

EDUCATION COORDINATING COUNCIL 2024–2029

STRATEGIC PLAN

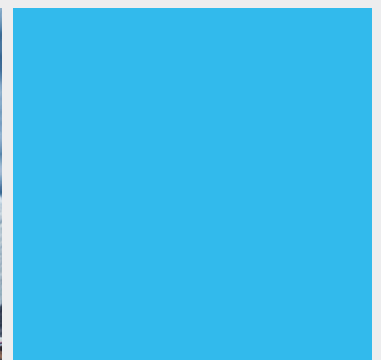
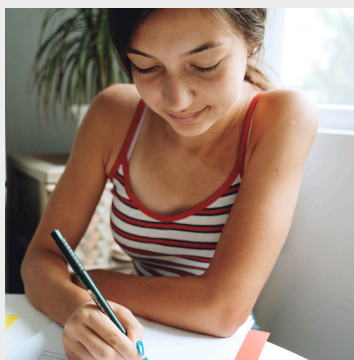
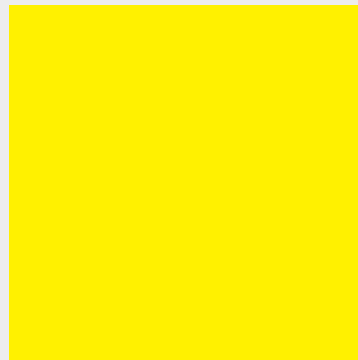
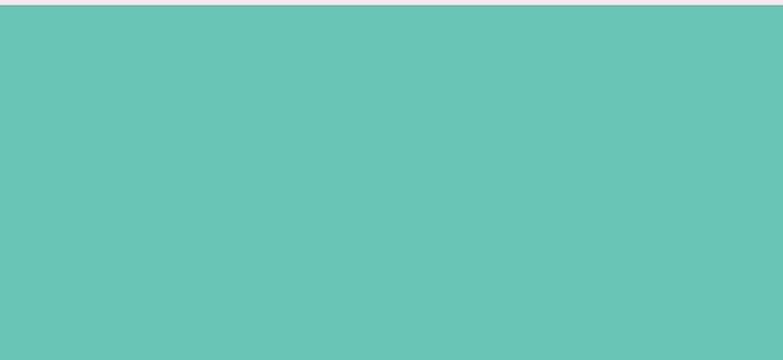




TABLE OF CONTENTS

Glossary of Terms	3
Introduction: Our Strategic Plan	7
Who We Are	10
Mission	10
Role and Approach	10
What We Know	11
Child Welfare	12
Juvenile Justice	13
What We Want	14
The Strategic Planning Process	15
What We Learned: Insights From Listening Sessions	17
Young People’s Listening Sessions	17
Partner/Stakeholder Listening Sessions	21
The Council’s Nine Basic Agreements	24

Our Strategic Plan 26

 Priority Areas 26

 The Plan..... 28

 Priority Area 1: Stability 28

 Priority Area 2: Information-Sharing and Data Integration 32

 Priority Area 3: Chronic Absenteeism..... 37

 Priority Area 4: Youth Engagement and Supports 42

 Priority Area 5: Collaboration, Communication, and Partnerships ...47

 Priority Area 6: Academic Achievement 50

 Priority Area 7: Post-Secondary Educational Achievement
 and Workforce Readiness 55

Implementation and Next Steps..... 57

Acknowledgements 58

 Education Coordinating Council Officers, Staff, and Members..... 58

 ECC Constituents and Stakeholders..... 60

Endnotes 61



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ACHSA	Association of Community Human Service Agencies
BID	Best-Interest Determination
CADAA	California Dream Act Application [<i>secondary-education financial aid</i>]
CALPADS	California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System
CASA	Court-Appointed Special Advocates
CBO	Community-based organizations/partners
CCALA	Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles
CDE	California Department of Education
CFT	Child and Family Team
CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM	When a student misses 10% or more of school days over the course of the school year; this includes both excused and unexcused absences
CLC	Children’s Law Center
CSW	Children’s Social Worker
CTE	Career Technical Education
CWS/CMS	Child Welfare Services/Case Management System [<i>the state-mandated case-management system used throughout California</i>]
DCFS	Department of Children and Family Services
DPOs	Deputy Probation Officers
DYD	Los Angeles County Department of Youth Development
ECC	Education Coordinating Council
ECC CONSTITUENTS	Los Angeles County community members who wish to be apprised of the ECC’s work or who partner with ECC members to implement the work of the ECC

ECC MEMBERS	Leaders from youth-serving county agencies and educational institutions, advocates, community members, and young people who have experienced the child welfare or juvenile justice systems who are voting members of the ECC body. For a full member list, please see the Acknowledgements starting on page 30.
ELA	English Language Arts
EPS	The Los Angeles County Office of Education’s <u>Educational Passport System</u> , a data-sharing system between all school districts within Los Angeles County, specifically to share information for youth in foster care.
EPY	Expecting and Parenting Youth
ERH	Educational Rights Holder <i>[by default, a minor’s parent, but if a parent/legal guardian is unable or unwilling to meet this legal, educational responsibility then the court will limit the parent/guardians rights and appoints a new Educational Rights Holder]</i>
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act <i>[federal]</i>
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid <i>[secondary-education financial aid]</i>
HOP	Home of parent
IEP	Individualized Education Plan <i>[for students with disabilities and those with special-education needs]</i>
LAC	Los Angeles County
LACOE	Los Angeles County Office of Education
LISTENING SESSIONS	Facilitated discussions with individuals and small groups aimed at collecting information about their experiences
LEA	Local Educational Agency
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCYL	National Center for Youth Law
OAECE	Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education
OCP	Los Angeles County Office of Child Protection
PROBATION	In this document, Los Angeles County Probation Department, Juvenile Division

RESOURCE FAMILY	An individual, couple, or family who provides out-of-home care for children and youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice system
SELPA MODEL	California's Master Plan for Special Education requires all school districts to join Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA), each of which is responsible for coordinating special education among its member districts. A large district could be its own SELPA, whereas smaller districts are required to partner with neighboring districts and/or county offices of education to form a collaborative SELPA.
SIS	Student Information System
SOO	School of origin
STAKEHOLDERS	Any individual, community, or organization who has a vested interest in the work of the ECC and the populations the ECC supports
STRTP	Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program
SYSTEM PARTNERS	Partners who work across the different systems with which the ECC interacts; primarily County agencies, school districts, community-based organizations, advocates, and service providers
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act [<i>federal</i>]
YOUNG PEOPLE	Children and young adults from birth to age 24, which includes systems-involved youth up to age 21 and youth who have aged out of the system, up to age 24
YOUTH	Often used interchangeably with "young people"; refers primarily to children under 18 but may include young adults up to age 24 (this includes youth who are systems-involved up to age 21 or youth who aged out of the system, up to age 24)
YOUTH WHO ARE SYSTEMS-INVOLVED	A child or young adult up to age 21 who is involved within the child welfare and/or juvenile justice systems



INTRODUCTION: OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

In November 2004, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors created the Education Coordinating Council (ECC) to raise the educational achievement of youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems in Los Angeles County. The ECC is a public/private partnership composed of multiple County departments, stakeholders, and advocates. ECC members include leaders from youth-serving county agencies and educational institutions, as well as advocates, community members, and people who have experienced the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

In 2015, the Office of Child Protection (OCP) was created to improve communication, coordination, and accountability across agencies involved in the child welfare system throughout Los Angeles County. The ECC was placed under the umbrella of the OCP, and OCP staff members serve as ECC Director and staff, convening ECC members to implement ECC strategic plan objectives.

For 20 years, the ECC has remained committed to its mission while updating its approach to meet the changing needs of young people in Los Angeles County. From the work set forth in its [2016–2021 Strategic Plan](#) the ECC has several notable accomplishments, including:

- 1** Developed and institutionalized a system to provide school-of-origin (SOO) transportation to help maintain school stability for youth in foster care. The ECC brokered a long-term, cross-sector **agreement to provide and fund SOO transportation in over 51 school districts and 19 charter schools, which serve over 85% of youth** in foster care in Los Angeles County.
- 2** Increased countywide financial aid application rates of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) for high-school seniors in the foster-care system from **33% in the 2017–2018** school year to **71% in the 2022–2023** school year.
- 3** Developed and implemented Creative Wellbeing, a culturally relevant, healing-centered arts-based program combining arts and mental health support to **destigmatize mental health** symptoms and **nurture communities of well-being** for system-affected youth and the adults who serve them across several school districts, DCFS-contracted congregate care facilities, Department of Mental Health (DMH) and Department of Health Services (DHS) clinics, as well as on the Wellbeing4LA Learning Center. Creative Wellbeing was created in partnership with the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture, the Arts for Healing and Justice Network (AHJN), the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH), and the OCP.

