

AC 2025 – 2026 Assessment

M.A.T. Early Childhood Education (548A) - Annual Report

Division: Gallaspy College of Education and Human Development Department:

School of Education

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Northwestern Mission. Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to acquiring, creating, and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, research, and service. With its certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs, Northwestern State University prepares its increasingly diverse student population to contribute to an inclusive global community with a steadfast dedication to improving our region, state, and nation.

Gallaspy College of Education and Human Development Mission. The Gallaspy Family College of Education and Human Development is committed to working collaboratively to acquire, create, and disseminate knowledge to Northwestern students through transformational, high-impact experiential learning practices, research, and service. Through the School of Education and Departments of Health and Human Performance, Military Science, Psychology, and Social Work, the College produces knowledgeable, inspired, and innovative graduates ready for lifelong learning who contribute to the communities in which they reside and the professions they serve. Additionally, the GCEHD is dedicated to the communities served by the Marie Shaw Dunn Child Development Center, NSU Elementary Laboratory School, NSU Middle Laboratory School, and the NSU Child and Family Network to assist children and their families related to learning and development.

School of Education Mission. The School of Education Mission offers exemplary programs that prepare candidates for career success in a variety of professional roles and settings. As caring, competent, reflective practitioners, our graduates become positive models in their communities and organizations. This mission is fulfilled through academic programs based on theory, research, and best practice. Further, all graduates learn to value and work with diverse populations and to incorporate technologies that enrich learning and professional endeavors.

MAT Early Childhood Education Mission Statement: The mission of the Northwestern State University alternative certification (MAT) Early Childhood Education Program is to prepare educators with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to be effective in the Early Childhood classroom. The program prepares educators to meet young children's diverse needs in a variety of settings while documenting and assessing their growth over time in relation to state standards. Upon completion of the program, which meets the National Association for the Education of Young Children's accreditation standards, candidates are equipped to meet the many demands of the teaching profession.

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Methodology:

The assessment process for this program includes:

1. Data from assessments provide results on candidate knowledge, skills, and dispositions as appropriate for professional education programs.
2. Content and key assessments in each program/course are aligned with the respective professional preparation/application standards, and candidates apply the standards in all their coursework.
3. Data from assessment tools are collected and returned to the program coordinator.
4. The program coordinator analyzes the data to examine candidates' performance, determines whether candidates have met measurable outcomes, and discusses the results with program faculty.
5. Annually, program faculty and stakeholders review data to make data driven, curricular decisions.
6. The program coordinator, in consultation with program faculty and other relevant stakeholders, proposes needed changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period, and the curricula and overall program.

Student Learning Outcomes:

SLO 1: Demonstrate discipline-specific content knowledge.

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Demonstrate discipline-specific content knowledge. (Praxis PLT: Principles of Learning & Teaching 5621).	Candidates will demonstrate knowledge of Developmentally Appropriate Practices relating to early childhood. <i>100% of candidates will meet proficiency (minimum score of 157) on Praxis PLT: Principles of Learning & Teaching 5621.</i>

Course Map: Prior to Internship

Measure 1.1. (Direct – Knowledge)

SLO 1 is assessed through PRAXIS Principles of Learning & Teaching (PLT) respective of the certification grade level. The PRAXIS assessments are published by ETS and are nationally normed. Proficiency is measured by scoring at least the minimum qualifying score set forth by the State of Louisiana for teacher certification requirements.

Quality of the assessment/evidence is assured because (1) the State of Louisiana requires the tests and (2) the tests are nationally normed.

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Application to clinical experiences (residency) requires a passing PRAXIS score; therefore, for candidates to be successful, they must achieve a score that is at least as high as the State required scores in the table below.

Certification Area	Pedagogy test	Pedagogy test#/minimum score
<i>Early Childhood PK-3</i>	PLT Early Childhood	5621/157

Finding. AC 2025 – 2026 the target was met.

Analysis.

In AC 2024 - 2025, the target was met. In AC 2024 - 2025, 100% (n=2) of candidates achieved proficiency on the PRAXIS PLT exam. Candidates' scores ranged from 157 to 162 with a mean score of 159.5. The cutoff score for the PLT (#5621) is 157.

