

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

**Division of Standards, Accreditation, and Workforce Investment
June 2026**

Overview of this Report

This agenda report includes the findings of the accreditation visit conducted at **Merced County Office of Education (COE)**. 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 with Stipulations** is made for the institution.

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

Common Standards	Status
1) Institutional Infrastructure to Support Educator Preparation	Met with Concerns
2) Candidate Recruitment and Support	Met
3) Course of Study, Fieldwork and Clinical Practice	Met with Concerns
4) Continuous Improvement	Met
5) Program Impact	Met with Concerns

Program Standards

Programs	Total Program Standards	Met	Met with Concerns	Not Met
Preliminary Multiple Subject Intern	7	6	1	0
Preliminary Education Specialist: Mild to Moderate Support Needs, Intern	7	5	2	0
Preliminary Education Specialist: Extensive Support Needs, Intern	7	5	2	0
Teacher Induction Program	6	5	1	0
Clear Administrative Services Credential	5	3	2	0

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: May 3-6, 2026

Accreditation Team Recommendation: Accreditation with Stipulations

Previous History of Accreditation Status

Accreditation Reports	Accreditation Status
Date: <u>January 22-24, 2018</u>	<u>COA action letter</u>

Rationale:

The unanimous recommendation of **Accreditation with Stipulations** 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, completers, and local school personnel. The team 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:

Preconditions

All preconditions were found to be aligned

Program Standards

Regarding the Multiple Subjects Intern Program, the Program Standards 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7 are met; however, Program Standard 3 is met with concerns.

The evidence for the Educational Specialist Mild/Moderate Support Needs (MMSN) and the Extensive Support Needs (ESN) intern programs demonstrate that Program Standards 1, 2, 5, 6, and 7 are met; however, Standards 3 and 4 are met with concerns.

For Teacher Induction Program (TIP) Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 are met; however, Program Standard 5 is met with concerns.

Program Standards 1, 4, and 5 for the Clear Administrative Services Credential (CASC) are met. Program Standards 2 and 3 are met with concerns.

Common Standards

Common Standards 2 and 4 are met. Common Standards, 1, 3, and 5 are met with concerns.

Overall Recommendation

The team recommends the following stipulations:

That within one year of this action, the institution must submit a written report documenting all actions to address the following:

1. The program must provide evidence that candidates' planned clinical practice experiences offer a developmental and sequential set of activities integrated with coursework. These experiences must extend candidates' learning through application of theory to practice with TK–12 students in California public school classrooms and ensure opportunities to work with diverse student populations reflective of the full range of learners identified in the program standards.
2. The institution must develop, implement, and document a systematic process to evaluate and demonstrate program impact across the unit. This process must include the regular collection, analysis, and use of multiple measures of data to show that candidates are positively impacting teaching and learning outcomes in TK–12 settings. Evidence must clearly demonstrate how these data are used to inform continuous program improvement across all educator and administrator preparation programs.

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:

- Preliminary Multiple Subject Intern Program
- Preliminary Educational Specialist Mild/Moderate Support Needs and Extensive Support Needs Intern
- Teacher Induction Program
- Clear Administrative Services Induction Program

Additionally, staff recommends:

- Merced County Office of Education may 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.
- Merced County of Education is permitted to propose new educator preparation programs for approval by the Committee on Accreditation.

Accreditation Team

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Documents Reviewed

Common Standards Submission
Program Review Submission
Common Standards Addendum
Program Review Addendum
Course Syllabi and Course of Study
Candidate Advisement Materials
Accreditation Website
Faculty Vitae
Candidate Files

Assessment Materials
Candidate Handbooks
Survey Results
Performance Expectation Materials
Precondition Responses
Performance Assessment Results and Analysis
Examination Results
Accreditation Data Dashboard

Interviews Conducted

Constituencies	TOTAL
Candidates	88
Completers	29
Employers	31
Institutional Administration	5
Program Coordinators	4
Faculty	16
TPA Coordinator	1
Field Supervisors – District	55
Credential Analysts and Staff	1
Advisory Board Members	9
TOTAL	239

Note: In some cases, individuals were interviewed more than once due to 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. 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. From there, it supports 55,000 TK-12 students across 20 school districts. Of these, 79% qualify for free and reduced-price lunch and 27% are classified as English Learners.

Education Unit

Merced County Office of Education (COE) serves as the lead educational agency for both a two-year Teacher Induction Program and a two-year Administrative Services Clear Induction Program. In addition, Merced COE operates a Preliminary Multiple Subject Intern Program and their Preliminary Educational Specialist: Mild to Moderate Support Needs and Extensive Support Needs Intern Programs.

Merced COE's Educational Services Division supports teachers and administrators enrolled in these programs across 20 school districts. Enrollment in all programs continues to grow each year, with an overall enrollment of 300 candidates.

Table 1: Enrollment and Completion Data

Program Name	Number of Program Completers (2024-25)	Number of Candidates Enrolled (2025-26)
Preliminary Multiple Subject Intern	7	24
Teacher Induction	64	192
Clear Administrative Services	15	49
Preliminary Education Specialist Intern, Mild Moderate Support Needs	12	28
Preliminary Education Specialist Intern, Extensive Support Needs	2	14

The Visit

This site visit was conducted virtually. Institutional and program constituencies were interviewed via technology. The visit proceeded in accordance with all normal accreditation protocols.

PRECONDITION FINDINGS

After reviewing all relevant preconditions for this institution, all have been determined to be met.

PROGRAM REPORTS

Preliminary Multiple Subject Intern Program

Program Design

The Multiple Subject Intern program is housed within the Credentialing Unit and Human Resources within the Merced County Office of Education. As of 2026, the County Office of Education has 32 partner districts across multiple California counties in three intern credential areas: Multiple Subjects, Education Specialist Mild to Moderate Support Needs, and Education Specialist Extensive Support Needs. Candidates enter the program as Interns in either of the three credential areas and then complete coursework fully online, with in-person supervised clinical practice and support.

As described in program documents, the Credentialing Programs Unit is under the leadership of the Director of Human Resources (HR), who is ultimately overseen by the Deputy Superintendent of Human Resources. The Credential Analysts report to the Director of HR. The Coordinator of Intern Programs reports to the Senior Coordinator and Director of Human Resources. Instructors are hired by and report to the Coordinator of Intern Programs.

Program leadership coordinates and communicates closely with the credential team staff and the larger education unit, as noted by the program coordinator. This was evidenced through document analysis as well as through interviews with the program coordinator and instructors. The program seeks input from its internal constituents through multiple avenues. Program mentors, advisors, and instructors reported being invited to provide feedback during monthly meetings. Candidates also reported that they are invited to provide input through various surveys that are sent throughout each term as well as at the end of each term specifically. Externally, the credential program's Advisory Council meets in fall and spring semesters to gather feedback from districts and local colleges.

The program has undergone major changes over the last two years as reported by instructors, candidates, and program staff during interviews. The program has implemented several targeted changes to strengthen candidate support, such as by refining the supervision model and updating the structure of observations and standardizing feedback protocols to ensure tighter alignment with the Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs). Coursework and fieldwork have been integrated, with revised assignments and seminar content designed to directly connect theory to candidates' classroom practice. Also, the candidates and completers described a shift in courses as the CalTPA shifted toward including the literacy competencies (once RICA was removed). Further, the program has brought in new internal staff and

restructured how course instructors are assigned. The program has also increased in the number of districts hosting interns in multiple subjects classrooms.

Course of Study (Curriculum and Field Experience)

After preservice courses, fieldwork, and intern eligibility is completed and verified, Multiple Subject intern candidates enter the two-year program sequence of courses. Candidates begin with foundational coursework focused on literacy, humanities, and STEM for either the upper or lower elementary grades and progress into coursework on equity and inclusion, and health and wellness. They also take coursework on co-teaching and have integrated skills such as classroom management, lesson design, and establishing an effective learning environment. They are enrolled in a fieldwork course each term (“Clinical Practice”), which emphasizes supported practice and mentoring with observations to build core TPEs. As candidates progress, coursework advances to deeper study of content-specific pedagogy in literacy, mathematics, and integrated subject areas, alongside differentiated instruction and assessment practices. Specific courses in mathematics and other content areas are also included.

Candidates reported during interviews that coursework is almost always immediately applicable and integrative to their internship roles. Candidates noted that signature assignments for classes often utilize their classroom roles for demonstrating competency in various content areas. However, some candidates also noted that at times their coursework did not align with their internship placement. For example, one candidate mentioned being in an upper elementary English and Social Studies internship, which was misaligned with a math course they needed to take and therefore was not directly applicable. Also, interns in TK roles noted a misalignment when taking their upper elementary coursework.

