

Item 8:

Request to Approve a New Educator Preparation Program: Educate Hearts Teaching Corps

DISCUSSION AND ACTION

SUMMARY: This item provides the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) an opportunity to approve a request by Educate Hearts Teaching Corps, located in Houston, Texas, to be approved as an educator preparation program (EPP) to prepare and recommend candidates for certification through the alternative certification route. Texas Education Agency (TEA) staff reviewed the proposal and found that it complied with provisions of 19 TAC Chapter 227, Provisions for Educator Preparation Candidates, Chapter 228, Requirements for Educator Preparation Programs, Chapter 229, Accountability System for Educator Preparation Programs, and Chapter 230, Professional Educator Preparation and Certification, Subchapter B, General Certification Requirements.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: The statutory authority related to the approval of educator preparation programs are the Texas Education Code, §21.0443 and §21.044.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon SBEC approval with enrollments to begin September 8, 2025.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND JUSTIFICATION: The SBEC approves all EPPs. The prospective EPP prepares and completes an extensive application addressing the SBEC-required ten components below.

Component	Component Description
1. Governance (19 TAC §228.25)	Pertaining to the responsibilities of the governing body and the EPP's advisory committee functions.
2. Admission (19 TAC §§227.10 and 227.17)	Pertaining to admission criteria and formal admission required of all applicants seeking initial certification in any class of certificate.
3. Educator Preparation Curriculum (19 TAC §228.57)	Pertaining to standards-based curriculum required for all candidates seeking certification.
4. Preparation Program Coursework and/or Training (19 TAC Chapter 228, Subchapters D, E, & F)	Pertaining to how the educator preparation program prepares candidates for educator certification and ensures they are effective in the classroom.

5. Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement (19 TAC §228.25 & §228.31)	<p>Pertaining to how the EPP has established benchmarks and structured assessments of a candidate's progress throughout the EPP.</p> <p>Pertaining to how the EPP continuously evaluates the design and delivery of the EPP components based on performance data, scientifically based research practices, and the results of internal and external feedback and assessments.</p>
6. Professional Conduct (19 TAC §228.31 & §228.57)	<p>Pertaining to how the educator preparation program ensures that the individuals preparing candidates, and the candidates themselves, understand and adhere to Chapter 247 relating to the Educators' Code of Ethics.</p>
7. Complaints and Investigations Procedures (19 TAC §228.121 & §228.123)	<p>Pertaining to the EPP's responsibilities for maintaining a process through which a candidate or former candidate in an EPP, an applicant for candidacy in an EPP, an employee or former employee of an EPP, a cooperating teacher, a host teacher, a mentor, a site supervisor, or an administrator in a public or private school that serves as a site for clinical teaching, residency, internship, or practicum experiences may submit a complaint about an EPP for investigation and resolution.</p>
8. Certification Procedures (19 TAC §230.36 & §230.37 and 19 TAC Chapters 230, 239, 241, 242)	<p>Pertaining to the requirements for the issuance of Intern, Probationary, and Standard certificates.</p>
9. Required Submission of Information, Surveys, and Other Data (19 TAC §229.3)	<p>Pertaining to all data and information an educator preparation program must submit to TEA.</p>
10. Candidate Training and Support on Inclusive Practices for Students with Disabilities [19 TAC §228.11(a)(1)(J)/TEC §21.0443(b)(1) & (2)]	<p>Pertaining to coursework and clinical experience requirements for training educator candidates in proactive instructional planning techniques and inclusive practices for all students including students with disabilities and English language learners.</p>

The proposal is reviewed by TEA staff members who hold extensive discussions with the applying entity to ensure compliance with the SBEC rules. The Educate Hearts Teaching Corps application meets the minimum requirements for approval by the SBEC. The attachment includes an Executive Summary that was prepared by the applicant and summarizes how the proposed program will meet each of the SBEC-required components for program approval.

TEA staff members conducted a pre-approval site visit on January 23, 2025, and found that the Educate Hearts Teaching Corps program complied with the provisions of 19 TAC Chapter 227, Provisions for Educator Preparation Candidates, and Chapter 228, Requirements for Educator Preparation Programs, that govern approval of educator preparation programs, and that the

organization's facilities and resources were adequate to support candidates and the preparation process.

Representatives from Educate Hearts Teaching Corps will attend the April 25, 2025, SBEC meeting and will address the Board's questions related to their application as needed.

Certifications Requested:

- Core Subjects with Science of Teaching Reading (STR): Early Childhood-Grade 6
- English Language Arts and Reading: Grades 7-12
- Mathematics: Grades 7-12
- Science: Grades 7-12
- Social Studies: Grades 7-12

Anticipated Enrollment Start Date: September 8, 2025

Anticipated Number of Candidates for the First Year: 25-50

Cost of the Program per Participant: \$6,500

PUBLIC AND STUDENT BENEFIT: The addition of this new educator preparation program will increase the number of qualified certified educators in Texas.

MOTION TO BE CONSIDERED:

Approve Educate Hearts Teaching Corps as a new educator preparation program as presented.

