

**Recommendations by the Accreditation Team and Report of Findings of the
Accreditation Visit for Professional Preparation Programs at
Wiseburn Unified School District**

Professional Services Division

November 2016

Overview of this Report

This agenda report includes the findings of the accreditation visits conducted at Wiseburn USD in March and October 2016. As a result of direction from the COA ([April 2016](#)), the October visit conducted as a follow-up to the site visit held in March 2016 and focused exclusively on the Common Standards. The report of the team presents the findings based upon reading the Institutional Self-Study Reports, review of supporting documentation and interviews with representative constituencies. On the basis of this report (Common Standards) and the previous report (Program Standards), a recommendation of **Accreditation with Major Stipulations** is made for the institution.

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

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

Program Standards

	Total Program Standards	Program Standards		
		Met	Met with Concerns	Not Met
Autism Added Authorization	3	3		
Early Childhood Special Education Added Auth.	4	4		
Emotional Disturbance Added Authorization	3	3		
Traumatic Brain Injury Added Authorization	4	4		

The site visits were completed in accordance with the procedures approved by the Committee on Accreditation regarding the activities of the site visit:

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

**California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
Committee on Accreditation
Accreditation Team Report
November 2016**

Institution: Wiseburn Unified School District

Dates of Visit: October 24-26, 2016

Accreditation Team Recommendation: Accreditation with Major Stipulations

Rationale:

The unanimous recommendation of **Accreditation with Major Stipulations** was based on a thorough review of the institutional Self-Study; additional supporting documents available during the visit; interviews with administrators, faculty, candidates, graduates, and local school personnel; along with additional information requested from program leadership during the visit. The team felt that it obtained sufficient and consistent information that led to a high degree of confidence in making overall and programmatic judgements about the professional education unit's operation. The decision pertaining to the accreditation status of the institution was based upon the following:

Common Standards

Site visit team members reviewed the nine Common Standards to determine if the standards were met, met with concerns, or not met. The team found that five Common Standards are **Met**, Common Standard 8 was **Met with Concerns** and Common Standards 1, 2, and 4 were **Not Met**.

Program Standards

Team members at the March 14-16, 2016 site visit (report attached) discussed all documentation, evidence, and information collected from interviews. Following these discussions the team considered whether the Program Standards for each of the programs were met, met with concerns, or not met. The consensus of the team was that all program standards were **Met** for all programs. The October 24-26, 2016 site visit team did not review the program standards and concur with the findings of the March 2016 site visit.

Overall Recommendation

Over the course of two visits (March 2016, October 2016), the team completed a thorough review of program documents, program data, and interviewed institutional administrators, program leadership, faculty, supervising instructors, candidates, completers, and school board members. Based on the findings for all Common and Program standards, and the fact that all program standards were met, 5 Common Standards were Met, 1 Common Standard was Met

with Concerns, 3 Common Standards were Not Met, the team unanimously recommends a decision of **Accreditation with Major Stipulations**.

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

Initial/Teaching Credentials

- Added Authorization
 - Autism Spectrum Disorders
 - Early Childhood Special Education
 - Emotional Disturbance
 - Traumatic Brain Injury

Staff recommends that:

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

Accreditation Teams

	March 2016	October 2016
Team Leader:	Randy Fall Azusa Pacific University	Jo Birdsell National University
Common Standards:		Sharon Russell CalStateTeach
Program Standards:	Leslie Comstock Ventura County Office of Education	
Staff to the Visit	Bob Loux Commission on Teacher Credentialing	Catherine Kearney Commission on Teacher Credentialing

Documents Reviewed

Optimal Website	Biennial Report Feedback
Common Standards Report	Board Minutes
Course Syllabi	Schedule of Classes
Candidate Files	Advisement Documents

Memorandum of Understanding
 Leadership Team Agendas and Minutes
 Optimal Website
 Common Standards Report
 Survey Results
 Faculty Vita
 Program Assessment Feedback

Faculty Vitae
 Biennial Report Feedback
 Board Minutes
 Catalog
 Field Experience Notebooks
 Advisement Documents

Interviews Conducted

Stakeholders	March 2016	October 2016
Candidates	22	1
Completers	39	8
Employers	8	5
Institutional Administration	2	2
Program Optimal Administration	1	1
Faculty	3	1
Practicum Supervisors – Program	5	3
Field Supervisors – District	4	2
Credential Analysts and Staff	1	2
School Board Members	1	2
Total	86	27

Background Information

Wiseburn Unified School District is a small school district in the El Segundo/West Hawthorne area of Los Angeles County. With four district schools and four independent charter schools, it serves almost 4,000 students. It has a very diverse population, with a mix of 7% Multiracial, 6% Asian, 15% Caucasian, 14% African-American, and 58% Latino.

