



Education Coordinating Council

January 24, 2018

9:30 a.m.

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

Present:

Mónica Garcia, Chair
Helen Berberian, representing Bobby Cagle
Maria Brenes
Jessica Chandler
Sylvie de Toledo
Leslie Heimov
Judge Michael Levanas
Bryan Mershon, representing Jonathan Sherin
Sheila Mitchell, representing Terri McDonald
Bruce Saltzer
Erika Torres, representing Vivian Ekchian
Rachelle Touzard, representing Debra Duardo

**Staff, Speakers,
and Guests:**

Judge Michael Nash
Stefanie Gluckman
Barbara Spyrou
Mandi Enders
Erica Ontiveros

Alaina Moonves-Leb, Alliance for Children's Rights
Mark Rodgers, Bonita Unified School District
Loren Solem-Kuehl, Department of Children and Family Services
William Cochrane, Department of Children and Family Services
Greg Lindner, Los Angeles County Office of Education
Khai Nguyen, Los Angeles County Office of Education
Jesus Corral, Probation Department
Jessica Petrass, John Burton Advocates for Youth
Daisy Esqueda, Los Angeles Unified School District

Mark Baucum, Fourth Supervisorial District
Maral Karacussian, Fourth Supervisorial District

Chair Mónica Garcia brought the meeting to order at 9:37 a.m., welcomed everyone, and thanked the Department of Mental Health for sponsoring today's meeting costs. She then asked ECC members, meeting speakers, and audience members to introduce themselves.

Accomplishments

- The ECC's 2017 annual report will be presented to Board deputies at the end of January and distributed to members prior to the ECC's April meeting. It catalogues the strides made last year toward goals outlined in the ECC's five-year strategic plan, especially in the areas of early childhood education, ESSA school stability, continuum-of-care reform, trauma-informed care, access to the arts, and electronic information-sharing.
- Los Angeles County is participating in the John Burton Advocates for Youth's California Foster Youth FAFSA [Free Application for Federal Student Aid] Challenge, led locally by the Los Angeles County Office of Education's Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program. The state's goal is to have at least 61 percent of foster youth who are seniors in high school complete their FAFSAs—matching the general population—but LACOE has set its local goal at 90 percent completion to ensure that Los Angeles County's foster youth receive the necessary financial aid to succeed in college. Chair Garcia encouraged all ECC members working with high school seniors (or younger) to urge them to complete the form.

Education Data: Improvements and Opportunities

“The good news is,” Stefanie Gluckman said, “that we’ve gone from having almost *no* education data on foster youth to having some. The bad news is that data is messy and inconsistent. Now we need to collecting clean, comprehensive data that is shared in a single efficient system and is accessible to multiple providers, including the Department of Children and Family Services, Probation, the courts, resource families, and youth.”

- Foster Youth Data at the State and School-District Levels

Alaina Moonves-Leb from the Alliance for Children's Rights presented state-collected data comparing the performance of foster youth to all students on California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) tests, along with comparisons between California and Los Angeles County foster youth/all students in the areas of drop-out/graduation rates in a four-year cohort, attendance and chronic absenteeism rates, and suspensions. Although these comparisons show Los Angeles County numbers as being roughly in line with statewide statistics, Moonves-Leb said, “Both are pretty grim.”

In addition, because of placement changes, many foster youth do not attend high school as part of a four-year cohort, nor does the state's measure of ‘chronic absenteeism’ include foster youth who are out of school for reasons not under their control (delays in enrollment, etc.). “All in all,” Moonves-Leb continued, “this data is inconsistent and incomplete, with many missing parts. The state doesn't collect information on immediate enrollment at placement changes, for example, nor the number of school changes students experience. Schools and school districts themselves need to track more information about foster youth, and we need to figure out how to solve the challenges of doing that.”

Mark Rodgers, director of student services at the Bonita Unified School District, thanked LACOE for spearheading the Los Angeles Educational Passport System (LA-EPS), which Bonita was the first district to upload. “We're now seeing it become what we hoped it would, which is very useful,” he said. Mark outlined critical data elements that school districts hope to see in EPS. Critical data elements include:

- Every school the youth has attended
- Transcripts for high school students (including any partial credits earned)
- Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), which ideally arrive with students so they can immediately be placed in classes most fitting for them
- Reliable contact information for Education Rights Holders

Bonita is a member of a six-district regional learning group for schools with large numbers of foster youth that is addressing questions of measuring success for the highly mobile foster youth population and identifying key metrics for students who attend given schools for only a short time. “We need to get the state chewing on how we measure success for a kid who’s attended six different high schools,” Rodgers said.

- DCFS Student Information Tracking System (SITS)

Helen Berberian expressed her appreciation to the ECC for supporting the long-overdue work necessary to reconcile, synthesize, harmonize, as well as improve data-collection and sharing processes for youth enrolled in school districts within Los Angeles County.

