



## **2019 – 2020 Continuing Approval Review Report ACT-Rio Grande Valley**

### **PURPOSE**

Texas Education Agency (TEA) Program Specialist, Vanessa Alba, conducted a five-year Continuing Approval Desk Review of the educator preparation program (EPP) for ACT-Rio Grande Valley (ACT-RGV) on February 17, 2020. Per 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.10(b), "...An entity approved by the SBEC under this chapter shall be reviewed at least once every five years...". Dr. Jorge Arredondo, Superintendent of Schools, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD, was identified as the program Legal Authority and Ms. Janie Trevino, Backup Legal Authority & Certification Officer, was identified as the primary EPP contact for the review process. ACT-RGV was approved as an EPP on October 9, 2001. At the time of the review, the EPP was Accredited – Warned Year 1. At the time of the review, ACT-RGV was approved to certify candidates in the following classes: Teacher class only.

Per 19 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 TEA administers TAC required by the Texas legislature for the regulation of all EPPs in the state. (See the complete [TAC](#) for details.) The five-year Continuing Approval Review was conducted in a "Desk Review" format where EPP staff submitted requested documents to TEA for review.

The scope of this review included: 1) verifying compliance with Texas Administrative Code (TAC) and Texas Education Code (TEC) as applicable to all certification classes in all certification routes offered by the EPP; and 2) developing a plan for improvement based on review data, performance indicators identified in 19 TAC §229.4, and self-reported EPP information provided in the Status Report. Next Steps were developed to address plans for quality improvement. Evidence of compliance was measured using a rubric aligned to TAC.

EPP staff participating in the review at various stages and during the mid-point conference call were Ms. Janie Trevino, Certification Officer & Backup Legal Authority, and Dr. Rebecca Garza, Assistant Superintendent for Human Capital Development, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

Information concerning compliance with TAC governing EPPs was collected by a variety of means. A Status Report and related program documents were submitted to TEA on January 8, 2020. Additional EPP documents, including records for ten (10) candidates, were submitted on January 21, 2020. Qualitative and quantitative methodologies of content analysis, cross-referencing, and triangulation of the data were used to evaluate the evidence.



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### FINDINGS, COMPLIANCE ISSUES, and RECOMMENDATIONS

“Findings” indicate evidence collected during the review process. If the program is “not in compliance” with any identified component, the program should consult the TAC and correct the issue immediately. A “Next Steps Plan” may be drafted during the review that identifies compliance issues to be addressed and a timeline for completion. “Recommendations” are suggestions for general program improvement and no follow up is required.

#### COMPONENT I: GOVERNANCE – 19 TAC §228

##### Findings

- Governance was not reviewed as a part of the Desk Review. TEA relied on self-reported data contained within the Status Report submitted as evidence of compliance. The program self-reported that it meets twice per academic year. [19 TAC §228.20(b)]
- ACT-RGV has posted a calendar of activities on the website. [19 TAC §228.20(g)]
- The completed Status Report was submitted to TEA on 1/8/2020 as required prior to the EPP review.[19 TAC §228.10(b)(1)]
- ACT-RGV was approved to offer clinical teaching on 2/14/2011 and supporting documents are in the EPP file. [19 TAC §228.10(c)]
- ACT-RGV submitted a program amendment to its coursework to meet new TAC curriculum requirements on 5/9/2018 and supporting documents are in the EPP file. [19 TAC §228.10(e)]
- ACT-RGV changed ownership on 5/5/2017. Dr. Kathleen Vinger, former legal authority, was the previous owner. The Pharr-San Juan Consolidated ISD purchased the program and the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Jorge Arredondo, is the current legal authority. [19 TAC §228.17]

##### Compliance Issues to be Addressed (Next Steps)

- None.

##### Recommendations

- Because the EPP is in transition and will soon have a new program director, the program was advised to utilize the TEA PowerPoint for advisory committee training.