While much has been accomplished, **critical work still lies ahead**. Many of the issues still persist that were pre-sented in the ECC’s February 2006 report (Expecting More: A Blueprint for Raising the Educational Achievement of Foster and Probation Youth), and new challenges continue to arise. A significant achievement gap remains for youth involved in the child-welfare and juvenile-justice systems, resulting in part from the social, emotional, and unmet mental health needs that come from exposure to trauma; structural barriers created by system involvement (such as instability in home and school placements); plus systemic barriers such as institutional racism and generational poverty that disproportionately lead to system involvement¹. What’s more, many of these challenges were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic², as youth involved in systems faced more educational and mental health challenges than their peers during that time, along with barriers such as a lack of access to technology, lack of care, and/or educational supports at home, which widened already significant disparities in educational outcomes³.

It is within this context⁴ that we build off our work to date while creating new goals and updating our approaches based on current needs identified by young people now involved in systems and our system partners. These needs include challenges with **school stability, information sharing and data integration, chronic absenteeism, youth engagement, academic achievement, postsecondary support, as well as communication, collaboration, and partnership across systems.**

The 2024–2029 ECC Strategic Plan laid out in the following pages will guide the Council’s direction, course of action, and decision making to address these challenges over the next five years. Benchmarks and measurable goals will track our collective progress and ensure that we ‘move the needle’ to increase the educational achievement of all youth who are systems-involved in Los Angeles County. But the plan is not static. As we progress, we commit to continuously listen to the voices of systems-affected young people and our partners, and to update the plan as expressed needs change, or in response to the unexpected.

Both in the creation of this strategic plan and in the actions necessary to execute it, the ECC depends on its members, partners, and stakeholders. The ECC’s basic assumption remains that **the responsibility for changing the educational performance of the children and youth under Los Angeles County’s supervision is *shared*.** We are grateful to everyone who has contributed to the work thus far and who has committed to do so in years to come.



WHO WE ARE

MISSION

The job of the ECC is to coordinate efforts across organizations and jurisdictions, encouraging varied networks to work together to fill gaps and expand best practices to youth who are involved with systems from being left behind educationally. It does this by mobilizing support across stakeholder groups, brokering solutions and collaborations among child-serving entities, and spearheading strategies that bolster the increased educational achievement of youth who are systems-involved.

ROLE AND APPROACH

The primary role of the ECC is to be a **champion of education** and to promote the achievement, well-being, and safety of youth in the following ways:

1

As an advocate, mobilizing support across various public and private stakeholder groups

2

As a *convener* and *broker*, working with other organizations to identify problems and develop solutions

3

As a *policymaker*, spearheading strategies that support the increased educational achievement of the County's youth

The ECC looks to achieve its mission through a collaborative approach that asks its members to:

- ◆ **Share responsibility** for the education of youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems
- ◆ **Coordinate efforts** across organizations and jurisdictions
- ◆ Encourage networks to work together through a lens of equity-based efforts to **fill gaps and expand best practices** to prevent youth who are systems-involved from being left behind educationally
- ◆ **Broker solutions** and collaborations among child-serving entities
- ◆ **Implement strategies** that bolster the increased educational achievement of youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems in Los Angeles County

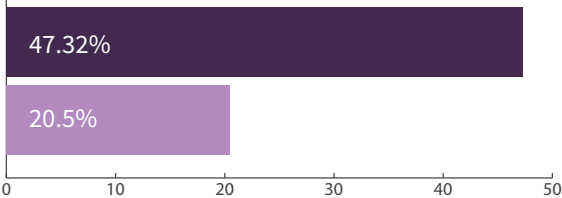
WHAT WE KNOW

Education is crucial for giving youth a foundation for critical thinking, social-emotional development, and self-confidence all of which are essential for empowering their growth into adulthood. Unfortunately, many young people who are involved in systems face obstacles that hinder their educational achievement, creating an educational achievement gap between youth in foster care and the general student population. We see the impact of this in several areas.

CHILD WELFARE*

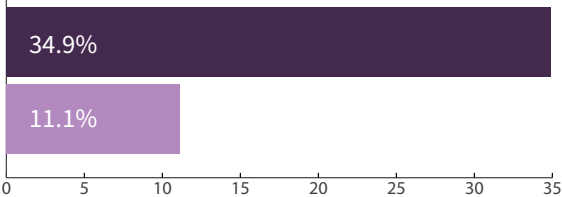
During the 2022–2023 school year in Los Angeles County:

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS



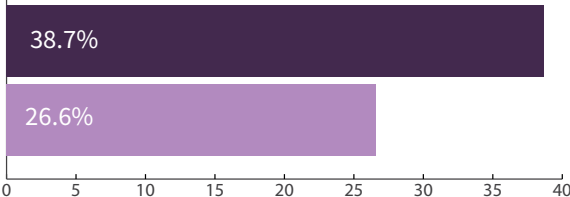
47.32% of youth met or exceeded the standard for English Language Arts compared to 20.5% of youth involved in the child welfare system.

MATH



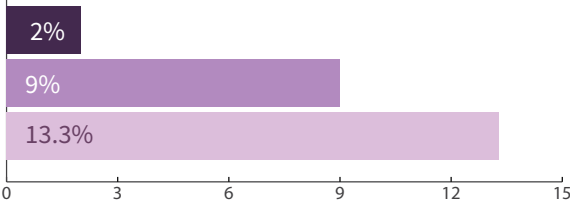
For math, 34.9% of the general youth population met or exceeded the standard for Math, compared to 11.1% of youth involved in the child welfare system.

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM



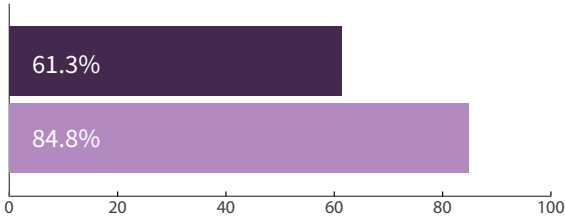
38.7% of youth in foster care were chronically absent, compared to the non-foster-student rate of 26.6%.

SUSPENSION RATE

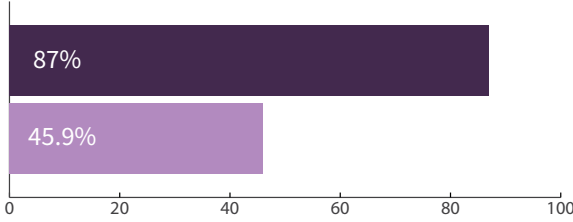


The suspension rate for all students was 2%, while the suspension rate for youth in foster care was 9%—4.5 times higher. The suspension rate for Black youth in foster care was 13.3%—in other words, Black youth in foster care were 6.6 times more likely to be suspended than youth not in foster care.

* This data is pulled from CDE’s Dataquest Website, which tracks data for youth in foster care who fall under the Local Control Funding Formula definition of foster youth. This includes youth with an open dependency case (California Welfare & Institutions Code §300) or open delinquency case (California Welfare & Institutions §602) with a suitable-placement order.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

61.3% of youth in foster care graduated high school, compared to 84.8% of non-foster students.

POST-SECONDARY ENROLLMENT

While 87% of youth in foster care state that they want to attend college**, only 45.9% of high school graduates in LA County enroll directly in post-secondary education.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

While we were not able to secure County-specific juvenile justice data, national and state trends illustrate the need to improve education outcomes for this population.

- ◆ Between 2018 and 2023, 85% of graduating high school students in California's juvenile detention facilities were unable to pass a 12th-grade reading assessment.⁶
- ◆ Nationally, nearly half of all students who enter residential juvenile justice facilities have an academic achievement level that is below the grade equivalent for their age.⁷
- ◆ A national sample of incarcerated youth found that more than one-third of ninth-grade students read on average at or below the fourth-grade level.⁸

Contributing factors affecting the academic achievement of youth who are involved in systems include frequent placement changes, frequent school changes, poverty, and delays in school enrollment.⁵

**Courtney, M. E., Okpych, N. J., Harty, J., Feng, H., Park, S., Powers, J., Nadon, M., Ditto, D. J., & Park, K. (2020). *Findings from the California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study (CalYOUTH): Conditions of youth at age 23*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago

Considering current outcomes for youth who are involved in systems and the immensity of Los Angeles County, it is vital that the ECC partner with key stakeholders, advocates, parents, resource families, and young people with lived experience to implement best practices and creative solutions to address these academic opportunity and achievement gaps, thereby ensuring that youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems have the tools they need for a successful future.

WHAT WE WANT

Youth who are involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems should have access to educational opportunities, resources, and culturally relevant supports to meet youth *where they are* to ensure they can succeed in post-secondary education and/or in the career of their choosing. In order to achieve this, we need to change the systems and policies in place that contribute to the current educational achievement gap between youth who are involved in systems and the general student population.

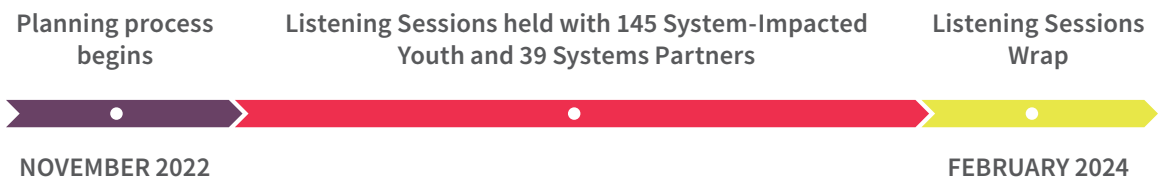




THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

During the development of our strategic plan, we connected with our partners, community stakeholders, advocates, and, most critically, young people to ensure we were capturing and embedding all voices into the plan. This grew into a series of listening sessions to gather feedback/input on the education-related issues youth and staff are experiencing, and on the future direction of the ECC.

