



# LOS ANGELES COUNTY PROBATION OVERSIGHT COMMISSION: EDUCATION REPORT

Improving Educational Opportunities and Outcomes for Students in Juvenile Halls and Camps

*Report Prepared by the Programs and Services Ad Hoc Committee*

MEMBERS OF THE PROBATION OVERSIGHT COMMISSION:

Franky Carrillo, Commission Chair  
Esche Jackson, Commission Vice Chair  
Dolores Canales, Commission Secretary  
Danielle Dupuy, Commissioner  
Sean Garcia-Leys, Commissioner  
Sam Lewis, Commissioner  
Don Meredith, Commissioner  
Dominique Nong, Commissioner  
Cyn Yamashiro, Commissioner

Wendelyn Julien, Executive Director

**March 14, 2022**

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## Executive Summary

In response to requests from the public and the Board of Supervisors for the Los Angeles Probation Oversight Commission (POC) to play an active role in supporting educational programs offered to incarcerated youth by the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), the POC agreed to engage in a series of site visit observations of Juvenile Court School (JCS) classrooms and report back to the public on what it found.

Three commissioners and one POC staff conducted classroom observations and interviewed students, teachers, administrators, and probation staff at all juvenile halls and camps between June and October of 2021. While these observations and interviews were conducted in the months following the return to in-person teaching following a period of remote learning implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, observers were disappointed by what they found even when the additional challenges posed during that time were considered. Based on their observations, commissioners found that classrooms generally lacked a culture of learning. Instead, students were too often engaged in task avoidance and actively resisted cooperating with teachers, or else would engage in instruction in a purely transactional way where they would bargain for the most possible credit towards graduation in exchange for the minimum amount of learning.

Commissioners attribute student resistance primarily to the carceral setting, poor quality and inconsistency of classroom instruction, and the failure to integrate the non-teacher credentialed adults in classrooms into instructional planning. However, commissioners also observed some facilities where teachers and site administrators appeared authentically committed to addressing these problems.

Based on these observations, the POC recommends that all reform efforts for juvenile court schools in Los Angeles County recognize that improving student engagement must be the immediate priority. Additionally, the POC recommends that these reform efforts be led by teachers and site administrators, encourage students to bring their authentic selves to classroom activities, integrate instructional strategies that better engage this population of students, and make better use of the extremely low staff-to-student ratios in juvenile court school classrooms.

Finally, the POC notes that the need to create a facility for secure track youth presents important challenges and opportunities for education reform. The creation of educational programs for secure track youth should not be merely a continuation of the programs at other juvenile court schools but should be planned and staffed with the objective of making the secure track facility a model for other facilities.

## Introduction

The public has made clear to the Los Angeles County Probation Oversight Commission (POC) that incarcerated youth must be one of the Commission's top priorities. It is also clear that education is one of the most important tools available to incarcerated youth for transformation, rehabilitation, and to ensure positive future socialization. Accordingly, the POC has made education in Los Angeles County Juvenile Court Schools (JCS), the schools in the county's juvenile halls and camps, a focus of its work from its earliest meetings.

From the POC's regular meetings, and from meetings between POC commissioners and members of the public who are concerned about the quality of education in JCS, it is apparent that the ability of the public to advocate for improving educational opportunities is hindered by the inability of the public to visit the halls and camps and see first-hand what classes are like. Considering this, the POC offered to do what it can to be the "eyes and ears" of the public on this issue. The POC offered to conduct a series of observations of classrooms and present those observations in the form of this report.

In keeping with the POC's role as a civilian oversight body, this report does not reflect a technical or scientific evaluation of education in LA's juvenile court schools. Others are already engaged in that work. LACOE conducts periodic, rigorous self-evaluations of schools as part of California's school accreditation process, which are reviewed by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. A team from UCLA is currently reviewing the Road to Success Academy (RTSA) curriculum used in LA's juvenile court schools; an independent monitor is overseeing a review process of the schools as part of a settlement agreement with the California Department of Justice. The POC will recommend and, where possible, insist that those reports be available to the public. Instead, what this report offers are the considered observations of laypeople. Nonetheless, the POC have endeavored to be objective and fair, and hope that this report will be a helpful tool to those working to support the educational accomplishments of Los Angeles' incarcerated youth.

