

**Recommendations by the Accreditation Team and Report of Findings of the
Accreditation Visit for Professional Preparation Programs at
Merced County Office of Education**

**Professional Services Division
March 2018**

Overview of this Report

This includes the findings of the accreditation visit conducted at Merced County Office of Education. The report of the team presents the findings based upon a thorough review of all available and relevant institutional and program documentation as well as all supporting evidence including interviews with representative constituencies. On the basis of the report, a recommendation of **Accreditation** is made for the institution.

**Common Standards and Program Standard Decisions
For All Commission Approved Programs Offered by the Institution**

	Met	Met with Concerns	Not Met
1) Institutional Infrastructure to Support Educator Preparation	X		
2) Candidate Recruitment and Support	X		
3) Course of Study, Fieldwork and Clinical Practice	X		
4) Continuous Improvement	X		
5) Program Impact	X		

Program Standards

	Total Program Standards	Program Standards		
		Met	Met with Concerns	Not Met
Teacher Induction	6	6		
Administrative Services Clear Induction	9	9		

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 Documentation and Evidence
- Selection and Composition of the Accreditation Team
- Intensive Evaluation of Program Data
- Preparation of the Accreditation Team Report

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

Institution: Merced County Office of Education

Dates of Visit: January 22-24, 2018

2017-18 Accreditation

Team Recommendation: Accreditation

Previous History of Accreditation Status	
Date	Accreditation Status
No previous history to report.	

Rationale:

The unanimous recommendation of **Accreditation** was based on a thorough review of all institutional and programmatic information and materials available prior to and during the accreditation site visit including interviews with administrators, faculty, candidates, graduates, and local school personnel. The team felt that it obtained sufficient and 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:

Program Standards

All Programs Standards were found to be **Met**.

Common Standards

All Common Standards were found to be **Met**.

Overall Recommendation

The site visit team conducted a thorough analysis of the unit and its programs. As a result of finding all Common Standards to be **Met** and all Program Standards to be **Met**, the team is recommending a decision of **Accreditation** to the Committee on Accreditation.

On the basis of this recommendation, the institution is authorized to offer the following credential programs and to recommend candidates for the appropriate and related credentials upon satisfactorily completing all requirements:

Teacher Induction Program
Clear Administrative Services Program

Staff recommends that:

- The institution’s response to the preconditions be accepted.
- Merced County Office of Education be permitted to propose new educator preparation programs for approval by the Committee on Accreditation.
- Merced County Office of Education 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 Lead:	Barb Libolt Riverside County Office of Education
Common Standards:	Melissa Beattie Tracy Unified School District
Program Standards:	Dina Pacis National University
	Kevin Tibbetts Riverside County Office of Education
Staff to the Visit:	Erin Sullivan Commission on Teacher Credentialing

Documents Reviewed

Common Standards Report	Biennial Reports
Program Review Report	Survey feedback
Program Assessment Report	Advisory Committee Agendas/Minutes
Candidate Files	Advisement Documents
Candidate Handbooks	Candidate-Mentor Collaboration Logs
Mentor/Coaching Handbooks	Professional Learning Seminars
Mentor/Coach Requirements	Recruitment Documentation
Assessment Rubrics	

Interviews Conducted

Stakeholders	TOTAL
TIP Candidates/Completers	20/15
CASC Candidates/Completers	15/24
TIP Site Administrators	8
CASC Site Administrators	5
Institutional Administration	1
Program Coordinators	3
TIP/CASC Employers	12
CASC Coaches	15
TIP Mentors	19
Credential Analyst	1
Advisory Council Members	20
TOTAL	158

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

Background Information

Merced County is located in the northern San Joaquin Valley, a rural and ethnically diverse area of California. The county office of education is located in the city of Merced. From there, it supports 58,271 TK-12 students across 21 school districts. Of these, 79% qualify for free and reduced price lunch and 27% are classified as English Learners. Geographically, the county covers nearly 2,000 square miles; therefore, some districts and school sites within the county are somewhat remote from the county office location.

