

# Compliance Report for Monitoring Visit 2009-2010

## Alamo Community College District – Palo Alto College

According to 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 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](http://www.tea.state.tx.us) for details of each rule.

Contact: Belkiss Bradford-Rodriguez

A technical assistance visit of the Alamo Community College District (ACCD) – Palo Alto College alternative certification educator preparation program was conducted on February 22-25, 2010 by Texas Education Agency (TEA) Program Specialist, Sandra Jo Nix, and Manager, David Carmody.

Alamo Community College District's central administration was asked to respond to Governance and Admission Criteria portion of the self-report. ACCD- Palo Alto College was asked to respond to the Curriculum, Field Experience and Support, and Evaluation portion of the self-report.

Self- Report Submitted: ACCD - September 14, 2009; ACCD-Palo Alto College - February 19, 2010

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

#### **Findings:**

Alamo Community College District (ACCD) – Palo Alto College is in compliance with TAC §228.20 Governance of Educator Preparation Programs. The operation of the advisory committee currently is the responsibility of the Alamo Community College District's Central Administration. ACCD- Palo Alto College participates as part of an advisory committee consisting of 14 members who represent public school districts, an education service center, and business and community interests. Currently, there are three vacant positions on the advisory committee. Bylaws have been created to guide its operation. Meetings are scheduled quarterly; however, there have been some gaps in meetings with the restructuring of the ACCD program. Attendance records, agendas, and minutes were available for the October, 2009 and January, 2010 meeting. Additional meetings are scheduled for April and August.

One of the strengths of the advisory committee is the consistency and tenure of the members. The outgoing Chair of the ACCD Advisory Committee served in that position for three years. According to the advisory committee questionnaire, the members

understand their roles and responsibilities and actively participate in assisting ACCD-Palo Alto College in design, delivery, policy decisions and program evaluation. In the advisory committee questionnaire administered last summer, 100% of the members indicated they do not participate in program evaluation. However in reviewing the minutes provided in the document review, evaluative information was shared with the advisory committee on a consistent basis. No evidence of discussing field-based experiences could be located. Because of the importance of the advisory committee's contributions, it is suggested to provide training annually and to develop a handbook for their reference.

**Compliance Status for Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.20 - GOVERNANCE OF EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAM. In light of the findings detailed above, Alamo Community College District-Palo Alto College is in compliance.**

**Commendations:**

Alamo Community College District's Advisory Committee is commended for meeting quarterly.

Alamo Community College District's Advisory Committee is commended for operating with the guidance of bylaws.

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

**Findings:**

Alamo Community College District (ACCD) – Palo Alto College is in compliance with TAC §227.10 Admission Criteria. Alamo Community College District's Central Administration in cooperation with Palo Alto College established uniform admission requirements for all ACCD colleges in 2008. According to the self-report and information posted on Palo Alto College's website, admission criteria includes a bachelor's degree, 2.5 grade point average or in the last 60 hours, passing scores on a basic skills assessment, participate in an interview, and provide a signed application which includes three essay questions. In addition, each applicant is required to provide three references. Admission criteria were confirmed by review of the Palo Alto College's student folders. Through statements on the Palo Alto College's website and recruiting material, sufficient evidence exists that admission criteria are applied equally for all candidates. Palo Alto College indicated in the self-report that no students were admitted under the 10% cohort rule.

According to the admission criteria on the website and in the document review, the TOEFL is used to determine language fluency for out- of- country students. Transcript evaluations are also required by an approved credentialing service.

In reviewing the student folders, a few students have been involved in the program for an extended period of time because of the difficulty in finding teaching positions in a constricted economy. It is recommended that Palo Alto College apply for clinical teaching in order to accommodate these candidates and have them complete the program in a timely fashion. This will also enhance the number of potential participants who will find the program a viable choice.

Candidate recruitment material includes brochures, career and job fairs, media outlets such as newspapers, mass mailings to local graduates, and participating in the San

Antonio Area Personnel Administrators Association. In addition, outreach efforts include Troops to Teachers and Para-professional development days. Samples of recruitment materials were available in the document review. It is recommended that recruiting efforts be reviewed and intensified in order to increase the number of participants in the program.

**Compliance Status for Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §227.10 - ADMISSION CRITERIA. In light of the findings detailed above, the Alamo Community College District – Palo Alto College is in compliance.**

### **COMPONENT III. CURRICULUM - Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.30 - EDUCATOR PREPARATION CURRICULUM**

#### **Findings:**

Alamo Community College District – Palo Alto College is in compliance with TAC §228.30 Educator Preparation Curriculum. Palo Alto College has 12 adjunct faculty members. Faculty credentials consist of two doctoral, 9 master’s degrees and all are Texas certified teachers. It was noted in the faculty credential review that the majority of faculty members have many years of public school experience. However, there are several with less than 5 years of teaching experience. In the ACCD job description requested by the TEA team, it was noted that the qualifications listed at least three years of teaching experience. It is recommended that the job descriptions are reviewed and strengthen in the teaching experience area. From the intern’s questionnaire, the interns expressed dissatisfaction with some content area instructors and the course content indicating that the coverage was not in depth. ACCD was aware of these issues and addressed them with the interns by allowing them to audit the same course with a different instructor at no cost to the teaching candidate.

