

Texas Education Agency Division of Educator Standards
Post Approval Site Visit
Education Service Center Region II
209 N. Water Street
Corpus Christi, Texas 78401
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Visit Conducted by TEA Staff:
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Texas Administrative Code (TAC) § 228.10 (b) Educator Preparation Program
Approval Process

Background

The Education Service Center (ESC) Region II Alternative Certification Program (ACP) has served 42 districts in southeast Texas for the past twenty years. The program has trained over 700 teachers, many of whom are now principals, department chairs, or counselors. Certification is offered in 38 areas, plus supplemental certifications. A Region II follow-up study showed that 87% of their interns are still teaching after five years.

The ACP hired a new coordinator eight months ago when the two former coordinators retired. The program cut from two to one coordinator at that time. The program is running smoothly and the ESC Region II Associate Director for Instructional Support Systems noted the smooth transition when interviewed by the Program Specialist. He claimed the greatest strength of the program was “the people.”

The Region II ACP enrolls about 40 interns per annual cohort. The program recently added requirements for all students, starting in the 2009-2010 cohort. All interns now take additional hours to become certified in Special Education or receive the Special Education Supplemental certification.

Interviews with the Program Coordinator and her director revealed that the program is concerned about financial stability if they do not maintain a high enough enrollment. The program has not raised student fees in some time, and hopes to continue to be affordable. Maintaining financial viability is an issue under discussion at this time.

Eight people, including the Program Coordinator, attended the Opening Session. The Program Coordinator gave an overview of the program and one Advisory Committee member spoke extensively about the program and how it works.

Prior to the TEA visit, ESC Region II submitted a self-report which addressed all required components.

Number and Roles of People Interviewed

Twenty (20) people were interviewed by Program Specialists. Interviewees included two (2) Advisory Committee members, two (2) program directors or coordinators, five (5) principals, four (4) mentors, two (2) Field Supervisors, four (4) Interns, and one (1) program staff member.

I. Entity Commitment and Collaboration

Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.20 Governance of Educator Preparation Programs

Findings:

Even though the Advisory Committee has twenty-five (25) members, only four (4) members representing three school districts attended the Opening Session. One assistant superintendent who was interviewed revealed she had served on the committee for seven years. Three people drove more than 30 miles each way to attend this meeting, demonstrating their commitment to the program. The Advisory Committee meets twice a year, or more as necessary. The program coordinator also attends additional monthly meetings held at ESC Region II with local district superintendents, human resource directors, and principals serving within the 42 districts.

The Advisory Committee is actively involved in decision making and evaluation of the program. Issues recently discussed with the Advisory Committee include areas of high need in local schools, recruitment, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and the quality of intern instruction.

One superintendent on the committee talked at length about how the program and the committee works. For example, the Advisory Committee recommended last year that the program begin certifying all candidates in special education as well as their other certificate fields. The new Program Coordinator has responded to this suggestion and implemented this new requirement. Advisory Committee members mentioned that they felt their input on the committee was valued and appreciated by program staff.

The composition of the Advisory Committee includes current interns and past interns, and special education program directors as well as representatives from school districts, higher education, and the community at large. The Advisory Committee does not have a business representative however.

ESC Region II is not in compliance with TAC §228.20 because no attempt has been made up to this time to recruit a business person to the Advisory Committee.

Recommendation:

- Recruit a business person to the Advisory Committee

II. Admission Criteria

Texas Administrative Code (TAC) § 227.10 Admission Criteria

Findings:

Admission requirements for the Alternative Certification Program at Education Service Center Region II meet or exceed state requirements in TAC §227.10. Prior to entering the program, candidates must meet NCLB criteria, and pass a rigorous interview conducted by two staff members. Interview questions are the same for all candidates. An essay is also required as part of the application process. The quality of candidates was noted by school administrators who were interviewed and is verified by the 98-100% pass rates on certification tests.

Students whose first language is other than English have been screened by the interview prior to admission. Program Specialists recommended that the TOEFL exam also be required for these students in order to give a more subjective evaluation.

ESC Region II is in compliance with TAC §227.10.

