



## **Education Coordinating Council**

**August 4, 2021**

**9:00 a.m. | via Zoom**

Present: Acting Chair Akemi Arakaki, Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court  
Fabricio Segovia, ECC Vice Chair (former foster youth)  
Cesar Casarrubias, Pomona Unified School District  
Jessica Chandler, Department of Children and Family Services (former foster and probation youth)  
Jesus Corral, Probation Department  
Pia Escudero, Los Angeles Unified School District  
Julie Eustler, Lancaster School District  
Stefanie Gluckman, ECC Director  
Leslie Starr Heimov, Children's Law Center  
Kathy Hunter, William S. Hart Union High School District  
Rebeca Hurtado, Department of Mental Health  
Jodi Kurata, Association of Community Human Service Agencies  
Raul Maldonado, Palmdale School District  
Judge Michael Nash, Office of Child Protection  
Mark Rodgers, Bonita Unified School District  
Devon Rose, West Covina Unified School District  
Deborah Silver, Department of Children and Family Services  
Sonya Smith, Los Angeles County Office of Education  
Claudia Sosa-Valderrama, Long Beach Unified School District

Speakers and Guests: Joseph Bishop, UCLA Center for the Transformation of Schools  
Jewel Forbes, Los Angeles County Office of Education  
Denise Grande, Department of Arts and Culture  
Ana Gutierrez, West Covina Unified School District  
Alex Kelman, DMH+UCLA Prevention Center of Excellence  
Luciana Svidler, Children's Law Center

Minsun Park Meeker, Office of Child Protection  
Barbara Spyrou Lundqvist, Office of Child Protection  
Elisabeth Salazar, Office of Child Protection  
Alex Bowen, Office of Child Protection

Monica Banken, Fifth Supervisorial District  
Lisa Pinto, Third Supervisorial District

The Office of Child Protection's Executive Director, Judge Michael Nash, introduced Judge Akemi Arakaki, newly appointed Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court, today taking the meeting-facilitator role for ECC Co-Chair Mónica Garcia, who was unavailable. Judge Arakaki started out

with Los Angeles County as a public defender, was appointed to the bench in 2010, and has spent the bulk of her time in the juvenile court system. She served as the Supervising Judge of the Dependency Court for the past several years, and now presides over the largest juvenile court in the nation. “She is exceptionally well qualified for that position,” Nash said, “and I look forward to working with her.”

“I’m the child of an educator and all of the women in my family were educators,” Arakaki said. “As soon as I read that the ECC was a ‘champion for education,’ I knew I wanted to be at this table. Thank you for inviting me.” She briefly described the court’s very active Education Committee—which has recently formed a pre-K subcommittee dedicated to the needs of young children—and acknowledged the educational and other challenges faced by unhoused children and foster youth, especially those in congregate care. Referring to recent state legislation requiring a supportive adult to be identified for each foster child to assist them with postsecondary education college admission and financial applications, she stated, “The juvenile court intends to be active in making sure the provisions of SB 12 are carried out properly.”

### Meeting Focus

Barbara Spyrou Lundqvist covered virtual-meeting housekeeping topics, including the online [location of meeting materials](#) that in some cases supersede those previously distributed. ECC Director Stefanie Gluckman then introduced the central topic of the meeting.

“After more than a year of social isolation, school closures, and the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on racial and ethnic minority groups,” Gluckman said, “we are on the precipice of a return to school. How can the ECC and its partners address both the academic loss caused by pandemic strictures and the social/emotional needs and safety of the students we serve? School districts are receiving an influx of COVID relief dollars, but spending this money effectively requires understanding the options, which can be made more clear by knowing what others are doing. Our speakers today will share their efforts.”

### Pandemic Recovery | Leveraging Relief Dollars

Dr. Joseph Bishop from the **UCLA Center for the Transformation of Schools** reviewed information presented in [Making the Most of the New Funding: Strategies to Better Support Historically Marginalized Students](#), encouraging spending models that leverage state and federal resources prioritizing students experiencing homelessness—approaches also valuable for foster youth. The American Rescue Plan, for example, offers \$23.9 billion in support for K–12 education in the U.S., while \$1.4 trillion in relevant federal funding is available for foster, homeless, and economically under-resourced youth and families. Bishop detailed nine evidence-based strategies that could be deployed with these new monies:

1. Train educators in the science of learning and student development.
2. Strengthen school support systems to mitigate the effects of adverse community conditions.
3. Increase investments in schools, which can lead to improved academic outcomes for low-income students.
4. Provide targeted professional development and capacity-building for teachers.
5. High-quality preschool has lasting positive academic, social, and economic effects.
6. A positive school climate can reduce the negative effects of poverty.
7. Educator qualifications and capacity matter.
8. Offer deeper learning that prepares students for today’s world of work.
9. Parents, families, and community are critical partners.