Candidates reported completing pre-service coursework in literacy skills that cannot be waived regardless of prior coursework or program involvement. Additionally, students take an English Language Development course for both lower and upper elementary students throughout their first year of the program. This is corroborated by the documented program of study for the Multiple Subject Intern Program.

Field placements are only completed through internships in multiple subject classrooms. Candidates typically come to the Merced COE intern program with a planned job opening from a district. From there, the Merced COE staff confirm an existing MOU and the intern eligibility of the candidate. The placement is then monitored by the assigned program provided advisor and a district-provided support person.

The program provides a coordinated system of support to ensure candidates’ success in field experience through structured clinical supervision and ongoing evaluation. Interns receive coaching from their program ‘advisors’ who conduct scheduled classroom observations six times per semester followed by TPE-aligned feedback and opportunities for reflection. These observations are recorded and stored on the GoReact platform and provide an opportunity for interns to watch back their lessons and for timestamped feedback to be impactful. In parallel, district-employed mentors offer consistent, on-site guidance through frequent informal check-

ins, with candidates reporting that they meet or text daily. Further, these mentors often model instructional practices and collaborate in planning.

As described by the Program Coordinator and confirmed in the Internship Credential Handbook, candidates in need of additional support for coursework and/or clinical practice are invited to a collaborative meeting and a Corrective Action Plan document is completed. This form is utilized to communicate areas of improvement and specific corrective actions including additional programmatic support that will be provided to the candidate.

Data is frequently collected throughout the program. On coursework, interns reported having opportunities to provide feedback to instructors often via surveys, and more formally at the end of each course via a course evaluation survey. The data collected is reviewed by program staff and is used to make decisions about future instructor assignments and any updates needed for the program overall.

Additionally, mentors and supervisors report being invited to monthly meetings where they can hear about the program happenings and also share out experiences and ask questions. This is another data gathering opportunity for the program staff.

Assessment of Candidates

Candidates are assessed for program competencies through coursework and fieldwork opportunities each term. Formative assessments begin early in the internship through observations with supervisors and the completion of self-assessments aligned to the California Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs), allowing mentors to assist in establishing individualized growth goals. Throughout each semester, candidates are evaluated through scheduled observations conducted by program supervisors with written feedback tied directly to TPE indicators. Candidates also complete key coursework assignments as assessments of competencies, such as lesson planning analyses, student work samples, and reflective practice assignments, which are part of their coursework milestones.

Candidates spend time in the preservice phase, completing requirements such as early fieldwork, preservice coursework, and other internship credential requirements ahead of being 'intern eligible.' Once candidates are eligible, hired, and in the program, they are guided through a two-year pathway that includes guidance on completion of a recommended one CalTPA cycle assessment per year of internship. Interviews confirmed that candidates know they must complete this assessment prior to being recommended for a credential, as stated in their Intern Credential Candidate Handbook. Scores are sent to candidates directly and confirmed via EdReports to the program. To assist candidates with this assessment, they are given optional zoom sessions, recordings, power points, and other support materials. They are also encouraged to attend office hours if they are struggling and need additional support or do not pass and need to resubmit.

The CalTPA coordinator is the Intern Program Coordinator. Candidates are made aware of the performance assessment requirements, appropriate use of materials, the appeal policy, the

remediation policy through their CalTPA workshops and materials folder, which houses links to recorded workshops, slide decks, and policies. Policies are also stated in the internship handbook.

Candidates who are in need of additional support are able to access zoom or in-person office hours with the CalTPA coordinator and other program instructors as needed. Candidates also report having access to all of their past assignments and feedback through multiple online platforms (GoReact, ELearn, Filemaker) in case they should want to revisit their prior work to support their thinking on the CalTPA. Also, support and preparation materials for the CalTPA exist in an online folder with links to the templates, slide decks, and videos hosted by the program.

Candidates are supported through these live and asynchronous materials (videos, slide decks, and documents) and are encouraged to come to office hours and seek help as needed. Candidates are encouraged to complete one cycle per spring term of internship, and this is monitored by the CalTPA coordinator.

Candidates who are unable to complete their CalTPA within two years of internship are allowed to apply for a third year as an intern under the extension option. These candidates reported that they made specific choices to delay their CalTPA (e.g., one transferred into the program late, another went on maternity leave during her internship) but felt they had the tools and support needed from the program to be successful once they chose to work on their materials.

Candidates are able to provide feedback on program survey forms at least two times per year. These surveys offer candidates a chance to share about a variety of topics, including their assessments. Candidates report that they felt very supported in taking their assessments and knew they could go to anyone on the program staff with questions. Due to candidate feedback, they reported that “the last year or two they really did improve the sessions and resources [for CalTPA preparation]. They were much more organized, and everyone had access to everything all the time” so that candidates could make progress on their own schedules.

Program staff report collecting and discussing data points such as CalTPA trends, current enrollments, program focal points, and goals during twice-per-year advisory board meetings. Because the CalTPA assessment has undergone recent sweeping updates, the program staff are working to collect and analyze current trends with cohorts completing the new assessment. Overall, program staff report updating their assessment support structure based on student feedback, such as providing CalTPA support materials to all students throughout their program so they have access whenever they are ready to complete a cycle. This was also confirmed by candidates as they reported having access to materials including live support sessions, office hours, video recordings, and slide decks related to CalTPA support.

Findings on Standards

After reviewing the institutional report, supporting documentation, the completion of interviews with candidates, completers, intern teachers, faculty employers, and supervising

practitioners, the team determined that all program standards are fully **met** for the Multiple Subject Intern Program except for the following: Program Standard 3 is **met with concerns**.

Standard 3: Clinical Practice- Organization of Clinical Practice – Met with Concerns

There is a lack of evidence to illustrate that fieldwork is varied to meet the needs of candidates and the TPEs. While Program Standard 3 requires a developmental, sequential, and integrated set of clinical experiences tied to coursework and responsive to candidates' learning needs, current fieldwork appears inconsistently structured and insufficiently differentiated.

**Preliminary Education Specialist Intern Program:
Mild to Moderate Support Needs (MMSN)
Extensive Support Needs (ESN)**

Program Design

The Merced County Office of Education (COE) Intern Programs for the Education Specialist: Mild to Moderate Support Needs (MMSN) and Education Specialist Extensive Support Needs (ESN) credentials are cohesive, founded on evidence-based practices, and provides interns with the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of students with Individual Education Plans. Preparation in the Merced COE Intern programs provide candidates with the opportunity to learn, practice, and apply competencies relating to the education of students with disabilities that include the TPEs, high quality instruction, culturally and linguistically responsive teaching, universal design for learning, and a whole-child design blueprint.

The Intern Programs are situated within the Credential Unit. The Credentialing Programs Unit is under the leadership of the Director of Human Resources (HR), who is ultimately overseen by the Deputy Superintendent of HR. The Credential Analysts report to the Director of HR. The Coordinator of Intern Programs reports to the Senior Coordinator and Director of HR. The Merced COE Intern Programs are based within local area districts and offers three intern pathways: Multiple Subject, along with Education Specialist MMSN and ESN.

Candidates complete the two-year program on a part-time basis while working at least a 50% contract in their credential area. There are 42 current active interns, including 28 in the MMSN specialization and 14 in the ESN specialization. Per interviews, all are currently working full-time in their intern positions.

A Program Coordinator supervises instructors and Merced COE Program Advisors. Instructors teach the required courses and support candidates through the required assessments, including Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA). The Intern Program Coordinator establishes partnerships with partner district administrators and district employed on-site mentors to ensure that candidates are being adequately supervised. Merced COE Program Advisors supervise candidates through their clinical practice internship and support candidates with their coursework and assessments, including successful completion of a TPA.

Notably, there was a significant reorganization prior to the 2025-2026 academic year. All constituent groups interviewed (instructors, Merced COE Program Advisors, site mentors, program completers, and current interns) reported that the changes resulting from new leadership were beneficial to program, including organization, procedures for documentation, candidate support, and cohesiveness of the program across coursework, fieldwork, and TPA.

The Merced COE Intern Programs partner with other constituencies within Merced COE such as the Special Education Department, Human Resources, and Continuous Improvement to gather feedback about how best to serve teachers in their classroom. The Intern Program Coordinator meets with instructors and Merced COE Advisors/faculty mentors on a monthly basis via Zoom. The recurring topics include program updates, candidates of concern, tech support, learning management system (LMS) concerns, instructional strategies, rubrics, and grading.

