

August 14, 2007

To: Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke  
Supervisor Don Knabe  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Sharon G. Watson  
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**PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN “*EXPECTING MORE; A BLUEPRINT FOR RAISING THE EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT OF FOSTER AND PROBATION YOUTH*”**

At its meeting on February 14, 2006, your Board approved “*Expecting More: A Blueprint for Raising the Educational Achievement of Foster and Probation Youth*,” developed by the Education Coordinating Council (ECC), and instructed the ECC to report its progress in implementing the recommendations in that document to your Board every six months. The first Progress Report was delivered to your Board on August 14, 2006 and the second on February 14, 2007; this is now the third report.

The ECC has made great strides in implementing the recommendations in *Expecting More* during the first half of 2007 and thanks your Board and the Departments of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and Probation for the significant financial support that made this progress possible. As you will see below and in the attached report from the Probation Department, much is being accomplished in the quest to raise the academic performance of children and youth under the supervision of DCFS and Probation, especially in those areas requiring inter-departmental and/or inter-sector collaboration.

Accomplishments since the last Progress Report in February, 2007 include:

**ECC Operations:**

- Received a grant of \$450,000 from the W.M. Keck Foundation on July 6, for fiscal years 2007-08 and 2008-09, to help implement the Blueprint recommendations
- Submitted a full grant proposal to the Weingart Foundation for \$200,000 for fiscal years 2007-08 and 2008-09 to implement the Blueprint recommendations. The Foundation’s Board of Directors will consider this request at its November meeting.

- Met with several members of the Los Angeles County Grand Jury on March 19 to discuss data and information-sharing issues and shared the LAUSD, LACOE and Pasadena USD data match results with them.
- Incorporated the ECC's Blueprint Recommendation #3 (Increasing participation in after-school and summer enrichment programs) as an objective in the LA County Strategic Plan
- Collaborated with the Children's Planning Council to develop, at the Board's request, a set of "hard-hitting" recommendations for reforming the county's juvenile justice system, including the strengthening of education programs for youth in juvenile halls and camps.

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

- Following a clarification by the U.S. Department of Education, LACOE has determined that it is now able to freely share educational information and records on probation students with probation officers without first obtaining parental consent.
- Facilitated data matches between Lancaster School District, Pomona USD and Long Beach USD students and both DCFS and Probation youth. Results will be presented to the ECC in October.
- LAUSD, LACOE and Probation are piloting a joint electronic education record-sharing program for probation students to facilitate the transition of camp youth back into district schools.
- LAUSD has automated its education record system to allow district records to be readily forwarded among district schools.
- LAUSD is working to amend its Directory Information List, by April 2009, to include DCFS, Probation, Mental Health and other city and county departments. This will allow the district to share student data—name, address, date of birth, dates of attendance, and previous school history—with all of these entities unless the student's parents opt out, and will greatly facilitate the ability to connect foster and probation youth with essential services and supports.
- Working with the Probation Department to train Supervising DPOs and their staff on how to use the Student Record Request Form, adopted by the ECC in January, now that LACOE is able to readily share its educational information with Probation. Training will also be developed for CASAs and children's attorneys.
- In partnership with the Children's Action Network, Casey Family Programs, the Commission on Children and Families and the California Education Collaborative for Children in Foster Care, working with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to secure permission for Los Angeles County to create an electronic-based educational record system for DCFS and probation students.

