Educator Preparation Program Communication Regarding COVID-19
March 25, 2020

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) continues to work with the Office of the Governor, Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), and the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) to coordinate and plan the state’s response to COVID-19. We are writing today to provide updates related to educator preparation programs (EPPs) and testing.

Please know that we hear your concerns and appreciate the specific situations you have raised. This situation continues to develop, and we will be providing additional information as we are able. TEA looks forward to continuing to partner with EPPs as you support instructional continuity for your candidates.

To manage the impact of the public health crisis on educator certification and preparation programs, Governor Abbott has issued the following waivers for those completing clinical teaching during spring 2020, engaging in an internship or a practicum during spring 2020, or completing field-based experience requirements in spring or summer 2020:

1) For those candidates who have met at least half of the required days of clinical teaching, demonstrated proficiency in each of the educator standards for the assignments and for whom their field supervisors and cooperating teachers recommend to the candidates’ educator preparation program (EPP) that the candidates should be recommended for a standard certificate, the requirements of 19 TAC §228.35(e)(2)(A)(i)(l) imposing clinical teaching requirements are waived as necessary.

2) For those candidates who have met at least half of the required hours of practicum, demonstrated proficiency in each of the educator standards for the assignments, and for whom the field supervisor and site supervisor recommend to the EPP that the candidates should be recommended for a standard certificate, the requirements of 19 TAC §228.35(e)(8) imposing minimum practicum requirements are waived as necessary.

3) The requirements for candidates’ experiences to be performed in actual school settings under 19 TAC §228.35(e)(6) and 19 TAC §228.35(e)(8)(A) are waived as necessary.

4) The requirements for a minimum number of hours of field-based experience under TEC, §21.051(b), and 19 TAC §228.35(e)(1)(A) and §228.35(e)(1)(B) are waived as necessary.

5) The requirements for face-to-face observations under 19 TAC §228.35(g) and 19 TAC §228.35(h) are waived as necessary.

6) The requirements for educator and administrator surveys for educator preparation program accountability under 19 TAC §229.3 are waived as necessary.
Frequently Asked Questions

Clinical Teaching

With schools and districts closed or moving online, how can our candidates who are completing clinical teaching meet the required number of days?

In accordance with Governor Abbott’s waiver, candidates completing clinical teaching during spring 2020 who meet the following criteria will be considered to have successfully met requirements for clinical teaching:

1) Completed at least half of the required days of clinical teaching,
   a. 35 days for full-day assignments or
   b. 70 days for half-day assignments
2) Demonstrated proficiency in each of the educator standards for their assignments (to be determined by the preparation program), and
3) Received a recommendation from their field supervisor and cooperating teacher that the candidate should be recommended for a standard certificate.

How can my candidates who were in clinical teaching this semester but were not able to meet the above criteria still qualify?

In accordance with Governor Abbott’s waiver, the requirements for candidates’ clinical teaching experiences to be completed in an actual school setting are also waived. This means that these candidates may complete any additional requirement by supporting their cooperating teacher through non-traditional means and may demonstrate proficiency based on alternative arrangements established by the preparation program, such as but not limited to simulated, remote, virtual, or video classroom experiences and reflection.

How can EPPs provide the required number of formal observations for candidates?

In accordance with Governor Abbott’s waiver, all requirements related to field supervision of candidates have been waived, including the number, duration, timing, and format of the observation.

Internships

With schools and districts closed or moving online, how can our candidates who are completing internships on an Intern or Probationary certification complete their internship?

Per 19 TAC §228.35(e)(2)(B), an internship is, at minimum, one full school year for the classroom teacher. As defined in 19 TAC §228.2(30), a school year may be defined by a particular public or private school. This means that as districts adapt the definition of a school year based on the situation, the school year associated with active internships will also adapt. Because interns are district employees and subject to the requirements of that district, what qualifies as a full year will be dependent on what the district establishes as its modified calendar. Interns who complete the year in the district, even if shortened, will have completed the year according to the rule. Further, for
candidates who began their internship in January, the completion of this semester according to the district’s schedule will count as half of the year.

How can EPPs provide the required number of formal observations for interns?

In accordance with Governor Abbott’s waiver, all requirements related to field supervision of candidates have been waived, including the number, duration, timing, and format of the observation.

Practicums for Certificates other than Classroom Teacher

How can candidates complete the required hours for their practicums?

In accordance with Governor Abbott’s waiver, candidates engaging in a practicum during spring 2020 who meet the following criteria will be considered to have successfully met requirements for the practicum:

1) Completed at least half of the required hours of the practicum (80 hours)
2) Demonstrated proficiency in each of the educator standards for their assignments (to be determined by the preparation program), and
3) Received a recommendation from their field supervisor and site supervisor that the candidate should be recommended for a standard certificate.

How can EPPs provide the required number of formal observations for candidates completing practicums?

In accordance with Governor Abbott’s waiver, all requirements related to field supervision of candidates have been waived, including the number, duration, timing, and format of the observation.

EPP Accountability

With disruptions in educator preparation program operations, will the Accountability System for Educator Preparation (ASEP) remain in effect for the 2019-2020 accountability year?

During these times, we know that EPPs have numerous concerns and priorities related to ASEP.

Given the interruption of testing, changes and increases in workload for principals and teachers, and disruptions in field experiences, the indicators in the Accountability System for Educator Preparation (ASEP) have been impacted. TEA will monitor the situation related to accountability and plans to make appropriate recommendations to the State Board for Educator Certification to allow flexibility for EPPs to meet the unique needs of their candidates, institutions, and partner LEAs during this crisis. Given that any ratings would not be calculated until much later in the year, there is time for SBEC to follow the rulemaking schedule and make changes before programs have any impact related to accountability.

