

Texas Education Agency Division of Educator Standards
Post Approval Site Visit
Region III Education Service Center
Victoria, TX
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Background Information

§228.10 – Approval Process

According to the Region III Education Service Center website, the twenty (20) education regional service centers (ESCs) were created in 1965 by the Texas Legislature to assist school districts in the implementation of school reform and improvement. The centers have focused their efforts and expertise on providing educators with professional development and technical assistance as well as administrative and financial support.

The Texas Legislature clearly defined the purposes of the ESCs: to assist school districts in improving student performance, to enable school districts to operate more efficiently and economically, and to implement initiatives assigned by the legislature or Commissioner of Education.

Keeping this purpose in mind, Region III ESC was established in 1968 to serve the school districts in Calhoun, Colorado, Dewitt, Goliad, Jackson, Lavaca, Matagorda, Wharton, Refugio, Victoria and Karnes County. In 1989, the Region III Alternative Certification Program (Region III ACP) was initiated to meet the increasing demand for teachers. Region III ACP indicated that it had one primary location in Victoria, TX. In the entire educator preparation program, approximately one hundred and forty (140) are enrolled, and eighty-eight (88) are currently undergoing the internship experience.

Prior to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) visit, Region III ACP submitted a self-report which addressed all required components.

Number and Roles of People Interviewed

Thirty – one (31) people were interviewed which included four (4) advisory committee members, two (2) members of the program staff, two (2) faculty members, three (3) field supervisors, four (4) campus administrators, six (6) mentor teachers, and nine (9) interns.

I. Entity Commitment and Collaboration

§228.20 – Governance, Design, and Delivery of Educator Preparation Programs

Findings

The Region III Advisory Committee is composed of twenty-three (23) members. Twenty-one (21) members represented school districts while two (2) members represented the business community. Four (4) ACP staff members are also on the advisory committee. Their self-report

and document review verified that the Advisory Committee meets a minimum of twice a year. A member of the Region III ACP program staff prepares sign-in sheets, agendas, takes minutes at the meeting, and maintains the Advisory Committee records. Interviews with Advisory Committee members indicated that they were apprised of their roles and responsibilities, and they felt that they were active participants in determining policy, review and procedures of the Region III ACP program. The advisory committee tries to rotate one-third of its membership each year.

The Region III Education Service Center Alternative Certification Program is in compliance with the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) section 228.20-Governance, Design, and Delivery of Educator Preparation Program.

II. Admission Criteria

§228.10 - Admission Criteria

Findings

According to the self-report, interns must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree, and a 2.5 overall grade point average (GPA), or a 2.5 in the last sixty hours of college work. The program uses the Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA) and the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) to determine minimum basic skill proficiencies for candidates. Currently, the program does not utilize Pre-Admission Content Testing (PACT) opportunity as a prerequisite for admission, but they indicated this would change with the initiation of the new cycle of candidates.

The prospective intern completes an application, undergoes a criminal history background check, transcript review, and an interview by the program director. The program develops and equitably applies admission criteria to all potential interns. Admission criteria are published in their applicant packet which is supplied upon candidate interest. In the student folder review, there was evidence of official transcripts, test scores, completed application, resumes, and letters of reference. Interviews with program staff indicate that student files are kept in a secure location, with some records stored electronically. Program documents are retained for five years.

Region III ACP recruits potential interns through the media including television advertising on the local stations. Some airtime is paid by the program and some airtime is donated by the local station. In addition, the program advertises in the newspapers, on local radio stations, and their website. They conducted thirty (30) informational meetings in the community and surrounding areas to recruit candidates. In June, the program sponsors a job fair conducted at the local shopping mall. Of all these methods, referral by successful interns has proved to be the best marketing strategy. According to the interview, the collaborative relationship Region III ESC shares with the surrounding school districts continually make the program a first choice when recruiting new teachers.

The Region III Education Service Center Alternative Certification Program is in compliance with the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) section 227.10-Admissions Criteria.

III. Curriculum

§228.30 – Educator Preparation Curriculum

Findings

The Region III ACP Program offers forty (40) areas of certification. Training consists of both online and face-to-face meetings. In interviews with staff, it was indicated that while lecture was necessary as part of their instruction, they also utilized hands-on and interactive activities for proper instruction. To address issues such as lack of meeting space and travel distance for candidates, five (5) online training sessions are utilized. Three (3) are in the core content areas secured through Region XIII Education Service Center. Two (2) are Special Education EC-12. EC-4 and 4-8 Generalist candidates participate in the three (3) content area online courses. The module hours range anywhere from twelve (12) to twenty-one (21) hours in length and include three face-to-face content area training sessions in the core academic areas to correlate with online coursework. The Special Education online modules range from twelve (12) to forty-eight (48) hours. Candidates take a practice test as part of a six hour face to face session before the actual test to ensure preparedness and success. Candidates must achieve a score of at least eighty (80) percent in order to complete the module and proceed to the next. In addition, each certification area candidate attends eighteen (18) hours of lesson design training. As part of this training, each candidate designs and presents a lesson which is video taped and critiqued by staff and other interns. An additional seventy-two (72) hours of Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities (PPR) training is presented during the summer before the internship begins, with an additional twenty-four (24) hours of follow up training scheduled with the intern during the internship. All Secondary 8-12 and all level EC-12 certification areas take a practice content test, and remediation is provided if the candidate scores a seventy-five (75%) percent or less. If additional help is needed in areas of math or English then the candidate is required to take the Region XIII online courses to supplement their learning. In addition to the coursework, each applicant must complete thirty (30) hours of field-based experience in their certification area and submit documentation to that effect.

