

Report of the Accreditation Visit to the Los Angeles Unified School District Internship Program

Professional Services Division

April 17, 2000

Overview of This Report

This agenda report includes the findings of the Accreditation Team visit conducted Los Angeles Unified School District. The report of the team presents the findings based upon reading the Self-Study Reports, review of supporting documentation and interviews with representative constituencies. On the basis of the report, an accreditation recommendation is made for the agency.

The programs that were the subject of this accreditation review in the Los Angeles Unified School District are District Intern Programs. The processes and procedures that were used are the same as those used for university-based programs. Preconditions that are specific to District Intern programs were used since District Intern programs have specific statutory requirements, which are different than university-based programs. The district responded to the Common Standards and used the California Program Standards for all programs, substituting the California Standards for the Teaching Profession in place of the Candidate Competence standards in the Multiple and Single Subject areas. The COA approved of the use of the CSTP at its January 2000 meeting.

Accreditation Recommendations

- (1) The Team recommends that, based on the attached Accreditation Team Report, the Committee on Accreditation make the following accreditation decision for the Los Angeles Unified School District and all of its credential programs: **ACCREDITATION WITH SUBSTANTIVE STIPULATIONS.**

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

- Multiple Subject Internship Credential
Multiple Subject BCLAD Emphasis (Spanish)
- Single Subject Internship Credential
- Education Specialist Internship (Level I)
Mild to Moderate Disabilities
- Education Specialist (Level II)
Mild to Moderate Disabilities

- (2) The Los Angeles Unified School District is required to provide evidence of the actions taken to respond to all of the stipulations within one year of the date of this action, to be verified by a team re-visit.
- (3) Staff recommends that:
 - The agency's response to the preconditions be accepted.
 - The Los Angeles Unified School District be permitted to propose new district internship credential programs for accreditation by the Committee on Accreditation.
 - The Los Angeles Unified School District be placed on the schedule of accreditation visits for the 2005-2006 academic year.

Background Information

Los Angeles Unified School District is a large, urban school district serving a diverse population of approximately 700,000 students. LAUSD created the first District Intern program in 1984. Since then the governing board of the district has recommended more than 3,500 teachers for Professional Clear Credentials through the District Intern Program. Currently there are 1,300 program participants.

The District Intern Program is led by a program director, two specialists and eight advisors. Forty-five retired teachers and administrators guide and monitor intern' evening and Saturday classes. Approximately 500 trained course instructors teach intern classes each year. Additional support is provided by the Human Resources Division, the Educational Services Division, the Language Acquisition Unit, the Master Plan Unit, the Mentor Teacher Program, the BTSA Program and other district personnel.

Instruction in the program begins with a 120 clock hour orientation prior to assuming full time responsibilities. This preservice training is offered four times throughout the year. The Elementary program offers an additional 538 clock hours of instruction during the two academic years of the program. Included in these instructional hours is 88 hours of instruction in reading. Nearly 700 elementary interns took RICA in 1998-99. Ninety-eight per cent passed.

The Elementary BCLAD program includes 792 clock hours of instruction including a 144 hour summer session between the two years of the program. The Education Specialist Program begins with the first year in general education classrooms and instruction (408 clock hours), and then continues with a second specialist preservice segment and two academic years of instruction including Levels I and II components. The total number of clock hours in the Education Specialist Program is 960.

Preparation for the Accreditation Visit

The Commission staff consultant was assigned to the school district program in 1997 and met with the program's leadership on two occasions about the accreditation visit. The meetings led to decisions about team size, team configuration, standards to be used, including the agreement to use the California Standards for the Teaching

Profession), format for the institutional self-study report, interview schedule, logistical and organizational arrangements. The size of the team was determined in the Spring of 1999. The Administrator for Accreditation and the Staff Consultant selected the team members to participate in the review. Team members were selected because of their expertise, experience and adaptability, and trained in the use of the *Accreditation Framework*. In addition, telephone and regular personal communication was maintained between the staff consultant and district representatives.

The Institutional Self-Study Report was prepared based on the Standards approved by the Commission for Multiple Subject, Single Subject, and BCLAD, and Education Specialist Intern Programs. The document was reviewed informally by Commission staff with suggestions on document improvement provided.

