



Policy Roundtable for Child Care
Wednesday, January 12, 2011
10:00 a.m. – Noon
Conference Room 743
Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles



Proposed Meeting Agenda

- 10:00 1. Welcome and Introductions Terri Chew Nishimura
Chair
- a. Comments from the Chair and Introduction of Dora Jacildo
- b. Review of Minutes from: **Action Item**
- October 2010
 - November 2010
 - December 2010
- 10:20 2. Progress on Updating the Child Care Policy Framework **Action Item** Jacquelyn McCroskey
- Discussion
- 11:10 3. Policy Framework Objective: Identify opportunities for Los Angeles County to promote collaboration among service providers and advocates on behalf of needed legislative or regulatory changes
- a. Governor's Budget & Proposed Legislation **Action Item** Adam Sonenshein
Michele Sartell
- b. Roundtable hosted by Senator Liu
- c. Congressional Action
- Continuing Resolution - Impact on Child Development Funding
- 11:45 4. Educare Planning Whit Hayslip
Ruth Yoon
- 11:50 5. Announcements and Public Comment Members & Guests
- 12:00 6. Call to Adjourn

Mission Statement

The mission of the Policy Roundtable for Child Care is to serve as the official County body on all matters relating to child care, working in collaboration with the Child Care Planning Committee and the Children's Planning Council, to build and strengthen the child care system and infrastructure in the County by providing policy recommendations to the Board.

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Policy Roundtable for Child Care

222 South Hill Street, Fifth Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90012
Phone: (213) 974-4103 • Fax: (213) 217-5106 • www.childcare.lacounty.gov

MEETING MINUTES

**October 13, 2010
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Conference Room 743
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California**

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

a. Comments from the Chair

Ms. Terri Chew Nishimura, Chair of the Policy Roundtable for Child Care (Roundtable), opened the meeting at 10:15 a.m. Members and guests introduced themselves.

1) Welcome to New Members

Ms. Nishimura relayed that Ms. Reynolds served two terms as chair of the Child Care Planning Committee, from 2008-2010. With the adoption of the Committee's 2010-11 membership slate, Ms. Reynolds term as chair ended and Ms. Bobbie Edwards was elected as Chair of the Committee. On October 5, 2010, the Board of Supervisors appointed Ms. Edwards to the Roundtable.

On October 12, 2010, the Board of Supervisors appointed Mr. Adam Sonenshein as the Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP) representative. Mr. Sonenshein replaces Dr. Celia Ayala.

Ms. Nishimura welcomed the new members and extended her deep appreciation to the contributions made by both Ms. Reynolds and Dr. Ayala. Ms. Nishimura added that they should expect the Roundtable to enlist their help as needed!

2) Strengthening Families Leadership Summit

Ms. Kathy Malaske-Samu referred members to their meeting packets for a copy of the Save the Date flyer for the Strengthening Families Leadership Summit scheduled for November 10, 2010. Participation in the event is by invitation only, however she asked for names of anyone interested in attending to let her know so that they may be invited as space allows. Persons representing networks will be encouraged to take back and share the knowledge gained at the summit with other systems in the county.

Because the event conflicts with the Roundtable meeting and a number of members have been asked to participate and serve as panelists, the November meeting of the Roundtable has been rescheduled to Friday, November 12, 2010 at 10:00 a.m. The meeting will be held at the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration in Room 743.

3) Comments on the State Budget

Ms. Nishimura noted that the Governor has signed the state budget for 2010-11. Due to some significant cuts in child care and development, some members and guests are not in attendance as they are addressing service reductions and staff layoffs. The cuts are very deep and very serious! Ms. Nishimura deferred a further conversation to later in the agenda.

b. Review of September 8, 2010 Meeting Minutes

Ms. Connie Russell made a motion to approve the minutes; Mr. Whit Hayslip seconded the motion. The minutes were approved on a unanimous vote.

2. POLICY FRAMEWORK OBJECTIVE

Identify opportunities for Los Angeles County to promote collaboration among service providers and advocates on behalf of needed legislative or regulatory changes.

a. State Budget Update

Mr. Adam Sonenshein reported that the budget for 2010-11 was passed by the legislature on Friday. The Governor line item vetoed CalWORKs Stage 3 effective November 1, 2010, which means lots of families will be without child care while working and attending school. Other notable cuts are:

- Fifty percent reduction to the Local Planning Councils (LPCs). According to Ms. Malaske-Samu, the LPC contract for Los Angeles County is critical to the operations of the Office of Child Care; as of the meeting, she was not sure whether the budget reduction would have staff implications.
- Approximately 21 percent cut to the Child Care Recruitment and Retention Programs. For Los Angeles County, this means that the Investing in Early Educators Program stipend amounts paid to early educators completing college coursework are likely to be reduced significantly. Consequent to the LPC and Stipend Program cuts, Ms. Malaske-Samu stated that the Office of Child Care will need to identify at least \$200,000 to keep afloat as is.
- Cuts to quality improvement activities based on the recommendation of the Legislative Analyst's Office to align with the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) requirements. California spends a larger percentage of its CCDBG funds on quality improvement activities than required by federal law.
- A reduction in the reimbursement rates paid to license-exempt providers.
- A reduction in the Alternative Payment allowances for administration from 19 to 17.5 percent of their total budgets.
- Child development centers will have their reserves capped at five percent.
- The Governor vetoed augmentations to staffing for the Early Learning Advisory Committee.

Advocacy efforts in response to the elimination of CalWORKs Stage 3 Child Care are moving quickly. Ms. Adela Arellano of the Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles (the Alliance) announced that the Alternative Payment (AP) Program agencies have begun sending Notices of Action to families informing them that their subsidized child care will end as of October 30, 2010. The AP Program agencies also are preparing to layoff approximately 400 staff countywide.

Community Voices is organizing parents to visit their legislators and participate in a rally on Friday, October 15, 2010. The Alliance and the AP Program agencies have been participating in conference calls with the California Department of Education/Child Development Division (CDE/CDD) to clarify issues. In addition, the Alliance and others are exploring how to best help families connect with other services and collect data. They are partnering with Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP) to explore transitioning families with four year olds, looking at strategies to track the number of families that may return to CalWORKs, and urging families to register on the Los Angeles Centralized Eligibility List (LACEL). Ms. Michele Sartell mentioned that families losing their Stage 3 Child Care will not receive the continuity of care priority; several members and guests find this a troubling change in CDE/CDD's position.

The long term strategy is to advocate for the reinstatement of CalWORKs Stage 3 Child Care. According to Mr. Sonenshein, elected officials plan to start working on the budget upon the swearing in of new members.

Mr. Hayslip announced that Friday at LAUSD is called norm day when LAUSD accounts for the spaces available in all of its centers. After Friday, LAUSD will have a list of where spaces are available for children under five years old. Ms. Younglove stated that all of the Head Start Programs are required to have their programs fully enrolled by October 30th, although a small number may have openings after that date.

b. Los Angeles County Legislative Agenda - 2011-12

Mr. Sonenshein directed members and guests to their meeting packets for copies of the recommendations for the County's State and Federal Legislative Agendas for the coming year.

Next, Mr. Sonenshein reported on bills that were signed into law:

- Senate Bill 1831 (Simitian) incrementally moves the kindergarten start date up and creates transition kindergarten programs. Mr. Hayslip said the true impact of the bill will be experienced a year from this fall. Districts need to be ready to accept children, and that includes having guidelines in place. He added that there is some confusion in the child care community that school districts will be taking children away from their programs. This is not the case as these are children who already would have left to enter kindergarten. LAUSD has 36 pilots up and running with the help of a Packard grant. LAUSD has also tapped into the resources of Dr. Linda Espinoza and Dr. Carola Matera, experts in dual language learning to help facilitate their strong language approach. The Boeing Corporation is underwriting LAUSD's parent engagement piece. A year from next fall, LAUSD anticipates 4,000 children with November birthdates, resulting in a need for 175 classrooms, and then ramping to 500 classrooms by 2013. This is a big jump from their current pilot. LAUSD is developing curriculum materials, which are being considered as a model for districts across the state.

- Senate Bill 1440 (Padilla) will improve articulation between the community colleges and four year colleges.
- Assembly Bill 2084 (Brownley) makes changes to the beverages served in child development programs. This bill implements some of the positive changes that were made to beverages served in schools.

Mr. Hayslip suggested that an opportunity exists for school districts to use their Title 1 funds for early childhood; however, to make this happen would require external pressure. He mentioned that the Chicago Public Schools ended Title 1 programs that were not working and then redirected their funds to early care and education. The Sacramento County Office of Education also has done some work around using Title 1 funds for early childhood. The Joint Committee on Legislation volunteered to study efforts underway and develop advocacy strategies and guidelines on how local school districts could use the funds to serve their communities. Ms. Malaske-Samu asked Ms. Younglove if the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) could assist in raising awareness on how funds are used across the county and point out local examples of where there has been success.

3. UPDATING THE POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD CARE

Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey distributed two items: *From Silos to Systems: Connecting Child Development and County Sponsored Services* and a draft document entitled *Updating the Child Care Policy Framework*. The documents will help guide the work of the County Department/Child Development Collaborative Committee on framing the next iteration of the Policy Framework, including reflecting the work of how County departments are implementing the Strengthening Families Approach philosophy. Dr. McCroskey acknowledged the important contributions of Mr. Michael Gray and Ms. Charlotte Lee, representatives from the Departments of Children and Family Services (DCFS) respectively, and the relatively new involvement of the Probation Department and Department of Mental Health.

