

School Attendance Task Force Meeting Notes

Children's Court
January 28, 2014

Attendees

Judge Michael Nash, Juvenile Court	Ruth Cusick, Public Counsel
Zoe Rawson, Comm. Rights Campaign	Lauren Gase, Public Health Department
Lydia Bodin, District Attorney Office	Gail McFarland-Sosa, Probation
Jennifer Gomez-Trejo, LACOE	Vicente Bravo, LACOE
Daniel Healy, Violence Prevention Coalition	Josh Pyrous, Violence Prevention Coalition
Melissa Ross, Advancement Project	Jewel Forbes, LACOE
Alicia Virani, CA Conference for Equality	Patrick Hirsch, Children's Law Center
Katie Butler, Public Health Department	Julie Matsumoto, Operation Street Kidz
Paige Fern, Alliance for Children's Rights	Kristen Byrdsong, City Attorney Office
Erika Torres, LAUSD	Khaira Gastelum, LAUSD
Angelica Salazar, Children's Defense Fund	Kaile Shilling, Violence Prevention Coalition
Selena Ledesma, LAUSD	Angela Chung, Children's Defense Fund
Tony Kuo, Public Health	Gil Espinosa, Advancement Project
Eugenia Wilson, Living Advantage	Natasha Khamashta, Public Defenders Office
Belinda Walker, New Village Charter School	Patty Armani, DCFS-Education
Vincent Holmes, County Chief Executive Office	

Welcome and Introductions

Judge Michael Nash welcomed Task Force members and allowed participants to introduce themselves.

Free Student Public Transportation Passes Presentation

Lauren Gase from the Department of Public Health provided the Task Force with a review of a study prepared by Public Health regarding the cost and benefits of providing free transportation to school-aged youth. The study was done in conjunction with the Free Student Metro Pass subcommittee of SATF and in response to the ECC resolution passed in April 2013. Public

Health also wanted to document and begin a discussion on the relationship between youth health and free public transportation

The study first focused on the potential cost implications of implementing a free transit pass program for students. The study concluded that there would be a decrease in transit fare revenue and an increase in transit ridership. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) provided information about their potential cost if free services were extended to all students. The amount provided was \$21.5M. Extrapolating from ridership numbers provided by the Southern California Association of Governments regional survey, the study estimates that ridership might increase by 22% or 65,000 riders. MTA estimated increased ridership at 18%

The report also outlined several potential benefits if a free transit pass program for students were implemented. Those benefits include:

1. Increase in school attendance: 27% of students (K-12) in Los Angeles County live more than 2 miles from their school. It is believed that attendance numbers would improve as one challenge of getting to school was removed.
2. Decrease in Justice Contacts: 9,966 fare evasion citations were issued in 2012 for youth under 18 years old. Those citations would no longer be issued. The study also noted that black youth were disproportionately represented in the number of citations issued.
3. Decrease in Traffic Congestion: The study noted that a reduction in the number of youth driving or driven to school would reduce carbon emissions, gas consumption and car ridership.
4. Decrease in Injuries: The study noted a finding by the National Safety Council that concluded individuals are 5 times more likely to be injured or killed in a passenger vehicle than while using public transportation.
5. Increase in Available Funds for Schools: The study estimated that if one percent of unexcused absences could be remedied by free public transportation, there would be an additional \$125,000 per year in pupil funding. The study also noted that LAUSD spends \$1.4M on MTA passes and spends \$75M providing bus services for students.
6. Increase in Disposable Income for Families: The study noted that families would save \$288 per child if free public transportation were implemented. Further noted was the fact that transportation expenses represent 53% of total expenses for families making less than \$20,000.
7. Increase in Freedom and Mobility for Youth: The study noted that youth throughout the County would have greater access to recreational activities as well as civic activities as a result of free public transportation.

Lauren Gase also noted that the study will be updated with more current figures as they are received. She also noted that Public Health staff is willing to present their findings to other groups that might be interested in the data.

The complete study is on the SATF/ECC website for those who wish to download it.

Zoe Rawson informed the Task Force that MTA is seeking to increase ridership fees. These increases, proposed over a 6 year period, could adversely impact those most at need of public transportation.

