



Merced Local Planning Council (LPC) Meeting Minutes

Date: May 20, 2025

Time: 12:33 PM

Location: MCOE EE Large Conference Room

Members Present

Name	Membership Category	Agency
Monica Garza	A	Merced County Office of Education/Early Education – Early Head Start/Head Start
Lurdes Parra	A	Family Child Care Provider
Jennifer Rocha	A	Los Banos Unified School District
Antonio Pasillas Lopez	B	Parent Leadership Training Institute
Linda Griffin	B	Community Boards & Coalitions
Jacqueline Esquivel	C	Consumer
Brianna Onteo	C	Consumer
Marie Hicks	D	Merced City School District
Scott Waite	D	First 5 Merced
Amy Mello	E	Merced City School District
Stephanie Dunn	E	Gateway EduCare
Danielle Waite	E	UC Merced Child Development Center

Appointing Agencies & Staff

Vanessa Mininger	MCOE EESP- LPC Coordinator
Loreno Burrola	MCOE EESP- Director

Others Present

Anna Moreno	CCCDS
Yolanda Valencia	CCCDS
Esmeralda Cortes	GVHS
Sandra Lee	WUSD
Jenny Mendoza	MCOE - CPIN Lead
Jacqueline Onofre	MCOE- Early Ed
Andrea Cruthird-Mays	MCOE College & Career
Nick Tarbat	Lakeshore
Don Ellis	Lakeshore
Joyce Darbo	MCOE - HS
Vicky Solis	MCOE - HS
Jeannette Carbajal	MCOE - Early Ed
Juan Ramirez	MCOE - Early Ed
Judy Xiong	WUSD
Elycia Pimentel	MCOE
Mailia Moua	WUSD

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:33 PM by Monica Garza.

2. Introductions

- Attendees introduced themselves, including representatives from various early education programs, childcare providers, and community representatives.

3. Public Comment

- Nick thanked Merced County for its continued support in curriculum assistance, educational manipulatives, and professional development. New sensory items, including a sensory rocker and color-changing infinity mirror, were introduced and are available for sampling. With the fiscal year ending June 30th, districts were encouraged to use remaining funds, as most items are in stock. The speaker also showcased customizable school readiness backpacks and Pre-K to Kinder kits that support family engagement. Clipboards were distributed to attendees, and Don Ellis, Regional VP of the Northwest, was introduced. The team emphasized its commitment to supporting educators and students. The meeting started with Monica Garza and transitioned to Scott Waite, who facilitated the rest of the meeting.

4. Conflict of Interest Statement and Consent Calendar

There was no conflict-of-interest.

- Danielle noticed the date on the minutes is incorrect and requested to include more detailed summaries in the meeting minutes to reflect what was presented and shared. This would help attendees recall key points from presentations, especially in meetings that may not be as comprehensive as this one. A question was raised regarding the highlights on the agenda. Vanessa clarified that they are notes and will be addressed during the report discussion.
- Motion to approve: Jennifer Rocha
- Seconded by: Linda Griffin
- Approved

5. Calendar for 2025-2026

- Vanessa reviewed the meeting schedule for the upcoming year. It was suggested that the first meeting be moved from August to September to allow more time for members to settle in after summer break. It was noted that while the August meeting had decent attendance, holding the first meeting in September might improve participation. A proposal was made to adjust the meeting schedule to September and November, instead of August and October. This would avoid a long gap between meetings from October to January and allow for a more consistent every-other-month schedule from September through May. This adjustment better aligns with end-of-month deadlines and provides more time to add the meeting to the calendar for the Board of Supervisors. This proposed schedule aligns well with the committee's action items and offers more flexibility to meet deadlines. July will remain a dark month with no scheduled meeting.
- Motion to approve: Amy Mello
- Seconded by: Jennifer Rocha
- Approved

