



Odessa Pathway to Teaching (OPT) Pre-Approval Site Visit 2020-2021 Report

PURPOSE

Texas Education Agency (TEA) Education Specialists, Vanessa Alba and Emily Carrizalez, conducted a Pre-Approval Site Visit of the proposed educator preparation program (EPP) Odessa Pathway to Teaching (OPT) on June 17, 2021. Per 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.10(a), “An entity seeking initial approval to deliver an educator preparation program (EPP) shall submit an application and proposal with evidence indicating the ability to comply with the provisions of this chapter, Chapter 227 of this title (relating to Provisions for Educator Preparation Candidates), Chapter 229 of this title (relating to Accountability System for Educator Preparation Programs), and Chapter 230 of this title (relating to Professional Educator Preparation and Certification). The proposal will be reviewed by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) staff and a pre-approval site visit will be conducted”. The site visit was conducted in a Virtual format due to the ongoing COVID disruption. Ashley Osborne was identified as the application author and primary contact for the Virtual Pre-Approval site visit.

Odessa Pathway to Teaching proposes to offer alternative Teacher certification in the following certificate areas: Core Subjects with Science of Teaching Reading (STR) EC-6, Core Subjects with STR 4-8, Mathematics 7-12, Science 7-12, and English Language Arts & Reading (ELAR) 7-12 with an anticipated program start date of September 1, 2021.

Per 19 TAC §228.10(a)(1), an EPP applicant must submit a proposal with evidence indicating the ability to comply with the provisions 19 TAC Chapters 227, 228, 229, and 230 including the following program approval components: ownership & governance, criteria for admission, curriculum, coursework and/or training, including ongoing support during clinical teaching, internship, and practicum, certification procedures, assessment & evaluation of candidates for certification and EPP improvement, professional conduct of EPP staff and candidates, EPP complaint procedures, and required submissions of information, surveys, and other accountability data.” Verification of compliance with the required components was the scope of the Pre-Approval Site Visit. Evidence of compliance was measured using the application and a standard rubric aligned to TAC.

OPT staff participating in the Pre-Approval Site Visit at various stages were: Dr. Scott Muri, Superintendent of Schools at Ector County ISD (ECISD) where Odessa Pathway to Teaching (OPT) will be housed; Dr. Stephanie Howard, Deputy Superintendent, ECISD; Ashley Osborne, Executive Director of Talent Development and author/primary contact for OPT; Debra Bynum, Director of Talent Development; Randy Lightfoot, field supervisor, Christine Mason, field supervisor; Angela Romano, field supervisor; and Billie Gamboa, Administrative Assistant, ECISD.



FINDINGS, COMPLIANCE ISSUES, and RECOMMENDATIONS

“Findings” indicate evidence collected during the review process. If the program is “not in compliance” with any identified component, the program should consult the [applicable TAC](#) and correct identified areas prior to SBEC approval. “Recommendations” are suggestions for general program improvement and no follow-up is required.

COMPONENT I: GOVERNANCE – 19 TAC Chapter 228

Findings:

- TEA verified that the OPT Proposal met all requirements pertaining to governance as written.
- OPT staff advised TEA that the advisory committee members will remain consistent. The role of the advisory committee will be to assist and advise OPT in matters pertaining to the design, delivery, and major policy decisions of the program. They will not vote on anything. The goal is to meet in person but are set up to conduct virtual advisory committee meetings that will meet the requirements in TAC. [19 TAC §228.20(b)]
- The Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Muri, advised TEA about the support that he would provide to the OPT programs. This includes filling teacher vacancies and ensuring teacher quality with OPT candidates and providing financial & policy support to ensure that the OPT is in compliance with all TAC pertaining to educator preparation. The district is committed to a “Grow your Own” model with recruitment efforts to bring in more educators to the area in which the district is located. [19 TAC §228.20(c)]

Requirements:

- Record and retain detailed agendas, minutes, and sign-in sheets of each advisory committee meeting and ensure that specific input provided by advisory committee membership is included.