THE OCP CONDUCTED LISTENING SESSIONS



The OCP conducted listening sessions over a 15-month period from November 2022 through February 2024. OCP, DCFS, and the Probation Department contributed funding to pay youth and caregivers \$100 each for their expertise during these sessions.

The OCP worked with the Alliance for Children’s Rights, Antelope Valley Ambassadors, California Youth Connection, Opportunity Youth Collaborative, and the Los Angeles County Youth Commission to recruit youth and convene the listening sessions. DCFS also worked with OCP to identify short-term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs) that were interested in hosting listening sessions on their sites, and that identified the youth who participated. Additionally, probation-facilitated listening sessions at the Dorothy Kirby Center, Camp Afflerbaugh, and Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall. The young people who participated ranged from middle school to college-aged youth.

Listening sessions were facilitated both in-person and virtually and were guided by a series of education-related questions specific to the group’s composition. OCP staff then synthesized and analyzed the recommendations received during those sessions, which helped inform an initial outline of the strategic plan’s priority areas and outcomes. Both the listening session results and plan outline were presented at the November 8, 2023, Education Coordinating Council quarterly meeting for feedback from ECC members and constituents.

Following that, ad-hoc meetings convened partners, stakeholders, and young people to comment further on the plan’s proposed priority areas and corresponding activities/action steps.

The full Strategic Plan was adopted by the Education Coordinating Council at its May 22, 2024, quarterly meeting.

WHAT WE LEARNED: INSIGHTS FROM LISTENING SESSIONS

YOUNG PEOPLE'S LISTENING SESSIONS

Young people involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems are experts about what they need and the challenges they face in achieving their educational goals. It was therefore essential that we initially connect with these young people to learn about their educational experiences and hear their input on potential solutions and areas of focus for the ECC.

“

*Foster youth have
ten times the worry
of a regular kid.*

— Young Person



“

The system is set up for your average child. Where's the help for those that are experiencing different issues? — Young Person

With the goal of having young people with diverse experiences inform the strategic plan, we reached out to those involved with child welfare, juvenile justice, and advocacy organizations—as well as those from various placement settings—to gather their recommendations. In total, over 145 systems-affected young people participated in the listening sessions.

“

Education is one-size-fits-all. That ends up punishing youth who are struggling and need help.

— Young Person

ECC YOUNG PEOPLE LISTENING SESSIONS

OCP conducted listening sessions with over 145 system-impacted young people representing 12 groups and/or organizations. After a thematic analysis, ten needs were identified as being most important to them.

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS	ORGANIZATIONS	STRTPS	CAMPS/HALLS	◆ INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM
	◆ Alliance for Children's Rights ◆ Antelope Valley Ambassadors ◆ CA Youth Connection ◆ Opportunity Youth Collaboration ◆ Youth Commission	◆ Optimist ◆ Rancho ◆ Sycamores	◆ Barry J. Nidorf ◆ Afflerbaugh ◆ Dorothy Kirby	◆ EXPECTANT & PARENTING YOUTH

TOP TEN NEEDS EXPRESSED BY YOUTH	#RAISING THE ISSUE	WHICH GROUPS RAISED THE ISSUES				
		ORGANIZATIONS	STRTPS	CAMPS/HALLS	ILP	EPY
STRONGER SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND ADULTS	13 OF 13 100%	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆	◆ ◆ ◆	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆	◆	◆
TRAINING ON AUTHENTIC YOUTH ENGAGEMENT	12 OF 13 92.3%	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆	◆ ◆ ◆	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆	◆	
YOUTH-LED DECISION MAKING	11 OF 13 84.6%	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆	◆ ◆ ◆	◆ ◆ ◆	◆	
ACCESS TO ELECTIVES & EXTRACURRICULARS	10 OF 13 76.9%	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆	◆ ◆	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆		
POST-HIGH SCHOOL RESOURCES AND SUPPORT	10 OF 13 76.9%	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆	◆ ◆ ◆	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆	◆	
TRAUMA-INFORMED SCHOOLS, AND TRAINING FOR STAFF AND CAREGIVERS	9 OF 13 69.2%	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆	◆ ◆ ◆		◆	◆
STRONGER ACADEMIC SUPPORTS	9 OF 13 69.2%	◆	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆	◆	◆
BASIC NEEDS, FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND LIFE SKILLS	7 OF 13 53.8%	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆	◆ ◆ ◆	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆		
TRANSPORTATION & SCHOOL STABILITY	6 OF 13 46.2%		◆ ◆ ◆ ◆		◆	◆
INCREASED MENTAL HEALTH SPACES AND RESOURCES	5 OF 13 38.5%	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆	◆ ◆ ◆			◆

TOP TEN NEEDS EXPRESSED BY YOUTH	ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTIONS & YOUTH QUOTES
STRONGER SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND ADULTS	<p>Young people in every focus group named a lack of supportive and encouraging adults (teachers, social workers, caregivers, etc.) as a primary barrier to their educational success. A common theme expressed by young people was that the adults around them don't often believe in them or discourage their goals as being "unrealistic."</p> <p><i>"Just having someone to be there for you [saying] 'you can do it...' That's all I want to hear because sometimes, as a foster youth, I feel very sad or lonely, and it really messes with your work ethic."</i></p>
TRAINING ON AUTHENTIC YOUTH ENGAGEMENT	<p>Young people desire for leaders (school districts, educators, probation, caregivers, etc.) gain additional training on how to authentically engage youth in conversations about their educational goals, challenges, and solutions.</p>
YOUTH-LED DECISION MAKING	<p>Students want to be included and take a leadership role in decision-making that impacts their education.</p>
TRAUMA-INFORMED SCHOOLS, AND TRAINING FOR STAFF AND CAREGIVERS	<p>Participants expressed the need for more understanding of what they've been through and a connection with more adults who are trauma-informed and/or who have lived experience within the child welfare system. In particular, the need for staff, including social workers, probation officers, and educators.</p>
ACCESS TO ELECTIVES & EXTRACURRICULARS	<p>Access to electives, such as art and languages, along with extracurriculars, such as sports and dance, were top responses to what keeps youth engaged in school and what motivates them to come to school. Transportation was identified as a primary challenge for youth participation in extracurriculars.</p>
POST-HIGH SCHOOL RESOURCES AND SUPPORT	<p>Youth identified the need for support around college, trade and vocational schools, and workforce development through linkages to programs, resources, and funding, as well as encouragement and navigation support from staff and caregivers.</p>
STRONGER ACADEMIC SUPPORTS	<p>Tutoring, mentorship, hands-on learning, access to tech, and support with subjects youth need to graduate were most commonly identified as supports youth desire.</p>
TRANSPORTATION & SCHOOL STABILITY	<p>Youth expressed stability and being able to remain in their school, mainly through access to reliable transportation, as vital to their success.</p> <p><i>"Normalize keeping kids in one school."</i></p>
BASIC NEEDS, FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND LIFE SKILLS	<p>Not having access to food and homelessness was deemed crucial to educational success by youth. Closely aligned was the need for financial literacy and life skills.</p> <p><i>"How am I supposed to work or go to school if I am homeless"</i></p>
INCREASED MENTAL HEALTH SPACES AND RESOURCES	<p>Youth expressed that experiencing mental health-related issues posed a being in school every day, as well as finishing school altogether. Requesting more attention be given to assessing needs as well as resources to meet those needs.</p> <p><i>"Then you also have the emotional aspect [of court]; school isn't the first thing on your mind."</i></p>

“

It's not just a school issue or a DCFS issue, these are our kids and they need our advocacy. — School-District Listening-Session Participant

PARTNER/STAKEHOLDER LISTENING SESSIONS

While the listening sessions with young people were underway, a second population was also important to hear from system partners. Our strategic-planning process goals were to be inclusive, collaborative, and transparent, and community stakeholder and advocate participation was key to ensure equitable representation and opportunity.

