Commission Meeting
January 10, 2008

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Commissioners:
Nancy Au
Jane Boeckmann
Yvonne Burke (Chair)
Jonathan Fielding (Vice Chair)
Neal Kaufman
Evangelina Stockwell
Corina Villaraigosa (Arrived @ 1:50 pm)
Carolyn Wilder

Ex-Officio Commissioners:
Jacquelyn McCroskey (Left @ 2:55 pm)
Deanne Tilton
Harriette Williams

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Commissioners:
Marv Southard (Excused)
William Arroyo (Alternate) [Excused]

STAFF PRESENT:

Evelyn V. Martinez, Executive Director
Carol Baker, Director of Public Affairs
Anthony Bellanca, Finance Director
Yolanda Bosch, Director of Grants Management & Legal Compliance
Armando Jimenez, Director of Research & Evaluation
Teresa Nuno, Director of Planning & Development
Maria Romero, Executive Assistant

LEGAL COUNSEL:

Craig Steele, Attorney-at-Law

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL:

(As sitting Vice Chair, Commissioner Fielding called the meeting to order and proceeded with the election of the Commission Chair for 2008).

1. Vice Chair Fielding called the meeting to order at 1:38 pm.

2. Election of Commission Chair – 2008

Nominations for the position of Commission Chair were opened. Supervisor Yvonne Burke was nominated. There were no other nominations.

M/S (Jonathan Fielding / Carolyn Wilder) APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED

Supervisor Burke was congratulated on her election as Commission Chair and assumed leadership of the meeting.
3. Election of Commission Vice Chair – 2008

Nominations for the position of Commission Vice Chair were opened. Commissioner Jonathan Fielding was nominated. There were no other nominations.

M/S (Yvonne Burke / Carolyn Wilder) APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED

Commissioner Fielding was congratulated on his re-election as Commission Vice Chair for a second term in 2008.

4. Announcements by the Commission Chair

RECEIVED

CONSENT CALENDAR: (Items 4 – 5)

5. Approval of Commission Meeting Minutes - Thursday, November 8, 2007

M/S (Jonathan Fielding / Nancy Au) APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED

Approval of Commission Meeting Minutes - Wednesday, November 28, 2007

The minutes of November 28, 2007 were amended to reflect the attendance and participation of Cynthia Harding, who attended in lieu of Commissioner Fielding and is the designated alternate.

M/S (Jonathan Fielding / Nancy Au) APPROVED AS AMENDED

6. Approval of Monthly Financials – October, 2007

M/S (Jonathan Fielding / Nancy Au) APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED

COMMISSION: (Items 7 - 9)

7. Executive Director's Report

RECEIVED AND FILED

In addition to the written report, Executive Director Martinez reported on the following Commission-related issues:

- **Literacy Campaign:** The campaign “Read Early, Read Aloud” that was launched last November garnered a lot of media attention reached an audience of over 10 million people. Coverage of this campaign ranged from the San Fernando Valley to Long Beach, including advertisements in La Opinion, one of our partners in the campaign.
Secure and Affordable Healthcare Act of 2008: Governor Schwarzenegar and Assembly Speaker Fabian Nuñez have co-authored this legislation which is the funding mechanism for the Governor’s health care reform plan. The healthcare plan would insure 5.1 million people in California at a cost of $14.4 billion. This cost would be paid through a $1.75 per pack increase in tobacco tax, and fees imposed on hospitals and employers. The plan is scheduled to be heard on the Senate Health Committee on January 16th. This legislation faces opposition, most notably from Senate Majority Leader Don Perata. However, both the Governor and the Assembly Speaker are being persistent and there is a reasonably good chance that the plan will pass the legislature and that this financing mechanism will be on the November ballot. An increased tobacco tax will likely result in a drop in sales and reduced revenues for Proposition 10 Commission and related programs. The plan would be partially financed by Healthy Kids funds, resulting in a loss of this revenue for First 5 LA. However, should this legislation pass, the State would assume responsibility for providing coverage for uninsured children ages 0-5 years. The Governor’s Office and the First 5 Association reached agreement to include Proposition 10 in a backfill for the loss of the tobacco tax increase. The proposed ballot initiative would provide a backfill to Proposition 10 funding. The Board of Equalization would develop a formula for this backfill within 18 months of the imposition of the new tax.

Cal CARE: Last fall, Senate Republicans introduced a healthcare package, known as Cal CARE. One of the bills included in the healthcare package, and introduced by Senator Cox, would have had the net result of diverting funds from the County First 5 Commissions and exclusively allocating this funding for children’s health care. This bill currently sits in the Senate Health Committee and has not been scheduled for a hearing. The Senate Republicans had intended the funding mechanism for Cal CARE to be included on the November 2009 ballot; however, due to a lack of interest by the public and a lack of progress on their bills, this seems unlikely.

SJR 11: This is a resolution supported by the County First 5 Commissions, which urges the President and Congress to enact legislation to ensure the continuation of funding for the National Children’s Study, passed unanimously and was adopted by the legislature. The National Children’s Study is a long-term observation of children’s health as impacted by genetics and environmental conditions.