Recommendations:

- The program can always set higher standards than the TEA minimum. As such, it is appropriate to consider adding additional members from other stakeholder groups such as human resource directors from the districts that the program serves, mentors/cooperating teachers, and past and current candidates to the advisory committee.
- Consider awarding continuing professional education (CPE) credit to reward members of the advisory committee for their involvement and assistance with the OPT educator preparation program by providing CPE hours. Teachers are



required to earn 150 clock-hours every five years and professional class certificates (Principals, Superintendents, Counselors, Educational Diagnosticians, Reading Specialists, School Librarians, and Master Teachers) are required to earn 200 clock-hours of CPE every five years to renew their Texas certificates. All can earn 45 clock-hours of CPE in a five-year period for mentoring another educator.

- After the initial two years of the program, rotate the membership of the advisory committee periodically to gain fresh perspectives and insight.
- Organize each agenda to specifically address the areas of authority of the advisory committee: design; delivery; evaluation; and major policy decisions.

Based on the evidence presented, Odessa Pathway to Teaching was in compliance with 19 TAC Chapter 228 – Governance of Educator Preparation Programs.

COMPONENT II: ADMISSION - 19 TAC §227.10

Findings:

- TEA verified that the OPT proposal met all requirements pertaining to admission as written.
- The admissions process will be managed by the program director and certification officer. OPT will allow both contingency and formal admits and has developed two separate letters for admission purposes. [19 TAC §227.15; 19 TAC §227.17]
- OPT staff stated that for applicants who do not meet the GPA requirement for admission, the TX-PACT would be used. [19 TAC 227.10(a)(3)(A-C)]
- TEA discussed transfer candidates with OPT staff. It was determined that candidates who hold an Intern or Probationary certificate recommended by the TNTP Academy-Fort Worth ACP would remain with that program and will not transfer to OPT to not disrupt the EC-12 students that those candidates are teaching or require candidates to have to deactivate certificates with one program and be issued a certificate with OPT. [19 TAC §227.10(c)(1-3)]

Requirements:

- If approved, ensure that all requirements of [19 TAC §227.10](#) are followed by OPT staff and met by OPT applicants as written in the proposal.



- Candidates on intern or probationary certificates with TNTP Academy-Fort Worth ACP need to stay with that program to finish the certification process. OPT needs to start with fresh candidates and not with transferring TNTP Academy-Fort Worth candidates to OPT.

Recommendations:

- None.

Based on the evidence presented, Odessa Pathway to Teaching is in compliance with 19 TAC §227.10 - Admission Criteria.

COMPONENT III: CURRICULUM – 19 TAC §228.30

Findings:

- TEA verified that the OPT proposal met all requirements pertaining to curriculum as written.
- OPT staff reassured TEA that the curriculum offered would be implemented as written in the proposal and as approved. [19 TAC 228.30(a-b); 19 TAC 228.30(c)(1-8); 19 TAC 228.30(d)(1-4)]

Requirements:

- If approved, ensure that all candidates meet the curriculum requirements of [19 TAC §228.30](#) as written in the proposal.

Recommendations:

- None.

Based on the evidence presented, Odessa Pathway to Teaching is in compliance with 19 TAC §228.30-Curriculum.

COMPONENT IV: PROGRAM DELIVERY AND ONGOING SUPPORT – 19 TAC §228.35

Findings:

- TEA verified that the OPT Proposal met all requirements pertaining to program delivery and ongoing support as written.
- The total number of coursework hours required for each certificate area are:
 - 420.5 clock-hours for Core Subjects w/STR EC-6;



- 427.5 clock-hours for Core Subjects w/STR 4-8;
 - 414.5 clock-hours for ELAR 7-12;
 - 402.5 clock-hours for Mathematics 7-12; and
 - 407.5 clock-hours for Science 7-12.
- The program will be delivered in both a face-to-face and online format and will be sustained, rigorous, intensive, interactive, candidate-focused, and performance-based. OPT is working toward full Quality Matters (QM) accreditation of the online coursework and understands they are expected to be accredited or making progress toward accreditation by QM by the time of the post-approval visit. [19 TAC §228.35(a)(2); 19 TAC §228.35(a)(6)(B)]
 - Teacher candidates will receive, at a minimum, 150 clock-hours of required coursework prior to internship. [19 TAC §228.35(b)(2)(A-J)]
 - All candidates will be required to complete 30 clock-hours of field-based experiences (FBEs) and of those FBEs prior to internship, 15 clock-hours must be interactive. [19 TAC 228.35(e)(1)(A-B)]
 - OPT candidates will not offer clinical teaching and candidates only have the option to complete a supervised internship year. [19 TAC §228.35(e)(2)(B)]
 - OPT discussed that field supervisors (FS) and mentor teachers will be qualified and trained according to requirements in TAC. [19 TAC §228.2 (18) & (26); 19 TAC §228.35(f); 19 TAC §228.35(g)]
 - OPT discussed the process that they will follow if either the FS or campus administrator does not recommend to OPT that a candidate should be recommended for standard certification. That process follows TAC as written. [19 TAC §228.35(e)(2)(B)(ix)]

