One Year Post Approval Compliance Audit Report 2011-2012
eTEACH N Texas
Alternative Teacher Certification Program

According to Texas Administrative Code (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 Texas Education Agency (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.

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Program Specialists, Vanessa Alba and Mixon Henry, conducted a Texas Education Agency (TEA) one year Post-Approval Compliance Audit of eTEACH N Texas alternative teacher certification program on October 31-November 1, 2011. The focus of the compliance audit was the initial Math 4-8 and Science 4-8 certificates. The following are findings and recommendations for program improvement.

Data Analysis:

Information concerning compliance with Texas Administrative Code (TAC) governing educator preparation programs was collected by various qualitative means. A self-report was submitted to the Texas Education Agency on September 30, 2011. An onsite review of documents, candidate records, course material, online courses, and curriculum correlations charts provided evidence regarding compliance. In addition, electronic questionnaires were sent to eTEACH N Texas Alternative Certification Program stakeholders by TEA staff. A total of ten (10) responses were received out of thirteen (13) stakeholders that were sent questionnaires. They included the following: Seven (7) out of nine (9) advisory committee members; zero (0) out of one (1) clinical teachers; one (1) out of (1) field supervisors; one (1) out of (1) campus principals, and one (1) out of one (1) cooperating teachers. Qualitative methods of content analysis, cross-referencing, and triangulation of the data were used to evaluate the evidence. Evidence of compliance was measured using a rubric correlated to Texas Administrative Code.
Opening and Closing Session:

The opening session on October 31, 2011, was attended by three (3) people. They included the following: Sarah C. Taylor, co-director; Stan Harrell, Finance; and Mystie Smith, Compliance Officer. The closing session on November 1, 2011 was attended by Sarah C. Taylor.

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

FINDINGS:

Program support was indicated by the governing body of eTEACH N Texas alternative certification program per TAC §228.20(c) as evidenced by the participation of Sarah C. Taylor, co-director, in all aspects of the compliance audit.

The advisory committee consists of nine (9) members. Four (4) members are from local school districts, one (1) from an education service center, two (2) from higher education, and two (2) member representing community/business interests. eTEACH N Texas meets TAC §228.20(b) requirements for advisory committee composition.

The first meeting of the academic year was held on August 7, 2010. Ten members attended this meeting. The agenda reflects approval of minutes and orientation of roles & responsibilities. The second meeting was held on May 21, 2011. The agenda reflects a program update; recommendations for candidate recruitment; possible future meeting dates; and approval of minutes. During the November 5, 2011, meeting, the second meeting date was scheduled for May 19, 2012. These meetings will be conducted electronically via “Go To Meeting”. One hundred percent (100%) of the advisory committee members indicated that they did meet two times per academic year. The program meets the requirements for conducting a minimum of two advisory committee meetings per academic year as required by TAC §288.20(b).

Seventy-one point four percent (71.4%) of the advisory committee members reported that they assisted in the design, delivery, evaluation and major policy decisions of the educator preparation program.

The advisory committee cited some of the strengths of eTEACH N Texas as the knowledgeable program staff and the focus on secondary curriculum.

Some areas cited for improvement by the advisory committee included more involvement with the members and a more effective strategy for recruitment.

Based on the evidence presented, eTEACH N Texas is in compliance with Texas Administrative Code §228.20 – Governance of Educator Preparation Programs.
FINDINGS:

According to the self-report and website, to be admitted into the eTEACH N Texas alternative certification program, the applicant must have a four year baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution of higher learning [TAC §227.10(C)]; a passing score on PACT [TAC §227.10(c)]; 2.5 overall GPA or 2.5 GPA in the last 60 hours [TAC §227.10(A)]; twelve (12) semester credit hours in a content field [TAC §227.10(C)]; show mastery of basic skills proficiency [TAC §227.10(4)]; exhibit adequate oral communication skills; submit an application [TAC §227.10(6)]; participate in an interview [TAC §227.10(6)]; and meet any other requirements the program determines [TAC §227.10(7)]. In a review of six (6) candidates’ electronic records, it was found that five (5) verified adherence to admission criteria. In the files reviewed the documented GPA range was from 2.67-3.69.

One of the applicant files contained evidence that the individual did not meet the TAC §227.10(C) passing score on the PACT. Training was provided to eTEACH N Texas to ensure that all applicants are appropriately screened prior to admission into the program.

Basic skills in reading, written communication and mathematics were met via a baccalaureate degree/Texas Successive Initiative (TSI) in all six applicant files and meet the requirements of TAC §227.10(4).

