**cation Coordinating Council**

**August 27, 2025, 9:00 a.m. | Hybrid Meeting***In-Person:* ***510 South Vermont Street, Los Angeles, CA 90020***

***9th Floor Terrace Level Conference Room C (TK05)***

*Remote: via Microsoft Teams*

Member Representatives Present:Tanya Ortiz Franklin, ECC Chair, Los Angeles Unified School District

Fabricio Segovia, ECC Vice Chair, former foster youth and lived expert

Judge Akemi Arakaki, ECC Vice Chair, Los Angeles Superior Court

Naomi Andrews, Association of Community Human Service Agencies (ACHSA)

Ashley Benjamin, Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District

David Carroll, Department of Youth Development

Jessica Chandler, former foster/probation youth and lived expert

Jesus Corral, Probation Department

Yasmin Dorado, Antelope Valley High School District

Josh Elizondo, Los Angeles County Youth Commission

Jessica Gonzalez, Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Los Angeles

Dora Jacildo, Commission for Children and Families

La Shona Jenkins, Los Angeles County Office of Education

Craig Liu, Children’s Law Center of California

Ayanna McLeod, Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services

Minsun Park Meeker, Los Angeles County Office of Child Protection

Denise Miranda, Los Angeles Unified School District

Jennifer Rodarte, Long Beach Unified School District

Elisabeth Nails, Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture

Tiara Summers, Los Angeles County Youth Commission

Kanchana Tate, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health

Trish Wilson, Lancaster School District

Additional  
Presenters:Vanessa Ximenes Barrat, WestEd

Jennifer Higuchi, Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services

Staff:Barbara Lundqvist, Director, Education Coordinating Council

Elizabeth Koenig, Los Angeles County Office of Child Protection

Miguel Hernandez, Luskin Fellow, Los Angeles County Office of Child Protection

Agenda Item 1: Call to Order, Introductions, AB 2449 Notifica­tion/Motion, Land Acknowledgement

Chair Tanya Ortiz Franklin brought the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m., wel­coming everyone and acknowledging the challenges of starting a new educational year while ensuring that students and families feel safe, especially when they are going to school. She thanked the Depart­ment of Chil­dren and Family Services (DCFS) for helping the ECC secure today’s meet­ing room. Following member self-introductions, Elizabeth Koenig read Los Angeles County’s [land acknowledgement](https://lacounty.gov/government/about-la-county/land-acknowledgment/).

Ortiz Franklin relayed a request from Josh Elizondo of the Los Angeles County Youth Commis­sion to attend today’s meeting remotely under AB 2449 due to emergency circumstances; Elizondo con­firmed his request verbally, adding that no persons over the age of 18 were present at his location. The motion for Elizondo to remotely represent the Youth Commission passed unanimously.

Ortiz Franklin went over the purposes of today’s meeting, and Koenig concluded Agenda Item 1 by reviewing in-person, online, and telephonic housekeeping issues.

Agenda Item 2. Presentation on the report Revisiting California’s Invisible Achievement Gap: Trends in Education Outcomes for Students in Foster Care in the Context of the Local Control Funding Formula followed by a Roundtable Discussion with ECC Members and Constituents on the findings of the report

Ortiz Franklin introduced Vanessa Ximenes Barrat, co-author of [WestEd](https://www.wested.org/)’s original 2013 report, [*The Invisible Achievement Gap: Education Outcomes of Students in Foster Care in California’s Public Schools*](https://www.wested.org/resource/the-invisible-achievement-gap-education-outcomes-of-students-in-foster-care-in-californias-public-schools-part-1/) plus its 2014 [part two](https://www.wested.org/resource/shared-data-reveal-the-invisible-achievement-gap-of-students-in-foster-care/). Today, Barrat presented a third update to that report, included in these minutes as **Attachment 1** and available in full [here](https://www.wested.org/resource/revisiting-californias-invisible-achievement-gap/) on the WestEd website.

This study performed a quantitative analysis of data from academic years 2014–2015 through 2023–2024—publicly available through the California Department of Education—for students in foster care in kindergarten through 12th grade. Authors also reviewed 2022–2023 Local Control Funding Formulas (LCFFs) for the 10 districts in the state having the highest enrollment of stu­dents in foster care—five of which are in Los Angeles County[[1]](#footnote-2)—and compiled interview and focus-group data gleaned from policy leaders, practitioners, and students formerly in foster care to contextualize their findings.