In her attempt to determine how many DCFS-supervised children and youth attend each school district located within Los Angeles County, Berberian researched a number of local and state data matches of foster student and education data, each with its own strengths and weaknesses.

- ✓ The California Department of Education’s Student and School Data Files reported the largest number of foster students in each school district, which suggests an aggregate student reporting methodology throughout a school year.
- ✓ In contrast, the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) captures a moment-in-time census, with last year’s snapshot having been taken on October 4, 2017. Although CALPADS encourages additional data submissions throughout the school year, it does not require them. As of mid-December, only half the school districts had updated their CALPADS information.
- ✓ The California School Dashboard, intended to report school-district performance and success measures, is based upon the latest available state data and is updated once each fall with new enrollment numbers and demographic information.
- ✓ The DCFS Student Information Tracking System (SITS)—developed first with the Los Angeles Unified School District and then with additional school districts—was Los Angeles County’s first automated foster-student academic data-sharing system. However, to date, SITS includes data on only 50% of the county’s school districts.
- ✓ LACOE’s Education Passport System (EPS) is the county’s second-generation academic data system, sharing information among LACOE, DCFS, and the county’s 80 school districts. SITS is now transitioning to EPS, but both systems are limited to data on children and youth with open court cases. Also, although EPS sends data to SITS, Berberian found during her research that the two systems’ numbers did not match up.

For all these reasons, Berberian concluded, none of these data sources yet presents a reliable picture of the educational achievement of foster youth. She applauds the ECC's efforts to improve this situation.

Loren Solem-Kuehl reviewed the history of SITS, which began in 2011 with LAUSD—initially with 1,200 students, then progressing to 3,000 students with a specific court order. The Uninterrupted Scholars Act of 2013 opened up the ability to share data in large batches, and LAUSD, Pomona Unified, and Long Beach Unified began sharing full student records in late 2013. In 2015, LACOE and DCFS began collaborating on sharing data, and districts were added to SITS through 2017. William Cochrane reviewed screen shots of the system from the point of view of the children's social worker accessing it.

Plans are for SITS to fold into EPS as the single point of foster-youth data-sharing for school districts and DCFS, with EPS handling all modules such as coordinating transportation to school-of-origin, school transfers, and records transfers. DCFS is currently working with LACOE to finalize an EPS Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and to develop and implement a transition plan to be piloted in the Torrance DCFS office. DCFS and LACOE both committed to finalizing the EPS MOU by the next ECC meeting on April 25th.

- Los Angeles Educational Passport System (LA-EPS) (Los Angeles County Office of Education)

Greg Lindner, LACOE's chief technology officer, gave an overview of LA-EPS, the mechanism for school-district data-sharing for the county's foster youth population that was designed with input from LACOE Student Services and the foster-youth user community. To date, 81 school districts have signed MOUs to share data (76 public-school districts and five charter schools), and 63 districts—over a thousand users—are already sharing data. Lindner and his team work directly with district information-technology staff and software vendors to make data from the various student-management systems used within Los Angeles County compatible with EPS.

Current features of EPS include:

- ✓ Student demographics, the CALPADS Foster Youth Report, and information on students from DCFS social workers
- ✓ The ability to view and share digital student cumulative folders
- ✓ LACOE foster youth case management and service tracking functionality
- ✓ Other services for Juvenile Court Schools and the Probation Department (multidisciplinary tracking, Individual Learning Plans, and camp assessment unit reporting)
- ✓ A consent mechanism for students over 18 years of age to allow school districts to view their records

Upcoming features of the system will include:

- ✓ Data-sharing with Los Angeles County's early education student population, with Green Dot charter schools, with the county's homeless student population, with

community colleges (Los Angeles Mission Community College initially), and with the state's new child welfare system

- ✓ Functionality to support the tracking of transportation, 500 plans, and AB 216 status
- ✓ Access to other Los Angeles County agencies such as the courts and the Department of Workforce Development, Aging, and Community Services

LACOE is providing EPS services at no cost to school districts, and Lindner committed to convene an advisory user group to direct where the system goes in future (data-sharing with Regional Centers was suggested, as well as more comprehensive linkages with charter schools). Social workers at the DCFS Torrance office are currently beta-testing the EPS system, which Lindner wants to make “everything they need to replace SITS.”

Khai Nguyen walked attendees through screen shots of the web-based system in action, noting that users may request permission through EPS to view scanned documents attached to a file. Agencies themselves handle access and permissions for their employees, so LACOE is not making decisions about sharing confidential material. “We leave those up to the owners of the data,” Lindner said.

