

AAQEP Annual Report for 2024

Provider/Program Name:	Abilene Christian University
End Date of Current AAQEP Accreditation Term:	June 30, 2026

PART I: Publicly Available Program Performance and Candidate Achievement Data

1. Overview and Context

This overview describes the mission and context of the educator preparation provider and the programs included in its AAQEP review.

Abilene Christian University (ACU), a private comprehensive university, was founded in 1906. It is affiliated with the Churches of Christ and is one of the largest private universities in the Southwest. The mission of the university is *to educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world.*

Abilene Christian University earned Doctoral/Professional university status, as determined by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education in December of 2021. Also known as R3, this classification includes institutions that award at least 20 research/scholarship doctoral degrees each year.

The university comprises seven schools and colleges and offers 79 baccalaureate majors, 35 master's degree programs, and four doctoral programs. ACU includes the Abilene residential campus and ACU Dallas, an online campus, which was established in 2015. All teacher certification programs are housed on the Abilene residential campus. Our students come from 52 states and territories and 46 countries. ACU is designated as an Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution by the Department of Education. Current recognitions and rankings can be found at the following link: <https://acu.edu/about/rankings/>.

The School of Education resides in the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, which includes the Departments of Art & Design, Communication & Sociology, History & Global Studies, Journalism & Mass Communication, Language & Literature, Music, Government & Criminal Justice, Theatre, and the School of Education. The mission of the School of Education is *to prepare exemplary, committed educators for service in diverse and multicultural communities for the glory of God*. The program is administered by the School of Education and is made up of all students seeking initial teacher certification, which includes students from three colleges and 13 academic departments. We do not currently offer any advanced certifications but do offer a 5th year Masters in Education in Teaching and Learning that includes initial teacher certification.

2. Enrollment and Completion Data

Table 1 shows current enrollment and recent completion data for each program included in the AAQEP review.

Table 1. Program Specification: Enrollment and Completers for Academic Year 2023-2024

Degree or Certificate granted by the institution or organization	State Certificate, License, Endorsement, or Other Credential	Number of Candidates enrolled in most recently completed academic year (12 months ending 07/31/24)	Number of Completers in most recently completed academic year (12 months ending 07/31/24)
<i>Programs that lead to initial teaching credentials</i>			
Bachelor of Science	Initial Certification: EC-6 Core Subjects with STR	50	12
	Initial Certification: 4-8 Science	1	
	Initial Certification: 7-12 Life Science		1
	Initial Certification: 7-12 Math	1	
	Initial Certification: 4-8 Social Studies	1	
	Initial Certification: 7-12 Social Studies	3	1
	Initial Certification: 7-12 History	2	1
	Initial Certification: 4-8 Mathematics	3	1
	Initial Certification: EC-12 SPED		1
Bachelor of Arts	Initial Certification: 4-8 ELAR with STR	2	

	Initial Certification: 7-12 ELAR	2	2
	Initial Certification: EC-12 Languages other than English - Spanish	2	
Bachelor of Music	Initial Certification: EC-12 Music	15	4
Bachelor of Fine Art	Initial Certification: EC-12 Theater	4	2
	Initial Certification: EC-12 Art	4	
Masters of Teaching and Learning	Initial Certification: EC-6 Core Subjects with STR	5	7
	Initial Certification: 4-8 ELAR with STR	1	
	Initial Certification: 7-12 Life Science	1	
	Initial Certification: 4-8 Mathematics	1	
	Initial Certification: 7-12 Social Studies	2	
	Initial Certification: EC-12 Music	2	1
	Initial Certification: EC-12 SPED		1
Special Education Supplemental Certificate		5	3
TOTALS:		107	37

Added or Discontinued Programs

Any programs within the AAQEP review that have been added or discontinued within the past year are listed below.

NA

3. Program Performance Indicators

The program performance information in Table 2 applies to the academic year indicated in Table 1.

