

Item 13: Consider and Take Appropriate Action on Continuing Approval for A+ Texas Teachers Educator Preparation Program

DISCUSSION AND ACTION

SUMMARY: This item provides the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) the opportunity to consider and take appropriate action on the continuing approval for A+ Texas Teachers (ATT) educator preparation program (EPP).

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: The continuing approval of EPPs is authorized by the Texas Education Code (TEC), §§21.0443, 21.041, 21.0452, and 21.061, closure of EPPs is authorized by TEC §21.0451, and the informal disposition of contested cases is authorized by the Texas Government Code (TGC) §2001.056.

The full text of statutory citations can be found in the statutory authority section of this agenda.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon Board approval.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND JUSTIFICATION: TEC §21.0443 authorizes the SBEC to adopt rules providing for EPP approval and renewal of approval and requires that to be eligible for renewal of approval, an EPP must meet the standards and requirements of the SBEC. TEC §21.061 states the SBEC is to carry out a process for reviewing and, as necessary, updating standards and requirements for EPPs. The TEC, §21.0451 and 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §229.6(b) state in part that if the Texas Education Agency (TEA) staff finds that an EPP has failed to comply with SBEC rules and/or the TEC, Chapter 21, and the EPP does not obtain compliance within the timelines established by TEA staff, the TEA staff shall recommend that the SBEC sanction the EPP. The TEA staff may recommend that the SBEC action include public reprimand, revocation of program approval, or the imposition of conditions upon continuing program approval. TGC §2001.056 allows informal disposition of a contested case by stipulation, agreed settlement, consent order, or default.

TEA staff conducted the five-year continuing approval review of ATT on March 30 – April 1, 2021. As a result of the review, ATT was required to submit their Compliance Plan to TEA by August 1, 2021 to address the areas of noncompliance found in the five-year review. After review of the Compliance Plan documentation, TEA staff found that ATT had not successfully addressed many of the identified deficiencies, including a lack of required evidence to prove ATT is ensuring candidates completing internships are assigned campus mentors. A summary of the deficiencies and the required evidence that ATT must submit to prove that it has corrected the deficiencies can be found in Exhibit A in the attachment.

On January 27, 2022, TEA gave ATT formal written notice in accordance with 19 TAC §229.6(c) that its proposed recommendation to the SBEC was revocation of ATT's approval to recommend candidates for educator certification.

At the SBEC meeting on April 29, 2022, TEA staff presented a draft agreed order that reflected a proposed settlement. SBEC rejected the agreed order and directed staff to seek different settlement terms or proceed with the sanction process. Board members provided recommendations on potential settlement terms, including requiring a more appropriate sample size of files to review given the size of the program, raising the compliance threshold to at least 90%, requiring documentation of the program's progress towards compliance, and public posting of the program's status.

On May 9, 2022, TEA staff presented ATT with a new proposed agreed order that reflected the settlement terms that SBEC had requested.

On July 1, 2022, TEA staff notified ATT that its final recommendation would be to lower ATT's accreditation sanction to Accredited—Probation, and to put conditions on ATT's continuing approval, including the appointment of a monitor to review ATT's efforts to come into compliance with SBEC requirements and to report to TEA staff periodically until ATT has come into compliance.

TEA staff and ATT have drafted a proposed Agreed Order that TEA staff will present to the SBEC for its consideration at its July 22, 2022 Board meeting. If the SBEC rejects the proposed agreed order, TEA staff will present a proposed Final Order to the SBEC with the terms outlined in TEA staff's final recommendation.

PUBLIC AND STUDENT BENEFIT: The public and student benefit anticipated as a result of the agreed order will be to ensure this educator preparation program is meeting minimum requirements set forth by the SBEC and is therefore adequately preparing educators for Texas classrooms.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER'S RECOMMENDATION:

Approve either the agreed order or the final order for A+ Texas Teachers educator preparation program as presented.

Staff Members Responsible:

Jessica McLoughlin, Director, Talent Pathways
Laura Moriaty, Director, SBEC Enforcement

Attachment:

Exhibit A, Summary of Deficiencies and Required Evidence

ATTACHMENT
Exhibit A
Summary of Deficiencies
and Required Evidence

Discrepancy	Action Item-Agreed	Requested/ Expected Deliverable	Delivered Item
Governance 19 TAC §228.10			
Action Completed as Required			
Admission 19 Chapter 227			
<p>Requirement 19 TAC §227.17 Formal Admission</p> <p>(b) For an applicant to be formally admitted to an EPP, the EPP must notify the applicant of the <u>offer of formal admission in writing</u> by mail, personal delivery, facsimile, email, or an electronic notification.</p> <p>(c) For an applicant to be considered formally admitted to the EPP, the applicant must <u>accept the offer of formal admission in writing</u> by mail, personal delivery, facsimile, email, or an electronic notification.</p> <p>(d) The <u>effective date</u> of formal admission was included in the</p>	<p>Review Finding: The offer letter provided to applicants does not include the effective date of admission and admission records are not consistently created for new candidates within 7 days of the admission date.</p> <p>Action Needed: Update the admission process for formal and contingency admission so that the offer letter sent to applicants includes the date of admission (such as “the date you sign this acceptance is your formal date of admission” or something similar).</p> <p>Update the process for uploading new admits into ECOS so that an admission record for each is</p>	<p>Provide a screenshot of the updated offer letter and acceptance for one candidate.</p> <p>The information will be compared with the ECOS admission record.</p>	<p>Screenshots of portals for 6 candidates reflected an admission date; however, no offer letter reflecting the admission date was submitted to support the admission date recorded in each candidate’s record in the portal.</p>

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<p>offer of formal admission.</p> <p>(e) An EPP must notify the Texas Education Agency within <u>seven calendar days</u> of a candidate's formal admission.</p> <p>Note: Similar requirements in 19 TAC §227.15 related to Contingency Admission</p>	<p>created within 7 days of the effective date of admission in the offer letter.</p>		
<p>Requirement 19 TAC §227.10(a)(4) Admission Requirements: Minimum Subject-Specific Content Hours</p> <p>For an applicant who will be seeking an initial certificate in the classroom teacher class of certificate, the applicant shall have successfully completed, prior to admission, at least:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a minimum of <u>12 semester credit hours</u> in the subject-specific content area for the certification sought... or 	<p>Review Finding: Subject-specific content hours required for admission could not be verified or did not match the certificate area in which the candidate was presumed to be admitted.</p> <p>Action Needed: Update the admission process to qualify an applicant for admission into one or more certificate area(s) and then collect all requirements, including related subject-specific content hours from the transcript and report as applicable</p>	<p>Submit admission records, including university transcripts, for one recently admitted candidate. Information will be reviewed and then compared with records in ECOS.</p>	<p>Transcripts were submitted for 6 candidates. Subject-area hours were captured accurately from the transcripts from the documented admission area; however, for 3 of the 6 candidates, the candidates were provided an active test approval for an unrelated subject area within the same day the admission record was created. This is a consistent pattern of admission that circumnavigates the requirement to qualify a candidate for “the certificate sought”.</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>15 semester credit hours</u> in the subject-specific content area for the certification sought if the certification sought is for <u>mathematics or science at or above Grade 7</u>; or • a <u>passing score on the appropriate content certification examination</u> ...The applicant will not be required to successfully complete a passing score on the appropriate content certification examination until January 27, 2020. <p>Requirement 19 TAC §228.40(c) Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement</p> <p>(c) <u>Upon the written request of the candidate</u>, an EPP may prepare a candidate and grant</p>	<p>for each admission area.</p>		

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test approval for a classroom teacher certificate category other than the category for which the candidate was initially admitted to the EPP.			
<p>Requirement 19 TAC §227.10(a)(8) Admission Requirements: Screen</p> <p>An applicant must... participate in either an <u>interview or other screening instrument</u> to determine if the EPP applicant's knowledge, experience, skills, and aptitude are appropriate for the certification sought.</p>	<p>Review Finding: There was insufficient evidence that applicants are consistently screened to determine if their knowledge, experience, skills, and aptitude are appropriate for the certification sought.</p> <p>Action Needed: Update the admission screening process to ensure all screeners collect evidence of the screen and score the screen. Establish a cut score that an applicant must meet for admission or to place the admitted candidate in the appropriate certificate area.</p>	Evidence of a scored screen with cut score identified for one recently admitted candidate.	The scored screen was not submitted. Screen shots from a candidate portal reflected that a screen was completed but no documentation was provided to support that admission requirement as recorded in the portal.
Curriculum 19 TAC §228.30			
Action Completed as Required			
Coursework and Delivery 19 TAC §228.35			

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<p>Requirement 19 TAC §228.35(e)(2)(B)(vi) & (vii) Skills Implementation: Notification of Certificate Deactivation</p> <p>(vi) An EPP must provide ongoing support to a candidate... unless...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (II) ...the candidate resigns, is non-renewed, or is terminated by the school or district... • (III) ...the candidate is discharged or is released from the EPP... • (IV) ...the candidate withdraws from the EPP... • (V) ...the internship assignment does not meet the requirements... <p>(vii) If the candidate leaves the internship assignment for any of the reasons identified in clause (vi)(II)-(V) of this subparagraph:</p>	<p>Review Finding: Certificate deactivation timeline requirements have not been met.</p> <p>Action Needed: Implement a process to deactivate certificates within the parameters set by the SBEC.</p>	<p>Submit a written description of the updated process with any related forms or documents, and the method that will be used to inform campus/district personnel and candidate of the requirements before start of internship.</p>	<p>The Action Item was not addressed in the responsive evidence of compliance submitted.</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the EPP, the campus or district personnel, and the candidate must inform each other within one calendar week of the candidate's last day in the assignment; and • (II) TEA must receive the certificate deactivation request with all related documentation from the EPP within two calendar weeks of the candidate's last day of the assignment in a format determined by TEA. <p>(viii) The EPP must communicate the requirements in clause (vii) of this subparagraph to candidates and campus or district personnel prior to the assignment start date.</p>			
<p>Requirement 19 TAC §228.35(e)(1) FBE: Settings</p>	<p>Review Finding: The evidence provided does not allow TEA to clearly identify if field-based</p>	<p>Provide a written description of the FBE process and submit documents for one candidate to</p>	<p>The Action Item was not addressed in the responsive evidence of compliance submitted.</p>