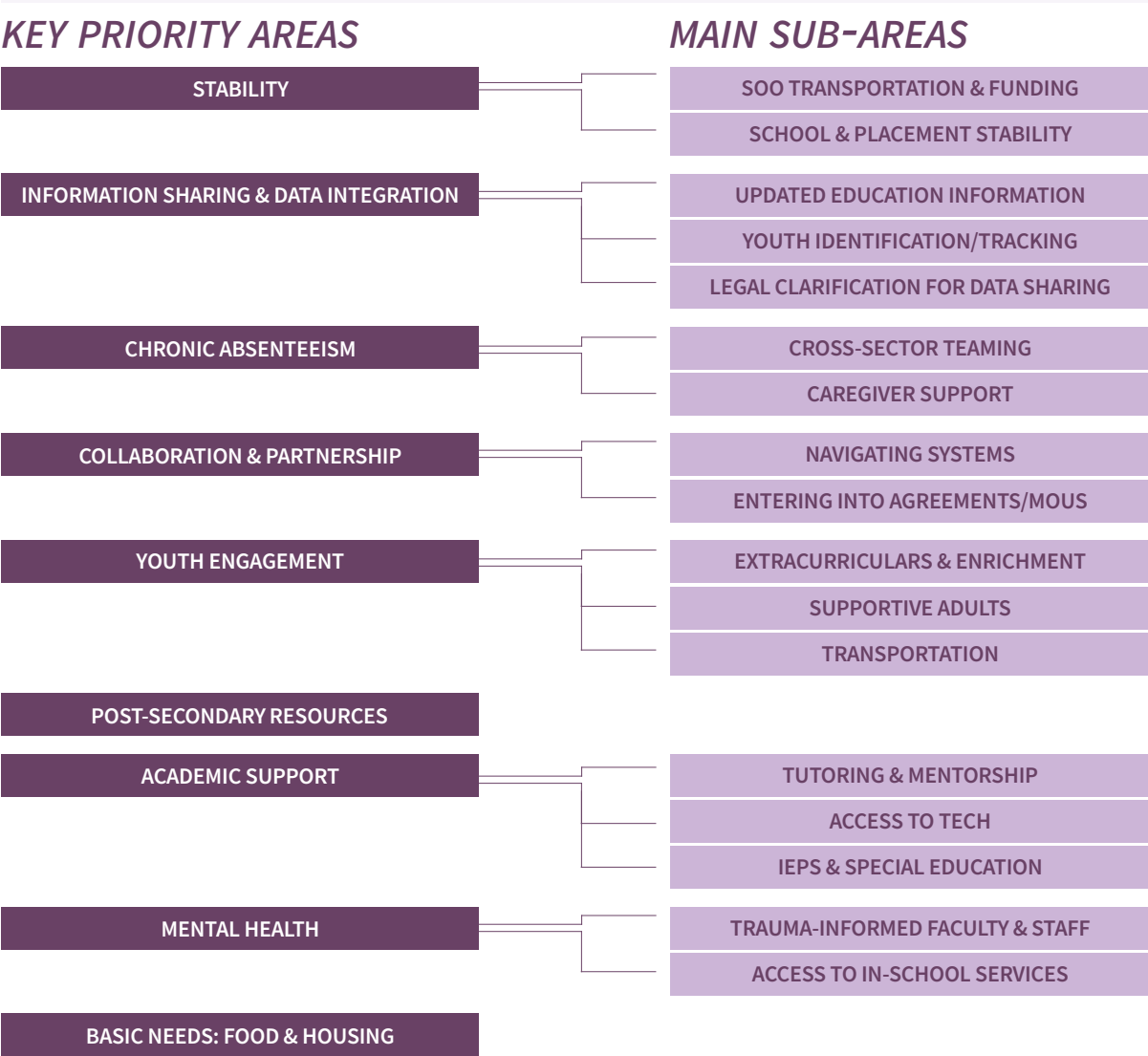
Overall, 39 system partners—County departments, the juvenile court, school districts, community-based organizations, advocates, and service providers—participated in listening sessions that resulted in nine priority areas being identified. Some were similar to what the young people had raised as their needs (mental health, post-secondary resources, extracurricular activities), while other areas were specific to process-level supports like information-sharing and increased collaboration and partnership with system colleagues.



ECC SYSTEM PARTNER LISTENING SESSIONS

OCP conducted listening sessions with 41 system partners. Following a thematic analysis, nine areas were identified as key priorities across system partners, as well as sub-areas presented within these priorities.

CBOS, ADVOCATES, PROVIDERS		COUNTY AGENCIES		SCHOOL DISTRICTS	
Alliance for Children’s Rights	ACHSA	Arts & Culture	Probation	Alhambra	Los Angeles
Child Care Resource Center	CASA	Children’s Deputies	DCFS CSWs	Antelope Valley	Pomona
Children Now	CLC	Juvenile Court	DMH	Bonita	Pasadena
Neighborhood Legal	CCALA	Ombudsperson for STRTPs	DYD	Compton	West Covina
Hilton Foundation	CYC	Public Defender’s Office	LACOE	Lancaster	William S. Hart
Pritzker Foundation	First 5 LA	Youth Commission	OAECE	Long Beach	
Resource Parents	JBAY	Commission for Children & Families			
Simply Friends	NCYL	DCFS Education & Development Services			



KEY PRIORITY AREAS IDENTIFIED IN LISTENING SESSIONS	ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTIONS
STABILITY	Placement stability and school of origin stability were expressed as critical to reducing learning disruption and increasing youth engagement in school. System partners expressed that SOO policy implementation remains a challenge, along with the process of notifying schools when a youth changes placements and the lack of active/engaged education rights holders.
INFORMATION SHARING & DATA INTEGRATION	Lack of information sharing and linking/integration between data sources was raised as a primary challenge across system partners. In particular, not having a shared understanding of what information is legally able to be shared, as well as issues integrating different systems to ensure access to updated education and placement information for youth.
CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM	Chronic absenteeism was identified by system partners as a primary barrier to educational achievement, often correlated with several other factors, including lack of consistent transportation, poor youth engagement, mental health, lack of incentives, material needs, and lack of support for caregivers/STRTP providers when youth are refusing to attend school.
COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIP	System partners desire better collaboration, communication, and partnership to improve educational outcomes. In particular, they need support navigating the IEP process, CBO services, entering into MOUs to provide on-site services, and upholding education rights. There is also a need for clarity as to which systems partners, in addition to CSWs, can support when there are education challenges.
POST-SECONDARY RESOURCES	System partners named post-secondary resources as a primary need for system-impacted youth. The need to address low college enrollment and completion rates, better connections for warm handoffs between high school and college, and the need to fully fund all aspects of college (including basic needs), were all raised. In addition, system partners also expressed the need for support efforts to connect youth with workforce opportunities, including CTE programs.
YOUTH ENGAGEMENT	System partners expressed the need to strengthen authentic youth engagement, both in school and in education decisions. This included amplifying communication around existing enrichment activities for youth in foster care, providing access to mentors and supportive adults, and adding additional support and resources to address unmet mental health needs.
ACADEMIC SUPPORT	The need for stronger academic support to improve educational achievement was raised by system partners. In particular, the need for increased access to tutoring opportunities, access to technology, and consistent funding for education services. Partners also lifted up the need to ensure young people in camps and halls receive engaging programming and support in transitioning back to community schools.
MENTAL HEALTH	Addressing significant unmet mental health needs of youth along with the need for mental health resources, particularly in-school resources, were both named by system partners as critical to youth engagement and school (academic, and social-emotional) success.
BASIC MATERIAL NEEDS	System partners shared that a lack of material support for system-impacted youth (mainly food and housing) was a barrier to academic achievement.



THE COUNCIL'S NINE BASIC AGREEMENTS

To increase the educational achievement of youth involved in systems, the body of the ECC agrees on the following nine precepts.

- 1** All adults who work with youth involved with systems must understand the central importance of education for the current well-being and future prospects of children and youth, expressing and prioritizing that value clearly and consistently in every aspect of their work.
- 2** A shared understanding of educational responsibility must exist among all partners who help to care for these youth, so that roles and responsibilities can be clarified and each group held accountable.
- 3** Youth voices should lead and centered in making decisions about youths' education services and goals.
- 4** Individualized supports that are culturally relevant and trauma responsive should be implemented to address the intersectional identities of youth.

5

All adults who work with youth involved with systems must adopt and maintain high expectations for children and youth who are involved in systems, believing in their ability to succeed educationally and encouraging improvements in their school attendance and achievement. While high standards must be held for youth, adults involved in a youth's life (including parents, attorneys, bench officers, caregivers, teachers, district personnel, social workers, deputy probation officers, and service providers) must also hold themselves accountable to provide supports to ensure that youth can succeed in school.

6

Parents and caregivers should be involved in all aspects of their children's education. All youth should have active and engaged Educational Rights Holders who are supporting them in all aspects of their education, in coordination with caregivers when applicable.

7

All adults who work with youth involved with systems must pay attention to and address any factor affecting educational success early on, including social, developmental, health, mental health, and academic factors.

8

School stability must be strongly considered when making residential and educational placement decisions. School stability is the basis for building positive attachments and educational continuity, and is essential to raising academic achievement. When a change in schools is unavoidable or is found to be in the child's best interest, records should be transferred quickly and youth enrolled immediately in the new school.

9

A strong investment should be made in linking youth to college, trade and vocational schools, and workforce development opportunities as early as possible. It is essential to recognize that not all youth want to pursue the same pathway to achieve their goals. Therefore, providing youth with various post-secondary opportunities and resources will be helpful to foster ownership of their future.



OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

The Education Coordinating Council is composed of a unique group of County, court, school district, advocacy, people with lived expertise, and community partners. Based on the expertise at the table and the feedback provided by youth and systems partners, the following seven Priority Areas were chosen for the ECC to address.