Dr. McCroskey mentioned that the first ever policy framework on child care and development was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in January 2009. *From Silos to Systems* summarizes the initiatives and accomplishments to date as reported at the retreat. The policy framework is scheduled for an update in two years, so now is the time to discuss next steps. Dr. McCroskey, Ms. Terry Ogawa, Ms. Malaske-Samu and Ms. Sartell recently met with Mr. Nicolas Ippolito, Deputy to Supervisor Don Knabe, to explore the presentation of the revised policy framework to the Board of Supervisors upon completion. Mr. Ippolito relayed that Supervisor Knabe would be happy to carry the motion and support a public discussion on the item. Supervisor Knabe also supports expansion of the Roundtable to include representatives from the Department of Mental Health and Probation.

Dr. McCroskey stated the question: What is the next iteration of the policy framework that the Roundtable would like to see the Board of Supervisors adopt? She suggested that the work build upon existing efforts and define the work ahead that represents conversations across departments. She suggested identifying two to three major policy areas that relate to more than one department. Dr. McCroskey invited members and guests to submit ideas for the committee to consider and join in the work that will look at how to integrate activities. In the context of the budget cuts, she mentioned that half of the children in the county come to the attention of at least one County department each year.

Member and guest comments:

- Mr. Gray noted that a preliminary analysis of the 467 child deaths from 2008-10 found that 37 percent of the children were in the age range of birth to two years old. He wondered how many of the children may have been enrolled in an early care and education program and, if not, how many deaths may have been prevented. Mr. Gray has been meeting with the DCFS leadership to discuss integrating the Strengthening Families Approach into their in daily work. Specific to internal support programs, Mr. Gray would like to see the information integrated into their service objectives. Dr. McCroskey asked if it would be possible to glean information on whether and the type of early care and education programs the families may have participated in.
- Mr. Hayslip expressed his support for connecting families with high quality services, but noted that the services are not readily available. He suggested exploring how to partner with County departments to maximize resources, beginning with identifying the resources and making the connections. Dr. McCroskey acknowledged the need for two-way connections and shared her thoughts around partnering between the Los Angeles Unified School District's (LAUSD) Saturday clinics and the Department of Mental Health's contractors funded to provide mental health services as an example. Mr. Hayslip added that he has been meeting with representatives of Magnolia Place and the Early Development Screening and Intervention Initiative to explore co-locating services. He emphasized the importance of relationship-building.
- Ms. Malaske-Samu stated that a revised Policy Framework needs to be presented to the Board of Supervisors in January 2011. The November meeting will be devoted to the Policy Framework. In the meantime, a meeting of the County Department/Child Development Collaborative will be scheduled. She also will ask to be on Child Care Planning Committee agenda.

4. UPDATES

a. Steps to Excellence Project (STEP)

Ms. Helen Chavez announced the following:

Enrollments: 480 applications to join STEP were received during the summer. Most of the applicants were outside of the pilot communities. Official enrollment is at 370. STEP has rated 165 programs to date and should hit 200 by December. STEP will continue to rate programs through June 2011.

Recognitions: STEP has received awards from the National Association of Counties, the California Association of Counties, and the Los Angeles County Quality and Productivity Commission.

Evaluation: Ms. Malaske-Samu has leveraged \$38,000 for a process evaluation of STEP. The Request for Qualifications will be released this month.

Sustainability: STEP's primary funders are First 5 LA, the Board of Supervisors and the CDE/CDD. In addition, LAUSD is using Title 1 funds to pay STEP for program ratings. STEP is seeking additional funding from First 5 LA to expand the pilot into the 14 place-based communities and pay for a full-time equivalent trainer. Another potential source of funds may be the money that the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) will use to fund pilot quality

rating systems across the state. Ms. Chavez is finalizing the STEP report and will soon have an executive summary to share with the ELAC.

Staffing: On a personal note, Ms. Chavez announced that she accepted a promotion within the Service Integration Branch (SIB) to work with the Education Coordinating Council. She expressed her pleasure in serving the Roundtable, stating that she has learned so much and is grateful for their contributions to STEP. In her new role, Ms. Chavez hopes to collaborate around connecting children to early care and education and helping those transitioning from the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

b. Statewide Planning Efforts

Ms. Younglove distributed excerpts from the application that was submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on behalf of ELAC. She noted that the October meeting has been rescheduled to November 30. She briefly walked members and guests through the objectives of the grant that includes rolling out a quality rating and improvement system pilot project. The materials also include a list of the ELAC members. Once the money is committed, there may be some changes as ELAC refines the plan with more specificity. There is a state match requirement, which is listed on the last page of the handout.

c. Bridge Funding for CDE/CDD-contracted Programs

Ms. Laura Escobedo was asked to give an update on the plan for bridge funding to address future state budget delays. Ms. Escobedo reminded members that at the previous meeting there was a discussion on the need to develop a mechanism to assist CDE/CDD-contracted child development programs when faced with budget delays. She mentioned that Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) Head Start made a request to First 5 LA for funding to assist their State Preschool Programs during the budget impasse. At that meeting, First 5 LA agreed to make a staff person available to participate in local efforts to establish a bridge funding mechanism. Ms. Escobedo has been working on this issue with representatives from the California Community Foundation and the Los Angeles Preschool Advocacy Initiative.

Ms. Escobedo stated that with the immediate crisis for passing of the budget now over, the focus is on issuing the allocations as quickly as possible. Given the data collected from contractors during the budget delay, easily a third of the 150+ contracts were significantly impacted, resulting in closed classrooms and/or sites. Now there are questions on whether programs will fully earn their contracts. In the meantime, work is underway to look at creating a bridge/loan fund. The goal is to have something to present by late spring. Ms. Escobedo concluded her comments by remarking on a ballot initiative that would, if passed, require a majority to pass the state budget. If the initiative passes, it may change the need to establish a local fund. Only three states require a two-thirds majority to pass a budget.

d. First 5 LA

Ms. Malaske-Samu reported that the First 5 LA Commission is scheduled to meet Thursday, October 14th. A number of Commissioners are introducing motions to augment First 5's countywide proposals. Ms. Nancy Au and Ms. Angie Stockwell will be introducing a motion to expand the countywide investment in the early childhood workforce. This proposal was developed by Ms. Randi Wolf at LAUP; Mr. Dennis has worked closely with the Commission members to craft a motion that will be successful and will provide a sizable investment in the

local early childhood workforce. The proposal is comprehensive and broad in vision and is designed to bring folks together.

The proposal includes six components:

- 1) Expand the LAUP stipend program to include persons working in programs other than LAUP.
- 2) Support the Child Care Resource and Referral (R&R) Agencies Gateway program, which provides training for license and license exempt providers, a Web based training calendar, and contracts courses with community colleges.
- 3) Support STEP expansion into all 14 Best Start communities, including training, technical assistance, and coaching in conjunction with the R&Rs Gateway program.
- 4) LACOE - Division of School Improvement
- 5) Higher Education – Teacher Quality Partnership
- 6) Workforce Initiative – Early Care and Education

The ask is for a substantial amount of money. Ms. Malaske-Samu hopes to report on the results of the proposal at the November or December meeting of the Roundtable. While the proposal is listed as an action item on the Commission agenda, typically items are presented in the first month and then voted upon in the next month. The goal is to push money out the door quickly, but still follow the process for public vetting and more. Ms. Malaske-Samu noted that there are lots of proposals on the agenda.

e. Planning for Educare

Mr. Hayslip announced that dates are scheduled for visits and exploration of Educare in Chicago and Omaha. The Chamber of Commerce and Compact LA are providing assistance and support. The Packard and Buffett foundations have awarded the planning grant. Technical assistance is needed for convening groups; Ms. Ogawa has agreed to handle the planning and convening process.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PUBLIC COMMENT

- LACOE Head Start is hosting a large resource fair in Exposition Park on November 23, 2010. Several vendors will provide on-site services, including flu shots by the Department of Public Health. Two thousand people are expected to attend. The fair is open to low income families with preschool children.
- First 5 LA is hosting a panel discussion on childhood obesity on November 8, 2010 from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m.
- First 5 LA has hired Ms. Carol Baker as its new Policy Department Director. Ms. Baker previously worked in Public Affairs. Ms. Kate Sachnoff said they are recruiting for three positions at the senior and junior analyst levels.

6. CALL TO ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 12 p.m.

Commissioners Present:

Ms. Bobbie Edwards
Mr. Michael Gray
Mr. Whit Hayslip
Ms. Charlotte Lee
Ms. Kathy Malaske-Samu
Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey
Ms. Terri Chew Nishimura
Ms. Connie Russell
Mr. Adam Sonenshein
Ms. Mika Yamamoto
Ms. Ruth Yoon
Ms. Sarah Younglove

Guests:

Ms. Adela Arellano, Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles
Ms. Leila Espinoza, UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families & Communities
Ms. Terry Ogawa, Education Coordinating Council
Ms. Holly Reynolds, Fairplex Child Development Center
Ms. Kate Sachnoff, First 5 LA

Staff:

Ms. Helen Chavez
Ms. Laura Escobedo
Ms. Michele Sartell



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MEETING MINUTES

**November 12, 2010
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Conference Room 743
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California**

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

a. Comments from the Chair

Ms. Terri Chew Nishimura, Chair of the Policy Roundtable for Child Care (Roundtable), opened the meeting at 10:12 a.m. Members and guests introduced themselves.

b. Review of October 13, 2010 Meeting Minutes

Due to lack of a quorum, the October minutes will be held for consideration at the December meeting.

2. STRENGTHENING FAMILIES LEADERSHIP SUMMIT: REFLECTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

Ms. Nishimura started the conversation by stating how inspired she was by the summit. Prior to attending, Ms. Nishimura learned from her staff that no one had heard of the Strengthening Families Approach and Protective Factors, given that they see approximately 1,200 children with special needs and the data that speaks to a higher level of risk for child abuse and neglect among this population. She was particularly touched by the emphasis on a strength-based framework and using a common language across disciplines. Ms. Nishimura mentioned that she is impressed by the paradigm change that occurred at the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services to serving as a resource for families rather than an entity that removes children.

