



Compliance Audit Report 2011-2012 iteachTexas Generalist EC-6 and Special Education EC-12

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 required by the Texas legislature for the regulation of all educator preparation programs in the state. Please see the complete Texas Administrative Code at www.tea.state.tx.us for details.

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County/District Number: 057709

Texas Education Agency Education Preparation Manager, Sandra Jo Nix, and Program Specialist, Mixon Henry, conducted a compliance audit of iteachTexas, 101 N. Elm, Suite 200, Denton, Texas on April 18-20, 2012, as required by Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §229.6(a). The focus of the compliance audit was the Generalist EC-6 and Special Education EC-12 certification areas. The following are findings and recommendations for program improvement.

Data Analysis:

Information concerning compliance with TAC governing educator preparation programs was collected by various qualitative means. A self-report was submitted to TEA on March 12, 2012. An onsite review of documents, student records, online course materials, and curriculum correlation charts provided evidence regarding compliance. In addition, TEA sent electronic questionnaires to iteachTexas stakeholders. Four out of five advisory committee members; 249 out of 598 educator candidates, 101 out of 134 field supervisors, 143 out of 363 principals, and 177 out of 261 cooperating teachers/mentors responded to the questionnaires. Qualitative methods of content analysis, cross-referencing, and triangulation of the data were used to evaluate the evidence. Evidence of compliance was verified by using a rubric correlated to Texas Administrative Code.

Opening and Closing Session:

The opening session on April 18, 2012, was attended by three people, Dr. Dianne Huber, owner of iteachTexas, Zach Rozelle, and Andrew Rozelle. The closing session on April 19, 2012, was attended by two people, Dr. Diane Huber and Zach Rozelle.

COMPONENT I: COMMITMENT AND COLLABORATION - Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.20

FINDINGS:

Program support was indicated by the governing body of iteachTexas per TAC §228.20(c) as evidenced by the participation and cooperation of Dr. Huber and members of the iteachTexas staff in various stages and aspects of the compliance audit.

The advisory committee consists of five members. Two members of the advisory committee are human resource staff from local school districts, one member is from a charter school and one member represents business and community interests. There is no representation from an education service center. iteachTexas meets TAC §228.20(b) requirements for advisory committee composition.

The first advisory committee meeting of the academic year was held on November 28, 2011, via teleconference. Five members attended this meeting plus iteachTexas staff. An agenda, minutes, and attendee records were available as evidence of compliance. The agenda and minutes reflect that the following were discussed: an update on the iteachTexas NCATE approval process; the delivery of non-Texas field experience; diverse placement for observations; migration to the new database platform; impact on student learning activity; and a report on the survey of supervisors. The second advisory committee meeting for the academic year will be held on April 30, 2012, via teleconference. Minutes and agendas for the 2009-2010 academic year were also provided to verify continuous advisory committee involvement. One hundred percent of the advisory committee members verified in their electronic questionnaire 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 §228.20(b).

Advisory committee members are invited by letter of invitation to serve and each member is provided an advisory committee handbook which contains the Articles of Incorporation, TAC rules, duties, roles and responsibilities, and a schedule of advisory committee meetings. Fifty percent (50%) of the advisory committee members reported that they do assist in the design; one hundred percent (100%) indicated that they participated in policy decisions, and seventy-five percent (75%) reported that they participated in the evaluation of the educator preparation program [228.20(b)]. One hundred percent (100%) of the advisory committee indicated that review and discussion of field experiences was included as an agenda topic [TAC 228.35(d)].

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

COMPONENT II: ADMISSION CRITERIA - Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §227.10

FINDINGS:

According to iteachTexas' website, to enter their teacher certification program, the candidate must meet the following criteria:

- a Bachelor's degree from an accredited institution of higher learning with the GPA as posted on an official conferred degree transcript [TAC §227.10(a)(2)];
- a minimum GPA of 2.5 overall or in the last 60 hours [TAC §227.10(a)(3)(A)];
- a minimum of twelve (12) semester credit hours in identified content areas of English, math, science, and social studies for Generalist EC-6 and Generalist 4-8, and Special Education EC-12 content areas, a content field by conferred degree in a specific content area [TAC §227.10 (A)(3)(C)];
- demonstrated proficiency of basic skills by satisfying the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) requirement by having a conferred degree, or passing score on the TASP/THEA (Reading – 230, Math – 230, Writing -220) or ACT (English – 23, Math – 21) or SAT (Verbal – 500, Math – 450) [TAC 277.10(a)(4)]; [TAC 230.21];
- adequate oral communication skills in communications with iteachTexas personnel [TAC 227.10(a)(5)];
- an application either by mail or electronically [TAC §227.10(6)];
- an interview using the intruVIEW which has 45 questions and is evaluated with a rubric [TAC §227.10(a)(6)].

iteachTexas has a policy in place that allows the program to consider a candidate's work, business or career experience equivalent to the academic achievement represented by the GPA requirement [TAC 227.10(a)(3)(B)]. This policy along with policies on transfers, withdrawal, late hire, probationary and standard certification was found in the iteachTexas Policy and Procedures Manual 2012.