### **Early Childhood Education:**

- The Steps to Excellence Quality Rating Program (STEPS) was successfully launched on June 22, 2007, which will pilot implementation of the quality rating instruments for child care programs developed by the Policy Roundtable for Child Care. Providers in designated areas (cities and neighborhoods) began submitting letters of intent in July.
- The Los Angeles County Office of Child Care, City of Santa Monica and Connections for Children have agreed to implement a tiered reimbursement rate system for child care providers based on the STEPS program quality rating scale, as their providers move through the rating process. This would be the first tiered reimbursement rate model in the State. Over the next three years, approximately \$3 million will be used to reimburse child care providers (both centers and family child care homes) in the Santa Monica area under this pilot program.
- A central phone line for contacting all ten Child Care Resource and Referral (R&R) Agencies in the county has now been established. The new Los Angeles County R&R Consumer Education Line (888-92-CHILD) will connect callers to the appropriate R&R agency for the zip code requested.
- The Atlas Foundation, Zero to Three and CASA are working with the ECC to establish a training program for CASA volunteers on the unique needs of young DCFS children, ages 0-3.
- The ECC's Early Childhood Education Workgroup is preparing a report that outlines the potential benefits gained from bringing high-quality early childhood education, family support and related services to young children involved with DCFS and to the children of foster and probation youth. This report, to be presented to the ECC in October, will include data on all children under the age of 6 associated with DCFS and the children of DCFS and probation youth, as well as the availability of early childhood education/child care resources for them.
- With First5LA and LAUP, presented information to the ACHSA Strategic Planning Committee on the availability of preschool resources for children associated with the child welfare system and how FFAs may access child care services for the children in their care. An article highlighting resource and referral agencies and preschool services will be included in ACHSA's upcoming member newsletter.
- Partnering with LAUSD to ensure that its Guidelines for School Enrollment of Students Associated with the Child Welfare and/or Probation Systems are applied across all District programs and that children associated with DCFS and Probation have access to the early childhood education, special education, and early intervention services offered by LAUSD.
- DCFS is now implementing its Service Planning Area-based Prevention Initiative to improve the overall conditions of communities and build on the strength of families. This initiative, now aligned with the County's Healthier Communities, Stronger Families and Thriving Children Initiative that targets four geographic areas, will ensure a broad

range of community-based activities, including efforts to increase access to affordable, quality child care and access to educational and recreational after-school programs.

### **Youth Development**

- DCFS hired and trained (with the help of the Children’s Law Center and the Juvenile Court) 15 education consultants to assist that department’s efforts to fully implement the Blueprint recommendations at the regional office level. These consultants are helping social workers to navigate school systems and address the challenging education issues faced by department youth.
- Probation has increased the number of school-based probation officers to 120.
- Partnered with the Probation Department to fund (through the Neil McDowell Trust), develop and administer a higher education scholarship program for probation youth. The first four scholarships were awarded to youth participating in the “Success is Our Future” banquet on May 17.
- A pilot project has been established between the DCFS Metro office in SPA 4 and LAUSD to significantly increase the number of foster youth with grade point averages of at least 2.8, in order to qualify them for \$5000 scholarships for their continuing education. Potentially eligible students are being identified and services wrapped around them to enable them to qualify for these grants.
- The City of Los Angeles, Los Angeles Police Department, Probation, and LAUSD have created 24 safe school collaboratives which align local efforts to create safer schools and safer passages to and from schools.
- The Children’s Law Center, Alliance for Children’s Rights, ACHSA, DCFS, Probation and the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce worked together to include 45 foster youth in the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Job Shadow Day, as part of the County’s Foster Awareness Campaign in May. Youth were able to Job Shadow in the offices of Supervisors Antonovich, Knabe and Yaroslavsky, Mayor Villaraigosa, Assemblymember Karen Bass, LAUSD and a number of other public and private organizations/companies.
- The Los Angeles Youth Transition Action Team led a collaborative effort with Probation, DCFS and the City of Los Angeles Community Development Department to increase the participation of foster and probation youth in this year’s Summer Youth Employment Program. Only 43 system youth participated in this program in 2006. The results of this outreach effort will be available in September.
- Public Counsel Law Center launched an Emancipating Youth Program to address the unmet educational, health, and social service needs of transitioning youth by employing direct legal services, education, and outreach.
- DMH rolled out its Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Full Service Partnership for Transition Age Youth. Navigation teams pairing an outreach specialist with a clinician are positioned throughout the county, with one team assigned to each SPA and 5 teams in juvenile camps. This program, designed for youth ages 16-25, addresses emotional,

housing, physical health, transportation, educational opportunities, and other needs that will help these youth function independently in the community.

