



Compliance Visit Report 2010-2011 Alternative Certification for Teachers – Now

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 for details contained in each rule.

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Texas Education Agency (TEA) Program Specialists, Mixon Henry and Dr. Mary Black, conducted a Texas Education Agency compliance audit on October 26-28, 2010. The following are the findings and recommendations for program improvement.

Self-Report Submitted: September 29, 2010

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

Findings:

Alternative Certification for Teachers Now (ACT – Now) has ten (10) members on their advisory committee. The representation includes two categories: business and community, three (3) members and public and private schools, seven members (7). We encouraged the program to consider expanding with additional members in the other categories, higher education and education service centers to provide a different perspective to the program. There was sufficient evidence, denoted in the minutes of the advisory committee meeting, per member discusses in meeting minutes, of adequate support by the governing body and/or chief operating officer of the entity and that the advisory committee is involved in the quality of the program and candidates preparation. In reviewing documentation of agenda, sign-in sheets, and minutes, there was sufficient evidence that the advisory committee meets a minimum of twice during the academic year. Documented dates of meetings were: February 26, 2009; August 16, 2009; January 24, 2010; and August 26, 2010. Agendas, attendance rosters, and notes were verified in the document review. In analyzing advisory committee questionnaires, members appear to understand their roles and have input in delivery, design, and evaluation of the program. The advisory committee also assists in determining relevant field-based experience for candidates. The TEA staff determined the field experience hours were insufficient for the required thirty (30) hours of field based experience. The program's field

experience component had a combination of eight (8) hours of observations and twenty-two (22) hours of tutoring. To clarify and reinforce the Texas Administrative Code (TAC), TEA staff provided training at the opening session, which addressed the roles and responsibilities of the advisory committee.

Alternative Certification for Teachers – Now is in compliance with TAC §228.20 – Governance of Educator Preparation Programs

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

Findings:

As stated in the ACT Now's self-report, identified on the program's website, and in program brochures, all candidates are required to have the following: a bachelor's degree from an accredited university and transcripts must indicate that the grade point average (GPA) is 2.5 or higher on the last 60 hours. Candidates below this GPA requirement may enroll in the program under the 10% rule of TAC §227.10 (B). Transcripts must also denote twenty-four (24) hours in the content specific areas of English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies for those seeking a secondary content area certificate. Additional requirements for admissions include: a signed application, success in meeting criteria for basic skills by THEA test scores or the Texas Success Initiative (TSI), four (4) letters of reference by a combination of two (2) character references and two (2) from educators or supervisors, and a criminal history background check. For out- of-country applicants, the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is required, though no out- of- country candidates were enrolled at the time of the audit. Upon submission of all required documents, a face - to-face interview is conducted. There was no documentation available providing evidence of the results of the interviews or questions used during interviews. During the opening session, there was a suggestion to limit the length of the oral interviews and create process parameters.

Alternative Certification for Teachers – Now (ACT-Now) is in compliance with TAC §227.10 – Admission Criteria

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

Findings:

The instructional staff members for ACT – Now are all practitioners with Texas certification and have advanced degrees. Most instructional members are in administrative roles in schools or district central offices. When content areas fall outside of the instructor's expertise, guest speakers from the specific fields were brought into classes to provide a deeper insight to the field. There is sufficient evidence of TEKS being addressed in program curriculum. In reviewing course modules and curriculum, there was only a limited alignment to certification

