explained. “The money follows the student. And although it isn’t additional money, we can try new things.”

California has separated out foster youth as a discrete category of targeted population because of the “perfect alignment of things that can go wrong” in their lives, as Delgado put it. Throughout the nation, foster youth tend to move around a lot, have high dropout rates, be abused in their homes, and have special-education needs. Over 47,000 foster children live in California, with 17,000 of them residing in Los Angeles County. “Between LACOE, DCFS, and Probation, we need to make sure that population doesn’t get lost,” Delgado said, “and that they get a fair shake at a good education.” The Department of Children and Family Services has granted \$2.2 million for programs on mentoring, counseling, and interagency work. “We have to communicate more and more,” Delgado concluded. “The whole area is improving, but greater staff development is still needed.”

Chair Garcia introduced Jesse Hahnel from the National Center for Youth Law, an Oakland non-profit public-interest law firm whose mission is to improve the lives of at-risk youth. “The initiative I’m working on,” Hahnel explained, “is meant to improve outcomes in education for foster youth. At the state level, however, getting definitive data as to how foster youth are doing in school isn’t easy. Neither the California Department of Education nor individual school districts track it, and many districts don’t even know which of their students *are* foster youth.”

Given these facts, the National Center for Youth Law commissioned a landmark study, *The Invisible Achievement Gap: Education Outcomes of Students in Foster Care in California’s Public Schools*, copies of which Hahnel distributed. The report is also available online at [http://cftl.org/documents/2013/IAG/Invisible\\_Achievement\\_Gap\\_Full\\_Report.pdf](http://cftl.org/documents/2013/IAG/Invisible_Achievement_Gap_Full_Report.pdf). This initial volume looks at all youth with open 300 cases, comparing them to the general school population. A second study will compare them to each other—how do those living in group homes fare beside those in relative care, for instance, and what are the differences in achievement between those whose cases were opened because of abuse and those entering the system because of neglect? A third study will focus on probation youth.

“This is the first time two state agencies [the California Department of Education and the California Department of Social Services] have done a data match that identifies students in foster care and evaluates how they’re doing compared to others,” Hahnel said. For instance, as shown on page 40 of the study, foster youth have lower graduation rates than any other subgroup and drop out of school much earlier on. (The data used for all three studies is from 2008–2009, prior to the passage of AB 167.)

“These findings were part of what drove significant reforms at the state level that have been incorporated into the Local Control Funding Formula,” Hahnel continued. “California became the first state to include foster youth as a subgroup in its accountability framework, recognizing that population’s poor academic outcomes and unique set of needs.” Other subgroups—English learners, for example, or low-income students—need a total of 30 students at a given school to be incorporated into local control and accountability plans, but the foster youth category needs only 15 students. “School districts must include goals and actions specific to foster youth in their Local Control Funding Formula plans,” Hahnel said.

Most of these plans will be funded by dissolving the boundaries of categorical funding streams and allowing schools more spending flexibility, but the degree of that flexibility is still a matter of debate in Sacramento, Superintendent Delgado noted. The domino effect can have an impact on other revenue streams, and school districts are also required to designate ‘maintenance of effort’ funding sources. “LACOE will be monitoring that,” he continued, “but it’s tricky. What triggers a query to the school district? When do we tell them they’re not spending adequately? Those questions aren’t answered yet.”

One of the few funding streams still preserved as categorical is that of foster youth services, for which the California Department of Education grants \$15 million a year, mostly to county offices of education who administer programs for foster youth.

“Then there’s the data piece,” Hahnel went on. “Who are our foster youth?” New provisions in California Education Code §49085 require the California Department of Social Services and the California Department of Education to electronically share data every week, with the Department of Education passing the information on foster students along to individual school districts.

“Foster youth advocates are excited about this exchange,” Hahnel said, “but how school districts and county offices of education implement it will be the key to its potential success.”

As far as Local Control Funding Formula categories go, school districts send the California Department of Education a count of students for most groups toward the beginning of the traditional school year, in October. For foster youth, the Department of Education obtains counts from the California Department of Social Services. Student circumstances may overlap multiple categories—for instance, foster youth may also be English learners from low-income families. (In *The Invisible Achievement Gap*, however, because foster children are a small percentage of the total school population, their numbers do not greatly affect statistics for other categories.)

If the system counts children in kin care only if they have open DCFS cases, Chair Garcia cautioned, “then we’re counting only *some* foster kids, and that’s a problem. We show more than 7,000 foster children enrolled in LAUSD, but that’s not all of the kids we should be concerned about. California is making decisions about money and accountability, but what do we do when school started in July and regulations are coming, uh, someday?”

