



Education Coordinating Council

January 25, 2017

9:30 a.m.

Room 739 Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

- Present:**
- Helen Berberian, representing Phillip Browning
 - Maria Brenes
 - Jenny Cheung, representing Leslie Heimov
 - Jesus Corral, representing Terri McDonald
 - Stefanie Gluckman
 - Judge Donna Quigley Groman, representing Judge Michael Levanas
 - Brian McDonald
 - Bryan Mershon, representing Jonathan Sherin
 - Judge Michael Nash
 - Bruce Saltzer
 - Fabricio Segovia
 - Erika Torres, representing Michelle King
 - Rachelle Touzard, representing Debra Duardo
- Guests:**
- Laurel Bear, Alhambra Unified School District
 - Kelvin Driscoll, Fourth Supervisorial District
 - Taylor Dudley, First Supervisorial District
 - Jason Hasty, Los Angeles County Office of Education
 - Alaina Moonves-Leb, Alliance for Children's Rights
 - Lisa Pinto, Third Supervisorial District
 - Scott Price, Los Angeles County Office of Education
 - Christopher Thompson, Department of Mental Health
 - Michelle Vega, Fifth Supervisorial District
 - Emily Williams, Second Supervisorial District

In the absence of Chair Mónica Garcia and Vice Chair Michael Levanas, Judge Donna Groman brought the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m., welcomed everyone, and thanked the Department of Mental Health for sponsoring today's meeting costs. She then asked ECC members to introduce themselves.

The Education Coordinating Council is proud of everything it accomplished in 2016—summarized in its annual report, submitted to the Board of Supervisors on December 22 and available at [http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/bc/1010207_ECCAnnualReport_2016.pdf#search=%22education coordinating council%22](http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/bc/1010207_ECCAnnualReport_2016.pdf#search=%22education%20coordinating%20council%22)—and looks forward to further achievements in 2017.

Since the ECC's last meeting, the Board of Supervisors has appointed:

- Dr. Jonathan Sherin as Director of the Department of Mental Health, in October
- Terri McDonald as Chief Probation Officer, in November
- Sheila Mitchell as Assistant Chief Probation Officer over Juvenile Services, in November

Building In Trauma-Informed Care

Many youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems have experienced trauma. The behaviors they exhibit as a result are often misinterpreted in the classroom as willful disobedience. Adults may also believe youth have more control over their behavior than they actually do. To help trauma-affected youth reach their potential in school, those who work with them must understand their history and its impact on their behavior and learning profiles, and learn how best to help them within the school or care environment. The three components of trauma-informed care are:

- ✓ **Safety**—creating physical and emotional safety at school
 - ✓ **Connections**—creating meaningful relationships
 - ✓ **Self-regulation**—modeling, teaching, and practicing self-regulation with students
- The **Los Angeles Unified School District** serves around 14,000 homeless students and 8,000 foster children, along with around 1,500 youth each year who exit the juvenile justice system's halls and camps. "Trauma-informed care is a priority," stated Erika Torres, "and is being integrated into the district's strategic plan." One of LAUSD's six local districts is currently piloting training on trauma-informed care practices, and the district's ultimate plan is to train all school staff, administrators, principals, senior leadership, and classified and certificated staff. Tactics and interventions for promoting wellness and resiliency in students and for administering 'psychological first aid' are also in the strategic plan.
 - The **Los Angeles County Office of Education's** Foster Youth Services program, funded by the California Department of Education, supports educational outcomes for all students in foster care and on probation (in group homes) in Los Angeles County—over 20,000 school-age children. It also provides technical assistance and support to the county's 81 school districts and 270 charter schools with regard to foster and probation youth, and supports interagency collaboration among those districts, the community, the Department of Children and Family Services, and the Probation Department. In addition, FYS is involved with developing policies and protocols with regard to Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs), coordinating student transitions to college and career, and planning for collaborations to meet Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) transportation requirements.

In 2015, FYS partnered with Teach Through Love to develop and deliver three sessions of a six-week online trauma-informed care practice program for foster parents, biological parents, relative caregivers, school district staff and teachers, group homes and foster family agencies, DCFS and Probation staff, and LACOE contracted tutoring providers. To date, over 1,600 participants have accessed the program, 72 percent of whom completed all six weeks. In 2016, FYS developed training materials for more than 23 workshops and professional development trainings, as well as for the first annual symposium for education and students in foster care.