6. Nominations/Elections for 2nd Chair

- The committee began the process of filling the Second Chair position for the 2025–2026 term, which will progress to First Chair for 2026–2027 and 2027–2028. Scott will be stepping into the Chair role, Monica will transition into an advisory position on the Executive Board, and Marie will move into the First Chair position. As such, a new Second Chair must be selected. Nominations were opened for current board members to serve in this leadership progression. It was clarified that only current faculty board members are eligible, and guests are not subject to nomination. The responsibilities were briefly described, with encouragement provided to potential candidates, noting that the role, while important, is manageable. As no immediate volunteers came forward, the group discussed forming a subcommittee to identify and nominate a candidate. It was noted that serving on the nominating subcommittee would not make one eligible for nomination. Vanessa volunteered to assist, offering support to help move the process forward. Shortly afterward, Amy Mello self-nominated for the Second Chair role.
- Motion to approve: Amy Mello
- Seconded by: Danielle Waite
- Approved

7. Zip Code Priorities

- The committee reviewed the updated Zip Code Priorities Assessment, which is used to guide state and federal funding decisions related to child care needs. The assessment, conducted by Joanne Brion, analyzed underserved areas using 2020 ELNET data, focusing on the number of eligible children and the availability of child care providers within each zip code.
- Zip codes were categorized into three priority levels:
- Priority 1 includes areas where 40% or more of eligible children are underserved and there are over 200 eligible children.
- Priority 2 includes areas with 25% or more underserved and over 100 eligible children.
- Priority 3 includes areas with 25% or more underserved and more than 50 eligible children.
- During the discussion, clarification was provided regarding the differences between this report and the strategic plan. The Zip Code Priorities report specifically targets subsidized care needs, whereas the Strategic Plan includes all children regardless of income. It was also noted that several zip codes have shifted from Priority 1 to Priority 3, which may impact future funding decisions, although the exact implications are currently unknown.
- Motion to approve: Jennifer Rocha
- Seconded by: Jacqueline Esquivel
- Approved

8. LPC Membership

- The committee reviewed an application from Susie Silvera to serve as a community representative on the Local Planning Council (LPC). Vanessa shared that Susie attended the previous meeting and subsequently submitted her application. She is the only applicant received for the community representative position and will be brought on to the LPC. Susie is the owner of Wholehearted Kids and works extensively with families of children with special needs, supporting parents in advocacy and directly working with children as a licensed chiropractor. She also has a longstanding background in education within Merced County. The committee noted that a public agency representative is still needed. Vanessa has reached out to HSA regarding potential interest, and the committee will continue to accept applications for this role throughout the summer. If only one application is received, that individual will be appointed in August; otherwise, an ad hoc meeting will be formed to review and select a candidate. It was recommended that once the vacancy is officially posted by the Board, members should share the announcement within their networks to increase visibility, as such postings are often limited in outreach.
- Motion to approve: Danielle Waite
- Second by: Linda Griffin
- Approved

9. Strategic Plan

- The committee reviewed the newly developed LPC Strategic Plan and its executive summary, which will serve as the guiding document for the next five years. Vanessa introduced the summary, noting it is a condensed version of a 130-page report and will be instrumental in guiding subcommittee work and outreach to community partners and stakeholders. The summary highlights contributions from local childcare partners and agencies and aims to support collaboration, advocacy, and grant writing efforts. Joanne Brion, who led the development of the plan, was present to answer questions and explained that the full report contains extensive data, research summaries, and analysis on early learning and care needs, and will be made available as a reference. Vanessa emphasized that the summary will be used in meetings with supervisors, city officials, and business leaders, and that printed copies will be distributed to key partners. Committee members were invited to review the draft and submit any typographical or non-material edits to Vanessa by June 1. Concerns were raised regarding the consistency of data between the strategic plan and the recent Zip Code Priorities report. As a result, the committee decided to table formal approval until the September meeting to allow additional time for data review and input. In the interim, the document may be shared in draft form for outreach purposes.