Hahnel believes it would be a mistake for school districts and county offices of education to develop their Local Control Funding Formula plans for foster youth in isolation, especially in Los Angeles County, where 81 different plans could be possible. The process needs input from LACOE, its Foster Youth Services arm, and child welfare agencies alike, which might develop a memorandum of understanding as one county has, outlining ‘how we as a county are going to improve.’ “Everyone is on the same page for foster youth in that county,” Hahnel said. (He will make the sample MOU from that County available to the ECC office for reference.)

The National Center for Youth Law’s strategy is to collaborate with agencies serving foster youth in developing that piece of the Local Control Funding Formula framework, overseen by a local leadership team that functions as an advisory board for work in the county. “We much prefer to have an existing advisory board steer us in the right direction,” Hahnel said, “and we’d love to discuss the possibility of the Education Coordinating Council serving as that team.” This would mean taking up perhaps five minutes on each ECC meeting agenda, plus four to five key stakeholders volunteering as a guidance and planning group.

**Superintendent Delgado moved that the Education Coordinating Council serve as the National Center for Youth Law’s leadership team for the implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula framework in Los Angeles County. Erika Torres seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.**

Ruth Cusick announced that Public Counsel and the National Center for Youth Law will host an open forum on Local Control Funding Formula implementation and foster youth in Los Angeles County on December 9 from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Public Counsel office. (A flyer was included in meeting materials.) Chair Garcia agreed that the ECC would publicize that event and help knowledgeable individuals share their challenges there. “I’m concerned about people expecting LAUSD to sponsor new programs [with these now-flexible funds],” Garcia commented. “I’m more interested in kids reading and writing at grade level. California is 47th in the nation in educational achievement—all kids in public schools here are faring poorly. How do we get ourselves off the bottom? We need everyone’s voice.”

### **Electronic Data-Sharing System**

Steve Sturm from the Department of Children and Family Services provided an update on the collaboration between DCFS and the Los Angeles Unified School District to electronically exchange information on foster children enrolled in LAUSD. He particularly thanked LAUSD's Erika Torres, René Gonzalez, and Debra Duardo for their assistance, and also expressed appreciation to LACOE Superintendent Delgado and his staff for leading efforts to involve other school districts in the system, especially smaller districts that may not have sophisticated information technology divisions.

The Student Information Tracking System (SITS) has been functional since March, and designers are now refining information from LAUSD to provide DCFS social workers real-time data on attendance, test scores, and grades (through the last complete semester), as well as incorporating progress reports into SITS and adding students in the elementary grades. The Pomona Unified School District, which enrolls just over 300 foster youth, is expected to join SITS within the week, and other school districts with large foster-youth populations—including Pasadena, Long Beach, Antelope Valley, Compton, and Paramount—should be part of SITS within the next year or so. (Currently, 45 school districts have access to the information on a 'read only' basis.) The biggest hurdle has been getting data from different systems to work together, but a generic 'recipe' has been developed that should speed up the inclusion of further districts.

The biggest bonus from the new system, Sturm said, is cutting down the labor-intensive request process and two- to six-week response time that had been the standard for social workers to obtain information from schools. SITS information is updated regularly and is available through a web-based portal to all social workers (and soon to DCFS clerical workers as well).

Adding information from other county agencies—such as the Probation Department or the Department of Health Services—is a long-term goal for SITS, but legal hurdles exist that need to be ironed out, and technical issues alone could take more than a year to resolve. (San Diego County took five years to design a memorandum of understanding and implement a similar system for all its school districts and county agencies.) If the California Department of Education and the California Department of Social Services fail to integrate their databases, as is now planned for 2017, SITS could possibly form the basis for a statewide system. "Right now, it's a stop gap," Sturm said, "but we're not holding our breath for state action."

### **Strategic Plan Review**

Now that the ECC has agreed to serve in an advisory role for the National Center for Youth Law's implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula framework in Los Angeles County, what other work should it focus on in 2014 within the ECC's strategic plan's five priority areas? (The strategic plan update for 2011–2014 was included in meeting materials.) "Nothing here is *not* important," Chair Garcia told attendees, "but because of reduced staff support and our desire to achieve something meaningful, what is most necessary for us right now?" She asked ECC members and the audience to vote via show of hands for two of the five areas.

Priority Area	ECC Members	Audience
1. Early Childhood Education	4	8
2. Youth Education and Development	4	8
3. School/Department Coordination and Support	2	13
4. Data- and Information-Sharing	4	10
5. System Accountability	3	3

- Superintendent Delgado reminded attendees that a lawsuit settlement approved by the courts is already in place for the Los Angeles County Office of Education’s involvement in probation camps and juvenile halls, although some items still need to be completed.
- Data systems are likewise in process and should be showing metrics shortly, which will also improve school/department coordination and support.
- The County’s Policy Roundtable for Child Care is also promoting early childhood education for Department of Children and Family Services youth, and the ECC could work more closely with that body on the first priority area.