PRIORITY AREAS

1. **Stability**
2. **Information-Sharing and Data Integration**
3. **Chronic Absenteeism**
4. **Youth Engagement and Supports**
5. **Collaboration, Communication, and Partnerships**
6. **Academic Achievement**
7. **Post-Secondary Educational Achievement and Workforce Readiness**

During the listening sessions with young people and system partners, many important issues were raised relating to the educational success of young people, such as the requirement for basic needs (e.g., housing and food) to be met for youth to succeed at school. While these areas are outside of the purview of the ECC, we have shared this feedback with partners who do work in those areas to inform the ongoing important efforts in those spaces.

Youth and systems partners raised the necessity of addressing unmet mental health needs during discussions of each one of the above priority areas, with the exception of information-sharing and data integration. Mental health must be considered a throughline element for those reading and implementing this plan.

As previously noted, many of the priority areas determined through this process are the same as those that appeared in the 2006 ECC Blueprint. While great work has been accomplished since that time, it is unacceptable that young people involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems have been dealing with these challenges for 20 years, and that they continue to deal with them still. The goals outlined in this Plan are admittedly ambitious—we must ensure that we address the challenges identified by our stakeholders.

To accomplish the objectives of the priority areas outlined below, we must partner more effectively and hold ourselves accountable for carrying out these goals.

We can and must do better.

“

Within the same school year, [youth] will be here, then move, and then come back two to three months later. — School District

THE PLAN

PRIORITY AREA 1: STABILITY

KEY CHALLENGES RAISED BY YOUTH AND SYSTEM PARTNERS

- ◆ Youth expressed feeling uninformed on school-of-origin (SOO) rights, saying that increased communication about these rights is needed.
- ◆ While Los Angeles County and its community partners have designed/implemented a model system for school-stability transportation, system partners and resource parents said that, in practice, implementation remains a challenge.
- ◆ School stability is critical to youth engagement and academic achievement.

“

Normalize keeping kids in one school even if that means trying to find different modes of transportation. Switching schools is what messed me up. — Young Person



IDENTIFIED ROOT CAUSES

- ◆ Placement instability.
- ◆ Lack of transportation.
- ◆ Lack of engaged Educational Rights Holders (ERHs).
- ◆ Barriers to Educational Rights Holders receiving timely information regarding school and placement changes that would allow them the chance to make informed decisions.
- ◆ Lack of communication and teaming when a child is first detained or changes placement.

“

I switched schools a lot, and this made it hard to make friends in [a] new school. This made me not want to go to school.

— Young Person

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Ensure that school stability is considered in placement decisions.
- ◆ Strengthen SOO transportation implementation, especially for youth in STRTPs and youth with transportation written into their Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).
- ◆ Enhance communication between school districts, child welfare, and ERHs.
- ◆ Secure sustainable funding for school-of-origin transportation.

“

Sometimes youth don't feel like there's any purpose in participating [in school] since they think they'll move again soon.

— School District

DESIRED OUTCOME WITHIN FIVE YEARS

- ◆ 100% of youth involved with systems will have school stability considered in their placement decisions.
- ◆ 100% of youth involved with systems will have an ERH who makes a best-interest determination decision in consultation with the youth, when developmentally appropriate, and informed by district Foster Youth Liaisons, child welfare staff, and the youth's attorney.
- ◆ No child removed from their home or who is changing placement will change schools until a BID has been completed.

ACTIVITIES AND ACTION STEPS

- ◆ Work with DCFS to implement clear policies and practices to ensure that school stability is considered in placement decisions.
- ◆ Identify interested school districts (actions taken may depend on capacity/ resources available at each district) to partner with DCFS, and enlist community-based organizations to help recruit resource families in areas with high numbers of DCFS removals to increase the ability for youth to be placed in SOO communities.
- ◆ Work with the Children's Law Center, DCFS CSWs, and bench officers to raise/ take into consideration school-of-origin issues when placement changes occur and ensure that youth-informed, updated, and accurate education information is included in court reports.
- ◆ Explore strategies to ensure that ERHs are invited and SOO conversations are occurring at Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings, especially when placement changes are planned.
- ◆ Use the CFT process for educational planning and to discuss transportation needs.
- ◆ Work with school districts to include youth and ERHs in best-interest determination (BID) meetings to weigh in on school selection, and to ensure that BID meeting results are shared with DCFS and minors' counsel.

- ◆ School districts, DCFS, and OCP work together to resolve issues related to SOO transportation when a youth is placed in a non-public school.
- ◆ Continue to work on the implementation of ESSA school-stability transportation, including convening County and advocate partners to secure sustainable funding for private vendors and other transportation methods.
- ◆ DCFS, the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), school districts, and OCP explore the feasibility of expanding current transportation services for youth placed in STRTPs, youth with transportation written into their IEPs, youth who are placed in home of parent (HOP), and other populations not currently covered under the Los Angeles County ESSA School Stability MOU.
- ◆ Explore strategies to implement alternative learning methods/supports (independent study, hybrid learning, intensive tutoring supports, etc.) as a supplement and/or complement to comprehensive education for youth with complex unmet needs and for youth who need time to adjust to a new placement.
- ◆ Explore strategies to maintain accountability among all stakeholders to implement school-of-origin transportation, ensure that youth are informing SOO decisions made by their ERHs, and that appropriate teaming is supporting youth stability needs.

“

I moved schools three times in a year. It would have helped to be in the same class with my friends. Though I did end up back in the school, I was taken out of what they were learning and it was very jarring returning. — Young Person



PRIORITY AREA 2: INFORMATION-SHARING AND DATA INTEGRATION

KEY CHALLENGES RAISED BY YOUTH AND SYSTEM PARTNERS

System partners (child welfare, probation, and school districts) lack shared data, linkages, and integration between/among data sources. This makes it difficult for youth to get the services they need in a timely manner and for agencies to make data-driven policy decisions.

“

Schools should know when someone is enrolling that the youth is in the system, and have the school tell the youth their rights and help the youth navigate the school.

— Young Person

IDENTIFIED ROOT CHALLENGES

- ◆ Insufficient technology and staffing for data-sharing
- ◆ Non-standardized processes for data-sharing
- ◆ Different interpretations of existing laws around data-sharing
- ◆ Records not shared in a timely manner

“

Identifying foster youth is an issue. We have to look at the DCFS list and CALPADS to verify and identify. This can be very time-consuming.

— School District

“

*We would love to see data on whether AB 490 is actually helping youth with their outcomes. Are these numbers getting better?
Or are we regurgitating the same numbers year after year?*

— School District

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Address legal barriers/differing interpretations of what information can be shared between partners.
- ◆ Address issues with integrating different data systems, capacity challenges, and ensuring that systems include updated education information and current records.
- ◆ Ensure that the data systems in place can track education-outcome information on an ongoing basis for youth involved with systems.
- ◆ Strengthen the thoughtful development of processes/systems for the consistent identification on school campuses of youth involved in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. Ensure that staff with access to this information are trained to interact with youth in a trauma-informed manner and that system involvement is not used to discriminate against youth.

“

If a student is going to be suspended and there is no flag, we don't know that we have to notify the social worker and attorney. We don't know where the issue is coming from on the Student Information System.

— School District

DESIRED OUTCOMES WITHIN FIVE YEARS

- ◆ Secure agreements across County and educational systems for what individual and aggregate data can be shared
- ◆ Education outcomes on all priority areas are tracked by district, placement type, race, ethnicity, gender, etc., across all priority areas for youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems

“

For partial credits, we need to make sure all of it is sent over so the youth can make their graduation goals.

— Advocate

ACTIVITIES AND ACTION STEPS

- ◆ Engage the Children’s Law Center (CLC), DCFS, Probation, LACOE, and school-district partners to reach a consensus regarding what information can be shared between DCFS, education, and youth/families’ attorneys, consistent with applicable confidentiality and privacy laws. Create a handbook outlining what can be shared, with specific examples. Disseminate the handbook to all child welfare, juvenile justice, and education partners.

“

We need to make sure we have updated education information.

— County Department



We need updated information in CWS/CMS on education so that the next social worker has the information.

— County Department

- ◆ In a workgroup that may include DCFS, Probation, LACOE, school districts, Children’s Law Center, children’s legal representatives from juvenile justice and/or child welfare, the Probation Ombudsperson Office, and child welfare advocates:
 - Determine the critical data points/documents/files that need to be shared between DCFS, Probation, and education partners.
 - Additionally, determine what outcome data metrics need to be tracked across the County.
 - Analyze whether confidentiality/privacy legal barriers exist to sharing identified data points and/or possible limitations in existing data systems for storing and tracking critical data points/documents/files and outcomes.
 - Determine next steps to address barriers and ensure that existing and/or new/additional data systems can track the data points and outcomes needed, consistent with applicable confidentiality and privacy laws.
- ◆ Work with DCFS and Probation to implement electronic systems to notify schools and attorneys whenever a youth involved in these systems is attending a specific school and/or is potentially changing placements.
- ◆ Work with DCFS to ensure that key education information (ERH contact information, school placement, IEP/special-education needs, etc.) is flagged as ‘required’ information fields to be filled out in CWS/CMS.
- ◆ Ensure that DCFS and Probation provide the court with regular education updates/information in court reports.
- ◆ Work with school-district partners to implement a systemic process to track BID meetings and ensure that students cannot be disenrolled from their school of origin until the BID is held and the student’s Educational Rights Holder determines that attending another school is in the child’s best interest.