Intensive Evaluation of Program Data

Prior to the accreditation visit, team members received copies of the appropriate institutional reports and information from Commission staff on how to prepare for the visit. The on-site phase of the review began on Sunday, March 5. The team arrived on Sunday afternoon and began with a meeting of the team. On Monday and Tuesday, March 6 and 7, the team collected data from interviews and reviewed institutional documents according to procedures outlined in the *Accreditation Handbook*.

A total of 360 group and individual interviews were conducted by the team members in the two days devoted to collection of data. Lunch on Monday and Tuesday was spent sharing data that had been gathered from interviews and document review. The team met on Monday evening to discuss progress the first day and share information about findings. Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning were set aside for additional team meetings and the writing of the report.

Preparation of the Accreditation Team Report

Pursuant to the *Accreditation Framework*, and the *Accreditation Handbook*, the team prepared a report using a narrative format. For each Standard, the team made a decision of "Standard Met," "Met Minimally" with either Quantitative or Qualitative Concerns or "Standard Not Met." The team then wrote specific narrative comments about each standard providing a finding or rationale for its decision and then outlining perceived Strengths or Concerns relative to the standard.

The team included some "Professional Comments" at the end of the report for consideration by the institution. These comments are to be considered as consultative advice from the team members, but are not binding of the institution. They are not considered as a part of the accreditation recommendation of the team.

Accreditation Decisions by the Team

The team discussed an initial draft of the report on Tuesday evening. After the report was finished, the team met Wednesday morning for a final review of the report and a decision about the results of the visit.

The team made its accreditation recommendation based on its findings and the policies set forth in the *Accreditation Framework*. In its deliberations, the team decided that one Common Standard was minimally met, all multiple and single subject program standards were met, and that twelve education specialist program standards (Levels I and II) that were not fully met. The team then considered the appropriate accreditation decision for the institution. The team's deliberations centered around the concerns in the Education Specialist Program against the overall high quality of the district intern program. The options were: "Accreditation," "Accreditation with Technical Stipulations," "Accreditation with Substantive Stipulations" or "Denial of Accreditation." After thorough discussion, the team decided to recommend the status of "**Accreditation with Substantive Stipulations.**"

**CALIFORNIA COMMISSION ON TEACHER CREDENTIALING
COMMITTEE ON ACCREDITATION
ACCREDITATION TEAM REPORT**

Institution: Los Angeles Unified School District
District Intern Program

Dates of Visit: March 6 - 8, 2000

**Accreditation Team
Recommendation:** ACCREDITATION WITH SUBSTANTIVE
STIPULATIONS

Following are the stipulations:

- That the district provide evidence of the complete implementation of the program evaluation standard that includes evidence of the systematic collection of information from all required constituencies, especially from graduates and employers.
- That the district provide evidence of actions taken to address all program standards less than fully met in the Education Specialist Credential Programs.

Rationale:

The team recommendation for Accreditation was the result of a review of the Self Study Report, a review of additional supporting documents available during the visit, and interviews with administrators, faculty, students, local school personnel and other individuals professionally associated with the district. The decision was based upon the following:

1. Common Standards - Based on evidence provided by review of documents and interviews with constituent groups, the accreditation team finds that all standards are fully met with the exception of Common Standard Four, Evaluation, which is minimally met with qualitative concerns.
2. Program Standards - Based on evidence collected from review of the self study report, supporting documentation and the completion of interviews of candidates, graduates, faculty, employers and supervising practitioners, the team determined that all program standards are met for all of the Multiple and Single Subject Programs. The programs meet the professional needs of students from varying backgrounds in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

For the Education Specialist Programs, the team determined that for the Level I program, one program standard is not met and two standards are met minimally. For the Level II program, three program standards are not met and five standards are met minimally.

3. Overall Recommendation - Based upon the evidence gathered by the Accreditation Team through document review and interviews, the team recommends the accreditation status of Accreditation with Substantive Stipulations. The district

should have one year to address and correct the deficiencies for those standards not fully met. The team recommends that the remediation be reviewed by the Education Specialist Cluster. The overall quality of the Los Angeles Unified School District Intern Program is excellent. Although the deficiencies in the Education Specialist Credential Level II Program were significant, it is the judgment of the team that the Education Specialist Program has the capacity to correct all of the areas of concern noted in the report within the specified time period.

