5.3.1. Continuous Improvement of the EPP.

Evidence and Analysis of the Continuous Improvement of the EPP:

Through the use of the EPP’s *LARS Quality Assurance System* and the ongoing and regular monitoring of candidates and reviews of evidence in their individual folders by the unit and Director of Teacher Preparation and Advising, the EPP regularly and systematically assesses performance against our goals and relevant standards, tracks results over time, tests innovations, and monitors the effects of our selection criteria on subsequent progress and completion and uses the results of feedback loops to improve our program elements, processes, and capacity based upon our *Selected Improvement Plan* [See the EPP’s Selected Improvement Plan]. External data from the Teacher Education Unit (TEU) and Educator Preparation Program (EPP) Advisory Council Meetings, Principal Employer Surveys, Clinical Teachers’ Exit Surveys, academic program evaluations and reviews, and faculty annual performance assessment reports are collected, analyzed, and reported through the EPP and the Office for Learning Assessment for continuous improvement [5.4.1]. The evaluation of faculty-level, candidate-level and unit-level data informs the EPP’s efforts to improve the capacity and quality of our preparation through curriculum and instruction, the use of technology, and the quality of our candidates and faculty on an ongoing, systemic, and balanced basis.

Regular and Systematic Review of the EPP’s *LARS Quality Assurance System*.

Evidence previously presented in 5.1, our EPP’s online quality assurance system or *Learning Assessment Reporting System (LARS)* is comprised of multiple measures that provides and monitors regular and comprehensive data on candidate qualifications, progress, and performance; completer achievements; program quality; and EPP operational efficacy. As an additive measure, Texas requires all candidate data from admissions through recommendation for state certification to be included in individual candidate folders housed in the Office of Teacher Preparation and Advising. This two-pronged approach to quality assurance provides formative, ongoing feedback, and summative decision points to candidates and to programs.

Program faculty, administrators, and the director of accreditation work together in their roles and responsibilities of collecting, gathering, analyzing, reporting, uploading, and disseminating data results to education faculty through meetings, online availability of reports, and sharing results with stakeholders in Teacher Education Unit (TEU) Meetings, Educator Preparation Program (EPP) Advisory Council Meetings, College of Education and Social Sciences Advisory Council Meetings, and the Dean, Leadership, and Superintendent Meetings and Focus Groups.

The EPP, administrators, and the Vice President of the Office of Learning Assessment monitors the quality assurance system operations and data and reviews our system regularly and systematically [See 5.1.1]. Through our *LARS Quality Assurance System*, the EPP regularly poses questions of all programs at all levels, identifies patterns across our preparation programs that includes strengths and weaknesses; and investigates differences among programs to seek what works best and are models of excellence.
5.3.1. Continuous Improvement of the EPP.

Addressing Areas of Need for Improvement.

Early Childhood (EC-6).

The EPP’s analysis of the state’s 2013 ASEP Report indicated Early Childhood (EC-6) candidates had lower scores on the TExES EC-6 Generalist Content Exams. The EPP also received a notice letter of noncompliance from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) concerning these low scores [See 5.3.1a. and ASEP 2013].

Steps/Strategies to Address Need:

1. Program faculty began to research reasons for lower test scores and identified strategies to address the need for improvement for Early Childhood EC-6 candidates.

2. The program developed the mantra, “Test Early, Test Often” to encourage EC-6 candidates to take and retake the test to assure passing. [Note: Due to the passing of a new 5-limit rule in 2015-2016, candidates will need to be better prepared before testing because test takers are now limited to five attempts. As a result, candidates are now encouraged to use the online test prep resources provided by the EPP. The program mantra has changed to “Practice Often, Test Best”].

3. Curricular and programmatic changes were made to increase candidates’ scores that included the following:

   o Program faculty implemented horizontal alignment among all Early Childhood courses and coursework.

   o New textbooks were adopted that were based on Texas state standards.

   o The EPP designed and implemented Program Educational Outcomes (PEOs) and Ethical and Professional Dispositions of Candidates for vertical alignment among all programs at all levels.

   o A new policy was introduced by the EPP that all candidates must pass both their TExES Content Exam and TExES PPR Exam prior to being admitted to clinical teaching.

   o A Remediation Specialist was hired to assist and support candidates in test preparation.

   o Reading program faculty conducted research and investigations and attended training on explicit phonics hosted by the Center for Learning Disabilities.

   o A new course EDRD 3304 Structured Literacy was developed.
5.3.1. Continuous Improvement of the EPP.

- EDRD 3304 Structured Literacy was available to candidates as a course offering in Fall 2015.

Results. As a result of these combined strategies and steps taken by the EPP, the scores for candidates taking the TExES Early Childhood EC-6 Generalist Exam significantly improved as evidenced in the 2015 ASEP Report. Candidates’ success in passing this content exam prior to clinical teaching proved to produce high quality candidates who are prepared to teach in public and private classrooms.

Writing.