The preparation program consists of 156 hours. The program is aware of the changes in the rules, and with the initiation of the new cycle, will comply with the three-hundred (300) mandated hours of instruction. In talking with program staff, it was determined that they are not currently seeking EC-6 certification.

Pedagogy sessions offered by the ACP program appear to be shorter in length. The staff indicated that the training was offered during the summer for twelve days. Currently, it appears that they have not yet incorporated all seventeen (17) mandated areas in instruction, but they will do so with their next cycle.

The Region III Education Service Center Alternative Certification Program is in compliance with the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) section 228.30 - Educator Preparation Curriculum.

IV. Program Delivery

§228.40 – Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement

Findings

According to ASEP indicators, the Region III ACP program shows a student achievement of 100 percent passing on exams for the last two years. The ACP program has established benchmarks in the form of activities and structured assessments. This is evident through candidate records located in the student folders. Interns are observed five (5) times by mentor teacher and comments are recorded on the standardized observation form. Interns are also observed a minimum of three (3) times by the EPP staff, as well as three (3) times by the principal of their assigned campus. Candidates also present a lesson before Region III EPP staff for critique.

To aid in the process of gathering and analyzing data, the Region III ACP program has contracted with the Stetson Consortium, a private consultant firm to conduct an annual survey of interns, school administrators and school human resource officers. According to EPP staff interviews, this process provides concrete data regarding the effectiveness of Region III ACP program. In addition to this data, scores on the Texas Examinations of Educator Standards (TExES) exams and Accountability System for Educator Preparation (ASEP) data is used to evaluate the effectiveness of the current program as well as pinpoint areas for improvement. Additionally, the EPP staff continuously evaluates each training and workshop in order to evaluate the effectiveness of each training presentation, making adjustments if needed.

The Region III Education Service Center Alternative Certification Program is in compliance with the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) section §228.40 – Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement.

Commendations

The use of an outside consultant firm to gather data which is often difficult to acquire and disaggregate is commendable.

Region III ACP is commended for using advanced data analysis to determine effectiveness of their program and make curriculum improvements for their interns.

V. On-Going Support

§228.35 – On-going Educator Preparation and Support

Findings

The three field supervisors work as a team to provide support to the eighty-eight (88) interns. The field supervisors provide a minimum of three observations during the internship and are readily available to assist students who are experiencing difficulty during their internship. If the intern's problems are severe, an action plan will be devised and executed to facilitate the intern's success. Additionally, if the intern fails the TExEs or ExCET, remediation is provided immediately. Remediation is in the form of individual tutoring, or by scheduling the intern for a

workshop which addresses the deficiency. If students do not pass the PPR practice test, additional remediation is provided by the ESC staff. If the interns encounter issues during their internship, the program responds by providing additional remediation in individual or small group settings.

Mentors provide day-to-day support for the intern. The mentors are supported in the Victoria ISD with extensive training using the Texas Beginning Educator Support System (TxBESS) material. In addition to the mentor identified on site where the intern teaches, the Victoria ISD also identifies district mentors to assist the interns. ESC III ACP secures mentor resumes and applications to ensure that highest qualified mentor is being utilized. The Region III ACP has attempted to provide mentor training outside Victoria ISD. In their opinion, the response has not been adequate. Creative ideas need to be employed to encourage attendance at these sessions.

The ESC III field supervisors are part of the regular staff members that present the training. From interviews with the interns, mentors, and campus staff, the field supervisors have been responsive and helpful in handling intern issues. Interviews with school staff and interns indicated that one of the key elements of this EPP program is that the field supervisors know the interns very well and are able to place the interns in the appropriate school setting. Even though the program consists of 88 students, the field supervisors have gone above and beyond the ordinary in providing support. Ongoing support for field supervisors is provided through attendance at professional development activities conducted by Stetson and Associates.

The Region III Education Service Center Alternative Certification Program is in compliance with the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) section 228.30-On-Going Support.

Commendations

Region III ACP is commended for the responsive and personalized support given to the candidates, especially in the areas of tutoring and remediation.

The field service personnel are highly respected for their efforts.

Program Recommendations

- Revise the curriculum program to reflect the seventeen mandated content areas as well as the three hundred (300) hours before the beginning of the next cycle of interns
- Continue to utilize Stetson and Associates for data gathering and analysis for program improvement
- Begin the process for securing the EC-6 certification field
- Utilize creative measures to conduct mentor training