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<p>An EPP shall provide evidence of ongoing and relevant field-based experiences throughout the EPP in a <u>variety of educational settings with diverse student populations, including observation, modeling, and demonstration of effective practices to improve student learning...</u></p> <p>19 TAC §228.35(e)(1)(A) FBE: Interactive Hours</p> <p>Field-based experiences must include <u>15 clock-hours</u> in which the candidate, under the direction of the EPP, is <u>actively engaged in instructional or educational activities</u> that include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • authentic school settings in a public school accredited by the TEA or other school approved by the TEA for this purpose; 	<p>experience “FBE” activities meet requirements.</p> <p>Action Needed: Although the EPP asserts that it has updated its FBE process, the evidence provided does not allow TEA staff to clearly identify which FBE requirements the 30 candidates selected for review had completed.</p>	<p>demonstrate the implementation of the new process. If the process is different due to COVID disruption, explain how the FBE will be required in non-COVID times.</p>	<p>Note: A TCR 000 course was listed in the EPP course list as an FBE course but the contents of that course, including any instructions that may be provided to candidates about completing FBE, were not available for review.</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • instruction by content certified teachers; • actual students in classrooms/instructional settings with identity-proof provisions; • content or grade-level specific classrooms/instructional settings; and • written reflection of the observation. <p>19 TAC §228.35(e)(1)(B): FBE: Electronic Hours</p> <p>Up to <u>15 clock-hours of field-based experience may be provided by use of electronic transmission</u> or other video or technology-based method. Field-based experience provided by use of electronic transmission or other video or technology-based method must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direction of the EPP; • authentic school settings in an 			

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<p>accredited public or private school;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • instruction by content certified teachers; • actual students in classrooms/instructional settings with identity-proof provisions; • content or grade-level specific classrooms/instructional settings; and • written reflection of the observation. <p>19 TAC §228.35(e)(1)(C) FBE: Long-Term Substitute Hours</p> <p>Up to 15 clock-hours of field-based experience may be satisfied <u>by serving as a long-term substitute</u>. A long-term substitute is an individual who has been <u>hired by a school or district to work at least 30 consecutive days in an assignment as a classroom teacher</u>. Experience may occur after the candidate's admission to an EPP or during</p>			

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<p>the two years before the date the candidate is admitted to the EPP. The candidate's experience in instructional or educational activities must be documented by the EPP and must be obtained at a public or private school accredited or approved for the purpose by the TEA. 19 TAC §228.35(e)(1)(A)-(C)</p>			
<p>Requirement Campus Supervision: 19 TAC §228.2(26), §228.35(f), and §228.35(g) 19 TAC §228.35(f) Campus Supervision: Mentor, Cooperating Teacher, or Site Supervisors Assigned</p> <p>... an EPP shall collaborate with the campus or district administrator to <u>assign each candidate a mentor during the candidate's internship, assign a cooperating teacher during the candidate's</u></p>	<p>Review Finding: There is no evidence that candidates completing internships are assigned mentors and consequently, it cannot be verified that mentors would meet qualification requirements or would be required to complete training. As a result of the lack of mentors assigned to interns, there is no evidence of collaboration between mentors and field supervisors and there is no evidence that mentors are provided a copy of observation feedback on observations conducted by FS.</p>	<p>Submit related mentor information and documentation for one candidate; or, Submit a written description of the updated processes, with any related documents. Include the date and person responsible for implementation of the updated process.</p>	<p>The Action Item was not addressed in the responsive evidence of compliance submitted.</p>

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<p><u>clinical teaching experience, or assign a site supervisor during the candidate's practicum...</u></p> <p>19 TAC §228.35(f) Campus Supervision: Training Mentors, Cooperating Teachers, and Site Supervisors</p> <p>...The EPP is responsible for providing mentor, cooperating teacher, and/or site supervisor <u>training</u> that relies on scientifically-based research, but the program may allow the training to be provided by a school, district, or regional education service center if properly documented.</p> <p>19 TAC §228.2(24) Campus Supervision: Training Mentors (24) Mentor--For an internship candidate, an educator who is collaboratively assigned by the campus administrator and the educator</p>	<p>Action Needed: Implement a process to ensure candidates are assigned mentors during internship. Ensure each mentor meets the qualification requirements and collect evidence each has been trained; and</p> <p>Establish a process for documenting collaboration between mentors and field supervisors and a process for ensuring mentors receive observation feedback for assigned candidates</p>		