Based on the evidence presented, ACT-RGV was in compliance with 19 TAC §228 – Governance of Educator Preparation Programs.



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### COMPONENT II: ADMISSION - 19 TAC §227.10

#### Findings

- ACT-RGV has informed applicants and candidates of all required information: The admission/completion requirements, the effects of supply & demand, the EPP performance over time, and the right to request a criminal history evaluation were all found on various pages of the website. The website postings and Candidate Handbook served as evidence of compliance. [19 TAC §227.1(c); 19 TAC §227.1(d)]
- ACT-RGV is an alternative certification program (ACP) and all applicants are required to have a degree at the time of admission. TEA reviewed ten files, and all contained official transcripts with a degree conferred as evidence of compliance. [19 TAC §227.10(a)(1)]
- One out-of-country file was reviewed. That file contained a transcript and transcript evaluation noting the degree conferred. The service used by the program was Span Tran, which is a TEA approved transcript evaluation service. Out-of-country applicants must demonstrate proficiency in the English language prior to admission. The file reviewed contained evidence of TOEFL scores as follows: 29 Reading, 30 Listening, 28 Speaking, and 24 Writing. The requirement is 24 Speaking, 22 Listening & Reading, and 21 Writing. The file reviewed exceeded the language proficiency requirement. [19 TAC §227.10(e); 19 TAC §227.10(a)(7)]
- The minimum grade point average (GPA) to be admitted an EPP is 2.5 and the minimum GPA requirement to be admitted to ACT-RGV is the same. TEA found that the GPA range was 2.55-3.81. The program met the requirement as prescribed. [19 TAC §227.10(a)(3)(A)]
- ACT-RGV requires candidates to take and pass a content test via the pre-admission content test (PACT) route prior to admission. Eight out of ten files reviewed were PACT. TEA found that two files tested via PACT after admission. Six out of eight files (75%) met the requirement as prescribed. The program was advised that the exams for PACT are now TX PACT and only measure content knowledge. ACT-RGV is now required to give test approval for all TExES exams after formally or contingently admitted. [19 TAC §227.10(a)(4)]
- All ACT-RGV applicants are exempt from basic skills based on a degree held at the time of admission. All ten files contained evidence of a degree held prior to admission and met the requirement as prescribed. [19 TAC §227.10(a)(6)]
- An interview or screening device is required of all applicants. All ten files contained evidence. Six files contained an interview scored on a rubric with a cut score. Four files contained evidence of the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal with a cut score required. All ten files contained an application. The program met the requirements for a screening device and application as prescribed. [19 TAC §227.10(a)(8)]
- One of the ten files reviewed was that of a transfer candidate. That file contained evidence of a completed transfer form. [19 TAC §227.10(a)(10)]



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- Two of the ten files reviewed were Career and Technical Education applicants. Both files contained evidence of licensure and experience as required. [19 TAC §227.10(d)]
- All files reviewed were formally admitted. The formal offer of admission with an effective date accepted by the applicant served as evidence of compliance. One file was admitted prior to the formal admission requirement. All ten files began coursework after being formally admitted as required. [19 TAC §227.17; 19 TAC §227.17(d); 19 TAC §227.17(f)]
- While there were no contingency admits, the program posted the requirements for contingency admission on its website. [19 TAC §227.15]

### Compliance Issues to be Addressed (Next Steps)

- 19 TAC §227.10(a)(4) Require applicants to demonstrate content knowledge prior to admission.

Action: Because the program is a PACT-only program, applicants must take and pass TX PACT for the content area for which they are seeking admission prior to being formally or contingently admitted.

### Recommendations

- Because ACT-RGV is now required to give test approval for content exams once the applicant is formally or contingently admitted, strongly consider using TX PACT as it is intended for those candidates who do not meet the 12 hours in a content area or 15 hours if the content area is math or science at grades 7 or above. This would allow candidates to not have to test excessively.

