

Merced County Office of Education

## Merced Scholars Charter School

### 2004-2005 School Summary Report

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#### Principal's Message

Merced Scholars Charter School (MSCS) is a high school designed to serve home school students in Merced County and adjacent counties. MSCS offers a program rich in diversity, strong in academic achievement, and is committed to providing each student with a personalized education of distinction.

Our purpose is to connect grades 9-12 home school students with guidance and resources, leading to a seamless transition into post-secondary education. We honor the concern and dedication of families who choose the demanding, yet rewarding, task of home schooling their children.

Students are guided and encouraged to become lifelong learners. Students will also complete core academics and demonstrate both academic mastery and the interpersonal skills necessary for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We stand tall in our dedication to improve in our commitment to our community of students and our efforts to ensure that all of our students have the opportunity to succeed and excel, both personally and academically.

#### Parental Involvement

Merced Scholars Charter School offers many opportunities for parents to become involved with their children's educational experience:

#### Home School Teacher

Since MSCS is a home school, parental involvement is an integral part of the learning process. MSCS teachers are the facilitators, preparing weekly lessons, while the parent/caregiver provides instruction and assistance at home.

#### MSCS Advisory Board

The Merced County Office of Education (MCOE) Board of Education is the governing board for the school and is responsible for making policy decisions. The MCOE Board of Education is also responsive to procedure and policy decisions which are endorsed by the MSCS Advisory Board. This Board serves in a capacity to review and recommend to the MCOE Governing Board. The MSCS Advisory Board was established under the by-laws of the Charter Petition and includes two parent representatives; both were elected by balloting of the MSCS parent population. There is also a community representative, who may or may not be a parent, two teacher representatives, one MCOE Superintendent's Designee, and the MSCS Principal, who serves as the Advisory Board Secretary. The Advisory Board meets quarterly and encourages all parents to attend the Board's Annual Meeting.

#### Field Trips

All parents are encouraged to attend MSCS field trips. MSCS sponsors both academic and entertaining field trips that provide an opportunity for parents to network with other home-schooling parents.



**Lee Andersen**  
Superintendent

**Evelyn Eagleton**  
Asst. Superintendent

**Michele Fagundes**  
Principal



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## Charter School Summary for 2004-2005

In reflecting upon the first year of operation for Merced Scholars Charter School, our contributions and accomplishments have been significant. We have truly committed to our mission of providing a personalized, one-on-one home school instructional model within a classroom environment that is reflective of caring and committed educators. We have been focused to meet the mission, purpose, goals, and objectives outlined in our Charter Petition. The success and progress detailed below would not have been possible without the prudent management of our budget through CAE fiscal oversight, the dedication of an exemplary teaching staff, and the commitment and support of our mission by CAE and MCOE leadership. Evidence of our success includes:

- Dedication to student personalization, as evidenced by low student-teacher pupil assignments of 20:1 (50 students as annual enrollment, with 42 as active enrollment)
- Development of an active seven-member Advisory Board
- All instructional materials aligned with California State Standards
- Compliance with California State Academic and Physical Education Testing Requirements
- Parental involvement encouraged and is evidenced at student instructional meetings, attendance at field trips, and school activities

**Academic Enrichment Activities and Programs** have included quarterly testing of core academic competencies through an in-house Standardized Testing and Reporting program (STAR); a six-week Art Instructional Program with the local Arts Council; Biological Science labs; Spanish instructional tutorial; Math tutorial; California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) and CAT VI preparation sessions; project-based instruction in English language arts, social science, and science; a strong partnership with our local community college, encouraging and facilitating the process for students to enroll in advanced coursework; and graduation ceremonies.

**Career Education and Postsecondary Enrichment Activities and Programs** have included field trips to our local community college, CSU, and UC institutions; development of career exploration activities with Merced College; personalized academic and career counseling in partnership with Merced College guidance staff; and implementation of a Career Employability Portfolio.

**Instructional Enrichment Activities and Programs** have included field trips to community laboratories, such as museums and community college classrooms; individual lessons personalized to student interests and talents with local visual and performing arts instructors in the area of voice and instrumental performance; physical education contracts with licensed Karate instructors and local fitness labs; and a Celebration of Learning event, where students showcased their academic and personal talents and accomplishments in front of an audience of over 150 attendees.

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## Facilities

Merced Scholars Charter School is located in the Castle Science and Technology Building at the Castle Air Force Base Military Institution, which was closed over ten years ago. The facility was built in the 1950s, but has since been restructured for civilian purposes. The school occupies approximately 1,583 square feet of the building with four offices, a curriculum room, and access to an adjacent large meeting facility and testing rooms. Two of the offices contain five computers, with Internet capacity, for student use, and plans are in place to add eight more computers in the fall of 2005.

MSCS plans to expand its operations to include two more offices for staff and students. All of the offices are in compliance with safety regulations and codes. All of the offices, restrooms, and facilities are clean and well-maintained.

The grounds and facilities are maintained by the Challenger Learning Center janitorial staff throughout the day. School offices are maintained by an individual teacher or staff member.