Education Unit

Wiseburn USD sponsors four added authorization programs: Emotional Disturbance, Early Childhood Special Education, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and Traumatic Brain Injury. All aspects of these programs (admission, curriculum, faculty, advisement, administration, determination of candidate competency, etc.) have been delegated to Project Optimal. Project Optimal is a subsidiary of Innovative Learning, LLC. The Southwest SELPA collaborated in the development of these programs. All coursework is through independent, self-paced online modules. There are currently 147 candidates enrolled in all four programs (2015-16) and 732 candidates that

completed programs in 2014-15. These programs are offered statewide; there are currently no candidates from Wiseburn USD enrolled in the program. Content experts developed the online modules and at this time there is one Project Optimal faculty member/project director responsible for all credential programs. Wiseburn USD also provides staff time to the program through a percentage of the time of Wiseburn’s Executive Director of Project Development.

Table 1
Program Review Status

Program Name	Number of Program Completers (2014-15)	Number of Candidates Enrolled or admitted 15-16
Autism Spectrum Disorder	595	101
Emotional Disturbance	72	36
Traumatic Brain Injury	38	6
Early Childhood Education Specialist	27	4

The Visit

The site visit occurred October 24-26, 2016 and was the second of two site visits for Wiseburn Unified School District. The team consisted of a team lead, one team member, and Commission staff. The team convened at midday on Monday, October 24th and conducted interviews and reviewed documents until late afternoon on Tuesday, October 25th. The team discussed their findings throughout the visit and reached consensus on Tuesday night. The site visit report summary was presented to Superintendent Johnstone and his staff on Wednesday, October 26th.

This visit was unusual in that it was a follow-up to the visit conducted in March 2016 (report attached). The first visit occurred in March 2016 at Project Optimal Offices in Buellton. Because of issues that arose with Preconditions and Common Standards, the COA directed that Wiseburn submit revised Preconditions and that staff arrange for a site visit to occur in fall 2016 focusing on the Common Standards (<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/coa-agendas/2016-04/2016-04-item-09.pdf>). This visit occurred at the Wiseburn USD district office.

Common Standards

Standard 1: Educational Leadership

Not Met

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

Findings

The vision that brought together the Wiseburn School Unified School District (the Program Sponsor) and Project Optimal (the contractor) grew out of the need to provide an efficient, cost effective, method for teachers to add necessary authorizations to their credentials. The Southwest SELPA, and district representatives explored models and determined that an on-line, self-paced, and self-taught series of modules were the appropriate route for development. Experts in the field were contacted to prepare the curriculum. In addition to learning activities and readings, there are tests to make sure that candidates demonstrate competency in the courses. The model met the need and many teachers, particularly in the area of the Autism Spectrum Disorder Added Authorization, completed the program and were appropriately credentialed.

Project Optimal is a subsidiary of Innovative Learning, LLC. Project Optimal is based in Buellton, California and is responsible for all aspects of the program, except for recommending candidates for the credential. Project Optimal employees work with the course developers, assist with contacting fieldwork supervisors, assist students, and maintain program records.

At the beginning of the program, there was a vision for the development of the courses, program, and candidate performance. School district personnel, Special Education directors and the SW SELPA were all actively involved in the initial program direction. Now that the program has been developed and has been working successfully, there is no longer one shared vision that provides direction for programs, courses, teaching, candidate performance and experiences. When Project Optimal or the SELPA or Wiseburn Unified School District determines that changes need to be made, there is an informal process to collaborate. Stakeholders are updated about the program through information shared during scheduled SELPA meetings.