Northwest Vista and Palo Alto share two hybrid courses. The first is a Generalist EC-6 content course and another is a Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities (PPR) EC-12 course. The face-to-face portion of these courses is taught one day per month. The online portion is taught once a week for the rest of the month. Several textbooks are used as resources. Activities include development of a thematic unit incorporating the TEKS and all core disciplines. Portions of the thematic unit are presented to the class for critique. Both courses include class readings and online discussions. Students are expected to participate in online discussions and to respond to discussion items of two other classmates. Coverage of the 17 mandated curriculum topics was verified through curriculum correlations with the PPR instructor and the coordinator.

Content syllabi for Generalist EC-6, English Language Arts and Reading 8-12, Science 8-12, Math 8-12 were available for review. Interns (2) responding to the survey indicated that they did not receive instruction in reading across the curriculum areas (100%), instructional methods for motivating students (100%), TEKS organization, structure, and skills (100%); using TEKS in the content area (100%); teacher’s responsibilities for administering the TAKS (100%); standards and teaching strategies for gifted/talented students (100%); standards and teaching strategies for students with limited English proficiency (100%); and differentiating or changing instructions to meet individual student needs (100%). They expressed needed improvement in the areas of child/adolescent development (100%), theories of how people learn (100%), process of curriculum development (100%), models and methodologies in classroom management

(100%), and using a variety of instructional strategies (100%). Because of the low response return by the interns, it is impossible for TEA to verify non-compliance because of this information.

However, it is evident from the curriculum deficiencies noted in the intern's questionnaires and examination of the curriculum binders that all the colleges' programs would benefit from having an ACCD Program Director with the responsibility of overall coordination of the ACCD's teacher education programs. It is strongly recommended that an intense curriculum development and revision project be conducted this summer to address curriculum improvement. This curriculum project should involve the ACCD Program Director and coordinators from each ACCD college working together as a team. Because of the time and cost involved in this endeavor, this arrangement would allow for the maximum utilization of resources. The ACCD team strategy is one that should be utilized in all educator preparation projects.

To ensure consistency, the products of this project should include standardized curriculum guides for each active certification area that can be used by the instructors in each college's educator preparation program. Additionally, it is strongly recommended that Palo Alto College participate in the development of a new, expanded module in the area of technology. Successful completion of the technology module would be required for all teaching candidates. Each course guide developed should use highly interactive modes of instruction, modeling of specific instructional strategies by the faculty, and focused practice of skills by the teaching candidates.

In reviewing the course syllabi, it was noted that a consistent format was used. The syllabi included instructor information, course description, course prerequisites, student learning outcomes, course objectives, textbooks and required materials, performance measures, and student responsibilities. However, the syllabi would be strengthened if it included more information about ways the students would be assessed for content mastery and skill attainment. Also, it would be helpful to make the content of a course, especially the 17 mandated curriculum areas, more transparent by providing a course outline of topics to be covered.

Test preparation is addressed through the Simulados software. The Simulados software program requires that each student have an user password that allows access to various aspects of the software. Practice tests or the study mode, which provides questions and then provides the correct way to answer the question and why, are available. The software also has a management system that allows the instructor and student to view the domains that need additional work. However, the Simulados software does not track the number of hours or minutes that the student is on task. This feature would be beneficial in tracking the required six hours of test preparation required by TAC rule. This additional feature needs to be requested from the software developer.

In addition, faculty members provide dedicated time in their classes to address specific testing topics and issues. The time spent on this class activity is not documented in the syllabi at this time. It is suggested each syllabus include a statement of the date and time expected to be spent reviewing a testing topic. Since the time the student spends on the Simulados software and in class reviewing for the test cannot be verified, it is suggested that a free-standing six hour professional development course be added to ensure proper student test preparation and to meet the requirements of TAC §228.30(b)(17) and §228.35(C).

**Compliance Status for Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.30 - EDUCATOR PREPARATION CURRICULUM. In light of the findings detailed above, Alamo Community College District – Palo Alto College is in compliance.**

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

**Findings:**

The Alamo Community College District – Palo Alto College is in compliance with TAC §228.35 Program Delivery and On-going Support with the exception of TAC 228.35(e) which requires mentor training.

ACCD-Palo Alto's facilities are spacious, well maintained, and resources for faculty and students are available. The courses are presented in a face-to-face and hybrid format.

ACCD-Palo Alto meets the requirements of 300 clock hours of instruction. Thirty clock hours of field experiences are required. Interns (100%) in responding to their questionnaire indicated that no follow-up activities were required as a result of their field-based experiences. However, at the visit, a sample blank reflective journal and a time log which is signed by the teacher whose classroom they visited was available for review. The reflective journal is not focused on specific aspects of the classroom or of teaching observed. Therefore, it is suggested that a standardized field experience document be developed with focused observation activities such as taking a class census, noting teacher transition techniques, classroom management and motivational strategies. Students should also be required to engage students in tutoring activities, small group reading, and other activities that allow the candidate to have actual face-to-face interactions with students.