- ◆ Develop standardized processes and workflows for data-sharing, consistent with applicable confidentiality and privacy laws, and implement them among stakeholders. Examine implementation gaps and devise solutions.
- ◆ Explore strategies to maintain accountability from all stakeholders and work with DCFS, Probation, and school districts to hold staff accountable for sharing necessary information.
- ◆ Support the development of a universal data match between DCFS and school districts in Los Angeles County.
- ◆ Work with DCFS to improve the completion and sharing of the education section of the Health and Education Passport.

“

We are using both SIS and EPS to verify [the youth's] ERH, but sometimes the information is different and conflicting.

— School District



PRIORITY AREA 3: CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

KEY CHALLENGES RAISED BY YOUTH AND SYSTEM PARTNERS

Caregivers and school districts expressed difficulty getting students to attend school consistently, and that it is challenging to support or achieve academic success when students are not in school. Additionally, youth in foster care are more likely to be subject to exclusionary discipline, and Black youth in foster care are disproportionately subject to disciplinary procedures.

“

We don't like going to school. You gotta make it a good environment where we want to go to school, not feel forced to go to school.

— Young Person

IDENTIFIED ROOT CHALLENGES

- ◆ Unmet mental health needs
- ◆ Lack of transportation
- ◆ Lack of motivation and encouragement
- ◆ Youth do not feel engaged and/or safe at school

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Address transportation challenges.
- ◆ Identify solutions and youth-engagement strategies to support caregivers/STRTP providers caring for youth struggling to regularly attend school.
- ◆ Improve the notification process/communication between stakeholders regarding absences that should be marked as ‘excused.’

- ◆ Prevent suspensions/expulsions and address the disproportionate rates of suspensions/expulsions for Black youth in foster care.
- ◆ Provide individualized, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive support to address the root causes of attendance issues.
- ◆ Address unmet mental health needs in and out of school that contribute of absenteeism.

“

We need to make school attractive again and not scary. Many [youth] have had bad experiences in school that have made them not want to go. — School District

DESIRED OUTCOME WITHIN FIVE YEARS

- ◆ Decrease the countywide chronic-absenteeism rate for youth in foster care from the 2022–2023 rate to the 2018–2019 foster-youth chronic-absenteeism rate:
 - All grades: from 38.7% to 28%
 - K–8: from 33.1% to 22%
 - 9–12: from 51.2% to 44.2%
- ◆ Decrease the countywide suspension rate for youth in foster care from the 2022–2023 rate of 9% to 2% (the Los Angeles County non-foster youth suspension rate for 2022–2023). Decrease the countywide suspension rate for Black youth in foster care from the 2022–2023 rate of 13.3% to 2%.

ACTIVITIES AND ACTION STEPS

- ◆ School districts, LACOE, DCFS, the Department of Youth Development (DYD), DMH, Probation, CLC, and the Association of Community Human Service Agencies (ACHSA) work together to create youth-specific plans/strategies on how agencies will team to re-engage youth who are not attending school regularly.
 - Integrate feedback from youth on motivations or deterrents to attending school into the plans/strategies on an ongoing basis.
 - Plans/strategies should include trauma-informed and culturally responsive supports.
 - Supports for caregivers should be made available to implement youth-centered engagement practices.

“

I had a very hard time being motivated [to go to school] due to having to walk very far [in the] early morning, a lack of support, and me just not knowing my rights at an early age.

— Young Person

“

When I was in high school, I was tardy way too many times, and no one ever checked in on what was going on. They were only checking on how many absences, and giving notices and trancies.

— Young Person

- ◆ Ensure that DCFS and Probation provide the court with regular school-attendance updates/information in court reports, including information on what may be contributing to attendance challenges, and what supports are needed to re-engage and/or support youth.
- ◆ Create peer-learning opportunities for districts/schools to share best practices around supporting complex chronic absenteeism/truancy cases.
- ◆ Establish/increase training for caregivers, CSWs, STRTP staff, and ERHs on education rights, how to support youth with homework/other education needs, the IEP process, etc.
 - Work with advocacy agencies (Alliance for Children’s Rights, Children’s Law Center, the Public Defender, the Alternate Public Defender, etc.) to create a toolkit and best-practice guide for caregivers.
- ◆ Work with youth advocacy groups to explore models for cohorts of youth involved in systems to encourage each other virtually or in-person to attend school.
- ◆ Work with districts to explore alternative learning opportunities to engage students (e.g., dual enrollment in community college classes, learning trades, hybrid schedule) as a complement and/or supplement to comprehensive education.

“

When youth are engaged in an activity or have a deep relationship with an adult, they tend to come more often to school. — School District

- ◆ Explore implementing near-peer (those who may be slightly older than the youth they serve) and peer mentors with lived expertise as well as coaching supports for youth involved in systems to support regular attendance at school.
- ◆ Explore whether legislation is needed to address high rates of chronic absenteeism for youth in foster care, including potentially examining the way absenteeism is calculated and ceasing to base schools' funding to schools on the Average Daily Attendance metric. Work with the County's Chief Executive Office (CEO) Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations (LAIR) unit on any recommendations related to legislation.
- ◆ LACOE, DCFS, school-district partners, Probation, and OCP work on addressing disproportionate rates of suspensions/expulsions/involuntary transfers for youth in foster care, including specific strategies to address high rates of discipline for Black youth in foster care.
 - Work with the Children's Law Center, the Public Defender, the Alternate Public Defender, LACOE, DCFS, and school-district partners to ensure that all youth who are systems involved have representation during school disciplinary meetings.
- ◆ Work with the Department of Arts and Culture, DMH, school districts, school-based mental health providers, and DCFS to explore barriers to and strategies for offering more traditional and non-traditional mental health services on campus for youth involved in systems.
- ◆ Examine how delays in implementing school-of-origin transportation during placement changes may affect chronic absenteeism, and develop/implement a plan to address this issue.

“

Another challenge for youth to go to school is mental health, anxiety, and challenges with their peers.

— Advocate

PRIORITY AREA 4: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORTS

KEY CHALLENGES RAISED BY YOUTH AND SYSTEM PARTNERS

Students expressed a lack of motivational support, and stakeholders expressed a lack of student engagement, as primary barriers to educational success. When students are not motivated and engaged in all aspects of school, their education and academic achievement suffer.

“

My speech therapist told me not to apply to 4-year universities because my GPA wasn't the best and I wouldn't get in, and it made me want to give up. — Young Person

IDENTIFIED ROOT CHALLENGES

- ◆ Unmet mental health needs
- ◆ Lack of encouragement from educators, adults, and caregivers
- ◆ School is not always a pleasant place to be.
- ◆ Youth are not centered in their education decision-making.

“

There needs to be more of a human approach and not a clinical approach to people who go through traumatic things. — Young Person



*Just having someone to be there for you [saying] ‘you can do it.’
I know that’s all I want to hear because sometimes, as a foster youth,
I feel very sad or lonely and it really messes with your work ethic.*

— Young Person

- ◆ Lack of knowledge of education rights by youth, caregivers, biological parents, and Educational Rights Holders
- ◆ High mobility of youth involved with systems

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Center youth in education decision-making.
- ◆ Ensure that youth, caregivers, ERHs, and County staff are trained on education rights and how to help youth implement those rights.
- ◆ Strengthen communication around available enrichment activities and increase access to them.
- ◆ Provide supportive adults and peer mentors/supporters to form stronger attachments.
- ◆ Add more resources—especially non-traditional approaches—to address unmet mental health needs.

DESIRED OUTCOMES WITHIN FIVE YEARS

- ◆ After collecting initial baseline data on youth access to extracurriculars, increase the rate of youth participating in these activities by 5% each year until it is on a par with all students.
- ◆ Ensure that 100% of youth have a completed CFT education action plan.

“

In high school, it's important to engage youth in the important decisions about their education. — Young Person

ACTIVITIES AND ACTION STEPS

- ◆ On an ongoing basis, ensure that youth voice is central to the development of County, school-district, and community-based programs, and that programs use individualized and culturally responsive approaches.
- ◆ Work with DCFS, DMH, Probation, and other County partners to ensure that youth voice is central to education decision-making meetings, such as the CFT meeting, Transition Independent Living Plan development, and BIDs. Ensure that ERHs and biological parents are included in these discussions, and implement strategies to ensure that parents are supported to be at these tables.
- ◆ Develop and disseminate resources for youth, ERHs, caregivers, CASAs, service providers, County staff, school-district staff, and bench officers on the education rights of youth involved in systems.
 - Ensure that these resources are youth-friendly and developed in partnership with youth with lived expertise. Analyze and overhaul existing education-rights resources to be youth-friendly and provided in multiple formats (paper, web-based, video format, etc.).
 - Dissemination strategies should be intentional and layered to ensure that education-rights information reaches every youth in foster care—as well as their parents, their resource families, and their Educational Rights Holders—to support their educational needs, including providing materials in different languages.

“

We need to make sure young people have access to education and programs that make their experience better. — County Department

“

There needs to be a focus on the importance of extracurricular and enrichment activities, and not them being seen as a ‘privilege’ or [something you’re] having to earn—instead as a sense of normalcy.

