



2019 – 2020 Continuing Approval Review Report

Urban Teachers

BACKGROUND

Texas Education Agency (TEA) Program Specialists, Lorrie Ayers, Vanessa Alba, and Emily Newton conducted a Post-approval Review of the Urban Teachers educator preparation program (EPP) on February 4-6, 2020. Urban Teachers was approved as an alternative certification program by the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) on April 15, 2016. They were initially approved to certify candidates in the Classroom Teacher class. 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.10(a) requires a post-approval site visit to be conducted after the first year of the EPP's operation. Because the EPP is a multi-year program, the Post-approval Review was scheduled after the program had completed one preparation cycle. The 2018-2019 reporting year was the first year in which finishers were reported. The EPP reported 61 finishers in 2018-2019. As required in 19 TAC §228.10(a), the review was conducted in an on-site format where TEA staff reviewed documents and records on-site at Urban Teachers located at 1825 Market Center Blvd, Dallas, Texas 75207. At the time of the review, Emily Garcia was the Legal Authority for the program and the primary point of contact for the review.

Per 19 TAC §228.1(c), "all educator preparation programs are subject to the same standards of accountability, as required under 19 Chapter 229." The TEA administers TAC required by the Texas legislature for the regulation of all EPPs in the state. (See the complete [TAC](#) for details.) The accreditation status of the EPP was Accredited and the risk assessment model identified Urban Teachers as a Level 3, low risk, program.

Per 19 TAC §228.20(d) an EPP "must be implemented as approved by the SBEC". The scope of this review included verifying implementation of program components as approved, including compliance with TAC and Texas Education Code (TEC) as applicable to the Teacher certification class. A Compliance Plan containing details of the next steps for the EPP was developed collaboratively with EPP staff prior to the close of the review.

EPP staff participating at various points in the review were: Rebecca Sieg, Katie Eisel, Emily Garcia, Natalie Mancia, Marce D. Scarbrough, Anthony Hernandez, Ernest Blackwell, and Rodney Frazier.

DATA ANALYSIS

Information concerning program implementation and compliance with TAC governing EPPs was collected by a variety of means. EPP staff submitted a Status Report and related program documents to TEA prior to the review. Records for 10 candidates were randomly selected from the Finisher Records List in the Accountability System for Educator Preparation programs (ASEP) and from the GPA spreadsheet used to report admitted candidate data to TEA. Candidate and EPP records were reviewed to determine compliance with requirements for



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candidate preparation and certification and for compliance with state reporting requirements and governance. The scope of the review included the reporting years 2016-2017 through 2019-2020. Qualitative and quantitative methodologies of content analysis, cross-referencing, and triangulation of the data were used to evaluate the evidence.

FINDINGS, COMPLIANCE ISSUES, and RECOMMENDATIONS

“Findings” indicate evidence collected during the review process. “Compliance Issues” are areas that are not compliant with requirements in TAC or TEC and must be corrected by the agreed date identified in the Compliance Plan. “Recommendations” are suggestions for general program improvement and no follow up is required.

SUMMARY

Overall, the EPP has been implemented as initially approved by the SBEC. There were a few areas identified that must be brought into alignment with TAC prior to the EPP being recommended to the SBEC for continuing approval. Detailed findings, by component, are listed below.

COMPONENT I: GOVERNANCE – 19 TAC §228

Findings

The Urban Teachers program is a three-year alternative certification program that requires a four-year commitment from candidates. Candidates complete certification requirements concurrent with earning a master’s degree from the Johns Hopkins School of Education. Candidates in the first “Residency” year receive a stipend of \$20,000. For the remaining three (3) year commitment, candidates are guaranteed a teaching contract with a district. The EPP website provides information about a variety of financial aid options, including various grants and scholarships.

The initial SBEC approval authorized the EPP to offer certification in these content areas: Core Subjects EC-6, English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) 4-8, ELAR 7-12, Math 4-8, and Math 7-12. Additionally, certification in Special Education EC-12 and English as a Second Language (ESL) is required for each candidate.

