

**Recommendations by the Accreditation Team and Report of the
Accreditation Visit for Professional Preparation Programs at
Merced Union High School District
Professional Services Division**

**August 2011
Overview of this Report**

Overview of This Report

This agenda report includes the findings of the accreditation visit conducted at Merced Union High School District. The report of the team presents the findings based upon reading the Institutional Self-Study Reports, review of supporting documentation and interviews with representative constituencies. On the basis of the report, an accreditation recommendation of **Accreditation** is made for the institution.

**Common Standards and Program Standard Decisions
For all Programs offered by the Institution**

	Met	Met with Concerns	Not Met
1) Educational Leadership	X		
2) Unit and Program Assessment and Evaluation	X		
3) Resources	X		
4) Faculty and Instructional Personnel	X		
5) Admission	X		
6) Advice and Assistance	X		
7) Field Experience and Clinical Practice	X		
8) District Employed Supervisors	N/A		
9) Assessment of Candidate Competence	X		

Program Standards

	Total Program Standards	Program Standards		
		Met	Met with Concerns	Not Met
Induction Clear Credential	6	X		

The site visit was completed in accordance with the procedures approved by the Committee on

Accreditation regarding the activities of the site visit:

- Preparation for the Accreditation Visit
- Preparation of the Institutional Self-Study Report
- Selection and Composition of the Accreditation Team
- Evaluation of Program Data
- Preparation of the Accreditation Team Report

**California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
Committee on Accreditation
Accreditation Team Report**

Institution: Merced Union High School District

Dates of Visit: May 9-11, 2011

Accreditation Team

Recommendation: Accreditation

Rationale:

The unanimous recommendation of **Accreditation** was based on a thorough review of the institutional self-study; additional supporting documents available during the visit; interviews with administrators, program staff, candidates, program completers, school personnel, and university partners. The team determined that evidence provided was sufficient and contained consistent information that led to a high degree of confidence in making overall and programmatic judgments about the professional education unit's operation. The decision pertaining to the accreditation status of the institution was based upon the following:

Common Standards

The entire team reviewed each of eight Common Standards and determined whether the standard was met, not met, or met with concerns. The site visit team found that all eight Common Standards are **Met**.

Program Standards

Discussion of findings and appropriate input by individual team members and by the total team membership was provided for the BTSA Induction Program. Following discussions, the team considered whether the Program Standards were met, met with concerns, or not met. The team found that all Program Standards are **Met**.

Overall Recommendation

The team conducted a thorough review of program documentation, evidence provided at the site, additional information provided by program staff, and interviews with program leadership, candidates, program completers, support providers (mentors), administrators, and other stakeholders. All Common Standards and Program Standards are met. The team unanimously recommends a decision of **Accreditation**.

On the basis of this recommendation, the institution is authorized to recommend candidates for the following Credentials:

Advanced Teaching Credentials

- Single Subject
- Clear Single Subject

Staff recommends that:

- The institution's response to the preconditions be accepted;
- Merced Union High School District be permitted to propose new credential programs for approval by the Committee on Accreditation;
- Merced Union High School District continue in its assigned cohort on the schedule of accreditation activities, subject to the continuation of the present schedule of accreditation activities by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

Accreditation Team

Team Leader: **Barb Libolt**
Riverside Unified School District

Common Standards Cluster: **Linda Smetana**
California State University, East Bay

Program Sampling Cluster: **David Simmons**
Ventura County Office of Education

Staff to the Visit: **Audry Wiens**
Consultant

Documents Reviewed

Common and Program Standards Narrative	District Strategic Plan
Program Assessment Preliminary Report of Findings	Personal and Confidential Accommodations Log
Biennial Report & Feedback	Professional Development Evaluations
Professional Development Online Resources	Participating Teacher Journey Graphic
Collaborative Assessment Logs	State Survey Results
FAS Assessments	FAS Portfolios
BTSA Induction Budget	MUHSD Instructional Norms
Local Surveys	MUHSD BTSA Induction Website

Interviews Conducted

	Team Leader	Common Standards Cluster	Program Sampling Cluster	TOTAL
Candidates	19	19	0	38
Completers	0	0	8	8
Employers	8	8	8	24
Program Director	1	1	1	3
Program Coordinator	1	1	1	3
Mentors (Support Providers)	4	4	4	12
Fiscal Personnel	1	0	0	1
Credential Analysts and Staff	0	0	1	1
Leadership Team Members	5	5	5	15
Executive Cabinet	4	4	4	12
Institute of Higher Education	0	3	0	3
TOTAL				120

Note: In some cases, individuals were interviewed by more than one cluster (especially faculty) because of multiple roles. Thus, the number of interviews conducted exceeds the actual number of individuals interviewed.