Based on the information gathered from an analysis of the AC 2024 - 2025 results, program faculty made the following changes to drive the cycle of continuous improvement. In AC 2025 - 2026, faculty encouraged candidates to take advantage of the support services offered in the Center for Excellence and Teaching and through discounted 240 Tutoring services to support candidate learning and their ability to meet SLO 1. These changes helped to improve the candidates' ability to demonstrate proficiency on the praxis test, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2025 - 2026, the target was met. Candidates' PLT scores ranged from 160 to 174 with mean score, $\bar{x} = 168$ (n=3), with a cutoff score of 157. These changes had a direct impact on the candidates' ability to achieve proficiency on the Praxis tests.

100% of candidates (n=2) achieved proficiency by passing the PLT (5621) Praxis in 2025-2026.

Decision.

In AC 2025 - 2026, the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2025 - 2026 results, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2026 - 2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. Program faculty will encourage candidates to take advantage of the support services offered in the Center for Excellence and Teaching and through discounted 240 Tutoring services, including a free month of 240 tutoring.

These changes will improve candidates' ability to meet proficiency on the Praxis PLT

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and Content exams, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

SLO 2: Apply discipline-specific content knowledge in professional practice.

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Apply discipline-specific content knowledge in professional practice.	Candidates will demonstrate knowledge of Developmentally Appropriate Practices relating to Early Childhood development, curriculum, and assessment. <i>100% of candidates will meet proficiency (minimum of 3.0) on the Teacher Candidate Observation Form.</i>

Course Map: EDUC 5451 *Early Childhood Internship in Teaching II*

Measure 2.1. (Direct – Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions)

SLO 2 is assessed through the use of the Teacher Candidate Observation Form. The adopted, state-mandated form is the Louisiana Educators Rubric (LER), which was implemented in Fall 2024. Moving forward, the state of Louisiana has mandated that all EPPs implement the Louisiana Aspiring Educators Rubric (LAER).

The Louisiana Aspiring Educator Rubric (LAER) was developed through a partnership between the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) and the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) to define and develop effective instruction for teacher candidates. The rubric aligns with the Louisiana Educator's Rubric (LER) and supports Louisiana's goal of using evaluation as a structure for professional learning to recruit and retain effective teachers. The 12 indicators in the LAER, drawn from NIET's research-based Teaching Standards Rubric and aligned with the LER, outline the essential skills aspiring teachers need to be classroom-ready.

The rubric establishes a common language for observation, feedback, and collaboration among faculty, peers, and aspiring educators, thereby improving instructional practice and student learning. The LAER brings a comprehensive focus within 12 indicators. Each indicator below includes a bulleted list of descriptors and a corresponding rubric that defines performance at five levels. Aspiring teachers can earn a score of 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 for each of the 12 indicators: 1. Instructional Plans (IP) 2. Assessment (AS) 3. Standards and Objectives (S+O) 4. Presenting Instructional Content (PIC) 5. Activities and Materials (A+M) 6. Questioning (QU) 7. Academic Feedback (AF) 8. Teacher Knowledge of Students (TKS) 9. Thinking and Problem-Solving (TH+PS) 10. Environment (EN) 11. Engaging Students and Managing Behavior (ESMB) 12. Professionalism (P).

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Finding. In AC 2025 – 2026, the target was met.

Analysis.

In AC 2024 - 2025, the target was met. In AC 2024 - 2025, 100% (n=2) of candidates achieved proficiency by scoring at least a 3 on the Teacher Candidate Observation Form. The mean score was 4.25.

Based on the information gathered from an analysis of the AC 2024 - 2025 results, program faculty made the following changes to drive the cycle of continuous improvement. In AC 2025-2026, faculty modified instructional design by adding resources addressing the following topics where points were missed to support candidate learning and their ability to meet SLO 2:

- *Questioning*

These changes helped to improve the candidates' ability to demonstrate proficiency on the Teacher Candidate Observation Form, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2025 - 2026, the target was met. These changes had a direct impact on the candidates' ability to achieve proficiency on the Teacher Candidate Observation Form.

100% of candidates (n = 3) met target and scored at least a 3.0 on the Teacher Candidate Observation Form. The mean score was 3.89. The candidates' lowest scores fell in the following categories:

- *Instructional Plans*
- *Standards and Objectives*
- *Questioning*
- *Academic Feedback*

Decision.

In AC 2025 - 2026, the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2025 - 2026 results, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2026 - 2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2026 - 2027, program faculty will modify instructional design by adding resources addressing:

- *Instructional Plans*
- *Standards and Objectives*
- *Questioning*
- *Academic Feedback*

These changes will improve the candidates' ability to apply discipline-specific content knowledge in professional practice, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement

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forward.