Requirements:

- If approved, ensure that a record of completion of the 30 clock-hours of field-based experiences required by the program, with adequate evidence including date, subject, grade level, candidate observation notes, campus, district with original verifying signatures of observed teachers, is able to be maintained in detail in the electronic system for review purposes. [19 TAC §228.35(b)(1)]
- If approved, ensure that all dated formal 45-minute observations have evidence of original signatures of the field supervisor, candidate, and mentor teacher. Retain in candidate's records for review purposes. [19 TAC §228.35(g)]



- If a candidate is not recommended for standard certification, notify the candidate, FS, and campus administrator about the reason for lack of recommendation and retain the documentation in the candidate's file. [19 TAC §228.35(e)(2)(B)(ix)]

Recommendations:

- Consider providing CPE credit to mentor teachers for their support and work with candidates. A standard certified educator may earn up to 45 clock-hours of CPE for serving as a mentor in a five-year period.

Based on the evidence presented, Odessa Pathway to Teaching is in compliance with 19 TAC §228.35 – Program Delivery and On-Going Support.

COMPONENT V: ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF CANDIDATES AND EPP – 19 TAC §228.40

Findings:

- TEA verified that the OPT Proposal met all requirements pertaining to assessment and evaluation of candidates and program as written.
- OPT verified that candidates will be kept informed of their progress regularly. Candidates will receive coaching conversations by the FS based on formal and informal observations. Candidates will receive progress reports regularly with regards to attendance, observations, and course completion. [19 §TAC 228.40(a)]
- OPT staff explained that readiness to test is determined when a candidate earns 75% on a practice exam. OPT would like to be able to approve candidates for edTPA, but if candidates take the PPR, a score of 220 or higher must be achieved or at least 70-75% before they are approved to take a TExES exam. [19 TAC §228.40(b) & (d)]
- Records will be stored for a period of five years from admission to completion, withdrawal, or removal in paper and e-format. TEA saw the locked file cabinet in the OPT offices that will contain candidate records. It was noted that records will be maintained in paper and electronic format. [19 TAC 228.40(f)]

Requirements:

- None.



Recommendations:

- Strongly consider requiring a score of 80% or higher, as identified in the proposal, as an indication of each candidate's readiness to test and as a way to monitor that each candidate scores the minimum passing score on TExES exams.
- Monitor the number of TExES exams taken by each candidate and the pass rate regularly.

Based on the evidence presented, Odessa Pathway to Teaching is in compliance with 19 TAC §228.40 – Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement.

COMPONENT VI: PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT - 19 TAC §228.50

Findings:

19 TAC §228.50 requires that during the period of preparation, the educator preparation program shall ensure that the individuals preparing candidates and the candidates themselves understand and adhere to Chapter 247 of this title (relating to Educators' Code of Ethics).

- TEA verified that the OPT Proposal met all requirements pertaining to the professional conduct of the individuals preparing candidates and the candidates themselves.
- OPT staff assured TEA that the Educator Code Of Ethics will be required to be signed by all OPT candidates at admission and OPT staff each year. The documentation will be retained in candidate and OPT files.

Requirements:

- None.

Recommendations:

- If approved, considering having candidates and staff watch a State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) meeting to see the various cases about violations of the Educator Code of Ethics so that they will understand the importance of understanding and adhering to the Educator Code of Ethics.

Based on the evidence presented, Odessa Pathway to Teaching is in compliance with 19 TAC §228.50 - Professional Conduct.



COMPONENT VII: COMPLAINTS PROCESS – 19 TAC §228.70

Findings:

- Per 19 TAC §228.70(b), the Odessa Pathway to Teaching complaints process is on file at TEA.