Background Information

Merced Union High School District (MUHSD) is a grades 9 -12 school district in Merced County serving the cities of Merced, Atwater and Livingston, California. MUHSD is located approximately 60 miles north of Fresno and 40 miles south of Modesto. Its 10,617 students attend five comprehensive schools and four alternative schools. Over 57% students are Hispanic, 23% are white, non-Hispanic, 14% are Asian and 0.5% are African-American. Approximately 13% of the students are English language learners; however, many students are former English learners who have been re-designated. The district provides a variety of educational programs suitable to the needs of a multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, and varied socio-economic community, and is governed by a five member Board of Education, with approximately 480 certificated staff and 407 classified staff.

The district provides a variety of educational programs suitable to the needs of a multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, and varied socio-economic community. MUHSD believes in the importance of professional development to further employees' continuing education and growth which directly impacts student achievement. As a result, professional development is the cornerstone of educational improvement.

The mission of the Merced Union High School District, in partnership with the community, is to provide an innovative and challenging learning environment that promotes excellence. Educators prepare students as life-long learners to succeed academically, intellectually, socially, emotionally and culturally. MUHSD is committed to providing an enriched curriculum with high expectations for all students which emphasizes the skills, concepts, and processes necessary for the technological and cultural challenges of the 21st century.

Education Unit

The rationale and overall design of the MUHSD Induction Program is based on sound theory, research, and practice. The delivery of services to candidates is carefully planned and implemented in ways that are consistent with the holistic, developmental view of teaching reflected in *The California Standards for the Teaching Profession*. This collaborative model, utilizing full-time release mentors, focuses on improving classroom practice and on developing teachers who reflect on their practice while being responsive to the diverse cultural, social, and linguistic backgrounds of all students.

The MUHSD BTSA Induction program is designed to assist and support candidates as responsible members of the teaching profession and leads to the recommendation for the California Professional Clear Credential. The program design advances the application of candidates' skills and knowledge in relation to:

- *The California Standards for the Teaching Profession;*
- State-adopted academic content standards and performance levels for students;
- The state-adopted curriculum frameworks; and
- *Standards of Quality and Effectiveness for Professional Induction Programs.*

MUHSD's Induction Program provides candidates with support providers who are veteran teachers of mentor quality, for individualized support and assessment in the application of:

- *The California Standards for the Teaching Profession*;
State-adopted academic content standards and curriculum materials;
- The New Teacher Center *Formative Assessment System* (NTC-FAS) to promote reflection, self-assessment, and analysis of student work; and
- Newly-acquired knowledge from seminars and individually chosen professional development activities that advances classroom teaching practice.

The Merced Union High School District, as the sole sponsor of the Induction Program, has in place an administrative structure that establishes clear direction and monitoring of the program. This commitment demonstrates a long-range and progressive dedication to the work of new teacher induction and teacher support and assessment.

The Visit

The Merced Union High School District site visit team included two team members and a team lead who have all been trained to conduct Accreditation Site Visits by the Board of Institutional Reviewers. The team reviewed the institution's narrative addressing Common and Program Standards, MUHSD's Biennial Report, and the CTC staff's response, along with the Program Assessment Preliminary Report of Findings. During the week prior to the visit, team members engaged in a telephone conference to discuss their preliminary perspective on the extent to which the program met the Common and Program Standards. The visit took place at the district's Instructional Support Center for a three-day period from May 9 to May 11, 2011. The institutional report-out was held at 12:00 noon on Wednesday, May 11, 2011 at the district's Professional Development Center.

Common Standards

Standard 1: Educational Leadership

Standard Met

The institution and education unit create and articulate a research-based vision for educator preparation that is responsive to California's adopted standards and curriculum frameworks. The vision provides direction for programs, courses, teaching, candidate performance and experiences, scholarship, service, collaboration, and unit accountability. The faculty, instructional personnel, and relevant stakeholders are actively involved in the organization, coordination, and governance of all professional preparation programs. Unit leadership has the authority and institutional support needed to create effective strategies to achieve the needs of all programs and represents the interests of each program within the institution. The education unit implements and monitors a credential recommendation process that ensures that candidates recommended for a credential have met all requirements.