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DATA SOURCES

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED		DOCUMENTS REVIEWED	
73	Program Faculty	x	Catalog
28	Institutional Administration	x	Institutional Self Study
85	Candidates	x	Course Syllabi
61	Graduates	x	Candidate Files
16	Employers of Graduates	x	Fieldwork Handbook and Portfolio Handbook
39	Supervising Practitioners(Mentors)		Follow-up Survey Results
20	Advisors	x	Needs Analysis Results
24	School Administrators	x	Information Booklet
2	Credential Analyst	x	Field Experience Notebook
5	Advisory Committee	x	Schedule of Classes
4	Site Coordinators	x	Advisement Documents
3	School Board Members	x	Faculty Vitae
		x	Portfolio/Journals

Common Standards

Standard 1 - Education Leadership

Standard Met

The administrative leadership of the District Intern Program is well coordinated between the Personnel Services Division and the Professional Development Branch of the Division of Instruction. They plan well together, respond efficiently to problems and concerns from the field, and communicate well throughout the district.

There appears to be a lack of consistent and reliable representation of special education leadership at the decision-making level of top management that has limited the influence of the special education program. The issue of inclusion of special education leadership is reported to have been hampered by demands on current personnel to respond to issues related to legal decisions. The District has entered into a search for someone who will become a part of the leadership team.

Strengths

None noted

Concerns

None noted

Standard 2 - Resources

Standard Met

The program is well funded with significant in-kind contributions from the district's general fund to more than meet the required match of the grant and the requirements of the program. Principals reported that there is good financial support to the Intern Program and often spoke favorably of examples of resources, materials, and support given to interns at the school sites.

Strengths

None noted

Concerns

Interns and program advisors expressed concern that the interns have inadequate access to computers and libraries.

Standard 3 - Faculty

Standard Met

The majority of principals and interns generally feel positively about the quality of the faculty. They believe the faculty understands the requirements to be a successful teacher in the LAUSD and have aligned state standards, district expectations and local curricula in the instructional programs.

Strengths

None noted

Concerns

None Noted

Standard 4 - Evaluation

Standard Met Minimally Qualitative Concerns

There was consistent evidence that interns, instructors, advisors, and management staff participate on a regular basis in evaluating the quality of courses, instruction, and the program. Improvements in the program are made as a result of the information gathered. However, there was no evidence of formal, well-documented follow up of graduates nor were there surveys of employers of the graduates.

Strengths

None noted

Concerns

Many principals reported they are unaware of the existence of the District Intern Steering Committee and do not participate in feedback or advice regarding the courses and the program. They also reported that they would be willing to respond to periodic surveys and questionnaires. There are no community representatives listed on the membership of the Steering Committee.

Standard 5 - Admissions

Standard Met

The program's record of recruiting and enrolling a diverse group of high performing interns is excellent. There is a comprehensive system in place to provide personal follow-through with potential candidates and multiple means to contact and assist potential candidates.

Strengths

The admission practices and procedures of the LAUSD District Intern Program are excellent. Information in the "Path to the Profession" and the "Standards and Guidelines for the District Intern Program " is clear and well-delineated.

Concerns

None noted

Standard 6 - Advice and Assistance

Standard Met

Interns reported that the advisors in the program are very knowledgeable and supportive. They reported that they are well-informed and receive assistance as needed at each step of the process and program. Interns are given special assistance when needed and/or extra time to complete the program. Instances were found when interns, despite special assistance, were still not successful and were non-reelected to their positions.

Strengths

None noted

Concerns

None noted

Standard 7 - School Collaboration**Standard Met**

There is very good cooperation and collaboration between the Division of Instruction and the Personnel Division in sharing responsibility for the District Intern Program. There was consistent evidence that representatives from a range of units, i.e. the Office of Instruction, the Professional Development Branch, the Employment Operations Branch, the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program, and the Mentor Teacher Program communicate effectively and meet regularly.

Strengths

None noted

Concerns

None noted

Standard 8 - Field Supervisors**Standard Met**

The mentors are valued highly by the interns and principals. Mentors are seen as instrumental in supporting and nurturing the ongoing professional growth of the District Interns.

Strengths

None noted

Concerns

Concern was expressed about instances in which interns were assigned to mentors who were certified in areas other than the intern's teaching area.

Program Standards

Multiple Subject Internship Multiple Subject BCLAD Emphasis Internship Multiple Subject (Middle School Core) Internship Single Subject Internship

Findings on Standards

After review of the institutional report, supporting documentation and the completion of interviews of candidates, graduates, faculty, employers and supervising practitioners, the team determined that all program standards are met for all of the Multiple and Single Subject Programs. The programs meet the professional needs of students from varying backgrounds in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Strengths

Program Standard 1: Program Design, Rationale and Coordination

The program leadership effectively articulates the program vision. The support interns receive through mentors, instructors, advisors, coordinators, administrators and staff is excellent, as evidenced through interviews with various individuals.