Devon Rose outlined the activities that the **West Covina Unified School District** is implementing this summer (using blended funds) that bolster the district's focus on social/emotional supports:

- Four-week extended learning sessions in June and July to help students reconnect
- Camp-style programs for transitional kindergarteners through twelfth graders
- Hiring 10 comprehensive counseling interns to make classroom presentations on social/emotional well-being
- Classes on social/emotional well-being for parents and school staff, coaching them on recognizing children's triggers and where to go for support
- Two sessions for foster youth, in July and August, focused on the strategies of resilience
- A student-produced video to be viewed by all students during the first week of school
- A [Mental Wellness Festival](#) on Saturday, August 28
- Using one-time dollars to retain a consulting group to bring social workers and counselors to elementary-school sites, which normally don't have those positions

Claudia Sosa-Valderrama encouraged meeting participants to review the **Long Beach Unified School District's** [2021–22 Learning Acceleration and Support Plan](#) (soon to be translated into Spanish and Khmer) and the four pillars upon which it is built:

- Academic acceleration and support (pages 6 through 10)
- Social/emotional well-being (pages 11 through 13), including multi-tiered systems of support, restorative-justice programs, wellness centers in all comprehensive high schools, and an equity leadership team of community members, parents, staff, and district administrators
- Engagement and voice (pages 14 and 15)
- Infrastructure and capital for the future (pages 16 and 17)

ECC member Jessica Chandler raised an important point and some questions. “Kids are immersed in the national news—the George Floyd murder, injustices of all kinds, repeated law-enforcement incidents,” she said. “Black and brown kids don't feel safe, they don't trust cops on campus, and they don't much want to go to school. Can there be some engagement with law-enforcement agencies and with county social workers about how they interact with the community? About how to persuade kids and families to reach out and accept help instead of just feeling sure they'll be hurt further by these folks? The people providing services to kids need to *look like them*,” she emphasized. “We can't continue the model of ‘white saviors’ being the only people who can help us.”

(Related materials provided by Rebeca Hurtado from the Department of Mental Health, or DMH, include an article from the *Journal of Adolescent Health*, [Unpacking Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Emotional Distress Among Adolescents During Witnessed Police Stops](#), and DMH's anti-racism handout for schools, [Taking a Stand Against Hate and Racism in the Classroom, School, and Community](#).)

Sonya Smith is new to the **Los Angeles County Office of Education**, having come in March from the Hawthorne School District, which had support from a mental-health team within the Hawthorne Police Department. “Finding the right person for the role of school resource officer was crucial, and we were fortunate to have someone educated in restorative practice that interacted well with staff, parents, and students,” she said.

Pia Escudero, executive director of [Student Health and Human Services](#) for the **Los Angeles Unified School District**, applauded Chandler's comments, recommending that ECC members embrace this opportunity “to empower *all* adults to be protective factors for children,” as she

phrased it. “We have a tremendous responsibility to do this right,” she continued, “and to infuse ‘looking at the whole child’ into our daily practice.”

- LAUSD’s [Roadmaps for Social-Emotional Well-Being and Academic Success](#) are resources created for parents/caregivers and educators to support children’s sense of safety, connectedness, and self-efficacy, and their ability to be calm and hope.
- The Pritzker Family Foundation has funded the district to provide culturally relevant trainings for thousands of parents on setting expectations/limits for their children.
- Implicit-bias training is also widespread.
- A mental health evaluation team has been created with LAUSD school police in response to the approximately 1,500 suicide-related phone calls received within the district every school year. The team interviews and supports the youth and arranges, when necessary, for psychiatric evaluations.
- School staff, administrators, and volunteers have launched this year’s ‘seek and search,’ knocking on doors to find students and ensure that they return to school.

Denise Miranda, LAUSD’s director of [Student Support Programs](#), reported that most of the district’s specialized student services counselors have been back since early July and are connecting with students to encourage attendance and review basic needs. Other staff are returning this week and “are hitting the ground running,” Miranda said.

- Many staff have had two days of training on motivational interviewing.
- A grant from Verizon has set up laundry facilities at some schools.
- Counselors can now give mini-grants to students/families—for interview-appropriate clothing, for example, or for fees to obtain certain government records.
- [Beyond the Bell](#) is planning outdoor educational field experiences and field trips.

#### Pandemic Recovery | Social/Emotional Supports

“Everyone you encounter has a deeper story,” Alex Kelman began. “Whether you’re aware of it or not, all of us have our own history and our own wounds. The more you know, the more you can contextualize ‘bad behavior’ and understand it.” The [DMH + UCLA Prevention Center of Excellence](#), where Kelman is director of training, is a public/private partnership that engages the Los Angeles County workforce in creating stigma-free environments, enhancing employee skill sets, and promoting the well-being of peers and professional providers who serve children, families, and adults. Kelman reviewed several Center activities:

- Trauma-informed training to staff and educators at 15 [Community Schools](#) across Los Angeles County; this initiative uses a ‘one-stop shop’ model for health, academic, and social/emotional supports for students and community stakeholders
- Following a transition from all-live trainings to a recorded virtual platform via [Wellbeing4LA](#), ‘anytime sessions’ are available to schools at no charge. Topics include [Enhancing School Communities](#), racial injustice, managing student stress and anxiety, suicide, and intergenerational trauma and racism.
- Curated learning communities for counselors and teachers to sustainably build capacity
- Public service announcements in various languages focused on mental health awareness

- Ten-month Early Childhood Fellowships for cohorts of 28 to 30 individuals to obtain a deep education in trauma, inequities, and supporting very young children and their families

Rebeca Hurtado from the **Department of Mental Health** is working closely with the Prevention Center of Excellence and the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) to create a ‘school team’ within DMH.

