



Compliance Visit Report 2009-2010 ACT - Houston

According to TAC §228.10(c) An entity approved by the SBEC under this chapter...shall be reviewed at least once every five years under procedures approved by the TEA staff; however, a review may be conducted at any time at the discretion of the TEA staff. Per TAC §228.1(c) all educator preparation programs are subject to the same standards of accountability, as required under Chapter 229 of this title. The Texas Education Agency administers Texas Administrative Code rules required by the Texas legislature for the regulation of all educator preparation programs in the state. Please see the complete Texas Administrative Code rules at www.tea.state.tx.us. for details contained in each rule.

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TEA Identification Number: 101-712

Mixon Henry, Program Specialist, and Ms. Annabel Pena, Program Specialist, conducted a Texas Education Agency continuing approval visit on March 11 and 12, 2010. The following are the findings and recommendations for program improvement.

Date Self-Report Submitted: January, 2010

COMPONENT I: COMMITMENT AND COLLABORATION - Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.20 – GOVERNANCE OF EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Findings:

ACT – Houston is in compliance with Texas Administration Code §228.20. The advisory committee represents a balanced membership of 28 voting members from school districts, higher education, and business and community. In addition to the three categories mentioned, the program has a graduate of the program as an active member of the Advisory Committee. Meetings are held two times per year. Meetings were conducted on June 25th and November 19, 2009. An additional advisory committee meeting was held on March 11, 2010 during the ACT - Houston monitoring visit. Agendas, minutes and attendance records were available in the document review as evidence of advisory committee compliance.

Fifteen out of 28 advisory committee members responded to the advisory committee questionnaire. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of the responding committee members indicated they had served on the advisory committee for one to four years. The members also indicated that they were well versed in their roles and responsibilities.

Based on responses from the advisory committee questionnaires, members have a direct impact on the program's policies, delivery and evaluation. Specifically, the advisory committee members revealed in questionnaires that they have influenced policy by addressing teaching critical shortage areas in local districts, adding more classroom management strategies, observation procedures, and curriculum changes.

Compliance Status for Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Section 228.20 - GOVERNANCE OF EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAM. In light of the findings detailed above, ACT – Houston is in compliance.

Commendations:

ACT – Houston is commended for adding a past graduate of the program as a member of the Advisory Committee. This member can provide a different perspective to the process and provide insight into the candidates' issues.

COMPONENT II. ADMISSION CRITERIA - Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §227.10 - ADMISSION CRITERIA

Findings:

ACT – Houston is in compliance with Texas Administrative Code §227.10-Admission Requirements.

ACT - Houston requires that an applicant complete an application, have a 2.5 Grade Point Average (GPA) or 2.5 GPA on the last 60 hours from an accredited university, a successful background check, character references, provide a writing sample, successful scores on the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Test, and an interview with program staff. The university transcripts must identify twelve (12) or twenty-four (24) content hours in a specific content area. When all of the aforementioned items are submitted and completed, the candidate meets with a program staff member to review test results, the writing sample, transcripts, and application to determine if the has met the program's criteria for acceptance. The program also wants to determine if the candidate and program are a good fit. This information was validated through the review of student folders and it was evident that the program adheres to their published criteria.

Students, who are graduates of universities where the language of instruction is not English, are interviewed by the director of the program to determine language proficiency. As this information became apparent to TEA staff, it was recommended, according to *Texas Administrative Code Rule 230.413 (M) (5) A, B, C, D, and E*, that the program implement testing with the TOEFL prior to admission if the candidates do not meet the other indicated criteria.

ACT – Houston disseminates information to potential candidates through the advisory committee members, their website, career fairs, school and community college visits, brochures, and word-of-mouth.

ACT – Houston indicated that five or less percent or less of their teaching candidates were admitted under the 10% cohort rule.

Compliance Status for Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Section 227.10 - ADMISSION CRITERIA. In light of the findings detailed above, ACT – Houston is in compliance.

Commendations:

ACT – Houston is commended for utilizing the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Assessment combined along with the written component on the application and interview to provide a semi-transparent portrait of the candidate and his/her potential success in the program.

COMPONENT III. CURRICULUM - Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.30 - EDUCATOR PREPARATION CURRICULUM

Findings:

ACT – Houston is in compliance with TAC §228.30 Educator Preparation Curriculum.

In reviewing the responses from questionnaires sent to Instructors for ACT – Houston, seventeen responded and reported the following: Sixty-five percent (65%) have advanced degrees, eighty-eight percent (88%) have Texas certification and eighty-eight percent (88%) have five or more years of classroom experience. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of the interns indicated that they had been provided with a clear and concise course syllabus. In reviewing the available course syllabi, it was found that common components were included such as instructor contact information, general course information, required texts, course description, course objectives, TExES competencies and standards, assignments, and assessments.

The 17 PPR curriculum topics mandated in TAC 228.30 are included in the curriculum. This was confirmed through the self-report, intern surveys, and through the course correlations required by TEA. Coverage of the topics was obvious in course syllabi during review of the curriculum.

In responding to the question of how effective the course content was, the interns indicated that instruction in the following areas was effective and extremely effective: how to develop a lesson (94%); child and/or adolescent development (92.6%); and using TEKS in the content area (92.5%). Intern surveys indicated a need for improvement in areas of instructional technology in the classroom (28%); standards and teaching strategies for gifted and talented students (24.2%); and how to use formative assessments to diagnosis student learning needs (20.1%). Surveys from intern mentors indicated a need for more preparation in the area of technology training for use in the classroom.

Compliance Status for Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Section 228.30 - EDUCATOR PREPARATION CURRICULUM. In light of the findings detailed above, ACT – Houston is in compliance.

Commendations:

ACT – Houston is commended for its well conceived and formatted syllabi; these are properly organized with clear objectives, standards, activities, and assessments to assist the candidate in understanding the course and its objectives.