Table 2. Program Performance Indicators

<p>A. Total enrollment in the educator preparation programs shown in Table 1. This figure is an unduplicated count, i.e., individuals earning more than one credential may be counted in more than one line above but only once here.</p>
<p>102</p>
<p>B. Total number of unique completers (across all programs) included in Table 1. This figure is an unduplicated count, i.e., individuals who earned more than one credential may be counted in more than one line above but only once here.</p>
<p>32</p>
<p>C. Number of recommendations for certificate, license, or endorsement included in Table 1.</p>
<p>32</p>
<p>D. Cohort completion rates for candidates who completed the various programs within their respective program’s expected timeframe and in 1.5 times the expected timeframe.</p>
<p>100%</p>
<p>E. Summary of state license examination results, including teacher performance assessments, and specification of any examinations on which the pass rate (cumulative at time of reporting) was below 80%.</p>
<p>Candidates in our EC-6, Grades 4-8, Secondary, and All-Levels programs are largely successful on state license examinations. Results of all certification exams can be found in Table 3 below. Of note from that data is that 100% of candidates passed the following certification exams on their first attempt -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Science of Teaching Reading (STR, n=16) ● EC-6 English Language Arts (ELAR, n=21) ● 4-8 ELAR (n=1) ● 7-12 ELAR (n=1) ● 7-12 Life Science (n=1) ● 7-12 History (n=1) ● EC-12 Theatre (n=1) ● Special Education (SPED) Supplement (n=4) <p>Additionally, 90% or more of students went on to pass their certification exams on their second attempt, if needed, on the Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities (PPR), English as a Second Language (ESL), EC-6 Math, Science, Social Studies, and Fine Arts, Health, and PE, and 4-8 Math exams</p> <p>There are three examinations in which our passing rate by the second examination was not 100%, these include the 7-12 Social Studies (66%), EC-12 Spanish (50%), and EC-12 Music exams (75%). While these percentages can appear problematic,</p>

we also have to consider that we have a small number of students taking each of these exams and the depth and breadth of content make each of them challenging to prepare for. Details on these data points are provided below -

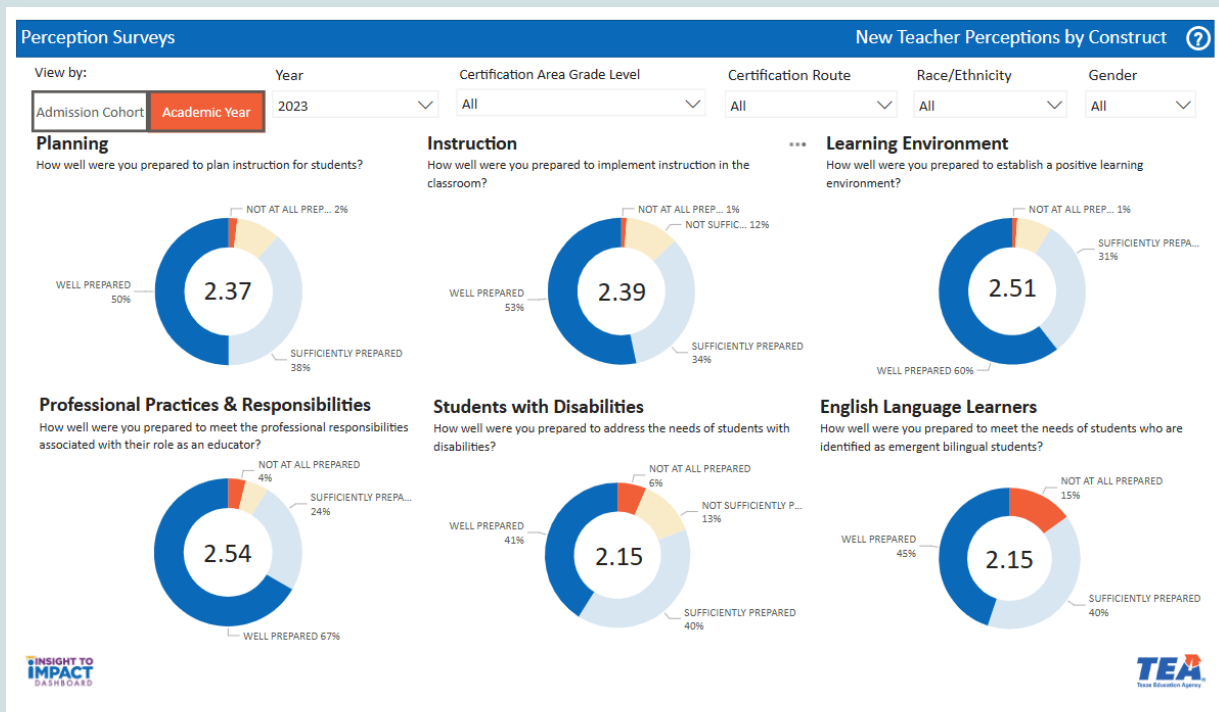
- One out of the three candidates from our program who took the 7-12 Social Studies Exam was unable to pass on their second attempt, but did pass on the third attempt the following fall.
- One out of the two candidates from our program who took the EC-12 Spanish Exam was unable to pass on their second attempt, but did pass on the third attempt the following fall.
- Three out of the 12 candidates from our program who took the EC-12 Music exam were unable to pass on their second attempt, but two passed on the third attempt and the third passed on their fourth attempt the following fall.

