

**Texas Education Agency Division of Educator Standards
Post Approval Site Visit
San Jacinto College North- Alternative Teacher Certification Program
April 21-22, 2009**

Visit Conducted by TEA Staff: Corrina Noriega and Sandra Nix

§228.10 – Approval Process

Background Information

San Jacinto College North- Alternative Teacher Certification Preparation Program (SJATCP) is located on the San Jacinto College North campus in Houston, Texas. Established in 2003, the SJATCP prides itself for being able to offer individuals an alternative route to become a certified teacher in Texas. Since its establishment, the program has aligned and enhanced curriculum, increased the number and variety of certifications offered, recruited additional advisory committee members, and increased the number of highly qualified adjuncts to meet the needs of a growing diverse student population. The SJATCP conducts all of their classes in the evening, and is approved to offer certification in the following seven (7) areas: Generalist EC-4, math 4-8, math 8-12 technology applications EC-12, Theatre EC-12, EC-4 Bilingual Generalist, and Special Education EC-12. The preparation program has shown acceptable pass rates over the last three years. Since the inception of the SJATCP in 2003, four individuals who completed the program have received outstanding teacher awards. SJATCP is currently accredited and is not required to submit an action plan. Prior to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) site visit, SJATCP submitted a self-report which addressed all components.

Number and Roles of People Interviewed

A total of 10 individuals attended the opening session. A total of twenty-eight people responded to the online electronic questionnaire submitted before the site visit, including seven (7) interns, five (5) mentors, three (3) principals, four (4) program staff, and eight (8) advisory committee members.

I. Entity Commitment and Collaboration

§228.20 – Governance of Educator Preparation Programs

The staff at SJATCP indicated that it has one main campus located at 5800 Uvalde Road, Houston, TX, and no identified teaching sites in the outlying areas of the college district.

The advisory committee consists of members from within and outside the educator preparation program to bring a diverse perspective which will enhance the program's

overall effectiveness. A list of advisory committee members was supplied which indicated there are currently twenty (20) members. From agendas and minutes supplied, it was evident that they met at least twice a year. Membership includes human resource personnel, curriculum and instruction personnel, attorneys, district recruitment personnel and district certification specialists. Examples of some major collaborations between the educator program and the committee include the agreement among school districts to hire student teachers upon successful completion of the internship course, the support of training mentors for the intern course as well as interns, the recommendation of new members for the Advisory Committee, and the sharing of information regarding SBEC, local school districts and community events. While there were a number of members listed, there was evidence of poor attendance of committee members at meetings. A review of current membership should be conducted and active committee members should be identified.

The electronic questionnaires returned by the advisory committee members indicated that they were active participants in providing input on future certification needs, program evaluation, and curriculum modifications and offerings. The committee was provided evaluation data on their students, and participated in major policy decisions. The advisory committee expressed a great commitment to this program because of its proximity to their school districts. The members indicated that the interns were well qualified people who wished to teach and become professional teachers; however, the committee members expressed a desire to increase the program participation and to offer more certification areas. One major concern was the lack of day to day leadership in the form of a full time program coordinator to provide stability and growth to the program.

San Jacinto College North- Alternative Teacher Certification Program is in compliance with the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) section §228.20 – Governance of Educator Preparation Programs.

Commendations

The SJATCP actively participating advisory committee members are commended for their commitment to sustaining the success of this ATCP.

The SJATCP advisory committee and the participating school districts are to be commended for their creative efforts to recruit high school and paraprofessionals into the teaching profession.

II. Admission Criteria

§227.10 – Admission Criteria

Discussions with the program staff and the advisory committee indicated that SJATCP recruits through regularly scheduled orientation meetings held on the second Tuesday of each month. Prospective students are encouraged to attend one of the meetings publicized in San Jacinto's catalog, program flyers, and marquee in the perimeter of the

college facilities. Information about the program was available on the website; however, it was very difficult to locate. Individual advising sessions are held with the program coordinator to review college transcripts and discuss the certification options. In addition, the school districts and the SJATCP cooperate in the “Home – Grown Teacher Program” which allows high school students to take dual credit courses toward an education degree and a “College is Possible Program” aimed at recruiting clerical and instructional aides in to the education field.

