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Evidence and Analysis of Stakeholder and Partner Involvement for Continuous Improvement:

Evidence presented in CAEP Standard 2 demonstrates that within our EPP, valued stakeholders and effective partnerships with strategic involvement are central to support quality and effective teacher preparation. These stakeholders and partnerships recognize the mutuality of benefit and the shared accountability for the success of our candidates. Aligned with our shared vision or conceptual framework and working closely with our partners, candidate experiences are designed to promote their knowledge, skills, and ethical and professional dispositions to ensure that all candidates have a positive impact on student learning. By engaging with our partners in meetings of all stakeholders in the College of Education and Social Sciences (COESS) Advisory Council, education program faculty and instructors; Teacher Educator Unit (TEU); the EPP Advisory Council; and the Dean, Leadership, and Superintendent Meetings and Focus Groups; the EPP ensures strategic, effective, and quality partnerships [2.1.1; 2.1.2; 2.1.3; and 5.4.1]. These collaborative and interactive meetings are regularly held to discuss strengths, areas for improvement, policy and/or curricular changes, partnership opportunities, employment needs, and overall improvements of the EPP’s quality assurance system.

Quality Assurance System: Involvement of Stakeholders and Partners.

The regularly held meetings, focus groups, and ongoing communications with our stakeholders include alumni, LEA employers, practitioners, school and community partners, cooperating teachers, field supervisors, university faculty, and candidates to ensure active involvement, participation, and engagement in the EPP’s program evaluation, continuous improvement, and identification of models of excellence.

In collaboration with our partners, the EPP delineates multiple expectations for stakeholders on the executed Participation Agreements [2.1.1a]. These co-constructed agreements establish, maintain, and refine criteria for selection, professional development, performance evaluation, continuous improvement, and retention of clinical faculty in all field experiences and clinical placement settings [2.2.3]. Additionally, the EPP and our partners have mutually co-established agreeable expectations for candidate entry, preparation, and exit; ensure that theory and practice are linked; maintain coherence across clinical and academic components of preparation; and share accountability for candidate outcomes [2.1.2; and 2.2.2].

Regular and appropriate stakeholder groups are involved in decision-making, evaluations, and continuous improvements of the EPP. Not all stakeholders are present in every meeting. The EPP has designed an array of focus groups, meeting groups, and activities that allow our partners and stakeholders ample opportunities to provide input, make recommendations, to collaborate and interact with other partners and stakeholders, and to voice concerns. This focus group and meeting design enables our partners and stakeholders to provide the EPP with a rich variety of viewpoints and perspectives. Our quality assurance system as well as our teacher preparation program have become much more effective and efficient through the EPP’s implementation of this design.
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Documentation of interactions, discussions, questions, and recommendations have been included as evidence across the CAEP Standards and the raw data of agendas, sign-in sheets, minutes, and their dissemination are included in CAEP Standards Notebooks that are available onsite.

Our EPP ensures that all candidates have the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions necessary to have a positive impact on all P-12 students and are qualified to teach in twenty-first century classrooms [1.1.2; 1.1.4; 1.1.11; 2.2.1; and 2.3.1]. With the active support and engaged involvement of our stakeholders and partners, our EPP is confident that effective, collaborative partnerships, and high-quality clinical practice are central to accomplishing our mission of preparing confident, skilled, and reflective professionals [2.3.1]. This is simply who we are and what we are about!

As an EPP, we remain committed to improving the preparation of the educational workforce for our region, state, and nation. The education of too many children and youth depend upon it. Not just for accreditation purposes or for any accolades that may come our way, but as a moral imperative, our EPP is dedicated to continuous improvement through the help and support of our partners and stakeholders to provide a high quality, effective teacher preparation program for West Texas A&M University.

Examples of Input from Stakeholders and Partners for Continuous Improvement.

Three examples of input from our stakeholders and partners that have assisted the EPP in making continuous improvements to our programs are (1) the concern of districts for more Classroom Management training for our candidates prior to their clinical teaching and employment after graduation; (2) the requests from small, rural school districts for more access to candidates before graduation due to their schools’ hard-to-staff hiring needs; and (3) the need of one large district to improve reading instruction [See 2.1.1; and 2.1.3].

(1). Classroom Management. For many years, the EDPD 4340 Classroom Management course was offered as a three and one half weeks intensive course that normally preceded candidates’ student/clinical teaching. As the EPP received communications from our districts, additional Classroom Management modules were added to the semester during candidates’ clinical teaching. Four Fridays were used as mandatory days for all clinical teachers to attend on campus for additional training on a variety of topics that were identified by Clinical Teacher Exit Surveys, Principal Surveys of beginning teachers, and/or other of our partners and stakeholders [See 1.1.8; 1.1.8e; 1.1.8f; 1.1.11; and 2.2.5].