Education Unit

Merced County Office of Education (MCOE) is the lead educational agency for the two-year teacher induction program and the two-year administrative services clear induction program. MCOE's Educational Services Division supports the teachers and administrators who are enrolled in these programs across 13 school districts. Enrollment in both programs continues to increase each year with 99% of its candidates earning a clear credential.

Administration and supervision of the Teacher Induction Program (TIP) has historically fallen to one program director. Beginning on January 22, 2018 an additional program coordinator has been assigned to the TIP. The Director of the Education Services Division maintains the administration and supervision of MCOE’s Clear Administrative Services Credential Induction program. Each of these individuals has direct access to MCOE’s Assistant Superintendent and has support staff who work closely with them. Both the teacher induction and clear administrative services induction programs have protected budgets and the support of the MCOE leadership.

Table 1
Program Review Status

Program Name	Number of Candidates Enrolled (2016-17)	Number of Program Completers (2016-17)	Number of Candidates Enrolled (2017-18)
Teacher Induction	91	90	111
Administrator Induction	43	22	42

The Visit

The visit proceeded in accordance with all normal accreditation protocols.

Program Reports Teacher Induction

Program Design

The Merced County Office of Education (MCOE) is the lead educational agency for the two-year Teacher Induction Program. This program, housed in the county's Educational Services Division, is designed to provide Multiple Subject and Single Subject Preliminary Credential holders with high quality extended preparation and professional development that enables them to meet the academic learning needs of their students and obtain a California clear teaching credential. Until recently, MCOE has staffed the program with one coordinator. A second program coordinator has been hired and started work just before the site visit. The program coordinators work closely with district leaders, professional development providers, mentors and the advisory council to successfully manage the teacher induction program. Interviews with district leaders, the MCOE Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services and with partnering agencies' human resources directors confirmed close collaboration with program coordinators which ensures integration of induction activities with agency initiatives and resources.

Interviews confirmed that the teacher induction program coordinators regularly communicate with credential analysts and employing agency personnel in human resource departments to ensure that candidates transition into the program in a timely and seamless manner. Employing agencies provide all new hires with information on program eligibility, the requirements for clearing their preliminary teaching credential, and access to ongoing support. Additionally, the program coordinators work with MCOE Educational Services to develop, schedule and deliver professional development activities. This collaboration ensures that candidates have access to professional development, mentoring and coaching that is relevant to their Individual Learning Plan (ILP).

Program stakeholders are provided with meaningful opportunities to become involved in program evaluation and improvement. Informal communications with stakeholders occur throughout the year through emails and personal meetings. A formal Advisory Council – that includes the assistant superintendent, district directors and superintendents, site administrators, mentors, and candidates – meets three times a year to review and analyze evaluation data and make recommendations for program improvements. During interviews with the Advisory Council, it was reported that they engage in a high level of decision-making around candidate competencies, mentor competencies, and program improvement. Candidates reported that program revisions have been made in direct response to their feedback. It was also evident to reviewers that statewide survey data and locally collected data on program impact, assessment activities, and professional development opportunities is regularly analyzed for program improvement purposes.

Program coordinators review professional development feedback results to make adjustments and improvements to meetings and training seminars. Stakeholders noted the program's responsiveness to survey feedback, particularly in adjusting professional development for candidates so that it more closely aligns it with candidates' ILPs. Mentor meetings have also been

modified to help mentors better meet the “just in time” needs of their candidates. Interviews with candidates and mentors confirmed that meetings and professional development offerings are structured to include ample opportunities for discussion and collaboration around current issues and are intentionally differentiated to meet the needs of all levels of general education and special education teachers. Finally, candidates and mentors are using an online platform, Google Docs, to document evidence of candidates’ successful completion of program requirements.