## Population Characteristics

* Over the last decade, the *number of students in foster care* steadily decreased (**slide 7** of Attach­ment 1), while the acuity of their behavioral and mental-health needs increased. This situation presented challenges for school districts that serve few foster youth to provide targeted services.
* Foster youths’ *school stability* *increased*, but remained lower than that of other students (**slide 8**). While most students attend only one school each academic year, only about two-thirds of students in foster care experienced that degree of school stability.
* Transportation to and from school, especially if a student’s out-of-home living situation changes, is a persistent challenge.
* Best-interest determination (BID) meetings—when students and Educational Rights Holders meet to decide whether a student will remain in their school of origin when a student’s place­ment location changes—often lack enough information for informed decisions about potential school moves.
* The percentage of students in foster care who were *chronically absent* from school increased substantially following the COVID-19 pandemic. Students in foster care remained much more likely to be chronically absent than other high-need student groups, including low-income students and English-language learners (**slide 9**). Absenteeism measures a student’s ability to learn in classrooms and affects drop-out and graduation rates. Causes include:

Instability in student living situations and frequent school changes

Delays in disenrollment from a student’s school of origin, a lack of reliable transporta­tion, and lengthy school commutes

Mandatory court dates and medical appointments scheduled during school hours

* The percentage of students in foster care who were *suspended* remained stable over the last decade (**slide 10**) and, following COVID, reverted rapidly to pre-pandemic levels. Students in foster care were over three times more likely than all students and other high-need student groups to be suspended.

More trauma-informed approaches are needed in education.

California Senate Bill (SB) 275, which took effect on July 1, 2024, prohibits suspensions based on lower-level behavioral offenses of ‘willful defiance.’

Academic Achievement

* The percentage of students in foster care *meeting grade-level standards in math* increased slightly before the pandemic, but decreased again post-pandemic to below the level attained 10 years prior (**slide 12**). This is seen as a reflection of school instability and interruptions to students’ academic instruction time. Interviewees also noted the potential benefits of one-on-one tutoring during periods of repeated home and school transitions.
* The percentage of students in foster care who *dropped out of high school* decreased over the last eight years, yet remained higher than for other students (**slide 13**). High-school students in foster care had the highest dropout rates of all student groups, with one in four dropping out each year.
* The percentage of students in foster care *earning a regular high-school diploma* increased by 10 percentage points over the previous eight years (**slide 14**). While that rate was still lower than for other high-need students, recent increases in graduation rates are narrowing the graduation gap. Circumstances affecting this measure include:

Local graduation requirement exceptions (AB 216)

The extension of foster care to age 21

* The percentage of *graduating students in foster care meeting UC/CSU requirements* has not changed over the last seven years (**slide 15**). Fewer than one in five graduating students in foster care successfully completed California’s A–G college preparatory-course requirements for admissions to the state’s four-year public universities (University of California campuses and California State University campuses), effectively limiting their postsecondary opportu­nities. Some believe this may be related to the possibility of graduating under the less rigor­ous state minimum standard permitted by AB 216.
* The percentage of students in foster care *enrolling in college within one year of high school completion* decreased over the last decade (**slide 16**), declining during the pandemic but showing some signs of recovery. Young people’s economic challenges can lead to the priori­tization of work over continuing education, and a lack of awareness of financial and housing supports availa­ble at college may also play a part. In addition, the latest data available is from 2021–2022 and does not provide insight into the impact of recent policy changes.

The 10 California school districts with the most students in foster care in academic year 2022–2023 (**slide 18**) educated more than 8,000 children; approximately 25 percent of California students are in foster care.

