



Education Coordinating Council

October 19, 2016

9:30 a.m.

First 5 Los Angeles, Suite 300
750 North Alameda Street, Los Angeles, California 90012

Present: Maria Brenes
Maria Castro and Erika Torres, representing Michelle King
Jessica Chandler
Jesus Corral, representing Cal Remington
Sylvie de Toledo
Debra Duardo
Mónica Garcia
Stefanie Gluckman
Judge Donna Quigley Groman, representing Judge Michael Levanas
Leslie Heimov
Bryan Mershon, representing Robin Kay
Fabricio Segovia
Loren Solem-Kuehl, representing Philip Browning
John Wagner, representing Kim Belshé

Chair Mónica Garcia brought the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m., welcoming everyone, thanking the Department of Children and Family Services for sponsoring today's meeting costs, and expressing appreciation to First 5 Los Angeles for the meeting space.

Garcia asked ECC members and the audience to introduce themselves, then reminded attendees of the Council's purpose to coordinate efforts across organizations and jurisdictions, encouraging varied networks of people to work together to expand best practices and help fill gaps, where necessary, to prevent system-involved children from being left behind educationally. The Council's primary role is to be a champion of education and to promote the achievement, well-being, and safety of youth in three ways:

- As an *advocate*, mobilizing support across various public and private stakeholder groups
- As a *convener* and *broker*, working with other organizations to identify problems and develop solutions
- As a *policymaker*, spearheading strategies that support the increased educational achievement of the County's youth

Today's meeting will:

- Examine the current status of issues, solutions, and opportunities in the area of early childhood education for system-involved youth.

- Discuss and vote on endorsing the Foster Youth Education Toolkit
- Review current and upcoming efforts for transition-age youth
- Hear member updates and accomplishments

Garcia noted a meeting-day change for the Council’s quarterly gatherings—from the third to the fourth Wednesday of the month—to accommodate several members with standing commitments that conflict with the ECC. She encouraged members to contact Stefanie Gluckman if this shift causes a problem.

Recent Data Released on California Foster Youth Re-Invigorates ECC Mission

Stefanie Gluckman welcomed the group. “Only a few months ago, we were developing our strategic plan,” she began, “and already we’ve been able to check some items off as completed. Our biggest achievement was our report to the Board of Supervisors, *Advancing Efforts To Support Self-Sufficiency for Transition-Age Foster Youth*, which is very exciting.”

As a requirement of the state’s Local Control Funding Formula, Gluckman stated, the California Department of Education recently published data on the number of foster students at county, district and school levels, as well as their performance on Common Core-aligned tests. Unfortunately, 56.2 percent of these students did not meet standards in English Language Arts, and 64 percent did not meet standards in Mathematics. “That gives us a baseline,” Gluckman said. “We know that there’s been progress in the past, but it’s been measured in a different way. These numbers tell us there is room for growth. It’s time to dig in, make a commitment to change, and see if those changes make a difference when the next data comes out.” In coming months, the Department of Education will also release figures on suspensions and expulsions of foster students, their graduation rates, and their movements between schools.

These data measure only foster children with open cases; there remains a need for data-collection about children in kinship care, adoptive, and other situations.

Early Childhood Education

First 5’s John Wagner introduced Katie Fallin, who was recently promoted to director of First 5’s early childhood education section.

A report commissioned through the Advancement Project covering 2000 through 2010—available for download at <http://www.ecelandscapela.org/>—focuses on the early childhood education landscape in the areas of access, workforce, and quality, which are also areas of focus in First 5’s strategic plan for early childhood. This report found that the birth-to-five population in Los Angeles County—650,000 in 2010—had declined by 12.5 percent since 2000 and was expected to continue to drop. That population was predominantly Latino and part of low-income families residing in the south and central portions of the county.

The concept of **access** addresses the number of licensed child care seats available in the county’s mixed delivery system versus the number of children needing them. The Advancement Project report found that licensed seats existed for only 2.4 percent of infants and toddlers, and for less than half (43.1 percent) of two- to four-year-olds. Full-day preschool slots were also difficult to find. These service gaps were at least partially caused by certain areas not having recovered from program closures and cut-backs caused by the recent economic downturn.