Assessment of Candidates

Interviews confirmed that the induction program coordinators advise candidates about the program and professional credential requirements in a timely manner. Each candidate receives a copy of the *Teacher Induction Program Handbook* at the induction orientation meetings offered at the beginning of the year. The handbook provides detailed information about the program and credential completion requirements. Candidates, mentors, and program completers that were interviewed stated that they understood the requirements for completion including the obligation to accumulate evidence of growth in relation to the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP). The candidates’ ILP, CSTP growth logs, and program participation logs are reviewed by program coordinators in regard to demonstration of progress towards mastery on the CSTPs. Program coordinators meet with candidates who are not on track to plan additional support that may be needed to ensure successful program completion and retention within the profession. Interviews confirmed that once a candidate has completed all requirements, an online recommendation to the Commission for a clear credential is submitted through the MCOE Human Resource Department.

Findings on Standards

After review of the institutional report, supporting documentation, the completion of interviews with candidates, completers, mentors, professional development providers, employers, stakeholders, and program coordinators and administrators, the team determined that all program standards are **met** for Merced County Office of Education’s Teacher Induction program.

Administrative Services Clear Induction Program

Program Design

The Merced County Office of Education (MCOE) is the lead educational agency for the two-year Clear Administrative Services Credential induction program. Housed in the Educational Services Department, the program is designed to provide administrative induction candidates with high-quality extended preparation and professional development. The program is designed to embody a data-informed decision-making process that guides continuous improvement, based on a theory of action that if educators are provided with clear standards for professional behaviors; coaching and opportunities for job embedded learning; they will attain competency. Based on continuous data collection from candidates, coaches/mentors, and school sites, the analysis of results informs future actions to improve the delivery of the program and actions of its stakeholders. The program is grounded in adult learning research highlighting the importance of personalized learning.

The MCOE Director of District Support Services has overall authority for the credential programs and direct oversight of the Clear Administrative Services Induction program, including the day-to-day implementation of the program, oversight of coaches and professional development providers, and relationships with employers of partnering school districts. In addition to the program director, the program is also supported by the two induction coordinators. The MCOE administrative services induction team works closely with stakeholders they serve. Open lines of communication are maintained through advisory council meetings held three times a year. Interviews confirmed that the induction team collaborates closely with district leaders including through formal and informal communication.

The Advisory Council, a combined teacher induction/clear administrative services induction council, is a formal stakeholder group that meets three times annually. They serve in an advisory capacity to the program, analyzing program data and making appropriate recommendations regarding program design and services. Interviews with multiple constituencies confirmed that the administrative services induction team communicates regularly with stakeholders through advisory council meetings and through informal, ongoing communication.

Course of Study

The Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) is a collaborative process between the candidate, direct supervisor and coach that outlines the candidate's pathway and includes feedback from their direct supervisor. The ILP serves as a guide for the candidate and coach to engage in reflective conversations around the candidate's goals and activities during their coaching sessions (minimum of 4 hours per month/40 hours per year). The candidate and coach also use the Description of Practice (DOP) to assess the candidate's level of practice. Additionally, reflective forms are completed by the candidate and reviewed collaboratively with the coach as part of the mid-year and end-of-year reviews. Candidates also chronicle a minimum of 24 total professional development hours per year, with 12 hours of self-selected professional development, approved by the program director, and 12 hours of professional development seminars prescribed by the program, based on needs common to all beginning educational administrators. Topics are offered to support content knowledge, professional practice and acquisition of the California Professional Standards for Educational Leader (CPSEL) competency. As stated in the standards, "the program provides professional development offerings addressing the needs common to all beginning educational administrators as well as provides differentiated learning opportunities as outlined in the candidates' ILP."

Assessment of Candidates

Candidates participate in an exit interview in which they present their portfolio, which includes evidence and artifacts related to their competency in the six CPSELS. Candidates are given one hour to share their learning and professional growth with the expert panel of program leaders, the candidate's coach and a representative from the candidate's employer. The panel evaluates the candidate's presentation using the *Oral Portfolio Presentations – Demonstration of Competency Rubric* developed by the program. Successful completion of this process results in the recommendation for the candidate's clear administrative credential. The exit interview

assessment process is explained to candidates in the program handbook and at the 1:1 introduction orientation meeting with the program director.