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**Personal and Social Enrichment Programs** have included social activities held at the school, development of a Student Organization with a four-tenet purpose of Community Service, Leadership Development, Social Applications, and Academic/Career Development Exploration.

In place for implementation for the 2005-2006 school year, just our second year of operation, will include:

- A computer lab, with a computer literacy requirement being met with an on-campus course.
- A lab component requirement for Life Science, which will be met with on-campus science labs.
- The addition of a Career Educator teaching position to ensure the implementation of a personalized career education plan for every student, which will include career exploration opportunities, career technical training, and postsecondary research and guidance.
- The development of a school wide comprehensive career education and guidance plan, inclusive of sequenced competencies and activities across grades 9-12.
- The offering of on-campus electives, such as journalism, desktop publishing, and leadership development.

### **Instruction and Leadership**

Merced Scholars Charter School's program is strongly influenced by the California State Standards. MSCS takes every opportunity to improve curriculum and notes areas in need of improvement. Staff has the responsibility to review and make recommendations regarding current curriculum. Teachers work to analyze, modify, and implement new curriculum and instructional strategies.

The instructional leadership of MSCS is a shared process. Teachers, along with the administrator, participate collegially in school development. Both staff and parents play key roles in school leadership, and work together as a cohesive unit to uphold the Charter's mission and goals.

MSCS's instructional program includes methods to monitor progress of underperforming students. Underperforming students are required to attend tutorials, and are re-evaluated at each scheduled appointment for progress. Underperforming student groups can be identified through various data provided by Merced County Department of Education and the California Department of Education, as well as through MSCS's in-house systems. Grades, attendance, and credit completion reports are monitored by staff to determine which students require more assistance to achieve academic success.

MSCS makes every effort to ensure equal access to the core curriculum for all students, including English learners (ELs) and placement of individuals with exceptional needs in the least restrictive environment. ELs and special needs students are evaluated by support services provided by the Merced County Office of Education in accordance with Education Code Section 47641 (b).

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## **Counselor and Staff Services**

### **Post-secondary Education**

MSCS provides the opportunity for college-ready students to enroll at a community college. College placement tests, the LASSIE and Accuplacer, are administered on-site. Results of these tests are reviewed with the local Community College Counselor and the student. The purpose is to work with students, beginning in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, to assist them to meet their college and career goals, and to ensure students understand academic strengths they personally have developed, or need to acquire, for their long-term career goals.

### **School-to-Career**

MSCS students have the opportunity to participate in Career Technical Training through the Merced County Regional Occupational Program. Career education guidance and exploration are also educational components emphasized at the Charter School. Direct connection is aligned with English language arts coursework and through career and college field trips. Additionally, students can access programs, such as Eureka, to explore career options and investigate employment opportunities.

### **Enrichment Programs**

MSCS students may participate in classes at the Arts Council, music/voice lessons, and have physical fitness training at a local gym.

Support services are provided by the Merced County Office of Education. MSCS currently does not employ a full-time counselor.

### **Professional Development**

Each teacher is required to have at least three days dedicated to professional development.

MSCS offers its faculty many opportunities for professional development. Staff has attended conferences held for Charter Schools, and numerous staff development trainings, including Exceeding Customer Expectations, Career Pictorial, Educational Web Site Information, Project Based Learning, and Eureka Career Education software training.

MSCS teachers have the opportunity to participate in programs such as the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program for new teachers, and the Peer Assistance Review (PAR) program, which provides assistance for new and veteran teachers in the areas of subject matter knowledge, teaching strategies, teaching methods, and instruction. These programs are offered through the Merced County Office of Education, our sponsoring agency.

### **Teacher Evaluations**

On a biannual basis, teachers are observed and evaluated by the school administrator. Teachers are evaluated in four domains: planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibility. The evaluator notes strengths and weaknesses, and provides suggestions. If needed, an individual improvement plan is developed and is noted for follow-up on the next evaluation. Teachers also have an opportunity to provide feedback and a self-evaluation.



### **School Safety**

MSCS follows the Safety Plan designed by the Merced County Office of Education, its sponsoring agency. MSCS has a comprehensive safety plan and provides safety training, which is conducted annually, to ensure that every one is aware of the procedures to follow in case of an emergency. The Safety Plan is listed in the 2005-06 Parent Handbook.

Safety training includes, but is not limited to, earthquake, fire, or any incident requiring that the building be secured for any length of time.

Teachers are required to participate in safety trainings, by which safety and health information is relayed. Trainings are provided when:

- An employee is first hired.
- An employee is given a new job assignment for which training has not been previously given.
- A new substance, process, procedure, or equipment is introduced to the workplace and represents a new hazard.
- Supervisors need to be familiarized with the safety and health hazards to which their employees will be exposed.

## **Positive Learning Environment**

Merced Scholars Charter School programs and practices foster a climate that promotes a positive learning environment.

## **Student Organization**

Part of our mission as a home-based Charter School is to prepare students with the interpersonal skills needed to become productive, community-minded individuals. An important piece of said preparation is the opportunity to develop leadership skills through the MSCS Student Organization. Officers of the MSCS Student Organization are elected by their fellow students with a purpose of developing ideas for school activities, community service, and fund-raising. They act as a voice for their comrades and are dynamic in nature, continually evolving and changing to meet the needs of the school, families, and community.

