

Rio Grande College of Sul Ross State University

Uvalde, Texas

Department of Education



2010 OVERALL TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM DESIGN

Because information on the curriculum used to prepare elementary teacher candidates in how to teach reading is unclear, we cannot provide a comment on the design of this critical element, but the overall design of this institution's teacher preparation programs could be improved across a range of elements, noted below. Because some of the data that we collect is drawn from public sources, we always ask the institution to verify the accuracy and currency of what we have collected. Rio Grande College of Sul Ross State University declined to review and comment.

Admission Standards

1. Admits teacher candidates with strong academic records ●

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

The standards for admission either into the institution or its teacher preparation program should select teacher candidates from only the top half of the college population.

Assuming that Rio Grande College of Sul Ross State University shares the "less selective" rating U.S. News and World Report gives to Sul Ross State University, NCTQ checked the entrance criteria for admission into the Rio Grande College's Department of Education. While the department commendably exceeds the state's minimum cut-score for the reading portion of the THEA (a test of college readiness), it does not do so for the mathematics portion of the test, and therefore does not fully meet this standard.

Elementary Teacher Program

2. Prepares teacher candidates to teach reading

a. Extent to which the science of reading is covered ?

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

The research-based content proven to be necessary for teaching all children to read should be clearly evident in course materials such as lecture topics, assignments and textbooks.

While some strong textbooks are used, the syllabi for required reading courses provide virtually no information on course content, making it impossible to ascertain the nature and quality of instruction. We identified three required textbooks that did not support reading science.

b. Adherence to science of reading throughout coursework ?

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

All of an institution's required reading courses — not just some courses — should impart the research-based content that is necessary for teaching all children to read.


While some strong textbooks are used, the syllabi for required reading courses provide virtually no information on course content, making it impossible to ascertain the nature and quality of instruction.

Ratings: ● Meets standard ● Nearly meets standard ● Partly meets standard ● Meets a small part of standard ○ Fails to meet standard
 ? Data insufficient for a final rating ⊘ Data withheld despite request NA Not applicable 2011 Evaluation pending NR Not rated

3. Prepares teacher candidates to teach mathematics 


[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

Teacher candidates, even those who excel in math, generally require three semesters of coursework in order to progress from a procedural to a conceptual understanding of the essential mathematics topics taught in the elementary grades. *The institution does not fully meet this standard because it simply does not require a sufficient number of courses to allow for adequate coverage of the essential topics.*

4. Educates teacher candidates in the broad content areas relevant to elementary teaching 


[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

Because they cannot teach what they do not know, teacher candidates need to have a solid grasp of literature and composition; American history, world history, art history and music history; geography; and science. *The institution does not meet this standard because neither the institution nor its teacher preparation program ensures sufficient coverage in the content elementary teachers need (including world/American literature, world history, world geography, art history and music history).*

5. Requires an area of concentration so that teacher candidates develop content expertise and have a second career option 

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

Teacher candidates should develop some expertise outside of their professional studies, not only to enrich their own academic experience, but also to serve as a fallback major in the event that the student teaching experience goes poorly. *The institution nearly meets this standard because it requires teacher candidates to take five English courses and four history courses.*

6. Offers all required courses at least once a year 

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

It must be possible to complete the requisite program in a timely manner. *The institution fully meets this standard because it offers all required courses each year.*

7. Prepares teacher candidates for the profession 

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

The well-documented ineffectiveness of first year teachers may be mitigated by professional preparation that includes coursework on classroom management, methods for teaching specific content and diverse learners, child development, assessment and data driven instruction, and how education policy challenges affect practice. *Because we could only gain access to course descriptions for this standard rather than syllabi, we did not rate this standard. However, our limited examination of course requirements and descriptions suggests that the institution potentially appears to give inadequate attention to a number of essential professional topics, most notably 1) assessment, 2) education policy challenges, and 3) mathematics methods.*

8. Student teaching effectively prepares teacher candidates for the challenges of the classroom 

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

Although there are a number of characteristics that define a high quality student teaching program, at a minimum a full-time, full-semester clinical experience is necessary. *The institution meets this minimal standard as it offers a full semester of full-time student teaching.*