## Methods

Information was collected for this report through a series of stakeholder interviews and unannounced, direct observations of a non-scientific sampling of classrooms in the juvenile halls and camps. Interviews and observations were conducted by Commissioners Carrillo, Garcia-Leys, and Jackson and by POC Executive Director Julien. Site visits were conducted in small groups and by individuals. A total of two dozen classrooms were observed over five months between June and October of 2021. Each of the halls and camps were visited at least once to ensure that the diversity of educational services was captured.

### Site Visit Observations

Classroom observation was selected as the primary method for this report. The spontaneous nature of the visits provided observers an opportunity to see classroom activities and behaviors in their most candid form.

Upon arrival, observers met with Probation staff to plan observations. In making that plan, observers discussed the diversity of the facility's population to ensure observations of classrooms where there were challenges in maintaining a safe and healthy environment and classrooms that were less challenging. Sometimes logs of incident reports were reviewed to ensure that a range of classrooms was observed. All Probation staff were candid and helpful in these discussions.

Next, observers would typically meet with principals to introduce themselves and explain the visits. Observers would discuss the plan with the principal and sometimes would ask the principal to recommend an example of what they believed to be the best teaching and learning that was taking place in the facility. Observers would also ask about which classes were designated as special day classes, so that they could be observed. Thus, a day of observations typically included at least one of each of the special day classes, classes of young women, classes led by a senior or recommended teacher, and classrooms facing challenges to maintaining a safe and healthy environment.

The duration of each classroom observation ranged between ten and fifty minutes. The arrival of visitors tended to be treated by students, teachers, and staff as a welcome disruption of whatever they were doing. Most classes had a pre-arranged protocol for when visitors arrived. In these classes, when observers arrived, any instruction that may have been happening would stop and a pre-selected student "ambassador" would greet the observer or observers and explain what they were learning. Though the ambassadors were always polite and frequently enthusiastic, the vast majority of them struggled to explain the content of their classes in a meaningful way. In contrast, the few times an ambassador did not greet the observers it was because the students were on task and the teacher was focused on instruction.

Once the presentation of the ambassador was finished, observers would sit down and take notes by paper and pencil on what was happening in the classroom. Observers paid careful attention to tracking students' time spent on-task; the academic rigor of the curriculum; the relationship between the teachers, students, and staff; and the general behavior of the students. On occasion, observers would have conversations with students during observations. Observations would end either when the class ended or when it was necessary to leave to observe the diversity of classes in the available time.

## Interviews

Interviews were conducted as a secondary method to collect qualitative information from stakeholders. Formal and informal questions were asked to provide the depth of insight needed to distinguish stakeholder perspectives and, ideally, explain the cultural and operational challenges identified in key observations. Over the span of five months, dozens of interviews were conducted with principals, assistant principals, instructors, tutors, behavior management specialists, and students.

Interviewees were randomly selected during classroom observation and office visits. Questions were tailored to the subject. For instructors, questions were oriented towards their overall experience, the quality of the curriculum and their role in its development, concerns, and ideas for improvement. In addition to quality of instruction and overall learning experience

assessments, students were asked questions to gauge their engagement levels and the alignment of their personal goals with classroom assignments. For LACOE administrators, information was solicited around instructor and student attendance, compliance ratings, curriculum design, stakeholder collaboration, grievance procedures, and engagement strategies. Interview durations lasted between five and thirty minutes.

## Findings

It is important to note at the outset of these findings that these observations took place soon after the return to in-person teaching after a period of remote learning necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, teachers were still establishing new routines for their classrooms and new relationships were being established between students, teachers, and the probation staff and paraeducators who had been physically present to manage the classes in teachers' absence. However, four months into our observation period, commissioners continued to observe many of the same issues that they observed at the beginning of the observation period in many classrooms.

