

**Texas Education Agency Division of Educator Standards
Post Approval Site Visit**

***Education Service Center Region IV
Houston, Texas
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***Visit Conducted by TEA Staff:
Mixon Henry and Dr. Mary Black, Program Specialists***

Texas Administrative Code (TAC) § 228.10 (b) Educator Preparation Program Approval Process

Background

Education Service Center (ESC) Region IV is located in the fourth largest city in America, Houston, Texas. It serves 168 Texas school districts, 21 charter schools, and 29 private schools. The program was approved in 1990, with the first cohort receiving training in November 1990. ESC Region IV has now certified over 11,000 educators. It is approved for 61 certification areas with a strong focus on Bilingual Spanish.

Currently there are over 1000 interns and clinical teachers working with Region IV. In April 2009, there were 874 interns and 155 clinical teachers. The Region IV Alternative Certification Program (ACP) partners with Regions IX, XV, XVI, and XVII to provide certification options in those areas of the state. Region IV also partners with St. Thomas University in Houston for principal certification, and Rice University for preparation for EC-12 Mandarin Chinese. The International Program of the Region IV ACP partners with the Universidad Regiomontana and the Universidad Autonoma de Guadalajara to prepare and recruit teachers from Mexico for Bilingual Spanish certification in Texas.

The International Program also began in 1992 and has certified 937 candidates. Currently there are 281 candidates enrolled. This program has produced two National Bilingual Teachers of the Year (NBTY) and many more Teachers of the Year at the local level. One of the two NBTYs currently teaches in the Region IV program.

Thirty-five (35) people attended the opening session of this visit, including twenty-six (26) representatives from Region IV and nine (9) representatives from surrounding school districts.

Prior to this monitoring visit, ESC Region IV submitted a self-report which addressed all required components.

Number and Roles of People Interviewed

Twenty-three (23) people were interviewed by program specialists. Interviewees included seven (7) members of the advisory council, three (3) principals, seven (7) interns, four (4) mentors, one (1) field supervisor, and one (1) program staff member.

I. Entity Commitment and Collaboration

Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.20 Governance of Educator Preparation Programs

Findings:

The Advisory Council members' list provided by Region IV showed approximately 15 members, but the names did not actually reflect the people who attended the meetings. An updated and corrected list was requested, but not received during the monitoring visit. Interviews with Advisory Council members, however, revealed that several people whose names were not on the official list had been attending meetings for up to eight years. Indeed, most of the school districts represented had been attending since the inception of the program, with various persons attending in various years. One member of the Advisory Council interviewed did not belong to Region IV, but because of their partnership with Region IV to receive Bilingual Spanish teachers, served on the council as an outside member.

Advisory Council meetings, agendas, minutes and roles all meet state requirements. Interviews revealed that the Program Director and staff were routinely responsive to Advisory Council suggestions. Twenty to thirty members generally attend Advisory Council meetings. Interviews with Advisory Members revealed that "quality of instruction and candidate preparation would challenge a university" and "always trying to improve and continually seeking input from Advisory Council at meetings or one on one". With the number of school districts participating and volume of interns placed in these districts, it is clear that the relationship with districts is strong and beneficial to all.

Education Service Center Region IV is in compliance with Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.20.

Commendations:

Long standing relationships with school districts personnel, specifically human resource directors, on the Advisory Committee have assisted with input for program and intern placement.

II. Admission Criteria

Texas Administrative Code (TAC) § 227.10 Admission Criteria

Findings:

All admission requirements meet or exceed those required by the state. Applicants are required to have a degree from an accredited university with an overall grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 or a 2.5 in their last 60 hours. The basic skills component is addressed by THEA, course work from the university, and various options from the Texas Success Initiative. The online application denotes an electronic signature, which also requires the reading and acknowledgement of the criteria and standards set by the program. Additional components that exceed the state requirements are a signed Region IV "Code of Ethics" agreement and a criminal background check. Another component, which demonstrates exceeding state requirements to the application, is a written essay on the topic "Why I Want to be a Teacher". Interviews are conducted with specific candidates if it is determined clarification is needed. If a candidate is not accepted into the program and wishes to appeal, a panel of three (3)

professional staff members independently reviews the application and makes a recommendation.