The Urban Teachers certification program is delivered in a residency cohort model where candidates complete coursework and an in-classroom supervised residency during year one and then subsequent supervised internships in year two and year three.



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Urban Teachers currently partners with Dallas Independent School District, Kipp, and Uplift Education for candidate residency and internship placements.

In year four of the four-year commitment, candidates hold a standard certificate in a core content area with Special Education EC-12 and an ESL supplemental. Urban Teachers staff continue to provide various types of support including teacher leadership development.

The EPP offices have expanded and appear to be in good repair and offer acceptable resources and support for candidates and others visiting the EPP offices. Resumes, teaching certificates, and service records provided evidence that EPP staff and faculty are experienced educators, with many engaged in the review process at various points during the review.

Urban Teachers offers certification in three cities: Baltimore, Maryland, Washington, D. C., and Dallas, Texas. The EPP website has information specific to each location with navigation to the appropriate program that is easy to follow and specific for the requirements in the state. The webpages that offer information about the Texas certification program contain specific, clear detail for both applicants and candidates. All information that is required to be posted was identified on the website either prior to the review or was updated during the review week:

- Required criminal history background checks [19 TAC §227.1(b) and §227.1(d)];
- Program admission and completion requirements [19 TAC §227.1(c)];
- A calendar of program activities [19 TAC §228.20(g)];
- The effect of supply and demand forces on the educator workforce in Texas [19 TAC §227.1(c)];
- The performance over time of the EPP [19 TAC §227.1(c)]; and
- The EPP complaints process and a link to the TEA complaints process [19 TAC §228.70(b)(2)].

Urban Teachers has three (3) advisory committees. One is the committee required in 19 TAC §228.20(b). It is composed of EPP staff, two (2) representatives from K-12 campuses and districts, one (1) member representing a university, and five (5) members from various business and community groups. There were no advisory committee members representing a regional education service center. This committee has been in place since approval in 2016 therefore training on roles and responsibilities has not been provided again after the first meeting. Dates and information documented in meeting minutes provide evidence the committee has met at least one time per year since approval and discusses EPP business including program design, delivery, evaluation, and major policy decisions. The EPP also convenes an advisory committee composed of



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candidates in the first-year residency and a committee composed of candidates in the internship portion of their training. The purpose is to gather feedback and input on program design and delivery. Urban Teachers meets advisory committee requirements in 19 TAC §228.20(b).

Recommendations

1. Continue to send staff to relevant training offered by TEA and other entities for the purpose of continuous improvements to the EPP and to stay in step with changes and updates in educator preparation requirements in TAC and TEC.
2. Increase advisory committee membership to include more representation from a regional education service center.
3. Provide updated training to advisory committee members. The TEA review team provided a copy of a training presentation to EPP staff for that purpose.
4. EPP staff were advised that, after SBEC accepts the recommendation of continuing approval of Urban Teachers, they may begin adding new certificate areas and may expand and amend the program. The process for doing both was reviewed with the program. [19 TAC §228.10(d)(1) and (e); 19 TAC §228.20(e)]

Based on the evidence presented, the Urban Teachers EPP has met minimum requirements for governance as specified in 19 TAC Chapter 228.

COMPONENT II: ADMISSION - 19 TAC §227.10

Findings

Candidates are admitted into cohorts.

The admission requirements identified on the website under the Info Center tab are:

- A bachelor's degree;
- A GPA of 3.0 or higher (2.50 or higher for exceptional candidates);
- Complete a digital performance task; and
- Attend an interview day.

Other requirements summarized on the website are:

- Exhibit the core competencies: achievement orientation, fit with Urban Teachers, growth mindset, and professional skills; and



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- Commit to the full four-year program in one of the cities served by Urban Teachers.

A new requirement not published on the website but identified in candidates' records is:

- Two letters of recommendation.

Urban Teachers admits applicants who submit credentials from outside the U.S. but does not sponsor employment or education visas. The following are identified as requirements for admission with credentials from out of country:

- Course by course transcript evaluation from a choice of two TEA-approved services; and
- Demonstration of English language proficiency.