The Credentialing Unit meets bi-monthly to discuss an update/summary from the most recent Commission on Teacher Credentialing (Commission) communications and/or Merced COE meetings, upcoming accreditation work, staffing issues, and intern program updates. There is time allowed for general updates, reporting on candidate progress, and grants. Other topics include the practitioner board, legislative updates, partnerships with other entities within Merced COE like Human Resources or the Special Education Department, as well as any other items that impact the programs.

The Credentialing Unit also hosts Advisory Council Meetings twice annually (Fall and Spring) in order to gather feedback from the districts where Merced COE candidates work as interns. The Advisory Council includes district representatives and other constituent groups.

Course of Study (Curriculum and Field Experience)

Interns in the credential program participate in a virtual (synchronous and asynchronous) course of study set by the institution. Merced COE had substantial changes in leadership prior to the 2025/2026 academic year. Since the transition, there has been a focus on all aspects of improvement, including coursework design and alignment to TPEs (including incorporating TPE 7 in literacy). Additionally, the Program Coordinator holds monthly meetings for instructors to collaborate with Program Advisors and mentors.

Both the MMSN and ESN specializations include five pre-service courses that are required prior to program coursework. Four of these courses may be waived through transcript review for equivalence. The last preservice course on literacy instruction cannot be waived as this course contains key components of the new TPE 7 in literacy.

Candidates are apprised of the curricular scope and sequence as part of their initial orientation. Progress in their program is guided by a Program Plan shared with candidates. Both the MMSN Credential and ESN Credential programs are 38 units. The program overlaps for the majority of coursework, but candidates in ESN take EDUC 344 (Teaching Students with Extensive Support Needs) and candidates in the MMSN program take EDUC 345 (Teaching Students with Mild to

Moderate Support Needs). Practicum courses are specific to each specialization: ESN takes EDUC 270 A-B (ESN Fieldwork) whereas MMSN takes EDUC 260 A-B (MMSN Fieldwork).

During interviews, current interns and completers reported that course content was beneficial. All interviewees noted the quality of instruction and content in their courses. They noted, particularly, that classes provide them with pedagogy and strategies that they “could use the next day.” Interviewees noted that their instructors were consistently available for support, responding to most emails in the same day.

The course of study for MMSN and ESN candidates overlaps almost entirely as discussed above. Interns (current and completers) in the ESN specialization noted that sometimes coursework did not go as deeply into learning about students with extensive support needs and appropriate supports as they would like. They reported that what they learned in class was useful once modified, and that site mentors often helped them with this task. ESN candidates indicated a desire for more content in Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices and supports needed for students with low incidence physical, visual, and hearing disabilities.

TPEs are included in course syllabi. Connections between coursework, fieldwork, addressing TPEs, and completing the CalTPA were apparent in the interview of Education Specialist instructors. For example, interns are asked to video themselves in several classes either trying out a new method learned in class, or to reflect in class how the lesson aligns with TPEs. Courses focus on application and the “why” of CalTPA; understanding the purpose of each of the required tasks and how that translates into practice. As one instructor noted, “Interns need to be aware of how the TPEs studied in courses connect and undergird CalTPA tasks.”

TPE 7 (literacy) has successfully been embedded across the program, and a preservice class (EDUC 117: Literacy and Teaching Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students). This preservice class cannot be waived. The program includes classes where literacy is the focus (EDUC 117, EDUC 331, EDUC 332) and practiced (MMSN/EDUC 260 and ESN/EDUC 270 respectively).

Instructors gather candidate feedback in a variety of ways. First, course evaluations are conducted in the Merced COE unit, and these data are available to instructors. Additionally, several instructors see feedback on specific assignments (a post-assignment question via email) or survey candidates on engagement and usefulness of the content directors. Candidates complete a post-reflection at the close of each semester connecting their coursework to their progress on the TPEs. At this time, candidate evaluation data is not being aggregated or disseminated for analysis to improve the program.

All candidates in the Merced COE Intern Program are intern teachers and find their own clinical practice placement with a partnering district. If the district that offers employment to an intern is not a current partner, the program administration contacts the district to establish an MOU.

At this time, candidates are not consistently interacting with a variety of students/settings/age groups as required by Standard 3A, “Candidates must have a range of experience that reflects the diversity of age and grade levels, the range of federal disability categories, and the continuum of special education services” and “Fieldwork/Clinical experiences are designed to

provide candidates with a developmental set of activities integrated with coursework that extend the candidate's learning through application of theory to practice with students in California's education settings." During interviews, both program completers and current interns in both MMSN and ESN specializations reported that they had limited opportunities to observe students or classrooms other than their own, as they were full-time employed. Some MMSN candidates reported that either their administrator had arranged an opportunity to visit another classroom, or their role uniquely allowed them to work in multiple environments (such as an inclusion specialist). Most MMSN interns, and all interviewed ESN interns, did not have access to other settings.

The Program Coordinator shared in her interview that the MOU agreements included two days a semester release time for interns to address program requirements. During interviews, no current or former intern was aware that they had these days available.

Merced is a large county (approximately 1900 square miles), and Merced COE advisors conduct four observations in person. This is commendable as these advisors might be driving multiple hours a day. Interns reported that they appreciated the in-person clinical component of their program as coursework is all online.

Upon admission to the intern program, candidates attend an orientation, where the Program Coordinator reviews requirements and candidates are provided with an academic calendar with key dates, a course of study that breaks down the classes they need for each of their four semesters, and the program completion process. They are assigned a Merced COE Program Advisor based on the credential they are seeking.

Interviews with current ESN and MMSN interns suggest a good fit between mentors and the interns they work with. Mentors held the same credential that the candidate was seeking Education Specialist with either the older Moderate/Severe or Mild/Moderate Credential, or the newer MMSN, or ESN Credential). Generally, mentors were at the same site as their intern, however when the school was small, the mentor might be at a different location. If a candidate and either their site mentor or Merced COE Advisor is not a good match, either party may request a change. If the change is made mid-term, the Program Coordinator will take over the mentorship and reassign the candidate in the following term. The policy outlining Complaints Against Instructors/Advisors is also outlined in the program handbook.

As part of their clinical practice course, candidates are required to complete a Professional Development Plan that identifies who their district employed on-site mentor will be, what coursework they will need to complete for the academic year, their progress on in-program assessments, dates for required professional development, and how the candidate will be evaluated by their district administration. Current interns reported that they felt aware of their progress in the program and felt the systems were well organized.

Interns receive guidance and feedback from two mentors: a Merced COE Intern Advisor and the school site mentor. Many of the Merced COE Intern Advisors interviewed had more than one role. Some also taught coursework, others were teachers on assignment. While all Merced COE Advisors demonstrated strong and consistent feedback procedures, they were also candid that

the role had changed with the leadership transition. They were unified in their assessment that the new methods and procedures for guiding interns were much improved.

Individuals are typically invited to act as mentors. Some of the mentors interviewed were approached by administration at their school. Others were asked by Merced COE if they were willing to act as a mentor. Most mentors had served as both a Year 1 and Year 2 mentor, with a clear understanding of the progression of Merced COE's program. Mentors shared that they had easy access to Merced COE leadership and that calls and emails were typically returned the same day.

Merced COE Advisors are recruited via an EdJoin.org posting. Once an advisor is selected, they receive orientation from the Program Coordinator to review the process of conducting an observation. Merced COE Advisors conduct observations both via in-person site visits (four per semester) and via video (two per semester). At the end of each term, candidates are provided with an evaluation of faculty via a Google Form. The results of that evaluation are provided to the Merced COE Advisor in order to aid in the improvement of practice.

Clinical Coursework

The MMSN and ESN course matrices list the specific courses, competencies (CalTPA, subject matter competency, etc.), and assignments that are used to assess intern progress for each specialization. Candidates pursuing the MMSN credential are responsible for Universal and MMSN TPEs. Candidates pursuing an ESN Credential are responsible for the ESN TPEs in addition to Universal and MMSN.

Courses and fieldwork are organized over four semesters. In the first and third (fall) semesters, students work on TPEs that focus on subject-specific pedagogy, designing and delivering instruction, and literacy instruction. In the second and fourth semester (spring) candidates focus on TPEs that address supportive learning environments, engaging all students, and professional responsibilities. The CalTPA is also completed in the spring semester (cycle one in year one, cycle two in year two). This structure provides opportunities for the interns to immediately apply the course content, and they spoke extensively about the practicality of the resources received.