Findings

Merced Union High School District's induction program supports the district goals and vision of creating Learners for the 21st Century. Towards this end, the induction program is designed to increase student achievement by accelerating the instructional development of participating candidates.

The Merced Union School District Induction Program aligns its induction program goals to the *California Standards for the Teaching Profession* (CSTP), the state-adopted academic content standards and performance levels for students. Interviews with the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources (who serves as the program director), the program coordinator, mentors, and candidates confirmed that the program creates and articulates an induction program that is an integral part of the district's vision. The program leadership team, consisting of full-time release mentors and the program coordinator, work collaboratively towards the effective implementation of the program. Mentors participate in ongoing professional development to maintain and grow an understanding of their roles while continuing to provide support to participating candidates.

Interviews with district and program leadership, and review of program documents indicate that program leadership is well-positioned within the district and maintains the authority needed to represent the interest of the program. Program leaders and site administrators work in concert to promote participating candidate success through mentoring and the completion of the *Formative Assessment System* (FAS) process. Interviews revealed that all program mentors and participants are informed of program rationale, design, and implementation. Additionally, site administrators gain updated information about the program through district meetings, professional development opportunities, site visits, and continuous communication with program mentors and the participating candidates.

In collaboration with a mentor, candidates utilize the *Formative Assessment System* (FAS) system to advance their practice and demonstrate application of the CSTP, BTSA Induction Program Standard 5: Pedagogy, and Standard 6: Universal Access: Equity for All Students. Candidates develop an *Individual Learning Plan* (ILP), identifying growth goals, and accessing professional development in support of those goals. Interviews with candidates and mentors noted the strong bridge the program provided between theory, content, student needs, and application. One candidate stated, the program "bridges the gap between what you think teaching is and what it actually is." Principals report that the candidates who have completed the program are the leaders of content specific departments and are often seen by veteran candidates as models of best practice.

The Merced Union High School District maintains a comprehensive credential recommendation process that begins with the identification and application of knowledge from candidates they bring from their preliminary credential programs. Program mentors and program leadership formally review candidate evidence of application and program involvement at the mid-year and end-of-year meetings. At the end of the two year process, the candidate presents a binder that incorporates the evidence relating to the completion of the components of the formative assessment system. The exit interview provides candidates with the opportunity to articulate their development as a candidate and provide feedback to the program.

The program coordinator then recommends to the program director those candidates who have successfully completed program requirements. These candidates are provided with the information to apply to the Commission on Teacher Credentialing for their clear credential. The program director meets with any candidate who is not on track to complete the requirements: an action plan for program completion is then subsequently developed.

Standard 2: Unit and Program Assessment and Evaluation

Standard Met

The education unit implements an assessment and evaluation system for ongoing program and unit evaluation and improvement. The system collects, analyzes, and utilizes data on candidate and program completer performance and unit operations. Assessment in all programs includes ongoing and comprehensive data collection related to candidate qualifications, proficiencies, and competence, as well as program effectiveness, and is used for improvement purposes.

Findings

Interviews with the program director, the program coordinator, mentors, and review of documents indicate that the Merced Union School District has an assessment system for ongoing program evaluation and improvement. Program leadership analyzes the data from mentor forum evaluations, state survey data, and internal program data. The program collects such internal data through program evaluations of professional

development, mid-year surveys, case studies of student achievement, and candidates' completed formative assessment activities.

Data is collected and analyzed throughout the year. Mentors collect formal and informal data from observations, candidate lessons and reflections, and the identification of next steps in the instructional process. Mentors support candidates' use of the *Continuum of Teaching Practice* to identify their personal strengths and needs, set goals and develop the *Individual Learning Plans* in a collaborative setting.

Feedback from candidates in the professional development seminars is used to construct the program design changes for the subsequent year. Through an examination of evidence, it is clear that professional development topics are based on identified candidate needs.

Conversations with the leadership team and the review of FAS documents demonstrate an on-going data collection related to candidate qualifications, proficiencies, competence, and program effectiveness. Data from program completers, as found on the statewide survey, is reviewed by the program director and program coordinator who, in turn, share the findings with district administration, mentors and principals. Since the first biennial report to the Commission on Teacher Credentialing was submitted August 2010 and the CTC response was received later in the fall, the program leadership team is in the process of analyzing the data and beginning to implement the processes and procedures leading to increased program effectiveness and candidate competence.