The English language proficiency requirements posted on the website were updated during the review to comply with requirements in 19 TAC §230.11(b)(5).

The program was advised that admission requirements that include a passing score on a pre-admission content test (PACT) may need to be updated with the implementation of the TX PACT effective 1/27/2020.

Applicants are screened at admission as required in 19 TAC §227.10(a)(8); however, applicants that had completed a selection process with specific EPP partners were allowed an abbreviated screening process for admission into the EPP. Related documentation was identified in the records for these candidates.

The EPP has consistently implemented program admission requirements as approved except the following area was found to be non-compliant with requirements in 19 TAC Chapter 227:

- The formal admission process as detailed in 19 TAC §227.17(d) has not been fully or consistently implemented. Six of the 10 candidates whose records were reviewed had been admitted after the implementation date of the formal admission requirements. The formal admission date was not consistently embedded in the written admission offer extended to candidates. EPP staff had used two different formats for offer letters, one format contained the admission date and the other format did not. None of the six candidates had been identified as admitted in the ASEP system within seven calendar days of the formal admission date.

Compliance Issues (per Compliance Plan)

1. Continue to use the current admission letter format, or a similar format, that reflects the intended formal date of admission for that applicant. [19 TAC §227.17(d)]



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2. Update the EPP admission process to include creating an admission record in ASEP for each admitted candidate within the required seven calendar-day window. [19 TAC §227.17(e)]

Recommendations

1. Evaluate the current admission policy around PACT and update PACT information on the website and any other published materials to reflect changes in policy.

Based on the evidence presented, Urban Teachers EPP has not met minimum requirements for admissions as identified in 19 TAC Chapter 227.

COMPONENT III: CURRICULUM – 19 TAC §228.30

Findings

EPP curriculum is standards-based and is delivered through courses offered by Johns Hopkins University.

Syllabi provided evidence that all curriculum components required in 19 TAC §228.30 had been implemented in coursework. Evidence of instruction in the following areas was identified in syllabi:

- The Educator's Code of Ethics;
- Detection and education of students with dyslexia;
- Mental health, substance abuse, and youth suicide (provided by an approved provider);
- The skills that educators are required to possess, the responsibilities that educators are required to accept, and the high expectations for students in this state;
- The importance of building strong classroom management skills;
- The framework in this state for teacher and principal evaluation;
- Appropriate relationships, boundaries, and communications between educators and students;
- The English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS);
- Reading instruction, including instruction that improves students' content-area literacy;
- For certificates that include early childhood and prekindergarten, the Prekindergarten Guidelines; and
- The skills and competencies captured in the Texas teacher standards in Chapter 149, Subchapter AA, of this title (relating to Teacher Standards).



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During the review, EPP staff strengthened the instruction in the framework for teacher evaluation in Texas by including more information about T-TESS using an activity that compared T-TESS with the evaluation processes used by the partner schools.

The EPP had not yet implemented the digital literacy evaluation or prescribed digital learning curriculum as required in 19 TAC §228.30(c)(8). Program staff were advised that this requirement went into effect after the program was approved; however, the curriculum must now be updated to include this required material.

Compliance Issues (per Compliance Plan)

1. Update curriculum and training to include the digital literacy evaluation and prescribed digital learning requirement as detailed in 19 TAC §228.30(c).

Recommendations

1. The test used for PACT purposes changed effective January 27, 2020. The TExES content pedagogy exams cannot be used for admission purposes after 1/27/2020 but may be used for certification purposes. The new PACT, "TX PACT", may not be used for certification purposes. The EPP must approve content pedagogy testing and should ensure the curriculum has been updated to meet requirements for instruction in content-specific pedagogy and test preparation.
2. The Application A, used to add new certificate areas to EPP inventory, has changed – staff in Teacher programs should plan to review requirements in the updated application in advance of preparing to add new certificate areas. Evidence of performance assessments will be a requirement for adding new certificates using the Application A.
3. The implementation of the Science of Teaching Reading (STR) test will impact the renewal of the Core Subjects EC-6 and ELAR 4-8 certificates offered by Urban Teachers effective January 1, 2021. The EPP must update the curriculum to provide instruction in the STR standards and notify TEA by letter that the program intends to continue to offer these certificates. The letter must be submitted to TEA before the end of December 2020.