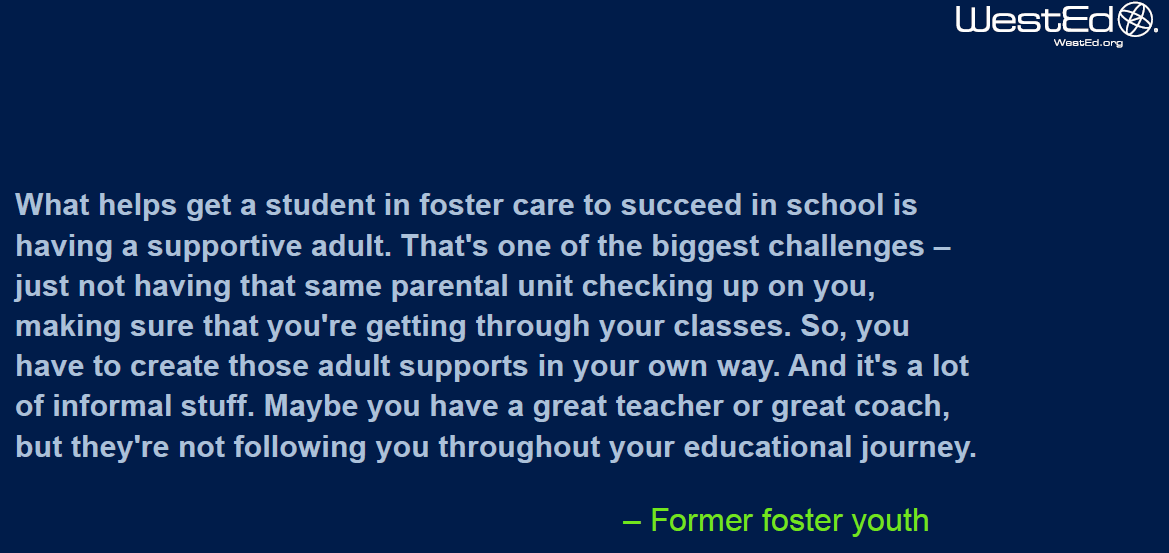
Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)

This funding formula is explained in detail in slides 19 through 21, with interviewee input sought specifically for this report outlined on **slide 22**, outcome trends on **slide 23**, and Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) analysis for academic year 2022–2023 on **slide 24**.

Barrat noted that district LCAPs document and describe planned actions and expenditures but may not include all activities that districts currently implement specifically for youth in foster care.

Discussion

Attendees broke into groups of two or three to discuss these reflection questions:

* *How might the promise of LCFF be more fully realized for students in foster care?*
* *What other important questions should we consider to improve education out­comes for students in foster care?*
* The quotation from a foster youth that prefaced Barrat’s presentation struck a chord with many.
* “Is there a way to reconsider the way that school districts receive LCFF funding?” Jessica Chandler asked. “Right now we have young people whose circumstances *could* trigger multi­ple funding streams to their districts, but don’t. If they’re in foster care *and* their families are low-income *and* they’re English-language learners, their schools don’t get three LCFF allo­cations for them. They get one—all those kids get lumped together as ‘high-need students.’”

As WestEd’s LCAP analysis showed, of the actions that even mentioned students in foster care, nearly all were intended for the three high-need groups combined. Among the ten Los Angeles County school districts with the most students in foster care, eight provided at least one action exclusively for students in foster care (or foster care/homeless). “But the fact that these students are so often not in school because of mobility issues or because they are chron­ically absent,” Barrat said, “means they don’t necessarily receive those services. Not to mention the fact that interventions designed for all students may not address specific needs.”

“I’d love it if we could get very specific at some point and see if that changes the data,” Chandler said.

“It reminds me of the ‘backpack’ funding model,” said Ortiz Franklin. “That’s a student-centered formula where, say, *I’m a foster youth*; the school gets some money. *I’m low-income*; the school gets some money. *I’m something else*; the school gets some money. Then that backpack goes with you from school to school and district to district. Sure, there can be controversy about that approach. Districts with strong unions may require staff positions to be fully funded for at least a year before they’ll hire. But it’s an interesting concept to explore, maybe with some advocacy at the state level, if this group wants to go with that.”

* David Carroll mentioned that the Department of Youth Development is in the process of building out school-based interventions with a focus on chronic absenteeism. “Do you have a list,” he asked Barrat, “of some of those specific requests made by young people?”

“We have a list of the services *offered*,” Barrat responded, “classified by type, but not of any requested. We did see a lot of social/emotional support and academic support services, all targeted to help kids succeed in school. But going more directly into asking the kids them­selves what would be helpful to them? I think it is an excellent idea, but not one that we examined in depth.”

Carroll then asked if a list of actions planned specifically for students in foster care (for the eight districts that provided them) was available; it is included in the [full report](https://www.wested.org/resource/revisiting-californias-invisible-achievement-gap/). Barrat also stated that she would provide the list of planned actions to DYD to support their school-based interventions work.