8. Approval of the Full Cycle 2 School Readiness Initiative Funding (Option 1) For an Amount Not-to-Exceed $42 Million

Before staff began their presentation on Option 1, Chair Burke asked if the Commissioners had any questions on Option 2. Commissioners did not have any questions and staff proceeded with their presentation and recommendation of Option 1.

In 2001, as part of its Cycle 1 School Readiness Initiative (SRI) partnership with First 5 California, First 5 LA allocated $67 million to fund School Readiness Programs throughout Los Angeles County. SRI engages families, community members, and educators in a holistic approach towards preparing children ages 0-5 for kindergarten. In developing the initiative, First 5 California adopted the National Education Goals Panel definition of school readiness: (1) children ready for school; (2) schools ready for children; (3) family and community supports; and (4) services that contribute to children’s academic success. SRI focuses on communities with the lowest performing schools (e.g., deciles 1, 2 and 3 – out of 10) as measured by the Academic Performance Index (API).
First 5 LA's initial allocation of Cycle 1 funds provided financial resources to support 42 SR Programs serving 53 high need communities. Cycle 1 funds were originally disbursed through an open Request For Proposals (RFP) process which resulted in 17 of the 42 SR Programs being funded. In 2003, First 5 LA approved an alternative funding approach in which communities were selected to participate in the initiative and received extensive technical assistance provided by First 5 LA staff and consultants in order to develop their SRI proposals. This targeted approach resulted in the remaining 25 SR Programs being funded. Communities were selected to participate in the targeted approach based on the following indicators:

- Number of children ages 0-5;
- Number of children ages 0-5 below 200% of poverty;
- Number of births with late or no prenatal care;
- Number of low birth weight births;
- Number of kindergarten students in low performing schools; and
- Number of births to mothers with less than a high school education.

In 2005, First 5 California announced its commitment of Cycle 2 funding totaling $200 million to continue supporting 206 SR Programs throughout the state for an additional four years. First 5 LA's Cycle 2 funding allocation from First 5 California is $67 million which equals the amount of funding that was provided during Cycle 1. In order to ensure that Los Angeles County SR Programs did not experience a gap in funding between Cycles 1 and 2, First 5 LA submitted Cycle 2 funding applications to First 5 California in January 2007. All 42 SR Program applications were subsequently approved by the State Commission.

In addition to providing funding for program implementation, First 5 California provides First 5 LA with an annual allocation of coordination funds in the amount of $340,000 for a total of $1.36 million over four years. First 5 LA uses these coordination funds for staff expenses related to the following: completing program accountability activities (e.g., adherence to First 5 California and SR Program RFF policies, timely and accurate reporting, etc.), reviewing progress and evaluation reports, performing site visits and observing program implementation, reviewing budgets and expenditures, preparing First 5 California annual and fiscal reports, identifying areas for program/initiative improvement, highlighting best and promising practices, and sharing critical challenges and successes with First 5 California.

In order to receive Cycle 2 funding, all SR Programs met the following criteria: (1) maintenance of Cycle 1 levels of service; (2) implementation Evidence-based and/or Promising Practices; (3) local cash match requirements; (4) collaboration with other County and State First 5 programs and projects; and (5) participation in statewide evaluation activities. First 5 LA's failure to adhere to all five funding requirements would mean a loss of millions in state funds for Los Angeles County.

Beginning in September 2007, First 5 LA implemented a special series of the Sustainability Project tailored specifically for SRI grantees. The Sustainability Project supports agencies in developing and implementing plans to sustain outcomes for children ages 0-5 in Los Angeles County. Through a structured eight-month, team-based curriculum, agencies strategically plan how to build their internal capacity to pursue and secure resources that will address their long-term needs. Twenty-one (21) SRI grantees, representing 30 SR Programs are currently participating in the project. Each agency has brought together two- to four-member sustainability teams which may include the executive director, superintendent or assistant superintendent, school principal, finance officer, program director, development director and board members. Throughout the process teams identify not only critical financial needs, but
also essential political, technical and administrative resources required to achieve long-term sustainability. The series will culminate with a Resource Forum in April 2008 bringing together SR Programs and representatives from local private and corporate foundations, corporations, county offices and other nonprofit agencies. During the forum, SRI teams will present their sustainability plans and receive feedback from the panelists.

First 5 LA's Commission evaluation shifted to concentrate on the effects of the initiative on children, families, organizations, and schools in Los Angeles County in July 2006. It also highlighted lessons learned from the initiative that will inform other First 5 LA efforts with similar funding and implementation strategies as the School Readiness Initiative.

The purpose of the evaluation was to provide outcome data on key components of the initiative and to answer the following questions:

1. How has the School Readiness Initiative been implemented in Los Angeles County?
   a. Who participated in SR Programs and which communities were served?
2. What are outcomes for children participating in School Readiness Initiative programs?
3. What are outcomes for parents and families participating in School Readiness Initiative programs?
4. How have schools been prepared for children entering school and their families?
5. What systems of care have been developed and/or cultivated to support children's readiness for school?
   a. What are similarities and differences between school-led and community-led SR Programs?
   b. What has been learned about collaboration and coordination?