SLO 3: Model professional behaviors and characteristics.

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Model professional behaviors and characteristics. (Dispositional Evaluation)	Candidates will model behaviors and characteristics that are professional and ethical. <i>100% of candidates will meet proficiency in the Dispositional Evaluation by scoring at least a 3.</i>

Course Map: ECED 5010 *Advanced Child Development*

Measure 3.1. (Direct – Dispositions)

SLO 3 is assessed through an electronic Professional Disposition Evaluation tool in ECED 5010 *Advanced Child Development*, which candidates take in their first year. The tool was implemented in the 2022 - 2023 AY and re-evaluated after first-year implementation. The Louisiana CAEP Consortium has drafted an updated dispositional evaluation tool to be piloted in 2025 - 2026 AY.

Content Validity was re-established for the Dispositional Evaluation in 2025. A panel of EPP faculty members from initial and advanced programs, as well as programs not associated with CAEP accreditation conducted an independent critique using the 2021 CAEP workbook. Construct validity was established by 1) aligning items to constructs, 2) avoiding bias and ambiguous language, and 3) stating items in actionable terms.

The Data Quality was determined to be sufficient, with all items being sufficient according to CAEP criteria for EPP-created surveys.

The Professional Disposition Scale informs candidates' professional responsibility, integrity, enthusiasm, communication, and reflection. Each domain entails three to six statements that confirm the degree to which candidates demonstrate each characteristic. Evaluators can rate candidates a 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (agree) or 4 (strongly agree). The assessment is evaluated using a rubric, and the target performance is that 100% of candidates will score at least "Agree" (3) on the rubric.

Finding. In AC 2025 – 2026, the target was met.

Analysis.

In AC 2024 - 2025, the target was not met, as no candidates took the course.

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Based on the information gathered from an analysis of the AC 2023 - 2024 results, program faculty made the following changes to drive the cycle of continuous improvement. In AC 2025 - 2026, faculty modified instructional design by adding resources addressing the following topic where points were missed to support candidate learning and their ability to meet SLO 3: *Maximize Learning*.

These changes helped to improve the candidates' ability to demonstrate proficiency on the Dispositional Evaluation, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2025 - 2026, the target was met. These changes had a direct impact on the candidates' ability to achieve proficiency on the Dispositional Evaluation.

100% of candidates (n=4) met target and scored at least a 3 on the Dispositional Evaluation in AC 2025 - 2026. The mean score was 4.0.

Decision.

In AC 2025 - 2026, the target was met. Based on the latest available data analysis, faculty will make the following changes for AC 2026 - 2027: faculty will modify instructional design by adding resources that help support candidates' *Time Management* to support candidate learning and their ability to meet SLO 3.

These changes will improve the candidates' ability to model professional dispositions, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

SLO 4: Exhibit creative thinking that yields engaging ideas, processes, materials, and experiences appropriate for discipline.

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Exhibit creative thinking that yields engaging ideas, processes, materials, and experiences appropriate for the discipline. (Lesson Plan)	Candidates will design and implement developmentally appropriate lesson plans that reflect research on best practices in Early Childhood Education. <i>80% of candidates will meet proficiency (minimum of 2.0) on the lesson plan and reflection.</i>

Course Map: ECED 5580 *Early Childhood Practicum: Performance Based Assessment and Documentation*

Measure 4.4. (Direct – Knowledge and Skills)

SLO 4 is assessed through a lesson plan and reflection in ECED 5580 *Early Childhood Practicum: Performance Based Assessment and Documentation*, which is candidates'

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practicum course. This assessment addresses the Louisiana Early Learning and Development Standards and candidates' ability to execute best teaching practices as reflected on the lesson plan. This assessment requires candidates to successfully execute the planned elements of the lesson on which their performance evaluations are based as measured by the Standards and Objectives domain of the NIET Evaluation Rubric. Residents demonstrate competency of written lesson plan design through course assignments prior to the residency. However, this lesson plan assessment measures the residents' ability to effectively execute the components as planned. Target for this assessment is that 85% of the candidates score a 3.0 on the Standards and Objectives Domain of the NIET Evaluation Rubric.