Other members and guests weighed in with their thoughts about the summit as well. Many of the comments were around the models presented and the discussions from the County-Community dialogues and how to take to scale a Strengthening Families Approach in Los Angeles County. It was noted that the Ms. Judy Langford has accomplished a lot of the work by translating very complicated concepts into practical and conversant ideas that are both hopeful and doable. In addition, there is a lot to learn from the work in Illinois that resulted in a paradigm shift as noted by Ms. Nishimura. Dr. McEwen, in his presentation, offered references to resources and literature that contributed to their change in approach. His presentation including the references will be made available soon through an Internet link.

Dr. Randi Wolfe posed the question, “By the end of the day, what are the concrete next steps?” Ms. Kathy Malaske-Samu replied that the Center for the Study of Social Policy and the Casey Family Foundation have a plan for taking the common themes and looking at the development of strategies for implementation in Los Angeles County. She added that First 5 LA has been involved from the beginning and was responsible for introducing Los Angeles County to Ms. Langford. It was noted that other foundations – Hilton and Amundson – were present at the summit.

3. UPDATING THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey referred to the Summit as the perfect segue for developing the next iteration of the policy framework. She referred members and the guests to their meeting packets for the draft laundry list of potential recommendations framed around the Strengthening Families Approach and the five Protective Factors¹ by Ms. Malaske-Samu in preparation of the meeting. There is some urgency to updating the framework, which is due to the Board of Supervisors in January 2011. An extension may be requested, however the aim is to submit it for action by February/March 2011. The document presented to the Board will include an introduction highlighting the two years of progress, honing in on the partners and their contributions.

Dr. McCroskey walked members through the list, highlighting strategies relating to families receiving services from County departments and with potential promise for achievable outcomes. Some of the highlights include: continuing and expanding upon ongoing activities, such as facilitating enrollments of children under Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) into Head Start; supporting emerging initiatives, such as the development of the Educare child development center in identified southeast Los Angeles communities, the Los Angeles Unified School District Saturday clinics, and the new transition kindergarten classrooms resulting from the passage of Senate Bill 1381; and taking on new endeavors, such as linking homeless families with child development services and reviewing DCFS and Probation policies to ensure teen parents are connected to child development services.

There was some discussion among members and guests around a few of the items as follows:

Item 1, b, i, c. *CEO (Chief Executive Office)/SIB (Service Integration Branch) OCC (Office of Child Care) Roundtable shall work with other DCFS family-center services such as kinship caregivers; CalWORKs families with two children under six who are exempt from work requirements; CalWORKs homeless, domestic violence, mental health, and substance abuse to facilitate access to child development services.*

- The CalWORKs exemption from welfare-to-work activities for families of young children is set to expire in 2011, therefore does not make sense to address.
- County departments separately hold contracts with organizations that conduct assessments of individuals who come to their attention and may confront issues of homelessness, domestic violence, mental health and substance abuse. The respective departments and their contractors do not necessarily work together and may or may not see the same people. One suggestion is to forge a campaign across departments for an integrated service approach.

¹ The Protective Factors are: Parental Resilience, Social Connections, Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development, Concrete Support in Times of Need, and Children’s Social and Emotional Development.

Item 3, iv. *OCC Roundtable shall work in partnership with DCFS, Probation, child welfare and child development advocates, legal services, and others to clearly define how children qualify as “at-risk of” abuse or neglect for priority subsidized child care services.*

- Define at-risk more broadly, regardless of child’s placement to encompass children under the purview of DCFS
- Children of teen parents under the supervision of DCFS and Probation
- A strategy may include working up the DCFS chain, then to the California Department of Education to weigh in. Is this a legislative or an administrative issue?

Additional general comments were offered as well and are as follows:

- Dr. McEwen spoke to convening an interagency team to implement the paradigm shift that speaks to parent partnership, professional development, integration of services and more. What might the Los Angeles County version look like? First 5 LA through its Community Opportunities Fund invests in policy change activities.
- Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE)-Head Start is implementing a family development credentialing model developed by Cornell University that is similar to the Strengthening Families Approach. Ms. Malaske-Samu will request a presentation on the model from LACOE.
- There needs to be a discussion on the role of the Child Care Resource and Referral (R&R) Agencies. The R&Rs touch lots of families through child care referrals and there may be parents of young children needing assistance from other social service agency. Explore R&Rs as connectors to other services, including those offered by County departments. Child Care Resource Center refers families to 211 LA County. What about LACountyHelps! and using the Healthy City database?
- The Los Angeles Centralized Eligibility List (LACEL) is like a control group with lots of families potentially not receiving any services. How are families registered on the LACEL being linked to other resources pending being pulled for enrollment in a child development program? Social service agencies may also help child development programs when they are conducting enrollments connect with families that are harder to reach.
- Explore bringing in representation from the Regional Centers; look at how addressing children at risk for and with special needs throughout the policy framework.
- The framework will build on lessons learned and accomplishments to date.
- Need to incorporate parent involvement and outreach to parents.
- Next steps to move the policy framework agenda will include: take to County department representatives for comment; members representing Board of Supervisor offices present the framework to their respective Board members for feedback; and request a public discussion as part of Board of Supervisors meeting agenda.

To conclude, Dr. McCroskey asked for the Roundtable members’ go ahead for the committee to continue working on the recommendations and begin conversations to with County department

representatives. A meeting of the committee will be scheduled before the December meeting of the Roundtable.

4. POLICY FRAMEWORK OBJECTIVE

Identify opportunities for Los Angeles County to promote collaboration among service providers and advocates on behalf of needed legislative or regulatory changes.

a. Activity Related to CalWORKs Stage 3 Child Care

Ms. Michele Sartell referred members to their meeting packets for a copy of the draft policy brief summarizing the status of CalWORKs Stage 3 Child Care since the Governor eliminated funding for it with his line item veto authority when he signed the 2010-11 State Budget. She briefly summarized the work of legislative leaders and community advocates to restore funding for CalWORKs Stage 3 Child Care, create bridge funding to cover the child care costs of CalWORKs Stage 3 eligible families (including those transitioning off of CalWORKs Stage 2) until funding is restored, and delay implementation of the termination of families from receiving the services.

5. UPDATES

a. Update on Selected Proposals Presented to First 5 LA Commission

Ms. Malaske-Samu reported that First 5 LA has been presented with 22 proposals for funding, which they have whittled to 15. The proposals were assigned to consultants or staff members to conduct analyses for further consideration. The proposals of most interest to the Roundtable are as follows:

- First 5 LA – East Los Angeles College (ELAC) Child Care Providers

See Early Care and Education Workforce Initiative.

- Data Partnership

Dr. McCroskey referred members to the handout included in their meeting packets for the recommendation submitted by Commissioner Duane Dennis. In summary, there are multiple sources of data – 211 LA County, Healthy City and more – on children from birth to five years old and their families that could be pulled together into a comprehensive approach. The proposal would create an infrastructure for reporting on a variety of child and family variables.

- Improving Nutritional and Physical Activity Environment in Child Care Settings

This proposal suggests strengthening the nutritional environments of licensed and license-exempt child care settings by improving the food and beverages served to the children. The elements include trainings to the providers on healthy nutrition standards and physical play activities with children and how to outreach to parents.

- Early Care and Education Workforce Consortium

Dr. Randi Wolfe of Los Angeles Universal Preschool reported on two major proposals. The first is the ELAC Child Care Providers that proposes an education academy targeted to 150 Spanish and 50 Mandarin-speaking family child care providers. The academy would offer educational guidance and specialized coursework in child development and other core subjects to the providers. Its coaching model that would also provide ongoing tutoring and educational/career advisement.

The proposal for the Early Care and Education Consortium represents a collaboration of stakeholders to provide and improve available training and professional development to the early care and education workforce. The request for \$37 million would support six components: Early Care and Education Workforce Initiative (\$3 million); Early Childhood Educators Stipend Program (\$1.2 million to make match for First 5 California initiative, CARES Plus); R&Rs (\$1.9 million); Steps to Excellence Project (\$1.4 million); LACOE Division for School Improvement (\$983,943); and Higher Education Teacher Quality Partnership (\$1 million). Commissioners Nancy Au and Duane Dennis will make the proposal to the full Commission.

A special meeting of the full Commission to consider the proposals is scheduled for Monday, November 15, 2010 at 2 p.m.

b. Planning for Educare

Ms. Ruth Yoon reported that a group of 10 stakeholders including Ms. Malaske-Samu, Ms. Terry Ogawa and Dr. Celia Ayala are traveling to Chicago then Omaha to visit Educare sites. In Los Angeles County, the plan is to create a state of the art early care and education center, a hub for family services, and a state of the art professional development center. The center will be designed to provide a vision for demonstrated quality and involving parents in promoting their children's development. City of Bell and Cudahy are being considered as potential sites. Santa Clara County is in the planning stage, having completed their visits. Los Angeles County has some funds to start, including bond money for facility construction and funds from the philanthropy community.

6. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PUBLIC COMMENT

- The Child Care Resource Center has published two documents containing data and maps on child care enrollments and need: *Agency-wide Family Needs Assessment* (Fall 2010) and *A Day at the Capitol – Sacramento, CA 2010*. Ms. Ellen Cervantes distributed copies of the first publication, which is also available for download as part of the meeting materials from the Office of Child Care Web site at www.childcare.lacounty.gov; click on "Policy Roundtable for Child Care", then click on 'Meeting Schedule' and go to 'Meeting Materials' for November.