### Most Classrooms Lack a Culture of Learning.

The carceral setting of the juvenile court schools is omnipresent. While there are significant differences between the environment of facilities, between Campus Kilpatrick, Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall, and Central Juvenile Hall for example, there is never any forgetting that these are locked facilities. While it is not within the ability of lay observers to describe the effect of this on the psychology of students, it seems obvious to commissioners that the stress of the environmental setting impacts students' ability to learn.

At the same time, classrooms are often the facilities' most familiar environments for youth inside the facilities. Presumably, most of the youth have previously attended schools that have adopted carceral practices such as strictly regimented schedules, micromanaging of students' physical bodies, the constant presence of adults tasked solely with enforcing security rules, and fencing to control movement. Unsurprisingly then, commissioners with experience in urban public schools recognized much of the students' behaviors as typical of urban public-school students. This is a problem.

The attitude of most students was either apathetic or antagonistic towards learning activities. Most students alternated between looking to avoid work or exhibiting a willingness to perform some minimal tasks in exchange for an immediate reward, whether credits or candies. Most teachers seemed to believe that this minimal work was the best that could be reasonably expected of these students. In only a very few instances did observers see students inspired, engaged, and active in their learning. However, the fact that this level of engagement was observed in these few instances demonstrates that engagement is possible with this population of students.

The passive and transactional nature of instructions was evident everywhere. The accepted norm was that students would do nothing except when offered some reward. Most often the reward was credits towards graduation. Focusing on the transaction of student work for credits seems to

work with around half of the students, those closest to graduation, but students engaged in that transaction tend to focus more on whether the number of credits makes the effort worthwhile than on whether they will learn anything. Accordingly, students bargain for the most credits for the minimum amount of work. The result is that, when students do engage in this transaction, they are awarded credits towards graduation that are far too generous in comparison to the amount of content they master. As a result, even though all the teachers and staff consistently encourage students to work hard and learn enough to succeed, the structure of the program and practices of the teachers make it clear that avoiding disruptions and “going through the motions” is what is genuinely valued.

In a particularly egregious example of alienation and a lack of instruction and engagement, during one observation for a total of over forty-five (45) minutes a teacher sat at the desk while the teacher’s aide played YouTube videos on the screen in the classroom of the “crate challenge.” The teacher explained to the observer that the students had already finished their required work for the day (the observation began at 9:25 a.m.), showing two completed pages of work for each student of which one worksheet about a book they were reading and the other was a free-writing assignment. The teacher invited one student to tell the observer about what they were working on. The student was respectful and obedient but could not explain the Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) bulletin board or the other work on the boards. At 10:45, a representative from a community-based organization (CBO) entered the classroom. The teacher did not know which CBO she was from nor did the representative introduce herself even though there was a new student in the class. She told the students she was going to work with them individually on monologues, apparently expecting that the other five boys would sit quietly as she worked for ten minutes with each student. The teacher’s aide passed out crossword puzzle sheets to help occupy the boys’ time. Shortly thereafter, one student became agitated about another boy sitting too close to him. Words were exchanged and tension rose quickly. The Probation Officer intervened and calmly and effectively de-escalated the situation. The assistant teacher also stood up and talked to one of the boys. The teacher did not get up from his desk but pulled out a paper that he said was to be used to suspend one of the boys. Before he could write the boy’s name down, there was an apology and order was restored.

Worse than the transactional nature of activities was the alienation from the content that most students seemed to feel. The lack of student engagement was at its worst when students felt that activities were not relevant or when they felt they were not allowed to authentically engage in the material. The RTSA curriculum expects students to bring their authentic selves to learning activities so that self-reflection, growth, and rehabilitation are part of classroom instruction. However, in practice, students in most classrooms were made to feel as if they were only allowed to express teacher-approved opinions, endlessly repeating that they “had made mistakes,” but were “turning their life around.” There was no place in most classrooms to express a critique of their environment or an analysis of their needs not being met, much less authentic expressions of emotions like anger or shame.