Validity and Reliability was established for the Assessment in 2025. A panel of 8 EPP faculty each conducted independent rubric-based evaluations of anonymous work samples submitted by candidates from various initial teacher preparation programs. The Content Validity Ratio (CVR) was calculated using the Lawshe (1975) method to assess content validity. The CVR mean = .952 with CVR(Critical), 8 = .75 and no single item below critical value of .75. The Intra-class Correlation Coefficient (ICC) by Fisher (1954) was used as a measure of inter-rater reliability with respect to the Lawshe method ratings. The ICC = .89. ICC of .75-1.00 reflects "excellent" inter-rater agreement.

The lesson plan assessment measures for the following components: pre-assessment; lesson standard(s)/objective(s); essential questions; lesson vocabulary, bellringer, connections, and hook; content knowledge; post-assessment; sequence of the lesson; accommodations and differentiation; materials/equipment/technology; and SAMR

Model. Candidates can score 10 (proficient), 5 (emerging), or 0 (beginning) on each lesson plan component. Scores are then converted to a four-point scale.

Finding. In AC 2025 - 2026, the target was met.

Analysis.

In AC 2024 - 2025, the target was met. In AC 2024 - 2025, 100% of candidates met target and scored at least "Proficient." Candidates' mean score was 3.88 (n = 2). Based on the information gathered from an analysis of the AC 2024 – 2025 data, program faculty made the following changes to drive the cycle of continuous improvement. In AC 2025-2026, faculty helped candidates explore strategies for Maximizing Learning in developmentally appropriate ways for young children in the areas of *Higher Order Thinking and Active Inquiry*.

These changes helped to improve the candidates' ability to demonstrate proficiency on the lesson plan, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward. As a result of these changes, in AC 2025 - 2026, the target was met. These changes had a direct impact on the candidates' ability to achieve proficiency in the lesson plan.

100% of candidates (n=2) met target and scored at least a 3.0 on the lesson plan in AC 2025 - 2026. The mean score was 3.775.

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The candidates' lowest scores fell in the following category:

- *Lesson Standards/Objectives*

Decision.

In AC 2025 - 2026, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the AC 2025 - 2026 results, program faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2026 - 2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2026 - 2027, faculty will modify instructional design by adding resources addressing:

- *Lesson Standards/Objectives*

These changes will improve the candidates' ability to exhibit creative thinking that yields engaging ideas, processes, materials, and experiences appropriate for the discipline, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

SLO 5: Make responsible decisions and problem-solve, using data to inform actions when appropriate.

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Make responsible decisions and problem-solve, using data to inform actions when appropriate. (Paper-in-Lieu)	Candidates applied the educational research process through a review of literature, analysis of data, and plans to improve instructional practice with empirically supported decisions. <i>100% of candidates will meet proficiency (minimum of 70% / grade of C) on the paper-in-lieu.</i>

Course Map: *EDUC 5840: Using Research to Improve Instructional Practice*

Measure 5.1. (Direct – Knowledge and Skills)

SLO 5 is assessed in *EDUC 5840, Using Research to Improve Instructional Practice*, through a paper-in-lieu-of-thesis.

The Graduate School requires each master's level candidate to complete a paper-in-lieu-of-thesis prior to graduation. Guidelines were specified by the Graduate Council and followed a traditional format with a paper introduction section, review of related literature subsections for each variable, analyses of data, and plans for improving instructional practices.

Based on the action plan for SLO 5 from the 2021-2022 assessment cycle, a construct-

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related validity analysis was conducted on the evaluation checklist. Data were included from the 2022 calendar year to assess a couple types of validity. First, an external evaluator reviewed the face validity of the evaluation checklist and determined that the checklist appeared to be valid on face value by measuring what it was designed to measure. Next, the external evaluator assessed the content validity of the checklist. The evaluative criteria on the checklist were compared to the directions provided to candidates throughout the course and paper guidelines provided by the Graduate School. The evaluation checklist appeared to have content validity compared to reference materials. Because of low candidate numbers enrolled in the fall 2022 semester, predictive validity was not evaluated.

Candidates are asked to engage in reflective teaching by evaluating their instructional practices in the areas of 1) assessment, 2) instructional planning, and 3) instructional strategies. These variables aligned with standards 6, 7, and 8 from the InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards for Teachers. For each variable, candidates evaluated their essential knowledge, performances (skills), and critical dispositions using itemized lists published for each standard.

The assessment allows candidates to self-evaluate their knowledge, skills, and dispositions while using data, along with findings from published academic studies, to inform their future instructional practices. Candidates develop specific action plans by problem-solving and making decisions about how to improve their knowledge, skills, and dispositions in the areas of assessment, instructional planning, and instructional strategies.