* Additional LCFF and LCAP resources prepared in 2024 by advocates—Children Now, the Alliance for Children’s Rights, the National Center for Youth Law, and the Children’s Law Center of California—appear as **Attachment 2** and **Attachment 3** to these minutes.

Agenda Item 3. Update and Roundtable Discussion with ECC Members and Constituents on the Implementation of School-Stability Transportation for Youth Involved in the Foster-Care System

Jennifer Higuchi from the Education and Developmental Services Section of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) began her presentation (included as **Attachment 4**)with an overview of the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), established to provide all children a significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps.

School-of-Origin (SOO) Trans­portation Program

One of ESSA’s key provisions requires Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and public child-welfare agencies—in Los Angeles County’s case, DCFS—to collaborate and ensure that trans­portation to a young person’s school of origin (SOO) is provided/available to youth in foster care. To address this need, DCFS, in partnership with more than half the public-school districts in the county, currently operates the School-of-Origin (SOO) Trans­portation Program that trans­ports youth in out-of-home care to their school of origin.

During academic year 2024–2025:

Nearly 900 youth were transported to their schools of origin.

A total of 89,668 individual rides were completed.

The ride cancellation rate—for rides provided by contractor HopSkipDrive—was 5.9 percent, a considerable decrease from the highest previous rate of 13 percent.

LEAs with the highest utilization included:

Los Angeles Unified School District (311 students)

Antelope Valley Union High School District (106 students)

Long Beach Unified School District (85 students)

Lancaster School District (50 students)

Palmdale School District (39 students)

First implemented in 2019, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for this program is an agreement between DCFS and each LEA to evenly split the costs of providing transportation for youth in foster care to and from their schools of origin. A total of 77 LEAs currently participate in the MOU, including 56 school districts and 21 independent charters. Seven LEAs were onboarded in aca­demic year 2024–2025.

The MOU language is in the process of being updated, with key issues under discussion includ­ing data-sharing and identifying activities that are in the best interests of students and should be included in their SOO transportation.

Student Transportation and Extracurricular Enrichment Ride (STEER) Program

DCFS established the STEER program on July 1, 2024, by using Flexible Family Support (FFS) funding to provide transportation assistance to youth who are not eligible for the SOO Transpor­tation Program. It is currently funded through April 30, 2026, and the DCFS Education Section will be presenting to DCFS Executive Operations to see if additional funding can be added for the following fiscal year.

In fiscal year 2024-2025:

470 youth were transported through STEER

19,013 individual rides were completed

220 youth were transported to their SOOs

184 youth were transported to extracurricular and school-related activities

The cancellation rate was 9 percent

The school-of-origin transportation that STEER covers includes rides for students having trans­portation as part of their Individualized Educations Plan (IEPs) when they are moved outside their original school’s catchment area, Higuchi explained, as well as students residing in Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Placements (STRTPs), which often lack enough staff to assign one or more to twice-daily chauffeur duty during the school year. It is an STRTP’s responsi­bility to transport its residents to and from school, Higuchi confirmed. “We of course encourage their first choices to be school buses/public buses or the Metro system, if those are feasible,” she said. “Sometimes they’re not, which is where STEER can come in.”

DCFS 1399 Form

DCFS utilizes the DCFS 1399 form to provide notice to school districts when a youth enters foster care or changes placement. A sample of the 2008 form can be seen [here](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fresources.finalsite.net%2Ffiles%2Fv1688668155%2Fhlpschoolsorg%2Fce2b9fbpohpdaprnos3b%2FDCFS1399-NotificationtoSchoolofPupilFosterCareStatus-DeptofChildFamilySvcsRev808.doc&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK).

DCFS is currently working with the Alliance for Children’s Rights, the Office of Child Protec­tion, and the Pasadena Unified School District to update the 1399 form. DCFS is also exploring internally the feasibility of automating a notification to LEAs when a student’s out-of-home placement has been or may be changed.

