

**Item 16:****Consider and Take Appropriate Action to Approve the Continuing Approval Review and Lifting of Board Orders for the TeacherBuilder.com Alternative Certification Educator Preparation Program****DISCUSSION AND ACTION**

**SUMMARY:** This item provides the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) an opportunity to approve the continuing approval review and to lift the Board orders from August 2015 for TeacherBuilder.com Alternative Certification Educator Preparation Program.

**STATUTORY AUTHORITY:** The statutory authority for 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §§229.6(a), 228.10(b) and 229.9 is the Texas Education Code (TEC), §§21.0443, 21.041, 21.0452, 21.0454, and 21.061.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Upon SBEC approval.

**FUTURE ACTION EXPECTED:** None until the next five-year continuing approval review cycle occurs or if a discretionary visit is requested or deemed necessary.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND JUSTIFICATION:** TEC §21.0443 authorizes the SBEC to adopt rules providing for educator preparation program (EPP) approval and renewal of approval. TEC §21.061 states the SBEC is to carry out a process for reviewing and, as necessary, updating standards and requirements for EPPs. TEC §21.041 allows the Board to set fees for the approval or renewal of approval of an EPP. TEC §21.0452 authorizes the Board to make information available regarding EPPs to the public. TEC §21.0454 authorizes the Board to propose rules that develop a set of risk factors for each preparation program to be used by the agency to guide the five-year review process.

**Historical Background**

In March 2005, SBEC approved TeacherBuilder.com to provide educator preparation. Since its initial approval, TEA staff have made six prior visits to the program (2005, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2012, and 2014) and have conducted two desk reviews (2009 and 2015). Based on the review history of TeacherBuilder.com and the findings from the October 2014 site visit and March 2015 desk review, TEA staff identified continued failures to correct program deficiencies despite repeated notices and offers of assistance over a period of ten years. These deficiencies constituted a repeated failure to comply with SBEC rules. TEA staff provided notice to TeacherBuilder.com in May 2015 that it would recommend the SBEC impose conditions on the continuing approval of TeacherBuilder.com to recommend candidates for certification. On August 8, 2015, SBEC issued Board orders imposing conditions upon continuing approval for TeacherBuilder.com. (See Attachment II)

Under 19 TAC §228.10(b), TEA staff may conduct a continuing approval review on an educator preparation program whenever risk factors listed in 19 TAC §228.10(b)(3) indicate a need for

review. In 2015, this risk assessment model identified TeacherBuilder.com as a Level One risk. SBEC issued an order on August 8, 2015 (hereinafter, "2015 Order"), requiring the following:

1. TeacherBuilder.com was to hire a TEA-approved monitor to participate in the activities of the EPP and report the activities to the TEA;
2. Candidate transcripts, test results, and a Statement of Eligibility were to be reviewed and approved by the monitor prior to recommending probationary certificates;
3. Transcripts and TOEFL scores for applicants with credentials from out-of-country must be reviewed by the monitor prior to admission;
4. TeacherBuilder.com was not allowed to add new certificate areas;
5. TeacherBuilder.com was prohibited from admitting candidates into certificate fields for which there was not an approved curriculum matrix on file at TEA; and
6. TeacherBuilder.com had to request and submit to a continuing approval review by TEA staff before SBEC could consider lifting these conditions on TeacherBuilder's continuing approval.

TeacherBuilder.com requested a continuing approval review earlier this year, and TEA staff conducted an onsite review at TeacherBuilder.com's offices in Edinburg, Texas on October 21–24, 2019.

### **Summary of On-Site Visit, October 21–24, 2019**

After spending three days on-site at the program and going through extensive documents, records, and online learning platform modules, as well as interviewing several program staff members, the TEA review team found TeacherBuilder.com is currently meeting all minimum requirements for educator preparation programs in the TAC and the TEC. TEA staff thus recommends the conditions on continuing approval for TeacherBuilder.com put in place by the 2015 Order be lifted.

**PUBLIC AND STUDENT BENEFIT:** Removing the conditions on TeacherBuilder.com's continuing approval will allow the program to function more efficiently and devote more resources to improving its performance in preparing educators to positively influence the performance of the diverse student population of the state.

### **ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER'S RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve the continuing approval review for TeacherBuilder.com and lift the conditions on continuing approval imposed by the 2015 Order.

### **Staff Member Responsible:**

Tam Jones, Director, Educator Preparation

### **Attachments:**

- I. Statutory Citations Relating to Continuing Approval Reviews
- II. 2015 Board Order

**ATTACHMENT I****Statutory Citations Relating to Continuing Approval Reviews****Texas Education Code, §21.041, Rules: Fees**

- (d) The Board may propose a rule adopting a fee for the approval or renewal of approval of renewal of an educator preparation program, or for the addition of a certificate or field of certificate to the scope of a program's approval. A fee imposed under this sub-section may not exceed the amount necessary, as determined by the Board, to provide for the administrative cost of approving, renewing the approval of, and appropriately ensuring the accountability of educator preparation programs under this subchapter.