Program Standard 5: Preparation for Multi-Cultural Education

Summer community outreach projects were important to interns' professional development. Several reported they were able to modify their instruction and include more culturally relevant strategies and content based on this experience. Several interns reported that in the fall of their second year, after spending significant time in the summer in the community in which students live, parent involvement in school activities dramatically increased.

Program Standard 6: Preparation for Daily Teaching Responsibilities

BCLAD interns are carefully screened with respect to Spanish language proficiency prior to admission to the program. The process is well defined, implemented consistently and communicated to interns.

Program Standard 9: Guidance, Assistance and Feedback

The students receive excellent support and advice throughout the program from their mentors, advisors, the coordinators and the faculty. There is an ongoing collaboration between the district intern program and school sites to place interns and support them in their assignments. The principals, assistant principals and certificated staff are to be commended for the attention paid to the interns.

With respect to assessing interns' coursework, it was reported that interns are held to pre-determined standards for their course assignments, and were given opportunities to respond to feedback and to re-submit assignments as appropriate.

CSTP Standard: Developing as a Professional Educator

Graduates of the program indicated that they were encouraged to develop as professional educators. They regularly attended professional conferences and were members of the several professional organizations. In addition, the program clearly fosters networking and cohort support for interns in the program.

CSTP Standard: Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for all Students

Many interns and program faculty referred to the “cutting edge curriculum” in the district intern program. Several principals and experienced teachers reported that some district interns were called upon to provide inservice workshops to their colleagues.

CSTP Standard: Creating and Maintaining Effective Learning Environments

There is a strong classroom management component in the program that begins in the Preservice Orientation and is extended through early coursework.

CSTP Standard: Assessing Student Learning

Interns are assessed in their courses through authentic, performance-based methodology. There was evidence that the interns were then able to apply this methodology in assessing their own students.

Concerns

Program Standard 9: Guidance, Assistance and Feedback

Both interns and mentors reported that there were many instances where mentors are assigned to provide support to interns who are teaching in credential areas different from theirs. Mentors also reported that they were often called upon to provide support to other beginning teachers, thereby reducing the time available to give district interns.

Education Specialist Level I

Findings on Standards

The Preliminary Level I Education Specialist Credential, Mild/Moderate Disability Internship Program meets the Specialist Program Standards, with the exception of Standard 14 (Not Met), Standard 22 (Met Minimally with Quantitative Concerns), and Standard 25 (Met Minimally met with Qualitative Concerns).

Standard 14: Qualifications and Responsibilities - The major concern related to this standard resides in the fact that a number of mentors are not qualified in special education. General education teachers often mentor special education interns. This does not meet the standard's requirement that “each field-based supervisor is certified and experienced in the area of the credential” (p. 55). Although multiple individuals are available to support the work of the special education interns (e.g., start-up coaches) and a new position, instructional support coaches, has been developed to support the intern in special education issues, the assigning of a general education mentor as the

primary district support individual does not provide the intern with the information and understanding needed to manage a special education caseload and classroom.

It was found that in some situations, interns were not provided a mentor until months into the school year. The opening months of school are a critical time for an intern and may be the time in which they most need a highly qualified mentor.

The role and qualifications of the mentor are integral to the overall success of the program. A special education-special education match is essential if interns are to have their needs and concerns addressed in a meaningful and expedient manner.

Standard 22: Assessment and Evaluation of Students - Interns are not exposed to a variety of individualized assessment and evaluation approaches and instruments. Although candidates are limited by district policy to allowable tests (e.g., KTEA, Brigance), CCTC standards require a breadth of testing experiences. KTEA appears to be the only standardized test emphasized consistently in the program. In order to meet the standard's requirement of knowledge and skills in using a variety of individual assessment approaches, interns need a much broader base of experiences.

Inclusion of the recently developed booklet on accommodations for standardized assessment (National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing, 2000) is well written and based on the cutting edge authorities in the field and represents an example of how instruction and experiences in this area could be strengthened. The program does provide a handbook on informal assessment during enrollment in EDSE 400. Although targeting a range of curricular domains, information is limited and is in need of updating.