In concert with other advocates, First 5 is working at the state level to increase public funding for early childhood programs and to form a collective voice for policy in Sacramento. As part of a \$15 million investment in longstanding early childhood organizations (those committed to early childhood education for years), that coalition recently released a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for an intermediary and is close to selecting one that will begin administering an anticipated eight grants at the end of this fiscal year or the beginning of next.

Very little is known about the **quality** of early childhood facilities in California, Fallin said. Although nearly every other state employs some form of a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), California has no framework to assess, rate, and improve the quality of early childhood education and make that data available to parents and the public. (Even in terms of basic health and safety, the state schedules licensing visits only every five years.) Quality Start Los Angeles, an umbrella group of 22 organizations including the Los Angeles County Office of Child Care and Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP), is working with First 5 L.A. to convene QRIS architects that will look at the best of what is functioning well elsewhere and develop a system to be used in Los Angeles County.

Workforce is the most important element in early childhood education programs, Fallin said. A 2011 study found that Los Angeles County had 42,300 individuals working in the field, about one-third of those likewise employed statewide. First 5 is working with its Bay Area counterpart on piloting an early childhood workforce registry (which California also lacks), and wants to support systems that prepare that workforce and provide continuing education opportunities, training, and professional development that would tie in to the quality portion of a QRIS.

In answer to Stefanie Gluckman's question about how the Education Coordinating Council might facilitate work in the early childhood arena, Leslie Heimov pointed out one area of need. "The approximately four hundred teen parents who are themselves in the foster-care system have a very difficult time accessing high-quality child care," she said. "That has a negative impact not only on their infant children, but on the teens themselves, who may not be able to pursue their educational or career goals because they can't afford to have anyone watch their kids. They're often not eligible for subsidized care, and a general lack of trust in the system can also create difficulties in their interactions with child care workers. Adults need to be specially trained and educated to work with young parents, especially those in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. That would be a great opportunity for the ECC to help."

When teen parents have custody of their children, those children may or may not have open cases with the Department of Children and Family Services. When they don't, the family can access fewer services. "It's not an uncommon situation for a teen with an open case to be in a foster home where the foster parent works full-time and cannot look after any young children," Heimov went on. "All the responsibility falls on the teen."

Relative caregivers who need to work experience a similar dilemma, Sylvie de Toledo added, when they either can't locate child care or can't afford it. "It's a Catch-22," she said. "With no child care, they might have to give up the kids. And if they themselves are working and not on welfare, they can't get child care."

On the juvenile justice side, Judge Groman recommended including teen offenders' children in case planning. "If a case plan reflected the need to improve parenting skills," she said, "that could motivate these teens to make some changes in their lives."

First 5 is looking at trauma-informed care, and Gluckman asked if it is working with the Department of Mental Health to ensure early assessments. Although no direct partnership exists, Fallin reported a commitment to including early developmental screenings as an ongoing practice in the statewide quality matrix being created. Coaching, training, and support to early childhood providers will encourage connections with the Department of Mental Health.

Each child detained by the Department of Children and Family Services receives a routine mental health screening, Bryan Mershon explained, that is reviewed by Department of Mental Health staff who then make referrals for any additional assessments or clinical treatment deemed necessary. Children's social workers complete similar screenings at any points of change when mental health services for the child may be advisable. Multidisciplinary teams likewise perform psychosocial, medical, dental, and educational assessments as part of the child's comprehensive service plan. (Because of Medi-Cal's focus on mental health, identifying learning disabilities or special-education issues is not necessarily a part of this process.) The Department of Mental Health is also participating with First 5 in developing trauma-informed care.

From the audience, Terry Ogawa expanded on Leslie Heimov's point. "The early childhood education system is built around the adult, not the child," she said. "It and child welfare have different priority populations, which creates difficulties in accessing services." The Los Angeles Policy Roundtable for Child Care, whose mission is to inform the Board of Supervisors about issues around child care and development, is similarly focused both on trauma-informed care and on connecting families and children in the child welfare system with high-quality early childhood education. Ogawa hopes for opportunities for the ECC and the Policy Roundtable to work together on these concerns.

The Department of Children and Family Services has been encouraging its social workers to place more children in early childhood programs throughout the county, Steve Sturm said, with 1,700 three- and four-year-olds having been referred to slots in the past year. "Only about half of them actually got in," Sturm said, "but we're working with fourteen providers to build more real-time connections between them and our social workers. When a family falls out of the process, or a kid doesn't get a seat, we want agencies to let social workers know right away. We're also developing new messaging to parents about the importance of early childhood education."