As required in Standard 2: "The coursework and fieldwork/clinical experiences provide multiple opportunities for candidates to learn, apply, and reflect on each teaching performance expectation. As candidates progress through their preparation scope and sequence, pedagogical assignments are increasingly complex and challenging. The scope of the pedagogical assignments (a) addresses all of the TPEs as they apply to the subjects to be authorized by the credential, and (b) prepares the candidate for course-related and other assessments of their competence with respect to both the Universal TPEs and the Education Specialist TPEs." Merced COE has implemented multiple opportunities to collaborate and has improved communication systems with candidates.

Instructors and the Program Coordinator at Merced COE meet monthly and have individual meetings approximately every three weeks. Through this collaboration between instructors, Merced COE advisors and site mentors, instructors ensure that new learning in coursework is

practiced and applied in clinical settings, and that there is continuity with the TPEs through class assignments. Additionally, significant attention of the program was paid to the connection of the TPEs to the CalTPA, ensuring that Advisors, mentors, and instructors made clear connections between learning, practice, and assessment of key competencies.

Merced COE has not yet introduced aggregated data for analysis at the monthly meeting or with other stakeholder groups. In interviews, mentors, Advisors, and instructors all agreed that the close collaboration, introduced after the transition in leadership, is highly beneficial to candidate, but they have not yet brought student outcomes and data to the table for group discussion and analysis. Data, currently, is gathered and used in individual candidate advisement, but not for program improvement planning.

During clinical practice, candidates complete six observations with their Merced COE Advisor per semester. The requirements are embedded in a fieldwork course's syllabus including an outline of the schedule for the semester and what assessments are required of each candidate. MMSN and ESN respectively utilize a set of observation protocols, when completing their observations and those observation protocols are evaluated using a scored rubric. The observation cycle includes pre-conference, observation, debrief (using Go-React), and final approval of a candidate's observation protocol including a post-reflection.

When interviewed, interns noted that the use of Go-React for debrief and feedback after observations was useful and effective. When observations are conducted virtually (two of the six each semester), then interns upload their video to the Merced COE LMS eLearn. Advisors then view the video and annotate with their comments. Interns reported that being able to connect the comments in real time with their instruction as they watch the video back is one of the most effective practices in improving teaching.

The interns receive feedback from Merced COE advisors and site mentors. Feedback from Merced COE advisors is systematic and provided in writing at the conclusion of each observation through a guided reflection form. Interns also meet with their Merced COE advisor multiple times throughout the semester including scheduled Zoom meetings after every two observations. Interns reported that the observation procedures were effective, did not overly tax the intern, and provided feedback that could immediately be applied to practice.

Site mentors also conduct three observations. They also use the Merced COE provided guided reflection form. Site mentors noted that procedures for mentoring in general, and procedures such as observations, were well covered in the initial mentor orientation.

Candidates are provided with extensive supports, all implemented and executed by the Program Coordinator. This includes Monthly Newsletters to Interns and mentors and Intern office hours offered through zoom with designated times for preservice CalTPA supports. Every intern or intern completer interviewed was highly appreciative of the Program Coordinator's dedication, availability, and willingness to support them. One candidate explained that when they were having difficulty with FileMaker, the Coordinator went to their school site to help

them get established. While the Program Coordinator is doing an excellent job, she is working in several roles, and many of these supports are dependent on her alone.

If a candidate is not meeting minimum requirements, the Program Coordinator, the Merced COE Advisor, and/or the On-Site Mentor will come together to create a Corrective Action Plan that will outline what needs to happen to support the candidate.

Assessment of Candidates

Interns are assessed throughout the program to meet TPE competencies. Assessments and signature assignments are woven throughout coursework and are designed to support the knowledge and understanding of how to teach students with disabilities as outlined in Universal, MMSN, and ESN TPEs. As noted above, coursework is structured to focus on different TPEs each semester and align to CalTPA preparation.

While in coursework, instructors teach their classes and update their grades on the Learning Management System on a regular basis. All instructors meet with the Program Coordinator in the monthly meetings to discuss the progress of our concerns they have about candidate performance. Each instructor is also tasked with submitting midterm grades. If there are any areas of concern, the instructor attempts to resolve them on their own. If the issue persists, then the instructor and the Program Coordinator will meet with the candidate and create a Corrective Action Plan. If the candidate does not adhere to the Corrective Action Plan, they risk earning a failing grade and academic probation/academic disqualification from the program.

If a candidate is not meeting minimum requirements in clinical practice, the Program Coordinator, the Merced COE Advisor, and the On-Site Mentor will come together to create a Corrective Action Plan that will outline what needs to happen to support the candidate. If the candidate does not adhere to the Corrective Action Plan, they risk earning a failing grade and academic probation/academic disqualification from the program.

Fieldwork quantitative evaluation data are collected via TPE-aligned rubrics for each observation (n = 24) which is a large amount of data to effectively use for analysis of program effectiveness. At this time, candidate data is shared with the candidate and monitored by the Program Coordinator. With changes in leadership Merced COE has not yet begun the process of using candidate outcome data for analysis of the program and to make improvements.

There is specific connection between the TPEs in the coursework and the Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA) required for the credential. Merced COE has adopted the CalTPA for this requirement. Some examples of the competency assessments are identification of a focal student and application of content to their needs, reflection about the content provided during the course, and development of an instructional plan to address the specific areas of course focus. TPA preparation is supported in several ways. A Learning Management System allows candidates to move through the CalTPA tasks at their own pace and includes resources for successful completion. Additionally, the Merced COE provides voluntary workshops on CalTPA

preparation. Interns can also meet with the Program Director, their site advisor, or their field mentor for advice.

Progress toward completion of the CalTPA is guided across the program. Candidates complete a Professional Development Plan at the start of their program, which includes planned courses, a timeline for CalTPA with check-ins, and fieldwork evaluations. This document follows the intern and is used at regular intervals with advisors. Interns also noted the use of FileMaker as a significant benefit. They explained that FileMaker was a hub where they could upload important paperwork and documentation where they could easily locate it again.

When the Program Coordinator was asked about how CalTPA completion data are used for analysis, she shared that at this point, Merced COE has had a 100% completion rate, though that includes interns who continue on into a third year with additional supports, including additional semester(s) of clinical practice and CalTPA workshops that are recorded. When interviewed, program completers who took a fifth semester explained that the instructor also invited guest speakers from the department who had expertise grading the CalTPA to come and speak to the group. As the unit continues to grow, it will need to address more systematic methods of collecting and analyzing CalTPA completion data for continued improvement.

Findings on Standards

After review of the institutional report, supporting documentation, outcome data including assessment and survey results, the completion of interviews with candidates, completers, intern teachers, faculty, employers, and supervising practitioners, the team determined that all program standards are **met** for the Preliminary Education Specialist (MMSN and ESN pathways) with Intern programs are met with the exception of **Standards 3A and 4, which are met with concerns.**

Standard 3A: Organization of Clinical Practice Experiences – Met with Concerns

There is not clear evidence that candidates who are teachers of records are engaging in guided fieldwork with a variety of ages and across the continuum of service delivery options including general education, as is appropriate for a credential ranging from PK-12. This is discussed in Standard 3A: “Candidates must have a range of experience that reflects the diversity of age and grade levels, the range of federal disability categories, and the continuum of special education services” and “Fieldwork/Clinical experiences are designed to provide candidates with a developmental set of activities integrated with coursework that extend the candidate’s learning through application of theory to practice with students in California’s education settings.”

Standard 4: Monitoring, Supporting, and Assessing Candidate Progress towards Meeting the Education Specialist Credential Requirements – Met with Concerns

It is unclear that evidence regarding candidate progress and performance is used in advisement or to improve the program overall. Fieldwork quantitative evaluation data are collected for each observation which is a large amount of data but it is not being used consistently for analysis of program effectiveness. These data are not yet being used outside of the candidate and advisor/mentor. Per Standard 4: “Program faculty, program supervisors, and district-employed supervisors monitor and support candidates during their progress towards meeting

and mastering the TPEs. Evidence regarding candidate progress and performance is used to guide advisement and assistance efforts.”

Teacher Induction Program

Program Design

The Merced County Office of Education (COE) provides overarching leadership for educator preparation through its Credentialing Unit, which operates within the Human Resources department. The unit serves as a consortium supporting nearly 30 districts in and around Merced County and is overseen by the Deputy Superintendent of Human Resources. The Director of Human Resources supports the work of the Senior Coordinator and credential analysts. The Senior Coordinator provides guidance for the Induction Program, while the Induction Program Coordinator manages day to day implementation. The Teacher Induction Program (TIP) currently serves 22 districts and includes approximately 150 mentors, 107 Year 1 candidates, and 85 Year 2 candidates.