Findings on Standards

After review of the institutional report, supporting documentation, the completion of interviews with candidates, completers, mentors, professional development providers, employers, stakeholders, and program coordinators and administrators, the team determined that all program standards are **met** for Merced County Office of Education's Clear Administrative Services Credential program.

COMMON STANDARDS FINDINGS

Common Standard 1: Institutional Infrastructure to Support Educator Preparation			
Components	Consistently	Inconsistently	Not Evidenced
Each Commission-approved institution has the infrastructure in place to operate effective educator preparation programs. Within this overall infrastructure:			
The institution and education unit create and articulate a research-based vision of teaching and learning that fosters coherence among, and is clearly represented in all educator preparation programs. This vision is consistent with preparing educators for California public schools and the effective implementation of California’s adopted standards and curricular frameworks	X		
The institution actively involves faculty, instructional personnel, and relevant stakeholders in the organization, coordination, and decision making for all educator preparation programs.	X		
The education unit ensures that faculty and instructional personnel regularly and systematically collaborate with colleagues in P-12 settings, college and university units and members of the broader educational community to improve educator preparation.	X		
The institution provides the unit with sufficient resources for the effective operation of each educator preparation program, including, but not limited to, coordination, admission, advisement, curriculum, professional development/instruction, field based supervision and clinical experiences.	X		
The Unit Leadership has the authority and institutional support required to address the needs of all educator preparation programs and considers the interests of each program within the institution.	X		
Recruitment and faculty development efforts support hiring and retention of faculty who represent and support diversity and excellence.	X		
The institution employs, assigns and retains only qualified persons to teach courses, provide professional development, and supervise field-based and clinical experiences. Qualifications of faculty and other instructional personnel must include, but are not limited to: a) current knowledge of the content; b) knowledge of the current context of public schooling including the California adopted P-12 content standards, frameworks, and accountability systems; c)	X		

knowledge of diversity in society, including diverse abilities, culture, language, ethnicity, and gender orientation; and d) demonstration of effective professional practices in teaching and learning, scholarship, and service.			
The education unit monitors a credential recommendation process that ensures that candidates recommended for a credential have met all requirements.	X		
Finding on Common Standard 1: Institutional Infrastructure to Support Educator Preparation	Met	Met With Concerns	Not Met
	X		
<p>The Merced County Office of Education (MCOE) educator induction programs have developed a rigorous system of support that prepare candidates through a data-informed decision making process. Through interviews of all relevant stakeholders, it was evident that program leaders and relevant stakeholders are actively involved in making decisions for the educator induction programs through a continuous improvement cycle of feedback and data analysis. Sufficient resources are allocated for the effective operation of the program through the revenue generated from charging agencies for the program. The authority and institutional support required to address the needs of the educator induction programs is present. Interviews provided evidence that the programs have sufficient resources to provide choice to candidates for optional professional learning sessions, grade-alike workshops, and peer observation and feedback. MCOE has also hired an additional coordinator to support the addition of the special education credentials to the induction program, which provides further evidence that the program is allocated sufficient resources to allow program leadership to effectively run the programs. Program leadership regularly monitors candidate growth throughout the program providing timely and relevant feedback, ensuring that all candidates are provided the support needed to meet all requirements to be recommended for a credential, as evidenced through interviews.</p>			

Common Standard 2: Candidate Recruitment and Support			
Components	Consistently	Inconsistently	Not Evidenced
Candidates are recruited and supported in all educator preparation programs to ensure their success.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The education unit accepts applicants for its educator preparation programs based on clear criteria that include multiple measures of candidate qualifications. 	X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The education unit purposefully recruits and admits candidates to diversify the educator pool in California and provides the support, advice, and assistance to promote their successful entry and retention in the profession. 	X		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate information and personnel are clearly identified and accessible to guide each candidate’s attainment of program requirements. 	X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence regarding progress in meeting competency and performance expectations is consistently used to guide advisement and candidate support efforts. A clearly defined process is in place to identify and support candidates who need additional assistance to meet competencies 	X		
Finding on Common Standard 2: Candidate Recruitment and Support	Met	Met With Concerns	Not Met
	X		