Based on the evidence presented, ACT-RGV is not in compliance with 19 TAC §227.10 - Admission Criteria.

## COMPONENT III: CURRICULUM – 19 TAC §228.30

### Findings

- The curriculum was not reviewed. TEA relied on self-reported information contained within the Status Report to determine compliance with 19 TAC §228.30.
- The program is a PACT-only program. Because TEA has moved from utilizing the actual content TExES exams for PACT to requiring TX PACT exams that measure content knowledge only, ACT-RGV will need to begin strengthening its content training to reflect the educator standards for each certificate offered. [19 TAC §228.30(a)(1)]
- ACT-RGV was providing in-house dyslexia training. The EPP has decided to strengthen the training to require candidates to complete the Region X online dyslexia training.
- It was found that ACT RGV was not using an approved mental health provider for its mental health training provided to candidates. [19 TAC §228.30(c)(3)]



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- Instruction in digital learning did not meet requirements because it did not include a digital literacy evaluation followed by a prescribed digital learning curriculum. [19 TAC §228.30(c)(8)]

### Compliance Issues to be Addressed (Next Steps)

- 19 TAC §228.30(a)(1) Ensure that the educator standards are the basis for each certificate offered.  
Action: Align the coursework to reflect specific training in the standards for each certificate offered.
- 19 TAC §228.30(c)(3) Instruction regarding mental health, substance abuse, and youth suicide was not from an approved provider.  
Action: ACT-RGV has decided to use the Texas Behavior Support Initiative to fulfill the requirement.
- 19 TAC §228.30(c)(8) Instruction in digital learning did not include a digital literacy evaluation followed by a prescribed digital learning curriculum.  
Action: ACT-RGV has decided to use Learning.com, which includes a pre-assessment and an online curriculum assigned to candidates by the program. TEA will expect to see evidence of the training in each candidate file at the next five-year review.

### Recommendations

- None.

Based on the evidence presented, ACT-RGV is not in compliance with 19 TAC §228.30-Curriculum.

## COMPONENT IV: PROGRAM DELIVERY AND ONGOING SUPPORT – 19 TAC §228.35

### Findings

- ACT-RGV provides candidates with adequate coursework and training. The program provided a Scope & Sequence reflecting 302 clock-hours of coursework and training required for standard certification. The program also provided a benchmark document for the ten files reviewed to show where each candidate was in the process of certification. [19 TAC § 228.35(a)(1)]
- The training offered meets requirements for being sustained, rigorous, and interactive. The scope & sequence provided and candidate benchmarks in files reviewed served as evidence of compliance. [19 TAC §228.35(a)(2)]
- All coursework & training is completed prior to standard certification. Five out of ten files reviewed reached the point of standard certification. The coursework & training completed was noted on the documentation provided for those files and met the requirements as prescribed. [19 TAC §228.35(a)(3)]