In the summer of 2017, FYS will implement the Trauma-Informed Practices for Schools (TIPS) model developed in San Diego County, partnering with the Beginning Teacher

Support and Assessment program (BTSA) to provide trauma-informed training for all new teachers that covers child welfare and the foster care system, as well as the impact on academic development of child abuse, neglect, and trauma. FYS is also developing partnerships with local universities to encourage trauma-trained beginning teachers to earn needed service hours by providing academic tutoring or mentoring for students in care.

For the schools that LACOE administers in the seven probation camps and three juvenile halls, it is collaborating with the Probation Department on dialectical behavioral therapy training, which will bring a social/emotional component to the project-based curriculum in those schools and broaden trauma-informed care practices in those environments.

- The **Pasadena Unified School District** is in the nascent stages of exploring trauma-informed care, said Superintendent Brian McDonald, and is partnering with community-based organization Young & Healthy to provide trauma-informed training to six ‘focus’ schools with the most hard-to-educate students. Teachers and staff will be trained to recognize trauma and taught some techniques to calm students, how to establish ‘peace corners’ to aid in emotional regulation, and so on. The district is also working with community partners who visit students’ homes to find out what family needs are and try to get them met. Foster youth are a special area of priority for the district.
- “The majority of probation youth are victims of trauma,” said Jesus Corral, “and training in trauma-informed care is important.” He introduced Jennifer Owen, director of the **Probation Department**’s residential treatment service bureau, who reviewed the *Think Trauma* training curriculum for staff in juvenile justice residential settings that was developed by the National Center for Child Traumatic Stress and piloted in Los Angeles County in response to an initiative to eliminate the use of isolation in juvenile facilities. Dialectical behavioral therapy emphasizes self-regulation, but trauma-informed care is the foundation for staff’s meeting youth where they are, accepting that there are reasons for their behavior, and acknowledging that youth want to do better. “It’s a balance of acceptance and change,” Owen said, “that, in a supportive environment, works for everyone.” The curriculum was adapted to include a module on self-care for adults dealing with trauma-affected youth, and that module has been one of the best-evaluated trainings Owen has ever been involved with.
- Seeing a need for trauma-informed training, the **Alliance for Children’s Rights** developed a ‘first-level’ curriculum to give schools a foundation for the culture shift necessary. It covers brain science and the psychology of trauma and youth (especially foster youth), Alaina Moonves-Leb said, and also helps trainees understand certain classroom behaviors, giving them specific tips and resources for coping. The curriculum is currently being utilized in the 13 schools of the Bonita Unified School District, which serves students in San Dimas and La Verne. “The entire staff is being trained, down to the janitors and the school safety officers,” Moonves-Leb said. “It’s really opening up some eyes. People want more strategies and we’re now looking for more in-depth training as an ongoing resource.”
- Bryan Mershon outlined the **Department of Mental Health**’s involvement in the trauma-informed care workgroup hosted by First 5 Los Angeles, which is looking at a menu of evidence-based practices that mental-health clinics might bring to school campuses. One issue in data-tracking has been the inability to break out on-campus service hours from clinic-based service hours; that issue has now been addressed.

- Laurel Bear, Assistant Superintendent for Student/Employee Welfare at the **Alhambra Unified School District** (AUSD), reviewed that district's journey toward trauma-informed care that began in 2008, when it created a collaborative school-based infrastructure called Gateway to Success to provide alcohol and drug, safety, mental health, and early education services to its students.

This district-wide program led to a trauma-informed transformation of AUSD's 220-student continuation school, where a four-day summer training in trauma-informed care and practices is mandatory for all school personnel and where parents are also trained to understand the family commitment involved and what practices occur at school. Behaviorists from Pacific Clinics are in every classroom to assist students with de-escalating tense situations, verbally naming problem and feelings, setting positive goals, identifying solutions and thinking through their consequences, and going ahead with the best plans for resolution. "Kids have allies there," Bear said, "adults whom they know they can go to, who'll help them regulate their emotions. We have mindfulness groups and provide depression screenings."

Positive responses to school climate surveys have increased from both students and staff, particularly because of the 'self-care' component for staff that includes free membership to the YMCA and monthly wellness seminars that have been very well received. "Not everybody was on board with this transition originally," Bear continued. "We worked very hard with the unions and gave staff the opportunity to transfer to other school sites. What we're hearing now is that those who *did* transfer are regretting their decision."

Graduation and attendance rates have improved at the continuation school; students are more positive and monthly meetings with parents are well attended. "The setting is targeted to trauma-exposed kids," Bear said, "to show them that they can communicate and engage, prepare for work situations, and think through their processes. And the adults around them at school model those desired behaviors, too. If the kids don't know how to share and play together, we teach them. It's a strategic approach to a comprehensive school-based project—at the same time engaging parents and building relationships, even down to the front office calling home when kids miss school." Suspension and expulsion rates, Bear added, are nearly nonexistent.