7. CALL TO ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Commissioners Present:

Ms. Maria Calix
Ms. Bobbie Edwards
Ms. Charlotte Lee

Ms. Kathy Malaske-Samu
Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey
Ms. Carolyn Naylor
Ms. Terri Chew Nishimura
Ms. Arlene Rhine
Ms. Connie Russell
Ms. Ruth Yoon

Guests:

Ms. Ellen Cervantes, Child Care Resource Center
Ms. Jennifer Hottenroth, Department of Children and Family Services
Ms. Patti Oblath, Connections for Children
Ms. Terry Ogawa
Dr. Randi Wolfe, Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP)

Staff:

Ms. Sarah Moton
Ms. Michele Sartell



Policy Roundtable for Child Care

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MEETING MINUTES

**December 8, 2010
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Conference Room 743
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California**

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

a. Comments from the Chair

Ms. Ruth Yoon, Vice Chair of the Policy Roundtable for Child Care (Roundtable), opened the meeting at 10:10 a.m. Members and guests introduced themselves.

As Mr. Whit Hayslip introduced himself, it was announced that he is retiring from the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) officially as of December 17, 2010. Mr. Hayslip will stay on, however, to focus on ramping up the transitional kindergarten program to scale and hopefully bringing Educare to Los Angeles.

b. Review of Meeting Minutes

• October 13, 2010 and November 12, 2010

Due to lack of a quorum, the October and November minutes will be held for consideration at the January meeting.

2. PROGRESS ON UPDATING THE CHILD CARE POLICY FRAMEWORK

Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey presented the next draft of the Policy Framework 2011-13 for review by members and guests. She thanked Ms. Kathy Malaske-Samu for her steadfast work on the document that reflects the input gathered to date. Dr. McCroskey noted that the Policy Framework has been narrowed down to five goals with a beginning list of action items. More work is needed to ensure that each goal is associated with clear action items. As such, she encouraged members and guests to read the document and provide ideas and comments to Ms. Malaske-Samu. The next step is preparing the document in a format that may be presented to the leadership of County departments, key stakeholders, and the Board Deputies.

Dr. McCroskey reviewed the proposed five goals, framing the fifth as an implementation goal. The goals, in brief, are:

- 1) Expanding the Steps to Excellence Project (STEP) into additional communities and intensifying support services offered to STEP participants.
- 2) Advocating for local, state and federal policies and budgets that strengthen the child development infrastructure and support the expansion of child development services that are integrated with other county services.
- 3) County departments working collaboratively and with community partners to maximize the utilization of high quality child development services and the delivery of integrated services.
- 4) County departments working collaboratively and with the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), school district and community-based child development services to integrate services to support: effective articulation between child development and kindergarten; design of developmentally appropriate transitional kindergarten programs; and identification/utilization of new or nontraditional funding for child development services.
- 5) County departments working internally and across departments and with community stakeholders to integrate the Strengthening Families Approach and Protective Factors into their work with children, families and communities.

With respect to the fifth goal, Ms. Malaske-Samu relayed that there have been several discussions within the Chief Executive Office around the Strengthening Families Approach. Ms. Kathy House in particular is interested in taking a more active leadership role in moving this item forward. As lead of the Service Integration Branch, Ms. House will be helpful in facilitating more direct connections among county departments.

Dr. McCroskey next reviewed the layout of the Policy Framework. Each goal section begins with lessons learned, contains success stories, lists immediate strategies, and ends with partners and commitments for 2011-13. Drawing attention to Goal Three, Dr. McCroskey highlighted the three priority populations, which will help guide the discussions with the respective County department executive teams and be used to solicit their perspective on how to move forward. Dr. McCroskey suggested that meetings be scheduled with the executive teams for early January. Ms. Malaske-Samu stated that she is currently working with key representatives of each department to discuss partner commitments in preparation of the document and the meetings. Additional persons to be brought into the discussions include Ms. Cindy Harding of the Department of Public Health and Ms. Leila Espinoza with UCLA's Center for Healthier Children, Families & Communities/Early Developmental Screening and Intervention (EDSI).

Next, Dr. McCrosky turned to Goal Four, asking for suggestions on success stories to add. Suggestions included: Department of Mental Health trainings on the Strengthening Families Approach and the LAUSD Saturday clinics. Mr. Hayslip returned to the bullets under Goal Four, suggesting broadening the item on articulation. He relayed that LAUSD Board President Mónica Garcia's interest has been sparked by an introduction to the whole continuum of birth to 16. Mr. Hayslip offered to help refine this item.

Discussion/questions:

- A question was raised on the identification of Title I as a new or nontraditional funding source – “what population of children is this addressing?” It was noted that uses of Title I are already defined; the key is figuring out a way to expand and leverage funding to serve other special populations.
- Who from the Department of Mental Health will review the document? Dr. McCroskey would like have the discussion with Dr. Marvin Southard. Mr. Dennis volunteered to have a preliminary “for your information” discussion with Dr. Southard.
- Has anyone gauged the Department of Children and Families (DCFS) leadership? Mr. Michael Gray suggested starting with Ms. Maryam Fatima and Ms. Jackie Contreras, then take it to the rest of the executive team. He will help facilitate.
- What is the timeline? Ms. Malaske-Samu is aiming to add the Policy Framework to the Board of Supervisors meeting agenda for February 15, 2011. The Education Coordinating Council report will follow the presentation and will reinforce the document goals and action items. Ms. Malaske-Samu would like to use the July retreat as a professional development opportunity across County departments.
- Who is keeping the Board Deputies informed? What mechanism is being used to keep them informed and what is the timeframe? Mr. Nicolas Ippolito from Supervisor Don Knabe’s office has been kept informed. It would be helpful to have Roundtable members appointed by Board of Supervisors and others make individual commitments to talk with their respective Board Deputies. The Policy Framework will be presented at a cluster meeting prior to filing; the Board offices are represented at the cluster meeting. However, individual meetings with the Board Deputies should occur before the presentation. Mr. Dennis suggested talking points be developed to help with the discussions. Ms. Malaske-Samu will prepare a calendar by the January meeting listing a schedule of Board Deputy visits and who can attend.

3. POLICY FRAMEWORK OBJECTIVE

Identify opportunities for Los Angeles County to promote collaboration among service providers and advocates on behalf of needed legislative or regulatory changes.

a. Status of CalWORKs Stage 3 Child Care

Mr. Adam Sonenshein referred members to their meeting packets for a copy of the policy brief, *Status of CalWORKs Stage 3 Child Care* dated December 7, 2010 and then highlighted the main points relating to actions to restore CalWORKs Stage 3 funding and provide transitional aid to families. On December 6, 2010, Speaker of the Assembly John Pérez introduced Assembly Bill 1, which would reappropriate funds to the California Department of Education (CDE), using a mixture of funding sources to bring funding up to its current level before the Governor used his line item veto. Action on the bill will need to wait until the Legislature convenes and the swearing in of the new Governor after the first of the year.

In the meantime, Mr. Adam Sonenshein noted, efforts have resulted in bridge funding - \$6 million of unused Assembly discretionary funds and First 5 Commissions providing funding for children from birth to five years old of CalWORKs Stage 3 eligible families. In addition, a lawsuit brought by four public interest law firms resulted in an ultimate hold on the cut to services,

instructing the CDE to continue providing CalWORKs Stage 3 Child Care through December 31, 2010. More recently, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) developed a mechanism through its Diversion program to provide an additional 24 months of Stage 2 Child Care to families currently receiving Stage 3 and those transitioning off of Stage 2. For background, Ms. Charlotte Lee explained that there is a provision in CalWORKs for the Diversion program, which has as its purpose preventing families from entering into CalWORKs. Typically, it takes the form of a onetime payment. DPSS, looking to the regulations, learned that it could make a referral to CalWORKs Stage 2. To be eligible, the parent must have time left on aid – that is, they have not reached their five year limit – are found apparently eligible for CalWORKs without considering income from their job and, in absence of child care, would need to quit their job. The key is that they need child care in order to maintain their employment. DPSS staff are scheduled to go to the Alternative Payment (AP) Program sites over the next two Saturdays to screen families for referrals to diversion. Services also are available at all DPSS offices.

Members and guests, while impressed with the level of collaboration and coordination that has occurred in response to the crisis of families losing their child care and development services, raised questions and issues that have cropped up with the temporary solutions as follows:

- Mr. Duane Dennis raised the issue that despite the court order requiring the continuation of services, CDE has not yet found funding to pay for the services. The Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles will be submitting a letter to the First 5 LA Commission requesting access to the bridge funding in the form of a loan.
- If families are on Stage 2, how many will return to Stage 3 once funding is restored? For now, returning families to Stage 2 is the best outcome; if funds run out in Stage 2, families resort to Stage 1.
- Will families need to change providers? The answer was “hopefully not”.
- Mr. Hayslip replied that Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) froze enrollments in their full-day, full-year programs since last week and gave contractors information to not fill their slots through their normal course of enrollment until December 31 so that they could take CalWORKs Stage 3 families. In fact, they have created an expedited enrollment process that simply requires the families to provide their lottery verification. Unfortunately LAUSD is taking a risk in that they could take a hit in terms of not filling its spaces and consequently not fully earn their contract. Ms. Ellen Cervantes, referring to the upcoming lottery to match families with available spaces, stated that slots they have learned about are mostly part-day programs for three and four year olds. She was glad to hear that LAUSD has full-day slots. Unfortunately, families with infants and toddlers will likely be underserved. She added that parents need to inform them by Friday, December 10, 2010 if they want to participate in lottery.
- Ms. Lee added that the Diversion program will not represent the best solution for the vast majority of families. While a percentage of families will still have time left on their aid clock, it will not be the majority.
- Mr. Hayslip suggested forwarding a message to the Board of Supervisors that 1) recognizes the collaboration in response to the crisis; and 2) states the unintended

consequences that will potentially result in CDE-contracted programs not fully earning their contracts. Everyone needs to be aware of the dilemma.