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- ACT-RGV has procedures for allowing relevant military experience and for allowing prior experience, education, or training. The requirements were posted on the ACT-RGV website. [19 TAC §228.35(a)(5)(A-B)]
- ACT-RGV disclosed through candidate records reviewed that some coursework is offered online. There was no evidence provided that the online coursework meets the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC) or Quality Matters (QM) accreditation requirements. The program staff revealed that the process had begun with QM, but with the change in EPP staff, the program had not continued with the accreditation process. [19 TAC §228.35(a)(6)]
- All candidates at ACT-RGV receive a total of 302 clock-hours of coursework & training. [19 TAC §228.35(b)]
- Candidates are required to complete 30 clock-hours of field-based experiences (FBEs) prior to clinical teaching or internship. Fifteen clock-hours of FBEs must be interactive. ACT-RGV requires 15 clock-hours of observations and 15 clock-hours of interactive FBEs. A review of ten candidate records revealed that nine out of ten (90%) of files met the requirement. The total FBE range was between 21.17-38 clock-hours. The non-interactive FBE range for the files reviewed was 13.37-16.15 and the interactive FBE range was 7.40-21.45. Candidates were required to complete reflections for FBEs completed and all files contained evidence of reflections as required. All FBEs were completed in accredited public or charter schools as required. One candidate completed one clock-hour of FBEs via video and those FBEs met requirements. [19 TAC §228.35(b)(1); 19 TAC §228.35(e)(1)(A); 19 TAC §228.35(e)(1)(B)]
- Candidates are required to complete pre-service coursework and training prior to clinical teaching or internship. All files contained evidence that 209 clock-hours of coursework & training plus 30 clock-hours of FBEs totaling 239 clock-hours were completed prior to clinical teaching or internship. [19 TAC §228.35(b)(2)]
- All required coursework in the identified topics that allowed candidates to demonstrate proficiency in those topics was provided prior to clinical teaching or internship. Candidate records with benchmark documentation noting coursework completed served as evidence of compliance. [19 TAC §228.35(b)(2)(A-J)]
- Eight files reached the point of internship. All files contained evidence of the statement of eligibility (SOE) with the required information. [19 TAC §228.35(e)(2)(B)]
- All ten candidates were trained in the area for which they were seeking certification. The benchmark document for all files reviewed served as evidence of compliance. [19 TAC §228.35(e)(2)(B)(iii)(IV)]
- Of the eight files that reached the point of the internship, four were issued an intern certificate and four were issued a probationary certificate. All held the appropriate certificate based on required exams passed. [19 TAC §228.35(e)(2)(B)(iv)]
- All candidates on an intern and probationary certificates were supported by the field supervisor (FS) and mentor during the full term of the internship. No additional



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internships were required. Observation documentation and emails between the FS, mentor, and candidate served as evidence of compliance. [19 TAC §228.35(e)(2)(B)(vi)]

- The observation instrument used by the FS allowed candidates to demonstrate proficiency in the educator standards during the internship. The completed observation documents served as evidence of compliance. [19 TAC §228.35(e)(2)(B)(vii)]
- Five files reached the point of standard certification and were recommended by the FS and campus administrator per the letters signed by each, stating that the candidate was successful, in the files reviewed. [19 TAC §228.35(e)(2)(B)(vii)]
- Candidate training included experiences with a full range of professional responsibilities including the start of the year. While candidates did not experience the start of the year during FBEs, they did so while on the intern or probationary certificates and met the requirements as prescribed. [19 TAC §228.35(4)]
- All eight candidates were in internships in accredited public or charter schools. The SOE served as evidence of compliance. The internships met requirements as prescribed. [19 TAC §228.35(6-7)]
- All eight candidates completing an internship were assigned a mentor. Each mentor had the required credentials. The service record noting three years of experience as a teacher or more and campus T-TESS evaluations and/or letters of recommendation served as evidence of accomplishment. All mentor teachers were trained within three weeks of assignment to the candidate as required. Certificates of completion for mentor training served as evidence of compliance. All were assigned to the candidate within three weeks of placement. The signed document stating they were assigned to the candidate served as evidence of compliance. [19 TAC §228.35(f); 19 TAC §228.2(24)]
- All eight candidates were assigned a field supervisor that held the required credentials. Certificates noting principal or teacher certification were provided as evidence of compliance. All field supervisors were trained as required. T-TESS or Region 1 Education Service Center (ESC) certificates and local FS training served as evidence of compliance. Each field supervisor made an initial contact within the first three weeks of the assignment. All files contained evidence of a pre- and post-observation conference with written feedback of instructional practices observed. Observation documents and feedback forms were provided for each file reviewed. The required individuals received copies of the observation documents. The email sent to the required individuals and the signed observation documents served as evidence of compliance. The candidates received informal observations & coaching as applicable as noted in the documentation provided for review. The FS collaborated with the required individuals as noted on observation documentation and emails sent to required individuals. Formal observations met requirements for duration, frequency, and format. The observation documentation provided for review served as evidence of compliance. [19 TAC §228.35(g)]



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### Compliance Issues to be Addressed (Next Steps):

- 19 TAC §228.35(a)(6) The ACT-RGV online curriculum is not meeting or making progress toward meeting accreditation, quality assurance, and/or compliance with [DEAC](#) or [QM](#).