Standard 25: Characteristics and Needs of Individuals with Mild to Moderate Disabilities - Evaluation of the documentation provided for EDSE 401 indicates interns need more information concerning each of the disability areas. EDSE 401 presents information on the disabilities identified in IDEA '97, but fails to develop in-depth understanding of the learning and behavioral profiles of individuals with mild to moderate disabilities (the focus of the credential). Course projects include lesson plan development, implementation, and evaluation. There is development of an individual behavior management plan but not in-depth reading concerning the profiles of individuals with mild/moderate disabilities. Emphasis is not on the development of a deep understanding of the issues associated with meeting the needs of individuals with mild/moderate disabilities. Expanding course reading requirements and requiring interns to investigate the latest research on the identification and intervention practices for these students would significantly strengthen this segment of the program.

Knowledge and skills represented by this standard could be easily blended with a portfolio case study approach, which might replace a current portfolio activity so as to not impose an undue burden on interns. Such an activity would provide an opportunity for interns to engage in the material concerning mild/moderate disabilities in a more in-depth and meaningful way.

Strengths

Standard 9: Program Design, Rationale, and Coordination - Overall program design, rationale and coordination adequately meet the requirements of a Level I program. The 120 hour special education orientation "kicks-off" the program and provides interns

with a foundational understanding of the workings of a special education program, the roles and responsibilities of the special education teacher, and the self-confidence to start the year with enthusiasm.

The portfolio serves as an infusion tool throughout the Level I program and provides meaningful opportunities for interns to further explore skills and understandings and to demonstrate them in an authentic way. Program administrators are encouraged to review the presentation requirements of the portfolio to ensure that the portfolio does not become an "art project" and the emphasis remains on the content, quality, and research base of the artifacts included.

Concerns

No additional concerns noted

Education Specialist Level II

Findings on Standards

The Professional Level II Education Specialist Credential, Mild/Moderate Disability Internship Program meets the required standards, with the exception of Standards 9, 10, and 18 (Not Met), Standard 11 (non-applicable to the intern program), Standards 13, 15, 17, and 19 (Met Minimally with Qualitative Concerns), and Standard 14 (Met Minimally with Quantitative Concerns).

Standard 9: Design of the Professional Education Specialist Program - The Level II program is intended to enable new teachers to apply their Preliminary Level I preparation to the demands of professional positions while also fostering advanced skills and knowledge. The Level II program is to include academic requirements, an individualized induction plan with a support component, and an option to allow some requirements to be met with non-university activities (interpreted by program faculty as meaning activities outside of the district such as professional conferences, on-line courses, and courses offered by neighboring educational institutions). Level II standards reflect the development of advanced skills across curricular domains.

The areas in which advanced training is effectively provided by the internship program include collaboration/communication and transition. In the area of collaboration, interns are provided opportunities to build on skills and understandings developed in Level I and are required to develop an inservice for general education teachers. The inservice targets general education teachers' understanding of the needs of students with mild to moderate disabilities and how they can work in concert with special education staff. The program is commended for their efforts and leadership in this area.

The other area of strength is transition. The transition course and related experiences foster student development of skills and knowledge for effectively developing, implementing, and evaluating ITP plans.

Areas in need of improvement include the inclusion of advanced experiences in assessment and behavioral interventions and supports, and in the revision of induction plan procedures.

Level II coursework is to build on that provided during the Level I experience and provide opportunities for interns to expand their knowledge base and “professional toolbox” and to demonstrate expertise in meeting the needs of students with mild to moderate disabilities.

The program needs to revise induction plan procedures in order to meet CCTC standards. Currently, interns are not developing a preliminary induction plan, something required by the standard.

The induction plan is not developed until the final semester of the program, with sign-off secured at the end of the term. This timeline is too late and prevents the program from meeting Standards 9 through 11.

CCTC standards require that the induction plan be developed and implemented under the guidance of the support provider and program advisor during the induction period. This induction plan is to be based on the preliminary induction plan developed during Level I (Standard 9, Level II). The purpose of the induction plan is for the intern to reflect and identify goals and activities they wish to accomplish during their induction period. Having interns complete the induction plan at the conclusion of the program does not provide them the opportunity to address goals during their final year of the program or to receive support and feedback concerning their achievement during the induction year. It is suggested that program staff articulate when interns move from Level I to Level II and develop a timeline that includes the development of the preliminary induction plan and allows adequate time for interns to (a) develop their induction plan, (b) have it reviewed by necessary individuals, and to (c) implement it during the induction period. One suggested timeline is:

- preliminary induction plan developed and approved February of Year 2
- induction plan developed and approved prior to school dismissal Year 2
- induction plan implemented during the third year of the program
- induction plan review included in the exit interview process at the conclusion of the third year.

