THE FIRST DAYS, WEEKS AND MONTHS of the school year can be a daunting time for new teachers and school counselors, especially those coming to teaching or school counseling from industry or other fields. So what can be done to support these teachers and school counselors, and how can we help them start making connections within their new professions? Missouri offered new career educators and school counselors two key events this past July—the state’s New Teacher and New Counselor Institute programs and the Missouri Association for Career and Technical Education’s (MoACTE) annual summer conference—as one combined experience to help get that first year off to a good start.

New Teacher Institute

The New Teacher Institute (NTI) is Missouri’s introductory program for new career education teachers who are moving directly from the workplace into the classroom under a temporary alternative career educator certification. NTI provides new educators with a jump-start into classroom teaching by wrapping instruction on teaching around the MoACTE Summer Conference and incorporating NTI instruction into MoACTE conference sessions. The seven-day instructional event serves new career educators across all content areas, and is open to secondary, postsecondary and adult educators, as well as apprenticeship instructors.

“Delivering New Teacher Institute at the same time and in the same location as the annual MoACTE summer conference makes sense,” said Dennis Harden, coordinator of career education for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). “Wrapping NTI around MoACTE provides a powerful learning experience that equips new teachers to meet the demands of classroom instruction, and connects them to a network of supportive colleagues.”

The institute is coordinated by the Missouri Center for Career Education (MCCE) at the University of Central Missouri (UCM) in Warrensburg, and sponsored by the DESE Office of College and Career Readiness in cooperation with MoACTE. Participants are enrolled in the UCM NTI/Foundations of Education course to earn three credit hours toward their Career Education Temporary Authorization Certificate, or Career License to Teach Secondary or Adult Students. Since the 1960s NTI has served as a “boot camp” for new career educators on an alternative certification path. Over the decades, the goals of the institute have remained constant while the techniques used have grown and evolved. The three main goals for participants in the institute are:

1. Network with colleagues in the career education profession.
2. Understand the role of the career education teacher.
3. Gain the basic skills to survive the first week of school.

Michael Wright, dean of the College of Education at UCM and a former director of NTI, said a synergy between these two key events has been in the mind of NTI planners for a long time. “Tying these
two events together is great,” Wright
said. “We always recognized the value of
networking and professional development
at the MoACTE summer conference.”

Tying in the institute with the
MoACTE summer conference goes
beyond scheduling and location. MCCE
staff and conference planners coordinated
the content for teacher and counselor
sessions. Joint planning also extended to
the opening session, keynote speakers,
and the new professionals luncheon.

“The collaboration of the MoACTE
summer conference and the New Teacher
Institute was a win-win situation for both
groups,” said Donna Vossen, MoACTE
executive director. “We were able to
cut down on expenses for both groups
by sharing the opening session speaker
and saving on time away from home and
school for the teachers who attend both
activities.”

She added: “Missouri ACTE gained
new members, and the participants were
able to see the connection between their
jobs and the importance of belonging to
Missouri ACTE. Everything they learned
was put into practice when the Missouri
ACTE summer conference began and
they were interacting with their peers.”

Over the past two years, staff at
MCCE conducted a ground-up review
and revision of the NTI curriculum. In
addition to the MoACTE summer confer-
ence, the entire content of the institute
was aligned to state and national stan-
dards for teacher education. Throughout
NTI, participants are encouraged to
apply general curriculum and instruction
principles to their content area. Veteran
teachers function as Teacher Leaders
guiding small groups of participants, who
will be teaching in similar content areas,
through activities and discussions. Area
career center administrators, DESE staff
and other highly experienced education
professionals offered their expertise as
instructors for the various topics covered
in the institute.

New Counselor Institute
This year, the New Counselor Institute
(NCI) was added to serve new school
counselors entering counseling from a
nontraditional route. While the format
and structure were modeled on NTI, the
content was specifically designed to assist
the new counselor during the first days,
weeks and months of his or her initial
year as a school counselor. The program
was conducted simultaneously with NTI,
and each day began with a joint NTI/NCI
activity. NCI and NTI participants
also interacted during common sessions
on topics such as legal issues and learning
theory. Like their NTI counterparts, NCI
participants attended MoACTE summer
conference sessions as a part of the
institute.

The initial class of NCI participants
brought a range of experiences with
them, from former teachers with many
years of teaching experience but no
counseling, to individuals with counseling
experience but no experience in an
education setting. As a part of completing
the NCI program, participants were
enrolled in a three-credit-hour graduate
course in counseling topics. According
to Bragg Stanley, director of Guidance
and Counseling Services for DESE, “The
New Counselor Institute provides an
additional supporting mechanism for our
new school counselors—especially those
who have entered the profession from an
alternate route. Between our statewide
mentoring program, which is run through
a partnership with MCCE, DESE,
and the Missouri School Counselor
Association, and our strong partnership
with our counselor education programs,
we have developed a structure of support
that provides a smooth transition into the
actual working experience for our new
school counselors.”
Continuous Review
To practice what is preached during the institutes, the NTI and NCI curriculum are continually reviewed and updated. MCCE focuses evaluation of both institutes not only on the reviews from participants, but also on teacher and school counselor gains in self-efficacy. Teacher efficacy, as defined by Anita Woolfolk Hoy, professor of educational psychology, is a teacher’s perceptions about his or her own capabilities to foster students’ learning and engagement. Others define teacher efficacy as the extent to which a teacher believes he or she has the capacity to affect student performance, or that as a teacher he or she can influence how well students learn—even students who may be difficult or unmotivated.

Similarly, school counselor self-efficacy is the counselor’s perceptions of his or her ability to meet the performance expectations implementing and operating the components of a comprehensive school guidance program. Self-efficacy of NCI participants is being measured before and after NCI using the School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (SCSE), a nationally recognized instrument for measuring school counselor self-efficacy (Bodenhorn and Skaggs, 2005). Post-NCI SCSE data is being collected this fall.

By utilizing self-efficacy scales in a paired samples t-test (pre-institute to post-institute), MCCE is able to measure its ability to impact the participants’ beliefs on how well they can teach or counsel. The assessment used was the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale—long form (Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy, 2001), which includes 24 items using a nine-point Likert scale. Initial NTI results from 44 participants in 2010 showed statistically significant gains on 18 of the 24 items.

Looking Ahead
The 2011 analysis is not yet complete for both NTI and NCI; however, findings from this year will be presented in a presentation at the ACTER conference in St. Louis next month. Visit www.acreteconference.com for more information.

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