The college meets the minimum admission requirements as specified in TAC rule section 227.10. They are currently not using the Pre-admission Content Test (PACT) for enrollment but are considering adding it in the future. As soon as a candidate demonstrates interest in applying for the program, a student file is created with a checklist of program requirements for admission. Students are required to complete the educator program application, submit passing scores for a qualifying examination, provide college transcripts with a bachelors degree or higher, provide a written language sample in the form of an essay titled, “Why I Want to Become a Teacher,” submit three letters of professional recommendation, and present a current resume or curriculum vitae. These admission criteria were evident in the review of student folders. The program staff indicated that informal interviews were conducted with candidates, but no formal interview instrument has been utilized. The educator program develops and equitably applies admission criteria through the policy of the college district to provide equal admission and educational opportunities without regard for race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, or handicap. All candidates are held to the same standards for admissions. Students who do not meet entry requirements are required to schedule an appointment with the program coordinator to discuss deficiencies.

Questionnaires conducted with program staff indicated student files are maintained in a secure filing cabinet, and documents are maintained as hard and electronic copies on the desktop computer on the college’s hard drive. The file cabinets are in an office that is kept locked when the program coordinator is not in. Old files are periodically boxed and kept at a secure location at the college. The college’s retention policy is to keep the records for five years.

San Jacinto College North- Alternative Teacher Certification Preparation Program is in compliance with the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) section 227.10- Admissions Criteria.

III. Curriculum

§228.30 – Educator Preparation Curriculum

According to the self-report, the curriculum for the educator program includes research- and scientifically based instruction to ensure teacher effectiveness and is aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills. Currently the San Jacinto College ATCP offers certification in seven areas; however, the staff indicated a desire to add the Generalist EC-6, science 8-12, and Generalist 4-8. It was noted that in the areas of math 4-8, math

8-12 technology EC-12 and Theatre EC-12, that no candidates had been recommended for certification in these areas for some time. In reviewing the document files and the electronic questionnaire, it was discovered there are three adjunct professors that provide instruction for this program. All three instructors are Texas certified teachers with masters' degrees.

A review of the curriculum indicates that it is presented in modules and covers both content and pedagogy and professional responsibilities. There are currently no online courses offered. In addition, each candidate is offered six hours of test preparation using the ETS test preparation materials as well as computer software which simulate the testing environment. The course syllabi indicate domains, competencies, objectives materials and required activities. The program coordinator completed a curriculum matrix submitted before the site visit indicating that the seventeen curriculum areas specified in 228.30 (b) were imbedded in their curriculum. It is evident through curriculum review that curriculum development has been an intentional, thoughtful process over a substantial period of time. Despite limited staff, the ATCP has been able to accomplish significant curriculum development and currently has a plan for ongoing curriculum review and modification.

San Jacinto College North- Alternative Teacher Certification Preparation Program is in compliance with the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) section 228.30 - Educator Preparation Curriculum.

Commendations

SJATCP is to be commended for their thorough development of course modules which align to the domains, competencies and 17 topics prescribed in TAC rule 228.30 (b) despite limited time and staff.

IV. Program Delivery

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

The ATCP evaluation uses documentation from both student and interns and is maintained in the student folder where applicable. The documentation for interns include the Program Checklist, PDAS Evaluation, Weekly Monitoring Observation Logs, Intern Supervisor Observation reports and documentation from Mentor-Intern, Intern-Supervisor and Supervisor-Principal meetings. Documents in the student folders include practice test scores, class assignments, and peer-student observations. Each piece of documentation is considered when evaluating and determining students' and interns' progress in the program. Evaluations are conducted during the internship year using the following instruments; Program Checklist, Intern Observation Report, and the Standard Recommendation form. Fifty percent of the interns responding to the questionnaire indicated they do not receive eighty hours of coursework prior to their internship. Prior

to the internship, each candidate is given a Pre-Observation Assignment Workbook. Using this workbook, each candidate completes Thirty (30) hours of focused field base observations in which they must observe teaching in a variety of settings and content areas, with the vast amount of observation time occurring in the content area and grade level in which they plan to teach. Throughout their coursework, the instructors use the workbook to discuss application of strategies to provide the connection between what is observed and what is learned in the pedagogy courses