As there is only one faculty member in the program, the expectations for scholarship and service are not defined, but the faculty member reports that she stays current in the field by serving on boards.

Although Wiseburn is the unit, there has been some misunderstanding in the responsibility and roles in unit accountability, as confirmed in interviews. Interviews and documentation revealed that much of the current unit authority has been delegated to Project Optimal.

Wiseburn Unified School District does not envision itself as a teacher preparation program. The Wiseburn Unified School District's vision and primary commitment are to their PK-12 students. The core values are:

- To work with a spirit of cooperation and collaboration.
- To act ethically and honestly toward our candidates, colleagues and community.
- To recognize and appreciate people's similarities and differences.
- To aspire to deliver quality and excellence in all we do.

According to the MOU adopted September 8, 2016 by Wiseburn Unified School Board, the Wiseburn Unified School District agrees to be the unit leadership in return for free professional development for their teachers. As confirmed by several stakeholder groups, this arrangement has served Wiseburn well, especially when the need was high. There are currently no Wiseburn teachers enrolled in the added authorization programs.

The Wiseburn Director of Human Resources is the recommender for the added authorization credentials. The director receives a list of those who have completed their modules and have had their fieldwork checklist signed and returned by an appropriate supervisor. Wiseburn staff then checks the veracity of the underlying credential before submitting the application to the Commission for processing. Candidates are not involved in applying for the credential but receive an e-mail from the Commission at the time that payment is due.

Rationale

There is no evidence of an articulated vision for the program that provides the direction for on-going program functioning and improvement. Although there was an MOU approved in September 2016, it does not establish clear lines of authority nor define specific roles and responsibilities for Program Sponsor (Wiseburn) and the Contractor (Project Optimal/Innovative Learning, LLC) for the added authorization programs. The current MOU notes as the Purpose: "The two parties agree to work cooperatively and in good faith to advance the common objective of enhancing their respective entities and to continue their contributions to the improvement of outcomes for students and the teaching staff who work with them."

There are not clear indications that unit leadership currently has the authority and institutional support needed to create effective strategies to achieve the needs of all programs and represent the interests of each program within the institution.

Standard 2: Unit and Program Assessment and Evaluation

Not Met

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

Findings

The team did not find evidence that the education unit implements an assessment and evaluation system. Project Optimal collects candidate completion data for each module. There is a dashboard that shows candidate progress. Candidates unable to pass tests within a module may retake the tests up to four times. However, each time a candidate re-takes a test, the previous test is written over so there is no data to show trends of where candidates were unsuccessful in passing the competencies. Without this layer of data, indication of where the curriculum needs development or improvement is lacking.

Project Optimal collects data on completer and employer satisfaction. Both parties indicate that they are satisfied with the product and process. Interviews with employers and program completers yielded positive comments about the timeliness of getting the programs up and running so that teachers could complete their Added Authorization. Program completers shared that they were pleased with the online, self-paced format that allows them to complete the program at times available to them. They also noted how relevant the content was to their teaching situations. One program completer noted, "We were doing some of these strategies, but we didn't have the words for it or the research for it. The program gave me that." Program completers also indicated that their fieldwork was appropriate and relevant. They liked having a supervisor who came to their classroom, understood their teaching situation and provided feedback to them on their application of new knowledge. When asked how the program could be further improved, they cited that access to professors and building a candidate community online would enhance their experience.

Candidates have met competencies per testing and a fieldwork checklist but there is no collected evidence of the quality of the work or what it was. Each supervisor is provided information that they must maintain a copy of the work completed that verifies their signature on the form, but that verification form is neither collected nor analyzed by the program or unit leadership.

A new process for sharing assessment information has been developed as indicated by a chart shared with the site visit team. The process is too new to provide evidence of its usefulness.

Rationale

Other than consumer satisfaction data, there is no evidence of an assessment and evaluation system designed and used for ongoing program and unit evaluation and improvement. This lack of process was confirmed through interviews.

Standard 3: Resources

Met

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

As a part of the Memorandum of Understanding, Wiseburn provides personnel and other resources to support the program. This includes a “percentage of Superintendent time for oversight, percentage of Admin [sic] support and overall management oversight and responsibility of the Project Optimal/Added Authorization.” Interviews indicated that these resources were sufficient to support the credential recommendation part of the process.