More specifically, the standard requires that interns are supported during their induction year by a district support provider (who, in the case of this program may be the mentor) and that only at the end of the induction year, an assessor (e.g., a building principal) becomes involved in the process.

Additionally, program faculty are encouraged to develop a simple amendment form for all Level II induction plan related activities for those instances when support, emphasis areas, goals and objectives, or any other factor included in the induction plan requires revision.

Standard 10: Support Activities and Support Provider Qualifications - This standard requires the involvement of a district support provider in the professional development of the intern through development and monitoring of the induction plan. Current practices associated with the induction plan do not meet this guideline. According to documentation, district mentors are not involved in the induction plan development or implementation, thus calling into question who is serving in the role of district support provider as identified in the standard. Moreover, the principal is listed on the induction plan. As previously stated the administrator (or individual serving in the role of assessor) only becomes involved at the conclusion of the induction year by serving as

an assessor of the interns' induction period performance. This ensures guidance and support is separate from evaluation and job retention.

A related concern is that district support providers (e.g., mentors) do not receive training in relation to Level II and the role of the support provider. The role and responsibilities of a Level II support provider are different from that required of Level I mentors, and needs to be further developed.

There are no indications of how support providers are evaluated. This is required by the standard.

One of the major concerns remains that not all mentors/support providers have expertise in special education or the readiness for assuming the responsibilities of a special education teacher. In order to guide and mentor during the induction year, support providers must be qualified, prepared for their responsibilities, assigned appropriately, evaluated for their effectiveness, and recognized for their contributions.

Standard 12: Assessment of Candidate Competence - Faculty are commended for their innovative use of the portfolio and portfolio tasks throughout the intern program. The portfolio allows for an authentic assessment of intern performance.

Program faculty are encouraged to continually evaluate the number and types of tasks included in the portfolio to ensure the portfolio is a meaningful learning experience, and not perceived as a burden by the interns. On-going evaluation would also ensure that emphasis remains on content and demonstration of skills and understandings, and that the portfolio does not become an “art activity” in which presentation is the primary focus.

Standard 13: Data-based Decision Making - Although interns do develop basic skills in data collection and analysis through Level I activities, these skills are not being developed at an advanced level.

Advanced skills in this area are correlated with advanced assessment training and instructional design. Development of advanced level skills ensures interns demonstrate a level of professional expertise and competence.

Standard 14: Advanced Behavior - The segment of the standard addressing the interns' ability to work with educational, mental health and community resources is adequately addressed in the Level II collaboration course.

The program does not provide advanced knowledge and training in how to assess, plan, and provide academic and social skills instruction for students with complex behavior and emotional needs. A foundation is developed during Level I and it is from that foundation that new, and more advanced and sophisticated skills and understandings are to be developed.

Standard 15: Current and Emerging Research - EDSE 500 and 501 provide beginning experiences in interpreting research, theory, legislation, policy, and practice. Course activities indicate active engagement on the part of interns but would be greatly strengthened if the course reader were expanded and if intern reading of the literature base was of greater depth and rigor.

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The overall Level II program would be greatly strengthened if all courses included research- and data-based readings. In that way, interns would be consistently and repeatedly exposed to research and its interpretation and its application to the classroom. Web-based resources could prove helpful here.

Standard 17: Development of Specific Emphasis - This standard is being addressed in EDSE 500 and 501. Interns select areas of emphasis of interest to them. The manner in which they explore and develop advanced understanding in these areas, however, is not clearly articulated. At times, cohorts have selected an area of emphasis as a unit; at other times, interns have selected to pursue reading and have enrolled in an available course. Program administrators and faculty are encouraged to further explore the types of experience that could be provided to ensure interns' development of a specific emphasis. In that the district does not offer "elective" courses, alternative paths to meeting this requirement are needed. Web-based research is one possibility.

This standard is being addressed in EDSE 500 and 501. Interns select areas of emphasis of interest to them. The manner in which they explore and develop advanced understanding in these areas, however, is not clearly articulated. At times, cohorts have selected an area of emphasis as a unit; at other times, interns have selected to pursue reading and have enrolled in an available course. Program administrators and faculty are encouraged to further explore the types of experience that could be provided to ensure interns' development of a specific emphasis. In that the district does not offer "elective" courses, alternative paths to meeting this requirement are needed. Web-based research is one possibility.