- Mr. Dennis proposed that the Roundtable consider sending a letter to the First 5 LA Commission asking them to release the \$15 million that they approved as bridge funding in the form of a loan to the AP Program agencies so that they can make payments to providers in December and January for services provided in November and December. Mr. Dennis stated that the loan would be secure since CDE needs to come up with the funding.

Ms. Arlene Rhine moved that the Roundtable prepare a letter to the First 5 LA Commission requesting that they make a loan to the AP Program agencies using the \$15 million approved to fund CaWORKs Stage 3 Child Care services for the months of November and December; Dr. McCroskey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Malaske-Samu will prepare the letter to the First 5 LA Commission and call Ms. Evelyn Martinez letting her know that the letter is on its way. It was noted that timing is critical, even with the money, to make it happen. For instance, DPSS will need to amend its contract with the AP Program agencies. Dr. McCroskey called on Ms. Kate Sachnoff to also pass on a message. Mr. Dennis also plans to call Ms. Martinez.

b. Restoration of Funds for Child Development Services

Ms. Sartell directed members to their meeting packets for a copy of the draft document, *Proposed Request for Pursuit of Position on State Budget Items*. The document summarizes the impact of the current State Budget for 2010-11 on two Office of Child Care administered programs funded by the CDE - the Local Planning Council (e.g. the Child Care Planning Committee) and the AB 212 Child Care Recruitment and Retention Program (e.g. Investing in Early Educators Program) – and recommends that the Board of Supervisors adopt positions to pursue restoration of the funds reduced from these program budgets.

In her comments, Ms. Sartell placed the items in the context of the other cuts to child care and development services, including the elimination of funding for CaWORKs Stage. She also mentioned that on Monday, December 6, 2010, the Governor declared a fiscal emergency and called for a Special Session of the Legislature. In addition, he sent the Legislature a package containing \$9.9 billion in budget solutions, of which \$7 billion are cuts mostly to Health and Human Services. Among the proposed cuts are the following: reduces CaWORKs grants effective April 1, 2011, and then effectively eliminates the CaWORKs program effective July 1, 2011; decreases the level at which CaWORKs child care providers are reimbursed effective March 1, 2011; eliminates General Fund support of subsidized child care and development programs except State Preschool and CaWORKs Stage 2 effective April 2, 2011; reduces current income eligibility limits from 75 percent of the State Median Income (SMI) to 60 percent; reduces voucher-based reimbursement limits from the 85th to the 75th percentile of the 2005 Regional Market Rate (RMR) survey and reduces the reimbursement rate paid to license-exempt providers from 80 to 70 percent of the rate paid to licensed family child care providers effective March 21, 2011; and proposes legislation to establish incentives for child care providers and administrators (including AP Program agencies) to reduce administrative errors, to establish sanctions for agencies that do not meet federal error rate guidelines, and deter fraud in child care programs by recipients and providers.

With respect to the proposed recommended pursuit of position to restore funds to the Local Planning Councils and the AB 212 Program, Ms. Sartell noted the importance of these programs to the infrastructure of the child care and development system. In short, among the Local Planning Councils functions are to conduct regular needs assessments that compare the supply with the demand for licensed child care and development services. The data is used to establish priorities for the allocation of State funds for subsidized services and planning for building capacity to meet the needs of families. The AB 212 Program provides stipends to early educators working in child development programs serving low-income families and who complete college coursework that lead to a degree in child development. She pointed out that the AB 212 Program also underwrites some of the costs associated with STEP, including staff support essential to the operations that entail outreach to recruit STEP participants, technical assistance and training support to facilitate program improvements, and ongoing evaluation and program development.

Mr. Sonenshein suggested edits to the pursuit of position that would place emphasis on the impact of the cuts to the field of child care and development that is supported by the work of the Office of Child Care.

Mr. Sonenshein made a motion to recommend a pursuit of position to restore funding to the Local Planning Councils and the AB 212 Program to the Board of Supervisors; Ms. Arlene Rhine seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

c. Federal Congressional Action

Ms. Sartell, citing a Preschool California update, reported that last week the House and then the Senate passed a Continuing Resolution extending the decision on appropriations to December 17, 2010. Both the House and the Senate are preparing an Omnibus Appropriations Package that includes funding for Head Start and Early Head Start, and the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) at current levels resulting from the augmentation of funding by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), and proposed funding for the Early Learning Challenge Grants. Preschool California warns, however, that the current political climate and another Continuing Resolution would eliminate the ARRA investments.

For background, near the end of July 2010 both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees had approved increases in funding for Head Start and Early Head Start and CCDBG that would maintain the ARRA investments. The Senate bill also added \$300 million for the Early Learning Challenge Fund.

4. UPDATE ON SELECTED PROPOSALS PRESENTED TO FIRST 5 LA COMMISSION

a. Early Care and Education Workforce Initiative

Mr. Dennis provided some historical perspective to the First 5 LA's countywide investments and the Commissioners urging to get money into the field more quickly. Under the leadership of Supervisor Gloria Molina, a process was developed that charged the Commissioners, with staff support, to develop proposals and funding opportunities. Initially, the Commissioners introduced 23 proposals for funding, some of which were integrated, resulting in a final total of 17. Of the 17, about a handful were approved, some were rejected, and others were referred to staff for additional work or clarification.

As a Commissioner, Mr. Dennis worked closely with Ms. Randi Wolfe on the Early Care and Education (ECE) Workforce Consortium proposal, which is designed to provide and improve training and professional development to a wide spectrum of the current and potential early childhood workforce. The First 5 LA Commission approved the proposal at \$53 million over five years. The ECE Workforce Consortium will be administered by Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP) in partnership with several organizations.

The components include:

- Early Care and Education Workforce Initiative Project (WFI) – involves collaborations of community colleges, universities and feeder schools to address barriers to access, retention, transfer and degree attainment encountered by the early childhood workforce pursuing advanced education and degrees; provides support/services necessary to successfully navigate the system of higher education
- Early Childhood Educators Stipend (ECES) – provides financial incentives to pursue college coursework and degrees
- Resource and Referral Agencies (R&Rs) – provides training for license-exempt providers
- STEP – expands STEP quality rating and improvement system services toward countywide implementation and enhanced professional development opportunities for program administrators
- LACOE Division for School Improvement – addresses the professional development needs of early educators and administrators working in school-based systems
- Higher Education Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) – brings together institutes of higher education and community stakeholders to address common workforce development challenges and needs
- East Los Angeles Child Care Providers – would develop a Family Child Care and Licensed Care Higher Education Academy targeted to Spanish- and Mandarin-speaking family child care providers to offer educational guidance as well as specialized courses in child development and general education

Ms. Wolfe was acknowledged for her work on the initiative and shepherding it through the approval process with First 5 LA. Since the proposal was approved, Ms. Wolfe has been hired as the Director of First 5 LA's Best Start initiative.

Mr. Dennis mentioned two other proposals of interest to the child development field, but were not approved – an initiative to address obesity in young children that would have been headed by the County Department of Public Health and a research initiative with a focus on data capturing the number of child development programs and the number of spaces as the driver for planning and advocacy.

b. Data Collection

Dr. McCroskey reported that initially there were three proposals relating to data collection. Of the three, the Commission approved the Data Partnership with Funders proposal for \$5 million over five years. Dr. McCroskey described the partnership as a broader effort to bring together groups that maintain data, such as Healthy City, WIC (Women, Infants and Children), and others including representatives from the child care and development field with the goal of improving the quality, timeliness and accuracy of data available about children 0-5 years old and their families. First 5 LA's Research and Development will serve as the lead.

5. REFLECTIONS ON THE EDUCARE TOUR

Mr. Hayslip, Mr. Sonenshein, Ms. Yoon, Ms. Malaske-Samu and Ms. Terry Ogawa traveled to Chicago, Illinois to visit the first Educare site and then were off to the site in Omaha, Nebraska. The tour involved meetings with local representatives and extensive tours and observations of the sites. The trip was inspiring, offering ideas of how an Educare might look in Los Angeles. Mr. Hayslip found the Omaha site particular inspiring in its operations and connections to the community. He spoke to the facility as formed around "pods" and welcoming to families, and practice clearly demonstrated as a team effort. In addition to a beautiful training room, Ms. Yoon commented on the one-way mirrors looking into the classrooms, which are used for training, not just observation. The program also reaches out to the family child care and center-based community with trainings on program strategies as well as advocacy. The visitors were particularly impressed with the integration of research with program practices. The research team knows the staff and their research is used for ongoing feedback and guides improvements.

Mr. Hayslip commented that not only will Los Angeles learn from the Educare system, they are looking to learn from Los Angeles. Mr. Hayslip envisions contributions from Los Angeles around dual language learning and inclusive practices. LAUSD is already working with Dr. Linda Espinoza on an approach that supports the dual language of each child.

Mr. Dennis has been in a preliminary conversation in relationship to Educare with First 5 LA and the response has been less than enthusiastic. He suggested a presentation on Educare to First 5 LA, outlining the opportunities for the First Supervisorial District, the benefits to the community including the early care and education field, and speaks to the scale of the proposed project. Ms. Malakse-Samu proposed dedicating the February meeting of the Roundtable to a presentation and discussion on Educare. In the meantime, meetings will be scheduled with the Board Deputies from the First and Fifth Districts. There was some discussion regarding the importance of drafting key, targeted messages for diverse audiences, e.g. First 5 LA, Board Deputies and the child development community. Ms. Terry Ogawa said the group came away with good and strong reasons for why Educare would benefit Los Angeles county, adding that the political piece is particularly important. Mr. Hayslip added that Educare is gaining national clout which could benefit Los Angeles and secure its role as a contributor to the model. Mr. Hayslip concluded his comments by stating that we need to do better for children; Educare provides a mechanism to improve quality. He wishes all children could be enrolled in a high quality program, however realizes the limitations in bringing it to scale.

6. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PUBLIC COMMENT

- The Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) is negotiating a contract with the Department of Public Health (DPH) to provide flu vaccinations to children in child development

programs. The Center for Disease Control is interested in expanding upon the DPH effort by including training on emergency preparedness and flu pandemic prevention.

7. CALL TO ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Commissioners Present:

Mr. Duane Dennis
Ms. Bobbie Edwards
Ms. Michael Gray
Mr. Whit Hayslip
Ms. Charlotte Lee
Ms. Kathy Malaske-Samu
Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey
Ms. Arlene Rhine
Mr. Adam Sonenshein
Ms. Mika Yamamoto
Ms. Ruth Yoon

Guests:

Mr. John Berndt, Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE)
Ms. Hania Cardenas, Probation Department
Ms. Ellen Cervantes, Child Care Resource Center
Ms. Mary Hammer, South Bay Center for Counseling
Ms. Terry Ogawa, Educare Consultant
Ms. Kate Sachnoff, First 5 LA
Ms. Angie Stokes, John Tracy Clinic

Staff:

Ms. Michele Sartell

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COUNTY OFFICE OF LOS ANGELES/POLICY ROUNDTABLE FOR CHILD CARE
OFFICE OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

BILL ANALYSIS

AB 1 (PÉREZ): EDUCATION FINANCE: CALWORKS STAGE 3 Would re-appropriate \$60 million in unobligated balances appropriated in the Budget Act of 2009 to the California State Department (CDE) for CalWORKs Stage 3 Child Care services. Funding would cover Stage 3 child development services retroactive to October 31, 2010.

Introduced and Amended Dates: Introduced December 6, 2010
Amended January 14, 2011

OCC Analyst: Michele P. Sartell
(213) 974-5187

Status: Assembly Floor

Sponsors: None

Support: None listed

Opposition: None listed

Summary:

AB 1 would restore funding to CalWORKs Stage 3 Child Care and be retroactive to November 1, 2010, and through March 31, 2011.

- Unobligated balances from the following budget items would be re-appropriated to the California Department of Education (CDE) for CalWORKs Stage 3 Child Care:
 - \$20 million of unspent preschool funds allocated in the Budget Act of 2009.
 - \$40 million of unspent child care and development funds allocated in the Budget Act of 2009.
- The CDE is to use the funds for families eligible for and receiving CalWORKs Stage 3 Child Care on or before October 31, 2010 and for those families who would otherwise have been eligible to receive CalWORKs Stage 3 Child Care after October 31, 2010.
- This bill, upon approval, would go into effect immediately

Analysis:

CalWORKs recipients participating in welfare to work activities that lead to employment and self-sufficiency are eligible for child care for their children from birth up to 12 years old and for

their children with special needs and severe disabilities up to 18 years old. There are three stages of child care:

Stage 1: Begins when a parent enters a County-approved welfare-to-work program or employment and continues serving them for up to six months or until their work and child care are stable. Families may continue to receive Stage 1 Child Care assistance if there are insufficient funds in Stage 2.

Stage 2: Available to families receiving welfare and with stable employment. Families are eligible for Stage 2 Child Care for up to 24 months after they stop receiving cash aid.

Stage 3: Prior to the elimination of funding, Stage 3 Child Care supported families as they moved off welfare and into self-sufficiency and had exhausted their up to 24 months of eligibility for Stage 2. Families continued to receive Stage 3 Child Care until they no longer met the income eligibility requirements or their children exceeded the age limit.

On October 8, 2010, Governor Schwarzenegger eliminated funding for the CalWORKs Stage 3 Child Care Program when he signed the 2010-11 State Budget for a savings of \$256 million. Approximately one week later, families began receiving Notices of Action that their child care services would be terminated effective November 1, 2010 and were encouraged to register on their County's Centralized Eligibility List (CEL). Almost simultaneously, Notices of Action were sent to families preparing to transition from CalWORKs Stage 2 to Stage 3 Child Care. State policy prohibited these families from receiving priority for continuity of care, which would otherwise allow a family to be picked up relatively quickly by another subsidized child care and development program. Rather, they would be listed based on income (lowest income first) with other families already registered on the CEL.

According to the Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles, 17,200 children ages birth through 12 years old of 11,700 families in Los Angeles County were due to lose their child care services as of November 1, 2010 resulting from the elimination of funding for CalWORKs Stage 3 Child Care. The estimated 6,000 providers – largely licensed centers and family child care homes – serving these families were also at risk of reducing or closing their operations. The 13 organizations that administer the funds – the ten Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies and three additional organizations with Alternative Payment Programs – would also experience consequences resulting in an estimated 400 layoffs.

Since the Governor signed the 2010-11 budget, the legislative leadership, community advocates and local government have worked diligently to develop strategies to: 1) restore funding for CalWORKs Stage 3 through legislation; 2) establish bridge funding to cover the child care costs of families eligible for CalWORKs Stage 3 Child Care until cuts are restored; 3) delay implementation of the cuts through court action; and 4) establish CalWORKs Child Care Diversion Services by the County Department of Public Social Services.¹ Most of the strategies were developed as temporary measures pending the introduction and approval of legislation that would ultimately restore funding to ensure that families who have successfully transitioned to self-sufficiency are able to continue working with the security that their children are in safe and stimulating child care and development programs.

On January 10, 2011, Governor Jerry Brown proposed a State Budget for 2011-12, which includes funding to continue CalWORKs Stage 3 Child Care funding effective April 1, 2011. This bill was amended recently to conform to the Governor's budget proposal.

Recommended Position for Board Approval:

The Roundtable recommends that the County take a "Support" position on AB 1 to restore funding for CalWORKs Stage 3 Child Care to ensure that CalWORKs families have continued access to high quality, consistent child care and development services. This position is consistent with County policy to support "efforts to ensure that vulnerable children and their families have access to consistent, uninterrupted subsidized high quality early care and education services". (See the County's 2011-12 State Legislative Agenda adopted on December 14, 2010, Section 1, Item 1.3(9), Page 5.)

Completed by: _____ Date: _____

Approved by: _____ Date: _____

¹ For a more detailed summary of the strategies, see the Roundtable's Policy Brief, *Status of CalWORKs Stage 3 Child Care* last updated on December 7, 2010.

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County of Los Angeles Policy Roundtable for Child Care



Executive Summary

January 12, 2011

Governor's FY 2011-12 Proposed Budget Child Care and Development Services

Overview

The Governor's State Budget proposal for 2011-12 released on January 10, 2011 contains substantial cuts to child care and development programs.

Major Funding Reductions Proposed for 2011-12: Total funding for child care and development programs, excluding after school programs, for 2010-11 is \$2.3 billion, of which \$1.5 billion is from Proposition 98 sources and \$722.3 million is from federal funds. CalWORKs Stage 1 Child Care totals \$485.8 million from General Fund/TANF and is included in the Department of Social Services budget.

Governor Brown's proposed budget for 2011-12 contains \$716 million in funding reductions to child care and development services. Total funding available for child care and development services, excluding after school programs, would be \$1.6 billion, of which \$1.1 billion would be from Proposition 98 sources and \$535.6 million from federal funds. CalWORKs Stage 1 Child Care would be funded at \$603.1 million.

Of significance, the Governor's proposals for reducing child care and development services include:

Child Care and Development Reductions

- Eliminates subsidized services for 11 and 12 year old children.
- Reduces eligibility for subsidized child development services, except part-day State Preschool, from 75 percent to 60 percent of the State Median Income.
- Reduces the level of subsidies across the board.
- Requires the California Department of Education (CDE) to amend its contracts with Alternative Payment Program agencies and Title 5 direct service contractors administering the programs to:
 - "provide local flexibility in the administration of waiting lists while assuring that families meet established income, eligibility and need requirements";

Budget bills AB 92 (Blumenfeld) and SB 68 (Leno) introduced on January 10, 2011 and in accordance with the Governor's proposed budget, are absent a line item for the Centralized Eligibility List, which in previous years has been funded at \$7.9 million. The Office of Child Care holds a \$500,000 contract with the CDE to administer the Los Angeles County Centralized Eligibility List (LACEL).

- "provide local flexibility to determine subsidy levels for families to implement the intent of reducing subsidies in the aggregate by 34.6 percent without reducing the number of children and families that may receive a subsidy; and

- “eliminate the administrative burden of family fee collection by state contractors [e.g. Alternative Payment (AP) Program agencies] by requiring families to pay their share of costs directly to the provider.”

CalWORKs Child Care

- Increases CalWORKs Child Care Stage 2 by \$241.5 million that reflects a \$4.2 million caseload increase and restoration of one-time funds used to support services in 2010-11. Total base workload cost for Stage 2 is \$435.2 million.
- Restores CalWORKs Stage 3 with a set-aside of \$52.6 million in 2010-11 from one-time Proposition 98 settle-up funding to continue services for Stage 3 families effective April 2011. Service levels are to be consistent with proposed policy solutions affecting age and income eligibility and reduced subsidy levels for 2011-12. In addition, the Governor would carry-over \$58 million in unanticipated prior year federal CCDF funds in 2010-11 in response to the court order extending the date for Stage 3 funding termination from November 1 to December 31, 2010.
- Increases CalWORKs Child Care Stage 3 by \$256.2 million that reflects a caseload reduction of \$42.4 million, restoration of one-time funds used in 2010-11 totaling \$42.6 million and restoring the \$256 million partial year veto. Total base cost for Stage 3 is \$342.4 million.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Funds

- Decreases child development funds by \$110.1 million in 2010-11 reflecting the one-time nature of the funding source used to augment child development services.