We are working closely with our colleagues in the Music, History, and Language and Literature departments to align curriculum and strengthen our preparation strategies for students taking these particular exams. In addition to closer alignment of content, we are working to find efficient and cost-effective programs, including Certify Teacher, 240 Tutoring, and Learning Liaisons, to offer students across content areas support as they prepare for their certification exams

F. Narrative explanation of **evidence available from program completers**, with a characterization of findings.

In the week before graduation, Clinical Teachers are asked to complete a series of program feedback processes, including an end of program survey in which they are prompted to evaluate their experiences in the classroom, field placements, and clinical teaching experiences. Data from program completers who submitted feedback in the 2023-2024 school year (N = 23) suggests that students felt most prepared in lesson planning (91%), assessment (83%), and content-specific pedagogy (74%). Completers reported that they felt under-prepared for data collection and analysis (30%), behavior management (39%) and working with families (61%).

Additional data on program completers is available through Texas's survey of first year teachers. This survey asks questions on a three-point scale, three being *well prepared*, two being *sufficiently prepared*, one being *not sufficiently prepared*, and zero being *not at all prepared*. In previous years data from this survey were reported in spreadsheet format, last year data was made available in visual format without any individual-level indicators, this year data was made available for EPPs on TEA's *Insight Impact Dashboard*, a new platform that the state has rolled out for data collection. Data from the New Teacher Perceptions Survey can be viewed below.