Both programs accept only candidates who hold appropriate preliminary credentials, providing them with the support, advice, and assistance needed to ensure their successful entry into, and completion of, the credential programs, along with their retention in the profession. The programs’ leadership works with the MCOE credential analyst, and also credential analyst contacts in agencies served by the programs, to ensure that those admitted hold appropriate credentials. Leadership from both programs encourage participating agencies to specifically recruit candidates that match the diversity of their student populations. Mentor/coach, completer, and current Year One and Year Two interviews confirmed that candidate needs are the force that drive both programs’ implementation. Those interviews also reinforced the programs’ multi-tiered support that assists candidates in both their professional growth and successful completion of the programs. Program documents, data, and interviews further established that clear processes are in place to identify and support candidates who need additional assistance to meet competencies. Stakeholders remarked on the timeliness of the extra support provided, based on careful monitoring by the programs’ leadership. Stakeholders also noted that the positive relationships established by the programs’ leadership with their participating agencies contributes to the timely identification of candidates who may need additional assistance.

Common Standard 3: Fieldwork and Clinical Practice			
Components	Consistently	Inconsistently	Not Evidenced
The unit designs and implements a planned sequence of coursework and clinical experiences for candidates to develop and demonstrate the knowledge and skills to educate and support P-12 students in meeting state-adopted content standards.	X		
The unit and its programs offer a high-quality course of study focused on the knowledge and skills expected of beginning educators and grounded in current research on effective practice. Coursework is integrated closely with field experiences to provide candidates with a cohesive and comprehensive program that allows candidates to learn, practice, and demonstrate competencies required of the credential they seek.	X		

The unit and all programs collaborate with their partners regarding the criteria and selection of clinical personnel, site-based supervisors and school sites, as appropriate to the program	X		
Through site-based work and clinical experiences, programs offered by the unit provide candidates with opportunities to both experience issues of diversity that affect school climate and to effectively implement research-based strategies for improving teaching and student learning.	X		
Site-based supervisors must be certified and experienced in teaching the specified content or performing the services authorized by the credential.	X		
The process and criteria result in the selection of site-based supervisors who provide effective and knowledgeable support for candidates.	X		
Site-based supervisors are trained in supervision, oriented to the supervisory role, evaluated and recognized in a systematic manner.	X		
All programs effectively implement and evaluate fieldwork and clinical practice.	X		
For each program the unit offers, candidates have significant experience in school settings where the curriculum aligns with California’s adopted content standards and frameworks, and the school reflects the diversity of California’s student and the opportunity to work with the range of students identified in the program standards.	X		
Finding on Common Standard 3:	Met	Met With Concerns	Not Met
Fieldwork and Clinical Practice	X		

The MCOE induction programs for both teachers and administrators is a job-embedded experience driven by the personalized goals of candidates' Individual Learning Plans (ILPs). Appropriately matched mentors/coaches are the primary support for candidates: the importance of that relationship to candidate success was strongly communicated throughout the interview process. MCOE strongly encourages its participating agencies to select and evaluate those chosen as mentors/coaches based on their credentials held, interpersonal skills, ability to maintain positive relationships in order to foster further professional growth, and their overall effectiveness. The programs' leadership provides mentors/coaches with ongoing professional development throughout the year based on identified needs. These professional development opportunities include dedicated time for mentors/coaches to collaborate and learn from each other. The programs evaluate candidates' field work and clinical practice through multiple methods embedded within the context of candidates' employment. Candidates are assessed against either the CSTP (teacher induction) or CPSEL (administrator induction), the development of their portfolios, and feedback from mentors/coaches. Candidates indicated in interviews that this feedback guides their continuous examination/self-reflection of the effectiveness of their teaching or administering against set criteria. Their induction experience is focused on their classroom (teacher induction) or their local education agency (administrator induction).