Requirements:

- Immediately upon SBEC approval, information concerning the complaint process must be posted on the OPT website, at the official administrative offices, and the candidate teaching sites. [19 TAC §228.70(2-3)]

Recommendations:

- None.

Based on the evidence presented, Odessa Pathway to Teaching is in compliance with 19 TAC §228.70 – Complaints Process.

COMPONENT VIII: CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES - 19 TAC §228 and §230

Findings:

- TEA verified that the OPT Proposal met all requirements pertaining to certification procedures of candidates as written.
- OPT plans for candidates to only need to be issued intern certificates. TEA discussed with OPT staff the potential of candidates to need a probationary certificate during a second internship year. OPT identified options for a probationary certificate and the conditions for which probationary certificates would be issued to candidates. The program identified those options in the proposal. [19 TAC §228.35(e)(2)(B)(iv); 19 TAC §230.36(d)(1); 19 TAC §230.37(d)(2)]

Requirements:

- None.

Recommendations:

- None.



Based on the evidence presented, Odessa Pathway to Teaching is in compliance with 19 TAC §228 and §230 – Certification Procedures.

COMPONENT IX: INTEGRITY OF DATA REPORTED - 19 TAC §229

Findings:

- TEA verified that the OPT Proposal met all requirements pertaining to the integrity of data reporting as written. TEA discussed with the program staff their understanding of reporting requirements and reiterated the commitment to meet the requirements as identified. [19 TAC §229.3(f)(1) and [Attached Graphic](#)]

Requirements:

- None.

Recommendations:

- If approved, consider participating in the 2020-2021 ASEP webinar to know and understand about the requirements for ASEP reporting in advance of having to actually process candidates through OPT.
- Strongly consider assigning one person to handle data submissions.
- Begin reviewing the 2020-2021 Data Reporting Manual posted on the Program Provider Resources page to familiarize yourselves with the requirements for data reporting in the 2021-2022 reporting year.

Based on the evidence presented, Odessa Pathway to Teaching is in compliance with 19 TAC §229 – Integrity of Data Reported.

SUMMARY:

Overall Recommendation: Based on the application and the Pre-Approval Site Visit, Odessa Pathway to Teaching (OPT) ACP will be presented to the SBEC for a recommendation for approval to certify teachers in Texas on Friday, July 23, 2021. TEA further recommends to SBEC that Odessa Pathway to Teaching ACP be approved to operate upon SBEC approval with a candidate start date effective September 1, 2021.

Upon SBEC Approval: TEA will send Odessa Pathway to Teaching an official notification of SBEC approval, the program's official TEA county-district number, instructions for determining the legal authority and legal authority back-up, and the name and contact information of the TEA



program specialist assigned to the program. TEA will also schedule a date and time for Odessa Pathway to Teaching staff to receive TEA New EPP virtual training.

If approved by the State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC), OPT will need to send a letter on letterhead and signed by the Legal Authority of Ector County ISD establishing a Legal Authority Backup within ECISD for the OPT program. Additionally, the Legal Authority will need to approve Educator Certification Online System (ECOS) for Entities access for the identified Legal Authority Backup. This individual will be responsible for approving ECOS for Entities access for other OPT staff members as needed.

GENERAL PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Ensure that staff utilizes the [Program Provider Resources](#) and the [Texas Educator Preparation Program Weekly Newsletter](#) pages of the TEA website to access pertinent information EPPs frequently request.
- To ensure continuity in record keeping and other related processes, consider creating a procedure manual documenting EPP processes.
- Implement quality control procedures to ensure ASEP reporting is submitted accurately during state reporting each year.
- Align the verbiage of the program to the verbiage of the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) (ex. field supervisor, mentor, candidate, etc.).
- Monitor the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) and the State Board of Education (SBOE) meetings and/or review the minutes to ensure that the program staff is knowledgeable about the current Texas Administrative Code.
- Begin to participate in webinars provided by the Division of Preparation, Certification, & Enforcement once approved to operate as an EPP to ensure that the program staff is knowledgeable about current requirements and changes in the Texas Administrative Code.
- Establish and maintain communication with the Education Specialist assigned to the program.
- Ensure that TEA staff has the most current contact information by sending updates to the assigned Education Specialist.