Innovative Learning LLC/Project Optimal includes the following costs in the Memorandum of Understanding: delivery of the Added Authorizations, Helpdesk, Candidate Support, General Liability Insurance, Instructor and Student Support Costs and Maintenance of Delivery System. The team verified that the supports provided were sufficient to meet candidate needs.

Project Optimal adjusts the resources for effective operation of each of the Added Authorization programs. Interviews with program completers, fieldwork supervisors and Wiseburn Unified School District personnel indicated that there were sufficient information resources available online and that personnel were available as needed.

The process to determine resource needs is an informal one between Wiseburn Unified School District and Project Optimal.

Standard 4: Faculty and Instructional Personnel**Not Met**

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

Findings

Project Optimal has course developers, peer reviewers, and district-employed supervisors. It does not appear that they have traditional faculty that are assigned to teach courses. The project director monitors candidates' progress in self-taught and self-paced courses and is available to provide assistance if a candidate requests it or has failed a module multiple times. In this regard, she might be considered faculty since she does assist candidates having difficulty with content understanding. If a struggling candidate is in a content area beyond her purview, the director will call upon another content expert for assistance.

The project director and course developers do have current knowledge in the content that they develop into coursework and district-employed supervisors understand the context of public schooling. Because this is not a traditional teaching model, there does not appear to be evidence that faculty model best professional practice in teaching and learning, scholarship, and service.

As special educators, the project director and instructional staff (project director, practicum supervisors) are versed in the field of diverse abilities but there was no evidence that the instructional staff is reflective of a diverse society and knowledgeable about cultural, language, ethnic and gender diversity.

The Project Optimal instructional staff demonstrate an understanding of the academic standards, frameworks, and statewide accountability systems that drive California public schools as illustrated by curriculum vita, course development, and professional participation in educational special advocacy groups, and national standards council committees.

Interviews with P-12 educators confirmed that the staff collaborates regularly with colleagues in P-12 settings units and members of the broader, professional community.

Project Optimal team members participate in professional development activities relative to the role that person serves within the Project Optimal team. Project Optimal provides support for professional membership to national teacher preparation organizations and associations.

Project Optimal staff is reviewed annually and professional targets are identified for the coming year. Feedback from candidate and administrator surveys, emails, and other communications are used to evaluate them. The reviewers were unable to find evidence of fieldwork supervisors' evaluation.

Rationale

Many functions typically performed by faculty in teacher preparation programs are not present in Project Optimal's organizational structure. For instance, there is no faculty to teach or model best professional practices in teaching and learning, scholarship, and service. The reviewers were unable to discern that instructional staff is reflective of a diverse society and knowledgeable about cultural, language, ethnic and gender diversity. Interviews confirmed that that professional instructional staff are neither evaluated nor recognized for excellence.

Standard 5: Admission

Met

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

Findings

Applicants interested in an Added Authorization program complete admissions information on the Project Optimal website. As a part of this process, prospective candidates indicate the credential they hold. They also provide the name of two people who would recommend them for the program and the name of one person who might serve as their fieldwork supervisor.

An e-mail is sent to those who will recommend the candidate. The e-mail includes a link to a recommendation form. This form includes questions as to the appropriate professional experiences and personal characteristics of the candidate, including sensitivity to California's diverse population. Upon completion of all the materials and verification of the underlying authorization, the candidate is notified that they have been accepted into the program.

Program completers noted that admission information on the website was easy to use.

Standard 6: Advice and Assistance**Met**

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

Findings

Project Optimal provides a guided online advisement system that provides support and assistance to candidates from recruitment and admission to credential recommendation and professional placement. An online help desk, available to candidates 24/7, answers candidate questions regarding technology and content.

Through the online system Project Optimal staff and district fieldwork supervisors monitor candidates' progress for access and examination attempts. Candidates not completing courses in a timely manner or who do not pass exams within 4 attempts are flagged by an algorithm in the online system and contacted by program staff.