Action: Continue the process for having the online coursework offered by ACT-RGV to be accredited by QM. The process consists of various levels of accreditation and takes approximately three years to become fully accredited.

### Recommendations

- As the program works to strengthen its curriculum to be based on the educator standards for each certificate offered, continue to work on ensuring the program is sustained, rigorous, and interactive.

Based on the evidence presented, ACT RGV is not in compliance with 19 TAC §228.35 – Program Delivery and On-Going Support.

## COMPONENT V: ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF CANDIDATES AND EPP – 19 TAC §228.40

### Findings

- ACT-RGV has established benchmarks to measure candidate progress. All files reviewed contained a benchmark document that noted requirements met prior to internship, during the internship, and for certification. The EPP also provided a series of structured assessments with the associated rubrics in its Status Report submission as evidence that the EPP has structured assessments to measure candidate progress. [19 TAC §228.40(a)]
- The benchmark documents with dates for test approval for the ten files reviewed served as evidence that candidates are prepared to be successful in their certification exams. ACT-RGV has historically been a PACT-only program and was only approving for the pedagogy and professional responsibilities (PPR) exam. [19 TAC §228.40(b)]
- All files reviewed tested once they were formally admitted. The criteria for testing were published on the website. [19 TAC §228.40(d)]
- ACT-RGV provided workshop evaluations for the 2018 year as evidence of program evaluation. [19 TAC §228.40(e)]
- ACT-RGV has retained records that candidates have met admission requirements and has completed all program requirements for five years as required. All records provided for the review served as evidence of compliance. [19 TAC §228.40(f)]

### Compliance Issues to be Addressed (Next Steps):

- None.



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### Recommendations

- While ACT-RGV did provide evidence of program evaluation for one year, it is strongly recommended that the EPP strengthen its program design and delivery evaluation. This information must be shared with the advisory committee at its yearly meeting.

Based on the evidence presented, ACT-RGV is in compliance with 19 TAC §228.40 – Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement.

### COMPONENT VI: PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT - 19 TAC §228.50

#### Findings

19 TAC §228.50 requires that during the period of preparation, the educator preparation program shall ensure that the individuals preparing candidates and the candidates themselves understand and adhere to Chapter 247 of this title (relating to Educators' Code of Ethics).

- Nine out of ten files reviewed (90%) contained evidence that each candidate acknowledges receipt of a copy of the Intern handbook which contains the Texas Educator's Code of Ethics. A signed copy of the Texas Educator's Code of Ethics was also found in each of the candidate's records.
- ACT-RGV provided evidence that thirteen (13) staff/field supervisors signed a Texas Educator's Code of Ethics. Signature documents were submitted for all staff.

#### Compliance Issues to be Addressed (Next Steps):

- None.

### Recommendations

- None.

Based on the evidence presented, ACT RGV is in compliance with 19 TAC §228.50 - Professional Conduct.

### COMPONENT VII: COMPLAINTS PROCESS – 19 TAC §228.70

#### Findings

- Per 19 TAC §228.70(b), the EPP complaints process is on file at TEA. The complaints process is also posted on the ACT-RGV website, posted on the wall at the program's physical site, and is provided in the candidate handbook. [19 TAC §228.70(b)(1-4)]



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### Compliance Issues to be Addressed (Next Steps):

- None.

### Recommendations

- None.

Based on the evidence presented, ACT-RGV is in compliance with 19 TAC §228.70 – Complaints Process.