Standard 3: Resources

Standard Met

The institution provides the unit with the necessary budget, qualified personnel, adequate facilities and other resources to prepare candidates effectively to meet the state-adopted standards for educator preparation. Sufficient resources are consistently allocated for effective operation of each credential or certificate program for coordination, admission, advisement, curriculum and professional development, instruction, field-based supervision and/or clinical experiences, and assessment management. Sufficient information resources and related personnel are available to meet program and candidate needs. A process that is inclusive of all programs is in place to determine resource needs.

Findings

The Merced Union High School District (MUHSD), as the sole sponsor and lead education agency, has in place an administrative structure that establishes clear direction for budget expenditures and other resources to prepare candidates to effectively meet the state-adopted standards for clear credential recommendations. In an interview on the first day of the visit, the district's cabinet expressed a strong commitment to educator preparation, which is demonstrated through the agreement to keep funding resources at an exceptional level to support program and candidate success in the midst of California's fiscal crisis. The funding sources that support the MUHSD Induction

Program are drawn from district general funds, with additional financial support provided by Title I, Title II, and professional development funds, as appropriate.

The Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources (who serves as the program director) meets with the program coordinator to organize the budget, oversee expenditures, and make necessary adjustments in response to program and candidate needs. The program director has ultimate authority over the program, including the budget that supplies program personnel, professional development sessions, office space, the *Formative Assessment System* materials, technology, mentor salaries and professional development, and other resources and supplies as needed. As verified through evidence of fiscal expenditures and interviews, additional program components are supported through district and site professional development funded programs. These funds, in combination with the general funds, Title I funds, Title II funds, and professional development funds described above, allow the program to effectively coordinate admission, advisement, professional development, classroom experiences, and program assessment management. Such resource allocation allows candidates to effectively meet the state-adopted standards in order to be recommended for their professional clear credential.

Examples of expenditures used in support of candidate preparation to meet programmatic goals include:

- ongoing professional development for mentors, data evaluation regarding program components and improvement, development and duplication of materials, maintenance of a training facility for professional development purposes,
- routine mileage reimbursement for mentors and MUHSD staff, two days of release time for candidates to observe veteran teachers, and
- travel-related expenses for the program coordinator to attend cluster meetings , state directors' meetings, New Teacher Center Leadership meetings, and other state-sponsored BTSA/Induction activities.

The director and coordinator carefully monitor the budget to ensure appropriate resource allocation. They present a budget summary at regular intervals to the deputy superintendent to ensure financial accountability. Furthermore, the program leadership uses the results of the local survey data, the annual state-wide BTSA Induction survey and other assessment data to determine resource needs, allocating resources appropriately in response to that data.

Interviews and financial documentation confirmed that professional development is provided in a substitute-release model during the school day by the program's mentors. Interviews with mentors and candidates additionally substantiated the importance of this specific program professional development, in conjunction with other district and site professional development, in supporting the continued professional growth of all candidates. Two annual release days are also provided to candidates to conduct classroom observations and inquiries and collaborate with colleagues. Mentors and

candidates additionally have access to a variety of professional books and videos provided by the program staff and outside consultants.

Sufficient information resources and related personnel are clearly made available by the district to meet program and candidate needs. The MUHSD human resources department confirmed through interviews and documentation that sufficient resources are provided for the admission, advisement, and program completion assessment.

Through a review of documentation and interviews with program leadership, it is evident that the scope of work for the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources (as program director) includes oversight for the program design, implementation, budget, staffing, and allocation of resources for support of the candidates in the program. Evaluating the program, collaborating with other programs, relaying induction information to other district departments, and communicating with cluster leadership are shared responsibilities with the program coordinator, who individually holds responsibility for the day-to-day management of the program; this coordination of responsibilities results in a process for resource management that is inclusive of all program needs and is responsive to change. As one principal stated, “We would not have experienced the growth in student achievement without the district’s financial commitment to the program.”

Standard 4: Faculty and Instructional Personnel

Standard Met

Qualified persons are employed and assigned to teach all courses, to provide professional development, and to supervise field-based and/or clinical experiences in each credential and certificate program. Instructional personnel and faculty have current knowledge in the content they teach, understand the context of public schooling, and model best professional practices in teaching and learning, scholarship, and service. They are reflective of a diverse society and knowledgeable about diverse abilities, cultural, language, ethnic and gender diversity. They have a thorough grasp of the academic standards, frameworks, and accountability systems that drive the curriculum of public schools. They collaborate regularly and systematically with colleagues in P-12 settings/college/university units and members of the broader, professional community to improve teaching, candidate learning, and educator preparation. The institution provides support for faculty development. The unit regularly evaluates the performance of course instructors and field supervisors, recognizes excellence, and retains only those who are consistently effective.