Michele Sartell from the Los Angeles County Office of Child Care acknowledged that the system of determining a family's eligibility for subsidized care is a complicated and challenging one. The county's Child Care Planning Committee (which the California Department of Education mandates for each county) performs a needs assessment every five years, the latest will be launched in March in partnership with First 5. The assessment includes recommendations around access, quality, and workforce, but its data-capture encompasses only a limited set of questions. "What do we still need to know?" Sartell asked. "What are the barriers? What are the challenges?"

The Los Angeles County Office of Education's board meeting yesterday included conversations about early childhood education, Debra Duardo reported. LACOE has 13 delegate agencies that provide early childhood services to 13,000 children, using a standardized birth-to-five curriculum. "We're collecting extensive data that we're happy to share," Duardo said. "I was pleased to find out that eighty percent of these LACOE teachers have a bachelor's degree, and all are required to be licensed or to have earned an associate's degree. In addition, we are reimbursing expenses for parents who want to further their education in child development and taking them

on as teachers' assistants and then teachers. Pregnant and parenting teens are eligible for our programs, and are given priority.”

Mónica Garcia concluded the discussion by acknowledging the complexity of early childhood issues and asking how desired behavior might be incentivized. “We usually begin with the lowest-hanging fruit,” she commented, “not the hardest to reach, like system teens who have kids. This is going to take multiple approaches and multiple tries.”

School-Age Youth

Jill Rowland, Education Program Director at the Alliance for Children's Rights, presented the Foster Youth Education Toolkit, created to help school districts and county offices of education improve outcomes for foster and probation youth. Through the prism of California's new Local Control Funding formula, it helps schools and school districts identify local needs, include system youth in their school accountability and funding systems, and establish a program blueprint.

The original version of the Toolkit concentrated primarily on the components of AB 490, the 2004 legislation that charged school districts, county social service agencies, and other professionals with additional responsibilities to facilitate educational equity for foster children. “AB 490's been on the books for twelve years,” Rowland said, “but there's still a lack of enforcement and implementation in many school districts.” AB 379 (effective January 1, 2016) incorporated foster youth education rights into California's Uniform Complaint Procedure process, creating a mechanism by which foster youth can now enforce their rights.

The Toolkit's latest edition, included in meeting materials, focuses on trauma, data (whether revised policies actually improve outcomes), youth and community engagement, and accountability plans. It also includes an important piece on school ‘pushout,’ a practice that transfers students from comprehensive schools to continuation schools as a result of behavior problems, discipline issues, or poor academic progress. The Toolkit's aim is to have every youth in an appropriate educational program, with education rights holders playing a central role. It is meant to be an online instrument for starting discussions and building evidence; each section outlines legal provisions and best practices for implementation, and then includes access to downloadable tools that can be edited.

The Alliance has piloted the Toolkit with Bonita Unified School District—a district located on the east side of the county that serves about 500 foster youth every year and has a high group-home population as well—and has seen the beginnings of much progress. Forty-five percent of foster youth are enrolled in school within 24 hours of their placement, 99 percent of high school youth who leave or arrive at individual schools mid-semester receive partial credits, and graduation rates have increased 5 percent. The Alliance hopes to work with the Los Angeles County Office of Education in 2016 and 2017 to implement the Toolkit countywide and inspire other school districts with Bonita's success. (LACOE will be sending out the Toolkit to its 80 school districts and encouraging its use, Debra Duardo said.)

“We want feedback and we'll integrate as much as we can,” Rowland told attendees. Upcoming projects include a similar toolkit for social workers, probation officers, attorneys, and the judiciary, plus another publication for children birth to age three.

In answer to queries about the Bonita Unified School District, Rowland explained that the district was from the outset very data-driven, having identified baselines and built tracking systems

before the Alliance began the pilot. Its challenges were similar to those of other school districts, including a lack of resources and funding for foster youth. Only two liaison positions exist for 500 foster students and the district structure took some navigation, Rowland said. “But with so many group homes in the area, kids coming in and out, they were frustrated, too,” she added. “They wanted to follow them—stabilize these kids and work with them longer. One of the missing pieces for them was youth, caregiver, and community engagement focusing on these students with their relatives and foster homes.”