III. Curriculum

Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.30 Educator Preparation Curriculum

Findings:

The Region II ACP curriculum meets or exceeds all requirements mandated by the state for teacher preparation. Every intern gets 54 hours of special education training. Generalist interns receive 48 hours of instruction in reading, and content area interns receive 12 hours. A variety of formative assessments are studied and discussed by interns to diagnose learning needs for their students. The Texas Code of Ethics for Educators is required reading in one of the ACP modules.

Interns receive two days of intensive training in CRISS strategies (Creating Independence through Student-owned Strategies). Interns are required to turn in a log showing their use of these active teaching strategies on a weekly basis once they are teaching. Interns also receive two days of training using Ruby Payne's "Framework for Understanding Poverty." Trainers are certified to present this training. In addition, interns get another two days of training from CPI (Crisis Prevention Institute), which concerns discipline.

The curriculum includes another six full days on classroom management using the Harry Wong system. Interns are required to create procedures for all aspects of classroom management and turn those in before they enter the classroom.

ESC Region II is in compliance with TAC §228.30.

Commendations:

- Special education curriculum gives candidate better marketability and understanding of how to serve population

IV. Program Delivery and Evaluation

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

Texas Administrative Code (TAC) § 228.40 Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement

Findings:

All interns receive instruction beyond the required 300 hours. All Generalist interns receive 391 hours of training. Content 4-8 interns obtain 326 hours of training. Content 8-12 interns get 329 hours, with some like Art and PE receiving 310 hours. The program is delivered both face-to-face and on-line in conjunction with ESC Region XIII. Online hours vary with certificate area. All PPR is presented face-to-face by Region II staff.

During the 30 hours of pre-service field experiences, interns are required to visit at least two different school districts, three different grade levels, and write up evaluations for each observation. Interns also must complete four observations of their campus mentor and three other teachers during the internship year using required documentation forms. Struggling interns are also required to do further observations.

Program evaluation is done through the ESC Consortium, which gathers data about all facets of the program. A review of the program is conducted once a year by means of survey data collected from interns, mentors, administrators, and personnel directors. Data is shared with the Advisory Committee and analyzed together.

ESC Region II is in compliance with TAC §228.40.

Commendations:

- Curriculum exceeds required clock hours
- Data sharing and program evaluation by Advisory Committee and larger Consortium, which gives a more regional focus

V. On-Going Support

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

Findings:

Region II program staff serve as Field Supervisors. Field Supervisors make initial contact with interns no later than the first three weeks of school. Interns can teach in any of 42 school districts, some as much as two hours driving time away from the Region II Corpus Christi location. One Field Supervisor interviewed has been with Region II for 18 years.

Field Supervisors generally work with no more than three (3) interns, and often have only one intern assigned. Field Supervisors generally make a minimum of five intern observations with documented feedback per year. Field Supervisors hold monthly meetings to analyze intern observations from themselves and the campus mentors. Growth plans are created immediately for any student who may be struggling.

Region II offers a six-hour training program and handbooks for mentors, plus compensation of \$300.00 per year, dependant on timely submission of all intern evaluations. In addition, Region II sends a monthly newsletter to all Mentors. Campus mentors are experienced teachers selected by campus principals. Mentors conduct a minimum of four evaluations of interns per year. Mentors interviewed revealed that they meet with interns briefly everyday and for a longer period at least once a week. Interns keep a log of meetings with mentors that is turned in to the program once a semester.

Interviews with school principals, Field Supervisors, and high school deans of instruction revealed that communication from Field supervisors does not always flow to the school principals at the high school level. One principal interviewed did not even know who the Field Supervisor was. Interviews also revealed that the Field Supervisors and Campus Mentors often did not work together for the benefit of the intern. Program Specialists recommended that the flow of information be improved in these areas.

ESC Region II is in compliance with TAC §228.30.

Commendations:

- Small ratio of Field Supervisors to Interns
- Compensation and training for Mentors

Overall Program Recommendations:

- Add business representation to Advisory Committee, implement for Fall of 2009.
- Use TOEFL examination to determine English language proficiency for non-native English speakers, add for cohort group of 2010.
- Improve communication among Field Supervisors, Principals, and Mentors, create system for interns serving 2009-2010.
- Consistently inform Principals of Field Supervisor contact information, create system for interns serving 2009-2010.
- Deans of Instruction at high schools need to pass on information to Principals, create system for interns serving 2009-2010.
- Make sure program is financially sound so it can continue; establish economic benchmarks with business advisory committee member for Fall of 2009.