Findings

Evidence from program and personnel documents, including resumés and job descriptions, further corroborated by interviews with program leadership, confirms that mentors (Induction program faculty and field-based supervisors) are qualified. Faculty includes the program coordinator and three full-time release mentors who provide support for all candidates. Interviews with current program candidates and completers

indicate that program faculty members are student-centered and highly valued members of the school district community.

Interviews with candidates, completers, administrators, and program staff provide clear evidence that faculty have a thorough grasp of the academic standards, frameworks, and accountability systems that drive the curriculum of the Merced Union High School District. Moreover, they clearly understand their current local context. One principal shared, “the program, with its mentor model has totally changed the culture of the district.” Interviews with principals indicate that unit leadership regularly provides service and support to local schools in their efforts to improve student achievement. Mentors, in addition to their programmatic role as support providers, also serve as professional development providers. In these capacities, they provide direct services and support to various school personnel. This allows frequent communication and collaboration among relevant stakeholders in addressing ongoing programmatic issues, as well as in planning and implementing programmatic changes.

Evidence from employment documents and faculty vitae, corroborated by interviews with program and institutional leadership, indicate that faculty come with diverse backgrounds; have experience in varied school settings including a variety single subject credential areas and subject matter competencies, as well as settings inclusive of disabled students. Additionally, they have experience working with socio-economically and linguistically diverse populations. Interviews with candidates, completers, program staff, and principals provide evidence that the mentors demonstrate knowledge of student diversity.

Evidence from documents and interviews with program and institutional leadership indicates that faculty collaborates regularly and systematically with colleagues in Cluster 3 and the New Teacher Center (NTC) to improve teaching and educator preparation. The program coordinator has committed to identifying additional sources of professional development for mentors beyond their weekly meetings.

Program leadership, mentors, candidates, and staff, indicate that the institution provides considerable support for mentor development consistent with their assigned responsibilities as support providers. In this role, mentors receive initial training and ongoing professional development. Sanctioned time for collaborative planning among faculty, as well as between faculty and the wider school community, ensures instructional consistency. One principal shared, “These mentors share the district’s message and help keep everyone on the same page.”

The district assesses the performance of the mentors and the program coordinator at least annually, evaluates them biennially, and retains only those who are consistently effective. Mentors consistently report that they consider themselves valued members of the team and are proud to be associated with the program.

Standard 5: Admission

Standard Met

In each professional preparation program, applicants are admitted on the basis of well-defined admission criteria and procedures, including all Commission-adopted requirements. Multiple measures are used in an admission process that encourages and supports applicants from diverse populations. The unit determines that admitted candidates have appropriate pre-professional experiences and personal characteristics, including sensitivity to California's diverse population, effective communication skills, basic academic skills, and prior experiences that suggest a strong potential for professional effectiveness.

Findings

As evidenced from documents and interviews, a clear admittance process implemented by the MUHSD Induction program ensures candidates have met all California Professional Clear Credential Induction requirements. At the time of hire and at program orientations conducted by the program coordinator and mentors, candidates are informed of their responsibility for accumulating evidence of professional growth in relation to *the California Standards for the Teaching Profession*, the New Teacher Center *Formative Assessment System*, the state-adopted academic content standards and performance levels for students, and documentation of completion of all clear credential requirements.

The MUHSD Induction Program leaders work with the MUHSD human resources department in collecting admission data and identifying eligible participants based upon all Commission-adopted requirements. As evidenced through interviews with the program director, the program coordinator, and the district's credential analyst, the program has created a collaborative structure that allows for the coordination of efforts with the MUHSD human resources department. Specific credential personnel assist with eligibility and program admission. The Human Resources Department provides an induction/eligibility intake form, detailing credential status and eligibility status, at the time of hire. Upon completion, it is then sent to the program staff. Also at the time of hire, human resources personnel, in conjunction with induction program personnel, provide identified candidates with a letter of commitment that details their exact credentialing requirements.

The program staff and mentors then provide candidates with further information on program requirements through program orientations and during individual meetings between candidates and their newly assigned mentor. The MUHSD BTSA Induction Handbook, confirmed through interviews as being provided to candidates at program orientations, clearly outlines the process of advising, supporting, and providing ongoing feedback to candidates as they progress through the program.

The MUHSD hiring process includes a focus on appropriate pre-professional experiences and personal characteristics, including sensitivity to California's diverse population, effective communication skills, basic academic skills, and prior experiences. This is determined through the application, interview, and reference verification process. Only teachers that exhibit a strong potential for professional effectiveness are hired.