Based on the evidence presented, the Urban Teachers EPP has not met minimum requirements for curriculum as identified in 19 TAC §228.30.



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

Findings

Program design and coursework requirements published in syllabi reveal a program that is consistently performance-based, rigorous, and interactive, providing multiple opportunities for candidates to practice skills with feedback from program staff. The program requirements exceed requirements in 19 TAC §228.35(a)(2).

Due to the master's degree component, instruction hours exceed the 300 hours required in 19 TAC §228.35(b).

Candidates in the first "Residency" year complete an apprenticeship in the classroom on a partner campus and attend training with the EPP in the evening where coursework is delivered by adjunct professors in a face-to-face format. The Residency allows candidates to complete pre-service requirements for field-based experiences (FBE) hours and prescribed coursework as identified in 19 TAC §228.35(b) during the first year of enrollment in the EPP. Candidates complete FBE hours across four (4) placements: Summer I, Fall, Spring, and Summer II. Candidates are placed in different classrooms in each of the four (4) placements and are required to complete specific activities with coaching and reflection. The Residency process, which is published and reflected on syllabi, meets or exceeds the requirements for FBE as identified in 19 TAC §228.35(e)(1). EPP staff were advised that keeping FBE logs was not necessary if the requirements continue as published.

Candidate placement records reflected that candidates are assigned to mentors during the internship as required in 19 TAC §228.35(f); however, EPP staff had not collected evidence that mentors met the qualification requirements in 19 TAC §228.2(24). The review team discussed with the EPP options for collecting and retaining evidence of mentor qualifications. A Power point presentation and mentor handbook was evidence that the EPP has developed mentor training but there was no evidence for any of the mentors assigned to the seven interns that they had received the training.

The EPP assigns qualified, trained field supervisors (FS) to support candidates during the internship; there was not enough evidence to support that all FS had attended the TEA-approved training as required in 19 TAC §228.35(g). Certificates of completion or other evidence of training could not be identified for field supervisors assigned to three (3) of the 10 candidates whose records were reviewed.

Field supervisors are required to conduct each observation for one class period which could differ in length depending on the campus class schedule. A Teacher Practice Rubric (TPR) is



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used for all observations conducted by field supervisors during Residency and Internship years. The TPR captures a level of candidate proficiency in a variety of areas aligned with educator standards. The proficiency levels are Beginning, Emerging, Proficient, and Mastering. The observation instrument allows for field supervisors to capture instructional strategies observed in the observation. For some observations, candidates are required to upload video or student work related to the observation before the post-conference, and some field supervisors may additionally require the candidate to self-score. Program policy requires field supervisors to conduct pre- and post-conferences with candidates for each formal observation. It could not be determined by the TEA review team if the program has not been consistently following the field supervision requirements or if the program has not retained consistent records of field supervision activities.

- For three (3) of the seven candidates who had reached the point of internship, documentation of the determination of proficiency was missing for one or more observations.
- Records for four (4) of the seven interns were missing evidence to support the candidates had received observations that were at least 45 minutes in duration.
- Records for three (3) of the seven interns were missing evidence of a pre- or post-conference for one or more observations.

Program policy requires that each quarter a candidate receives a quarterly performance report containing a summary of observation outcomes and progress in the program. The summary report is also sent to the campus administrator. Individual observation reports are not provided to the campus administrator. There was no evidence in EPP records that the summary report was being provided to campus administrators as required in 19 TAC §228.35(g).

The EPP had not implemented the requirement in 19 TAC §228.35(e)(2)(B)(vii) that the field supervisor and campus supervisor must agree, upon completion of the internship, that the candidate is ready to receive a standard certificate. This requirement became effective after the approval date of the EPP. The TEA review team discussed with EPP staff options for collecting this evidence.