Across AUSD, about 2,200 students each year receive school-based mental health services provided at no cost to the district through partnerships with 11 agencies, nine universities, and several foundations. The district is also working with Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (as LACOE is) to help new teachers address the needs of trauma-exposed students immediately. "We give them the infrastructure for support," Bear said. "How to generate referrals, who's on campus at their site. More kids are trauma-exposed in our community and we need to ease their stressors so they're able to process directions from their teachers, problem-solve, and develop solutions. Our climate surveys tell us that students feel that school is an engaging place with reliable adults, and they want to be there. Parents likewise feel welcomed and they know where to go for help. And although the demands on them are extreme, our staff feel that the support and training the district offers has equipped them to be better teachers."

During the ensuing discussion, Bear explained that the impact of the Gateway to Success program on attendance and graduation rates has been tracked by the University of California Los Angeles for the past ten years, with data identified by unique student number. The evaluation of

increased staff capacity is in its third year, and a pre- and post- evaluation with parents at the continuation school is also planned. Outcome measures on Gateway and other best practices will go a long way to ‘sell’ those initiatives to other school districts.

ECC members agreed that educating other districts about this program and these practices could be beneficial. In response to questions about replicability, Bear further noted that, when the Gateway program began 11 years ago, it was funded through Federal programs attempting to break through the stigma of accessing mental health services. “Today, we have no Federal funding,” she said. “Everything comes through LCAP general funds and through partnerships. We’ve increased our capacity to serve students eligible for Medi-Cal, and use local education agency funds for social workers to help the homeless families of our students link up with housing and jobs; they do case monitoring with the adults while we work with the kids. The sustainability of the Gateway program is completely a result of our board of education’s vision.” LACOE’s Rachelle Touzard imagines that mental health clinics throughout Los Angeles County would be willing to develop MOUs to adapt their services onto Gateway-like campuses.

Janis Spire would like to see data tracking foster youth’s access to Gateway and similar programs. Alhambra is not a district with a large number of probation youth, Jesus Corral mentioned, although he believes Gateway practices would benefit districts that do. (Alhambra is a declining-enrollment district, serving about 17,600 students overall.) Judge Nash remembered that, in the past, LACOE and the ECC hosted bi-annual informational and discussion meetings for all school superintendents with the heads of DCFS, Probation, the courts, and the Department of Mental Health, and suggested that the council consider reinstating that practice.

Meeting Federal School Stability Requirements

In 2008, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act required child welfare agencies to include in every child’s care plan the directive that the child remain in his or her school of origin (where they attended when removed from their families) unless a school change is in the best interest of the child.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)—enacted on December 10, 2015—contained key protections for students in foster care and imposed new requirements on education agencies relating to school stability and prompt school enrollment (similar to those the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act imposed on child welfare agencies). Under ESSA, local school agencies must collaborate with their child welfare partners to ensure school stability and success for these youth.

“Together,” Stefanie Gluckman explained, “ESSA and Fostering Connections envision a dual-agency responsibility. State and local education agencies and child welfare agencies are required to *jointly* ensure school stability.” They must work together to develop clear written transportation procedures for youth in foster care who remain in their school of origin, and these procedures must include the extent to which each agency will pay or share the cost of this transportation. (The default position is that children *should* remain in their schools of origin when their placement changes, unless transferring to another school is determined to be in their best interests. However, the cost of transporting students from a new placement to their school of origin may not be considered in making that determination.)

Helen Berberian from the **Department of Children and Family Services** reported that DCFS has been actively working, both independently and with the Los Angeles County Office of Edu-

cation, on meeting ESSA requirements. Berberian met with LACOE's Superintendent Debra Duardo about this issue a week and a half ago, and has been closely collaborating with Dr. Rachelle Touzard as well.

With input from LACOE, DCFS is developing a decision tool to help make recommendations about school-of-origin determinations. It is also researching potential costs and logistics based on as accurate an estimate as possible of the number of children in care to be placed outside their school-of-origin catchment areas, who will therefore need to be transported.

Touzard reviewed the ESSA timeline and stated that the state's ESSA plan—informed by all local plans—will be issued in September 2017. Besides holding ESSA trainings and disseminating state and Federal guidelines during the first part of 2016, LACOE hosted transportation roundtables with 58 school districts in September 2016 (facilitated by Foster Youth Services staff, the DCFS education unit, the Alliance for Children's Rights, and FosterEd: Los Angeles) and in November produced a transportation primer—included in meeting handouts—for school districts and DCFS. It also formed and cultivated six regional learning networks within Los Angeles County and created a transportation subcommittee to build capacity/develop relationships with districts and provide technical assistance with transportation plans.