## COMPONENT VIII: CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES - 19 TAC §228 and §230

### Findings

- Eight out of ten files reached the point of internship and five out of ten reached the point of standard certification. Because the degree was required for admission to ACT-RGV, the degree requirement was met for all files reviewed. [19 TAC §230.13(a)]
- Two files reviewed were Career and Technical Education (CTE) candidates. Both files contained statements of qualification (SOQ) documentation, the required experience documentation, and required licensure as required. [19 TAC §230.13(b)(2)]
- Eight out of ten files reached the point of internship and five out of ten reached the point of standard certification. The record of required coursework and training benchmark document for those files reviewed served as evidence that requirements for internship and standard certification were met. All candidates met the application and issuance deadlines for the certificate sought. [19 TAC §230.13(a)(2); 19 TAC §230.13 (b)(3)]

### Compliance Issues to be Addressed (Next Steps):

- None.

### Recommendations

- None.

Based on the evidence presented, ACT RGV is in compliance with 19 TAC §228 and §230 – Certification Procedures.

## COMPONENT IX: INTEGRITY OF DATA REPORTED - 19 TAC §229

### Findings

- ACT-RGV met the timeline for data reporting. [[19 TAC §229.3\(f\)\(1\) and related Graphic](#)]
- All ASEP reports were accurately reported. While reviewing the observation frequency and duration, two files contained discrepancies in the observation documentation provided for review as compared to what was submitted in ASEP for observations. The



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program also reported two candidates on the GPA spreadsheets submitted as PACT, but the candidates tested after admitted to the EPP. One file contained a discrepancy in the GPA reported by the EPP as compared to the GPA reported on the GPA spreadsheet. Two files did not contain evidence that the content hours were reported on the GPA spreadsheet. The program was 80% compliant for observation duration & frequency and data reporting.

### Compliance Issues to be Addressed (see Compliance Plan):

- None.

### Recommendations

- Continue to carefully monitor the accuracy of all ASEP submissions during yearly ASEP reporting.

Based on the evidence presented, ACT-RGV is in compliance with 19 TAC §229 – Integrity of Data Reported.

### GENERAL PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

- The addition of the Science of Teaching Reading exam (STR) will drive the renewal of the Core Subjects EC-6, Core Subjects 4-8, ELAR 4-8, and ELAR/Social Studies 4-8 certificates. Programs that are not able to demonstrate an updated curriculum will not be able to renew these certificates after January 1, 2021. Teacher program staff are advised to plan to meet the January 1, 2021 certificate issuance requirement.
- Application A has changed – plan to review requirements to prepare for adding new certificate areas.
- Certificate deactivation timelines and requirements changes are proposed. Changes will include new timelines for requesting deactivations and information that must be provided to stakeholders in advance of internship start dates. The field supervisor will need to verify candidate placement information at the beginning of the assignment.
- To ensure continuity in record keeping and other related processes, consider creating a procedure manual documenting EPP processes.
- Implement quality control procedures to ensure ASEP reports are submitted accurately during state reporting each year.
- Align the verbiage of the program to the verbiage of Texas Administrative Code (TAC) (ex. Field supervisor, cooperating teacher, mentor, candidate, etc.).
- Continue to follow the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) and the State Board of Education (SBOE) meetings and/or review the minutes to ensure that the program staff is knowledgeable about the current Texas Administrative Code.



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- Continue to participate in webinars provided by the Division of Educator Preparation to ensure that the program staff is knowledgeable about current requirements and changes in the Texas Administrative Code.
- Continue to maintain communication with the program specialist assigned to the program.
- Ensure that the TEA staff has the most current contact information by sending updates to the assigned program specialist.

**SUMMARY**

Next Steps were created collaboratively with the ACT-RGV staff.

**“I have reviewed the EPP Report and agree that all required corrections will be made on or before May 21, 2020.”**

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<b>Signature of Legal Authority</b>	<b>Date</b>
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<b>Printed Name of Legal Authority</b>	<b>Date</b>
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