Qualified members of the unit are assigned and available to advise applicants and candidates about their academic, professional and personal development, and to assist each candidate's professional placement. Appropriate information is accessible to guide each candidate's attainment of all program requirements. The institution and/or unit provide support and assistance to candidates and only retains candidates who are suited for entry or advancement in the education profession. Evidence regarding candidate progress and performance is consistently utilized to guide advisement and assistance efforts.

Findings

The program coordinator and mentors work collaboratively with human resources personnel in advising candidates of their credential completion and professional development requirements. The Participating Teacher Handbook provides the candidate with information regarding advisement and other program details. Each candidate is assigned a mentor for the course of the program. Since the mentors serve specific schools, candidates have the opportunity to interaction beyond scheduled visits and program observations.

To guide candidates' attainment of all program requirements, the program coordinator and mentors begin the candidate's induction process at an orientation meeting. During this meeting, candidates are introduced to program requirements, the *Formative Assessment System (FAS)* candidates' responsibilities for data collection and evidence of teaching practice, as well as additional program documents.

The *Formative Assessment System (FAS)* scaffolds the candidates' work over the course of the two-year program. Candidates meet with their mentors on a weekly basis, and frequently use the *Continuum of Teaching Practice* to reflect on their professional growth. Collaborative assessment logs and candidate reflections provide further opportunities for candidate-mentor collaboration. The mid-year and end-of-the-year reviews further allow candidates and their mentors opportunities to evaluate progress and plan for future work. Candidates report that the support, advice and assistance provided by the mentors are invaluable. The relationships that are built during induction continue well beyond the conclusion of the program. One stated, "I appreciated the fact that this program was individualized. I never felt that my time was wasted," while another reported, "My mentor opened the door to information I didn't even know existed."

At the end of the two-year program, candidates participate in an exit interview where they present their portfolio, share evidence of their professional growth and completion of credentialing requirements, and also present plans for continued professional development. Candidates who are not making progress towards completion of program requirements create, with the assistance of their mentor and other leadership team

members, an intervention plan to identify the steps or activities that the candidate will complete, leading to the successful completion of the Induction program.

Standard 7: Field Experience and Clinical Practice

Standard Met

The unit and its partners design, implement, and regularly evaluate a planned sequence of field-based and clinical experiences in order for candidates to develop and demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to educate and support all students effectively so that P-12 students meet state-adopted academic standards. For each credential and certificate program, the unit collaborates with its partners regarding the criteria for selection of school sites, effective clinical personnel, and site-based supervising personnel. Field-based work and/or clinical experiences provide candidates opportunities to understand and address issues of diversity that affect school climate, teaching, and learning, and to help candidates develop research-based strategies for improving student learning.

Findings

The Merced Union High School District (MUHSD) Induction Program uses *FAS* in a planned sequence of experiences designed to provide opportunities for candidates to demonstrate the application of the *CSTP*, the Induction Program standards, and the state-adopted content standards. The *Continuum of Teaching Practice* is used to help assess candidate professional growth over the course of the two-year induction program.

Evidence from employment documents and mentor vitae, corroborated by interviews with program and institutional leadership, indicates that the program has clear criteria in place for the selection of the full-time release mentors who serve as support providers. A job description and application process ensures that effective mentors are employed. Principals interviewed also stated that they work with mentors to provide candidates with site-based expertise and assistance in specific content areas as needed.

Interviews with district leadership, program leadership, and principals provided clear evidence that the program's design is a well-planned and fully implemented sequence of field-based experiences consistent with the district's chosen research-based strategies for improving student learning. *FAS* provides a logically sequenced structure of actions to focus the candidate's growth on planning instructional experiences, assessing student learning, creating equitable and effective learning environments, and reflecting on professional growth. The program coordinator, among others, identified additional district professional development opportunities in pedagogy, universal access, and technology which are available to candidates as choice options to support the action research component of their inquiry.

Evidence from documents (e.g. candidate and principal surveys, and interviews with relevant stakeholders) indicates active involvement in systematic assessment to assist candidates in developing and demonstrating the knowledge and skills necessary to educate and support their students to meet the state-adopted academic standards.

Interviews with program leadership, faculty, and candidates clearly indicate that required field-based work provides candidates ample experience with issues of diversity that affect school climate, teaching, and learning, and provides opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skills required by the program.