- The Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect and DCFS, with assistance from the Probation Department, Los Angeles Mentoring Model Coalition, MPLAY, ACHSA, Commission for Children and Families and the Center for Applied Research Solutions, developed new guidelines for mentoring programs, as well as an instructional video (“Hand to Hand”) to help increase the number of mentor matches for youth in care.
- Over 150 people participated in DCFS’s first annual mentoring summit that trained staff, caregivers, and community partners on the effects of trauma on brain development.
- The DCFS Torrance office, Probation, Children Uniting Nations, and 11 Community based organizations created the South Bay Community Partnership to increase the numbers of foster and probation youth matched with mentors.
- Children Uniting Nations, in collaboration with DCFS and LAUSD, expanded its school-based academic mentoring programs to include John Muir Middle school.
- Created a Youth Development Work Group, composed of 20 diverse agencies/organizations, to recommend actions that the ECC can take to facilitate the participation of DCFS and Probation youth in after-school, off-track and summer skill-building and enrichment programs that provide opportunities to connect to nurturing adults (Blueprint Recommendation #3). Four focus groups were held in June and July with youth, resource families, relative caregivers and congregate care providers in SPAs 3, 4 and 8. The findings were then presented to the Youth Development Work Group at its first meeting in mid-July.

### **School-Based Support:**

- Partnering with LAUSD Superintendent David Brewer and the SEED Foundation to plan at least one residential academy for system and other at-risk youth in Los Angeles, using the model developed by the ECC in 2005 at the Board’s request. Helped create the California Academies for Residential Education (CARE) group to work with other counties (Sacramento, Orange, and Santa Barbara) on statewide strategies and effective California program initiatives
- Probation has instructed its school-based probation officers to reach out to and assist DCFS students at their assigned schools, and DCFS has followed suit with the same policy for its school-based staff.
- Worked with LAUSD, DCFS and Probation on a training component for school staff (superintendents, principals, deans, school counselors, front office staff, etc.) on the needs of foster and probation youth. 800 school-based advocates have been trained on this curriculum to date.
- DMH has worked with school districts to create new identifiers for children and youth with mental health issues. These identifiers are now in place.

- LAUSD established a California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) Boot Camp in order to assist foster, probation, and other at-risk youth with passing the CAHSEE and graduating from high school.
- As a result of the success of the transition open house meetings with parents and guardians at camp facilities, LACOE, Probation, and LAUSD are developing a formal policy and better protocols to facilitate the successful transition of probation students from camp back into LAUSD schools. LACOE educational facilitators in each camp will look at the educational, special education and mental health needs of each youth, review that information with LAUSD liaisons and, together with the youth's parents, design a plan for providing a network of services upon release—including, ideally, returning youth to their home schools and communities. The Probation Department will provide the release dates to LACOE and LAUSD one month prior to these youth leaving camp and returning to their neighborhood schools to facilitate this process. Five counselors in LAUSD's camp returnee program have responsibility for supporting these transitions and functioning as case managers to prepare schools for these youths' enrollment.
- The Keppel Union School district and Pomona USD superintendents have joined LACOE, Lancaster, Long Beach, Los Angeles, and Pasadena in signing a letter outlining AB 490 regulations to help caregivers expedite the enrollment of their foster youth in school.
- Following the release of a letter from Jack O'Connell, the state superintendent of public instruction, outlining the legal responsibilities school districts have for granting and transferring partial course credits, LACOE offered to convene the seven school districts on the ECC to develop and adopt uniform procedures for the transfer and acceptance of all (both partial and full) course credits. These procedures will then be presented to the other school districts in Los Angeles County for their consideration at the next School Superintendent's Meeting scheduled for November.

In summary, ECC members, partners and community organizations are successfully making *Expecting More* a reality and the Council looks forward to reporting further progress in its next report. If you should have any questions or require any additional information, your staff may contact the ECC at: (213) 974-5967.

Attachment: August 7, 2007 Probation Department Memo

cc: Chief Executive Officer  
 Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors  
 Director, Children and Family Services  
 Chief Probation Officer  
 Director, Mental Health  
 Superintendent, Office of Education  
 Education Coordinating Council