Agenda Item 4. Roundtable Discussion with ECC Members and Constituents regarding Child-Welfare Education Updates and/or Issues from the Field

**Updates Regarding Head Start and Immigration Resources**

Chair Ortiz Franklin introduced Fredy Ruiz, an immigrant relations coor­dinator with the Los Angeles County Office of Education’s General Counsel, to update attendees on recent federal impacts on Head Start and to share some available [immigration resources](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1JkDD2mkB_Ag_RIiF17gctdRxtgPuTkkF?usp=sharing) for families and educa­tors, along with a calendar for upcoming webinars scheduled from now until mid-December. “Anyone here is welcome to participate in those,” Ruiz said; registration is avail­able on this [office website](https://www.lacoe.edu/services/student-support/immigrant-relations) link.

“In July, the United States Department of Health and Human Services,” Ruiz began, “also known as HHS, released a [notice](https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/prwora-notice.pdf) that reclassifies Head Start and multiple other HHS programs as ‘federal public benefits.’ Under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconcili­ation Act (PRWORA), the 1996 welfare-reform law, ‘federal public benefits’ are restricted to U.S. citizens and ‘qualified aliens,’ a category that excludes recipients of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and those with Temporary Protected Status. The July action reverses the [previous interpretation](https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-1998-08-04/pdf/98-20491.pdf) of the law published by HHS in 1998, in essence restricting immi­grants’ access to community health centers, mental health and substance-abuse care, Head Start, and other public health and social services.

“Following a lawsuit filed by at least 20 states, including California,” Ruiz explained, “the admin­istration agreed to temporarily pause the enforcement of policy changes restricting some educa­tion-related federal programs based on students’ immigra­tion or citizen­ship status in states that were part of the lawsuit, so programs won’t be retroactively penalized for enrolling students regardless of their immigration status ... as has been the norm for Head Start for decades now. In addition, Head Start programs run by nonprofit charitable organizations may not be affected at all because PRWORA exempts them from need­ing to verify the immigration status of individuals.

“We’re closely monitoring the situation,” Ruiz went on, “and we should know more within the first couple of weeks of September. We provided public comment on why the government shouldn’t restrict Head Start—or other programs, either—and make these services unavailable to undocumented students and families. Many organizations have done the same, not only here in Los Angeles, but throughout the entire state.

“Health care access could be cut for 1.4 million adults and around 218,000 chil­dren in Cali­fornia alone, which will worsen health outcomes, increase costs, and further burden immigrant families. The Supple­mental Nutri­tional Assistance Program, SNAP, may be revoked for immigrants with­out citizen­ship. Parents who don’t have Social Secu­rity Numbers won’t benefit from programs like the Child Tax Credit. At least one parent must have a Social Security Number to simply claim a child as a dependent, even if the children are birth­right U.S. citizens.

“The flip side of this action, by the way, significantly increases immigration enforcement and detention funding—$45 billion for detention and I believe $27 billion for ICE [U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement] operations. We’re not talking millions here,” Ruiz emphasized. “We’re talking *billions*. This is expected to lead to more arrests and deportations in Los Angeles County, increasing the fear that’s already out there. Anxiety, mental stress, trauma—all of this is wearing on our immigrant communities, our students, and our families. It’s restricting access to essential public benefits for undocumented immigrants as well as *lawfully present* immigrants such as refugees, asylum seekers, parole recipients, survi­vors of trafficking and domestic vio­lence, and people in Temporary Protective Services, also known as TPS.

“Provisions in this measure may further erode ‘due process,’” Ruiz said, “which we are already seeing here with family members or just people in general being picked up by ICE without judicial warrants at peaceful protests or workplaces or churches and detained with­out access to a lawyer and without being able to notify anyone of their whereabouts. It particu­larly threatens the well-being of immigrant children, especially those who are unaccompanied—depriving this latter group of legal representation by prohibiting the use of funds already allocated for attorneys. Without them, children face a complex immigration system alone, which reduces their chances both of due process and of any protection from trafficking.”

On January 1, 2024, California became the first state in the nation to offer health insurance to eligible undocumented immigrants of all ages via full-scope Medi-Cal. Qualifying individuals could seek free dental, vision (eye) care, specialist appointments, mental health care, substance-use disorder services, prescription drugs and medical supplies, and In-Home Support Services (IHSS) if they met all Medi-Cal eligibility rules, including [income limits](https://www.healthforcalifornia.com/covered-california/health-insurance-companies/medi-cal/income-qualifications).