Standard 8: District-Employed Supervisors **Not Applicable to Tier II programs**

District-employed supervisors are certified and experienced in either teaching the specified content or performing the services authorized by the credential. A process for selecting supervisors who are knowledgeable and supportive of the academic content standards for students is based on identified criteria. Supervisors are trained in supervision, oriented to the supervisory role, evaluated and recognized in a systematic manner.

Standard 9: Assessment of Candidate Competence **Standard Met**

Candidates preparing to serve as professional school personnel know and demonstrate the professional knowledge and skills necessary to educate and support effectively all students in meeting the state-adopted academic standards. Assessments indicate that candidates meet the Commission-adopted competency requirements, as specified in the program standards.

Findings

Candidates in the Merced Union High School District (MUHSD) Induction Program first learn of the professional knowledge and skills they will need to demonstrate in order to educate and support all students by attending a program orientation. At this meeting they are additionally informed of the specific requirements that must be completed in order to be recommended for their clear credential. Candidates also receive a copy of the MUHSD *Participating Teacher Handbook*.

Requirements that must be met include, but are not limited to, participating fully in the *FAS* system in order to strengthen candidates' developing practice, meeting regularly and working collaboratively with their assigned mentor, participating in professional development as related to the program standards and/or *Individual Learning Plan (ILP)*, allowing their mentor to observe them throughout the year, and also completing targeted observations of experienced teachers' classrooms.

As candidates complete *FAS* activities, they capture evidence of their current level of both professional knowledge and skills necessary to educate and support all students. The program utilizes multiple verification tools, including the above-referenced

formative assessment activities, over the course of the two-year program to ensure that candidates' level of practice is assessed through multiple means. Interviews with candidates revealed that such collection of evidence includes documented observations by their mentor, reflections on the increased knowledge gained through their *Individual Learning Plan*, analysis of student work, and case studies of specific focus students. As one candidate stated during interviews, "This program helps further our professional development in response to the needs of the whole class as well as for individual students." Principals reported that candidates who have completed the program are leaders and are often seen by veteran teachers as models of best practice. "These are my site leaders. They outperform many of my experienced teachers within just two years or so after they start the program," stated one principal.

MUHSD's induction program leadership has a process in place for examining and monitoring candidates' implementation within their classroom of the CSTP, Program Standard 5: Pedagogy, and Standard 6: Universal Access: Equity for All Students. Assessment of the effectiveness of this implementation includes, but is not limited to: a review of candidate portfolios by the program coordinator and the full-time release mentors, a monthly examination of mentor/candidate collaboration logs, mentors' documented observations of candidates' classrooms and candidates' participation in annual exit interviews. Exit interviews include a complete review of their induction work by the program coordinator and the mentors. Samples of candidate portfolios ("padfolios") examined by the team included:

- Class lists to record students' primary language, ELD level, retention, and special populations;
- FAS School, Family, and Community Resources which provides a format for candidates to identify school resources and programs available to assist students in meeting the academic content standards;
- Family Communication Log, which allows candidates to document contact with parents;
- Instructional Grouping Log, where candidates display a seating chart that is inclusive of students' learning needs;
- Assessing and Understanding Learning Context, which provides candidates with a forum to reflect on meeting the needs of all their students;
- Collaborative Assessment Logs, which documents the interactions between candidates and their mentors on a regular basis, with a focus on capturing their knowledge, skills, and areas for growth; and,
- Continuum of Teaching Practice, where candidates use evidence to reflect on their practice related to the California Standards for the Teaching Profession.

The biennial report submitted August 2010 indicates plans for an enhanced exit process that will be guided by a rubric-based evaluation of candidate work that may include observations and activities in addition to those found in *FAS*.

Merced Union High School District (MUHSD) General Education Clear Credential Program

Program Design:

The MUHSD Induction Program is overseen by the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, while the program coordinator provides the day-to-day leadership. The BTSA Advisory Council is composed of the director, program coordinator, and three mentors. This team of stakeholders is actively involved in organizing, coordinating, and governing the MUHSD Induction program. The mentors are full-time release teachers on special assignment who facilitate induction workshops, work one-on-one with candidates and serve as liaisons with various other support systems. A credential analyst in the human resources department works with the program coordinator and program secretary to determine candidate eligibility for program entry upon hiring.