- Judge Groman would like to see the Probation Department also involved with these transportation plans, as many probation youth qualify for school-of-origin determinations.
- One of the reasons transportation becomes an issue is a lack of placement homes within large parts of Los Angeles County. Often, the options when children are removed from their families are located far out of their home neighborhoods. DCFS would love to explore the school-based recruitment of foster families to increase local caregiver alternatives, Berberian said.
- A 'best interest' decision-making tool is being developed to incorporate the child's wishes with regard to possible school transfers, as well as input from social workers and schools. It will also address the investigative phase of DCFS's involvement, along with continuing services. Once the tool is fully vetted, it will be widely shared.
- Martha Matthews from Public Counsel reminded attendees that, in California, social workers and schools do not make decisions about foster children's education options—the holder of a child's education rights does. "Difficulties with transportation create a huge temptation for schools of origin to be declared *not* in a child's best interest," she said, encouraging parents, relatives, and other caregivers to become robust champions of reducing school transfers. The CDE is pushing ways to measure the frequency of school transfers over time, but that measurement is not yet being done. With the county's data-sharing agreement, Matthews said, it might be possible to figure out whether school transfers for foster youth are decreasing over time. "Otherwise, it'll be hard to tell if these new regulations are working," she concluded.

Member Updates

- Scott Price, chief financial officer of the Los Angeles County Office of Education, reported on the Governor's budget released two weeks ago, which he characterized as a 'maintenance budget' in terms of education. The base year for local control funding formulas was 2014, with a target year of 2021 to complete the reverse (or at least the amelioration) of the effects on schools of the great recession. As funding increases from year to year, the current year

becomes the base year, and the target shifts. “Twenty-four percent of the gap was a huge amount of money in the past,” Price explained, “but now that the gap is less, it’s not so much—equivalent to between a one and two percent increase. Automatic increases in contributions from school districts to the state retirement systems come in at about two percent a year as well, which is why this is a maintenance budget. The governor’s hands are tied by existing revenues. We’re grateful for what we’ve received over the past few years, but the economy is slowing down. We’ll see what happens in the May budget revise.”

- In an ongoing partnership with the Alliance for Children’s Rights, Jesus Corral said, the Probation Department provided training on educational advocacy to between 200 and 300 field probation officers in September 2016. A meeting in December, hosted by the ECC and including representatives from the halls and camps as well as the Alliance for Children’s Rights, was the launching point for providing similar training on educational advocacy to probation youth themselves. This is slated to begin at one of the probation camps this spring. Probation is also working with the Center for Juvenile Law and Policy at Loyola Law School to develop parent trainings on this subject.

According to Jason Hasty from LACOE, the vision is to connect the Road to Success Academies curriculum used in the probation camps with trainings for education rights holders, bringing students’ personal experiences into the classroom.

- Lauren Gase from the Department of Public Health reported on the youth diversion motion passed by the Board of Supervisors yesterday. Research shows that involvement with the juvenile justice system can have considerable negative consequences for youth, and the motion concentrates on diverting youth at their earliest points of contact (arrest or citation) with that system. An ad hoc committee of the Countywide Criminal Justice Coordination Committee (CCJCC) will be formed—chaired by the Department of Public Health’s Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention, which has already been convening key partners to coordinate youth diversion work—to report back in 120 days on the core components necessary to effectively tackle this issue, explicitly focusing on going to scale with a community-based approach and planning for the monitoring and evaluation of these efforts. The Chief Executive Office will identify the ongoing infrastructure needed with regard to funding, staffing, and sustaining this process.

Public Comment

- Martha Matthews referred to a report by Public Counsel that she will make available to ECC staff, *Will Continuum of Care Reform Improve Education Outcomes for Foster Youth?* “We’re beginning to think about the education component of CCR,” Matthews said, “to avoid pitfalls in the future. I urge the ECC to take up the matter at a future meeting.”
- The departments of Mental Health, Children and Family Services, and Probation have convened a steering committee for the Continuum of Care Reform workgroup, and Bryan Mershon said members would be happy to present at the next ECC meeting.

Adjournment

Chair Groman adjourned the meeting at 11:25 a.m.

Next Meeting

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

Wednesday, ~~May 3~~, 2017

[change in date]

9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

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500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012