10. LPC Reports

a. Legislative Updates

- Vanessa noted that the legislative report may need to be revised pending new information from the state. She shared that the team had hoped to have their legislative expert present to provide an update, but he was unavailable due to another meeting. Vanessa will be attending a legislative update session at 2:00 PM and will distribute the most current information to the committee via email afterward. As a result, a full legislative update could not be presented during the meeting.

b. Legislative Summit

- Vanessa provided an update on the second annual Legislative Summit, which was held on Thursday, May 1st. The event was well attended, with over 80 participants, including several new faces. Feedback from attendees was positive, particularly regarding the data presented and the overall engagement. The fiscal impact of the summit was minimal and did not draw from the LPC's budget. Planning for next year's summit will begin in July, and those interested in participating in the planning subcommittee are encouraged to reach out to Vanessa.

c. Leadership Day

- Vanessa provided a summary of the Leadership Day event, which took place the day after the Legislative Summit and had approximately 45 attendees. The event was well-received, featuring informative breakout sessions and a collaborative speaker who focused on strategies for working together to achieve shared goals. Vanessa shared that, given the scheduling of three consecutive events—Legislative Summit, Leadership Day, and the Early Education Conference—there is consideration for consolidating next year's Leadership Day into a leadership track within the Early Education Day. This would streamline the events into a single day while still serving both leadership and educator audiences. Anyone interested in joining the planning team for this potential change was encouraged to reach out. The event was funded through UPK dollars.

d. Voluntary Temporary Transfer of Funds

- Vanessa reported on the successful facilitation of a Voluntary Temporary Transfer of Funds (VTTF) between Kern County on behalf of Merced County's California Alternative Payment Program (CAP). The process, initially expected to be lengthy, was completed efficiently in just two weeks and involved minimal paperwork. As a result, Merced County was able to secure an additional \$7,373,185 in funding for its CAP program, avoiding the need to return unused funds to the state. This year, there was a notable increase in collaboration among LPC coordinators across the state, with more counties willing to both offer and request transfers, marking a positive shift in communication and resource sharing. Although the exact number of additional children served through the transferred funds is not yet available, the CAP program has been operating at high capacity. Vanessa emphasized the importance of staying informed about contract balances and committed to continuing efforts to retain and attract funding to Merced County.

11. Council Discussions-Sub-Committee Reports

- **Workforce Development:** Danielle and Scott provided an update on the Workforce Development Subcommittee, noting that the group has not met recently. However, a new professional development opportunity is underway. In partnership with UC Merced, a free training session is being offered to develop Professional Growth Advisors (PGAs) to support early educators across Merced County. The training, hosted by Jenny Mendoza, aims to build a broader network of advisors to assist with tasks such as permit renewals, system navigation, and updates related to the forthcoming P-3 credential and the new competency-based child development permit. The event will take place on Thursday, May 29, at UC Merced, with parking available after 6 PM. Two Zoom sessions will also be offered. Currently, the training is at half capacity, and the committee encouraged attendees to share the flyer and QR code with qualified individuals. Participants are required to have basic information ready, including permit type, number, and expiration date. This initiative is open to professionals across TK, family child care, Head Start, Early Head Start, and private centers, and participation also counts toward permit renewal hours.
- **QRIS:** Lorena provided a brief update on the Quality Rating and Support (QRS) subcommittee, noting that currently only she and Marie are serving on the committee.

The subcommittee met earlier to develop and distribute a survey to all California State Preschool Program (CSPP) sites. The survey focused on CLASS-related needs and the availability for observations. With Marie's support, the survey was finalized and disseminated, and responses have been collected. All CLASS observations are now complete, and staff are currently working on scheduling feedback sessions for participating sites. An additional update regarding QRS ratings will be provided at the meeting scheduled for 2:00 PM later that day.