The best example of this alienation from the academic content was in a math class of six young men where, after about 60 minutes into a 90-minute class, the teacher had felt that students had completed as much work as they were going to and so the teacher decided to show a YouTube video for the remainder of the class. The teacher chose a video of Steve Jobs giving a

college commencement speech. After about five minutes of the video, one of the students, the only African American student in the classroom, began loudly complaining that Steve Jobs is not relevant to their lives and that the teacher should play speeches by Black people or people from “the ‘hood.” The student specifically asked for videos of Malcolm X. The teacher tried to tell the student about Steve Jobs’ biography, but the student continued to demand a video by a Black speaker. The teacher relented and changed the video to one of Nelson Mandela. The student became agitated and said that was no better than the Steve Jobs video and that he wanted someone relevant, not someone dark-skinned, though he did not use those words. The teacher responded by turning off the video entirely and handing out candies to all the students who then quietly talked among themselves for the last ten minutes of class. Later, when the teacher was asked why he did not play a Malcolm X speech, the teacher said that Malcolm X is “too negative” and would be a “bad influence” on the students. The teacher seemed unaware that two of the students used the last ten minutes of free time the teacher gave to quietly discuss the best ways to hide a gun when hanging out on a street corner or in an alley.

In contrast to these examples, in another class of three young women, students were highly engaged in revising and peer editing essays for an essay contest. To prepare for the essay, the class first read Street Life: Poverty, Gangs, and a Ph.D., by Victor Rios. Using Victor Rios’ book as a template, students then drafted autobiographical essays using the prompt of an essay contest. Inspired by the book and their teacher’s encouragement, students believed that they had a chance at being recognized in the contest, so long as they were honest in their stories and helped each other do their best work. One student read her essay to the observer, and it was very impressive.

### The Quality of Instruction Is Generally Far Below Expectations

Instruction in most classes involved either watching a video or reading a non-fiction essay and then answering short questions. Sometimes this was done as a whole class assignment and sometimes by students working independently on laptop computers. Often, the class was divided into two or three students working with the teacher orally while another two or three students worked independently. Questions nearly always involved simple recall and did not require grade-level analysis or application. This was the practice whether the content was math, reading, science, history, or personal reflection and growth for both special day classes for students with special needs and general education classes. In fact, observers generally could not tell whether they were in a special day class or a general education class without being told.

In many of the cases of students who were engaged in trying to advance towards graduation as quickly as possible, content was skill-level appropriate and academically rigorous, though rarely involved difficult tasks that required applying or analyzing content. However, at other times, content was far below students’ skill level. For example, one student was given a paper math worksheet in his math class which was supposed to take the entire class. The student avoided beginning the worksheet for thirty-five minutes, then did the worksheet entirely in his head in about two minutes. The teacher criticized the student for not showing his work but grudgingly admitted that the student had gotten every question correct. In later conversation, it became apparent that the student had already earned enough math credits to graduate and should have been working on something else.

The result of this model of instruction is that students tend to work independently on a computer in hopes of rapidly advancing towards a high school degree, or actively avoid working at all. For students who avoid work, typical techniques included waiting for instructions to be explained to each student individually, forgetting computer passwords, asking teachers to repeat things, asking for inordinate amount of time to finish simple tasks, engaging with tutors and probation staff in off-topic conversations, repeatedly breaking minor rules such as not putting their feet on the desk, repeatedly sharpening pencils, or asking for more paper among others. As a result of these work-avoidance techniques, it was not unusual for students to be on-task less than ten minutes out of every hour of class time.

In contrast to this, classes that did not rely on the format of a video or reading followed by short questions tended to have higher levels of engagement and learning. These classes included project-based work like science experiments, or the essay project described above. The most impressive levels of participation were observed when a teacher from an outside non-profit arts program came to teach an acting class. The class began with a warmup activity where students stood in a circle around the teacher and had to quickly point and say “splat” to the person next to the person the teacher pointed at. The activity got nearly all the students participating, required that they become attuned to the teacher and each other, and broke down many of the students’ typically counterproductive defensive attitudes. That was followed by handing out copies of a script of an August Wilson play about a young man and his father arguing over whether schooling matters to Black people in America. While not every student had a part to read, those who did read aloud were engaged in reading grade-level material and applied the reading with intellectual rigor in discussions with the teacher that happened throughout the class.