— Young Person



- ◆ Work with the court, CLC, and DCFS to ensure that every student has an active ERH.
 - Work with CASA to support its advocates’ volunteerism in this role; CASAs often serve as ERHs and activists to ensure that youth receive needed education services.
- ◆ DYD should help connect youth to CBOs to map their education goals, outline graduation plans, and offer support in achieving them.

“

Young people know what they want. We know what we need.

— Young Person

“

Those who believed in me and praised me helped me achieve.

— Young Person

- ◆ Explore peer-to-peer/near-peer mentorship/high-touch models on school campuses to support education outcomes and help youth explore careers, such as the Michigan Youth Opportunity Initiative, Guardian Scholars for youth in high schools, and others. Ensure that mentors are people with similar lived experience to the youth being served.
- ◆ Work with community colleges and four-year universities to increase dual enrollment for youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.
- ◆ ECC members should work with youth having lived experience to develop and implement a youth engagement structure so youth can provide ongoing feedback on the work of the Education Coordinating Council. Part of the development of this process includes members identifying and/or applying for funding to support this structure.

“

Education is not youth centered. Teachers are talking directly to the parent or caregiver and not to the youth.

— Young Person

“

Youth should have a say in their educational decision making. Someone else may have a different perspective from you and what you may want.

— Young Person

PRIORITY AREA 5: COLLABORATION, COMMUNICATION, AND PARTNERSHIPS

KEY CHALLENGES RAISED BY YOUTH AND SYSTEM PARTNERS

Stakeholders desire better collaboration, communication, and partnership—in particular, more support navigating the IEP process, pathways to support youth on school campuses, and the upholding of education rights. There is also a lack of clarity as to which systems partners, in addition to CSWs, can provide support when education challenges arise. And although both youth and school districts have needs for services, community-based organizations often have difficulty navigating district processes to execute agreements to provide services to youth in foster care directly on school sites.

“

We need to further build a bridge of communication with DCFS.

— School District

IDENTIFIED ROOT CHALLENGES

- ◆ Lack of engaged Educational Rights Holders
- ◆ Barriers to Educational Rights Holders receiving information regarding education rights and available resources
- ◆ Placement stability
- ◆ Lack of communication/teaming when a child is first detained or changes placement
- ◆ Lack of clear guidelines on how to partner between school districts, the County, and community-based organizations

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Develop and implement a standardized process to facilitate communication, collaboration, and teaming.
- ◆ Provide resources for caregivers, CASAs, and other adult supports to help youth with navigating the IEP process in different languages.
- ◆ Develop best practices/guidance for community-based organizations to provide services to support systems-involved youth.

“

I don't think we're doing a good job with building relationships with other supportive adults. — School District

DESIRED OUTCOMES WITHIN ONE TO TWO YEARS

- ◆ Ensure that DCFS notifies school districts of a pending detention and/or placement change within one day—or 10 days for youth with IEPs—for 75% of youth.
- ◆ Create a best-practice guide with strategies to support community-based organizations in partnering with school districts to provide services to youth involved in systems.

“

Ideally, we'd all work as a team. In reality, it doesn't seem to work that way. I think training would be good to create continuity between all parties. — Resource Family

ACTIVITIES AND ACTION STEPS

- ◆ School districts and LACOE develop a guide for how County and community-based organizations can navigate school-district MOU and agreement processes to provide on-campus services to youth involved in systems. The guide should include best practices to ensure that programming limits interruptions to instructional time (e.g., is provided after school hours) and/or complements academic instruction.
- ◆ Explore strategies to create better teaming and communication between/among the County, school districts, and community partners, including regional meet-and-greets.
- ◆ Map out various decision-making meetings (Child and Family Team meetings, Student Study Team meetings, School Attendance Review Board meetings, Best-Interest Determinations, etc.) where education and child-welfare partners can come together to support youth. Identify strategies to better communicate and team in these settings.
- ◆ Facilitate opportunities for community, school-district, and County partners to discuss issues from the field and team to address identified concerns.

“

When a youth transfers to our school sites, we don't receive the youth's IEP right away. Or [know that] the youth was in the process of having an IEP before getting transferred to our district. — School District

PRIORITY AREA 6: ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

KEY CHALLENGES RAISED BY YOUTH AND SYSTEM PARTNERS

Both young people and system partners feel that youth don't have the resources or support they need to succeed academically. Youth, caregivers, and Educational Rights Holders are not informed on education rights. School districts lack support to provide/address all education needs. Caregivers and ERHs struggle to navigate systems to secure needed education support.

“

Having more access to tutoring...one-on-one in-person tutoring is what's needed, rather than group tutoring, especially when youth are tired and shy. — Young Person

IDENTIFIED ROOT CHALLENGES

- ◆ Adults telling (verbally and non-verbally) system-affected youth that they can't achieve their academic goals, including pushing youth who are systems-involved out of schools
- ◆ Lack of understanding and trauma-informed schools
- ◆ Lack of resources and complicated processes to access existing resources

“

We get so many more incentives and support for school inside [juvenile hall], but not on the outside. There are just more people to help you. I wish we had that out there. — Young Person

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Assess and address education services needs, including access to intensive one-on-one tutoring.
- ◆ Ensure that all youth who are systems-involved have access to the technology resources they need to succeed in school.
- ◆ Ensure that all youth who are systems-involved have the resources—including books and supplies—they need to succeed in school.
- ◆ Implement solutions to address lower English/Language Arts and Math test scores for youth in foster care.
- ◆ Ensure that all youth who are systems-involved have the academic skills needed to succeed in post-secondary education.

DESIRED OUTCOMES WITHIN FIVE YEARS *

- ◆ Increase the percentage of youth in foster care ‘meeting or exceeding the standard’ for English Language Arts from 20.5% to 47.3% (to match the non-foster youth meet/exceed rate for 2022-2023).
- ◆ Increase the percentage of youth in foster care ‘meeting or exceeding the standard’ for Math from 11.1% to 34.9% (to match the non-foster youth meet/exceed rate for 2022-2023).
- ◆ Increase high-school graduation rates for youth in foster care from 61.3% to 84% (to match the countywide rate for all youth for 2022-2023).

** Based on 2022–2023 data*

ACTIVITIES AND ACTION STEPS

- ◆ Work with DCFS, LACOE, the court, school districts, and community partners to ensure that the young person’s education needs are met at every stage of a youth’s case.
 - This includes assessing the need for additional education support for youth (e.g., one-on-one tutoring supports) and enhancing existing programs and/or implementing additional services to address this need.
 - Ensure that court reports, case plans, and assessments address a youth’s educational entitlements and how those educational entitlements are being satisfied.
- ◆ Work with Probation, LACOE, the court, school district, and community partners to assess the education needs of youth involved in the juvenile justice system attending schools in the community.
 - This includes assessing the need for additional education supports for youth (e.g., one-on-one tutoring supports) and enhancing existing programs and/or implementing additional services to address this need.
 - Ensure that court reports, case plans, and assessments address a youth’s educational entitlements and how those educational entitlements are being satisfied.
- ◆ Work with DCFS, Probation, LACOE, CLC, and school districts to assess the technology needs of youth in foster care. Implement ongoing tracking to ensure that youth have access to technology to complete their schoolwork.

“

I was put into special education for behavior issues and not because I couldn't learn. You need to make more time to assess the youth and whether they actually need to be in special ed, or if there's something else that's going on that's impacting their behavior in the classroom.

— Young Person

“

Make it achievable for us to stay on track to graduate with our class.

— Young Person

- ◆ Work with LACOE and school-district partners to gather resources to help youth, caregivers, and ERHs better navigate special-education processes (e.g., 504 Plan and IEP processes).
- ◆ Analyze existing County and community resources to support education needs for youth involved in systems for each region, determine gaps, and, as a Council, devise solutions to address gaps and reduce duplicative efforts. Examine and replicate best practices from schools with high academic achievement for systems-involved youth.
- ◆ Explore what it would take to expand school-based support staff for youth in foster care, as many districts typically have a single AB 490 Liaison who also supports other work within that district. Additionally, explore what it would take to expand the number of DCFS Education Specialists to provide more supports to youth.

“

We need trauma-informed practices implemented in schools to help give a snapshot of what the youth has encountered so they can be supportive and work with the youth. — County Department

- ◆ Review English/Language Art and Math testing data across the county and disaggregate by Local Educational Agency (LEA). Research/explore literacy rates among youth involved in systems and proven strategies to increase proficiency in literacy and math.
- ◆ Create peer-learning opportunities for districts/schools to share best practices around supporting educational achievement, including how to interact and educate youth with systems involvement through a trauma-informed lens.
- ◆ Create a partnership agreement/MOU between California State University (CSU), community colleges, school districts, and County representatives to enhance the number of youth in foster care completing A–G requirements.
- ◆ Convene school-district superintendents/assistant superintendents to cultivate recommendations for academic preparation to increase high school completion of A-G requirements to increase enrollment into 4-year universities for youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

“

We can't send a kid out into the world when they're lacking education, so we need to provide them with the one-on-one tutoring or supports to catch them up. — Advocate

PRIORITY AREA 7: POST-SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AND WORKFORCE READINESS

KEY CHALLENGES RAISED BY YOUTH AND SYSTEM PARTNERS

Youth and system partners identified the need for support around college, trade and vocational schools, and workforce development. In particular, young people need funding for basic needs—plus information about available resources/funding—to be accessible and more clearly communicated. System partners also identified supports needed to ensure that youth successfully transition from high school to college, as many youth may apply and/or enroll in college but do not make it to the first day of classes. This is often referred to as the ‘summer melt.’