In working with our partners and stakeholders to review multiple sources of data over time, the EPP recognized that even with our adjustments, our candidates and completers as in-service teachers needed additional training in the area of Classroom Management. As a result, the EPP supported sustained and evidence-based continuous improvement by evaluating the effectiveness
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of our candidates and our completers, using the results of inquiry and data collection to establish priorities, to enhance our program elements such as Classroom Management, and to strengthen our capacity. The course EDPD 4340 will begin being offered as a full semester-long course. The EPP will continue to collect data and to monitor the results of the additional instruction and training in Classroom Management for our candidates and completers with the support of our partners and stakeholders.

(2). *Educator’s Expo.* Many of our small, rural school districts have requested more access to our candidates before graduation due to their schools’ hard-to-staff hiring needs [See 2.1.2; and 2.1.3]. It is difficult for them to compete with the larger school districts, such as Amarillo ISD and Canyon ISD. Each spring, WTAMU hosts an *Educator’s Expo* complete with a breakfast buffet for exhibitors and for area district representatives and others from the four state region (Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Kansas) and others who represent their schools or organizations, to meet and/or interview our candidates, and possibly to hire many of our graduates.

To fulfill the requests of partners and stakeholders from small, rural schools, the EPP has established an evening meeting for them the prior to the *Expo.* The EPP provides ordureves for partners and candidates and ample time to discuss the advantages of teaching and living in small communities. Many of our graduates are hired on the spot!

Additional planning is now underway to allow superintendents of small, rural schools opportunities to come and speak with our candidates during their preparation to become teachers through brown-bag lunch meetings, evening meetings, events, and as invited special speakers in some of our classes.

(3). *Reading Instruction.* One of our larger district partners identified the need to improve their students’ state assessment scores in Reading by improving the reading instruction of their teachers.

The Center for Learning Disabilities sponsored a conference on structured literacy that all of our Reading program faculty attended. A teacher from this large school district was also in attendance and reported back to her district. The district called our EPP and requested professional development for their teachers in the area of structured literacy. Working together with our partnering school district, program faculty researched the state reading scores for students in the district and designed a three-year professional development series for teachers to improve reading instruction through structured literacy. In Year 1 (2014 to 2015), Reading program faculty provided an ongoing, weekly professional development series for kindergarten and first grade teachers on the use of a systematic phonics program. In Year 2
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(2014-2015), the program moved to the second grade with a series of professional development for second grade teachers, implementing the program into second grade. For Year 3 (2015-2016), program faculty will continue to implement structured literacy into third grade.

Results of students’ state assessment scores will be monitored each year to test this innovation and to determine the positive impact upon student learning and development through strengthened reading instruction in the district.

Models of Excellence.

Through the extensive presentation of evidence for CAEP Standards 1 through 5 and the crosscuts of diversity and technology, the EPP has demonstrated that we have sustained, maintained, and systematically improved our quality assurance system through multiple data sources that are analyzed, interpreted, and shared widely as evidence of program impact upon P-12 student learning and development through our candidate and completer outcomes. The evidence indicates that the West Texas A&M University Educator Preparation Program (EPP) is consistently accomplishing our mission of preparing educators who are confident, skilled, and reflective professionals. The EPP remains confident that the evidence will show that we have successfully met each of the five CAEP Standards.

The Center for Learning Disabilities.

Additionally, the EPP has gone beyond a mere status quo of operational effectiveness by creating, developing, providing, and even celebrating models of excellence throughout our programs. Our Center for Learning Disabilities has been recognized and granted by the Texas A&M University (TAMU) System as a “Center of Excellence”--a very high honor indeed [See 5.5.1a]. The Center for Learning Disabilities has an outreach that far exceeds our geographical area. People from around the country faithfully attend conferences, workshops, and community/parent meetings to learn ways to strengthen the learning and development of their children with special needs. Countless educators, parents, students, and our partners have benefited from the research-based approaches provided by The Center to improving the academic and behavioral achievement among special education, special needs, and attention deficit and hyperactivity deficient (ADHD) students.

Texas Panhandle Professional Learning Network (TXPPL).