The paper-in-lieu-of-thesis is graded using a holistic evaluation checklist with seven evaluative criteria and a seven-point rating scale. The evaluative criteria aligned with the Graduate School's requirements and included the following parts of the paper: 1) preface, 2) introduction, 3) section on assessment, 4) section on instructional planning, 5) section on instructional strategies, 6) conclusion with implications for future teaching, and 7) references.

The rating scale includes the following rating levels: 0-Missing (not present), 1-Unsatisfactory (too underdeveloped to award credit), 2-Significant Development Needed (needed a significant amount of development), 3-More Editing Needed (needs more explanation, details, or correction), 4-Minor Polishing Needed (few errors in APA guidelines, mechanics, and/or grammar), 5-Target (aligns with directions), and 6-Beyond Expectations (exceeds expectations asked in the directions in both scope and depth with exemplary writing). The benchmark score of 3 indicates that an evaluative criterion is minimally acceptable with the required elements from the directions present in the subsection of the paper, but more editing is needed in terms of explanation, details, or corrections. Additionally, candidates must earn an overall letter grade of C or higher (175 out of 250 points) on the paper-in-lieu-of-thesis before it is submitted to the Graduate School to meet the graduation requirement.

Finding. In AC 2025 - 2026, the target was met.

Analysis.

In AC 2024 - 2025, the target was met. In AC 2024 - 2025, 100% of candidates met

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target and scored at least a “B” (n = 2).

Based on the information gathered from an analysis of the AC 2024 - 2025 results, program faculty made the following changes to drive the cycle of continuous improvement. In AC 2025 - 2026, faculty modified instructional design by encouraging candidates to apply feedback to improve their papers and utilize the Center for Excellence and Teaching as needed to meet SLO 5.

These changes helped to improve the candidates’ ability to demonstrate proficiency on the lesson plan, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2025 - 2026, the target was met.

100% of candidates (n=2) met target and scored an A on the Paper-in-Lieu assessment in AC 2025 – 2026.

Decision.

In AC 2025 - 2026, the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2025 - 2026 results, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2026 - 2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2026 - 2027, faculty will modify instructional design by requiring mid-course appointments to ensure candidates are on track with their papers. This change provides an additional check-point for students, and it provides the instructor with an additional opportunity to answer candidates' questions and address any concerns.

These changes will improve the candidates’ ability to make responsible decisions and problem-solve, using data to inform actions when appropriate, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

Comprehensive Summary of Key Evidence of Improvements Based on Analysis of Results:

Program faculty made several decisions after examining results of data analysis from AC 2024 - 2025 which resulted in improved candidate learning and program improvement in AC 2025 - 2026:

SLO 1: Faculty encouraged candidates to take advantage of the support services offered in the Center for Excellence and Teaching and through discounted 240 Tutoring services.

SLO 2: Faculty modified instructional design to support candidates by adding additional resources addressing these topics to ECED courses: *Questioning*.

SLO 3: Faculty modified instructional design by helping candidates explore strategies for these topics in ECED courses: *Maximizing Learning*.

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SLO 4: Faculty modified instructional design by adding resources addressing *Adaptations, Technology, and Planning* to ECED courses.

SLO 5: Faculty modified instructional design by encouraging candidates to apply feedback to improve their papers and utilize the Center for Excellence and Teaching as needed.

Faculty strengthened service-learning components in all ECED courses.

Plan of Action for Moving Forward:

Program faculty examined the evidence and results of data analysis from AC 2025 – 2026 and will take the following steps to continue to improve candidate learning in AC 2026 - 2027:

SLO 1: Faculty will encourage candidates to take advantage of the support services offered in the Center for Excellence and Teaching and through discounted 240 Tutoring services, including a free month of 240 tutoring.

SLO 2: Faculty will modify instructional design to support candidates by adding additional resources addressing these topics to ECED courses: *Instructional Plans Standards and Objectives, Questioning, and Academic Feedback*.

SLO 3: Faculty will modify instructional design by helping candidates explore strategies for *Time Management*.

SLO 4: Faculty will modify instructional design by adding resources addressing these topics to ECED courses: *Lesson Standards/Objectives*.

SLO 5: Faculty will modify instructional design by requiring mid-course appointments to ensure candidates are on track with their papers.

Faculty will strengthen service-learning components in all ECED courses.