Jesus Corral thanked Rowland and the Alliance for their work. “We just trained two hundred field juvenile probation officers on education advocacy, and the Toolkit was a key component. Folks are excited about it. They really feel they have the information they need now.” Maria Brenes agreed, especially praising the Toolkit’s explanation of the complex Individualized Education Program (IEP) process as being useful for any youngster, not just foster students. She sees opportunities to pull training materials for caregivers and parents from the Toolkit, and would also like to see it translated.

Mónica Garcia will see that the Toolkit is distributed throughout the Los Angeles Unified School District, from preschools to adult schools, and will also follow up on the translation suggestion. She additionally recommended a video treatment for those who learn best through listening.

Leslie Heimov moved that the Education Coordinating Council endorse the Foster Youth Education Toolkit as presented. Debra Duardo seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Transition-Age Youth

Since the ECC’s last meeting, staff has been working on the provisions of an October board motion (included in meeting packets) to advance efforts to support self-sufficiency for transition-age youth, as well as also looking at promising programs, including college and career preparation.

- Stefanie Gluckman introduced Minsun Park Meeker, Director of **FosterEd: Los Angeles**, an initiative of The National Center for Youth Law (<http://foster-ed.org/research.html>). FosterEd: Los Angeles’s overall vision for young people in state care, Meeker said, is for them to graduate from high school with as wide an array of possibilities for the future as possible. They should be positively engaged in school, take charge of their own learning, and have supportive adults in their lives.

FosterEd partners with local education, child welfare, and judicial agencies to implement a continuous cycle of data-driven interventions:

- ✓ Finding and supporting education champions who are informed of their rights and responsibilities and paired with education coaches to help increase their capacity to support educational success; whenever possible, biological parents are educational champions
- ✓ Creating and facilitating education teams that include the student (if age-appropriate), educational champion(s), social workers, school staff, caregivers, court-appointed special advocates (CASA), and any coaches, mentors, or other community members able to help the student succeed in school

- ✓ Creating asset-based individualized education plans based on the student's strengths and needs, as identified with a research-based tool

This model has improved the educational outcomes of children in foster care and has also ensured they exit care with education champions and teams that continue to support their educational success.

FosterEd: Los Angeles has been providing support to school districts in this county for the past two years, including in the Antelope Valley, the South Bay/Torrance area, and the Los Angeles Unified School District. It is now planning a full College Readiness pilot in school districts with high levels of foster youth, particularly focusing on high school graduation and post-secondary education opportunities, and ensuring that education champions are trained and supported in their knowledge of available college and career-readiness pathways. Conversations are underway with LAUSD and with the Los Angeles County Office of Education in coordination with its Foster Youth Services unit; FosterEd wants to expand to include probation youth, especially when they are transitioning back to their home settings and schools of origin. Meeker stated that the organization hopes to hire staff in 2017 and begin services in the fall of that year.

In answer to a question from Leslie Heimov about how education champions differ from education rights holders, Meeker explained that it depends on the jurisdiction of the site. In New Mexico, Arizona, Indiana, and California's Santa Clara County, champions are sometimes students' caregivers, sometimes their education rights holders, and sometimes CASA or other volunteers. "The goal is to find adults to participate in the trainings and be with these kids for the long term," Meeker said.

Maria Brenes raised the issue of problematic transfers to continuation schools and how to prevent them. "For kids to complete any college or career preparation program, they need to stay in comprehensive settings," Brenes said. Meeker acknowledged that this is a focus of the teams' planning, which coordinates with child welfare planning to address similar issues and barriers.

- Thomas Lee, director of the **L.A. Opportunity Youth Collaborative (OYC)** coordinated by the Alliance for Children's Rights, explained that the OYC brings together various stakeholders to prepare foster youth transitioning out of care for independence—completing high school and gaining access to college and gainful employment. After FosterEd's College Readiness pilot works with high school students, the OYC will provide academic support to these youth when they attend college, and, through the Performance Partnership Pilot (P3), offer employment services and resources to youth who choose to take a career pathway.