Proposition 10

- Diverts \$1 billion in Proposition 10 funds to fund Medi-Cal services to children through five years old. Would allow continued funding of core programs providing early childhood health services. Subject to voter approval.
- Continues \$50 million in reimbursement funding included in 2010-11 budget to provide services to consumers from birth to age five years old through 2011-12, resulting in General Funds savings of the same amount.

Early Learning Advisory Council

- Increases the budget by \$948,000 for state operations from federal funds for the second year of the three year federal grant; total proposed funding for 2011-12 is \$3,551,000.

Budget Act of 2010 Implications: When former Governor Schwarzenegger signed the 2010-11 State Budget, he made significant cuts to child care and development services, including the elimination of CalWORKs Stage 3 Child Care. Additionally, two state programs essential to supporting the infrastructure of the child care and development system had their budgets reduced significantly: Local Planning Councils (LPCs) and AB 212 Child Care Recruitment and Retention Program (AB 212 Program). The state budget for Local Planning Councils was slashed in half from \$6,637,000 to \$3,319,000 while the budget for the AB 212 Program was cut by nearly 22 percent from \$15 million to \$11.825 million. The Office of Child Care administers the programs locally and in prior years ending with 2009-10, Los Angeles County’s share of the budget for our local LPC and AB 212 Program have been \$377,000 and \$4,250,000 respectively.



County of Los Angeles
Child Care Planning Committee
INCLUSION WORK GROUP



Office of Child Care

**Call for Child Development Care and Centers
to Answer Survey on Use of Developmental Screening Tools**

Center Directors and Site Supervisors are invited to participate in a survey on the use of developmental screening tools in child care and development centers being conducted by the Los Angeles County Child Care Planning Committee's Inclusion Work Group.

Survey responses will provide us with valuable information on the following:

- 1) Whether and how child care and development centers are integrating the use of developmental screening tools into their program services,
- 2) Whether and how centers link families to community resources for children identified at-risk of developmental disabilities, and
- 3) Whether and what expertise center staff have on administering and interpreting developmental screening tools.

The results of the survey will be published in a report with a list of recommendations, including the resources needed by centers to fully integrate the use of developmental screening tools into their program services.

Programs that conduct universal and ongoing developmental screenings of all of their enrolled children using high quality, research-based tools are reported to gain a much deeper knowledge of each child's development. This knowledge helps communications between staff and parents on whether their children are developing and learning as expected and/or if there are concerns that may be addressed with early intervention strategies that may be applied in the classroom and in the home. Furthermore, the use of developmental screening tools are often key to identifying early signs of developmental delays that may require referrals to community resources, such as the local Regional Center or school district, for further assessment and possibly much needed services for the child and the family.

To complete the on-line survey, visit the Office of Child Care Web site at www.childcare.lacounty.gov and click on the link located in the "What's New..." box. Hard copies of the survey are also available by contacting Michele Sartell by e-mail at msartell@ceo.lacounty.gov or by telephone at (213) 974-5187. The survey takes approximately ten minutes to complete.

The Inclusion Work Group has developed a Web-based directory of links to resources for identifying and intervening early children at risk for or with developmental delays, disabilities or other special needs. To access the directory designed for parents and professional, visit www.childcare.lacounty.gov and click on "Children with Special Needs" from the menu located on the left side of the page.

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January 5, 2011

Effort to Restore Children's Play Gains Momentum

By HILARY STOUT

SARAH WILSON was speaking proudly the other day when she declared: "My house is a little messy."

Ms. Wilson lives in Stroudsburg, Pa., a small town in the Poconos. Many days, her home is strewn with dress-up clothes, art supplies and other artifacts from playtime with her two small children, Benjamin, 6, and Laura, 3. "I let them get it messy because that's what it's here for," she said.

Ms. Wilson has embraced a growing movement to restore the sometimes-untidy business of play to the lives of children. Her interest was piqued when she toured her local elementary school last year, a few months before Benjamin was to enroll in kindergarten. She still remembered her own kindergarten classroom from 1985: it had a sandbox, blocks and toys. But this one had a wall of computers and little desks.

"There's no imaginative play anymore, no pretend," Ms. Wilson said with a sigh.

For several years, studies and statistics have been mounting that suggest the culture of play in the United States is vanishing. Children spend far too much time in front of a screen, educators and parents lament — 7 hours 38 minutes a day on average, according to a survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation last year. And only one in five children live within walking distance (a half-mile) of a park or playground, according to a 2010 report by the federal Centers for Disease Control, making them even less inclined to frolic outdoors.

Behind the numbers is adult behavior as well as children's: Parents furiously tapping on their BlackBerrys in the living room, too stressed by work demands to tolerate noisy games in the background. Weekends consumed by soccer, lacrosse and other sports leagues, all organized and directed by parents. The full slate of lessons (chess, tae kwon do, Chinese, you name it) and homework beginning in the earliest grades. Add to that parental safety concerns that hinder even true believers like Ms. Wilson.

"People are scared to let their kids outside, even where I live," she said. "If I want my kids to go outside, I have to be with them."

Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, a developmental psychologist at Temple University in Philadelphia, concluded, "Play is just a natural thing that animals do and humans do, but somehow we've driven it out of kids."

Too little playtime may seem to rank far down on the list of society's worries, but the scientists, psychologists, educators and others who are part of the play movement say that most of the social and intellectual skills one needs to succeed in life and work are first developed through childhood play. Children learn to control their impulses through games like Simon Says, play advocates believe, and they learn to solve problems, negotiate, think creatively and work as a team when they dig together in a sandbox or build a fort with sofa cushions. (The experts define play as a game or activity initiated and directed by children. So video games don't count, they say, except perhaps ones that involve creating something, and neither, really, do the many educational toys that do things like sing the A B C's with the push of a button.)

Much of the movement has focused on the educational value of play, and efforts to restore recess and unstructured playtime to early childhood and elementary school curriculums. But advocates are now starting to reach out to parents, recognizing that for the movement to succeed, parental attitudes must evolve as well — starting with a willingness to tolerate a little more unpredictability in children's schedules and a little less structure at home. Building that fort, for example, probably involves disassembling the sofa and emptying the linen closet. (A sheet makes an excellent roof.)

"I think more than anything, adults are a little fearful of children's play," said Joan Almon, executive director of the Alliance for Childhood, a nonprofit pro-play group. "Some people have a greater tolerance for chaos and have developed a hand for gently bringing it back into order. Others get really nervous about it." Megan Rosker, a mother of three (ages 6, 3 and 2) in Redington Shores, Fla., has learned to embrace the disorder. She set aside the large sunroom in her home for the children and filled it with blocks, games, crayons, magazines to cut up and draw in, as well as toys and dress-up clothes. "I think a big part of free play is having space to do it in, a space that isn't ruled over by adults," she said.

"The other key is not to instruct kids how to play with something," she said. "I can't tell you how many board-game pieces have been turned into something else. But I let them do it because I figure their imagination is more valuable than the price of a board game."

But, Ms. Rosker added, "I won't claim any of this has been easy for me or my husband," noting that her husband used to be "a total neat freak." She said they have learned to live with disarray and to take other difficult steps, like strict limits on screen time.

Ms. Rosker has also campaigned, although unsuccessfully, to bring recess to her son's elementary school. But school officials were too worried about potential injuries, unruliness and valuable time lost from academic pursuits to sign on to her idea and, she was surprised to find, many parents were similarly reluctant. "They said:

'I'm not going to sign that. I'm sure there is a good reason why this is good for our kids — our school has good test scores.' "

To try to reach more parents, a coalition called Play for Tomorrow this fall staged what amounted to a giant play date in Central Park. The event, known as the Ultimate Block Party, featured games like I Spy, mounds of Play-Doh, sidewalk chalk, building blocks, puzzles and more. The National Science Foundation was closely involved, advising organizers — and emphasizing to parents — the science and the educational value behind each of the carefully chosen activities. Organizers were hoping to attract 10,000 people to the event. They got more than 50,000.

"We were overwhelmed," said Roberta Golinkoff, a developmental psychologist at the University of Delaware and a founder of the event along with Dr. Hirsh-Pasek. They are now working with other cities — Toronto, Atlanta, Baltimore and Houston, among them — to stage similar events, along with making the Central Park gathering an annual one.

The goal, in some ways, is to return to the old days.

"When I was growing up, there was a culture of childhood that children maintained," said Jim Hunn, vice president for mass action at KaBOOM, a nonprofit group that is a leading voice in reducing what it terms the "play deficit." He noted that he learned games like Capture the Flag from other children. To revive that culture, he said: "Parents have to reassert themselves in this process and teach them how to play. It's critical that parents take some ownership and get out and play with their children."

But promoting play can be surprisingly challenging to parents. Emily Paster, a mother of two in River Forest, Ill., a Chicago suburb, tries to discourage screen time and encourage her children to play imaginatively. That usually works fine for her 7-year-old daughter, who is happy to play in her room with her dolls for hours. But her 4-year-old son is a different story, especially in the cold weather when he's cooped up.

"If he wants to play, he always wants me to play with him," Ms. Paster said. "This child has a million toys. Every kind of train you can imagine. But he really wants a partner. If I'm meant to get anything accomplished — dinner, laundry, a phone call — then it's really difficult."

Encouraging brother and sister to play together only goes so far. "It seems like there's a ticking time bomb," Ms. Paster said. "Someone's going to decide they're done before the other one's ready." Sometimes, a video screen is the unwelcome but necessary alternative.

"If I want to get anything done it's like, 'Here's the Leapster,' " she admitted, referring to a Leapster Explorer, a video-like device for preschoolers.

But once they're used to it, Mr. Hunn said, children will direct their play themselves — a situation Ms. Almon recalls from her own childhood. “Our neighborhood gang organized a lot of softball games,” she said. “There was no adult around. We adjusted the rules as we needed them. Once the adults are involved it becomes: Here are the rules, and we have to follow these rules. It still can be a good activity but stops being play.”