Out-of-country applicants whose first language is not English must demonstrate competence in the English language by submission of an official minimum score of 79 on the computer-based Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) [TAC §230.11(b) (5) (C)]. 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(e)]. During the candidate record review, one candidate was identified as from out-of-country and the transcript review and TOEFL were present as evidence of compliance.

In a review of twenty candidates' records, it was found that all required admission criteria was documented as required by TAC rule.

According to the self-report, eleven candidate(s) were admitted who were seeking career and technology certification. A review of their candidates' records which includes transcripts and statements of qualifications indicated that they did meet the experience and preparation requirements as stated in TAC §230, §233.13 and §233.14 [TAC §227.10(b) (7) (d)].

The self-report noted that five or fewer candidates were admitted with a grade point average of less than 2.5 overall or in the last 60 hours. It was verified that the number of candidates admitted did not exceed 10% of the cohort of candidates allowed by TAC §227.10(a) (3) (B). Of the twenty candidate records reviewed, four candidates had a GPA below 2.5.

The self-report submitted by iteachTexas stated that general information about their program and admission criteria could be found on their website, in catalogues, brochures, and through various media outlets [TAC §227.10(a) (7)].

Based on the evidence presented, iteachTexas is in compliance with TAC § 227 - Admission Criteria.

COMPONENT III: CURRICULUM - Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.30

FINDINGS:

iteachTexas is approved to offer teacher certification in 53 certification fields, two supplemental fields, and one professional class. For the purpose of this compliance audit, the Generalist EC-6 and the Special Education EC-12 certifications were selected for in-depth curriculum review.

iteachTexas has five instructors who assisted in course creation and facilitation. Their credentials were presented for review and it was verified that the instructors have the appropriate background and experience to provide instruction in their respective certification area.

In reviewing the iteachTexas curriculum syllabi and alignment charts, it was verified that the educator standards were the curricular basis for instruction as required by TAC §228.30(a). It was noted that the curriculum addressed the relevant Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) as required by TAC §228.30(a). Nine courses and alignment charts for Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities EC-12, TEKS, the seventeen mandated topics, Generalist EC-6 and Special Education EC-12 were reviewed. The program has placed a six months timeline for completion of the first seven modules. Of the two remaining courses, one specifically addresses the Pedagogy and Professional Responsibility exam and the other course addresses areas once the candidate is hired.

The seventeen (17) subject matter topics were verified in the coursework as prescribed by TAC 228.30(b). Reading Across the Content Areas was provided through EDTC 5500 Literacy Across the Curriculum. The seventeen topics were verified by locating the specific topics in the content of the online coursework material and in the alignment charts.

Assessments and assignments for the coursework were presented in a document entitled iteachTexas Teacher Assessments and Assignments 2012 and in a chart Alignment of Competencies with Assessments. Each course was listed with the assignment and the assessment instruments. However, no standard for mastery were evident for each assessment in this document.

Thirty hours of test preparation were provided for candidates prior to TExES testing which exceed the six required per TAC 228.30(b)(17) and TAC 228.35(a)(3). Test preparation is provided through 240 Tutoring, a private online company which specializes in test preparation and tutoring.

Clinical teachers and interns were asked to respond to a series of questions prepared by TEA and sent to them electronically in order to verify aspects of the curriculum, the program's delivery, and its effectiveness. Ninety percent (90%) identified 16 curriculum items in which they felt well prepared including the Texas Educator's Code of Ethics (93.3%), theories of how people learn (97.9%), and using a variety of instructional strategies (97.5%). Candidates indicated that they would like more emphasis placed on reading strategies across the curriculum (9.2%), teacher's responsibilities for administering the STAAR examination (20.4%), strategies for gifted and talented students (9.6%), strategies for limited English proficiency (8.3%), conducting parent conferences (12.1%). Ninety-two point six percent (92.6%) of the candidates indicated that they would recommend the iteachTexas program to others.