Applicants are required to partake in a telephone interview. That interview is scored on a Likert-type scale. The questions are standard for all applicants. The interview meets the requirements of TAC §227.10(6) interview or other screening instruments used to determine a candidate’s appropriateness for certification sought.

Out-of-country applicants whose first language is not English must demonstrate competence in the English language by submission of an official minimum score on the written or computer-based Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). In addition, the applicant must have his/her transcripts from an out-of-country non-English speaking university evaluated by an approved evaluation service [TAC §227.10(7)]. The program has no out-of-country candidates at this time.

The self-report submitted by eTEACH N Texas stated that recruitment was conducted through its website, brochures, mass mailing of recruitment postcards and meet the requirements of TAC §227.10(7).

Based on the evidence presented, eTEACH N Texas is in compliance with TAC §227 - Admission and Certification Criteria.
FINDINGS:
eTEACH N Texas alternative certification program was approved to offer teacher preparation in the following six (6) certification fields: English Language Arts and Reading (8-12); Life Science (8-12); Mathematics (4-8); Mathematics/Physics (8-12); Science (4-8); and Social Studies (8-12). Since this was a post-approval audit, the entire curriculum was reviewed, with a focus on Math (4-8) and Science (4-8) content areas.

Qualifications necessary to be selected as a course instructor require an advanced degree; Texas Teacher Certification in corresponding content and grade level; more than five years experience teaching content at the specific grade level in a public or private school; and three years of secondary school teaching experience. The aforementioned qualifications are the preferred instructor qualification requirements. However, the minimum instructor qualifications include a Bachelor’s degree, at least 18 hours in education coursework; Texas teacher certification in corresponding content and grade level; and at least three years teaching experience in public/private schools. Instructors’ credentials were presented for review and criteria for selection were verified by the instructor list that was correlated to the courses that each instructor teaches. There are four instructors for the online coursework. It was verified that the instructors have the appropriate background or experience to provide instruction in the certification fields offered.

In reviewing the online curriculum, it was found that the educator standards were the curricular basis for instruction as required by TAC §228.30(a). The evidence presented included the EC-12 Correlation Matrix for each of the modules and lessons in the seven (7) courses offered in the online curriculum. The specific courses and sequence are as follows:

- Course 1: Legal and Ethical Requirements
- Course 2: Knowing and Learning
- Course 3: Classroom Management
- Course 4: Multicultural Curriculum
- Course 5: Instructional Strategies for Diverse Learners
- Course 6: Literacy Connections
- Course 7: Parent Conferencing and Professionalism

In addition to the online courses, candidates are required to participate in face-to-face class meetings with other candidates seeking certification in the same certification field. The content of the face-to-face classes is as follows:

- Candidates seeking a Science 4-8 certificate must participate in content specific pedagogy coursework. “Simply Outrageous Science”, whose proprietary rights are owned by Aaron Harrell, Pam Harrell, and Sarah Taylor, is based on the 5E Model. In this spiraled pedagogical portion of the curriculum, candidates are required to identify where the Science TEKS are introduced, taught, and tested.
• Candidates seeking a Math 4-8 certificate must participate in content specific pedagogy coursework. "Xtreem Math", whose proprietary rights are owned by Colleen Eddy, is based on the 5E Model. In this spiraled pedagogical portion of the curriculum, candidates are required to identify where the Math TEKS are introduced, taught, and tested.

It was also noted that eTEACH N Texas online curriculum did provide evidence that it addresses the relevant Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) as required by TAC §228.30(a). In addition to the aforementioned courses, Course 4: Multicultural Curriculum requires candidates to collect five lessons from the internet related to the content area, write TEKS for each of the lessons, identify and describe how the TEKS demonstrate a variety of instructional strategies. A minimum score of 15/20 is required and the lessons are scored utilizing a rubric.

The seventeen (17) subject matter topics were included in the coursework as prescribed in TAC §228.30(b). The evidence was provided in the course syllabi and verified in the online coursework. Reading for each certificate offered was verified in Course 6: Literacy Connections. Six hours of test preparation for candidates prior to Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities (PPR) TEExES testing as per TAC §228.30(b)(17) and TAC §228.35(a)(3)(C) is offered to all candidates via T-Cert.

Based on evidence presented, eTEACH N Texas alternative certificate program is in compliance with Texas Administrative Code Section §228.30 – Educator Preparation Curriculum.