In the vast world of organized children's sports, a few parent-coaches are getting that hands-off message. Ms. Almon knows of a soccer coach who started allowing children to organize their own scrimmages during practice while he stood silently on the sidelines, and a hockey coach in Chicago who ends practices by shooing all the adults off the ice and letting the kids skate as they please.

There are more formal efforts, in addition to the Ultimate Block Party initiatives. The US Play Coalition, a group of doctors, educators and parks and recreation officials, plans a conference next month at Clemson University on the value of outdoor play. KaBOOM has built 1,900 playgrounds across the country, most in low-income neighborhoods, and in September helped organize “Play Days” in 1,600 communities. It also has added do-it-yourself tools on its Web site to help parents organize and create neighborhood play spaces themselves. Another Web site scheduled to start this spring, LearningResourceNetwork.net, aims to create a broad educational source for parents and teachers.

“Our first big push will be on play,” said Susan Magsamen, the executive director of the group.

An important part of the movement is teaching children themselves how to play. The average 3-year-old can pick up an iPhone and expertly scroll through the menu of apps, but how many 7-year-olds can organize a kickball game with the neighborhood kids?

Toward that end, at the Central Park event, parents were given a 75-page “Playbook” outlining research on play and offering children ideas for playful pursuits — things that generations past did without prompting and that may evoke in today's parents feelings of recognition and nostalgia.

“Climb on the couch with your friends and pretend you are sailing on a ship to a distant land,” reads one idea. Another, from the section on construction play: “Lay a toy on the floor and figure out how to build a bridge going over the toy with blocks.”

“Make paper doll cutouts from old newspapers and magazines,” a third suggests, “and let your imagination fly!”

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These green thumbs sprout early

Children in an outdoor classroom at an East L.A. preschool use natural materials and the environment as a learning laboratory. It's part of a national campaign to connect youngsters to the outdoors.

By Carla Rivera, Los Angeles Times

December 25, 2010

On a visit to a Home Depot one day, Cynthia Munoz was surprised when her 4-year-old son began clamoring to plant flowers, trees and a strawberry patch at their La Puente home. She was taken aback again when he knew exactly what tools to use in their backyard garden.

But he'd already had plenty of practice at his preschool, the Brooklyn Early Education Center in East Los Angeles. The school has an outdoor classroom, part of a growing trend in California and other states of using natural materials and the environment as a learning laboratory.

"He comes home and talks about what they planted or what fruit they picked," Munoz said. "When we walk into a market, he knows what a squash looks like or a tomato. At a fruit stand we pass, he says, 'Look, Mom, they have those at school.' He loves the outdoor activities."

Connecting children to the outdoors is one of the goals of the Nature Explore program, a national network of outdoor classrooms created by the nonprofit Dimensions Educational Research Foundation in collaboration with the Arbor Day Foundation, both headquartered in Nebraska.

There are more than 60 certified sites and hundreds more in progress at preschools, child-care centers, churches and libraries around the nation.

Schools throughout Los Angeles and elsewhere have planted gardens for students, but the Nature Explore classrooms go further. They are developed by early childhood educators and landscape architects and include distinct learning areas. Teachers receive training to turn gardening into lessons.

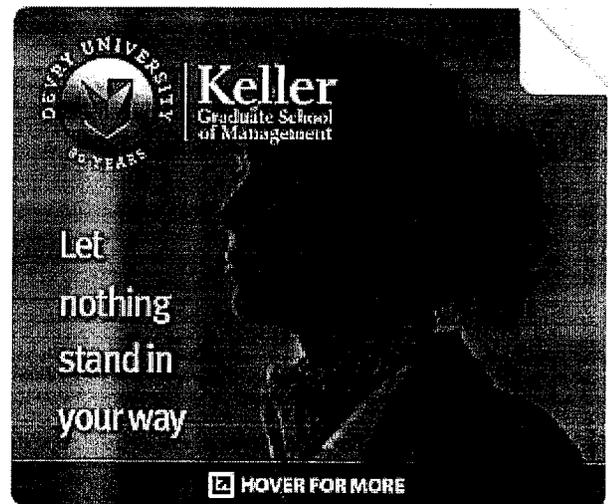
The Brooklyn center, run by the Los Angeles Unified School District, is an outdoor classroom demonstration site and is becoming certified. It features a winter garden with squash, pumpkins, cauliflower, tomatoes and green peppers, a greenhouse with artichokes and lettuce, a sand pit and the ever-popular mud pit.

Children on tricycles weave through the gardens, pits and planters, while others pretend to camp in an area scattered with logs, tree stumps and sticks. Some climb through a playhouse or stand at the water table making mud pies. There are areas where they can sit and do quiet activities.

They dig for worms, and they learn the different stages of plant growth and how much water a tomato plant needs to thrive.

"We tell parents if their children come home clean, they didn't have a good day," Principal Ranae Amezcuita said.

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"Parents know this is how it is and this is how they learn."

Since the outdoor classroom was established three years ago, behavioral problems have been reduced. Children participate longer in activities and develop problem-solving skills.

"Parents tell us that when they go to kindergarten, they're better prepared," Amezquita said.

Recent studies support assessments at the center. The Nature Explore program also helps improve reading and writing skills for children who struggle in traditional classrooms, said Nancy Rosenow, executive director of the Dimensions Foundation.

"It's difficult to provide everything a child needs in an indoor classroom, sitting at a desk," Rosenow said.

The results have impressed district officials, who want to add 50 more outdoor classrooms using bond funds. Each costs between \$100,000 to \$200,000 from design to opening, said Whitcomb W. Hayslip, the district's assistant superintendent for early childhood education.

"A lot of our kids are in environments where they don't have a lot of involvement with the outdoors or the opportunity to be around things where they can climb and explore," Hayslip said. "The outdoor classrooms become like the backyard — and a stimulating backyard."

Nature Explore classrooms can be created in any setting and environment, Rosenow said. An alley in Harlem was transformed into an outdoor space for neighborhood families. A Minnesota classroom includes a warming hut, and most classrooms provide inexpensive rubber boots so children can splash around in puddles.

Parental involvement is important, since they need to understand the benefits of outdoor play.

"A lot of parents have come to equate dirt with germs and feel like they're exposing their children to something harmful," said Susan Wirth, outreach director for both the Arbor Day and Dimension foundations. "That's a misperception."

Elena Otto, assistant director of the Kids & Company preschool in Carson, said parents have embraced the Nature Explore classroom there.

The program transformed a mostly concrete playground in an industrial area into an oasis of gardens and play spaces. The 74 children all participate — even the infants who lie on blankets to feel the grass and the toddlers who taste mint in the herb garden.

Parents helped build a trellis on the bicycle path, put up bamboo fencing and attend planting parties.

Munoz said that her son, Timothy Cabezas, loves his outdoor classroom so much that he doesn't want to leave. The children are so excited by the gardening and painting, "they want to do it all the time."

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Learning in an outdoor environment



One eye on the dirt

(Bob Chamberlin / Los Angeles Times)

Diego Rodriguez, 3, watches as Rashid Macias, 4, uses a magnifying glass to look for earthworms in the loamy soil of the Brooklyn Early Education Center's outdoor classroom in East Los Angeles. Outdoor education is a way to connect children to nature and make learning fun. The classrooms must be certified, and the teachers are specially trained.

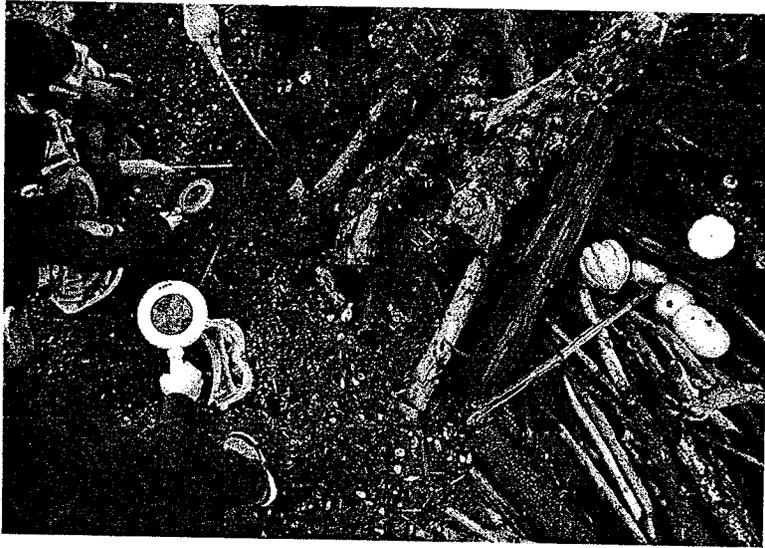


Time to clean up

(Bob Chamberlin / Los Angeles Times)

Youngsters wait to change their boots and clothes after working in the soil at the outdoor classroom. It features a winter garden with squash, pumpkins, cauliflower, tomatoes and green peppers, a greenhouse with artichokes and lettuce, a sand pit and the ever-popular mud pit.

[See full story](#)



Down to the earth

(Bob Chamberlin / Los Angeles Times)

Youngsters examine the loamy soil. The results at the center have impressed Los Angeles school district officials, who want to add 50 more outdoor classrooms using bond funds. Each costs between \$100,000 to \$200,000 from design to opening, said Whitcomb W. Hayslip, the district's assistant superintendent for early childhood education.

[See full story](#)



Little gardeners

(Bob Chamberlin / Los Angeles Times)

Teacher Beatriz De La Torre leads children in the garden area at the classroom. "We tell parents if their children come home clean, they didn't have a good day," Principal Ranae Amezcua said. "Parents know this is how it is and this is how they learn."

[See full story](#)

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