Candidates that are unable to finish the program within the required 12 months may work with Project Optimal to request an extension. The candidate completes a "Request for Extension" that includes the participant's plan for completion of the program. Each request is evaluated on an individual basis. Once approved, Project Optimal staff supports the candidates with advice and assistance.

Specific program requirements are provided online to guide each candidate through the admission and enrollment process. This process is designed to ensure each candidate meets eligibility criteria for the program. For example, only candidates who have a preliminary education specialist teaching credential are eligible to participate in these programs.

Prior to admission to the program, each candidate receives a communication that outlines credential and program requirements. During the program, Project Optimal staff monitors candidates' progress and performance as they work through the modules. Using the communication system such as the *i-learn* features, helpdesk, and dashboard, participants in the program have access to support from program staff.

An online system has been developed to track program progress and completion. If a candidate demonstrates difficulties, meaning the candidate has not passed exams after 4 attempts, Project Optimal provides additional supports and assistance to candidates and only recommends candidates who successfully complete program requirements. For candidates who

are unable to identify an appropriate professional placement that meets program fieldwork requirements, there is an alternate practicum available.

At the end of the program, using an online tracking system, the credential analyst reviews all assessment data and makes the recommendation for the added authorization. If a candidate does not successfully meet all of the requirements for program completion, then the credential recommendation is not made.

At this point there is no indication that Wiseburn USD has been participating in the oversight of Project Optimal's monitoring of candidate progress, nor its determination of candidate competence. Program leadership reported to the site visit team and it was confirmed in Board meeting minutes that Project Optimal would be providing quarterly reports and that Wiseburn would be taking a more active role in ensuring accountability for the process for advising and assisting candidates.

Standard 7: Field Experience and Clinical Practice

Met

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

Findings

Educators from surrounding districts and SELPA representatives worked on the original design of the program. Fieldwork practice is conceptualized as a series of competencies that are checked off. There is no evidence collected at the unit level regarding how candidates meet the field experience. Rather, fieldwork supervisors are advised that they are responsible for retaining evidence that would prove that fieldwork experiences were completed.

Program completers and employers noted that fieldwork covered the major knowledge and skill levels of each Added Authorization. Program completers shared that their experiences were very relevant and they appreciated the visits by their fieldwork supervisors. Program completers also noted that the fieldwork and coursework together helped them put a name to their practice and better determine the best strategies for improved student learning.

Candidates in the Added Authorization programs can complete their fieldwork in their classroom or at their school provided that the population is appropriate. If not, the Practicum Supervisor can provide names of locations where candidates can complete their fieldwork.

Candidates can access other sites for fieldwork because they have one year to complete program requirements. Practicum supervisors determine the appropriateness of school sites and determine if the personnel have the appropriate credentials.

Standard 8: District-Employed Supervisors

Met with Concerns

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

Findings

As confirmed by interviews and a review of supervisor rosters, district-employed supervisors, who are certified and experienced in either teaching the specified content or performing the services authorized by the credential, are approved to supervise candidates. Both candidates and supervisors verified that the role of the district-employed fieldwork supervisor is to certify that the applicant holds the proper credential, is teaching the appropriate population for the requested added authorization, and can successfully demonstrate the fieldwork competencies.

When applicants apply to the program, they nominate an employer supervisor to serve as their fieldwork supervisor. The Director of Project Optimal or a qualified Project Optimal team member screens all fieldwork supervisor applicants to ensure that they meet the following requirements: three years of experience teaching or working with students diagnosed with the disability of focus; a Master’s Degree in a related field; and a valid California Educational Specialist Teaching Credential.

Project Optimal has an established network of professionals who are knowledgeable about the program requirements and experts in the course content. To recruit new district-employed supervisors, Project Optimal collaborates with partner school districts, SELPAs, and county offices.

Supervisors are oriented to the supervisory role by online material and practicum supervisors established for each added authorization. The team found no evidence that district-employed supervisors were evaluated and recognized in a systematic manner by Project Optimal or Wiseburn School District. This was confirmed during interviews.

Rationale

The team found no evidence that district-employed supervisors were evaluated and recognized in a systematic manner by the program sponsor, Wiseburn Unified School District.