Chair Garcia thanked everyone for their input.

### **School Attendance Task Force Report**

Sharon Watson reviewed the ECC’s most recent progress report to the Board of Supervisors on implementing the recommendations in *Expecting More: A Blueprint for Raising the Educational Achievement of Foster and Probation Youth*. (Copies of the progress report were included in meeting materials.) She particularly highlighted the activities of the School Attendance Task Force, a group formed by Judge Michael Nash three years ago to help address Outcome 5 in Priority Area 2 (Youth Education and Development): “Prevent/reduce school truancy and engage truant youth in safe and welcoming educational programs.”

The Task Force spent its first year gathering data on truancy and school attendance from around the county and elsewhere, and published its report of recommendations in February 2012. Since then, it has created a series of workgroups to implement key proposals; Watson discussed the progress report’s summary of their accomplishments.

- **Truancy diversion.** With the revision of the City of Los Angeles’s municipal code section on daytime curfew violations—encouraging students to go to school as opposed to penalizing them when they don’t—and the establishment of the Youth WorkSource Centers by the City of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Unified School District, a nearly *90 percent drop in truancy citations* has occurred when compared to numbers from the 2004–2009 period (which were roughly 100,000 tickets a year).
- **School attendance awareness.** In 2012, the County Board of Supervisors, the City of Los Angeles, and 13 local school districts declared September as *School Attendance Month*. This year’s campaign included 19 school districts, with several of those participating in a county-

wide Student Recovery Day in one or both years, resulting in thousands of students being re-enrolled in school.

- **Exclusionary school discipline reform.** Spurred by the surprising statistic that California suspends more students than it graduates, the Task Force studied Garfield High School, which has instituted LAUSD's Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports program along with strong parent and community engagement, and has taken suspension off the table as a discipline option. As a result, suspensions there fell from 581 in 2006–2007 to a single (state-mandated) suspension each in both 2010–2011 and 2011–2012. The school's Academic Performance Index has also jumped by 75 points, and its overall culture has become significantly more positive.

Based on this and other affirmative models, the workgroup developed a resolution promoting a host of exclusionary discipline reforms that was approved by the ECC in April. Since then, both LAUSD and the Long Beach Unified School District have adopted similar initiatives around creating positive school climates, and plans are in place for the ECC's resolution to be introduced to all the other Los Angeles County school districts at a meeting next spring.

- **Free student Metro pass campaign.** A one-page summary of a larger report prepared by the Department of Public Health, *The Potential Costs and Benefits of Providing Free Public Transportation Passes to Students in Los Angeles County*, was included in meeting materials. (The full report is available at [http://educationcoordinatingcouncil.org/SATF\\_DOCS/SATF\\_Library/HIA\\_Full\\_Report\\_October\\_2013.pdf](http://educationcoordinatingcouncil.org/SATF_DOCS/SATF_Library/HIA_Full_Report_October_2013.pdf).) Fare evasion is the citation most often issued to young people, and reducing related law-enforcement expenses—along with boosting school revenues through increased Average Daily Attendance—should go a long way to offsetting the cost of providing free transportation for students.
- **Policy and practice guides for school districts.** *How to Improve School Attendance: A Practical Guide for Schools and School Districts*, a manual of nearly 350 pages, is a resource developed by the Task Force. Its device-friendly version is available at [http://www.educationcoordinatingcouncil.org/H2ISA/H2ISA\\_Bkgrd.html](http://www.educationcoordinatingcouncil.org/H2ISA/H2ISA_Bkgrd.html), while the printable PDF version can be accessed at [http://www.educationcoordinatingcouncil.org/SATF\\_DOCS/SATF\\_Reports/SATF%20Technical%20Manual%20\(March%202013\).pdf](http://www.educationcoordinatingcouncil.org/SATF_DOCS/SATF_Reports/SATF%20Technical%20Manual%20(March%202013).pdf).

*A Guide to School-Community Best Practices* serves as a stand-alone policy document and is also incorporated as a chapter in the *How to Improve School Attendance* manual. The stand-alone version is available at [http://www.educationcoordinatingcouncil.org/SATF\\_DOCS/SATF\\_Reports/A\\_Guide\\_to\\_School-Community\\_Best\\_Practices.pdf](http://www.educationcoordinatingcouncil.org/SATF_DOCS/SATF_Reports/A_Guide_to_School-Community_Best_Practices.pdf).

Watson then summarized the School Attendance Task Force's agenda for the near future, which includes continuing to pursue free student Metro passes and working further with school districts on exclusionary discipline. In addition:

- One of Judge Nash's highest priorities is state **legislation to prohibit locking up juveniles for truancy and other status offenses**. "The Task Force has done a lot to avert that in Los Angeles County," Watson commented, "but it would be nice to have an enforceable statewide policy."
- "We need to **identify barriers that cause kids not to go to school**," Watson continued. As part of the Department of Public Health's report on free student Metro passes, the Youth Jus-

tice Coalition administered 2,000 surveys to students in various school districts, and that information should be very helpful in identifying and breaking down those barriers.

