Principal Certification Program Report
2009-2010
Lamar University Principal Preparation Program
Executive Summary

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Dr. Karen Loonam, Deputy Associate Commissioner, and Dr. Janice Lopez, Director of Educator Standards, conducted a Texas Education Agency Technical Assistance Visit on November 9 and 10, 2009. The following is an Executive Summary of the findings and recommendations for program improvement.

Self- Report submitted: October 27, 2009

COMPONENT I: COMMITMENT AND COLLABORATION – Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.20 – Governance of Educator Preparation Programs:

FINDINGS:

Lamar University's Principal Program is in compliance with TAC Rule §228.20 Governance of Educator Preparation Programs. The University held an advisory committee meeting in the spring of 2009 and on November 30, 2009. The spring 2010 advisory committee meeting is being scheduled at this time. Agendas, minutes, and sign-in sheets were available to substantiate that the advisory committee meetings were held. The current Advisory Committee consists of twenty (20) members from local school districts, education service centers, higher education, and community/business interests.

In the Lamar University Compliance Report, it states that its advisory committee was the first to recommend an online delivery system so that individuals throughout Texas would have an opportunity to participate in the principal program. However, it was revealed in the Advisory Committee questionnaire that the members were not aware of the specifics of the principal program and were not involved in the design or the evaluation of the program. With Texas being very diverse demographically and needing to address varied needs, the composition of the Advisory Committee should consist of members statewide who can provide input and represent various geographic interests (by regional service centers). Because Advisory Committee membership tends to be fluid, a handbook should be created to outline the members' roles and responsibilities.

Even though the advisory committee questionnaire response rate was low, members reported that they were unfamiliar with their roles of being a member of the Advisory Committee. It is recommended that Advisory Committee training be conducted annually. Records of this training should be retained in the Advisory Committee records for future compliance audits. Committee members should be provided with state and federal reports so that overall program evaluation can be conducted. Curriculum structures should be discussed with members for the purpose of a better fit with the needs and requirements in the field. It is also strongly recommended that committee members receive training regarding the new Texas Administrative Code (TAC) so that parameters of recommendations can be clear and measurable.

COMPONENT II. ADMISSION CRITERIA – Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §227.10 – Admission Criteria:

FINDINGS:

Lamar University's Principal Program is in compliance with TAC Rule §227.10 Admission Criteria. Lamar University admission requirements for the principal's program include a bachelor's degree, classroom teaching experience, calculated GPE x 200 + GRE (V and Q) of 2.75 overall or 2.75 in the last 60 hours, and a written essay. If the candidate has a Master's degree, no GRE is required. A formal appeal process is in place.

In the document review, it was discovered that recruitment for the program is conducted through the website, catalog, brochure, school and community college visits, media outlets (newspaper, radio, TV, billboards) and word-of-mouth.

COMPONENT III. CURRICULUM – Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §241.15 – Standards for the Principal Certificate:

FINDINGS:

Lamar University's Principal Program is in compliance with TAC Rule §241.15 Standards for the Principal's Certificate. Through the curriculum review, it was found that the curriculum demonstrates vertical and horizontal articulation of content. Even though there are different and varied conceptual areas, the curriculum is integrated and interdisciplinary. Authentic objectives are stated for each course with meaningful and measurable assessments. Each course aligns with the Texas Administrative Code for Principal Certification and also correlates with ISLLC and ELCC standards.

Candidates in the Lamar University's Principal Program are provided learning and performance outcomes each week for each course. The courses provide relevant and purposeful activities allowing candidates to assess and analyze their leadership type and capacities while exploring other colleagues' leadership types, roles, and beliefs. Candidates are offered resources and course materials related to assignments for the purpose of deepening the learning experience. Rubrics and sample assignments are provided for guidance as well. Candidates can review materials either through a streaming video or a video transcript. Question and answer forums are available to clarify course assignments and content.

Candidates are provided opportunities to develop an electronic internship plan and portfolio in order to guide them toward self-reflection as they progress through the coursework. Candidates interact with varied activities, videos, assigned readings, interviews, bulletin board discussions, and case studies. Leadership content extends to curriculum management, instructional leadership, leadership accountability, organization and management issues. The online interface is easy to use, comprehensive, and offers in-depth learning opportunities. Lamar University's Principal Program meets all online compliance indicators.

Commendations:

Lamar University's Principal Program is to be commended for providing a comprehensive, research-based instructional program. It is technically appropriate for distance learning.

