

Texas Education Agency Division of Educator Standards
Initial Post Approval Site Visit
Education Service Center Region 18
Midland, Texas
April 14-15, 2009

Visit Conducted by TEA Staff: Mixon Henry and Tabita Gutierrez, Program Specialists

This post-approval site visit was conducted by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) team in compliance with Texas Administrative Code (TAC) § 228.10 (b) Educator Preparation Program Approval Process

Background

Region 18 Education Service Center – Teacher Certification Program (Region 18 TCP) provides an alternative route to teacher certification in West Texas near the cities of Midland and Odessa. Approved by the State Board for Educator Certification (S.B.E.C.) twenty years ago, Region 18 TCP offers certification in 28 fields. It provides teachers for the largest geographic area in the state, 37,000 square miles. Region 18 serves 19 counties and 33 school districts. Region 18 also assists in the neighboring regions of 14, 15, and 17 with teacher placements.

The opening session of the post approval site visit was held in Midland, Texas, on May 14, 2009. The session was comprised of 13 participants, primarily members of the Region 18 TCP program and the Advisory Committee. Program Coordinator, Cindy Fouts began with an introduction and a PowerPoint presentation. Following the presentation, attendees introduced themselves and gave a brief description of their relationship to the program.

Program Specialists from the Texas Education Agency (TEA), Mixon Henry and Tabita Gutierrez, provided a framework for the visit, discussing the proposed two-day agenda format and rules compliance. Cindy Fouts and selected staff met with the TEA team for a clarification meeting to allow everyone to ask and answer questions regarding aspects of the visit, including items on the Self-Report and information gathered during interviews. Finally, the closing session was led by the TEA team, who provided an oral briefing to share preliminary findings, commendations, and recommendations.

Prior to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) visit, Cindy Fouts of Region 18 TCP submitted a self-report which addressed all required components. The program also ensured that the documents for the required document review were in order. The current accreditation status for the Region 18 TCP is “accredited.”

Number and Roles of People Interviewed:

A total of thirty-one (31) people were interviewed. At the Education Service Center Region 18 site, one (1) advisory committee member, six (6) program staff, one (1) field supervisor, three (3) campus administrators, ten (10) mentors, and ten (10) interns were interviewed. Because of the distance and number of mentors and interns in the program, with the permission of Program Director Cindy Fouts, electronic questionnaires were provided to the mentors and interns, and

principals. Of the questionnaires sent to mentors, interns and principals responses were received from fifteen (15) mentors, nineteen (19) interns, and fifteen (15) principals.

I. Entity Commitment and Collaboration

TAC §228.20

Governance of Educator Preparation Programs

Findings:

All five categories are represented within the Advisory Committee. Sign-in sheets for meetings documented the members in attendance. Past agendas, which included the minutes of discussed topics, demonstrated the request for input and the collaboration of ideas. PowerPoint presentations were also utilized to present information during the Advisory Committee meetings and shared with members that were unable to attend.

Interviews indicated that most Advisory Committee members understood the program well and knew the sequential and comprehensive processes needed for certification of its interns. They were familiar with the mission and goals of the program and its focus on student success. Members were cognizant of individual staff member's roles, responsibilities, and qualifications. Interviews revealed consensus among advisory committee members that the leadership provided by the directors of the program was strong and focused on continued growth and future needs of the districts served by the Region 18 TCP.

Region 18 Education Service Center is in compliance with Texas Administrative Code §228.20 - Governance of Educator Preparation Programs.

Commendations:

Region 18 TCP is commended for involving the Advisory Committee in many areas such as curriculum, program delivery, program evaluation, and discussions of enrollment and recruiting.

