Annual Report
on the 2015-2016 School Year
INTRODUCTION

The Merced County Office of Education (MCOE) provides Head Start and Early Head Start services in Atwater, Delhi, Dos Palos, El Nido, Gustine, Hilmar, Le Grand, Livingston, Los Banos, Merced, Planada, Santa Nella, Stevenson, and Winton. The program serves low-income or at-risk children and their families by providing services, referrals and follow-up in the areas of education, nutrition, health and social services. MCOE first received funding for the program in 2005. During the 2015-2016 school year MCOE was funded to serve 1060 preschool age children and 296 infants, toddlers and 2-year-olds; a total of 1278 children were served.

The Merced County Office of Education (MCOE) is the grantee for the Head Start program. The Superintendent, as a ‘Board of One’ serves as the governing body. The Head Start Policy Council serves as an additional oversight and decision making council, and is comprised of Head Start parents as well as representatives from a variety of community agencies. Head Start is a program of the Early Education department of MCOE, which provides educational leadership in the delivery of services for children 0-5 across Merced County.

MCOE Head Start promotes the school readiness of low-income children by meeting their educational, health, nutritional and social needs in a safe, caring and stimulating environment. The program offers a variety of program options, specifically tailored to meet the needs of families in both urban and rural communities. This includes both center-based and home-based program options, as well as family child care. Early Head Start centers and Family Child Care homes serve children birth to 3-years-old year-round ten hours each day, to accommodate the needs of families with very young children that are working or attending school or training. Head Start centers serve 3 and 4-year-olds 3.5 hours daily in the part day option, or ten hours daily in the full day option depending on need and location. Home-based services are provided once a week for 1.5 hours plus twice monthly social experiences.
ENROLLMENT

MCOE Head Start achieved full enrollment in all options but Family Child Care for the 2015-16 school year. Waiting lists were maintained in nearly every community that the program serves. Fifty-Eight (58%) percent of preschool children were four years old, and 42% percent were three years old. Eleven point five percent (11.5%) of the total enrollment was made up of children with diagnosed disabilities.

RACE/ETHNICITY

MCOE Head Start serves children from many cultural backgrounds. In the 2015-2016 school year, 11% of children were white (non-Hispanic), 74% were Hispanic, 5% were black/African-American, and 7% were Asian. Three percent (3%) of families considered their children to be from multiple backgrounds.

LANGUAGES

Fifty-eight percent (57%) of families spoke English at home, while 38% of families spoke Spanish, 5% spoke Hmong and 1% spoke a different language.

DISABILITIES SERVICES

MCOE Head Start provides services to over 100 children with disabilities annually. Most are included in regular classrooms. Staff receive extensive training to support children with special needs, and every classroom is provided with equipment to ensure that any child with special needs can be fully included in all program activities.

In 2015-2016, MCOE Head Start provided services to 117 preschool aged children with special needs, and 62 children 0-3 with special needs. Approximately 59% of these children had speech and language delays, 3% had an intellectual disability, 25% had autism, 3% had an orthopedic impairment, and 10% had another type of impairment.
MCOE Head Start takes a comprehensive approach to school readiness. To be successful in school children must have achieved appropriate growth in four key developmental areas: social, emotional, physical and cognitive. Additionally they must be healthy, well nourished, and safe. Parent engagement is critical. MCOE Head Start provides developmentally appropriate educational services in the context of nurturing relationships with full family engagement, in an environment of acceptance and support that respects gender, culture, language, ethnicity and family composition. The purpose of the program is to help children gain knowledge, skills and confidence necessary to be prepared to succeed in their present environment and with later responsibilities in school and life.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

The academic program for preschoolers was based on the Frog Street Curriculum. For the coming year, the Frog Street Curriculum will be used for 3 and 4-year-old children. Frog Street is research-based and helps children build knowledge and skills in math, language, science and the arts, while promoting cognitive, physical and socio-emotional development.

Creative Curriculum is used throughout the Early Head Start program because it is relationship based and addresses the growth and development of infants and toddlers. The home-based program also supplements Creative Curriculum with Partners for a Healthy Baby, which provides a strong parent education and support component for Head Start and Early Head Start children.
There is a strong focus on learning through physical activity in all Head Start and Early Head Start program options. Resources from the *I am Moving I am Learning* initiative and the *SPARK* curriculum are used in all preschool classrooms and home-based settings to help children and families learn and develop physical strength, as well as to combat obesity. Early Head Start staff utilize activities from the *Creative Curriculum, Body Start* and *Little Voices for Healthy Choices* to promote physical activity in an age-appropriate manner.

The Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) is utilized to measure children’s progress in key educational outcome areas. The assessment is completed on each enrolled child three times annually. Data is summarized and analyzed in order to plan for staff training and other supports for children in these key areas. The following graphs demonstrate the progress four-year-old children made from Fall 2015 to Spring 2016 in two key areas, Letter and Word Knowledge and Number Sense and Counting.

**TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN**

Every school year, the Head Start Program collaborates with each of the school districts in the county that receive Head Start children transitioning into Kindergarten, or Transitional Kindergarten. Last year, 601 four-year-olds completed the year at MCOE Head Start and transitioned into Merced County Kindergartens or Transitional Kindergartens.
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Family engagement is a central focus of MCOE Head Start. Family members have the opportunity to set goals for themselves, and are included in the goal setting process for each child. During the 2015-2016 school year 41 family members volunteered in the program. This is a dramatic drop in parent volunteers as a result of the new immunization Lan SB 792.

Head Start places a significant focus on parent education. During the 2015-2016 school year, the following parent workshops took place at the different Head Start sites:

- Family Literacy
- Volunteering in the Community
- Job Readiness
- Family Budgeting and Financial Literacy
- Parenting Classes
- CPR/First Aid and Safety
- Parent Advocacy
- Transitioning to Kindergarten
- Family Nutrition and Wellness
- Preventing Childhood/Family Illness
- The Importance of Male Engagement

Each center offers a special activity to engage men in activities with children. This year options included a ‘Man Plays with Food’ workshop, “Silly Slimy Science”, and Men and Children Moving Together” providing opportunities for men and children to learn new approaches to communication while making fun and healthy snacks, exploring science concepts, or learning how to increase physical activity by moving to music together.

Most centers also provided educational family I children participated in fun physical activities in a festive atmosphere.
HEALTH AND NUTRITION SERVICES

Head Start offers comprehensive health and nutrition services to all enrolled families. Head Start staff complete hearing, vision and nutritional screenings on children who have not been screened by their primary care physician, and work with the family to provide resources and support if any follow up is necessary.

Head Start family services staff also work with each family to ensure that every child has medical insurance, and is up-to-date on all of their physicals, immunizations and dental exams. In the 2015-2016 program year, 99.7% of families had health insurance and received a physical for their Head Start child. Ninety point six percent (90.6%) of Head Start children and 74.9% of Early Head Start children received a dental exam or, in children under one year, appropriate early dental screening with their primary care physician during the program year.

Child wellness is promoted by providing nutrition services that meet the nutritional needs of infants and children while establishing good eating habits that nurture healthy development and life-long well-being. During 2015-2016 72.7% of Head Start families and 69.7% of Early Head Start families were enrolled in WIC, and an average of 58.7% of all enrolled families were receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP). Gardens at each Head Start and Early Head Start center provided an outdoor classroom and also encouraged healthy eating. Families were invited to participate and create their own gardens with the expectation that this will increase accessibility to healthy seasonal foods.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

MCOE Head Start is a mentor site for the Center for Emotional Foundations for Learning. Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is embedded in the curriculum at all age levels. It is not unusual to see children using PBS when a conflict occurs. Even toddlers frequently model the concepts! During the 2015-2016 school year teaching staff had the opportunity to advance their PBS skills through workshops, trainings, and mentoring. Parents learned about PBS at parent meetings and through modeling in the classroom. Children learned about PBS through their daily routines at school. Conscious Discipline was also introduced to staff and is embedded in the new curriculum.
FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

In the fiscal year 2015-2016, MCOE received $8,329,000 in federal funds for Head Start program operations, $2,500,772 for Early Head Start program operations and $1,439,470 for Early Head Start Child Care Partnership program operations. Federal funds were also received specifically for training and technical assistance in the amounts of $86,271, $62,950, $84,340 for Head Start, Early Head Start and Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships respectively. $703,540 was received in reimbursement from the Child and Adult Care Food Program. An additional $177,167 was received for Early Head Start Child Care Partnership Start Up.

The budget proposed for the 2016-2017 school year for Head Start was $8,519,317 for Program Operations and $86,271 for Training and Technical Assistance. The budget proposed for Early Head Start for 16-17 was $2,550,734 for Program Operations and $62,950 for Training and Technical Assistance. The budget proposed for Early Head Start Child Care Partnership for 2016-2017 was $1,623,596 for Program Operations and $45,590 for Training and Technical Assistance. This is a combined total of $13,383,510 with a non-federal share obligation of $3,220,864. Non-federal share obligation is met through “In-kind” services from parents and the community.

MCOE Head Start undergoes an audit each year. There were no findings in the most recent audit report conducted for the Merced County Office of Education.

FEDERAL REVIEW

The most recent Federal review of the MCOE Head Start program was conducted in 2015 and focused on Fiscal Integrity and ERSEA (Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment and Attendance). MCOE Head Start was found to be compliant with all applicable regulations.

Merced County Office of Education
Head Start Administrative Office
2130 Cooper Ave
Merced, CA 95348
209-381-5170
Fax: (209) 381-5172