COMPONENT IV: PROGRAM DELIVERY AND ONGOING SUPPORT - Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.35 – PREPARATION PROGRAM COURSEWORK AND/OR TRAINING

Findings:

ACT – Houston is in compliance with TAC §228.35 Preparation Program Coursework and/or Training.

The program is delivered in a face-to-face format. The 30 clock hours of field experience required by the program necessitates reflections and documentation. The total program hours for the educator preparation program are 310 - 330 clock hours, including 50 allowed district training clock hours. The program provides nine (9) clock hours of preparation for the TExES exam. The program's pass rate on the TExES is 96% - 98% over the last three years.

The staff and advisors are past educators and school district personnel who lead the candidates through the progression with face-to-face interactions.

Intern mentors submitted 196 completed surveys to TEA. Mentors have the following qualifications: forty-one percent (41%) have advanced degrees; ninety-five percent (95%) are Texas certified; eighty-eight percent (88%) have 3+ years of teaching experience; thirty-eight percent (38%) are department heads; and twenty-four percent (24%) are master teachers. Training for the mentors is provided by the program and takes place over a full day and is documented in their records. The training is an infused TxBESS program with elements added by the program. Additional information covers mentor's agreement, and a review of documentation used and submitted by the mentor during the internship. The mentor receives a stipend of \$500 at the end of the internship. Ninety-four percent (94%) of the mentors have no concerns about the candidates' training or the preparation program.

Thirty- five field supervisors returned questionnaires. Qualifications of the field supervisors include the following: eight-six percent (86%) have advanced degrees; ninety-four percent (94%) are Texas teacher certified; ninety-four percent (94%) have 5+ year of classroom teaching experience; forty-nine percent (49%) Texas certified administrators; seventy-one percent (71%) are PDAS trained; and eighty-nine percent (89%) have served 3+ years as a field supervisor for ACT – Houston. Field supervisors' yearly training consists of an infused TxBESS curriculum with additional focus on cognitive coaching techniques, mentoring methods, and review of handbooks. Per survey responses from the interns and mentors, first contact is made by the field supervisors within the first three weeks. In reviewing the student folders, evidence of three formal observations was present as prescribed by TAC rule §228.35. Lengths of formal observations were not defined on the forms but the director stated they were at least 45 minutes in duration. Observations were followed by an interactive conference with the candidate. Questionnaires from interns reveal satisfaction with the field supervisors at ninety-five percent (95%). Per the principal and the field supervisor surveys, a copy of the formal observation is

provided to the campus administrator. The average field supervisor to student teacher ratio is 1 to 8.

Students who are struggling in the program are required to conferences with the field supervisors and principals to determine remedial services to be offered. If further assistance is needed an intervention plan is created to focus on specific skills for the intern to address.

Compliance status for Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Section 228.35 – PREPARATION PROGRAM COURSEWORK AND/OR TRAINING. In light of the findings detailed above, ACT – Houston is in compliance.

Commendations:

ACT – Houston is commended for providing a \$500 stipend for mentors.

ACT – Houston is commended for its field supervisors who are highly qualified with advanced degrees, teaching experience, administrative experience, and PDAS trained.

COMPONENT V. PROGRAM EVALUATION - Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.40 - ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF CANDIDATES FOR CERTIFICATION AND PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT.

Findings:

ACT – Houston is in compliance with TAC §228.40 Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement.

ACT- Houston has a limited benchmarking system for student progress. It is determined by the assessments during the coursework which is primarily rubric driven. Though the completion of coursework is a measurement, it would benefit the program to create a defined set of benchmarks to denote the skill set required by each candidate.

The candidates' readiness to test for the content area and PPR is determined by the completion of a test review course and practice test. With pass rate success at 96% - 98%, the success of the curriculum and test review process appears effective.

Evaluation is an ongoing process that includes all stakeholders and pertinent data is gathered from a variety of sources such as ASEP data, and course/instructor evaluations by students.

Overall program evaluation is conducted annually by program staff and advisory committee members. Data is gathered from ASEP, interns' and candidates' feedback, faculty, and retention data.

Student records are kept in a secure cabinet in a locked office. The student files were extremely well organized and made access to information easy to retrieve. This documentation is kept for five years.

The procedure for due process of grievances is to provide a written request to meet with the director of the program and present the issue. It is reviewed and discussed to resolve the issue. The final step is to submit a written request for a panel to review the grievance and respond to the individual.

Compliance Status for Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Section 228.40 - ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF CANDIDATES FOR CERTIFICATION AND PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT. In light of the findings detailed above, ACT – Houston is in compliance.

PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION

The following are recommendations based on the findings of the Texas Education Agency Visit. If the program is NOT in compliance with any component, please consult the TAC rules and initiate actions to correct the issue IMMEDIATELY. A progress report will be required in one year on Compliance Recommendations.

General program recommendations are suggestions for general program improvement and do not require follow-up.

PROGRAM COMPLIANCE RECOMMENDATIONS: None at this time. ACT-Houston is currently in compliance with all Texas Administrative Code rules.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Document that out-of-state and out-of-country degreed candidates have the required documentation to meet the basic skills requirements in TAC rule 227.10.
- Document that candidates with degrees from non-English speaking universities meet the requirements for demonstrating oral communication skill or English proficiency.
- Evaluation of curriculum and program effectiveness should encompass all involve all stakeholders; candidates, principals, mentors, field supervisors, and any other participant.
- Review timelines and documentation of field supervision requirements and consider adding time and length of observation on observation forms and maintaining logs of supervisor contacts.
- Reinforce and review curriculum items: specifically instructional technology in the classroom, strategies for gifted and talented students, and formative assessments to diagnosis student learning needs.