II. Admission Criteria

Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §227.10 Admission Criteria

Findings:

Region 18 TCP's admission requirements and fees are available on their website, as well as printed in the program's brochure. When the application is completed, the submission of official transcripts and admission fees are required. The application requires written response to questions that are evaluated by a screening committee. Candidates must have a bachelor's degree from an accredited university. A minimum overall grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 or 2.75 on a 4.0 scale in the last 60 hours of university coursework is mandatory. In addition, candidates must pass the Nelson-Denny Vocabulary/Reading comprehension test which is administered by the program. For demonstration of basic skills, a passing score on the Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA) is required. A screening interview is another component of admissions process. The program requires a criminal background check, as a part of the Safe Schools Project, and candidates must supply three character references. To evaluate Spanish proficiency for bilingual (Spanish) the candidate must pass the Spanish Woodcock-Munoz Language Survey.

Region 18 TCP has specific university hour requirements for core content areas, using the 24-12 hour rule for Highly Qualified status by No Child Left Behind. Candidates may use the Pre-Admission Content Test (PACT) to demonstrate content proficiency or substitute university coursework.

In reviewing the candidates' files, the files were well organized with all pertinent information accounted for in regard to student status and requested items. These files are kept in a secure location with access limited to specific individual staff members. Additional data for student information is kept electronically. This data is easily retrieved for review and tracking of student progress. This also is secured and limited to specific staff members. Region 18 TCP has a very organized system that tracks the first step of a candidate into the program to the recommendation for the standard certificate.

Recruiting of candidates by Region 18 TCP is done with newspapers, career fairs, their website, public meetings, brochures and a visible sign in front of the service center. Interviews revealed that the most common means of exposure of the Region 18 TCP was by "word of mouth" by districts and past graduates of the program.

Region 18 Education Service Center is in compliance with TAC §227.10 - Admission Criteria.

Commendations:

The Nelson-Denny Vocabulary Reading Comprehension Test is a unique instrument used to gain insight to the reading skills of candidates. It allows the program to make a judgment as to the possible success of a candidate with the volume of reading and other assignments during the teacher training.

Screening interviews of candidates gives the program another perspective of the candidate. These interviews focus not only on response to open ended questions but also on the mannerisms, candidate demeanor, and attitude.

The electronic data and folder file systems are well organized and easily retrieved for quick access to valuable information. The program and staff have provided a system that tracks each individual in the program. This well developed mode for documentation can eliminate issues and clarify the progress of any individual in the program.

III. Curriculum

Texas Administrative Code §228.30 Educator Preparation Curriculum

Findings:

Region 18 TCP meets and exceeds the required clock hours set by Texas Administrative Code 228.30. Region 18 TCP provides 32-70 clock hours of training for content testing. Instructors are full time staff of ESC Region 18 and content specialists. Additionally, 78 clock hours of coursework are devoted to Special Education, English as a Second Language (ESL), and

Bilingual training. The total amount of clock hours offered for special programs is 230 hours. All 17 Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities (PPR) topics are covered in the curriculum. These topics are revisited throughout the curriculum by a spiraling format. That puts the total clock hours for Elementary Generalist (EC-4) and (4-8), Special Education, ESL, and Bilingual candidates at 343 clock hours. Secondary content areas (4-8), Physical Education, Health, and Technology are at 304 clock hours.

Region 18 Education Service Center is in compliance with TAC §228.30 - Educator Preparation Curriculum

Commendations:

Region 18 TCP exceeds the clock hours for Generalist, Special Education, ESL, and Bilingual candidates. It also allows a more extensive study i.e. book studies and sustained professional development. The PPR curriculum is revisited to enhance the candidates understanding of the material presented.

IV. Program Delivery and Evaluation

Texas Administrative Code §228.35 Preparation Program Coursework and/or Training

Texas Administrative Code 228. 40 Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement

Findings

The educator is required to complete 30 clock hours of field experience. It is mandatory that all educators use the program's Field Experience Reflection Forms and Field Experience Verification Forms. In addition, during the internship the educator must complete two observations of experienced teachers and use the required forms. Interviews of mentors suggested that field experience should be more structured and hands-on in a school environment to enhance the opportunity for the candidate to understand the classroom experience prior to internship. It was stressed that follow-up training and feedback sessions could enlighten the candidates as to the selection of certification area and future difficulties regarding classroom management.