standards, domains, and competencies as found in syllabi. ***In TAC rule §228.30 (a) The educator standards adopted by the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) shall be the curricular basis for all educator preparation and, for each certificate, address the relevant Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).*** The lack of identifiable standards in the course syllabi needs to be addressed to demonstrate curriculum alignment. There was sufficient evidence through the curriculum alignment chart that the seventeen (17) required curriculum topics were adequately covered. During coursework and training, assessment of candidates were provided by short answer quizzes and performance based assessments such as lesson plans, writing assignments, and presentations, all supported by grading criteria using a rubric. At the end of the two major modules, a comprehensive exam was given to assess the knowledge gained by the educator. The only curriculum weakness identified by intern questionnaires was strategies for gifted and talented students (13%). Mentors identified weak areas of the curriculum “as not prepared” in strategies for gifted and talented (66.7%), strategies for students with limited English proficiency (44.4%), Administration of the TAKS examination (33.3%), and child and adolescence development (44.4%). In review of the curriculum and its depth of coverage by TEA, it was noted curriculum areas needing to be strengthened were: English Language Learners and Bilingual, Special Education, Child development, Gifted and Talented strategies, and formal and informal assessments. It should be noted that the Accountability System for Educator Preparation (ASEP) test scores over the last three years are as follows: 2008 – 100%, 2009 – 96%, and 2010 – 100%.

Alternative Certification for Teachers – Now (ACT-Now) is not in compliance with TAC §228.30 – Educator Preparation Curriculum

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

Findings:

Alternative Certification for Teachers – Now (ACT-Now) has 300+ clock hours of training for candidates. Incorporated in the training hours is the six (6) required clock hours of test preparation. Additionally, more test preparation is embedded into the coursework with specific reviews presented in curriculum with questions utilizing testing terminology and format. This takes place at four (4) identified points in the curriculum. Furthermore, Alternative Certification for Teachers – Now (ACT-Now) has created a study guide which addresses specific terms in each content test area which assists in familiarizing the educator with terms that will later appear on the TExES certification test.

In reviewing candidate field experiences, it was revealed that only eight (8) clock hours were observations in classroom environments and the other twenty-two (22) clock hours were a “combination of tutoring and subject development study”. Though potentially an excellent learning experience, it does not meet the TAC guidelines. ***Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.2 (9) Field-based experiences states that “Experiences in which the primary activity of a candidate for certification is the performance of professional educator activities***

while interacting with Early Childhood-Grade 12 students, teachers, and faculty/staff members in a school setting that is part of regular classroom instruction. The professional activities include more than observation within a classroom. The interaction with students, teachers, and entity faculty/staff must be ongoing and relevant.”

Reflections by candidates' field experience are noted in candidates' folders along with hours of credit for the experience. This in combination with the two beginning modules, Survival Classes and Pedagogy Block make-up the beginning stages of training for the 80 clock hours prior to the teaching practicum. In reviewing the candidates' folders, documentation of all coursework was present, including the district training of fifty (50) clock hours. The candidates' folders also contained evidence of the internship assignment which included: starting date, teaching assignment, campus principal and mentor, assigned field supervisor, and observations.

In the document review, documentation was present that confirmed mentor and field supervisor training. According to intern questionnaires, it was revealed that interns rated the field supervisor as effective (25%) or very effective (75%). The questionnaires also confirmed that first contact was made by the field supervisor within the first three (3) weeks of the assignment, the first observation was within the first six (6) weeks of the assignments, and that three (3) observations were performed. This was also confirmed by the field supervisors' contact logs and observation forms. The duration of each observation was at least 45 minutes, with written feedback and an interactive conference following the observations. The campus administrator was provided a copy of the observation form by the field supervisor prior to leaving the campus. Additional coaching and support was noted by intern questionnaires' responses with 92% reporting this additional support. In reviewing the late hire candidates, all requirements were met by the prescribed timeline.

It was noted in the self-report and in student folders, 2nd and 3rd year interns received no observations by the program. As noted in **TAC §228.35 (f) On-Going Educator Preparation Program Support. “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. The initial contact with the assigned candidate must occur within the first three weeks of assignment. The 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 first observation must occur within the first six weeks of assignment. 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.”** During the clarification of the self-report and program documents, this issue was addressed and the Texas Administrative Code was reviewed. The program acknowledged the error and submitted documentation that this has been corrected.

Alternative Certification for Teachers – Now (ACT-Now) is not in compliance with Preparation Program Coursework and/or Training.