The induction program leadership delivers strong and consistent communication across the consortium through newsletters, emails, and district reports. The Advisory Committee further strengthens communication and collaboration by bringing together program staff, district administrators, mentors, and higher education partners for ongoing dialogue and feedback. Feedback from constituent groups consistently reflects a high level of satisfaction. One district administrator described “great communication,” noting that program leadership is proactive and responsive in supporting candidate progress. A Year 1 candidate similarly emphasized that “the biggest strengths are the clear expectations and communication, with strong use of bulletins and memos. The coordinator is always very clear, and when I have questions, I receive prompt feedback.”

The mentoring design is a central component of the program and emphasizes individualized, job embedded support aligned to candidate needs. Candidates are paired with trained mentors who provide context specific support aligned to their teaching assignment. Mentors and candidates meet weekly and complete a minimum of 40 hours of annual collaboration. Support includes both “just in time” assistance and longer-term professional growth through inquiry cycles aligned to the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTPs). Mentors conduct at least four non evaluative observations annually and guide candidates through reflective practice, goal setting, and evidence collection. As one mentor explained, “we try to address any concerns... talk about a celebration, discuss options and strategies and identify next steps. Sometimes we just need to listen.” The Individual Learning Plan (ILP) serves as the foundation for this work and is used solely for professional growth, not employment evaluation.

Mentor qualifications align with induction standards, with districts responsible for selection. The program provides comprehensive onboarding and ongoing professional learning, including orientation sessions, Mentor Mondays, office hours, and a Cognitive Coaching series. Mentors are required to participate in professional learning and complete an individual mentoring plan.

According to the 2024–2025 ADS report, 94% of teacher candidates rated their mentor as helping to impact student learning by providing feedback from observations to improve instruction, and 98% indicated their mentor was helpful to very helpful in supporting them to set and reach professional learning goals that impact student learning.

One mentor shared that the Cognitive Coaching series, “helped me understand my role as a listener and a collaborative partner.” Mentor effectiveness is monitored through candidate feedback and program staff observations, and processes are in place to address and resolve any mismatches between mentors and candidates.

The program actively seeks input from constituencies through multiple measures. The Advisory Council, composed of representatives from institutions of higher education, districts, and programs, meets twice annually to review data and provide feedback. Surveys are administered to candidates and mentors at multiple points throughout the year, and ongoing communication supports continuous input. Credential program staff share data, review findings, and engage participants in identifying best practices for continuous improvement.

Over the past two years, the program has implemented significant modifications, including restructuring within Human Resources, the addition of new staff roles, increased collaboration with credential analysts and recruitment, the establishment of a Mentor Advisory Council, and the implementation of biannual progress reporting. The Program Coordinator identified a need for greater clarity and responded by highlighting office hours, revising the handbook, developing a toolkit, and refining language within the ILP.

These changes reflect a commitment to continuous improvement and responsiveness to feedback, a strength consistently affirmed in interviews, where mentors described the program as highly organized, with clear communication and responsiveness to input.

Course of Study

The course of study is grounded in individualized, job embedded learning that connects directly to candidates’ teaching assignments and professional goals. Candidate and mentor matches are made at the district level following program guidelines outlined in the handbook. Districts prioritize pairing candidates with experienced mentors who share similar credentials, grade level, and/or subject matter expertise, ensuring that support is context specific and relevant to the candidate’s teaching assignment. Matches are finalized within 30 days of enrollment to support timely onboarding.

The Individual Learning Plan (ILP) is initiated within 60 days and serves as the central framework for candidate growth. Drawing on prior preparation experiences and input from the initial triad meeting with the mentor and site administrator, candidates establish measurable professional goals aligned to the CSTPs. The ILP functions as a living document, guiding inquiry cycles, reflection, and evidence collection throughout the program. Candidates complete one inquiry cycle in Year 1 and two cycles in Year 2, with ongoing documentation of progress in the

program's data system. While the ILP provides a clear structure for goal setting and reflection, evidence from interviews and document review indicates variability in how candidate progress toward mastery of the CSTPs is consistently and formally assessed, with many candidates primarily engaging in self-assessment using the CSTP continuum.

Candidates are supported through a collaborative structure involving mentors and program staff. Mentors provide weekly guidance, facilitate reflective conversations, and conduct observations aligned to candidate goals. The program coordinator monitors progress, reviews documentation, and provides feedback within the system to support candidate growth and ensure timely completion of program requirements. However, interviews suggest that the consistency of feedback from mentors and program staff varies, and that a clearly defined, defensible process for determining candidate progress towards mastery of the CSTPs is not yet consistently implemented across the program. Overall, while variability exists in the consistency of CSTP aligned feedback, candidates describe the program as highly supportive. One Year 1 candidate reflected on the impact, stating, "I was going to give up on the whole teaching thing then this door opened, and I am so glad I went through this program."

Professional learning opportunities are offered to both candidates and mentors and are designed to align with candidate goals, instructional responsibilities, and identified areas of need. Options include classroom management, building strong classroom culture, fostering student engagement and belonging, and supporting multilingual learners and students with disabilities, among others. These opportunities are informed by survey data, integrated into mentoring conversations and Individual Learning Plan (ILP) goals, and are often recommended by mentors to support candidates identified areas of growth. Feedback from Year 1 and Year 2 candidates indicate that the professional learning opportunities are highly valued with participants describing sessions as having a meaningful impact on their teaching practice and student learning, particularly in areas such as classroom management and instructional strategies. A Year 1 candidate highlighted a session that supported their ability to "culturally understand students and make learning relevant."

The program continuously seeks feedback on its effectiveness through surveys, as well as through advisory committee input. This feedback is used to inform program improvements and is shared with mentors and constituent groups to support ongoing refinement.

Assessment of Candidates

Candidate progress is monitored through a database platform that manages program documentation and tracks completion of required tasks. The ILP and CSTP cycles are reviewed by the program coordinator for completion and alignment to program requirements. While the system provides consistent tracking of required program components, there is insufficient evidence that a defensible, consistent, and equitable process is in place to assess candidate progress toward mastery of the CSTPs.

Multiple interviews with candidates indicated that progress toward the CSTPs was primarily self-measured and that mentor feedback specifically aligned to CSTP development is limited

and inconsistently implemented across districts. In some cases, CSTP focused dialogue within mentoring interactions is minimal, resulting in variability in how candidate growth toward the CSTPs is supported and documented. This variability contributes to a process for determining candidate competence that is not clearly defined or consistently applied.

While the transcript tracks completed items such as triad meetings, ILP and CSTP cycles, and observation records, there was limited evidence of a consistent and defensible process demonstrating growth toward mastery of the CSTPs.

When candidates do not complete requirements, the system identifies cells needing completion, alerting the program coordinator, who then follows up with the mentor and candidate when needed. Specific feedback related to completion of program requirements is then communicated directly to the candidate, with the mentor included to ensure alignment and additional guidance. Candidates are given clear directions for revisions, and materials are resubmitted and reviewed until standards are met.

Assessment expectations are clearly communicated through orientation sessions, program materials, and ongoing interactions with mentors and program staff. Evidence indicates that candidates engage in ongoing self-reflection aligned to the CSTPs, with growth explored through inquiry cycles and observations. Mentors conduct four non evaluative observations annually, and candidates use the CSTP Continuum of Practice to guide reflection and track perceived progress.

The program uses multiple sources of data, including candidate performance, survey results, and completion rates, to inform continuous improvement. The data is reviewed by program leadership and shared with advisory groups to guide decision making.

Each candidate's progress toward recommendation for a clear credential is monitored through the program's data system. Program staff, including the program coordinator, review and verify that all program requirements have been successfully met prior to approval. These multiple measures provide an effective system for determining program completion. Once a candidate has fulfilled all program expectations, the credential analyst is responsible for submitting the recommendation and provides the candidate with instructions to complete the formal recommendation process through the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

Finding on Standards

After reviewing all available information including interviews with candidates, program completers, program personnel, mentors, coaches, and other constituency, the team determined that all program standards are **met** for the Teacher Induction Program except for the following:

Standard 5: Determining Candidate Competence for the Clear Credential– Met with Concerns

Given the minimal opportunities for feedback by mentors/program coordinators on the candidates' self-reflection of progress on the CSTPs, there was insufficient evidence that a

defensible, consistent, and equitable process is in place to assess candidate progress toward mastery of the CSTPs.