Leslie Heimov mentioned that school districts often provide answers about what records can be released that differ from district to district, and even between employees of the same district. A digital system seems to offer an opportunity to make that consistent, and Lindner would welcome someone to the advisory user group with knowledge about that particular barrier.

- Juvenile Justice System Education Data (Probation)

Jesus Corral expressed appreciation to Greg Lindner and to Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools Debra Duardo for “getting us to the point where we’re really starting to make a difference in serving youth in residential centers,” as he put it. The multidisciplinary team (MDT) component of EPS—which is primarily for youth in probation camps, and which includes the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Health Services, LACOE, and school districts—has been in the works for several years. Probation cohorts trained by LACOE find that module very helpful—particularly the automated meeting scheduling feature.

Although the Probation Department collaborates on learning plans at the local level, it has view-only access to EPS right now and does not input or share anything directly into the system. Chief Deputy Probation Officer Sheila Mitchell committed to work towards having Probation staff input and share data.

Corral is also excited about the future project with community colleges, especially as Probation is working with Los Angeles Mission Community College to create a re-entry center on that campus for youth returning to the community from probation halls and camps.

Next Steps for Education Data

Chair Garcia urged those involved in this project to continue to press for quality. “We might be setting up a model here for the entire nation,” she said, “showing that Los Angeles County can succeed in breaking down walls, removing obstacles, and remaining student-focused.”

Stefanie Gluckman recapped the next steps around sharing education data:

- Finalizing the EPS Memorandum of Understanding between LACOE and DCFS
- Establishing an EPS stakeholder advisory group
- Reopening discussions with the Probation Department regarding its sharing information in EPS

Gluckman also challenged the juvenile court to begin discussions with the EPS team so judicial officers can more easily access education data for youth appearing in their courts. Judge Michael Levanas agreed, especially with the recent refurbishment of the court's case management system, that now is a good time to convene the Courts and EPS to explore that option.

In addition, after learning that a lack of reliable information on youths' Education Rights Holders was often a significant barrier for school districts, Levanas committed to researching whether or not that information can be included on every minute order issued from the dependency and delinquency courts.

Postsecondary Education Tracking

Jessica Petrass from John Burton Advocates for Youth presented that organization's work with LAUSD to track higher-education outcomes for foster youth. How many are going from high school to college? How are they doing once they get there? What factors are important to their success or present barriers to it? The LAUSD school board recently passed a resolution allowing for flagging foster youth in the district's aggregate reporting into Cal-PASS Plus (PASS standing for Partnership for Achieving Student Success), a data system for the education-to-work pipeline that was created by the California Community College Chancellor's Office. That project is in its initial stages, and those involved hope to expand from community colleges into the University of California and Cal State University systems, as well as to private colleges.

Educational Results Partnership, the nonprofit organization co-managing Cal-PASS Plus, is working to obtain accurate information regarding foster youth, LAUSD's Daisy Esqueda reported—data that represents a full picture of young people touched by the foster system. “Not just whether they're enrolled in community colleges,” Esqueda said, “but whether they need remedial courses, if they're earning associate degrees or completing certificated courses, if they're transferring to four-year institutions (and if so, where), details about extracurricular activities, and so on. We want to do a better job of supporting foster youth.”

Court Companion to the Foster Youth Education Toolkit

Alaina Moonves-Leb from the Alliance for Children's Rights presented the *Court Companion* to the Foster Youth Education Toolkit, which was formally endorsed by the ECC in October 2016. (Both the Toolkit and its *Court Companion* are meant to be online tools, although hard copies of the *Companion* were included in today's meeting packets.)

The *Companion* provides step-by-step instructions and checklists on what is required from each member of a foster/probation youth's education and case management team, including Education Rights Holders, social workers/probation officers, schools of origin, youth's attorneys, parents' attorneys, and judges. Each initial section begins with an overview of the law pertaining to that team member's role, then moves on to best practices for that role before, during, and after every court hearing. The latter portion of the *Court Companion* includes a series of comprehensive court tools that provide sample language for various standardized reports.

Moonves-Leb is looking for opportunities to share the *Court Companion* and make it widely useful, and encouraged ECC members to share the website address on the final page of the handout. She will present the *Companion* at the Partnership Conference scheduled for June 7, 2018, on the Cal State University Los Angeles campus.

Further modules being considered for inclusion are special education, trauma, and school-based discipline; a similar comprehensive companion for foster parents was also suggested.

Chair Garcia asked anyone with ideas about how to leverage the *Companion* and increase training opportunities to e-mail Stefanie Gluckman at SGluckman@ocp.lacounty.gov.

Next Meeting

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

Wednesday, April 25, 2018

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

Room 739, Hahn Hall of Administration

500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

Adjournment

There being no public comment, Chair Garcia adjourned the meeting at 11:26 a.m.