Region 18 TCP's summer institute provides the pre-internship course work and training. It focuses on content areas, special education, ESL, and Bilingual. Test preparation and remediation for candidates support the candidate in content and PPR testing. This support is provided by content specialists. The program's testing rate is 100% and is a valid indicator that shows successful implementation of the curriculum.

TCP's benchmark assessments given throughout the curriculum track the progress of the candidates and provide continuous feedback. It not only documents the progress in a course, but allows for immediate remediation on a topic or course. Formative and summative assessments are in place to evaluate the progress of candidates during each phase of the program. A grade book provides documentation of each activity and assessment of the activity for each individual candidate. It is evident that continuous feedback is provided to all candidates. As stated previously, course work is assessed as is the internship. The internship

is assessed by observations completed by field supervisors, mentors, and principals. A modified PDAS is used by field supervisors and mentor. A complete PDAS is used by the principal.

Stetson and Associates provides an extensive evaluation of the program, which is distributed to all Shareholders for program evaluation. The surveys go to interns, mentors, principals, human resource personnel, and superintendents. Analysis of this evaluation information is completed by the program and advisory committee for the purpose of program improvement.

Region 18 Education Service Center is in compliance with Texas Administrative Code §228.35 - Preparation Program Coursework and/or Training and Texas Administrative Code 228. 40 - Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement.

Commendations:

Test preparation and remediation has provided a 100% success rate. It is very apparent that the investment of time and effort as rewarded the program and the educator.

Continuous feedback from assessments enhances the knowledge and progress of the candidates. The documentation of these assessments also provides evidence of success or failure.

V. On-Going Support

Texas Administrative Code 228.35 (f) On-going Educator Program Support

Findings:

Interns are observed three times by field supervisors. Feedback from the observations are given to the intern both orally and written. On-going training takes place monthly during the internship. The district allows release time to support the intern in the final phase of coursework. Monthly performance assessments are also required by the internship. Interns reflect on the internship, submit the reflections online to the program, and receive feedback from field supervisors.

Mentors receive eight hours of training from Region 18 TCP. The training provides program expectations and the mentor's role with the intern. It focuses on coaching techniques, clarification of observation forms, and documentation that needs to be submitted to the program. Region 18 TCP pays each mentor a stipend of \$250 per semester to assist the intern. Interviews at the secondary level revealed that mentors were not always included in interactions with the field supervisor. Mentors felt that more communication about observations would increase support to the intern.

Field Supervisors are full time staff members of the Education Service Center. This allows TCP staff to discuss formally and informally the progress of any intern. Documentation shows remediation efforts through a candidates' attendance, content of remediation, instructors. Correspondence provides clear directions to the intern encountering difficulty during the internship. Interviews revealed that two out of six interns had only been observed once during the fall semester. Documentation of Field Supervisors' observations needs to be monitored to assure adherence to rule and identify whether enough staff is available to conduct observations.

It was discovered that the observations had been completed but not turned into the program and documented. This record-keeping issue was discussed.

Region 18 Education Service Center is in compliance with Texas Administrative Code §228.35 – Preparation Program Coursework and/or Training.

Commendations:

TCP is commended for providing a mentor stipend for supporting the intern at the campus environment. This demonstrates that the mentor is valued for the time and effort provide to the intern.

Program Recommendations:

Enhance Special Education training by specific practices with ARDs and IEPs. This will provide a level of comfort for the regular education instructor or special educator when encountering these important meetings. Implement training for the 2010 cohort.

Provide targeted instruction of data analysis and intervention to enhance specific remediation for student success. Implement training for the 2010 cohort.

Assure that a system is in place to document that all observations are completed and shared with principals and appropriate staff. Implement for the 2010 cohort.

Seek ways to adjust the field supervisor to student ratio. With distance and time being a factor for field supervisors, a smaller ratio may assist in record-keeping and observations. Implement by fall of 2010.

Include the mentor, by way of interaction with the field supervisor, to support the intern. With the daily or weekly interaction between the mentor and intern, field supervisors could gain insight as to the overall needs and successes of the intern. Implement by 2010 cohort.