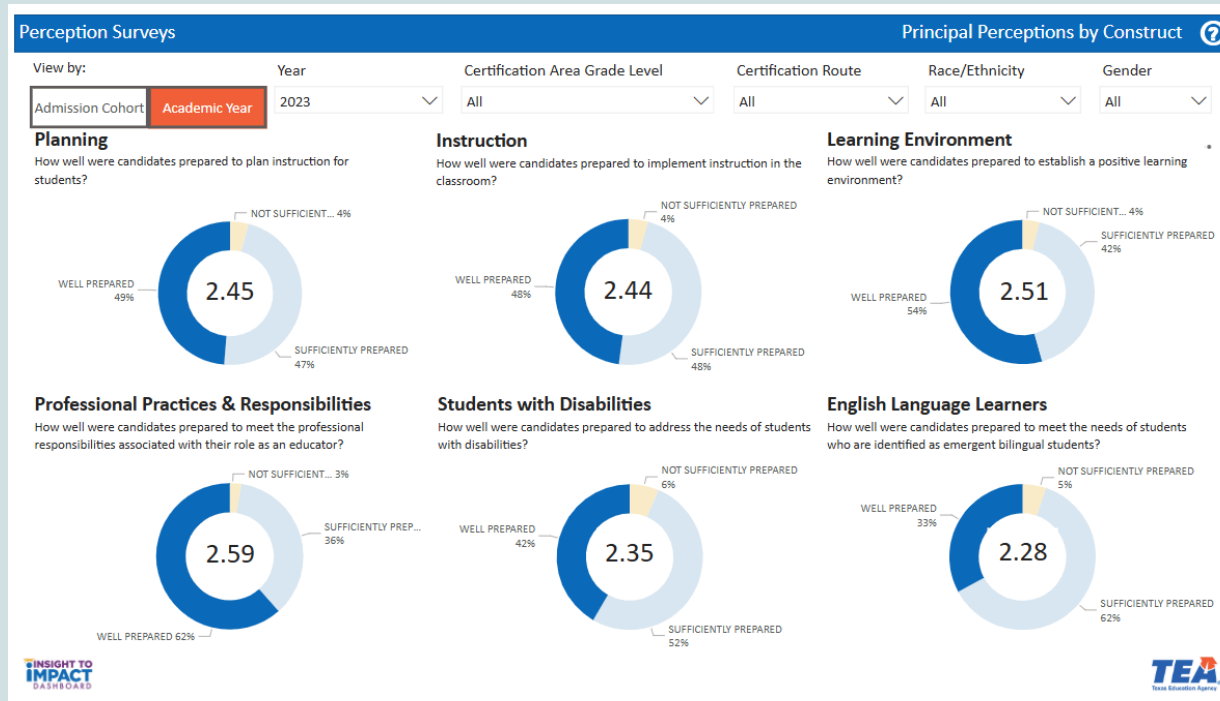
Looking more closely at the data by construct, program completers were most pleased with their preparation in the areas of professional practices and responsibilities (2.54), learning environment (2.51), instruction (2.39), and planning (2.37). Areas that received the lowest ratings were working with students with disabilities (2.15) and English language learners (2.15). While these numbers are similar to those reported across the state, they indicate the work that we are doing in our professional education sequence, specifically in SPED 371 and EDUC 476, is time well-spent.

Overall, this data suggests that students are largely pleased with their preparation upon completing our program. Moving forward, we will need to focus our attention and energy on strengthening our curriculum and experiences related SPED and EL populations.

G. Narrative explanation of evidence available from employers of program completers, with a characterization of findings.

The state of Texas sends an annual survey to principals asking for feedback on their first year teachers. Similarly to the Teacher Survey referenced above, principals are asked to rate first year teachers on a three-point scale, three being *well prepared*, two being *sufficiently prepared*, one being *not sufficiently prepared*, and zero being *not at all prepared*. In previous years data from

this survey were reported in spreadsheet format, last year data was made available in visual format without any individual-level indicators, this year data was made available for EPPs on TEA's *Insight Impact Dashboard*, a new platform that the state has rolled out for data collection. Data from the Principal Perceptions Survey can be found below.



Using data from the *Principal Perceptions by Construct* report, principals were most pleased with program completer’s preparation in the areas of professional practices and responsibilities (PPR; 2.59), learning environment (2.51), planning (2.45) and Instruction (2.44). Areas that received the lowest ratings were working with students with disabilities (2.35) and English Language Learners (2.28).

This data adds to our knowledge of the potential strengths and weaknesses of our program. Specifically, it suggests that our students are able to meet professional responsibilities/requirements and are strong in instructional practices. The data also contributes to the case for strengthening our candidates' knowledge and experience in the area of students with learning and language exceptionalities.

H. Narrative explanation of how the program investigates **employment rates for program completers**, with a characterization of findings. This section may also indicate rates of completers' ongoing education, e.g., graduate study.

Of our 32 completers from the 2023-2024 school year, 27 are employed as teachers. Of the 27 completers in the classroom, 25 are employed in Texas public schools and two are teaching out of state (Montana and Kansas). One completer is employed at a local church and one is staying at home with her children while her husband is deployed.