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

FINDINGS:

Currently, the eTEACH N Texas alternative certification program is delivered in a hybrid format. The total program consists of 300 clock hours for secondary certification. This meets the requirements set forth in TAC §228.25(a)(3). Evidence was presented in the program hours chart in the self-report and verified in a review of the online curriculum and candidate files.

Thirty clock hours of field-based experience was verified prior to clinical teaching as per TAC §228.35(d). Evidence was found in two candidate files reviewed by TEA program specialists. Those field experiences are based on the TxBESS standards. Fifteen hours of field-based experience may be provided by use of electronic transmission or other video or technology-based method per TAC 228.35(a) (3)(A). This option is not utilized by eTEACH N Texas alternative certification program.

Per TAC §228.35(a)(6), the program implemented may allow candidates to substitute prior ongoing experience and/or professional training for part of the educator preparation requirements such as the 30 clock hours of field-based experiences. However, previous experience cannot replace internship, student teaching, or clinical teaching. eTEACH N Texas educator preparation program does not permit that type of an accommodation and meets the requirement of TAC §228.35(a)(6).
Eighty hours of coursework prior to clinical teaching/internship were verified by documentation in the candidate’s electronic file and met the requirements of TAC §228.35(a).

Fifty clock-hours of training provided by a school district and/or campus was not utilized toward the total number of program hours.

Clinical teaching [TAC §228.35(d)(2)(B)] is conducted for a minimum of twelve weeks. Currently, there is one candidate who has begun the clinical teaching assignment in the fall 2011 semester and meets the requirement of TAC §228.35(d)(2)(B).

Per TAC §228.35(d)(2)(C), an internship of 180 school days or an academic year is required for teaching candidates. The assignment must match the certification field for which the individual is accepted into the program and trained. In addition, per TAC §228.35(d)(2)(C), the intern should be issued the appropriate probationary certificate and is classified as “teacher” of record on the campus PEIMS data. Although approved to offer internship as an option, currently there is not a candidate in the eTEACH N Texas alternative certification program who has utilized this option.

Evidence in the form of placement information was present in the candidate’s files that verified that clinical teaching is taking place in an actual school setting rather than a distance learning lab or virtual school setting as prescribed by TAC §228.35(d)(2)(C)(ii).

According to TAC §228.35(e), eTEACH N Texas alternative certification program is responsible for providing mentors or cooperating teachers training that is scientifically –based or verify that training has been provided by a school district or education service center. The evidence provided demonstrated the following:

- A Handbook was provided to the cooperating teacher; and
- TxBESS Training was provided and verified via training certificate issued by the University of North Texas (UNT).

TAC §228.35(f) states that supervision of each candidate shall be conducted with the structured guidance and regular ongoing support of an experienced educator who has been trained as a field supervisor. The evidence provided that field supervisors had been trained by participation in the TEA Field Supervisor webinar. Certificates for the three field supervisors were presented for review. Currently, only one is serving as a field supervisor. eTEACH N Texas meets the requirements for field supervisor training as prescribed in TAC §228.35(f).

Initial contact by the field supervisor was verified as made within the first three weeks of the assignment as required by TAC §228.35(f). Evidence was located in the candidate’s electronic file that contact was made by telephone and email prior to clinical teaching. The first contact met the requirements of TAC §228.35(f).

According to TAC §228.35(f)(3), during internship, the program must provide a minimum of two formal observations during the first semester and one formal observation during the second semester. In the documentation provided it was found that there are currently no candidates actively participating in an internship at this time.

A total of three observations [TAC §228.35(f)(4)] must be conducted during the student teaching/clinical teaching assignment and must be at least 45 minutes in duration [TAC §228.35(f)]. TAC §228.35(f) also states that the first observation must be conducted within the first six weeks of student teaching/clinical teaching. eTEACH N Texas presented evidence that the clinical teaching schedule of observations meets the requirements of TAC §228.35(f)(4).
Furthermore, TAC §228.35(f) requires that the field supervisor document instructional practices observed and provide written feedback through an interactive conference with the candidates. Observation instruments were presented as evidence and was signed and dated by the candidate and campus principal. The documentation provided meets the requirements of TAC §228.35(f).

It is also the responsibility of eTEACH N Texas to provide a copy of the written feedback to the candidate’s campus administrator as required by TAC §228.35(f). eTEACH N Texas is currently providing that documentation in electronic format and meets the requirements of TAC §228.35(f).

Additional informal observations and coaching were provided by the program as specified in TAC §228.35(f). Field supervisors in the program provide individual candidates additional coaching via email. Documentation was provided upon request and included feedback regarding discipline management and positive feedback. Informal observations and coaching met the requirements as specified in TAC §228.35(f).