Clear Administrative Services Induction Program

Program Design

The Merced COE administers the Clear Administrative Services Induction program (CASC) through its ADMIN KEYS program, which is situated within the Credentialing Programs unit of the District Support Services Program, under the Educational Services Department. This placement reflects alignment with Merced COE's broader mission to provide leadership and instructional services to districts and to support educator development across the county. The CASC-ADMIN KEYS program is one of several credentialing pathways offered by Merced COE, positioning it within a comprehensive system of educator preparation that includes teacher induction and intern programs. Annual Data Submission (ADS) reporting for the 2024-25 academic year shows that there was a total of 39 candidates in the program with 25 new candidates and 14 continuing candidates. The program is led by a program coordinator who oversees day-to-day operations, including candidate progress, coach coordination, and communication with participating districts. The coordinator operates within the credentialing unit and under the Director of District Support Services. Documented evidence and interviews illustrate that coaches are assigned to candidates through the candidate's employing districts. This structure allows for alignment between program fidelity and local district context.

Program leadership maintains regular communication through bi-weekly credentialing unit meetings to review program progress and make necessary adjustments. Additionally, the program engages in structured collaboration with constituents through Advisory Council meetings held twice annually, which include representatives from districts, institutions of higher education, candidates, and coaches. The program coordinator communicates directly with candidates and coaches through seminars, orientation sessions, and virtual meetings. Orientation materials outline expectations, program components, and timelines, including requirements such as coaching hours, Individualized Induction Plan (IIP) submission deadlines, and portfolio expectations. However, findings from the review of program documents, evidence, and interviews indicate that the ADMIN KEYS program does not consistently maintain regular communication with candidate supervisors to ensure the development of a coherent, individualized learning experience. Supervisors reported limited to no direct communication from the program, with one stating, "I do not hear anything from the program, only through my candidate." These findings illustrate a gap in communication systems between the program and employing agencies, particularly in supporting alignment between candidate learning and site or district priorities.

The program utilizes a coaching-based, job-embedded induction model centered on individualized support aligned to the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSEL). Each candidate engages in a minimum of 40 hours of coaching annually, with ongoing interactions focused on goal development, reflection, and application of leadership practices.

Documented evidence and interviews illustrate that coaching strategies emphasize trust, confidentiality, and individualized support, with coaches guiding candidates through a continuous cycle of planning, implementation, reflection, and adjustment tied to their Individualized Induction Plan (IIP). Coaches are recruited by participating districts and participate in initial structured training aligned to program expectations. However, evidence indicates that the program does not provide ongoing professional learning opportunities for coaches to refine their coaching skills. Coaches consistently reported an absence of continued training beyond initial preparation, with one stating, “We don’t [receive training]. I have my own coach network that I am a part of outside of this program,” and another coach noting, “I attend the seminars for my candidate, but have not been offered more training for my coaching.” In addition, evidence and interviews indicate that the program does not provide structured opportunities for coaches to engage in reflection on their own coaching practice. While coaches described facilitating reflective practices for candidates aligned to CPSEL standards, they reported that they themselves do not participate in formal reflection as part of the program. As one coach stated, “I have not participated in reflecting on coaching,” indicating a need to strengthen the program’s support for ongoing coach development and continuous improvement.

The program employs multiple feedback mechanisms, including mid-year and end-of-year surveys; feedback collected during seminars and coaching interactions; Advisory Council meetings in the fall and spring; and informal conversations with candidates and coaches. Survey data is analyzed and shared with the Advisory Council and used to inform program improvements, including adjustments to program structure and delivery. For example, the shift from the FileMaker system to Google tools to house the IIP. The program has undergone several iterations over the last few years, and interview evidence illustrates that there are other planned modifications to take effect next year. Interview evidence indicates that these changes are done by the program coordinator based on the perceived need to make changes based on coach and candidate feedback. Recent program modifications include a transition to a flexible seminar model, allowing candidates to select topics aligned to their needs while maintaining required content areas (e.g. special education). Further, the location of sharing IIPs has changed from FileMaker platform to Google Drive, allowing a clearer process for candidates to document their progress in the program. These changes reflect responsiveness to stakeholder feedback and a shift toward greater personalization and efficiency in program delivery. ADS report survey data for the 2024-25 academic year shows that over 93% of candidates would recommend the ADMIN KEYS program to potential candidates without reservation.

Course of Study (Mentor/Coaching System)

The program coordinator collaborates with districts in the consortium who recruit and assign coaches, with districts submitting recommended matches based on local knowledge. Matching considers experience and, where possible, proximity and context alignment. The Individualized Induction Plan (IIP) is collaboratively developed by the candidate, coach, and supervisor within 90 days of program entry. It is informed by the initial CPSEL self-assessment, candidate-identified areas of strengths and areas for growth, and supervisor input. Candidates focus on three CPSEL domains each year and document progress through coaching log, the mid-year IIP

checks, and their end of year presentation. The IIP is revisited regularly during coaching sessions and adjusted as needed to reflect evolving responsibilities and growth.

Candidates in the program are supported through a coordinated system of coaching, supervision, and program oversight that emphasizes ongoing formative assessment and alignment to the CPSEL. Coaches serve as the primary source of support, meeting regularly with candidates to guide the development and implementation of the Individualized Induction Plan (IIP), facilitate reflection, and monitor progress toward established goals. During interviews, the candidates expressed a deep appreciation for the expertise and leadership of their coaches. Supervisors informally contribute to the process by providing input during the development of the IIP. The program coordinator maintains oversight of candidate progress through review of documentation within the program database and ongoing communication with candidates and coaches. Candidates are evaluated using multiple measures that include CPSEL self-assessments conducted at key points in the program, coaching logs documenting engagement and focus areas, professional development logs, and portfolio artifacts aligned to each CPSEL domain. The use of the Descriptions of Practice (DOP) and CPSEL Attainment Reflection (CAR) forms further supports candidates in demonstrating growth and competence across standards.

Professional learning within the program is designed to be closely aligned with candidates' job-embedded leadership responsibilities. Candidates participate in seminars and are required to complete additional professional development hours annually, selecting learning opportunities that align with their Individualized Induction Plan goals and current work context. Seminar topics are informed by coach and candidate feedback and local needs, allowing participants to engage in learning that is directly applicable to challenges they encounter in their administrative roles. Candidates are expected to reflect on each professional learning experience and document how new knowledge and strategies are applied within their school or district setting. This integration of professional learning with practice is further reinforced through coaching conversations program documents and interview evidence illustrate that the program utilizes multiple mechanisms to gather feedback from constituencies. Formal feedback is collected from candidates and coaches through mid-year and end-of-year surveys, seminar reflections, and structured evaluation activities conducted throughout the program. Informal feedback is also gathered through ongoing communication between candidates, coaches, and program leadership. This data is reviewed by program staff and shared with the Advisory Council, which includes representatives from districts, candidates, coaches, and institutions of higher education. Feedback has informed programmatic changes, such as adjustments to seminar structure and delivery, including the introduction. These changes suggest that the program values stakeholder input.

Assessment of Candidates

The program employs a range of measures to monitor candidate progress and ensure that program requirements are met. Candidates are required to maintain an electronic portfolio that includes documentation of their Individualized Induction Plan, CPSEL self-assessments, coaching logs, professional development logs, and reflective artifacts aligned to each standard. The program also utilizes a progress monitoring checklist to track completion of required

components and provide candidates with a clear overview of their progress. Ongoing monitoring occurs through regular coaching interactions, during which candidates reflect on their practice and receive feedback on their progress through the Descriptions of Practice (DOP) framework. The program coordinator supplements this process by reviewing candidate documentation and communicating directly with individuals who may require additional support. However, the program lacks a systematic process for continuous monitoring, early identification, and targeted support for candidates who may need targeted intervention in order to be fully supported through program completion.

The program coordinator monitors candidate progress through the database and initiates direct communication when candidates fall behind or require additional guidance. Support may include individualized meetings, virtual check-ins, site visits, and adjustments to the candidate's Individualized Induction Plan to better align with their needs and context. Coaches support candidates' progress by guiding the development and implementation of the Individualized Induction Plan and providing ongoing feedback aligned to CPSEL competencies. In cases where the coaching relationship is not effective, the program outlines a formal process for requesting a change in coach, which includes communication with the program coordinator and, if necessary, reassignment to ensure appropriate support. As evidenced by documentation and interviews, greater clarity and emphasis are needed regarding how varying levels of support are identified and provided to candidates based on their individual needs.