In addition to our most recent graduates, TEA's *Insight to Impact Dashboard*, also gives us access to retention numbers across cohorts going back to the cohort that began teaching in the 2018-2019 academic year. Of the seventeen candidates that began as first year teachers that year, eight are still in the field. Of the 19 teachers that began their teaching careers in 2019-2020, 14 are still teaching in Texas. Of the 44 that began teaching in the 2020-2021 academic year, 37 are still in Texas Public School classrooms. Lastly, 12 of the 15 candidates that entered teaching in the 2021-2022 academic year are still in the classroom. Our retention percentages across the past four years vary from 47%-84% across cohorts, which reflects the trends we are seeing in the retention of novice teachers across the country. It is important to remember that this data was likely profoundly impacted by COVID, shifts in educational policy and perception, and changes in the family structures of our young teachers.

Overall, our students are able to quickly find jobs in the districts/areas they are most interested in teaching, and the majority remain in the classroom.

4. Candidate Academic Performance Indicators

Tables 3 and 4 report on select measures of candidate/completer performance related to AAQEP Standards 1 and 2, including the program's expectations for successful performance and indicators of the degree to which those expectations are met.

Table 3. Expectations and Performance on Standard 1: Candidate and Completer Performance

Provider-Selected Measures	Explanation of Performance Expectation	Level or Extent of Success in Meeting the Expectation
Dispositions	<p>Students are assessed formatively and given feedback using the Dispositions rubric multiple times throughout the program at the sophomore (EDUC 211), junior (READ 322/363), senior (Block), and Clinical Teaching levels.</p> <p>By the Clinical Teaching semester, students are expected to score a 70 on the Dispositions Review with no ratings of a 1.</p>	<p>All rubrics are kept in students' permanent files. All teacher candidates met standard at for each benchmarking period. Formal data is summarized below for all Clinical Teaching Dispositions completed during the 2023-2024 school year:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Clinical Teaching Dispositions (N =33)</p> <hr style="width: 50%; margin: auto;"/>

		Met Standard	Mean Score*	Standard Deviation
		100%	97.58	4.20
		* Out of a possible 100		
TEExES Certification Exams	The state of Texas has set the passing score of all certification tests at a scale score of 240.	Data from TExES exams taken during the 2023-2024 school year are below.		
<p><i>NOTE: 'N' represents the number of individual students who took individual certification exams, exams may have been taken multiple times to meet mastery. For reporting purposes, passing rates were calculated based on individuals passing by their second attempt. Where multiple attempts were reported, both scores are calculated into the means and standard deviations.</i></p>				
TEExES Certification Exams				
	Exam	Met Standard	Mean Scale Score	Standard Deviation
	PPR (N = 46)	100%	263	16.37
	ESL (N = 27)	96%	261	12.04
	Science of Teaching Reading (N = 16)	100%*	265	10.01
EC-6 Certification (N = 21)	ELAR	100%*	280	8.62
	Math	100%	262	22.68
	Science	95%	267	19.61
	SS	91%	252	31.23
	FAHPE	100%	274	14.01
4-8 Certifications (N = 4)	ELAR (n = 1)	100%*	256	-
	Math (n = 3)	100%	241	16.64
7-12	ELAR (n = 2)	100%*	252	9.90

Certifications (N = 7)	Life Science (n = 1)	100%*	278	-
	Social Studies (n = 3)	66%	242	8.35
	History (n = 1)	100%*	267	-
All Levels Certifications (N = 15)	Music (n = 12)	75%	246	12.52
	Theatre (n = 1)	100%*	251	-
	Spanish (n = 2)	50%	233	9.74
Supplemental Certifications	Special Education (n = 4)	100%*	256	5.00

* 100 % Passing percentage on first attempt

Teacher Work Sample	Clinical Teachers complete a Teacher Work Sample documenting a unit of study from pre assessment through planning, delivery, and post-assessment. Students are graded using a department-created rubric. Revisions were made to the rubric for the Fall of 2022, the revised rubric can be found here .	Data from Teacher Work Samples collected during the 2023-2024 academic year are as follows: Teacher Work Sample (N = 33)
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Met Standard	Mean Rating	Standard Deviation
97%*	89%	6.29

Mastery standard set at 75%
*One student scored below a 75%, an all-levels music candidate, they completed revisions to meet mastery

Table 4. Expectations and Performance on Standard 2: Completer Professional Competence and Growth