International candidates, in addition to the aforementioned criteria, are required to pass either the Versant or Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) to determine English language proficiency. Transcripts from foreign universities are evaluated and validated by an outside agency. A training course is offered to applicants in Mexico by Region IV personnel each year in order to prepare them to take the Accuplacer, which may be an unfamiliar format for these candidates.

ESC Region IV is in compliance with TAC §227.10.

Commendations:

The recruiting of foreign students has assisted in filling the void of Spanish Bilingual educators. ESC Region IV's rigorous criteria and support of the foreign educators to meet the criteria reinforces the effort to create quality Spanish Bilingual educators.

The requirements of a signed code of ethics and criminal background check demonstrate the effort for limiting a safety risk of the classroom students during observations and internship. This defines the expectations by the program for the candidate. Interviews with specific candidates are conducted by staff for qualification clarification. The required electronic signature and acknowledgement of the program's handbook again set a standard of behavior essential to become part of ESC Region IV's program.

III. Curriculum

Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.30 Educator Preparation Curriculum

Findings:

The curriculum from Region IV meets or exceeds all state requirements. The 17 topics of Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities (PPR) are integrated into both the online and face-to-face classes. Each module has an assessment component to measure the progress of the educator. Test-taking strategies, English as a Second Language (ESL), and PPR 8-12 are delivered to all students online. Six hours of test preparation was difficult to identify because it is incorporated in the test-taking strategies portion of the classes. Online curriculum hours are calculated by the average time required for each module to be completed by the educator. This information is gathered by surveys taken by candidates as they complete the online coursework. Interviews revealed interns could not recall specific topics i.e. differentiated instruction and special populations. There is documentation of coursework being taught and attendance by educators but recall by interns was not strong. It was recommended that classes be held during the internship to assist interns in transferring this information into the classroom.

For the International Program, an additional semester of course work is offered through the partner universities in Mexico to prepare students for working and teaching in the United States (U.S.). All of these courses are delivered only in English both online and face-to-face. These classes include two courses in U.S. History, two courses in English composition and rhetoric, two courses in spoken English, one algebra course, and a science course. International students take 433 clock hours of work through the Region IV program before internship in the U.S.

ESC Region IV is in compliance with TAC §228.30.**Commendations:**

The development of an International Program extended curriculum aligns foreign credentials and prepares students to teach in the United States. The program is highly effect and successful in ensuring the professional growth of the foreign candidates.

IV. Program Delivery and Evaluation**Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228. 35 Preparation Program Coursework and/or Training****Texas Administrative Code (TAC) § 228. 40 Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement****Findings:**

Coursework is delivered online and face-to-face. Native English-speaking students in the U.S. take 303 clock hours of coursework in addition to internship or clinical teaching. The International Program candidates complete field-based experiences prior to internship. When a candidate has unsuccessful results, remediation is designed which provides specific feedback to correct and better understand the assignment per course module. The success of the curriculum is demonstrated by the 98% -100% pass rate on the TExES.

ESC Region IV electronic data system is secure with access restricted to specific personnel. It provides a wide range of information from demographics of the educator to the specific notes entered by an instructor. This data system tracks an individual from entrance into the program to the recommendation for the standard certificate.

The evaluation process covers several areas of the program. The coursework, on-line and face- to-face, have a feedback component on the content and delivery of curriculum and the instructor. ESC Region 4 considers the feedback in continuing the services of instructors. In addition to surveys with interns, mentors and others, the Region IV program is evaluated annually by Stetson and Associates. Feedback from human resource administrators in the area is also solicited.