Compliance Issues (per Compliance Plan)

1. Implement a process to collect and retain evidence that mentor teachers hold the required credentials for the candidate being mentored. [19 TAC §228.2 (24)]



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2. Implement a process to capture evidence that mentors assigned to interns are trained and that training occurs within the first three weeks of being assigned to the candidate. [19 TAC §228.35(f)]
3. The EPP must ensure field supervisors attend TEA-approved training and retain certificates of completion or other similar evidence in EPP records. [19 TAC §228.35(g)]
4. Candidate proficiency in the educator standards must be consistently captured in observations conducted by field supervisors during internships and evidence retained in candidates' records. [19 TAC §228.35(e)(2)(B)(vii)]
5. EPP must ensure that formal observations conducted by field supervisors are 45 minutes or longer in duration, not including the pre- or post-observation conference. Retain evidence in candidates' records. [19 TAC §228.35(g)(1-8)]
6. The EPP must implement a process to capture evidence that FS conduct pre-and post-conferences with candidates before and after formal observations. Retain evidence in candidates' records. [19 TAC §228.35(g)]
7. Field supervisors or EPP staff must provide a copy of the written observation feedback to the campus supervisor for each candidate. Evidence must be retained in EPP or candidates' records. [19 TAC §228.35(g)]
8. Field supervisors and campus supervisors must provide recommendations to the EPP regarding candidate success in the internship. [19 TAC §228.35(e)(2)(B)(vii)]

Based on the evidence presented, Urban Teachers EPP has not met minimum requirements for program delivery as identified in 19 TAC §228.35.

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

Findings

Candidates are admitted for preparation in one certificate category with a Special Education EC-12 and ESL supplemental. There is no evidence that candidates change certification categories after admission. [19 TAC §228.40(c)]

Dates on coursework and testing with admission records are evidence that candidates are admitted prior to beginning training and testing. [19 TAC §228.40(d) and 19 TAC §227.17(f)]

Per the website, candidates must maintain a GPA of 3.0 on all coursework and must meet benchmarks. Candidate performance in the classroom is benchmarked using the TPR with



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graduated target scores from Residency through the second Internship year. [19 TAC §228.40(a)]

EPP records were retained electronically. EPP staff indicated they had changed to a new system. Records were available for all candidates reviewed. [19 TAC §228.40(f)]

Urban Teachers collects performance data throughout the program. Per the Status Report, they were reviewed by the Teacher Preparation Inspectorate (TPI-US) in Spring 2019 and will complete a comprehensive program impact evaluation conducted by the American Institute for Research (AIR) in 2020. Additionally, feedback from program candidates is encouraged through advisory committees. [19 TAC §228.40(e)]

Candidate test readiness is determined by performance on coursework and practice testing. [19 TAC §228.40(b) and (d)]

Recommendations

1. Ensure EPP benchmarks and test readiness requirements have been updated to address changes in PACT effective January 27, 2020.
2. EPP data retained by TEA may be accessed through TEA dashboards linked from the Consumer Information page or through a Public Information Request (PIR) linked on the TEA home page. EPP staff were provided information about accessing both.

Based on the evidence presented, the Urban Teachers EPP has met minimum requirements for program and candidate evaluation as identified in 19 TAC §228.40.

COMPONENT VI: PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT - 19 TAC §228.50

Findings

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

- Records for seven of the ten teacher candidates contained a signed statement of understanding and abiding the Texas Educators' Code of Ethics (ECOE).
- EPP records contained signed acknowledgements of understanding and abiding the ECOE for EPP staff, instructors, and field supervisors.



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Compliance Issues (per Compliance Plan)

1. The EPP must consistently capture evidence that candidates understand and agree to adhere to the ECOE. [19 TAC §228.50]

Recommendations

1. Strengthen the language on the document that captures candidate commitment to the ECOE by having candidates sign an agreement of “understanding” and adhering to the ECOE.

Based on the evidence presented, the Urban Teachers EPP has not met minimum requirements for professional conduct as identified in 19 TAC §228.50.