In responding to their questionnaire, the mentors expressed that they felt that the candidates were well prepared in the Texas Educator's Code of Ethics (94.1%), child and adolescent development (91.1%), theories of how people learn (89.3%), and using instructional technology in the classroom (91.7%). They also indicated that the candidates would benefit from more emphasis on reading strategies across the curriculum for all grade levels (14.4%), process of curriculum development (21.2%), methods and methodologies in classroom management (22.4%), laws and standards regarding students with special needs (24%), standards and teaching strategies for students designated as gifted and talented (32.3%) and students with limited English proficiency (34.3%).

The principals' questionnaire reflected that the strengths of the program are communication, field supervision/feedback and support, and the quality of its candidates. The principals' questionnaire also reflected the following:

Collaboration between program and school: Satisfactory – 44.7% Very Good– 34.8% Excellent –14.9%

Concerns about training and preparation of candidates: yes – 28.3% no – 71.1%

Areas of candidate preparation:

- Classroom management: yes – 81.9% no – 18.1%
- Academic and behavioral needs of students with disabilities: yes – 83.2% no – 16.8%
- Communicating expectations for achievement and behavior: yes – 88.4% no – 11.6%
- Appropriate use of multi-media and technology to support and extend learning:
Yes – 87.5% no – 12.5%
- Addressing academic and behavioral needs of limited English proficient students:
Yes – 72.8% no – 27.2%
- Developing and interpreting formal and informal assessments : yes – 77.5% no – 22.5%

Based on evidence presented, iteachTexas 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

FINDINGS:

Currently, the iteachTexas' initial teacher preparation program is delivered in an online format. According to the self-report, the total program consists of 455 clock hours for all certifications and 80 hours of coursework prior to internship or clinical teaching. Candidate hours were verified by review of the program's database which tracks candidates progress [TAC §228.35(a) (3)].

The thirty clock hours of field-based experiences prior to clinical teaching or internship as required by TAC §228.35 (a) (3) (A) was verified by individual candidates' records in the program database. An observation log is kept by the candidate and is divided between videos and in-school observations. The videos require analysis and reflection and the candidate must record the title of the video and the length of time. Each video is equivalent to 30 minutes. For in-school observations, the candidate must record the date, activity, and length of time of the observation. However, there is no place on the log for the observed teacher to sign to verify that the observation actually occurred.

Clinical teaching [TAC §228.35(d) (2) (B)] consists of twelve weeks, while internship is 180 days or a full academic year [TAC §228.35(d) (2) (C)]. Evidence was presented in the form of documentation in the individual candidates' records and in the electronic records which recorded the campus where the candidate was placed and which field supervisor was assigned to that candidate. This verified that clinical teaching/internship took place in an actual school setting rather than a distance learning lab or virtual school setting as prohibited by TAC §228.35(d)(2)(C)(ii). Candidates were provided handbooks for clinical teaching and internship which included: general information; glossary of terms; addressing academic/disciplinary concerns; addressing general candidate concerns; attendance; Texas Educators Code of Ethics; Texas teaching proficiencies, roles and responsibilities for clinical teachers/interns; survival tips; candidate pacing guide; tips for handling stress during the practicum; cooperating teacher qualifications and responsibilities; field supervisor responsibilities; and evaluation of clinical teaching practicum forms.

According to TAC §228.35(e), iteachTexas is responsible for providing cooperating teachers/mentors training that is scientifically-based or verify that training has been provided by a school district or education service center. iteachTexas produced evidence of a letter welcoming the mentor and explaining that training is required by the state, and offering the training. Training for the cooperating teachers and mentors focuses on the basics of mentoring. The training material is sent as a PDF file attached to the letter of welcome. An example of one email response from a cooperating teacher/mentor thanking the program for the material was provided as documentation of delivery of the training materials.

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. One hundred and seventy-three (173) field supervisors were identified for the 2011-2012 school year. In a review of the field supervisors' credentials, all hold a teaching certification. Field supervisor training was provided on June 24, 2011 through an annual training session each June. iteachTexas produced evidence of a field work handbook which is reviewed yearly. The ratio of field supervisors to candidates is 1 to 10.

Initial contact by the field supervisor is made within the first three weeks of the assignment as required by TAC §228.35(f) in a face to face meeting with the candidate. Evidence of first contact was verified in a review of the candidates' records. A total of three formal observations [TAC §228.35(f) (4)] must be conducted during the intern/clinical teaching assignment and must be at least 45 minutes in duration [TAC §228.35(f)]. Documentation of three formal observations was found in the candidates' records. TAC §228.35(f) also states that the first observation must be conducted within the first six weeks of internship/clinical teaching. In review of the candidates' folders, evidence was located that the observations were conducted on the schedule prescribed by TAC.