ESC Region IV is in compliance with TAC §228.40.**V. On-Going Support****Texas Administrative Code (TAC) § 228.35 (f) On-going Educator Program Support****Findings:**

During the internship phase, the field supervisor, campus administrator, and mentor are the support system for the interns. According to the self-report, interns are observed at least twice by the campus administrator, five times by the mentor, and five times by the Field Supervisor.

Field Supervisors are professionals hired by Region IV explicitly for this purpose. The field supervisors are certified educators with many years of experience. One field supervisor interviewed had served in this capacity for 11 years and was a school principal for 22 years prior to that. The mentors are campus teachers and receive training via electronic media. The field supervisor delivers the training CD to the mentors. The observation forms and feedback documentation is also provided by ESC Region IV. The intern is responsible for keeping a notebook that is to be placed on the intern's desk for easy access. This notebook contains information to be shared with the mentor and field supervisor. When the notebook is read and feedback given, the mentor and field supervisor sign the notebook to denote their input. Observations are completed by field supervisor and mentors. Feedback is given orally and in a written format. Interns who are struggling receive more Field Supervisor and mentor visits, and may receive an intervention plan. The mentor also observes the intern. These observations are documented with forms provided by ESC Region 4. Interviews revealed that the daily conversations between intern and mentor provided the largest amount of feedback to the intern. This daily encounter was "extremely important and provided the best source of information to help me in the classroom". The mentor is paid \$500.00 by ESC Region IV for the support given to the intern. The campus administrator does two formal PDAS observations that are the key to the decision in recommending the intern for the standard certificate. The campus administrators revealed in interviews that the interns from ESC Region IV were "a step above the others" and "had confidence". Another comment shared by campus administrators was the "easy access to the field supervisors and staff" at ESC Region IV.

In addition, Region IV offers a unique remediation seminar called BITTS (Building Individual Teaching Techniques and Skills). Region IV interns who are struggling attend at no extra cost, and novice teachers throughout the Houston area can attend for an additional fee even if they are not part of the Region IV ACP. In this way Region IV offers a valuable service to all beginning teachers in the area.

Field Supervisors attend three training days annually at Region IV. The Field Supervisor is responsible for training new mentors. Region IV has developed extensive mentor training materials which they give to mentors in a CD format.

ESC Region IV supports the educators in economic terms, too. There are five scholarships offered to educators yearly. There are four domestic scholarships and one international. Each scholarship is in the amount of \$800.00. The criterion is that the educator be training in an identified need area.

ESC Region IV is in compliance with TAC §228.30.

Commendations:

BITTS seminars offered at no cost for Region IV interns or low-cost to others is a key to support of struggling interns. These seminars share methods of classroom management, organization skills, and give insight to the intern to better facilitate their classroom.

Extensive mentor training materials developed by ESC Region IV have assisted in the process of mentors in supporting the intern. The materials define the program expectations, mentor responsibilities, and paperwork for documentation.

Training for field supervisors is a key to consistent expectation from one supervisor to another. This enables the program to know that all supervisors are on the same page and using the same terminology.

Scholarship money for educators is a unique but necessary way of showing support. This is shared with both domestic and international educators.

Overall Program Commendations:

ESC Region IV's rigorous standards for online courses and their implementation of those online course standards are noted by the successful test scores with 98-100% pass rate.

ESC Region IV's International Program recruits and trains bilingual Spanish teachers for Texas schools. The vast number of educators produced by ESC Region IV (937 educators) is helping feel that need.

Overall Program Recommendations:

- List the attending members of the Advisory Committee to correctly identify individuals supplying input to the program, implement for the coming year 2009-2010.
- Identify test preparation of the required 6 clock hours, implement by the 2010 cohort.
- Consider extending curriculum into the internship which reviews previously covered material. These issues and topics will become pertinent during the intern's classroom experience, possibly implement for the 2010 cohort.
- Include additional instruction on Gifted and Talented students, TAKS responsibilities, modifying assignments for special need students, and legal responsibilities for special needs populations, implement by the 2010 cohort.