Candidates are informed about assessment expectations through multiple channels, including program orientation, the CASC Handbook, and ongoing communication with the program coordinator and coaches. Orientation materials outline key program components, including coaching requirements, professional development expectations, and portfolio development, while the handbook provides detailed descriptions of performance expectations and assessment processes. Throughout the program, candidates engage in self-assessment using the CPSEL Descriptions of Practice (DOP) tool, which serves as a framework for reflection and goal setting. ADS report survey data for the 2024–25 academic year indicate that over 87% of candidates reported that the ADMIN KEYS Program prepared them well or very well to shape a collaborative culture of teaching and learning informed by professional standards and focused on student and professional growth. Coaches support candidates in interpreting these expectations and in understanding how evidence collected throughout the program will demonstrate competence. The program collects data on candidate competence through portfolios, assessments, surveys, and feedback mechanisms, and shares findings with the Advisory Council to inform program improvements. Survey results and informal feedback are reviewed by program staff and used to guide adjustments to program design and delivery. Available documentation and interview evidence indicate the ADMIN KEYS program does not evaluate and demonstrate that their candidates are having a positive impact on candidate learning and competence and on teaching and learning in schools that serve California's students.

The recommendation process for the Clear Administrative Services Credential is grounded in a comprehensive review of candidate performance across all CPSEL domains. Candidates are

required to develop an electronic portfolio that includes evidence of practice, reflections, and CPSEL Attainment Reflection (CAR) forms demonstrating competency at or above the “meets standard” level. As a culminating assessment, candidates present their portfolio to a panel of experts that include coaches, program staff, and district representatives. The panel evaluates the candidate’s performance using rubric aligned to CPSEL standards, ensuring a consistent and standards-based determination of readiness. Following the panel’s recommendation, the program coordinator reviews all documentation and collaborates with the credential analyst to submit the final recommendation to the Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

Findings on Standards

After reviewing all available information including interviews with candidates, program completers, program personnel, mentors, coaches, and other constituency, the team determined that all program standards are **met** for the Clear Administrative Services Induction program except for the following:

Standard 2: Program Collaboration, Communication, and Coordination – Met with Concerns

There is a lack of evidence to illustrate that the program provides consistent communication with site supervisors.

Standard 3: Selection and Training of Coaches – Met with Concerns

There is a lack of evidence to illustrate that the program provides structured opportunities for ongoing coach development.

INSTITUTION SUMMARY

Merced County Office of Education operates multiple educator preparation programs, including Multiple Subject Intern, Education Specialist Intern (MMSN and ESN), Teacher Induction, and Clear Administrative Services Credential programs. The institution demonstrates a strong research-based vision aligned with California public school standards and maintains collaborative relationships among faculty, instructional personnel, and P–12 partners. Candidate recruitment, support, and advisement systems are well established, with purposeful efforts to diversify the educator workforce and support candidate success. The institution also maintains continuous improvement processes through constituent feedback, program review, and candidate support systems.

Key strengths include committed leadership, qualified faculty, strong partnerships with school districts, and effective candidate support structures. Most program and common standards were met, particularly in recruitment, coursework, supervision, and program improvement processes. Constituents reported positive experiences with preparation and support across programs.

Areas of growth primarily involve consistency in clinical practice and program evaluation systems. Reviewers found insufficient evidence that candidates consistently participate in structured, developmental fieldwork experiences that reflect the diversity of California’s TK–12 student population. Concerns were also identified regarding communication with site

supervisors, ongoing coach development, and the institution’s ability to systematically collect, analyze, and use candidate performance data to demonstrate measurable impact on student learning outcomes. Additionally, staffing limitations and concentration of responsibilities within a small leadership structure may affect long-term sustainability.

COMMON STANDARDS FINDINGS

Common Standard 1: Institutional Infrastructure to Support Educator Preparation	Team Finding
Each Commission-approved institution has the infrastructure in place to operate effective educator preparation programs. Within this overall infrastructure:	<i>No response needed</i>
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.	Consistently
The institution actively involves faculty, instructional personnel, and relevant constituencies in the organization, coordination, and decision making for all educator preparation programs.	Consistently
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.	Consistently
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.	Inconsistently
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.	Inconsistently
Recruitment and faculty development efforts support hiring and retention of faculty who represent and support diversity and excellence.	Consistently

Common Standard 1: Institutional Infrastructure to Support Educator Preparation	Team Finding
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) 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.	Consistently
The education unit monitors a credential recommendation process that ensures that candidates recommended for a credential have met all requirements.	Consistently

Finding on Common Standard 1: Met with Concerns

Summary of information applicable to the standard

The institution demonstrated many components of an effective infrastructure to support educator preparation programs. Evidence from interviews, documentation, and stakeholder feedback confirmed that the institution has established a research-based vision for teaching and learning that is consistently reflected across programs and aligned with California’s adopted standards and frameworks. Faculty, instructional personnel, and educational partners were actively involved in program coordination and decision-making processes, and the institution employs qualified personnel with relevant expertise and experience in California public schools. The team also found evidence that credential recommendation processes are monitored appropriately and that recruitment efforts support diversity and excellence within the educator workforce.

While foundational systems and supports are in place, the review team found that significant operational responsibilities remain concentrated within a limited number of personnel, particularly during a recent leadership transition. This concentration of duties creates potential risks to continuity, sustainability, and the institution’s ability to consistently support program growth and increasing operational demands.

Concerns emerged regarding the institution’s capacity to consistently manage coordination, candidate advisement, fieldwork supervision, and program oversight at the level required by the standard. Although current personnel demonstrated strong commitment and responsiveness, the lack of distributed leadership structures and additional staffing support contributed to the finding of “Met with Concerns.”

Rationale for the Finding - Met with Concerns

Specifically, standard 1 requires that the institution provide sufficient resources for the effective operation of educator preparation programs, including coordination, advisement, supervision, and clinical experiences, and that unit leadership have the authority and institutional support necessary to address program needs. Evidence related to institutional infrastructure and resource capacity was inconsistent due to key responsibilities being concentrated in a single individual. In addition, the team found insufficient evidence that current staffing and resource allocations are adequate to sustain long-term program quality across all credential pathways.

Common Standard 2: Candidate Recruitment and Support	Team Finding
Candidates are recruited and supported in all educator preparation programs to ensure their success.	<i>No response needed</i>
The education unit accepts applicants for its educator preparation programs based on clear criteria that include multiple measures of candidate qualifications.	Consistently
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.	Consistently
Appropriate information and personnel are clearly identified and accessible to guide each candidate's attainment of program requirements.	Consistently
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.	Consistently

Findings on Common Standard 2: Met

Summary of information applicable to the standard

The Merced County Office of Education (Merced COE) supports new teachers through intern and induction programs and supports new administrators through a Clear Administrative Services Credential (CASC) induction program. Program representatives recruit prospective teachers and administrators through local community colleges, high schools, and internal classified employee pathways.

Through the Merced COE Intern programs, candidates earn a preliminary Multiple Subject, Education Specialist: Mild to Moderate Support Needs or Education Specialist: Extensive

Support Needs credential in partnership with local school districts while teaching and completing coursework. Interns are supported by appropriately credentialed and experienced mentors at their school sites. Candidates shared that coursework was relevant to their classroom assignments and supported their development as beginning teachers. Several candidates expressed appreciation for the flexibility of the program while balancing professional and family responsibilities. One candidate noted they had encouraged two family members to pursue teaching through the Merced COE program.

Teachers holding preliminary credentials clear their credentials through the Merced COE Teacher Induction Program (TIP), offered in collaboration with partner districts throughout the county. An Early Completion Option (ECO) is available for qualified candidates. Candidates, mentors, and advisors reflect the diversity of the Merced County population. Candidates described the program as growth-oriented, well-paced, and supportive. Multiple candidates highlighted the accessibility of mentors, including responsiveness outside regular work hours, which supported completion of program requirements and reflective activities. Candidates who transitioned from the intern program into induction noted improved accessibility and program support following recent program reorganization efforts.

Candidates requiring additional assistance are identified through coursework, mentor observations, and reflective online posts. Additional supports are coordinated between Merced COE and employing school districts. Candidates generally expressed satisfaction with program responsiveness and support.