### Staffing of Classrooms Creates Barriers to Learning.

Classrooms seemed to be optimal when there was one teacher and no more than two other adults in the room. However, far too many classes were taught by substitute teachers and classrooms often seemed crowded with adults who were more of a distraction than a help. It was not unusual for a classroom to have more adults than students. Because engaging in off-topic conversation was a typical work-avoidance technique, the presence of so many adults provided students with a wealth of opportunities to avoid working on tasks. And even when not serving as a distraction, the presence of several adults sitting quietly in the room without any apparent work to do helped reinforced idleness as a classroom norm. The result is that a great many classrooms seem better suited to students’ work avoidance techniques than to learning.

Some of the identified problems with staffing classrooms in this report are based on observations of classrooms shortly after the return to in-person learning that followed the end of the remote learning response to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the remote learning period, classrooms were staffed in-person by probation department officers and paraeducators while teachers appeared remotely by computers. This led to a need for probation department staff to take over many of the duties of LACOE staff, which they admirably did to the best of their abilities. With the return to in-person teaching, some of these blurred duties must be re-defined in order to make sure that every adult in the classroom serves a necessary purpose and is not a distraction.

However, not all staffing problems can be attributed to the return to in-person learning. In one observation visit, one of the camps had only two teachers for nine classrooms. The rest of the classes were led by substitute teachers. This was explained to the observers as being the result of a LACOE employee policy requiring teachers to use their vacation time within a certain period. While teachers undoubtedly deserve vacation, the needs of the classrooms must also be considered when scheduling those vacations.

Also, relatedly, students were often pulled out of class by either the Probation Department, Department of Mental Health (DMH), LACOE counselors, or staff from community partner organizations, leading to a steady stream of students coming and going. Or in other cases, a non-classroom staff person would come into classrooms and take over a corner for one-on-one meetings with students. Both approaches caused unwarranted distractions. While students deserve access to one-on-one counseling, there are ways to schedule these sessions so that they are less distracting. To observers, it appeared that these sessions happened during class time, and were often welcomed by teachers, because they provided a break from the shared frustration of trying to cajole students into doing some minimal amount of classwork.

### A Few On-site School Leaders Exhibited the Ability and Intent to Improve Instruction.

The most hopeful finding of this report is that a few facilities have on-site administrative and faculty leaders who are committed to improvement. For example, one of the observed facilities is actively engaged in reform efforts rooted in raising expectations for academic rigor, peer supports and accountability among teachers, and a more relevant education. While these efforts have not yet fundamentally challenged the read-and-answer-questions instructional paradigm nor the transactional nature of most students' relationship with the educational program, those goals are being considered for future priorities once academic rigor has been established.

Other observations at this site include the high level of on-task work, the use of culturally relevant instructional materials, the collaboration of teachers across classrooms and content, and the willingness to include students' perspectives in reform. For example, at the beginning of the day, all classes watched the same motivational video that featured mostly Black speakers talking about their beliefs about the opportunities that are created by a good education and was directly relevant to the RTSA theme of transformation. Though from a very different cultural background, the teacher observed during this opening activity was fully invested in the video and exhibited none of the cynicism or fear of a culturally relevant curriculum that was observed in other facilities. Students were unusually attentive through the entire ten-minute video.

In the next classroom observed, later in the morning, nearly every one of nine students in a classroom was fully engaged in either independent work on a laptop or working with the teacher in a small group, reading and answering questions about ecosystems from a passage projected on a smart board. Students working independently all wore headphones, and when they took them off to talk to each other, conversations were nearly always about asking and receiving help with the academic task they were working on. There was almost no time spent off-task.

The principal was excited to share the details of the reform efforts. Among them was a splitting of class times so that students would be better able to understand what credits they were

receiving for what work. When the observer shared the concern that would further reinforce the transactional nature of the approach to education seen across all the facilities, the principal understood and shared the observer's concerns, but explained how that reform was demanded by the students. The principal showed that he valued student input by implementing that reform, but even while implementing this reform, the principal also plans to work towards more relevant content and better instructional strategies so that students are inspired to learn and not just earn credits.

