



State Board for Educator Certification

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Teacher Preparation Programs Are Measuring Up to State Standards

AUSTIN – The State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) today issued the second-ever ratings of universities, education service centers, and school districts that prepare teachers to work in Texas public schools. Last year, Texas became the first state in the nation to rate preparation programs based on the quality of their graduates.

The Accountability System for Educator Preparation (ASEP) ratings are based on the number of prospective educators that pass certification exams. For an educator preparation program to receive an “Accredited” rating, it must meet the passing standards established by the SBEC in each demographic group (total, male, female, African American, Hispanic, White, Other).

“ASEP is a means to guarantee that our educators are better prepared to enter the profession,” said James Harris, a special education teacher in Lubbock ISD and Chairman of the SBEC Board. “By scoring well on the ASEP, the programs that prepare teachers have moved beyond their own definition of quality and have achieved a state-defined standard of acceptable performance. This standard indicates that programs are producing educators who are better prepared for a new era in education. For programs not meeting the standards, ASEP data can help identify an area that needs more attention.”

Of the 87 programs approved by SBEC to prepare educators, 76 met the SBEC standards and were rated “Accredited.” Ten programs were rated “Accredited – Under Review” and one program was not rated because it has not enrolled students in its program for the past two years. Nine of the 10 programs are under review for the second consecutive year and teams of

educators will continue their work with these programs to assist them in identifying strategies to improve their performance. All preparation programs – whether at a university, education service center, or school district – must meet the same standards to be rated “Accredited.”

Pamela Tackett, SBEC’s Executive Director, is encouraged by the 1999 ratings. “While we still have work to do, there is no doubt that the accountability system is making a difference. More and more universities are beginning to act on the belief that teacher preparation is the responsibility of the entire institution, not just the college of education. And programs are scrutinizing their curriculum and instructional methods with the active involvement of public school educators to ensure that what is being taught to prospective teachers aligns with the realities of teaching in today’s public schools.”

For the first time, SBEC is also issuing commendations to 44 programs that produced a diverse population of teacher candidates when compared to regional or state population diversity, and to programs that produced teachers in regional or state high-need subject areas. Diversity commendations were awarded to 28 programs, high-need commendations were issued to 20 programs, and four programs were commended in both areas.

Comparisons between last year’s and this year’s ASEP ratings are not possible because the Board made two changes to the criteria used to determine the ratings. First, this year’s ratings are based on students’ performance on the certification exams during the first academic year they took the exams, rather than on their first attempt. As a result, a program is not penalized if one of their students fails an exam in February but passes it in June.

The second change increases from 10 to 30 the number of students that must be in a demographic group for the performance of the group to impact the accountability rating. This change was made to recognize that small data samples are often not reliable indicators of a program’s success or failure in preparing prospective educators.

According to Dr. Kenneth Craycraft, SBEC Board member and Dean of the College of Education at Sam Houston State University, “These modifications to the accountability system

encourage preparation programs to work with all of their students in helping them achieve the standards of performance necessary to be recommended for certification. In addition, because the number of students in newly-created programs are typically quite small, the ASEP modifications encourage the addition of new programs in areas of significant teacher shortage by reducing the impact that small numbers of tests takers have on the overall rating.”

Seven programs that were under review last year achieved “Accredited” status. While several of those programs benefited from the change in the small data sample criteria, it also appears that several made significant improvements that resulted in increased student passing rates on the certification exams.

The ASEP system was authorized in 1995 with the passage of Senate Bill 1, the rewrite of the Texas Education Code authored by Senator Bill Ratliff (R-Mt. Pleasant) and Representative Paul Sadler (D-Henderson). ASEP affects the 70 universities, 13 education service centers, and 4 school districts that are approved by SBEC to prepare educators. A complete listing of the ASEP ratings and commendations is available at www.sbec.state.tx.us.

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