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

Findings:

Alternative Certification for Teachers-Now (ACT-Now) has several structured assessments and benchmarks to ensure progress of the candidate. In the Survival and Pedagogy blocks, specific assessments are a combination of selected response, short answer, and performance-based assessments and this followed up with a comprehensive exam. Benchmarks are noted by successful completion of courses during training. These assessments and benchmarks clearly denoted the readiness of the candidates to test and demonstrate success with the program content. When a candidate is unsuccessful on the content or Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities (PPR) test, a tutorial session is created to assist the candidate in preparing for the next attempt. Test approval is only provided when candidates are enrolled in the program and have met all of the requirements established by the program.

In the overall program evaluation, there is limited curriculum evaluation. Evaluations are based on ASEP data, candidate feedback from a final question on curriculum exam, and verbal feedback from principals and mentors in discussion held with field supervisors. In accordance to **TAC §228.40 (c) “For the purposes of educator preparation program improvement, an entity shall continuously evaluate the design and delivery of the educator preparation curriculum based on performance data, scientifically-based research practices, and the results of internal and external assessments.”** There is no evidence of a regular, systematic review of curriculum or overall program effectiveness. It was recommended to expand input of curriculum and program effectiveness to include principals, mentors, interns, instructors, field supervisors, and district HR personnel. This broadening base of input will allow a more comprehensive view of the program. It was suggested that yearly questionnaires be sent to assist in gathering the data. When the data is gathered and organized, it should be presented to the advisory committee for additional input. This should be specifically noted in the agenda and minutes to document advisory committee input and collaboration.

Alternative Certification for Teachers – Now (ACT-Now) is not in compliance with TAC §228.40 – Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement.

Senate Bill 174/TAC §229 Compliance

Standard I: Results of Certification Exams

Pass Rate Performance:	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
	80% Pass Rate	80% Pass Rate	70% Pass Rate
Overall:	100%	96%	100%

PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION

The following are recommendations based on the findings of the Texas Education Agency visit. If the program is NOT in compliance with any component, please consult the Texas Administrative Code and initiate actions to correct the issue IMMEDIATELY. A Compliance Status Report will be required in sixty days.

- General program recommendations are suggestions for general program improvement and do not require follow-up.

PROGRAM COMPLIANCE RECOMMENDATIONS: A Compliance Status Report will be required in 60 days. Component III – Curriculum - Texas Administrative Code §228.30

- Create syllabi for each course or block to define objectives, standards, domains, and competencies; include assignments and method of assessments with grading criteria; these course syllabi should demonstrate an alignment to the standards, domains, and competences; implement immediately.

Component IV – Program Delivery and Ongoing Support - Texas Administrative Code §228.35

- Re-design the field experience component to include a minimum of 30 clock hours of observation and interaction in the classroom environment; implement immediately.
- Begin observations for interns that require extensions on their probationary certificate; the requirements are the same (three observations with the same required timeline) regardless of whether it is the first year of probationary certificate or second extension; implement immediately.

Component V – Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement

- Develop a regular, systematic method to evaluate overall program effectiveness; implement immediately.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS: No progress report is necessary.

Component I – Advisory Committee

- Recruit additional Advisory Committee members to expand the feedback base; include Higher Education representation, possibly add local district Human Resource directors, and Administrators from local districts for better exposure of the program.

Component II – Admissions Criteria

- Document the interviews; develop a standard set of questions to be asked with each interviewee and a rubric to assess the responses; keep the interview results in the student's folder.

Component III – Curriculum

- Align terms in coursework to allow candidates to identify standards and educational language to assist in recognizing these terms and standards.
- Create additional assessments, to be used earlier in each course, which identify educator's acquired knowledge of course content prior to course assignments; this allows an opportunity to remediate prior to the evaluated task.

Component IV – Program Evaluation

- Create a method to gain input on the educator's experience in the practicum; seek input from all groups involved: intern, mentor, campus administrator, HR directors, and advisory committee.