## **Newsletter**

MSCS publishes a monthly newsletter that provides a wealth of information to both students and parents about the activities at the school. Important dates for testing, field trips, and events are posted, along with reports on prior activities. The newsletter may also be found on the school's web site.

## **California Fitness Test**

The California Fitness Test is administered to all ninth graders. MSCS uses FITNESSGRAM, a program developed by the Cooper Institute, to measure health-related physical fitness.

## **Health Courses**

MSCS promotes healthy living via direct instruction in health courses, and encourages the development of healthy behaviors that will last a lifetime.

## **Student Handbook**

Each student is provided with a Student Handbook that outlines MSCS's Behavior Expectations and Rules in accordance with the California Education Code. Teachers, administrators, and staff enforce the Behavior Expectations, contributing to a positive learning environment.

## **Sexual Harassment Training**

Teachers and staff have taken part in Sexual Harassment Training to help provide a safe and secure environment that is conducive to learning. Staff is aware of the guidelines set forth by the California Education Code concerning sexual harassment, and is prepared to enforce the Behavior Expectations and Rules accordingly.

## **Substitute Teachers**

Merced Scholars Charter School is a high school that serves home-schooling families. Since we offer one-on-one instruction by a weekly appointment, we do not have the need for substitute teachers at this time. Appointments may be rescheduled to accommodate an absence; however, our teachers are fully trained and prepared to handle any student file in case a teacher must leave for an emergency.

## **Textbooks**

The process in which textbooks are selected is as follows:

1. Teachers recommend textbooks for core and elective courses according to the standards set forth by the State of California.
2. Textbook recommendations go before the Advisory Board for approval and adoption.
3. Textbook is either approved or disapproved.

The school district adheres to the state-adoption cycle for purchasing textbooks.

Each pupil has access to their own copy of the standards-aligned textbooks (approved by the State Board of Education) and instructional materials in the core curriculum areas of reading/language arts, math, science, history/social science, foreign language, and health.

The California State Board of Education does not have an adoption policy for high school textbooks. Therefore, MSCS has set into policy that textbooks with written alignment to the California State Standards are the only resources we will purchase.

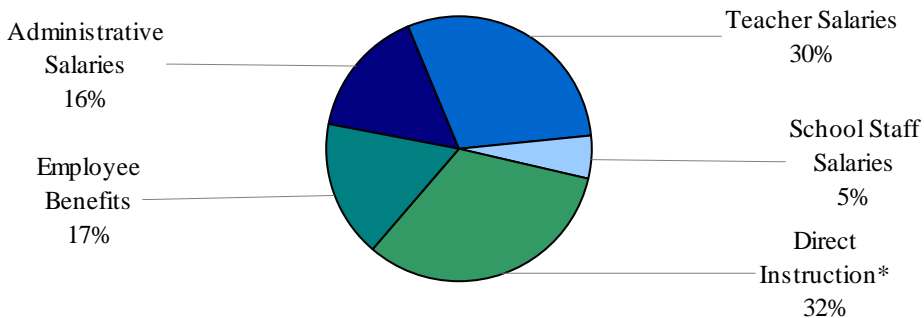


Subject	Textbook Name	Year Adopted	Standards Based
Math	Mathematics: Applications & Concepts Course 1,2, & 3	2005	Yes
Math	Algebra Concepts and Applications	2005	Yes
Math	Geometry Concepts and Applications	2005	Yes
Math	Algebra 2	2005	Yes
Math	Mathematics with Business Applications	2005	Yes
Science	Glencoe Life Science	2005	Yes
Science	Biology: The Dynamics of Life	2005	Yes
Science	Glencoe Earth Science	2005	Yes
Science	Glencoe Physical Science	2005	Yes
Social Studies	World Geography: Building A Global Perspective	2005	Yes
Social Studies	World History: Modern Times	2005	Yes
Social Studies	American Vision	2005	Yes
Social Studies	America's Story 1 & 2	2005	Yes
Social Studies	Economics: Concepts and Applications	2005	Yes
Social Studies	Economics: Today & Tomorrow	2005	Yes
Social Studies	MacGruder's American Government	2005	Yes
Language Arts/English	Reader's Choice Course 2 & 3	2005	Yes
Language Arts/English	The Language of Literature 9	2005	Yes
Language Arts/English	The Language of Literature 10	2005	Yes
Language Arts/English	The Language of Literature 11	2005	Yes
Language Arts/English	The Language of Literature 12	2005	Yes

### District Expenditures

The graph below depicts how the Merced Scholars Charter School spent its funds in 2004-2005.

### Budget Expenditures



\* Merced Scholars Charter School received a start-up grant from the California Department of Education which was used as Implementation Funding directly toward classroom instructional needs.

The information contained herein is provided by the Merced Scholars Charter School. Data gathering, compilation, layout, and design are provided by School Innovations & Advocacy ([www.sia-us.com](http://www.sia-us.com)).