- **Collaboration/Public Relations:** Vanessa provided an update on the Collaboration and Public Relations efforts, highlighting ongoing meetings with County Supervisors to share data and advocate for early care and education. The meetings have been productive, with supervisors expressing strong awareness and support for increasing early learning opportunities. Discussions included land use issues, regulatory and tax requirements, and the inconsistent fee structures across different cities. The committee felt encouraged by the responsiveness and engagement of local officials. Looking ahead, efforts will expand to include outreach to business leaders, with a focus on educating them about options such as employer-sponsored child care. There is hope that MCOE will set an example by leading in this area.
- **Special Projects/UPK:** The Special Project on Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK), led by Vanessa and Lorena, was briefly referenced in relation to Leadership Day, which was primarily organized and reported on by Vanessa. No additional updates were provided during this meeting regarding UPK-specific activities, as the related discussions were already covered earlier in the meeting.
- **Data:** Scott noted that Dr. Rousso was not present but had been heavily involved in the data-related work for the needs assessment, much of which is now concluded with the final strategic plan in place. The data committee has not met recently, though Vanessa has continued to engage members by sharing data and surveys via email. Several members, including Scott, confirmed they had provided feedback or engaged in communication through email as part of this ongoing review process.
- **Family Engagement:** The committee reported that while there are no major new events currently planned, efforts continue under the leadership of Karina, who oversees the program. She is preparing for the upcoming Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI)—a 22-week civic engagement and advocacy course for parents—with sessions scheduled to begin in August in Los Banos. In addition, she is working to schedule Child Leadership Training Institute (CLTI) sessions, which parallel PLTI but are tailored for children ages 3 to 12. Flyers will be distributed once available. Committee members noted the high value of PLTI, sharing that parents who complete the program consistently speak highly of the experience and the personal projects they develop. Recent examples include a music program for youth and a website that centralizes local community events. The April 30th graduation showcased several impactful projects, demonstrating the initiative's success.

12. Council Members Reports

- No reports.

13. Merced County Program Updates

- **Merced College:** Brianna shared several important updates. The upcoming Child Development Advisory Meeting will be held via Zoom on Friday, coinciding with graduation day. During the meeting, new proposals will be presented regarding changes to the child development matrix and course offerings in response to evolving state requirements. Anyone not on the invite list was encouraged to reach out for access. The college has also successfully submitted its Competency-Based Education (CBE) program for child development to the Department of Education. This new model will allow participants to complete coursework at their own pace, ultimately earning a Site Supervisor Permit upon completion. This approach mirrors the format currently used in the agriculture program. Additionally, Merced College will offer an infant-toddler course on Wednesday nights in the fall—the first time in seven years this class has been held at night. Early enrollment numbers are promising, with the class already half full. The seven-week accelerated course format has also proven effective, with five full sessions completed, and further adjustments to infant-toddler programming will be discussed in the advisory meeting.
- **MCOE College and Career:** Regarding the Adult CTE ROP program, Libby and Andrea have been collaborating to streamline the process for awarding CPL (Credit for Prior Learning) credits. The proposal is to submit a certificate of completion instead of large, cumbersome packets, which faculty are generally supportive of. This is especially important because the Adult ROP program serves vulnerable students, many of whom come from nontraditional educational backgrounds such as justice-involved youth or continuation schools with limited academic rigor. The program is designed to prepare students for both college and career success, with strong partnerships such as with Head Start to provide additional practicum hours—currently encouraging 300 hours of practice, exceeding permit requirements. The curriculum currently includes Child Development 1 and Toddler Development, with plans to integrate Child Development 2 soon, facilitating a smooth handoff to the college for advanced coursework. The program aims to maintain hands-on infant practicum experiences, critical for permit qualifications. Special thanks were extended to Head Start for hiring program graduates and supporting student placements. Additionally, there is an exciting partnership opportunity between the culinary program for high-functioning adults with disabilities and Head Start, facilitating site placements for culinary students. Lastly, while classes are currently in-person due to student needs, the program's accreditation through the Council on Occupational Education offers the possibility of developing an Applied Associate degree. However, the preference remains to maintain a strong partnership with Merced College to provide a seamless educational pathway for students.
- **Weaver Union School District:** We plan to expand our preschool classrooms from 5 sessions to 6 sessions next year. The teaching format will change to mirror the TK model, with the AM teacher leading a session while the PM teacher supports alongside two aides, totaling four staff members in the classroom. The PM teacher will have prep time midday and then take lunch. In the afternoon, the AM teacher will assist the PM teacher. We are excited to implement this new structure and will monitor how it goes.

14. Important Dates

- Executive Committee Meeting: TBD
- Next Regular Council Meeting: September 2, 2025
- Presentation: TBD

15. Adjournment

- Scott Waite adjourned the meeting at 1:50 PM.