Children and parents participating in SR Programs have demonstrated some statistically significant changes in their knowledge, skills and abilities during their participation in the School Readiness Initiative. Parenting practices and behaviors have changed, generally, in a positive direction based on the Time 1 and Time 2 survey conducted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR). Additionally, grantee program evaluations support some of the findings of the parent survey. Qualitatively, some parents expressed that they have more of a voice in the school and community which provides an opportunity for them to advocate for their children.

In examining schools' readiness for children and their families, there are activities the CBO-led and school-led programs have employed to provide a smooth transition of children and their families from early care settings to school. Evaluation of these types of efforts could be more systematic and deliberate so that key stakeholders are more aware of what strategies tend to be most effective.

SRI funds more programs than any other First 5 LA initiative. Over the past five years, SR Programs have solidified critical community partnerships between families, schools and community-based agencies. In many instances such partnerships did not exist in these communities prior to the implementation of SRI. Continuation of SRI funding will provide an opportunity for First 5 LA to leverage over $85 million dollars in First 5 California and local grantee funds for Los Angeles County. Conversely, discontinuing funding will result in:

- An abrupt disruption of school readiness services in 53 of the county's communities of highest need.
SUMMARY ACTION MINUTES

• A lack of coordinated services to over 29,000 children ages 0-5 and their families annually, since SRI funding has often served as the “glue” for collaborative approaches.
• An elimination of a platform for collaborating with other First 5 LA efforts such as Best Start, Family Literacy, etc.

Staff recommends that the School Readiness Initiative be fully funded for the remaining three years of Cycle 2, as presented in Option 1. This recommendation is based on factors related to a thorough analysis of the initiative that was conducted over the past year which included the following factors:

• Evaluation results that demonstrate SRI’s achievement of positive outcomes among children and families participating in SR programs;
• The potential for SRI to serve as a platform for launching future Commission efforts such as Best Start (Prenatal Through Three);
• SRI’s alignment with the Next Five Strategic Plan, as well as the Commission’s recently adopted Policy Agenda; and
• The extensive leveraging opportunity the initiative provides First 5 LA.

Commissioner McCroskey commented that she believed in the continued funding of the School Readiness Initiative.

Commissioner Stockwell publicly thanked the parents who wrote the letters of support to each of the Commissioners. Commissioner Stockwell commented that she was supportive of refunding the initiative based on the staff recommendation.

Commissioner Williams commended the evaluators of this initiative and stressed the need to focus on a longitudinal study.

Commissioner Au commented that she was supportive of refunding the School Readiness Initiative based on the staff recommendation.

Commissioner Villaraigosa commented that having educated parents typically translates to also having their children educated.

Commissioner Kaufman commented that he was worried that the School Readiness Initiative would not exist in three to five years as there will not be sufficient funding based on revenue projections. Furthermore, Commissioner Kaufman commented that he did not understand the cost per child. In his view, if this information was not clear, then a policy evaluation could not be done.

Commissioner Kaufman proposed the following amendment to the motion:

_The funding of school districts should be done within 90 days after the review of their leveraging proposals._

The amendment was seconded by Commissioner Fielding to begin discussion.

Commissioner Fielding commented that he would like to see a cost per family analysis. He found it absolutely shocking that a recommendation would be made by staff without any cost-effectiveness information as part of the recommendation. While Commissioner Fielding commended the providers, he did express his concern about the scalability of this initiative.
Commissioner McCroskey suggested that a special meeting of SRI Commissioner Liaisons and grantees be scheduled to hear directly from those individuals providing the services.

Commissioner Williams commented that a lot of time and effort had been put into the staff report and recommendation. Commissioner Williams also commented that she was bothered by amendments being made at the last minute at the Commission meeting. Commissioner Williams commented that there is a systematic process and it should be followed. The materials that were received ahead of time had a specific recommendation; and, this is the issue that should be voted on by the full Commission.

The proposed amendment to the motion was rescinded and a vote was taken on the proposed staff recommendation.

M/S  (Corina Villaraigosa / Nancy Au)  APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED

9. Public Comment

Tricia Bowers, LAUSD – “Ready for School”
Richard Cohen, Westside Children’s Center
Julie Castillo, Parent
Cindy Diaz, Van Nuys Community Adult School
Laura Diaz, Hope Street Family Center
Peggy Funkhouser, Urban Education Partnership
Magdalena Garcia, Human Services Association – Pasitos
Deborah Hayes, LAUSD – Hyde Park “Ready for School”
Luis Hernandez, Human Services Association
Paula Kaplan, Vista Del Mar
Jim Managia, St. John’s Well Child Family Center
Bruce McDaniel, Lennox School District
Alex Morales, Children’s Bureau
Jennifer Pavelka, PAC/LAC
William Turner, Urban Education

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:31 pm.

The next regularly scheduled Commission meeting will be on:

    February 14, 2008 at 1:30 p.m.
    Multi-Purpose Room
    750 N. Alameda Street
    Los Angeles, CA 90012

Meeting minutes recorded by Maria Romero.