The EPP’s analysis of the state’s STAAR assessment results for Region 16 ESC schools were lower in the area of Writing, especially in the tested grade levels of fourth and seventh grades.

Steps/Strategies to Address Need:

1. The EPP reviewed and analyzed state assessment results for area schools in our Region 16 ESC service area.

2. The Chancellor’s Summit of the Texas A&M University (TAMU) System began a three-year research study of “An Investigation of Writing Experiences of Pre-Service Elementary Teachers” that included three regional universities within the system. Our EPP represents one of the regional universities participating in the study. The study reviewed all course offerings and syllabi in our EPP to determine the amount and types of writing that were being taught and assigned.

3. Candidates in all Methods courses are required to write a reflection over ten assigned topics during their required 40-hours of classroom observations. Copies of these reflection writings are submitted to their instructors/faculty in their Methods courses and to the Director of Teacher Preparation and Advising. They are housed in candidates’ individual folders in the Office of Teacher Preparation and Advising as required by state guidelines.

4. A new faculty member was hired as a writing specialist by the EPP in 2015.

5. In review of the Methods’ reflection essays, decisions were made by the EPP to horizontally align reflection-writing requirements and to produce a “Quickwrite” template. This Quickwrite template was implemented in all Methods courses in 2015 [See 5.3.1.b].

6. Active plans are underway by the EPP to bring the National Writing Project to West Texas A&M University to support our candidates and area teachers in the area of writing and writing instruction. The EPP is currently in the application process for this project, meetings have been held with area LEAs to see how our EPP can support them in writing.
5.3.1. Continuous Improvement of the EPP.

instruction, and a new course EDPD 6615 Writer’s Workshop is being developed. Summer workshops for area teachers are planned for Summer 2017 [See 5.3.1d].

7. The EPP designed and implemented Program Educational Outcomes (PEOs) and Ethical and Professional Dispositions of Candidates for vertical alignment among all programs at all levels.

8. A new policy was introduced by the EPP that all candidates must pass both their TExES Content Exam and TExES PPR Exam prior to being admitted to clinical teaching.

9. In Early Childhood (EC-6) and Reading programs of the EPP, faculty enhanced and improved writing instruction through the implementation of the “Different Types of Course Writing Assignments.” This instruction includes quick writes (Writing to Learn); informal reflection (Writing to Expand and Connect); and formal essay response (Learning to Write Using Profession, Discipline-based Communication Style). [See 5.3.1c].

10. All programs in the EPP have increased their focus upon candidates’ quality of writing and writing assignments, course reflections as KEI assignments, and candidates’ appropriate use of APA 6th Edition in research writing assignments.

Results. As a result of these combined strategies and steps taken by the EPP, candidates’ reflection writings in their Methods courses have significantly improved as evidenced in their course requirements and candidates’ individual folders in the Office of Teacher Preparation and Advising. Candidates’ success in passing their state content certification exams and PPR certification exams prior to clinical teaching have also proven to produce high quality candidates who are prepared to teach.

Intervention and Remediation.

Due to the implementation of our new policy that all candidates must pass both their TExES content certification and TExES PPR certification exams, the EPP has hired an Intervention Specialist to assist and support our candidates who need intervention and/or remediation in passing the required state certification tests.

Through our Teacher Education Unit (TEU) Meetings with partners and stakeholders that include colleges within WTAMU that also provide teacher preparation, the EPP has an intervention and remediation plan in place to support all candidates who seek to become teachers in public schools. Faculty members are provided candidate data and keep documentation of their intervention and/or remediation actions with candidates. Other avenues available for possible intervention and remediation of our candidates include the WTAMU Writing Center, the Hastings Electronic Learning Center (HELC), the WTAMU Math and Science Labs, the Cornette Library, and faculty/instructors mentoring and/or remediation efforts.

(Continued).
5.3.1. Continuous Improvement of the EPP.

Selection Criteria of the EPP.

As evidence previously presented in 3.2, a critical measure of the selectivity criteria of the EPP that all candidates must pass both of their state certification exams (content and PPR) prior to being admitted to clinical teaching. State certification exams are evidences of state-normed and professional consensus-established performance scores for passing. The state of Texas does not require candidates to pass the SAT or the ACT to be eligible for admission to Texas universities. State protocol directs the actions of the EPP in regard to selectivity and admission of candidates. However, the effects of our selection criteria and the two examples of programmatic changes just presented, highlight the established fact that our candidates are better prepared and highly qualified to complete their clinical experiences, to teach P-12 students, and will make positive impacts on student learning and development.

Comparison of Results and Next Steps for the EPP.

Our Selected Improvement Plan (SIP) and the evidence presented in CAEP Standards 1 through 5 demonstrate the various ways that the EPP tracks and collects data over time from admission, during development, and at completion with Decision Points of candidate quality, satisfaction of employers and completers, completer achievements, and comprehensive operational capacity and effectiveness. The EPP consistently makes data-driven decisions regarding our programs for continuous improvement to ensure the recurring and highest quality of teacher production by West Texas A&M University Educator Preparation Program possible for our regional, state, and national educator needs [See the EPP’s Selected Improvement Plan].