**Texas Education Code, §21.0443, Educator Preparation Program Approval and Renewal**

- (a) The Board shall propose rules to establish standards to govern the approval or renewal of approval of:
- (1) educator preparation programs; and
  - (2) certification fields authorized to be offered by an educator preparation program.
- (b) To be eligible for approval or renewal of approval, an educator preparation program must adequately prepare candidates for educator certification and meet the standards and requirements of the Board.
- (c) The Board shall require that each educator preparation program be reviewed for renewal of approval at least every five years. The Board shall adopt an evaluation process to be used in reviewing an educator preparation program for renewal of approval.

**Texas Education Code, §21.0452, Consumer Information Regarding Educator Preparation Programs (excerpt):**

- (b) The Board shall make available at least the following information regarding each educator preparation program:
- (1) the information specified in Sections 21.045(a) and (b);
- (e) The Board may develop procedures under which each educator preparation program receives a designation or ranking based on the information required to be made available under Subsection (b). If the Board develops procedures under this subsection, the designation or ranking received by each program must be included in the information made available under the section.

**Texas Education Code, §21.0454, Risk Factors for Educator Preparation Programs; Risk-Assessment Model (excerpt):**

- (a) The Board shall propose rules necessary to develop a set of risk factors to use in assessing the overall risk level of each educator preparation program.
- (b) The set of risk factors developed by the Board may include whether an educator preparation program is accredited by other organizations.
- (c) The Board shall use the set of risk factors to guide the agency in conducting monitoring, inspections, and compliance audits of educator preparation programs, including evaluations associated with renewals under Section 21.0443.

**Texas Education Code, §21.061, Review and Updating of Educator Preparation Programs:**

The Board shall, after consulting with appropriate higher education faculty and public-school teachers and administrators and soliciting advice from other interested persons with relevant knowledge and experience, develop and carry out a process for reviewing and, as necessary, updating standards and requirements for educator preparation programs.

**ATTACHMENT II**

|                           |   |                               |
|---------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| <b>IN THE MATTER</b>      | § | <b>BEFORE THE STATE BOARD</b> |
|                           | § |                               |
| <b>OF</b>                 | § | <b>FOR</b>                    |
|                           | § |                               |
| <b>TEACHERBUILDER.COM</b> | § | <b>EDUCATOR CERTIFICATION</b> |

**ORDER**

On the 8<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2015, came on to be considered TEA staff’s recommendation to impose conditions upon the continuing program approval of TeacherBuilder.com pursuant to 19 Tex. Admin. Code § 229.6, and the recommendation to assign TeacherBuilder.com the accreditation status of Accredited-Warned pursuant to 19 Tex. Admin. Code §§229.4 and 229.5.

Based on the recommendation of TEA staff, the Board hereby orders the following:

1. TeacherBuilder.com is assigned an Accredited-Warned status due to violations of SBEC rules.
2. Based on the assignment of the Accredited-Warned status and as a condition of continuing approval, TEA staff will appoint a monitor to participate in the activities of TeacherBuilder.com and report the activities to the TEA. All costs associated with the appointment of the monitor shall be paid by TeacherBuilder.com.
3. TeacherBuilder.com is required to have each candidate’s transcript, content examination results, and/or Statement of Eligibility reviewed and approved by the appointed monitor prior to recommending a probationary certificate. TEA staff will review and approve probationary certificate recommendations until a monitor is assigned.
4. TeacherBuilder.com is required to have each out-of-country applicant’s transcript review by an evaluating service and TOEFL results reviewed and approved by the appointed monitor prior to admission to the program. TEA staff will review and approve out-of-country applications until a monitor is assigned.
5. As a condition of continuing approval, TeacherBuilder.com is prohibited from the addition of new certificate classes or new certification fields.
6. As a condition of continuing program approval, TeacherBuilder.com is prohibited from the admission of candidates into certification fields for which TeacherBuilder.com does not have a TEA-approved curriculum matrix.

TeacherBuilder.com is required to grant TEA staff access to the TeacherBuilder.com online curriculum.

7. TeacherBuilder.com is required to participate in a discretionary continuing approval review by TEA staff when recommended by the appointed monitor. At the time of the review, TeacherBuilder.com is required to show compliance with all SBEC rules as a condition of continuing program approval. TeacherBuilder.com is required to pay the applicable fee for the review.

8. Upon a successful discretionary continuing approval review visit report, TeacherBuilder.com may request the SBEC to lift the conditions of continuing approval and re-evaluate its accreditation rating.

On behalf of the State Board for Educator Certification:

SIGNED this 17<sup>th</sup> day of August 2015

---

BONNY L. CAIN, Ed.D.

CHAIR, STATE BOARD FOR EDUCATOR CERTIFICATION