Another innovation of our EPP is the creation of the Texas Panhandle Professional Learning Network (TXPPL), a Candidate Preparation and Learning Partnership between WTAMU and Texas Panhandle School Districts [See 5.5.1b]. The idea for the Network originated with an area superintendent, who inquired about our familiarity with EdCamps. One of our faculty members, the Dr. John G. O’Brien Distinguished Chair in Education explored what EdCamps are and how WTAMU might be able to use this framework to support the professional learning among WTAMU faculty and educators.
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among the 62 Texas Panhandle school districts. EdCamps are innovative professional learning experiences for educators that are participant-driven and enable attendees to interact and participate by sharing ideas and asking questions. Offered at no cost to attendees, EdCamps are open to all educational stakeholders and are vendor-free. Unlike the traditional conference-model for professional learning, EdCamps are organically planned and do not define a preset schedule of presentations or presenters prior to the conference. At the beginning of the event, attendees informally chat and identify topics of interest. These topics are placed on a grid, and the schedule is collaboratively developed. Attendees then attend sessions at will and come together at the end of the event to share ideas, tools, or tips with the whole group. After visiting with other district stakeholders, the EPP developed a framework that draws from critical aspects of the EdCamp model to customize a co-constructed, mutually beneficial partnership between WTAMU and P-12 school districts in the Texas Panhandle. Focused upon continuous improvement of candidate preparation and continuing professional education, this framework links theory with practice and shares accountability for candidate outcomes and continuing professional education for certified Texas educators. Underpinning our framework are the following principles:

Effective candidate preparation and professional learning experiences are:

1. focused upon student learning.
2. individually empowering and collaborative.
3. sustaining continuous dialogue to improve teaching and student learning.
5. supportive, safe spaces that reinforce meaningful change.

The inaugural TXPPLN event will be a daylong event (approximately six hours) hosted at WTAMU during the summer of 2016.

*Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead): A Celebration of Life.*

WTAMU hosts the renowned annual cultural event, *Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead: A Celebration of Life) Reception* and *Gala* in October/November of each year. We send letters to each of our school districts, stakeholders, and partners inviting them to participate in the event. It is a wonderful cultural experience that highlights Hispanic heritage in our region, displaying 80 to 100 ofrendas created by WTAMU students, faculty, and local P-12 students. The word ofrenda means “offering” in Spanish that is displayed on altares or “altars” (not intended for worship) that are designed to remember and honor the memory of an ancestor. Districts are invited to bring their students to view the displays of ofrendas at the Panhandle Plains Historic Museum of Canyon, Texas while a serenading Mariachi band plays. An internationally famous band from Venezuela, Micky Cruz and the Cruz Band perform all evening at the Gala and dinner.
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that follows the viewing of the ofrendas. A silent auction of artwork from WTAMU art students and faculty occurs during these two events to raise scholarship funds for WTAMU education candidates. All of our underfunded scholarships have been fully funded through these events. Hundreds of P-12 students, WTAMU students/candidates, community members, donors, stakeholders, and partners look forward to attending this cultural event each fall. It is one of the highlights of all we do in our EPP to celebrate life with our community [See 5.5.1c; and 5.5.1d].

Investing in Innovation (i3) CORE Grant.

After a rigorous national competition, the proposal submitted by the EPP of West Texas A&M University to Jacksonville State University in Jacksonville, Alabama was selected to participate in a National Study for the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), Investing in Innovation (i3) Program: Validating the Collaborative Regional Education Model: Technology in Rural Classrooms (CORE), [See 5.5.1e]. The purpose of this study is to test the impact of the CORE curriculum model to improve college and work readiness among 8th through 12th grade students. The expected duration of this study is two school years. This study has been approved by the Jacksonville State University’s Institutional Review Board and approval is pending for WTAMU’s Institutional Review Board. The EPP’s randomized control study includes nine of our eligible small, rural schools that have limited technology resources. Through intricate processes, five different districts with both control group and treatment group teachers were selected to collaborate with our EPP in this important two-year national study. District participating teachers will receive Apple MacBook Laptops, 25 Apple iPads for their classrooms, and professional development for a week this summer at Jacksonville State University. The i3 grant will fund the project. Districts will receive $2,000 for their technology infrastructure and technical support throughout the study.

The EPP is honored to participate in such an important national study that will help our area teachers, especially in small, rural school districts, to receive the most current training and technology to improve their instruction and to impact 8th grade through 12th grade students.

The Opportunity School.

Through high-quality early childhood education (years 0-5) and caring family support, Opportunity School equips low-income children and their families to succeed in school and in life (See 5.5.1f). After much discussion and research, a community Sunday school class decided to address a serious but little known community problem: young children from low-income families who lacked basic learning skills and experiences and who then entered school unprepared for academic achievement and were unable to catch up to their peers. The class elected to open a school to preschoolers from low-income families to provide high quality early education. The total number of children and parents served are approximately 500 children. Nearly 90% of these families are low-income and qualify for free or reduced lunch meals according to USDA guidelines. The median income among low-income families served is $22,280. The school’s ethnic mix is 41% Hispanic, 30%
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African American, 20% Anglo, and 8% Asian/multiracial. Nearly 51% of the families served are led by a single parent. Single parent households are at the highest risk of remaining in poverty (See [www.quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48/48275.html](http://www.quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48/48275.html)).