Based on evidence presented, eTEACH N Texas is in compliance with Texas Administrative Code Section §228.35 – PROGRAM DELIVERY AND ON-GOING SUPPORT.

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

FINDINGS:

eTEACH N Texas has a process in place for candidate assessment and benchmarking as prescribed by TAC §228.40(a). The process was documented in the self-report and verified during the document review. Candidates complete a seven step benchmark process that is approved by the certification officer. The benchmark form is dated and signed electronically by the eTEACH N Texas certification officer prior to issuance of Standard Certification. The process and format provided meet the requirements of TAC §228.40(a).

Readiness for testing [TAC §228.40(b)] is determined by the eTEACH N Texas “PPR Testing Approval Readiness to Test” process. According to TAC §228.40(b), the program shall not grant test approval for the pedagogy and professional responsibilities test until the candidate has met all the requirements for admission to the program and has been fully accepted into the educator preparation program. The program staff uses the on-line tracking system, and based on this system, will determine readiness to test utilizing the following process:

- Gain full acceptance into the eTEACH N Texas online program;
- Complete 30 hours of field based observations;
- Achieve a passing score for all on-line coursework modules; and
- Complete 6 hours of test preparation.

The document is signed and dated by both the teaching candidate and the certification officer. The process in place meets the requirements of TAC §228.40(b).
Evaluation of the program’s design and delivery of the curriculum should be continuous per TAC §228.40(c). Information such as performance data, scientifically-based research practices, and the results of internal and external assessments should be included in the evaluation process. Due to the small number of candidates in the eTEACH N Texas program, currently the program is taking feedback from candidates and instructors. This process meets the requirements of TAC §228.40(c).

According to TAC §228.40(d), the program will retain documents that provide evidence of a candidate’s eligibility for admission to the program and evidence of completion of all program requirements for a period of five years after program completion. Evidence exists that required documents have been kept for one year. They are stored electronically and saved to a secure server. Retention of documents meets the requirements of TAC §228.40(d).

Based on evidence presented, eTEACH N Texas is in compliance with Texas Administrative Code §228.40 – ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF CANDIDATES FOR CERTIFICATION AND PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT.

COMPONENT VI: Professional Conduct (TAC) §228.50

TAC §228.50(a) states that during the period of preparation, the educator preparation entity shall ensure that the individuals preparing candidates and the candidates themselves demonstrate adherence to Chapter 247 of this title (relating to Educators’ Code of Ethics). Candidates in the eTEACH N Texas alternative certification program are required to take as their first online course Legal & Ethical Requirements. In that course, candidates are required to read, know, understand, and apply the current TAC §247 requirements.

Senate Bill 174/Texas Administrative Code §229

Current Accreditation Status

eTEACH N Texas online educator preparation program is currently Accredited-Not Rated based on the fact that this is a new entity that was approved as an official educator preparation on June 18, 2010.

Program Recommendations:

The following are recommendations based on the findings of the compliance audit. If the program is NOT in compliance with any identified component, please consult the TAC rules and correct the issue IMMEDIATELY. A Compliance Status Report will be required every sixty days until the compliance issues are totally corrected.

Program recommendations are suggestions for general program improvement and no follow up is required.

PROGRAM COMPLIANCE RECOMMENDATIONS:
None at this time.

GENERAL PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Attend dean/director meetings;
- Participate in SBEC Meetings/webinars/trainings; and
- Ensure that the certification officer is provided with access to Educator Certification Online System and attends training.

Component 1 Recommendations:

- Expand the membership of the governing body to include more representatives from local school districts, such as superintendents, campus principals, and human resource directors to ensure that breadth of stakeholder input is provided.

Component 2 Recommendations:

- When advising applicants regarding PACT for a specific content area, expand grade levels to encompass a larger range of employment (i.e. 4-8 add 8-12);
- Ensure that all applicants have met the Pre-Admission Content Test (PACT) route requirements prior to admitting them into the program; and
- Conduct a visual interview with applicants to better ensure that the individual being interviewed is the person applying to the eTEACH N Texas educator preparation program.

Component 3 Recommendations:

- Completely develop the coursework and training for ELAR (8-12) and Social Studies (8-12) certificates offered.

Component 4 Recommendations:

- Consider adding clock-hours to the face-to-face training during clinical teaching or internship as the program expands;
- Cluster candidates within the same content/certification field together for the face-to-face portion of training to ensure that all candidates seeking a specific certification receive similar instruction.

Component 5 Recommendations:

- None at this time.