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

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

Findings

As documented by program matrices, courses within the Added Authorization Programs in Autism Spectrum Disorder, Early Childhood Special Education, Emotional Disturbance, and Traumatic Brain Injury were developed based on CCTC program standards. The Programs identified the knowledge and skills from the standards and aligned them to coursework.

Project Optimal's theoretical framework for learning is derived from information processing theory. In information processing approaches, testing is central to the learning process. Tests are designed to measure specific competencies through particular types of questions, systematically presented within the courses. The courses are based on establishing competencies at three levels of Bloom's Taxonomy: recall/retrieval, comprehension, and application. Each course includes tests at the end of each module, as well as a comprehensive test at the end of each course. These frequent and specific assessments ensure that candidates have the necessary professional knowledge to educate and support students in meeting academic standards.

As verified in supervisor and candidate interviews, fieldwork supervision is a process in which a candidate's identified fieldwork supervisor validates that the candidate holds an educational specialist credential and is working with the population served by the added authorization. Each authorization has identified areas of competency in which candidates are to be observed. The verification is a signed checklist. Though interviews of candidates, completers and fieldwork supervisors confirm fieldwork supervision does occur, there is no consistent process through which documentation is collected, reviewed and archived to ensure that all candidates demonstrate the professional knowledge and skills necessary to educate and support effectively all students in meeting the state-adopted academic standards.

A demonstration illustrated how Project Optimal collects and tracks the progress of participants' through passing tests using an online data collection and reporting system. The Progress Tracking Process also includes event notification, grade tracking, and progress reporting. Course managers with appropriate credentials are assigned to monitor the progress of candidates using these online administrative tools.

A credential analyst who is employed by Wiseburn but serves as a consultant for Project Optimal by MOU is responsible for submitting the credential recommendation after assuring that each candidate has the proper underlying authorization. Project Optimal sends the information to Wiseburn after verifying the completion of fieldwork, and coursework

requirements. Interviews and documents reviewed at the site confirm the efficacy of the verification process.

**Added Authorizations
Autism, Early Childhood Special Education,
Emotional Disturbance, and Traumatic Brain Injury
(Site Visit March 14-16, 2016)**

The Wiseburn Unified School District program is a very unique model in that all coursework and communication is done online through Project Optimal. The Program Design, and Candidate Competence is identical for every program, and the Course of Study is also similar, with the content being modified. These programs are standardized so that every program is arranged similar to the others so that there is a consistency in their appearance and their expectations. The programs are structured with norms and guidelines that are research-based and follow the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) guidelines for standards and processes, to ensure consistency and integrity.

Program Design

All four of the added authorizations have the same Program Design, with the program being divided into modules with assessments needing to be passed at a 90% rating before being able to advance to the next module. At the end of the course, there is a cumulative assessment that also must be completed at a 90% or better rating.

The Project Optimal programs are offered as an online distance learning program as defined by the U.S. Department of Education. There is no prior credit given for previously completed coursework to ensure consistent learner outcomes based on the Commission ASD Added Authorization Program Standards. Project Optimal will however give credit for prior fieldwork experience as long as this fieldwork can be verified by a qualified supervisor.

Each candidate has 12 months to complete the program once they have enrolled. Candidates must pass the course assessments with at least a 90% pass criteria. Within each topic area candidates must pass the quizzes and tests in order to move forward in the program. Fieldwork must be verified by a qualified supervisor employed within a school, school district or county education office in California to receive credit for the practicum requirements. If fieldwork cannot be verified then the candidate will be required to participate in the 45 hour practicum before all requirements of the ASD Added Authorization program can be met. The practicum is offered online and the supervision happens via Skype and instructor asynchronous and synchronous discussion. The comprehensive online community allows candidates to communicate with participants from many counties and form an extensive support network if desired. Instructor contact is offered through asynchronous and synchronous discussion for those students who need the additional support.

The end of the program survey is compulsory for all candidates before they can access their certificate of course completion. The candidates also have the opportunity to enter free text so they can leave comments. These surveys are reviewed daily by the Program Director as candidates complete the program. This allows Project Optimal to be very responsive as needed to any issues or challenges a candidate may have encountered. Candidates also have access to the helpdesk. This is another forum for candidates to give input and feedback, post questions, and resolve any challenges they may be experiencing.