Using the research-based *Formative Assessment System (FAS)*, designed by the New Teacher Center, the MUHSD Induction program supports new teachers in developing the instructional expertise necessary to meet the unique needs of California's student population in fulfilling state-adopted content standards and curriculum. The system is designed around standards (the CSTP, the Induction Program Standards, and the academic content standards), criteria (the CSTP's *Continuum of Teaching Practice*, Induction Program Standards Self-Assessment) and evidence of teaching practice (inquiry, lesson plans, student work analysis, mentor observation and feedback, reflection).

The program ensures that each candidate has an *Individual Learning Plan*, based on an ongoing assessment of the development of the candidate. Merced's Induction program utilizes activities and benchmarks as part of the *FAS* system to encourage candidates to become reflective, questioning teachers who strive to improve their teaching practice.

In order to better facilitate the transition from teacher preparation to induction, the program coordinator has participated in discussion groups for teacher preparation at local institutions of higher education universities, including the University of the Pacific, California State University at Stanislaus, and Brandman University. Articulation opportunities between the institutions of higher education and the induction program occur during these meetings. Topics for discussion include review of the teacher preparation components, the commonality of content and standards and the ways that induction programs build upon and provide opportunities for demonstration and application of the pedagogical knowledge and skills acquired in the preliminary credential program.

The MUHSD program also participates in the Cluster 3 meetings and trainings. Program leadership attends state and regional meetings, as well as the New Teacher Center Leadership Network meetings. Program leadership is thereby informed of changing programmatic requirements and impacts on resources.

Site administrators provide feedback to the Advisory Council formally through administrative meetings and informally through direct communication with program staff to ensure their active participation in program decisions. These relationships involve communication among all partners to help design and implement the most effective program for candidates.

Course of Study

Mentor assignments are made based on credentials held, subject matter knowledge, relevant experience, current assignments, and geographic proximity. Mentors are paired with candidates who most closely match their areas of subject matter expertise when possible. However, mentors serve teachers in as few schools as possible to maximize time with teachers and to develop community and relationships in schools. Therefore, a subject matter match is not always possible. Mentors are consequently required to collaborate with other teachers and instructional coaches to develop a level of subject matter expertise necessary to support the candidate.

As candidates move through the *FAS* system, they work with their mentor to develop, teach, and discuss lesson plans. Candidates use the *Continuum of Teaching Practice* to reflect upon and describe their current practice in relation to the CSTP and Induction Standards 5 (year 1) and 6 (year 2). The resulting *Self-Assessment Summary* of areas of strength and areas for growth forms the basis of the *Individual Learning Plan (ILP)*. Through this use of observation, inquiry, and reflection, candidates are provided with the opportunity to show classroom application of the learning that took place in their preliminary preparation programs. Specifically, this process allows candidates to explore strategies for equity, English language learners, and students with special needs. The process similarly provides opportunities for candidates to demonstrate proficiency in technology and classroom management.

At the end of each semester, mentors assess evidence of practice through classroom observations and reflections which are documented on *Collaborative Assessment Logs*. Additional evidence may include the *Class Profile (FAS tool)* or data sheet, the pre-assessment and resultant flexible instructional groupings (*FAS tool*), *Collaborative Assessment Logs (FAS tool)* showing collaboration with colleagues, families and resource personnel, *School, Family and Community Resources (FAS tool)*, *Observations or reflections regarding the classroom environment (FAS tools)*, samples of student work for the case study students and/or *Analysis of Student Work (FAS tool)*, and professional development action plans.

At the conclusion of year two of the program, each candidate engages in an exit interview where the candidate submits and presents a formative assessment portfolio to program leaders. Program leaders use interview questions and evidence of application to assess candidates.

The program coordinator and BTSA Induction Program staff monitor candidates' progress through the *FAS* elements, record seminar attendance, provide one-on-one mentor meetings, and conduct mid-year and end-of-year portfolio reviews.

Candidate Competence

Candidates are told about induction requirements during an advisement session. The candidate receives a handbook and information about the program's website. They are provided with information regarding credentialing requirements, suggested timelines, specific activities and required training dates that will lead to the completion of requirements for the professional clear credential. It also describes participant and program responsibilities, the process to verify completion of requirements, and procedures for requesting an extension of the induction timeline. Late hires are advised of their requirements and responsibilities by BTSA Induction program staff.

When completion requirements are verified, candidates receive an SB 2042 Induction completion record summary and their portability document. The program issues a verification of completion form 41-Induction to support their application for the professional clear credential.

Findings on Standards:

After review of the institutional report, supporting documentation, the completion of interviews with candidates, program completers, mentors, and principals, the team determined that all Program Standards for MUHSD's Induction Program are **Met**.