Secondary Teacher Program

9. Prepares high school teacher candidates to teach their subject area(s) ●
- + Rationale + Methodology + State findings
- All children deserve to have teachers who are well versed in each and every one of the subjects they teach, regardless of teacher shortages.
While most of the course requirements in the certification areas for secondary teachers appear to be sound, the institution does not fully meet the standard because of an inadequate program design in social studies. Acknowledging that flawed state regulation is the principal culprit for the prevalence of poorly designed social studies preparation programs across the state, including here, the institution should not sanction a system that qualifies secondary teachers to teach multiple subject areas in social studies after having taken sufficient coursework in only two of these areas, history and political science.
-
10. Prepares middle school teacher candidates to teach their subject area(s) ●
- + Rationale + Methodology + State findings
- All children deserve to have teachers who are well versed in each and every one of the subjects they teach, regardless of teacher shortages.
The institution only partially meets this standard because of an inadequate program design for the "middle school generalist." Acknowledging that flawed state regulation is the principal culprit for the prevalence of poorly designed middle school programs across the state, including here, the institution should not sanction a system that qualifies a middle school teacher in all four core disciplines without sufficient coursework in each.
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11. Offers all required courses (high school certification) at least once a year ●
- + Rationale + Methodology + State findings
- It must be possible to complete the requisite program in a timely manner.
The institution meets this standard because it offers all required courses each year.
-
12. Prepares high school teacher candidates for the profession ?
- + Rationale + Methodology + State findings
- The well-documented ineffectiveness of first year teachers may be mitigated by professional preparation that includes coursework on classroom management, methods for teaching specific content and diverse learners, adolescent development, assessment and data driven instruction, and how education policy challenges affect practice.
Because we could only gain access to course descriptions for this standard rather than syllabi, we did not rate this standard. However, our limited examination of course requirements and descriptions suggests that the institution potentially appears to give inadequate attention to a number of essential professional topics for the secondary teacher, most notably 1) subject-specific methods, 2) assessment, and 3) education policy challenges.
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13. Student teaching effectively prepares high school teacher candidates for the challenges of the classroom 2011
- + Rationale + Methodology + State findings
- Although there are a number of characteristics that define a high quality student teaching program, at a minimum a full-time, full-semester clinical experience is necessary.
The institution meets this minimal standard as it offers a full semester of full-time student teaching.

Ratings: ● Meets standard ● Nearly meets standard ● Partly meets standard ● Meets a small part of standard ○ Fails to meet standard
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Special Education Teacher Program

Because Rio Grande College of Sul Ross State University does not offer a program for special education certification, Standards #14-16 are not included.

Outcomes

17. Systematically seeks and uses feedback on graduates from school districts ?

18. Utilizes available data systems to monitor performance of graduates ?

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

Mirroring a similar commitment now found in K-12 education, higher education institutions must embrace data driven decision making and accountability in preparing teachers.

The ratings for these standards are unclear. Relying on survey data of local school districts to determine an institution's commitment to looking at data on its graduates, we were unable to locate any local school district that routinely hired the institution's graduates.

Institutional Features

19. Assigns faculty to teach in their area of expertise ○

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

Only the most extreme examples of unsuitable assignments are noted, such as an instructor teaching both reading and mathematics methods.

The institution does not meet this standard as we found some evidence of an institution making inappropriate assignments, including evidence of a single instructor being assigned to teach mathematics methods, science methods, teaching diverse learners and counseling.

20. Offers grade-span specific coursework as appropriate ●

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

A single class with curriculum addressing students from preschoolers to high school seniors cannot adequately prepare both elementary and secondary teacher candidates in areas such as classroom management or instructing students with disabilities.

The institution only partially meets this standard as we could find evidence of single courses designed to teach both elementary and secondary candidates on topics benefiting from age-specific approaches (e.g., EDUC 3302 Educational Psychology).

21. Ensures that teacher candidates are prepared to teach in a global society NR

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

The world has shrunk. Recognition of that fact should pervade the campus.

Because this standard is still in a developmental phase, we do not provide an institutional rating and our findings should only be viewed as exploratory. We note that teacher candidates are required to take eight credit hours of coursework in Spanish, but we did not find coursework requirements regarding world geography, or education-focused study abroad programs, nor do foreign students comprise a significant proportion of the institution's student body.

**Exit Standards**

Either state licensure standards are adequate or the institution sets a higher standard for program completion than licensure requires

If the state fails to establish rigorous licensure requirements, institutions are still obligated to ensure that their graduates meet high standards. For example, if the state does not require a licensure test that measures candidates' knowledge of every subject taught, institutions must fill this vacuum.

22. Elementary (EC-4/EC-6)

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

The institution does not meet this standard because it relies only on the state's licensing test, the TExES elementary generalist test, to determine if its elementary teacher candidates possess adequate knowledge of reading instruction, as well as content knowledge in four subject areas. This test is wholly inadequate—both because of its low level of rigor and the lack of separate cut scores for each subject. Recognizing that action on the part of the state to remedy these deficiencies is needed, the institution could require a more meaningful test of reading instruction and insist that its teacher candidates pass assessments in each of four subject areas.

23. Middle School (Grades 4-8)

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

The institution does not meet this standard because it qualifies middle school teacher candidates by virtue of passing the middle school generalist licensing test. This test is inadequate because of its lack of separate cut scores for reading and four core subjects. Recognizing that action on the part of the state to remedy these deficiencies is needed, the institution could require a more meaningful test of reading instruction and insist that its teacher candidates independently pass assessments in each subject area.

24. Secondary (Grades 8-12)

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

The institution nearly meets this standard. Acknowledging that flawed state regulation is the principal culprit for the prevalence of poor design of some secondary programs across the state, the institution should not qualify secondary teacher candidates to teach multiple subjects by means of a "composite subjects" certification (e.g., preparing a teacher to teach "science" instead of chemistry, biology, physics and/or earth science). The institution could remedy the state's regulatory deficiency by requiring candidates to pass content assessments in each subject for exit.

25. Special Education (EC-12)**NA**

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

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Accreditation:	NCATE	TEAC	None
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Number of Teachers (2009): **79** Low Producer

Data are from the Texas Education Agency.

Elementary:	55
Middle:	17
Secondary:	7
Special education:	0

[+ Statewide teacher production](#)

Opportunities for institution to respond: May 26, 2008; October 29, 2009; February 22, 2010

[+ More on communication](#)

Institution Comment: No comment was submitted for publication.