Multiple Evidence Sources:

- 5.3.1a. TEA Notice Letter.
- 5.3.1b. Quickwrite Template for Methods Course Reflections.
- 5.3.1c. Different Types of Course Writing Assignments.
- 5.3.1d. Route 66 Writing Project of West Texas A&M University.
- [See the EPP’s Selected Improvement Plan].
- [See 1.1.1. Program Educational Outcomes (PEOs), Ethical and Professional Dispositions of Candidates, and Standards Alignment of the EPP].
- [See 1.1.2. Program Educational Outcomes (PEOs) Rubric of the EPP].
- [See 1.1.3. InTASC Standards of the EPP].
- [See 1.1.4. Candidate Evaluation Instrument (CEI)].

Multiple Evidence Sources (continued):

- [See 1.1.5. GPAs at Admission and Grade Distribution of Candidates in Teacher Education (Aggregate Reported) 2012-2015].
- [See 1.1.6. GPA Requirements and Median Texas A&M University (TAMU) System].
- [See 1.1.7. ASEP and LBB Performance Measures 2012-2015].
5.3.1. Continuous Improvement of the EPP.

- [See 1.1.7b. State Board for Educator Certification Accountability System for Educator Preparation (ASEP) 2013].
- [See 1.1.7d. State Board for Educator Certification Accountability System for Educator Preparation (ASEP) 2015].
- [See 1.1.8. Content Knowledge of Candidates].
- [See 1.1.9. Pedagogical Knowledge of Candidates].
- [See 1.1.10. Program Progression of the EPP 2013-2015].
- [See 1.1.11. Candidate Field and Clinical Experience Assessments (Fall 2014, Spring 2015, and Fall 2015].
- [See 1.1.12. Ethical and Professional Dispositions of Candidates].
- [See 1.1.13. InTASC Standards and Representative Samples of the Learner and Learning in 10 Course Syllabi (2013-2015). Syllabi Analysis I].
- [See 1.1.14. Progression of Candidates’ Deep Understanding].
- [See 1.1.15. Summary Tables of Current Performance of the West Texas A&M University EPP Graduates].
- [See 1.1.16. Decision Points of the EPP].
- [See 1.2.1. Candidate Application of Content-Specific Practices Flexibly and InTASC Standards].
- [See 1.3.1. Application of Content and Pedagogical Knowledge of Candidates as Reflected in Outcome Assessments].
- [See 1.4.1. Candidates Demonstrate Skills and Commitment for All P-12 Students Access to Texas College- and Career-Readiness Standards].
- [See 1.5.1. Candidates Model and Apply Technology Standards to Engage Students, Improve Learning, and Enrich Professional Practice].
- [See 2.1.1. Effective Partnership and Stakeholder Evidence].
- [See 2.1.2. Teacher Education Unit (TEU) and Educator Preparation Program (EPP) Advisory Council Meetings, 2013-2015].
- [See 2.1.3. Dean, Leadership, and Superintendent Meetings and Focus Groups].
- [See 2.1.4. Candidate Clinical Teacher Handbook of the EPP, Fall 2015].
- [See 2.2.1. High Quality Clinical Practice].
- [See 2.2.2. Candidate, Clinical, and Diversity Placement Evidence].
- [See 2.2.3. Criteria for Performance and Retention].
- [See 2.2.4. Cooperating Teacher and Field Supervisor Support Evidence].
- [See 2.2.5. Candidate Assessments].
- [See 2.2.6. Completer Follow-Up Survey].
- [See 2.3.1. Clinical Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions (KSD) and Positive Impact on P-12 Students].
- [See 2.3.2. Samples of Candidate Individual Folder Content Evidence].

Multiple Evidence Sources (continued):

- [See 3.1.1. Recruitment for Academic Ability and Diversity Evidence of the EPP].
- [See 3.2.1. Admission of Candidates for Academic Ability/Achievement (Dispositional) Evidence of the EPP].
- [See 3.3.1. Setting and Investigating Non-Academic Factors of the EPP].
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- [See 3.4.1. Monitoring the Progression of Candidates].
- [See 3.5.1. Employing High Exit Criteria].
- [See 3.6.1. Candidates Developing Understanding of Ethical and Professional Aspects of Teaching].
- [See 4.1.1.Completer Impact on P-12 Student Learning and Development].
- [See 4.2.1. Teacher Effectiveness].
- [See 4.3.1. Satisfaction of Employers].
- [See 4.4.1. Satisfaction of Completers].
- [See 5.1.1. Quality Assurance System of the EPP].
- [See 5.2.1. Quality of Assurance Measures of the EPP].
- [See 5.3.1. Continuous Improvement of the EPP].
- [See 5.4.1. Completer Impact].
- [See 5.5.1. Stakeholder and Partner Involvement].
- [See Diversity Crosscut Narrative].
- [See Technology Crosscut Narrative].