The EPP is proud to partner with the Opportunity School and through many of our Early Childhood EC-6 and Reading courses, our candidates participate in ongoing field trips, observations, in reading to, and in tutoring these young children while assisting their teachers. Our candidates gain incredible experiences and real appreciation of children and their families from poverty.

*The National Writing Project.*

As presented in 5.3.1, the EPP is currently in the application process of a proposal to bring the National Writing Project to West Texas A&M University [See 5.3.1d. Route 66 Writing Project of West Texas A&M University]. This project will bring additional innovative ways to improve writing and writing instruction for the P-12 students of our area.

*Williams Collection of Children’s Literature Reading Room.*

One of the unique innovations of the EPP includes our new Williams’ Collection of Children’s Literature Reading Room housed in our building of Old Main. Our faithful alums and generous donors of Rob and Dr. Judy Williams have collected and donated countless award winning children’s books and have designed, decorated, and furnished an incredibly beautiful setting where classes, faculty members and staff, and members of our community may come to read and simply enjoy quality children’s literature. It is a place that must be seen and experienced! We are extremely proud to “show off” this amazing place to learn to all visitors.

Currently, the Williams’ are in the design and construction phase of adding a new classroom within Room 207 of our building for Early Childhood with the latest technologies and innovations for learning. Our donors, our alumni, our partners, and our friends are the only ones who could possibly make these dreams come true and become a reality for our EPP. Our candidates and our community will benefit from these unique gifts for decades to come.

*Literacy Alive, Snack Pack-4-Kids, and Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society in Education.*

For the last two years, our EPP and the Iota Theta Chapter of Kappa Delta Pi (KDP) International Honor Society in Education (the only Honor Society in Education for WTAMU) has partnered with our candidates in various classes and the local Snack Pack-4-Kids organization to provide at least two children’s educational books, “cool” writing pens, and writing notebooks (for the reading-writing connection) as the “Promise of a Pencil” to improve literacy for children of selected schools in Amarillo ISD and Canyon ISD. Officers of KDP and faculty counselors worked with our partner to fill Snackpacks...
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with books, pens, notebooks, and food. Many area low-income children were delighted to receive the extra “prizes” of books and other items to call their very own. Over 400 children received these Snackpacks in two area elementary schools.

Summary.

We are extremely proud as an Educator Preparation Program (EPP) to highlight the countless models of excellence that we have created, have tested, and are developing throughout our programs. If space was unlimited, there are many other innovations that we could describe. However for the EPP, as a moral imperative, we heartily believe that we routinely strive to go “above and beyond” any measure in providing high quality preparation in coursework, field, and clinical experiences for the educational workforce of today and tomorrow. America’s children depend upon it.

Multiple Evidence Sources:

- 5.5.1a. The Center for Learning Disabilities.
- 5.5.1b. Texas Panhandle Professional Learning Network (TXPPLN).
- 5.5.1c. Letter to Districts for Dia de los Muertos Celebration of Life.
- 5.5.1d. Dia de los Muertos Flyer.
- 5.5.1e. Investing in Innovation (i3) CORE Grant.
- 5.5.1f. The Opportunity School.
- [See 1.1.2. Program Educational Outcomes (PEOs) Rubric of the EPP].
- [See 1.1.4. Candidate Evaluation Instrument (CEI)].
- [See 1.1.8. Content Knowledge of Candidates].
- [See 1.1.8e. Clinical Teacher Exit Survey (Content)].
- [See 1.1.8f. Principal Survey (In-Service), (Content)].
- [See 1.1.11. Candidate Field and Clinical Experience Assessments (Fall 2014, Spring 2015, and Fall 2015)].
- [See 2.1.1. Effective Partnership and Stakeholder Evidence].
- [See 2.1.1a. Participation Agreements].
- [See 2.1.2. Teacher Education Unit (TEU) and Educator Preparation Program Advisory Council Meetings Summary Evidence, 2013-2015].
- [See 2.1.3. Dean, Leadership, and Superintendent Meetings and Focus Groups, 2013-2015].
- [See 2.1.4. Candidate Clinical Teacher Handbook of the EPP].
- [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].
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- [See 5.3.1d. Route 66 Writing Project of West Texas A&M University].