Provider-Selected Measures	Explanation of Performance Expectation	Level or Extent of Success in Meeting the Expectation
PPR - Domain 2	Domain 2 of the PPR standards is <i>Creating a Positive Productive Classroom Environment</i> . Our goal is for Teacher Education candidates to score a	Data from Domain 2 of TExES PPR exams taken by completers from the 2023-2024 school year are as follows:

	65 or better on the Domain 2 competency of their TExES PPR exam.	<p style="text-align: center;">PPR: Domain 2 (N = 46)</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;">Met 65% Standard</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Mean Score</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Standard Deviation</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">91%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">75</td> <td style="text-align: center;">14.97</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Met 65% Standard	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	91%	75	14.97		
Met 65% Standard	Mean Score	Standard Deviation								
91%	75	14.97								
Teacher Work Sample - Contextual Factors	The Instructional Decision Making section of the Teacher Work Sample requires clinical teachers to collect and analyze data at the community, district, campus, classroom, and student levels in order to identify instructional implications that will impact their teaching. Candidates must score an eight (8) or higher (ten point maximum) on the Instructional Decision Making section to meet department expectations for that section.	<p>Data from the Contextual Factor indicator of the Teacher Work Samples collected during the 2022-2023 school year are as follows:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">TWS Contextual Factors (N = 33)</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;">Met Standard</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Mean Rating</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Standard Deviation</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">91%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">9.03</td> <td style="text-align: center;">0.53</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><small>*Three students averaged below an 8 on the Instructional Decision Making section, for each student, it was the Guiding Data and Synthesis indicator that they struggled with.</small></p>	Met Standard	Mean Rating	Standard Deviation	91%	9.03	0.53		
Met Standard	Mean Rating	Standard Deviation								
91%	9.03	0.53								
Environmental Criteria from Observation Rubric	<p>The Environmental Criteria from the ACU Observation Rubric include -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Respect and Rapport ● Materials and Supplies ● Transitions, Routines, and Procedures ● Expectations ● Effective Behavior Supports <p>In order to demonstrate mastery in these areas, candidates are expected to earn a score point three (3) out of four (4) possible points.</p>	<p>Data from the Environmental Criteria areas of the final Clinical Teaching Observations collected during the 2023-2024 school year can be found below.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Observation Environmental Factors (N=33)</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th style="text-align: center;">Met Standard</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Mean Rating</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Standard Deviation</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Respect & Rapport</td> <td style="text-align: center;">100%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3.88</td> <td style="text-align: center;">0.33</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Met Standard	Mean Rating	Standard Deviation	Respect & Rapport	100%	3.88	0.33
	Met Standard	Mean Rating	Standard Deviation							
Respect & Rapport	100%	3.88	0.33							

Materials & Supplies	100%	3.76	0.44
Transitions, Routines & Procedures	100%	3.55	0.51
Expectations	97%*	3.39	0.56
Effective Behavior Supports	94%*	3.58	0.61

*Each student who did not earn a 3 or above scored a 2, "Needs Improvement." There were no 1, "Unsatisfactory," ratings in the data set.

5. Notes on Progress, Accomplishment, and Innovation

This section describes program accomplishments, efforts, and innovations (strengths and outcomes) to address challenges and priorities over the past year.

Last year, we did extensive curricular review within the School of Education. To begin, we started with the conceptual framework that has been used in the department for the last 15 years. The faculty agreed that everything about schools and schooling, and higher education, has experienced great change in the past 15 years. In order to better address the needs of our students and the students they will teach, we needed to re-examine our practices. To begin, we started with the central question, "What is the ideal portrait of a graduate from the School of Education at Abilene Christian University?" We started by generating adjectives to describe this ideal student. Over the course of several faculty meetings, we brainstormed and defined characteristics of a successful graduate; worked on identifying patterns and themes in our list of characteristics; and clarified our understanding. At the end of our work, we identified four foundational terms. We concluded that we want graduates from our education program to be reflective, responsive, aware, and critical. After identifying these as our key characteristics, the chair assigned four different faculty members to write a paragraph to communicate to all stakeholders (students, parents, public school partners, etc.) how we operationalized these terms. Faculty were assigned based on their areas of research. Dr. Joseph McNulty wrote the *critical* paragraph. Dr. Amy Spiker wrote the *reflective* paragraph. Dr. Andrew Huddleston wrote the *responsive* paragraph; and, Dr. Kim Hardin wrote the *aware* paragraph. The full faculty reviewed and offered input and feedback on all paragraphs as they were written. The newly formed conceptual framework and paragraphs can be found [here](#).