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<p>preparation program (EPP); who has <u>at least three years of teaching experience</u>; who is <u>an accomplished educator as shown by student learning</u>; who has <u>completed mentor training, including training in how to coach and mentor teacher candidates, by an EPP within three weeks of being assigned to the intern</u>; who is currently <u>certified in the certification category in which the internship candidate is seeking certification</u>; who guides, assists, and supports the candidate during the internship in areas such as planning, classroom management, instruction, assessment, working with parents, obtaining materials, district policies; and <u>who reports the candidate's progress to that candidate's field supervisor.</u></p> <p>19 TAC §228.35(g):</p>			

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<p><u>In a clinical teaching experience, the field supervisor shall collaborate with the candidate and cooperating teacher throughout the clinical teaching experience. For an internship, the field supervisor shall collaborate with the candidate, mentor, and supervising campus administrator throughout the internship.</u></p>			
<p>Requirement 19 TAC §228.35(g) Field Supervision: Field Supervisor Initial Contact</p> <p>...initial certification of teachers... The <u>initial contact</u>, which may be made by telephone, email, or other electronic communication, with the assigned candidate must occur <u>within the first three weeks of assignment.</u></p> <p>19 TAC §228.35(g), §228.35(h), & §228.35(j)(2)(C) Field Supervision: Informal Observations & Ongoing Coaching</p>	<p>Review Finding: There is insufficient evidence that field supervisors consistently make first contact with candidates during the first three weeks of the assignment or that field supervisors provide ongoing coaching and support to candidates throughout the internship assignment.</p> <p>Action Needed: Update the requirements for field supervisors to ensure they make the required contacts with the candidate. Update the collection of data related to</p>	<p>Submit related documentation for one candidate and the screen shot of the portal reflecting the capture of the evidence.</p>	<p>The Action Item was not addressed in the responsive evidence of compliance submitted.</p>

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<p>...<u>Informal observations and coaching shall be provided by the field supervisor as appropriate...</u></p>	<p>candidate contact in the portal so that contacts are accurately reflected.</p>		
<p>Requirement 19 TAC §228.35(g)(1) Field Supervision: Formal Observations-Duration & Format</p> <p>(1) Each formal observation must be at least <u>45 minutes in duration</u>, must be conducted by the field supervisor, and must be <u>on the candidate's site in a face-to-face setting</u>.</p>	<p>Review Finding: A significant number of observations appeared to have occurred outside of the school day.</p> <p>Action Needed: Update field supervisor requirements and training so that they understand that observations are completed during the school day/assignment.</p>	<p>Submit observations for one candidate; and</p> <p>Submit training or other information conveyed to field supervisors regarding observation requirements and the date of implementation.</p>	<p>The Action Item was not addressed in the responsive evidence of compliance submitted.</p>
<p>Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement 19 TAC §228.40</p>			
<p>No Action Required</p>			
<p>Professional Conduct 19 TAC §228.50</p>			
<p>Action Completed as Required</p>			
<p>Complaints Procedures 19 TAC §228.70</p>			

Discrepancy	Action Item-Agreed	Requested/ Expected Deliverable	Delivered Item
Action Completed as Required			
Certification Procedures 19 TAC Chapter 230			
No Action Required			
Required Submissions of Information, Surveys, and Other Data 19 TAC §229.3			
<p>Requirement 19 TAC §229.3(a), §229.3(f)(1), & related graphic Figure 19 TAC §229.3(f)(1) Data Reported: Accurately</p> <p>(a) Educator preparation programs (EPPs) ...field supervisors, administrators, mentors, site supervisors, and cooperating teachers <u>shall provide to the TEA staff all data and information</u> required by 19 TAC Chapter 229, as set forth in 19 TAC §229.3(e) and §229.3(f).</p> <p>(f)(1) EPPs <u>shall provide data for all candidates</u> as specified in the figure:</p>	<p>Review Finding: Due to the lack of concrete information about the subject area in which candidates are admitted, subject-specific content hours reported could not be verified as accurate.</p> <p>Action Needed: Review admission requirements around qualifying candidates for admission into specific certificate areas. Train admissions staff to collect subject-specific hours related to the one or two certificate areas of admission as per the qualifications of the candidate.</p>	<p>ECOS records for admission will be reviewed at state reporting time.</p>	<p>This issue has not been corrected.</p>

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Figure: 19 TAC §229.3(f)(1)			