IDENTIFIED ROOT CHALLENGES

- ◆ Generational poverty
- ◆ Unaffordable costs to attend college (e.g., housing, food, transportation, etc.)
- ◆ Judgment and bias toward youth involved in systems
- ◆ Lack of a positive support system
- ◆ Lack of basic academic skills

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

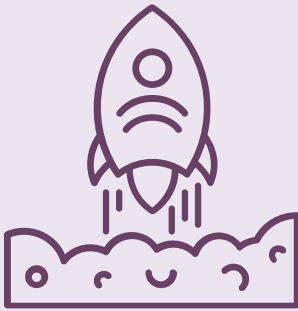
- ◆ Increase direct college enrollment and completion rates.
- ◆ Facilitate ‘warm handoffs’ between high schools and colleges to ensure that youth successfully transition to post-secondary education.
- ◆ Support efforts to fully fund college for youth in foster care, including basic needs such as housing and food while they are attending.
- ◆ Support efforts to connect youth with career and technical education programs.

DESIRED OUTCOMES WITHIN FIVE YEARS

- ◆ Increase rates of college graduation by age 23 for youth involved in the child welfare system from 10% to 36% (California's rate for non-foster youth).
- ◆ Increase college enrollment rates for high-school seniors involved in the child welfare system from 29.2% (2021–2022) to 53% (California's rate for non-foster youth).
- ◆ Attain a college-persistence rate (the rate at which students return to college at any institution for their second year) for youth in foster care attending community colleges of 67% (the current rate for all community college students who persisted from fall to spring at any community college).
- ◆ Work with Probation, LACOE, and post-secondary partners to collect baseline data on the college graduation, college enrollment, and college-persistence rates of youth involved in the juvenile justice system and work on increasing these rates.
- ◆ Work with the LA Opportunity Youth Collaborative (OYC) to collect baseline data on the number of youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems enrolled in workforce and/or career training programs and work on increasing the number of youth involved in systems enrolled in these programs.

ACTIVITIES AND ACTION STEPS

The John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY) and the LA Opportunity Youth Collaborative are leading efforts across Los Angeles County to achieve the outcomes above. Given this, and to not duplicate efforts, the ECC will participate in and support the efforts of the LA Opportunity Youth Collaborative's Foster Youth College Advancement Project (FYCAP) that is convened by JBAY.



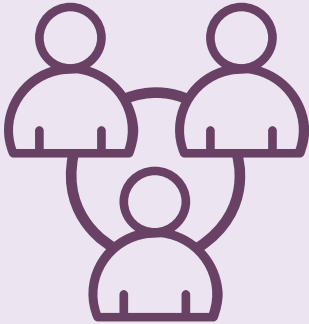
IMPLEMENTATION AND NEXT STEPS

Now that the ECC 2024–2029 Strategic Plan has been adopted and there is shared commitment across systems and stakeholders on the Nine Basic Agreements and Seven Priority Areas/Priority Area Objectives, the ECC will begin implementing this plan.

To support that implementation, we will establish workgroups to accomplish the goals of the Priority Areas. ECC members and constituents will co-chair these workgroups with backbone support from the OCP team members who staff the ECC. Additionally, it will be critical to center and engage youth with lived expertise—as well as to engage resource families and parents—in the implementation of this plan.

Regular implementation updates will be presented at ECC quarterly meetings, where each workgroup will have a dedicated space to highlight milestones, data updates, and progress. As needed, specific activities and action items will be modified to meet the outcomes outlined in the strategic plan.

Given the immensity of Los Angeles County, this effort to close the educational gaps experienced by youth who are systems-involved is no small feat. It will require shared responsibility and coordination across departments, organizations, agencies, and individuals to make a meaningful change for our youth. As such, the ECC is also developing a charter that will outline the responsibilities and expectations of its partners to provide accountability. Ongoing public and private funding and staffing resources must be secured to support the full implementation of the objectives, activities/action steps, and outcomes outlined in this plan.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to give special thanks to all the County departments, school districts, agencies, community-based organizations, partners, young people, resource families, and individuals who gave their time and effort to share ways in which we can work together, as a county, to increase the educational achievement of youth who are systems involved. The feedback and support provided to finalize the 2024–2029 ECC Strategic Plan was much appreciated and incredibly valuable.

EDUCATION COORDINATING COUNCIL OFFICERS, STAFF, AND MEMBERS

Chair:	Tanya Ortiz Franklin , Board Member, Los Angeles Unified School District
Vice Chair:	Judge Akemi Arakaki , Presiding Judge, Los Angeles Superior Court, Juvenile Division
Vice Chair:	Fabricio Segovia , former foster youth
ECC Director:	Barbara Lundqvist , Office of Child Protection
ECC Staff:	Elizabeth Koenig , Office of Child Protection Rachael Parker Chavez , UCLA Luskin Fellow, Office of Child Protection Evelyn Hughes , Office of Child Protection

Alhambra Unified School District
Antelope Valley Union High School District
Association of Community Human Service Agencies
Bonita Unified School District
California State Universities (CSU)
Children's Law Center
Compton Unified School District
Court-Appointed Special Advocates Los Angeles (CASA-LA)
Department of Arts and Culture
Department of Children and Family Services
Department of Mental Health
Department of Youth Development
First 5 LA
Jessica Chandler, former probation youth
Lancaster Unified School District
Long Beach Unified School District
Los Angeles County Youth Commission
Los Angeles County Office of Child Protection
Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families
Los Angeles County Office of Education
Los Angeles Unified School District
Pasadena Unified School District
Pomona Unified School District
Probation Department
Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District
West Covina Unified School District
William S. Hart Unified School District



ECC CONSTITUENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Alliance Ed Youth Cohort
Alliance for Children's Rights
Antelope Valley Ambassadors
Board of Supervisors' Children's deputies
California Youth Connection
Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles
Child Care Resource Center
Children Now
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Los Angeles
John Burton Advocates for Youth
Los Angeles County Alternate Public Defender's Office
Los Angeles County Public Defender's Office
National Center for Youth Law
Neighborhood Legal
Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education (OAECE)
Ombudsperson for Youth in STRTPs
Opportunity Youth Collaborative
Opportunity Youth Collaborative Young Leaders
Optimist Youth Homes & Family Services
Anthony & Jeanne Pritzker Family Foundation
Rancho San Antonio
Resource parents
Simply Friends
Sycamores
Youth with lived experience





ENDNOTES

¹Dettlaff, A. J., Boyd, R., Merritt, D., Plummer, J. A., & Simon, J. D. Racial Bias, Poverty, and the Notion of Evidence. *Child Welfare*, 99(3), 61-90. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48647485>

²Greeson JKP, Gzesh SE, Wasch S, Jaffee SR, Ciluffo KL. “Just being there, like a shoulder to lean on”: Resilience and Mental Health among Older Youth in and Aged out of Foster Care during COVID-19. *J Child Adolesc Trauma*. 2022 Nov 19:1-10. doi: 10.1007/s40653-022-00498-7. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 36438863; PMCID: PMC9676753.

³Lee H, Rauktis ME, Mulzet M, Jenkins AS. A Mixed-Methods Study Exploring the Educational Experiences of Foster Youth and Foster Parents During COVID-19. *Child Adolesc Social Work J*. 2023 Mar 19:1-25. doi: 10.1007/s10560-023-00922-3. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 37363070; PMCID: PMC10024912.

⁴Wiegmann, W., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Barrat, V. X., Magruder, J. & Needell, B. (2014). The Invisible Achievement Gap Part 2: How the Foster Care Experiences of California Public School Students Are Associated with Their Education Outcomes; Mehana M, Reynolds AJ. School mobility and achievement: A meta-analysis. *Children and Youth Services Review*. 2004; 26:93–119. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2003.11.004.

⁵California Department of Education. (2024, January 22). Information, resources, and educational outcomes for foster youth students. Foster Youth in California Schools. Retrieved March 13, 2024, from <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sg/fosteryouth.asp>

⁶Willis, D. J., & Márquez, R.B. (2023, June 6). In California’s youth justice system, many high schoolers graduate with grade-school reading skills. EdSource. Retrieved March 13, 2024, from <https://edsources.org/2023/in-californias-youth-justice-system-high-school-graduates-with-grade-school-reading-skills/688955>

⁷Miller, A. A., Therrien, W. J., & Romig, J. E. (2019). Reducing Recidivism: Transition and Reentry Practices for Detained and Adjudicated Youth with Disabilities. *Education & Treatment of Children*, 42(3), 409–438. <https://doi.org/10.1353/etc.2019.0019>

⁸Krezmien, M. P., & Mulcahy, C. A. (2008). Literacy and Delinquency: Current Status of Reading Interventions With Detained and Incarcerated Youth. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 24(2), 219–238. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10573560701808601>