Standard 18: Assessment of Students - Interns enter Level II with a foundation of skills in identifying, describing, selecting, and administering standardized and non-standardized assessment procedures, but do not have advanced skills in these areas, nor a broad base of preparation. The standard requires that interns are prepared in the administration, scoring, and interpretation of a variety of standardized assessments and are prepared to step into the assessment and evaluation responsibilities assigned to RSP teachers. Inclusion of advanced experiences in assessment would allow the program to meet this standard and to build on the skills/understanding interns have upon entering Level II.

The portfolio provides meaningful opportunities for interns to develop and demonstrate assessment skills. Portfolio tasks could be revised to include engagement with and demonstration of advanced skills in assessment.

Standard 19: Curriculum and Instruction - As with Standard 18, interns enter Level II with a foundation of skills and understandings in curriculum and instruction. These skills are to be further developed in Level II. Greater depth in understanding curricular domains and instructional techniques and approaches is needed for interns to demonstrate advanced level skills.

The portfolio provides a meaningful avenue for the enhancement of these skill areas. Existing portfolio tasks provide for the development of Level I skills. Some could be deleted or without adding to the overall workload of interns, be revised to include advanced skills in curriculum and instruction.

Professional Comments

(These comments and observations from the team are only for the use of the institution. They are to be considered as consultative advice from team members, but are not binding on the institution. They are not considered as a part of the accreditation recommendation of the team.)

Commendations

The district is to be commended for its innovative web sites that make available program information, instructional resources and materials to faculty, staff as well as provide access to prospective interns.

The Education Specialist staff and instructors are extremely dedicated to the program and the professional development of the special education interns.

The portfolio incorporated across Levels I and II represents an authentic and meaningful way to assess candidate development.

The emphasis on general and special education collaboration and collaboration with local agencies and resources demonstrates a forward-looking approach to providing services to students with disabilities and is commended.

Students appreciated that the faculty were practitioners and could acknowledge the challenges experienced by beginning teachers. Faculty were knowledgeable about the California Standards for the Teaching Profession and reported that these standards were an integral part of the courses they taught.

There were several instances where interns reported concerns that the program requirements changed, and there appeared to be a lack of consistency and organization. It was however, the belief of the team, that the program leadership was clearly committed to being responsive and often the program modifications were due to changes in state law and credential requirements.

Recommendations

Consider how to increase the District Interns' access to resources, references, textbooks, etc. warehoused centrally. An open accessible resource center would be an asset to the program and an advantage for the students.

Consider increasing reports to the Board through inclusion in the Superintendent's Annual Report, Informatives, or Presentations.

Develop and publish a list of specific criteria necessary for individuals to qualify to teach courses in the District Intern Program.

Consider using the upcoming Peer Assistance and Review Program to increase the support to interns.

Increase the flow of information to and from the District Intern Steering Committee.

Rethink the scheduling of orientation meetings to prevent any disruption to classroom instruction.

Consider consolidating the Mentor selection procedure to local areas rather than individual school sites.

Periodically examine the balance between theory and practice in the courses and curriculum.

Mentors and interns should be carefully matched in terms of subject matter expertise and teaching assignment.

Program faculty are also encouraged to consider using the portfolio as a way for interns to demonstrate the skills and understandings thoroughly explored in coursework and not as “stand alone” opportunities to learn. Portfolio tasks may be most valuable and meaningful for interns when they are directly linked with on-going course dialogue and reading.

The Level I program would be greatly enhanced if the academic rigor of courses was strengthened. Limited research-based pieces, the use of a single, required textbook across courses, and "workshop" style handouts weaken the academic base of the program. Program emphasis appears to be on "hands-on" activities, with limited attention given to a theoretical foundation that would be achieved through inclusion of data-based and research-based information, and the expansion of required readings for each course. Materials and resources appear to be available, but need to be more readily integrated and required in coursework and experiences. Instructors need to be oriented on course texts through standard syllabi formats. In fact, having generic course syllabi as reference for all instructors would significantly strengthen the program and allow for greater consistency across course instructors and time. Providing a list of assigned readings associated with each course would also strengthen program curricula.

The Level I program could also be significantly strengthened if additional units/course meeting sessions were added to some of the key courses to allow for greater development of core concepts and skills.