The OYC's numerous partners allow access to a full continuum of city and county services for working youth. The summer youth employment program, for example, grew from 400 to 800 slots last year, training youth and matching them with employers, and Lee would like to see that program expand geographically. Other areas of focus include working with philanthropy and the Chamber of Commerce to make sure youth are ready for college, with access and direct enrollment; raising Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion rates; and making sure the provisions of AB 167 are applied appropriately.

Member Updates

- Office of Child Protection intern Barbara Spyrou reported on the OCP's work to respond to the June 2016 Board of Supervisors motion to support **self-sufficiency efforts for transition-age youth (TAY)**. In partnership with youth-serving County departments, the OCP created a TAY workgroup to:
 - ✓ Identify new goals to meet the needs of TAY
 - ✓ Develop new annual performance-based goals for department heads
 - ✓ Revisit an integrated service delivery plan developed in 2013

The TAY workgroup created a modified integrated service delivery plan that builds upon the current model and addresses the challenges of the original approach. Highlights of this modified model, whose overall goal is the integration of self-sufficiency services for all departments, include:

- ✓ Educating youth and families about the importance of having all youth-serving departments as part of child-and-family team meetings to provide the best opportunities for youth to reach self-sufficiency
- ✓ Starting services (especially mental health and education services) earlier, at age 12, thereby creating a solid foundation for career and college readiness
- ✓ Ensuring a *single* transition plan for each student—to be used by Child and Family Teams, Youth Development Services, school districts, and others—that is clear as to goals and paths, includes no duplicative services, and allows departments to better identify barriers to self-sufficiency

The workgroup also identified promising programs and opportunities for improving self-sufficiency in four areas: education, housing, employment, and social/emotional well-being. These include FosterEd: Los Angeles' College Readiness pilot, expanded internship programs, and possible philanthropic opportunities in housing and social/emotional well-being through the Center for Strategic Public-Private Partnerships.

The OCP's October 4 report to the Board of Supervisors was included in meeting packets. The TAY workgroup will continue to meet with the goal of continuing service integration for TAY and implementing this modified plan.

- Renovation of Camp Kilpatrick and Camp Scott Jesus Corral reported on the demolition of all buildings at Camp Kilpatrick—built in 1962 on 11.5 acres in Malibu—to make room for a new facility that is expected to be completed in early 2017 and ready for youth by April. It will be rated for a total of 120 residents, as was its previous incarnation, but its building area has increased from 49,500 to 64,500 square feet. The design of the new 'Campus Kilpatrick' facilitates Probation's 'L.A. Model' shift from a correctional/custodial atmosphere to a rehabilitation environment, emphasizing cottage-style housing to better support treatment and behavioral modification interventions. A renovation of the dormitory-style facility at Camp Scott (which serves females) is also planned; materials on that were included in meeting packets.

The Department of Mental Health, the Los Angeles County Office of Education, the courts, and other county partners have been pressing for and supporting Probation's transformation,

Mónica Garcia said, adding, “We have fewer young people incarcerated now than ever before, and we have an opportunity to do something different with them.” The total housed today in all probation camps is less than 500 youth, Corral said, and he is optimistic that L.A. Model best practices can be absorbed and replicated at all facilities.

Jessica Chandler asked if the guidelines for qualifying for camp placement were changing. “Traditionally, it’s been difficult to be cleared to go to camp, with psych evaluations and everything making it harder to get in,” she said. “If you have only exceptional youth there, then of course you’re going to have success. Kids in the juvenile justice system are just the same as kids in the child welfare system, and need the same kinds of help.” Chandler wants to be sure that camp reform practices spread to the juvenile halls.

- Los Angeles County Office of Education Debra Duardo reported on LACOE’s strategic planning process, which includes supporting its 80 school districts with trainings that are consistent with the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), a component of the new Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) that each school district must engage parents, educators, employees, and the community to establish.

Duardo thanked Jesus Corral for his help with LACOE’s flourishing partnership with the Probation Department. “We’re seeing incarcerated kids making positive gains,” she said. “The probation schools now feel like schools, not jails.”

LACOE is committed to creating a countywide policy regarding the active implementation of legislation that supports system-involved youth. If anyone is interested on serving on the group developing this, Duardo asked that they let Stefanie Gluckman know.

Adjournment

There being no public comment, Chair Mónica Garcia adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

Next Meeting

The Education Coordinating Council’s next meeting is scheduled for:

Wednesday, January 25, 2017
9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Room 739, Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012