The formal observation rubric is an abridged PDAS instrument. The observation rubric requires the date of the observation, beginning time/ending time and comments and recommendations. There is a place for the field supervisor to sign the observation form but no place for the candidate's signature to confirm the observation or the feedback session. The observation instrument is a multi-copy document with the white copy going to iteachTexas, the yellow to the candidate, and the pink to the campus administrator. A short conference is completed following the observation and a follow-up reflection is required by the intern/clinical teacher; in-turn the field supervisor responds to the reflection of the intern/clinical teacher in accordance with [TAC §228.35(f)]. All of this data is captured and saved on the electronic tracking system created by the program. The submission by the candidate of the observation reflection is documentation of the formal observation and feedback session.

It is the responsibility of iteachTexas to provide a copy of the written feedback to the candidate's campus administrator as required by TAC §228.35(f). Evidence was presented to support that the field supervisor had provided the feedback to the campus administrator by the multi-copy instrument and questionnaire responses provided by principals.

Additional support for probationary extensions was shown differently depending on the candidate's situation. If the candidate did not have a successful internship/clinical teaching experience, another opportunity was provided with additional observations. If the issue was unsuccessful testing, the candidate was not observed, but support for test remediation was provided.

Additional informal observations and coaching were provided by the program as specified in TAC §228.35(f). Evidence was presented in the form of additional observation forms and emails.

Based on evidence presented, iteachTexas 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

FINDINGS:

iteachTexas has a candidate assessment and benchmarking process as prescribed by TAC §228.40(a). Evidence presented to support candidate assessment was a Transition Point Assessment. The major transition points identified were: program admission, field experience, certification recommendation, and retention. In addition, a chart was produced that was used to monitor the candidates' progress through the program. The assessment points were admission, entry into clinical practice, exit from clinical practice, program completion, and after program completion.

Readiness for TExES testing [TAC §228.40(b)] is determined by the candidate submitting a test approval request. Prior to receiving test approval for the Pedagogy and Professional Responsibility (PPR) EC-12, the candidate must complete all instructional courses, have obtained a field experience, have an authorized payment plan, and have passed the content area test, and demonstrate mastery in EDTC 5800 Comprehensive Review. 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.

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. The program presented the following documents used in program and curriculum evaluation: alignment of competencies with assessments; beginning teacher program exit survey; course evaluation form. iteachTexas indicated that they evaluate their program's design and curriculum at least once every 12 months. Per Dr. Huber, the plan is to redesign the curriculum every 18 months. It was indicated that a new online curriculum involving voice and video would debut the summer of 2012.

The program completed the evaluation plan included in the self-report and provided a chart of the On-going Evaluation of the Unit: The chart included the Assessment Data, the responsible party, frequency of aggregation, and evaluation questions. Recently, the program was evaluated by National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) for accreditation.

According to TAC §228.40(d), the program will retain documents that evidence 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. iteachTexas provided evidence of compliance by demonstrating their secure electronic record keeping system. In addition, hard copies of records are kept in locked cabinets in a file room in a locked building which requires access by permission. Records are retained for a period of five years.

Based on evidence presented, iteachTexas is in compliance with Texas Administrative Code §228.40 – Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates 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 were provided instruction in the Texas Code of Ethics in the second instructional module. The candidate is then instructed to acknowledge the Code of Ethics and post the signed Code of Ethics document to their electronic portfolio.

Each staff member is given a copy of the Code of Ethics and signs the copy.

Senate Bill 174/Texas Administrative Code §229

Current Accreditation Status

iteachTexas currently has a status of "Accredited".

Standard I: Results of Certification Exams

| Pass Rate Performance: | 2008-2009 | 2009-2010 | 2010-2011 |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| | Final 80% Standard I | 70% Standard I | 75% Standard I |
| Overall: | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Program Recommendations:

The following are recommendations based on the findings of the Texas Education Agency. If the program is NOT in compliance with any identified component, consult the Texas Administrative Code 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:

Component III. Recommendations:

- Review and update terminology used in coursework (i.e. mental retardation in the special education curriculum).
- Share with candidates the standard for mastery for the assignments presented in the iteachTexas Assignments and Assessments document.

Component IV. Recommendations:

- Do not allow classroom instruction to fulfill the 30 clock hours of field-based observations for late hires;
- Have candidates sign a FERPA agreement allowing the program to provide information to the campus administrator, mentor teacher, and other campus and district staff as appropriate;
- Update the Code of Ethics in the clinical teaching handbook and the internship teaching handbook and in any coursework material;
- Add a place for the observed teacher to initial or sign on the Observation Log for the in-school observations for 30 clock hours to verify authenticity of observation;
- Consistently add an ending time to all of the formal observation instruments;
- Consistently add a placement date to the formal observation instruments in addition to the program database.