### Recommendations

To ensure this report helps build consensus around what efforts will be most effective at improving educational success in LA's juvenile court schools, and recognizing the POC's role in advocating for change, the authors of this report decided to offer recommendations in addition to observations. The shared goal is to ensure that the educational services offered to incarcerated youth successfully reduce recidivism and increase public safety, foster confidence and healthy decision making by youth, encourage continuing education, and develop a peer culture inside juvenile halls and camps that further fosters these goals. In making these recommendations, the POC assumed the good faith of all partners, recognized the role of existing leadership and reform efforts, and avoided prescriptive recommendations.

In sum, the overarching recommendation is that classroom instruction must better engage students, which can only happen when reform efforts are led by the teachers and administrators at the school site. There is little faith that any reform effort can significantly improve students' educational, behavioral, or health outcomes unless students are more engaged in what they learn. If students see schooling as unrewarding, or worse, actively dehumanizing, then youth will resist efforts to improve their education and will act out with avoidance strategies and confrontation. More specifically, the POC makes the following seven recommendations:

***1. Empower effective principals, teachers, and youth to collaborate with each other and the public to lead site-specific improvement efforts.***

The existing efforts that seem most likely to significantly improve student outcomes are reform plans developed cooperatively by the teachers and administrators who will implement them, with input from youth. When there are ambitious reform efforts arising from the staff at a facility, those efforts should be prioritized over fidelity to programs created offsite and should be prioritized no less than attempts to ensure LACOE's compliance with minimum state law and regulations. Furthermore, these efforts should be presented to the public for input, with benchmarks and timelines, to build trust and leverage the public's resources.

In contrast, when site teachers and administrators are unwilling to recognize the poor quality of instruction or do not have a plan ambitious enough to adequately address the poor quality of instruction, then it is unlikely that any reform effort, whether led by LACOE, Probation, the Department of Justice, or independent advocacy groups, will lead to substantial improvement. Observations and discussions with teachers suggest that in classrooms where teachers believe that the existing level of success is the best that can be hoped for, any reform effort will be met with resistance by teachers and nothing we observed suggests that the existing system can

overcome such resistance. If LACOE is unable to recognize the poor quality of instruction in many classrooms and implement a sufficiently ambitious reform effort, then the County should look for ways to restructure educational programs, such as by contracting with another public school district or with a charter school operator, even if such an effort requires action by the state legislature.

## *2. Encourage students to bring their authentic selves to their academic work.*

Transformation requires authentic self-reflection and an education that empowers youth to understand and transform their place in society. That cannot happen if teachers are afraid to allow students to express their honest feelings and beliefs and critically engage with students' home communities. While the RTSA curriculum adopted by LACOE for juvenile court schools clearly intends for students to use school as an opportunity for holistic personal growth, this was rarely happening during observations, which was unsurprising. The extraordinary trauma faced by many students raises challenges to this kind of engagement that are far outside teachers' scope of practice. Fortunately, there are DMH employees at every site who are trained in creating safe spaces where students can be honest. Furthermore, the Probation Department has recognized the need for "credible messengers" in the halls and camps who are able to engage with students about their home communities. Credible messengers should become partners in educational programming. Finally, at every site the observers encountered youth who demonstrated leadership abilities and who often demanded that classrooms accommodate their authentic selves. These students should also be made partners. By creating teams with teachers, mental health professionals, credible messengers, and by consulting with student leadership, classrooms can become places where youth engage with adults who are experts in all of the areas that must be addressed for authentic engagement to take place.

## *3. Integrate arts, cooperative learning, project-based learning, and cultural relevance into classroom instruction.*

The single best example that we observed of what JCS could look like is the acting class described in the findings, which combined arts, cooperative learning, and project-based learning, as well as exhibiting cultural relevance. The class began with acting exercises that got youth out of their seats to connect with each other, making the activities embodied and social experiences not exclusively intellectual. The teacher established high standards for rigor by giving the students a challenging script with the requirement that they must practice reading it until they could read it with fluency, prosody, and comprehension.