Thirty-two hours of professional development are required of the teaching interns. These sessions are presented on Saturdays and cover a variety of topics. Sign-in sheets were available for review. It is suggested opening the professional development activities to teachers who have completed the program and are currently in their 2nd through 5<sup>th</sup> year of teaching. This will be a good public relations tool as well as show the current and future ACCD students your continued interest and support after completion of the program.

Palo Alto has two part time field supervisors who are certified educators with at least five years classroom teaching experience. One of the field supervisors is also the program coordinator. Both field supervisors were provided TxBESS training. The coordinator reported an intern to field supervisor ratio of ten to one. She indicated in discussions that should an individual field supervisor's responsibility exceed this number, additional staff will be hired. The field supervisors meet together every Friday to discuss issues and share ideas. One hundred percent of the interns responding to the questionnaire indicated that field supervision was very effective.

First contact, first formal observation and two others were scheduled as required. The observation lasted at least 45 minutes and interactive feedback was conducted as required by TAC rule §228.35. This was also confirmed through the field supervisor, mentor teacher, and intern responses on their questionnaires as well as on observation

records found in the student folders. The campus administrator is provided a copy of the formal observation as well as an informal note from the field supervisor.

No mentor teachers responded to their questionnaire. According to the self-report Palo Alto College does not provide training to the mentors. However, it was stated in the report that field supervisors met with the mentor teachers and provided them with information individually. Mentor training must be provided according to Texas Administrative Code 228.35(e).

In order to strengthen communication with the campus administrator, a letter of introduction should be sent by Palo Alto College to the intern's principal outlining the training and other educational preparation that have been provided to the intern and what the expectations will be for the intern during the teaching practicum.

**Compliance status for Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.35 – PREPARATION PROGRAM COURSEWORK AND/OR TRAINING. In light of the findings detailed above, the Alamo Community College District – Palo Alto College is in compliance with the exception of TAC 228.35(e) which requires mentor training.**

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

### **Findings:**

The Alamo Community College District- Palo Alto College is in compliance with TAC §228.40 Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement.

Palo Alto College uses a candidate checklist, test preparation software, and an Excel database to benchmark student progress. On-going support is provided to candidates who may be struggling in the program through faculty intervention and individual candidate tutoring. However, there appears to be no college-wide support systems in place.

Curriculum evaluation is conducted at Palo Alto College on an ongoing basis and also at the ACCD level. The most recent revisions have been to the Generalist EC-6 program. A committee consisting of ACCD coordinators, current and past instructors, a school district curriculum director/advisory committee member served on the revision committee.

An overall program evaluation is conducted twice a year. Surveys are conducted of school district staff, current and past interns. Candidates evaluate the courses and instructors. ACCD central administration breaks down data by college and content areas. An evaluation report is compiled annually and submitted to the advisory committee members, deans, presidents of the colleges and the ACCD Governing Board.

Student records are kept at Palo Alto College for a minimum of five years in a secure environment.

There is no official grievance process in place. Generally, the program coordinators deal with grievances individually. Staff members have been identified and trained at Palo Alto College on the ASEP accountability system.

**Compliance Status for Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.40 - ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF CANDIDATES FOR CERTIFICATION AND PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT. In light of the findings detailed above, Alamo Community College District – Palo Alto College is in compliance.**

**Commendations:**

The Alamo Community College District- Palo Alto College is commended for tracking completed interns for five years.

## **PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following are recommendations based on the findings of the Texas Education Agency Technical Visit. If the program is NOT in compliance with any component, please consult the TAC rules and initiate actions to correct the issue IMMEDIATELY. A progress report will be required in one year to ensure compliance with recommendations.

General program recommendations are suggestions for program improvement. No progress report is required.

**PROGRAM COMPLIANCE RECOMMENDATIONS: A Progress Report will be required in one year.**

- Provide or arrange training yearly for ACCD mentors on their roles and responsibilities as well as mentoring techniques as per TAC 228.35(e). This should be initiated immediately.

**GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Support the hiring of a program director to coordinate all teacher education programs in the Alamo Community College District.
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- Support the development of an overarching structure of program/curriculum planning, and coordination among all Alamo Community College District colleges. This is strongly recommended.
- Apply for clinical teaching in order to accommodate candidates who are not able to find teaching jobs. This is strongly recommended.
- Initiate a program of curriculum improvement in all certification areas.
- Develop a free-standing six hour professional development course covering testing topics. This is strongly recommended.

- Develop a handbook which outlines the complete and detailed roles and responsibilities of the advisory committee.
- Provide yearly training for the advisory council .
- Review and intensify recruiting efforts in order to increase the number of candidates in the educator preparation programs.
- Develop an expanded technology course that addresses both management and instructional technology and require completion of the course by all teaching candidates.
- Open the professional development courses to allow teachers who have completed the ACCD program and are in their 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> year of teaching to attend.
- Develop and send a letter to all principals where an intern is placed introducing the intern, outlining expectations and the referencing the Texas Administrative Code.
- Revise field experiences to make them more focused and meaningful.