COMPONENT IV: PROGRAM DELIVERY AND ON-GOING SUPPORT – Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.35 – Preparation program Coursework and/or Training:

FINDINGS:

Lamar University's Principal Program is in compliance with TAC Rule §228.35 Program Delivery and Ongoing Support. The Lamar University's Principal Program curriculum is delivered to a large candidate cohort completely online with a small cohort of candidates utilizing the traditional face-to-face format. The number of practicum hours, use of field supervisors, training of field supervisors, field supervision of principal candidates including number and length of formal observations, and submission of field observations to campus administrators need immediate attention to bring them into closer alignment with the rule. The program should implement processes to address these areas.

TAC §228.35 states that for candidates seeking professional certification that includes principal, each educator preparation program shall provide a practicum, as defined in §228.2, for a minimum of 160 clock-hours. Coursework must be at least 200 clock-hours. The self- report stated that a minimum of 140 clock-hours of practicum are required while another question stated that 200 clock-hours are required for the practicum. However, during the visit, it was clarified that 200 clock hours were offered.

TAC §228.35(f) On-Going Educator Preparation Program Support 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. While the university does have a mentoring process in place, the process does not include field supervisors. Technically the program is in compliance. However, to strengthen the program, it is recommended that field supervisors be identified and utilized. Included in TAC §228.30(f), guidelines state that the first observation must occur within the first six weeks of assignment. The initial contact with the assigned candidate must occur within the first three weeks of assignment. Lamar does not provide an observation within the first 6 weeks of the practicum. The self report stated that the first observation took place within the second 6-weeks course.

The principal's program must provide a minimum of two formal observations during the first semester and one formal observation during the second semester. Each observation must be at least 45 minutes in duration and must be conducted by the field supervisor. The field supervisor shall document instructional practices observed, provide written feedback through an interactive conference with the candidate, and provide a copy of the written feedback to the candidate's campus administrator. Informal observations and coaching shall be provided by the field supervisor as appropriate. Documentation was not available to verify observations had been conducted as prescribed by rule.

The program does ensure that every candidate has a campus mentor. Campus mentors reported in their questionnaires that they were not provided training for their role in the program. However, upon further investigation, it was found that Lamar University provides the internship handbooks and program expectations for principal candidates and mentor/field supervisors by email. With the innovative nature of Lamar University's program, the creation of an online mentor training program would be feasible.

COMPONENT V. PROGRAM EVALUATION – Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.40 – Assessment of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement:

FINDINGS:

Lamar University's Principal Program is in compliance with TAC Rule §228.40 Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement. Evaluation of the program components is ongoing and extensive as faculty members act together in the revision of existing courses and development of new courses. External and internal data such as advisory committee input and qualitative evaluations from principal candidates are collected through surveys. Lamar University utilizes these surveys to revise and update program components. The academic coach, who has continuous interaction with candidates, provides ongoing feedback regarding all areas of the program.

Lamar University's Principal Program provides immediate feedback to candidates through their online program. When candidates take an examination, it is immediately graded. The online system also has a grading portal for candidates to review their progress throughout the program. The bulletin board also provides candidates the opportunity to provide feedback as they progress through the program's curriculum. Candidates in the program are also given the opportunity to take the representative principal examination prior to taking the certification examination.

The Accountability System for Educator Preparation (ASEP) indicates that Lamar University Principal Program is accredited.

Advisory committee members should be involved in the evaluation of the program. Committee members can evaluate and provide feedback for the distribution of ASEP data, qualitative evaluations from candidates, campus administrators, faculty personnel, mentors, field supervisors, program staff, and student retention information. It is also recommended that there would be a smaller candidate to professor ratio. During the onsite visit, TEA was told that there was approximately a ratio of 700 candidates to one professor. Even though there are academic coaches available, candidates need continuous feedback from the professors.

Lamar University is managing the retention of records and security appropriately. Records are kept electronically under secure conditions. Records are retained for a minimum of 5 years.

Program Recommendations:

The following are recommendations based on the findings of the technical assistance visit. If the program is NOT in compliance with any component, please consult the TAC rules and correct the issue IMMEDIATELY. Program recommendations are suggestions for general program improvement. A progress report will be required in one year.

PROGRAM COMPLIANCE RECOMMENDATIONS:

Implement the appropriate internship hours, field supervision, schedule of observations, number of observations, length of observations, and reporting of observation findings to candidates and campus administrators per TAC Rule §228.35 - Program Delivery and On-going Support.

GENERAL PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that Lamar University: 1) convene a statewide advisory committee to strengthen and improve the program components, and represent the needs of various geographic areas; 2) compile a handbook for each advisory committee member which outlines his/her various roles and responsibilities; (3) provide yearly training to the advisory committee members to make them aware of the principal's program operation, progress, as well as state and federal reports and rules; 4) involve the advisory committee in the evaluation of the principal program; 5) reduce the student to professor ratio to provide more personal attention to the candidates; 6) establish a timeline for course review and revision to include recent relevant information and research and 7) align program terminology to match TAC definitions; 8) create an online program for principal mentor training.