Starting on January 1, 2026, Governor Gavin Newsom plans on freezing new enrollments to this program for adults 19 and older having an ‘unsatisfactory’ immigration status. Those already enrolled will not be removed, but dental coverage and IHSS will be eliminated from their bene­fits package. Some will also face new premiums, which Ruiz believes will be $30 per month.

“But these new 2025 policies would bar undocumented immigrants from over a dozen health, social-service, and educational programs that are operated or funded by HHS,” Ruiz continued, “generating additional fear and confusion, especially within mixed-status families. We’re no longer talking about just undocumented students. Now we’re talking about students who might be U.S. citizens themselves, but whose parents are undocumented, which could discourage citizen children from seeking help for fear of exposing undocumented family members.

“We hear about changes to all these possibilities almost on a daily basis, and it’s really hard to wrap your head around everything going on and how best to support students, families, and communi­ties,” Ruiz admitted. “But at least nonprofit organizations aren’t required to verify a family’s immigration status to enroll them in Head Start, so if a location like that is feasible, that might be a place for folks with young children to go. But right now we just don’t know exactly what else is going to happen. Some of this is fear tactics on the part of the federal administration, and part of it is seeing what they can get away with, so it’s very hard to predict.”

Chair Ortiz Franklin invited Ruiz to return to quarterly ECC meetings to provide regular updates on these issues, and he said he’d be happy to.

David Carroll commented, “We know that the low performance numbers we saw in the LCAP presentation today are heav­ily based on young people not being prepared for school,” he said. “And we also know that two of the best ways of preparing young people is Head Start so they’re ready for kindergar­ten, and after-school and summer programs so they can keep up in subsequent grades. Even though the federal administration seems to have backed off defunding those, I believe it’s incum­bent upon us—especially for foster youth—to figure out where the money could come from, if necessary, to provide after-school and summer programs within school districts.

“If kids aren’t ready for kindergarten,” Carroll went on, “then chances are they’re not going to be working at grade level in third grade. The prison industry bases its building and capac­ity esti­mates on school performance reports, and third grade is when those folks start build­ing future prisons. Yes, they calculate the number of kids likely to go into the justice system from third-grade aca­demic perfor­mance. It’s that serious. So kids who don’t have Head Start, who don’t have after-school programs? The prison system, at least, believes the odds are that they’ll end up in a juve­nile or adult facility. Threats of cutting those front-end programs have gone back and forth, and that’s really been bothering me a lot lately. We need to get those wraparound ser­vices to kids.”

“My early care and education agency is seeing vacancies,” Dora Jacildo added, “especially in communities with large immigrant populations. Our Wilmington location had a 50 percent decline in participation. People are scared. Organizations are struggling to keep their staff mem­bers employed with such a reduced level of activity.”

Youth Commission Listening Session

Josh Elizondo announced a Youth Commission listening session at Los Angeles Valley College on September 19; Supervisor Lindsey Horvath is slated to attend, and all are welcome. A flyer for the event appears as **Attachment 5** to these minutes.

Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Updates

* LAUSD is offering non-routine transportation for families who have concerns with their children walking to school, or they themselves walking their children to school, Denise Miranda reported. Bus routes will be available. Families should connect directly with their child’s school, which then submits the referral.
* The website [We Are One / We Are One L.A. Unified - Home](https://www.lausd.org/weareone) contains family prepared­ness toolkits, a family resource guide, information about the district’s Wellness Clinic and its enrollment, placement, and assessment centers, plus ‘red cards’ showing an indi­vidual’s rights when stopped by ICE, videos in multiple languages, and so on.
* The district is reminding families to make sure that their emergency cards are up to date and completely filled out so that if something happens to parent/s, a named caregiver is authorized to receive the child or children from school.
* In September, Miranda’s department is presenting a workshop on the three-strand GlobalProtect program, a K–12 curriculum about human trafficking, in preparation for the various world events planned over the next few years in the Los Angeles area.

Agenda Item 5. Closing Comments and Adjournment

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

**Wednesday, November 5, 2025 | 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.**

In-person location details, virtual connection instructions, meeting materials, and the agenda will be sent out closer to the meet­ing date.

Adjournment

There being no further public comment, the meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

1. Los Angeles Unified School District, Lancaster Elementary School District, Long Beach Unified School District, Antelope Valley Union High School District, and Palmdale School District [↑](#footnote-ref-2)