Our next step was to begin the curricular revision process through the lenses of these four pillars with the additional development of aligned student learning outcomes. To do this, every faculty member was tasked with critically examining one course using the standards of their field, the Texas Teacher Standards and our new conceptual framework. Faculty then wrote new student learning outcomes and scrutinized every assignment in their course. Faculty were to ask themselves if the assignment was meeting its purpose; aligned to the new SLOs; needed revision, etc. All core courses in the education sequence were to be examined. These courses are the courses all majors, regardless of certification field, must take to certify to teach at ACU. Faculty began this task with a partner that was intentionally chosen by the chair of the department. After working with a partner, they met

individually with the chair. They provided all materials for the chair meeting in advance so that the discussion would be productive. The goal of the meetings was to provide any support needed to the faculty members as they worked on course revision. At the end of the year (May), faculty shared their final syllabi for the chosen course with their partners for review. All faculty were then tasked with writing new SLOs and reviewing all course assignments in their other syllabi over the summer.

In June, we shared our new conceptual framework with the alumni who attended our New Teacher Institute. Alumni provided written and oral feedback. After filling out the response sheet, one faculty member sat with each table group to process the data and take notes. Alumni were able to highlight specific experiences and assignments in their coursework that aligned with the different characteristics presented. In addition to providing affirmative feedback, our alumni were also able to identify where gaps exist in our current programming, including more instruction in behavior management, working with colleagues and families, and how to navigate more restrictive curriculum and administrative practices.

Revising our conceptual framework also led to an extensive revision of the handbook for our department. This was started by the leadership team. After this team identified areas that needed revision, information was shared with the full faculty. Due to changes in state policy (moving to hours instead of days for clinical teaching), the need for consistent policies across the department (absences, etc.) and components pertaining to department procedures (re-applying for program, etc.), the handbook required attention. This work was done predominately by the leadership team; however, the process was transparent to the full faculty throughout. At this time, the handbook is ready to be launched department wide at the start of the spring semester in January 2025. Additionally, it will be sent to a graphic designer for formatting and updating. It will replace the old handbook on the website and within the department in January. It is our hope that clearly communicating with the students using the new handbook, throughout the program, will clarify the routines, procedures and ethos of the department.

Strong research has continued this year in the department as well. Drs. Andrew Huddleston and Stephanie Talley have continued their work in principled resistance and teacher adaptiveness in the face of standardized and scripted curricula. Last year, they were awarded an internal grant from Abilene Christian University for \$50,000. This internal grant is designed to support work that will lead to external grants. Building on their previous work in principled resistance, Dr. Huddleston and Dr. Talley sought to implement a two-year professional learning community for elementary teachers in the Abilene area designed to develop their instructional adaptiveness in their literacy instruction. Two of the goals of this research are to develop literacy teachers' expertise for making assessment-based adjustments to their instruction thereby improving classroom instruction in local schools; and, to develop potential partners that could later serve as cooperating teachers for clinical teachers and model classrooms for field-based observations. This fall, six teachers elected to participate in this research. The PLC met in the fall and will continue to meet for the next year and half. Additionally, Dr. Huddleston and Dr. Talley presented at two conferences: The Texas Association of Literacy Educators (TALE) and the Literacy Research Association (LRA). Two publications from this research were accepted and published this year as well. The most prestigious was a theoretical literature review on principled resistance accepted by the Review of Research, a Sage publication that is connected to the American Educational Research Association (AERA). The online version of this article can be accessed at <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543241291835>. The review will appear in a print version of the journal in the spring.