Common Standard 4: Continuous Improvement			
Components	Consistently	Inconsistently	Not Evidenced
The education unit develops and implements a comprehensive continuous improvement process at both the unit level and within each of its programs that identifies program and unit effectiveness and makes appropriate modifications based on findings.	X		
The education unit and its programs regularly assess their effectiveness in relation to the course of study offered, fieldwork and clinical practice, and support services for candidates.	X		
Both the unit and its programs regularly and systematically collect, analyze, and use candidate and program completion data.	X		
The continuous improvement process includes multiple sources of data including 1) the extent to which candidates are prepared to enter professional practice; and 2) feedback from key stakeholders such as employers and community partners about the quality of the preparation	X		
Finding on Common Standard 4: Continuous Improvement	Met	Met With Concerns	Not Met
	X		

MCOE's Teacher Induction and Clear Administrative Services Induction credential programs have developed a comprehensive continuous improvement process that is integral to the functioning of the program. Through interviews, mentors shared that the review of candidate feedback on their work as mentors is immediate, with program leadership responsive to the need for any program modifications, making appropriate and timely changes based on findings. Stakeholders across the consortium indicated that regular data analysis has supported a system of continuous improvement within the program. The Advisory council articulated a strong system of reciprocal support, with the advisory council having a strong voice in providing programmatic modifications to improve effectiveness. Mentor/coaches and candidates provided evidence of the programmatic shifts to providing a mentor/coach driven program with a greater focus on candidate growth. Stakeholders spoke positively about program leadership and the responsiveness to feedback to improve program outcomes for candidates.

Common Standard 5: Program Impact			
Components	Consistently	Inconsistently	Not Evidenced
The institution ensures that candidates preparing to serve as professional school personnel know and demonstrate knowledge and skills necessary to educate and support effectively all students in meeting state adopted academic standards. Assessments indicate that candidates meet the Commission adopted competency requirements as specified in the program standards.	X		
The unit and its programs evaluate and demonstrate that they are having a positive impact on candidate learning and competence and on teaching and learning in schools that serve California's students.	X		
Finding on Common Standard 5: Program Impact	Met	Met With Concerns	Not Met
	X		

The MCOE teacher induction and administrator induction programs ensure that the candidates know and can demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to educate and support all students in meeting the state adopted standards. During interviews, induction program participants, completers, and mentors articulated the clear focus on improving practice through the lens of the CSTPs and the Individual Learning Plan (ILP); CASC coaches and candidates articulated that the ILP process is meaningful and relevant to their current position. The design for both the teacher induction and administrator induction programs, which includes strong mentoring components, collaboration, and ample professional learning options, supports candidates' growth and development to support all learners. An examination of evidence and interviews with program leadership, the advisory council, mentors/coaches, program participants, and completers affirm that the programs regularly evaluate and demonstrate they are having a positive impact on candidate learning and competence.

INSTITUTION SUMMARY

MCOE implements a personalized, research-based vision for its teacher induction and administrative induction credential programs. Housed in the county's Educational Services Division, the programs are dedicated to the development of high quality teachers and leaders who provide rigorous educational programs for all students and are designed to embody data-informed decision making processes that guide continuous improvement for both the programs and their candidates. The unit's core belief is that by providing educators with clear standards for professional behavior, timely coaching, and opportunities for job embedded learning, they will attain competency. Paths for candidates to contextualize previously-learned or newly-learned content to their own experiences are built into each program, as are the structures for them to have learning-focused conferences centered on personal reflection and growth.

The Teacher Induction coordinators and Clear Administrative Induction Program director work with an active advisory council representing all districts served by the consortium, along with local institutions of higher education. Meeting three times per year, the advisory council is directly involved in the governance of the programs, including modifications in response to data. Advisory members praised the programs' leadership for the time invested in developing strong personal relationships with consortium members, with small districts reporting an equal voice, on par with the consortium's larger districts.

As both teacher induction and administrator induction have transitioned to a greater focus on individualized support, all stakeholders affirmed that collaboration between candidates and their mentors/coaches is the strength of the programs' implementation. Current candidates and program completers noted that the personal collaboration with their mentors/coaches is highly effective in fostering their continuous growth, including the development and implementation of their ILPs. Beyond the focus on reflective practice, candidates also noted the strength of their mentors/coaches in providing "just in time" support in response to challenges that arise.