Are the principal surveys for April to June still on schedule or will they be canceled due to the COVID-19 illness?
Governor Abbott has waived the requirements for principals to complete the surveys.

**Is the teacher survey related to educator preparation still happening this spring given COVID-19?**

Governor Abbott has waived the requirements for teachers to complete the surveys.

**Field Experience**

**How can candidates complete the 15 clock-hours of field-based experiences on a school campus if the schools are closed?**

Governor Abbott has waived the requirement that 15 clock-hours of field-based experiences must be completed on a school campus for those completing field-based experience requirements in spring or summer 2020. All field-based experiences may be completed by use of electronic transmission or other video or technology-based method.

**Educator Testing**

We recognize that programs and candidates have many questions and concerns regarding educator testing and certification requirements and timelines. We are actively working to compile an FAQ document to address the questions we have received, and we will share that information in a forthcoming communication.

**edTPA Update (NEW)**

With many educator preparation programs (EPPs) and P–12 school districts impacted by COVID-19, the following guidance is provided to programs and teacher candidates in need of options for successfully preparing and submitting an edTPA portfolio.

Pearson will continue to monitor the situation and will provide updates as events warrant.

**Candidates Have 170 Days to Submit:**

Upon edTPA account registration, teacher candidates have 170 days to prepare and submit a finalized portfolio, for both initial submissions and retakes. Programs may encourage candidates to submit their portfolio during a future submission window within the 170 days.

**Candidates May Request an Extension:**

If necessary, teacher candidates impacted by COVID-19 may request an extension if they are unable to submit their finalized portfolio within the 170-day window. To request an extension to the 170-day window, teacher candidates may contact a Pearson Customer Support representative by phone at (413) 256-2889, or toll free at (866) 565-4872, or via the email communication form available on the program website. Pearson will extend the registration at no additional cost to teacher candidates impacted by COVID-19.
**Additional Submission Windows Planned:**
Two additional submission windows and reporting dates will soon be added to the current submission and reporting schedule for the 2019–2020 edTPA program year. The current schedule will be updated on Texas edTPA Pilot very soon. In addition, Pearson will post the schedule of submission windows and reporting dates for the 2020–2021 program with the updated 2019–2020 schedule. A notification will be forwarded to edTPA Coordinators when the updated schedule is available on the program website.

edTPA Coordinators and program faculty members who need additional information, or have questions regarding this topic, may contact edTPA EPP Support at edtpaeppsupport@pearson.com, or by telephone at (866) 613-3278.

**Pearson Testing Center Closure Information**
Starting Tuesday, March 17, 2020, Pearson is suspending Texas Educator Certification Examination Program exam delivery at their U.S.- and Canada-based Pearson-owned computer-administered test centers for 30 days until April 16, 2020. This decision was made for the health and safety of examinees and proctors. Pearson is sending cancellation notices and instructions for scheduling new appointments directly to examinees. Exam delivery at test centers on college/university campuses and other non-Pearson-owned partner locations are subject to the decisions local to that campus/facility. Please visit the Texas Educator Certification Examination Program web site at www.tx.nesinc.com for more information.

**ETS Performance Assessment for School Leaders Information**
ETS continues to monitor the impact of the Coronavirus as well as state and federal responses. As health and safety are the primary concern, we are announcing modifications to the spring 2020 PASL submission schedule. The new deadline dates are as follows:

- Registration deadline – May 11, 2020
- Task submission deadline - May 20, 2020 (at 2pm ET)
- Score reporting to candidates - June 17, 2020
- Resubmission deadline – July 1, 2020
- Resubmission Task submission deadline – July 8, 2020 (at 2 pm ET)
- Resubmission score reporting to candidates – July 29, 2020

The submission system will be updated shortly to reflect the new submission deadline.

ETS is continuing to determine if additional action may be necessary as the situation evolves. Candidates who are unable to complete the assessment this spring will be eligible to receive a registration voucher that allows for the completion of the PASL assessment over the next academic
year. Candidates should contact ETS between May 11th and May 15th at ppa@ets.org or 1-855-628-5088 (Monday-Friday 8am-6pm ET) once they have confirmed they will not be able to complete the assessment.

We will continue to provide updates periodically. This information is also available at https://www.ets.org/ppa.

Educator Certification

The Educator Certification Online System (ECOS) will remain available for candidates to submit online applications for certification, and EPPs will still be able to provide recommendations for certificate issuance. Please be sure to confirm your candidates have submitted a complete and accurate application for your review prior to submitting your recommendation for certification to the agency.

Is TEA considering waiving teacher certification renewal? (NEW)

Not as a blanket waiver. In specific cases where an educator has a catastrophic illness or injury or is caring for an immediate family member with a catastrophic illness or injury, that educator is eligible for a hardship exemption to allow additional time for certificate renewal. While highly sensitive to the concerns around COVID-19, the current situation does not necessitate waiving teacher certification renewal requirements for all educators. Educators are able to renew their certification as early as six months prior to expiration, and certificate renewal is a paperless process completed through the Educator Certification Online System (ECOS). Because ECOS has 24/7 access, educators can complete the renewal process and submit their online payment at any time from their preferred location. Additional information on the certificate renewal process including a frequently asked questions document and guidance on obtaining continuing professional education hours is available on the website.

Additional Notes

TEA has established a COVID-19 website as a central source for information to school districts, and this should also provide beneficial information for EPPs.

If you have additional specific concerns that are unique to your program or geographic area that may not be addressed by the guidance provided, please let us know by completing a Help Desk Ticket submitted to Educator Testing and Preparation Programs. We will be in touch as additional information is available.