Staff Members Responsible:

Lorrie Ayers, Director of EPP Management, Educator Preparation and Certification
Rebecca Bunting, Program Specialist, Educator Preparation and Certification

Attachment:

Executive Summary for Educate Hearts Teaching Corps

ATTACHMENT

Executive Summary

Introduction

Educate Hearts Teaching Corps, located in downtown Houston, Texas, is poised to address the state of Texas' significant teacher shortages, particularly in critical subjects. (Texas Education Agency, 2021) The program seeks to prepare candidates for certification in Core Subjects with the Science of Teaching Reading EC-6 (COR EC-6), English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) 7-12, Mathematics 7-12, Science 7-12, and Social Studies 7-12, with a projected annual certification of 25-50 candidates. Educate Hearts Teaching Corps stands out as an independent, in-person alternative teacher certification program, offering rigorous, cost-effective, and innovative preparation. The program's uniqueness lies in its emphasis on subject-specific content mastery balanced with effective pedagogy, immersive experiences, comprehensive mentorship, high expectations, and academic excellence for all students. Pending approval, we anticipate launching our program on September 8, 2025, with an estimated attendance cost of \$6500 per candidate.

Component 1: Governance of Educator Preparation Programs

Educate Hearts Teaching Corps operates with a clear hierarchy led by the Director of Educational Programs & Business Strategy. Reporting to this role is the Program Director of the Alternative Teacher Certification Program (ATCP), who oversees the Program Coordinator for Enrollment and Student Services, the Program Coordinator for Academics, and the Program Coordinator for the Teaching Practicum (clinical experience). The Advisory Committee provides guidance to the program to ensure the production of effective and day-one-ready teachers. The Advisory Committee will meet quarterly to provide input on program design, delivery, evaluation, and policy decisions.

Component 2: Admission Criteria

The admission process involves submitting a program application with a \$50 fee, official transcripts, and transcript evaluations for international applicants. Applicants must have a minimum GPA of 2.5. Applicants with a GPA below 2.5 must submit a passing score on the Texas Pre-admission Content Test (TX PACT) in the subject area of the certificate sought. United States (US) citizenship or residency is required, and international applicants must demonstrate English language proficiency by submitting transcripts from a country on the list of English-speaking countries or provide a passing score on the Test of English as a Foreign Language-internet based test (TOEFL-iBT). Additionally, candidates must complete a 1-minute video interview that will be used to assess prospective candidates' disposition for the education profession, and they must pass a fingerprint background check.

Component 3: Educator Preparation Curriculum

The program offers a curriculum that provides rigorous instructions in the standards required for teacher candidate preparation. The program ensures that all competencies and standards required of Texas educators are scaffolded throughout the curriculum, enabling candidates to grasp the knowledge and skills necessary for mastery and excel as educators in the classroom. To address specific state requirements, the program requires that all candidates complete external training through approved providers for Dyslexia, mental health, substance abuse, and youth suicide awareness. A separate external training on digital learning is another program requirement, but additional lessons led by program staff are integrated throughout the remainder of the curriculum.

The program's curriculum prioritizes candidates' content mastery. Hence, 45% of the program curriculum focuses on the knowledge and skill indicators and TEKS aligned to candidates' certification category, while the remaining courses emphasize the most contemporary and research-based educational theory and pedagogy. The curriculum also includes real-world classroom scenarios, lesson planning exercises, and student teaching experiences, providing candidates with opportunities to apply what they have learned and receive constructive feedback. The program's commitment to an innovative, comprehensive, and adaptable curriculum ensures that candidates are fully equipped to meet the demands of the modern educational landscape.

Component 4: Delivery & Ongoing Support

Educate Hearts Teaching Corps offers a flexible face-to-face program that spans approximately nine months. Candidates complete a minimum of 388 clock hours of coursework, 50 clock hours of pre-service field-based experiences, and a clinical teaching or internship option. Rigorous training of program staff ensures that instructors, field supervisors, and cooperating teachers and mentors deliver effective training and support to candidates throughout the program.

Component 5: Candidate and Program Evaluation

The program utilizes benchmarks to monitor candidate progress, assesses candidates' readiness for TExES exams, and conducts systematic evaluations of both the program and curriculum. The advisory committee plays a pivotal role in this process, guiding the program to ensure its effectiveness. The program also adopts a research-oriented approach to data collection to conduct effective analyses to drive continuous program improvement.

Component 6: Professional Conduct

Educate Hearts Teaching Corps places a strong emphasis on fostering a deep understanding of the Texas Educators' Code of Ethics among its instructors and candidates. To achieve this goal, the organization provides regular trainings that not only familiarize them with the code but also guide them in its practical application. This commitment to ethical standards helps create a culture of integrity and professionalism within the Educate Hearts Teaching Corps community.

Component 7: Complaints Process

The program handbook outlines a complaints process that ensures timely resolution, featuring clear procedures for filing, involvement of program personnel, and a well-defined timeline. Candidates are also informed about the option to file complaints with TEA, if needed.

Component 8: Issuance of Certificates

Candidates must achieve passing scores on all required certification exams. Additionally, Educate Hearts Teaching Corps requires candidates to complete all required coursework and training to qualify for issuance of an Intern or Probationary certificate. For issuance of a Standard certificate, all required tests must be passed, and all program requirements must be met, including a successful clinical experience.

Component 9: Accuracy of Data Reporting

Educate Hearts Teaching Corps is dedicated to strict adherence to both state and federal rules and regulations concerning reporting. This commitment extends to ensuring compliance with all applicable laws, policies, and procedures. The program prioritizes transparency and accountability in reporting practices and maintains a proactive approach to stay updated on any changes in regulations.

Component 10: Candidate Training & Support on Inclusive Practices for Students with Disabilities

The program integrates proactive instructional planning techniques and research-based inclusive practices into both coursework and the clinical experience, ensuring that all candidates are well-prepared to effectively address the needs of all students.