Lydia Bodin noted that on the Student Attendance Review Boards (SARBs), the inability of parents to afford public transportation is often given as one reason youth are unable to get to school. She inquired if the study considered parents and their inability to pay for transportation. Lauren Gase noted that was outside of the scope of the study.

Judge Nash noted his desire to keep this issue front and center, in hopes of seeing this effort become a reality.

Lauren Gase also informed the Task Force that Public Health had received a grant to identify opportunities to strengthen systems to improve school attendance in Los Angeles County. The project will review current practices for truant youth as well as identify their movement through the justice system. To assist with this effort, Lauren Gase asked members of the Task Force to join an advisory body that would provide input throughout the entire phase of the project, including methods, results and practices. Task Force members interested were asked to meet with Lauren Gase after the meeting.

Nondiscriminatory Administration of School Discipline

Zoe Rawson discussed a letter from the Departments of Education and Justice regarding the administration of student discipline sent to all school districts. The letter described the position of the federal government related to racial disparity in the administration of school discipline and provided examples of cases that displayed different treatment of students or disparate impact on students.

The letter aligns nicely with the resolution passed by the ECC in April 2013 regarding school discipline. The letter will be included in the best practices kit that is provided to school districts in the County.

Exclusionary School Discipline Work Group Report

Zoe Rawson, Ruth Cusick and Vicente Bravo provided an update on the efforts of the Exclusionary School Discipline Work Group. Zoe Rawson reiterated to the Task Force a request had been made by LAUSD Board Member Monica Garcia for the Task Force to provide her with suggested objectives and goals as well as possible presenters for LAUSD's Progressive School Discipline Committee which she chairs. A draft letter was shared with Task Force members that would be provided to LAUSD Board Member Monica Garcia. Task Force members were asked to review the letter and provide their comments to Vincent Holmes by Thursday, January 30, 2014. After final revisions, the letter would be given to Judge Nash for review and signature.

Vicente Bravo described a recent meeting with ABC Unified School District and its director of pupil services. The workgroup hopes to meet with all the school districts in the County to learn more about their school discipline policies and share best practices. Vicente Bravo noted that

ABC Unified School District was provided with copies of the LAUSD and Long Beach School Discipline Resolutions. There was a fruitful exchange of ideas and ABC Unified School District noted their desire to look more aggressively at data to better fashion appropriate discipline efforts. The school district also noted their interest in developing restorative justice programs.

Ruth Cusick informed the Task Force that members of the Work Group would be attending a LACOE meeting comprised of school district pupil services staff. The meeting will provide an opportunity to inform school districts about ECC and the School Attendance Task Force as well as share resolutions and documents. The meeting is scheduled for Friday, March 7, 2014 from 8:30am to 12:00pm.

Free Student Transit Passes Work Group Report

Anjelica Salazar updated the Task Force on the efforts of the Work Group to continue researching how best to make free student passes a reality given the fiscal and political hurdles. To assist with this process and in consideration of the government representatives who sit on the Work Group, efforts have been divided into two areas: advocacy and position-taking and, fact-finding and operationalizing.

The Work Group met last and discussed how best to continue researching the funding needs for this project. A survey has been completed by the Youth Justice Coalition on over 2,000 youth to get their insights into transportation issues facing youth in the County. This data will assist in framing the discussion going forward.

The Work Group will also be looking at funding opportunities at the federal, state and local levels and will be looking to partner with carbon emission advocates and others who might see a benefit in this effort. The next Work Group meeting is scheduled for February 4, 2014.

Announcements/Updates

Vicente Bravo informed Task Force members of an upcoming webinar sponsored by the Departments of Education and Justice on their new policies related to student discipline. The webinar is scheduled for Wednesday, January 29, 2014. Vincent Holmes suggested that the information be emailed to him and he would forward to all the Task Force members.

Vincent Holmes informed the Task Force that a small meeting would be occurring regarding the Student Attendance Review Boards (SARBs). The goal of that meeting will be to better understand the SARB process and invite the relevant participants to the next Task Force meeting.

Next Meeting

The date for the next meeting is:

Thursday, March 20, 2014

12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m.

Location: TBD

Conclusion and Adjournment

Judge Nash adjourned the meeting at 1:50 p.m.