There are currently seven interns in the program with one (1) field supervisor who is a certified Texas Teacher. Per the electronic questionnaire, the field supervisor (FS) indicated that he had supervised as many as thirty-one (31) interns at a time. There is a concern that when the program reaches over twenty (20) interns, that additional field supervisors will be employed. It was also indicated that he usually conducts four to six observations of the interns per semester. The observations last for one full class period; however fifty-percent of the interns indicated that observations lasted less than forty-five minutes. It should also be noted that the FS sometimes spends up to two hours in observations, and has made over seventeen (17) visits to a struggling intern. During an informal visit, he generally spends fifteen minutes with the mentor teacher to address any issues or concerns. The initial contact with the candidate after assignment is less than one week. The interns meet four times on Saturday mornings to participate in required interactive seminars. The topics of the sessions depend upon a needs assessment generated by the intern, field supervisor and mentor.

The field supervisor noted that classroom management, planning and relating with parents were chief concerns. The mentor teachers expressed concern in the interns' knowledge about utilizing TEKS in the content areas, steps in curriculum development, and diagnosing the learning needs of students. Interns indicated that they felt very comfortable in using technology in their classroom instruction and in teaching reading.

Currently the SJATCP program is not offering the 300 hours of preparation as required by TAC rule. However, the program has indicated that with the next cohort there will be a correction of course hours to meet the specifications.

Program evaluation is ongoing and includes candidate and student feedback, programmatic review, analysis of the TExES pass rates, and completion rates. Reflected in the student folders were course evaluations in which students were asked to evaluate course expectations, the instructor, and the course effectiveness.

San Jacinto College North- Alternative Teacher Certification Preparation Program is in compliance with Texas Administrative Code (TAC) section §228.40 – Program Delivery

V. On-Going Support

§228.35 – On-going Educator Preparation and Support

For students struggling in the program, the program coordinator as well other program staff is available to address any issues that may arise. The constant communication between the candidates and the program staff ensures that issues are addressed immediately. In addition, each candidate is provided structured guidance from the field supervisor. Per the field supervisor, the initial contact is made within the first week of the intern's assignment. The guidelines require two formal observations during the first semester and one formal observation during the second semester. The field supervisor is responsible for documenting instructional practices observed, providing written feedback during a conference with the intern, and providing written feedback to the intern's appraising principal. Evidence of these practices was available in the student folders.

Additionally, interns receive support from the program coordinator in the form of regular class meetings and trainings. Adjunct instructors meet with the program coordinator to discuss any changes or updates with SBEC and the overall performance of the educator program. This information allows them to make adjustments and develop substantial relationships with the college, interns, and school districts.

Each school district that hires an intern assumes the responsibility of training and assigning a mentor teacher. Based on advisory committee information, the school districts have an application process and training in place to support mentor teachers.

San Jacinto College North- Alternative Teacher Certification Preparation Program is in compliance with the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) section 228.30-On-Going Support.

Recommendations:

- Appoint a full-time program coordinator as soon as possible to ensure the stability and growth of the program in a timely manner
- Add certification areas, especially Generalist EC-6 as soon as possible.
- Align program to offer 300 hours of coursework/training prior to the beginning of the next cohort
- Increase marketing opportunities by making the educator preparation program more visible on the website and other media as soon as possible
- Increase active advisory committee membership to include the five groups recommended by TAC rule as soon as possible
- Formalize the student interview process and add this as part of the student file prior to the next cohort
- Explore adding online modules to encourage participation in the program as needed

- Explore adding teaching sites in outlying areas of the college district as needed
- Keep the field supervisor to student ratio low in order to address concerns in classroom management, planning and relating to parents