- Schools with no ties to mental health service providers may now contact DMH directly through a [referral form](#) available for download. Since schools were shut down, over 250 of these referrals have linked children, siblings, and families to direct services.
- Mental health well-being [workshops](#) for educators to use with students are available in English and Spanish through DMH’s School-Based Community Access Platform; since June, 132 educators have taken advantage of these offerings.
- Planning is underway for the annual school symposium hosted by DMH, LACOE, and UCLA, which over 700 people attended virtually last year.
- Meetings with mental health providers are held 10 months out of the year; if school districts would like to attend, please e-mail Hurtado at [RHurtado@dmh.lacounty.gov](mailto:RHurtado@dmh.lacounty.gov).
- Technical assistance for schools is also available on anti-hate and anti-racism issues, on grief and loss among staff, and in the wake of a suicide or adverse event on campus.

The **Los Angeles County Office of Education**’s Jewel Forbes reiterated the importance of providing services for students and families and linkages for mental health professionals during the pandemic. Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools Debra Duardo and DMH director Jonathan Sherin released a joint message at the beginning of the pandemic shutdown, and LACOE has:

- Expanded collaborations already in place
- Shared the DMH mental health services [referral form](#) with all 80 school districts
- Worked with subcontracted agencies to provide telehealth services
- Expanded its offerings of trainings and workshops
- Created a roundtable offering virtual trainings to support mental health and well-being, including an ‘overcoming stress’ series for educators that tied in with the George Floyd murder
- Hosted a two-day ‘grief and loss’ workshop, which will be offered again in the fall
- Developed a well-received after-school ‘Learn and Earn’ mentoring program matching students with LACOE employees

Forbes also cited the involvement of the Department of Public Health and its [Office of Violence Prevention](#) and its [Trauma Prevention Initiative](#) in providing information critical to student well-being. “Schools need to prioritize mental health,” she said. “Students coming back need to be assessed and have a strong support and referral system in place, with all staff trained on needed supports and where to get them.”

LACOE began a ‘community of practice’ for social/emotional well-being a few months ago, Sonya Smith noted, as a safe space to discuss challenges and highlight best practices, empower participants to take care of themselves, create a culture of belonging, and address trauma and adversity.

Denise Grande from the **Department of Arts and Culture** spoke about the role of the arts in addressing all the goals and concerns touched on during this ECC meeting. “We hear these days that the arts are serving as a lighthouse for school districts and as sustenance for engaging with

communities and with foster youth in particular,” she said. “The arts help humans process their trauma, heal from it, and build resilience against adversity. We believe that all youth should be able to engage in the arts—all year, every year.”

- The [Los Angeles County Arts Education Collective](#), coordinated by Arts and Culture, is grounded in partnerships with community-based organizations, nonprofit arts organizations, and teaching artists—“Role models who look like the students and are credible messengers,” Grande added.
- With LACOE, the department also offers [Technology Enhanced Arts Learning](#) (TEAL) for professional development and coaching that integrates the arts and healing-informed practices, along with the [Center for Distance and Online Learning](#).
- In the emerging field of healing-centered engagement, especially as it relates to arts-based youth development, the ArtsEd Collective publishes *Healing-Centered Engagement—Reflections and Insights from the Field*, a zine available [here](#).
- As ECC members have heard previously, Arts and Culture has partnered with the OCP, DMH, and the [Arts for Healing and Justice Network](#) to develop a well-being curriculum that builds a shared understanding of protective and risk factors, with workshops offered to educators and care staff both during the pandemic and after schools reopen.

#### Action Item

Stefanie Gluckman called for a vote on the proposal that the Department of Arts and Culture be included as a member of the Education Coordinating Council. A virtual poll was launched (for member-only votes), and the result returned unanimously in favor of that department’s addition to the council.

#### Adjournment

There being no public comment, Acting Chair Arakaki thanked everyone for attending today’s meeting, remarking especially on the eloquence of Jessica Chandler in expressing her concerns and issues. “There is no one answer,” Arakaki said, “no panacea. We all know that having a police officer come into your classroom means nothing if that same officer arrests someone for something on campus. It’s a big challenge. My role models took the time to really see me, and we need to do that for everyone, child and adult alike—truly understand what has happened to each of our own selves, those we serve, and those we work with. We are making strides, and this is our moment in time to address these huge issues. I’m grateful to be here and work with all of you,” she told participants. “We’re going to do great stuff.”

#### Next Meeting

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

**Wednesday, November 17, 2021**  
**9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.**  
*Zoom link to come*

#### Adjournment

There being no further public comment, Acting Chair Arakaki adjourned the meeting at 11:02 a.m.