



## 2005 Annual Report

During its inaugural year, through a small consultant team and some committed volunteers, the Education Coordinating Council successfully established its leadership and membership, raised initial operating funds, set up an office, agreed on its mission, identified four program priority areas, determined a multi-level working structure for accomplishing its objectives, developed a Blueprint for raising the educational achievement of foster and probation youth, built awareness of the achievement gap for these youth and a series of partnerships for addressing it, and took a series of actions that helped connect youth to available programs and services.

These actions include:

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH/PARTNERSHIP-BUILDING

- Met with the superintendents of school districts with large numbers of foster and probation youth, Los Angeles County's Commission for Children and Families, SPA 1, 3, 4, and 7 Councils, the Los Angeles County Education Foundation, the Association of Community Human Service Agencies' group home and foster family agency providers, and the Policy Roundtable for Child Care
- Held twelve focus groups with 145 youth, including current foster/probation youth and emancipated youth, and four with caregiver groups, involving 66 adults, to hear their ideas for raising educational achievement; and published a report of findings
- Presented information about the ECC and its work at several national and local conferences, including the National College Access Network's "Changing the Face of Education" in Las Vegas (September), Children Uniting Nations/University of

Southern California's "Keeping the Promise to At-Risk Youth" in Washington, D.C. (October), the Los Angeles County Superior Court & California State University, and Los Angeles's "A New Beginning for Partnerships for Children & Families in Los Angeles County" (November); and gave testimony to the LAUSD Board of Education (November)

- Established working partnerships with the LAUSD's Working Group for Safer School Communities, the Mayor's Council of Education Advisors, the Los Angeles County Interagency Operations Group, the Children's Planning Council, the Emancipation Program Partnership, the Chamber of Commerce, New Ways to Work Youth Transition Action Team, and the United Coalition East Prevention Project for Homeless Youth

## PROGRAM

**Residential Academy Model:** At the request of the Department of Children and Family Services and the Board of Supervisors, studied the feasibility of creating a residential academy for Los Angeles foster youth, developed a Los Angeles model for such an academy, and crafted a set of recommendations for moving forward with the concept.

**Education Blueprint:** Drafted a Blueprint for raising the educational achievement of foster and probation youth that will be submitted to the ECC at its January meeting and to the Board of Supervisors in February. This Blueprint presents the unique educational challenge facing these youth, the data outlining their achievement gap, the desired outcomes for these youth, the basic agreements needed by key stakeholders to meet our goals, some short-term practical solutions in the ECC's priority program areas and specific, "doable" actions for each, the roles and responsibilities of major stakeholder groups and systems, and the shared and individual accountabilities of the ECC and its members.

### **Progress in the ECC's Four Priority Areas:**

#### **1. Early Childhood Education:**

- Obtained a fee waiver from Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP) for foster parents, parents whose children are under the auspices of DCFS, and teen parents in the foster care or juvenile justice systems
- Foster parents are now being encouraged to enroll DCFS children in preschool/early education programs such as LAUP, Early Head Start, Head Start, and HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters), and are routinely being provided contact information for both these and other licensed child care programs.
- DCFS and Probation established a pilot program that fills available openings in State Preschool, Early Head Start, Head Start, and LAUP programs with foster children and the children of foster and probation youth.

- Adopted a series of actions that promote the utilization of high-quality child development services for young children in the child welfare system, highlight the importance of continuity of care for children in these programs, support implementation of the child care rating instruments developed by the Policy Roundtable for Child Care, and ensure that youth who are teen parents access subsidized care for their children prior to their leaving the system

## **2. Youth Development:**

- Developed a sample Educational Plan for DCFS and Probation youth and outlined the responsibilities of the departments, caregivers, and the court for implementing these plans
- Brokered connections between the Orangewood Foundation, the Fulfillment Fund, and the Community College Foundation to help expand the Guardian Scholars Program for emancipated youth to additional Los Angeles area college/university campuses
- Adopted the Youth Engagement Task Force’s belief statement, values, and principles, as outlined in its “Our Voice is Your Future” report, and a set of actions that incorporates them into the Council’s work
- Brokered a process for ensuring the improved access of foster and probation youth to LAUSD’s Beyond The Bell after-school programs
- Partnered with the Los Angeles Youth Transition Action Team (YTAT), a leadership group that is leveraging the resources of the workforce, education, and child welfare systems, to better prepare current and former foster youth to achieve economic, educational, and employment success
- Collaborated with the Working Group for Safer School Communities that was created to reduce violence in selected LAUSD middle and high schools, as well as the Mayor’s Council of Education Advisors, the City of Los Angeles Commission for Children, Youth and Their Families, and the Los Angeles County

Children's Planning Council, to improve the social and emotional well-being of students in high-risk communities and, therefore, their school attendance and achievement

- Assisted Congress's Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance in its efforts to improve access to aid for system youth by proposing new language on the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) that makes it easier for foster youth to self-identify, automatically links FAFSA to the Chafee grant application for online users, and makes financial aid available to youth in relative care or guardianship
- Partnered with UNITE-LA/Chamber of Commerce/UCLA on a Workforce Investment Act (WIA) grant proposal to prepare 200 foster youth, ages 16 to 18, for entry-level jobs in the retail and leisure/hospitality industries

### **3. Data and Information-Sharing:**

- Prepared a comprehensive literature review of research on the educational experiences of dependent and delinquent youth
- Compiled a list of effective characteristics of programs working to close the achievement gap for at-risk youth
- Obtained a blanket order from the Juvenile Court permitting the Department of Children and Family Services and the Probation Department to share information on their youth with the seven school districts on the ECC. These data matches will determine how many foster and probation youth are enrolled in these districts and in each individual school, provide aggregate demographic information, and highlight how these youth are faring academically
- Facilitated a preliminary data match between the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) that collected descriptive statistics and initial academic achievement data on foster youth. Facilitated a similar match between the Los Angeles County Office

of Education and the Probation Department, as well as one between DCFS youth and community youth at The Sycamores Non-Public School. Further data matches are now being planned between LAUSD and the Probation Department, between the Pasadena USD and DCFS, and between the Long Beach USD, DCFS and Probation.

- Developed language for amending the Federal Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) and the California Welfare and Institutions Code that would clarify that child welfare personnel are eligible to receive basic educational information from schools

#### **4. School-based Support (Education Liaisons):**

- In January, the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) convened a meeting of AB 490 Foster Youth Liaisons and Homeless Youth Liaisons to discuss key provisions of AB 490 and McKinney-Vento legislation; the purpose, goals and structure of the ECC; and how the ECC might be most helpful to them in meeting their new responsibilities.
- Four additional meetings of Education Liaisons (school-based probation officers, DCFS staff, court liaisons, AB 490 liaisons, as well as others serving in this role) have been held throughout the year to identify the challenges they are facing and what is currently working for them, to build collaborative relationships and develop solutions.