Merced COE also offers a Clear Administrative Services Credential (CASC) program. Interviews with candidates, mentors, administrators, and district personnel indicated that candidates receive substantial support beyond coursework, demonstrate strong retention, and effectively serve their schools and communities. One candidate shared that they initially relied heavily on mentor support but had developed significant independence through the mentoring process over time.

Common Standard 3: Fieldwork and Clinical Practice	Team Finding
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.	Inconsistently
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.	Consistently

Common Standard 3: Fieldwork and Clinical Practice	Team Finding
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.	Consistently
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.	Consistently
Site-based supervisors must be certified and experienced in teaching the specified content or performing the services authorized by the credential.	Consistently
The process and criteria result in the selection of site-based supervisors who provide effective and knowledgeable support for candidates.	Consistently
Site-based supervisors are trained in supervision, oriented to the supervisory role, evaluated and recognized in a systematic manner.	Consistently
All programs effectively implement and evaluate fieldwork and clinical practice.	Consistently
For each program the unit offers, candidates have significant experience in California public schools with diverse student populations and the opportunity to work with the range of students identified in the program standards.	Inconsistently

Finding on Common Standard 3: Met with Concerns

Summary of information applicable to the standard

The Merced County Office of Education intern and induction programs for teachers and administrators are job-embedded programs that provide candidates with classroom and administrative experiences leading to preliminary or clear credentials. Candidates are paired with mentors whose assignments align closely with candidates' credential areas and career goals. Mentors serve as the primary support for candidates, with additional assistance provided by Merced COE and partner school districts. Mentors receive ongoing training prior to and throughout their service, including cognitive coaching, "Mentor Mondays," and additional professional learning opportunities.

The programs provide coursework, mentoring, workshops, and seminars to support intern teachers, Teacher Induction program candidates, and Clear Administrative Services Credential (CASC) candidates. Several mentor teachers shared that they provide demonstration lessons to model effective instructional practices for mentees. Candidate fieldwork and clinical practice are assessed through multiple measures including mentor and advisor observations, professional development activities, counseling, and self-reflection. Mentors, advisors, and

candidates participate in ongoing collaborative professional learning opportunities throughout the year.

Mentors and advisors receive ongoing training and support from Merced COE and partner districts. Mentors reported valuing monthly newsletters and “Mentor Mondays” training opportunities. One mentor shared that training provided through Merced COE positively influenced their mentoring practices, while another noted that mentees frequently shared program learning with veteran teachers at their school sites.

Teacher induction complete self reflection demonstrating growth on the CSTP and CASC candidates complete culminating portfolios demonstrating growth aligned to CPSELs prior to recommendation for clear credentials. Interviews with intern and induction teachers and CASC candidates reflected a high level of satisfaction with program supports and mentoring, consistent with program survey data.

However, teacher and administrator candidates reported limited opportunities to purposefully observe or interact with the full range of diverse students represented across Merced County, including culturally and linguistically diverse students and students requiring significant instructional or program modifications. Reviewers did not find sufficient evidence that candidates consistently participate in significant clinical experiences necessary to develop and demonstrate the knowledge and skills required to effectively support the full range of Merced County’s diverse P–12 student population in meeting state-adopted content standards.

Rationale for the Finding

Insufficient evidence was found to verify candidates have the opportunity to participate in significant clinical experiences to develop and demonstrate the knowledge and skills to educate and support the full range of Merced County’s diverse P-12 student population in meeting state-adopted content standards as proscribed in the Standard.

Common Standard 4: Continuous Improvement	Team Finding
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.	Consistently
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.	Consistently
Both the unit and its programs regularly and systematically collect, analyze, and use candidate and program completion data as well as data reflecting the effectiveness of unit operations to improve programs and their services.	Consistently

Common Standard 4: Continuous Improvement	Team Finding
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 constituencies such as employers and community partners about the quality of the preparation.	Consistently

Finding on Common Standard 4: Met

Summary of information applicable to the standard

The Merced County Office of Education (Merced COE) develops and implements a comprehensive, continuous improvement process at both the unit level and within each of its credential programs. As a unit, they have undergone significant reorganization since their Program Review, including staffing changes across programs and revisions to both individual and collective systems for data collection, reflection, and program improvement. The HR director reported that with the new team in place, “There are much better clear and concise systems and processes from the time a person enters [their programs] to the time they exit.” The purposeful use of “Improvement Science” was identified by both program personnel and a district employer as the framework guiding program improvements and directly addresses the Program Review recommendation for a more systematic process for data analysis and continuous improvement.

Multiple sources of data were reviewed, including exit surveys, constituent survey results, performance assessment results and analysis, unit leadership meeting agendas and schedules, advisory team meeting agendas and notes, as well as Accreditation Data Dashboard. These documents provided evidence that, since the restructuring of the programs, intentional efforts have been made to systematically collect, analyze, and reflect upon data in order to guide program revisions and decision-making processes. Surveys are intentionally designed to include both common unit-wide questions and program-specific questions to ensure consistency while also addressing the unique needs of each program. Program leaders meet weekly as a unit to review survey data, discuss candidate progress, and address programmatic needs and areas for improvement.

Advisory team members interviewed supported this process and reported that the advisory team meets twice annually to review survey findings and provide recommendations for program refinement. Members described one of the most impactful aspects of the process as “when the program leaders share feedback from their district constituents that have resulted in adjustments in the program, and then the districts can make corresponding adjustments also.” District-level changes resulting from these collaborative reflections and recommendations included modifying the way districts meet with Merced COE program participants and increasing the collaborative role of school sites in supporting candidates enrolled in Merced COE programs. One district specifically cited the expansion of curriculum coach support at school sites to provide additional assistance for intern candidates.

Evidence gathered through document review and stakeholder interviews demonstrates that Merced COE has established a thoughtful and systematic continuous improvement process that is embedded across the unit and its programs. The intentional use of Improvement Science, ongoing collaboration with educational partners, and regular analysis of multiple data sources illustrate a strong commitment to program refinement and candidate support. Furthermore, the alignment between program-level reflection and district-level action demonstrates a collaborative culture focused on improving educator preparation and ultimately strengthening teaching and learning outcomes for the students and communities served by Merced COE.

Common Standard 5: Program Impact	Team Finding
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.	Consistently
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.	Not Evidenced

Finding on Common Standard 5: Met with Concerns

Although the Merced COE develops and implements a comprehensive, continuous improvement process at both the unit level and within each of its credential programs, evidence reviewed did not demonstrate a systematic and coordinated process for evaluating candidate impact on teaching and learning in the schools they serve. In interviews, candidates and mentors anecdotally reported instances of candidate positive impact on student learning, such as when a mentor shared that her candidate was struggling in her first year with student engagement during lessons so the mentor helped her analyze her lessons and the observations revealed that her students were mostly off task during a certain part of her lesson. After classroom management workshops, and working together, the mentor helped the candidate focus on implementing new routines and consistency, and a later observation data collection revealed that student off-task behavior decreased from 37 instances to 5. This showed a concrete impact on students, however, it was not quantified as a coordinated practice. Although many survey results and constituent interviews reflected positive perceptions regarding candidate growth and professional development, these findings were largely informal and were not consistently supported by multiple measures of evidence tied to candidate effectiveness or P–12 student outcomes.

Reviewers did not find evidence that the unit and its programs systematically evaluate, nor demonstrate that candidates are having a positive impact on teaching and learning in the

schools they serve. While survey data and stakeholder feedback suggest that candidates perceive growth in their practice, these perceptions are not supported by a comprehensive and coordinated system of evaluation of evidence. The unit lacks a clearly defined process for collecting, analyzing, evaluating, and reporting candidate data that demonstrates a positive impact on P–12 student outcomes.

Rationale for the Finding

Reviewers did not find sufficient evidence that the unit or its programs consistently collect, analyze, and use candidate performance data to demonstrate a positive impact on teaching practices or student learning. Although the collective programs reviewed candidate reflections, survey data, and performance assessments, these measures were not part of a clearly defined unit-wide system for evaluating candidate impact. Evidence of data analysis, longitudinal tracking, and systematic reporting across programs was limited. Additionally, the unit did not provide a comprehensive process for connecting candidate growth and competency development to measurable outcomes in P–12 settings.

Constituents expressed that candidates appear well-supported and demonstrate professional growth; however, reviewers found limited evidence that the unit systematically evaluates whether candidates' participation in the programs results in improved instructional practices, leadership outcomes, or student achievement. The absence of a coordinated framework for collecting and analyzing impact data limited the unit's ability to demonstrate how program improvements are informed by evidence of candidate effectiveness.