As with authentic engagement, the RTSA curriculum clearly anticipates project-based learning, though observers rarely observed it taking place. Rather, RTSA activities were mostly projects to be shown during the schools' regular exhibitions and seemed more like extracurricular activities than a primary method for accessing rigorous academics. Teachers should be encouraged to look for instructional activities that combine arts, cooperative learning, project-based learning, and culturally relevant instruction as ways to teach core academic content, and not only as extra enrichment activities.

***4. The Probation Department must give more weight to educational needs when balancing education and safety.***

Balancing safety and programming is one of the most difficult challenges in detention facilities and juvenile court schools. Safety must be the top priority. However, every program involves some risk. In discussions with LACOE teachers and administrators, and community partners, many have related that they have been unable to offer programs that they believe are safe because the Probation Department is too risk adverse. In fact, the Probation Department's tendency to treat the youth themselves as a constant source of danger leads to the prioritizing of control of student's movements above all else. The result is carceral environments that make learning more difficult, and for many of the youth, it makes learning impossible. The Probation Department should recognize that educators and community partners are also experts in working with incarcerated youth, recognize that educators and community partners also care deeply for the safety of the youth and staff, and collaborate with them to minimize the negative educational impacts of the carceral environment.

***5. Lesson planning must take better advantage of low staff-to-student ratios.***

Though there is a common assumption that more adults in the classroom is always better, that was not what was observed. Rather, observers noticed not only diminishing returns, but at some points the number of adults seemed counterproductive. This was particularly the case when adults seemed idle for most of the time or when there were as many adults or more adults than students. To better coordinate and take advantage of low staff-to-student ratios, lesson plans should have an active role for each adult in the classroom, including probation staff, and adults who are not included in lessons should provide services outside the classroom.

Additionally, more effort must be made to ensure consistency in classroom instruction when teachers use sick or vacation time. Teaching adolescents is challenging and could be stressful, even more so when students are incarcerated. It must be recognized that stress has negative effects on teachers' physical and emotional health. Additionally, the norm in American education is for schools to operate at full capacity for nine-month school years with two to three months of vacation. Unfortunately, this is impossible in juvenile court schools. Accordingly, teachers need and expect more sick and vacation time than employees in most other professions. However, there must be better ways to provide sick and vacation time to teachers while mitigating the inconsistent staffing we observed. This seems particularly true when there can be as many as three to six other adults in the classroom who continue to be present even when a teacher is absent.

***6. Ensure that the new secure track facility begins with the best possible educational program.***

Now that youth that would previously have been incarcerated in a Department of Juvenile Justices facility are now being kept in Los Angeles County facilities, the County is planning to create or repurpose one or more secure track facilities to house these young people. This means the creation of one or more new juvenile court schools. This is a tremendous opportunity to reimagine what a juvenile court school can be. However, we are concerned that the challenge of

choosing a facility, the inability to staff Campus Kilpatrick for use as a temporary facility, and the de facto use of the Compound and the Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall juvenile court school in the meantime will combine to make the creation of a new school program impossible. Observers fear that the county agencies will be unable to effectively plan a new program because of uncertainty as to what the new facility will look like. As a result, when the county finally chooses a new facility, there will have been inadequate planning and the only available option will be to transfer teachers from other juvenile court schools to the new facility who will continue to teach using the same programs and strategies as are currently being employed at the existing juvenile court schools. Instead, agencies should be actively partnering now with advocates and education experts to plan the new school or schools and should be considering how to staff the new school or schools with teachers and administrators who share a vision for a new kind of juvenile court school.

***7. Make public all documents related to the Probation Department and LACOE's agreement with the California Department of Justice.***

The Probation Department and LACOE have entered into an agreement with the California Department of Justice to improve education at the juvenile court schools. The details of this agreement and the progress towards implementing it could go far to assure the public that progress is being made. However, the agencies involved, particularly LACOE, have refused to collectively waive confidentiality so that this information can be made public. That should be done immediately. Furthermore, confidentiality by the appointed monitors overseeing the implementation of the agreement should be waived so the monitors may authentically engage with stakeholders outside the Probation Department and LACOE.