COMPONENT VII: COMPLAINTS PROCESS – 19 TAC §228.70

Findings

Per 19 TAC §228.70(b), the EPP complaints process is on file at TEA, posted in the physical EPP site, and available in writing. The website reflects the complaints process, with a link to the TEA complaints process, in two places, one accessible by candidates and the other for applicants and other interested individuals and entities.

Based on the evidence presented, the Urban Teachers EPP has met minimum requirements for a complaints process as identified in 19 TAC §228.70.

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

Findings

Records in ECOS show that four (4) of the ten candidates had achieved a standard certificate at the time of the review. Various documents such as checklists and benchmark documents, along with candidate transcripts and data reported in ASEP, were evidence that candidates met requirements for certification.

Based on the evidence presented, the Urban Teachers EPP has met minimum requirements for certification procedures as identified in 19 TAC §228 and §230.



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

Findings

Each year, as identified in the Figure: 19 TAC §229.3(f)(1) and in 19 TAC §229.4(a)(4)(A), the EPP is required to report to the TEA the enrollment status of each candidate and data for observations conducted by the field supervisor during each candidate's internship in that reporting year. Additionally, the EPP reports admission data for candidates admitted during the reporting year. For candidates admitted through the 2018-2019 reporting year, admission data was reported a) in the Test Approval screen in ECOS for Entities; and b) on the GPA spreadsheet. The GPA spreadsheet was the instrument used to capture data that was required to be reported by EPPs but could not be reported through ECOS for Entities. Candidate and EPP records were reviewed to verify data reported by the EPP to TEA was accurate.

- Candidates have not been reported as enrolled or finished in all areas in which they were/are prepared or certified. Each candidate is listed in ASEP with a status of Other Enrolled or Finisher for the certificate category sought; however, the Special Education EC-12 and ESL supplemental areas are not identified. EPP staff were advised that all content and supplemental certificates sought must be listed for each candidate. Creating an admission record that reflects the certificate category and each supplemental area sought by the candidate will create the appropriate enrollment records for the candidate.
- Candidate records verified that admission data was reported accurately for each of the 10 candidates.
- For three (3) of the four (4) candidates who had observation data in ASEP, the duration of each observation was reported as less than the duration reflected on those candidates' records. Observations were reported as 45 or 60 minutes when documentation reflected observations that were 60-90 minutes in duration. EPP policy requires the field supervisor to observe for a full class period which could be more than the 45 minutes required for an observation in 19 TAC §228.35(g). EPP staff were advised to report the actual observation time as reflected in the observation documentation provided by the field supervisor.

Compliance Issues (per Compliance Plan)

1. Implement reporting processes to ensure enrollment data for candidates are reported accurately according to the certificate(s) sought as required in 19 TAC §229.3(e) and (f).



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Based on the evidence presented, the Urban Teachers EPP has not met minimum requirements for the integrity of data reported as identified in 19 TAC Chapter 229.

Additional Items Discussed with EPP Staff

1. Intern and Probationary certificate deactivation timelines and requirements changes are proposed. If approved by the SBEC, changes will include new timelines for requesting deactivations and new requirements for information that must be provided to stakeholders in advance of internship start dates. Field supervisors will need to verify candidate placement information at the beginning of the internship assignment.
2. EPP staff should continue to stay informed of changes in educator preparation requirements and make updates to educator preparation processes and/or curriculum as necessary to meet minimum requirements in TAC and TEC.

PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL EPPS

- 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 reports are submitted accurately and timely during state reporting each year.
- Align the verbiage of the program to the verbiage of TAC (ex. Field supervisor, cooperating teacher, mentor, candidate, practicum, internship, etc.).
- Continue to follow 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 current TAC.
- Continue to participate in webinars provided by the Division of Educator Standards, Testing, and Preparation to ensure that the program staff is knowledgeable about current requirements and changes in the TAC.
- Continue to maintain communication with the TEA program specialist assigned to the program.
- Ensure that TEA has the most current contact information by sending updates to the assigned program specialist.