School district administrators are also contacted regularly, a minimum of every 3 months, to ensure all of their school and district needs are being met. Job placement of candidates is reviewed after they have completed the ASD AASE as well as feedback on the impact the program had on their ability to do their job.

Administrators' survey feedback is looked at regarding school performance outcomes as well as the job satisfaction of the teachers who had completed the ASD AASE with Project Optimal. This feedback and input is discussed at the board meetings, executive team meetings, and the program management team meetings. Weekly staff meetings are held and part of the process is to prioritize any tasks related to quality improvement and stakeholder feedback. This information is used to continuously impact how they select, admit, and prepare candidates; measure their success; and use the data to make decisions about program improvement.

Course of Study

Each program is divided into modules that may include readings, videos, audio snippets, and vignettes. Candidates read through the module, completing exercises and attending to videos and audio snippets to learn the strategies and procedures of working with the appropriate students. During each module, there are assessments to ensure that the candidates fully understand the concepts just reviewed, so they can proceed to the next piece of the module. A competency model such as this does not allow the student to continue with the instruction until they have scored a 90% or better on every module. The coursework is equivalent to 120 classroom hours. Fieldwork must be verified and approved if the candidate is seeking equivalent credit for the practicum requirements. If the candidate does not have verifiable fieldwork from an approved fieldwork supervisor, then the candidate must complete the 45 hours practicum.

A candidate cannot commence the practicum until all coursework is completed. The practicum is where the candidate will demonstrate the application of the strategies and concepts learned in the coursework. The candidates complete their practicum within their district of employment. The candidate learns about and understands Autism Spectrum Disorders and in addition, the candidate learns how to conduct a functional behavioral assessment and then develop, implement, and monitor a Positive Behavioral Intervention Plan using person-centered approaches. Using Applied Behavior Analysis and Positive Behavior Supports, candidates will be able to apply specific support strategies such as Discrete Trail Teaching, Pivotal Response

Teaching and create optimal learning environments for the students they teach in the practicum. At the end of the practicum, the candidate must pass an exit exam with a 90% pass criteria on the key components of the practicum exercise.

Assessment of Candidates:

Candidates are informed about how they will be assessed in the program description published online, in the terms and conditions which must be agreed to before enrollment into the program, and through the Candidate Handbook. There is also an FAQ and an “ask a question” feature that can be accessed by all prospective and current candidates. Phone call appointments with instructor and/or the program director are also available upon request.

A candidate must pass all of the quizzes within the coursework and a final exam with a passing score of 90%. The practicum requires a positive behavior support plan and passing of a final exam for the practicum. For both the quizzes and exam there are eight different question types in the system: Fill-in-the-Blank; Multiple Responses; Multiple Choice with Fill-in-the-Blank; Multiple Response with Fill-in the-Blank; Drag and Drop; Hot Spot; Multiple Choice and True/False.

The testing is based on Bloom’s Taxonomy and three levels: Recall/retrieval, Comprehension and Application. The testing of a person’s comprehension and the ability to translate knowledge into practice is assessed through scenario based testing.

Candidates have up to 4 opportunities to pass each quiz and the final exam at a 90% pass criteria before they are flagged with the helpdesk team. At that point the candidate may be contacted by the program director, instructor, or the help desk to help assist them with any system or content issues. The candidate can at any time access assistance through the “red” help tab that is displayed continuously on their screen as they are working through the course material. The candidates can also email or call the instructor or program director at any point in time for assistance with content questions or needed clarification. Candidates receive immediate feedback after each quiz is completed and then directed back to the content for review if needed.

The candidate’s confidential dashboard allows the candidate to review quiz and test scores, progress, status of completion, and status of the completion of program requirements on a real time basis.

Findings on Standards

After review of the institutional report, supporting documentation, the completion of interviews with candidates, graduates, intern teachers, faculty, employers, and supervising practitioners, the team determined that all program standards are **Met** for the Added Authorizations for Autism, Early Childhood Special Education, Emotional Disturbance, and Traumatic Brain Injury.