- Some **School Attendance Review Boards (SARBs)** are doing extraordinary work—the Alhambra Unified School District’s SARB recently won a state award—and the Task Force will explore having model SARBs present best practices to others. Superintendent Delgado mentioned School Attendance Review Teams, a pre-SARB step that is also very helpful to students.
- **Mental health services** for foster and probation students are tremendously important, although many school districts are apprehensive about providing them if they do not have the appropriate clinicians. The Task Force wants to work more closely with the Department of Mental Health to expand school-based and community resources.
- The Task Force also wants to promote **joint-use agreements** that allow for more partnerships between schools and community agencies, keeping school facilities open at night and on weekends.
- More representation of **charter schools** on the Task Force will be pursued.
- The Department of Public Health wants to launch a project to look at the **systemic changes brought about as a result of the School Attendance Task Force**. Its goal would be to document the group’s experience and progress and develop a peer-reviewed publication through written policies and protocols, key informant interviews, and semi-structured interviews with youth.
- In continuing to address positive school climate, the Task Force wants to look at issues with **physical school facilities**—razor wire, metal detectors, fences, and so on. “Those don’t exactly contribute to an atmosphere of trust and respect,” Watson pointed out, although she realizes that fences also exist to keep unwanted people out. “Disasters can occur when outsiders are allowed on campus,” she acknowledged, “but I don’t know that we can ever ensure that they will never happen again. What’s the value of using intimidating security measures versus the value of millions of kids going to school every day with fear hanging over their heads? It’s a hard one.” The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges is also looking at this issue.

“In successful schools, the relationships of people on campus take precedence over fear,” Chair Garcia commented. “At Fremont High, we took the gates down. That puts us on the hook for safety, sure, but with every [campus] incident, the public sector is indicted. We need to move toward personalization on campus, so that people know each other and work together to find out what’s good for the kids. Yes, the liability issue in the public sector is real—we pay millions of dollars when things go wrong—but we must remember the goals and outcomes we want to see for these students.”

The School Climate Bill of Rights adopted by the Los Angeles Unified School District’s school board last May eliminated ‘willful defiance’—kicking a chair, cursing, not removing a cap when asked, and similar minor infractions—as a reason for suspension throughout the district. “LAUSD has been cutting suspensions in half for each of the past three years,”



Garcia continued. "What is bad behavior? An opportunity to teach. Plus, we're just throwing money away if kids aren't in class."

The LAUSD School Climate Committee is studying the intersection of achievement, budget, and discipline, using the Loyola Marymount Restorative Justice Project as one model. "Having people know each other reduces bad behavior and violence," Garcia said. "We need to make sure that our response to an incident doesn't make things worse, but helps decrease the reoccurrence of similar incidents." By 2020, every LAUSD school will have a restorative justice program in place, beginning with schools with the highest incidence of suspensions. "It's easy to just kick kids out of class," Garcia said, "and restorative justice creates vulnerability in adults and students alike. But we're still suspending 13,000 kids a year. We know the classrooms they're coming from, and we need to train those teachers."

LAUSD is currently preparing an agreement with the Los Angeles School Police Department to cease issuing citations to students 12 years old and younger, instead helping them get to school and obtain the attention and support they need to address their behavior. "This means connecting with other adults to help provide services to a kid who needs them," Garcia said. "It doesn't mean being a social worker or a parent yourself, but just calling attention to the issue with other adults. We all need to think about our jobs differently and reach out to other community partners and resources."

Everyone is welcome to attend the next School Climate Committee meeting, scheduled for Tuesday, December 3, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. in the LAUSD board room.

### **Member/Staff Updates**

Carrie Miller introduced Vincent Holmes, who will be providing staff support to the ECC and the School Attendance Task Force from now on. Holmes has been with the Service Integration Branch for two years and the county's Chief Executive Office for five, mostly working on gang-related issues. "I look forward to supporting this group and working with all of you," he said.

### **Public Comment**

- The Department of Children and Family Services referred over 1,500 DCFS youngsters to early childhood education programs this fall, Steve Sturm said. He is currently waiting for follow-up data, but expects at least 600 children to have been enrolled.
- Adrienne Popeney distributed material about the United Friends of the Children's college readiness and sponsorship programs, highlighting the opportunity to refer youth there.

### **Next Meeting**

The next ECC meeting is scheduled for:

**Thursday, April 24, 2014**  
**1:00 p.m.**  
*Location to be determined.*

There being no further public comment, the meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.