

Assessment Cycle 2025 – 2026

M.A.T. Elementary Education (506 MAT)

Middle School Master of Arts in Teaching (MS MAT) (507)

Master of Arts in Teaching, Secondary Education (508)

Division: Gallaspy College of Education and Human Development

Department: School of Education

Prepared by: Wendi O'Halloran

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Approved by: Dr. Mary Edith Stacy

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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 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.

Program Mission Statement: The mission of the Northwestern State University alternate certification Elementary Education Program is to prepare educators with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to be effective in the Elementary classroom while earning teacher certification. The program prepares educators who are currently in the field to meet children's diverse needs in a variety of settings while documenting and assessing their growth over time in relation to state standards. Upon

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completion of the program, which meets the state accreditation standards, candidates are equipped to meet the many demands of the teaching profession.

Methodology:

The assessment process for the M.A.T. in Elementary Education is as follows:

1. Data from assessment tools are collected and returned to the director and program coordinator.
2. The program coordinator will analyze data to determine student learning and whether students have met the measurable outcomes.
3. Results from the assessment will be shared and discussed with program faculty.
4. The program coordinator, in consultation with program faculty, will review data and based on the analysis, and faculty collaborate to make any necessary changes to course instruction and/or assessments for program improvement purposes.

NOTE: In past years these MAT reports have been completed separately. However, because the signature core courses are taught simultaneously across the three levels (Elementary, Middle and Secondary), the reports have been combined to more accurately reflect and better reveal trends in the data so that faculty are able to more accurately target improvement efforts across all three programs.

Student Learning Outcomes.

SLO 1: Demonstrate discipline-specific content knowledge

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Demonstrate discipline-specific content knowledge	Candidates will demonstrate knowledge of Developmentally Appropriate Practices relating to respective certification areas of education.

Course Map: Candidates take the PRAXIS PLT in their second year of coursework, prior to their internship (EDUC 5410, 5420, and 5430: *Internship in Teaching*).

Measure 1.1. (Direct – Knowledge)

SLO 1 is assessed through the PRAXIS Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT) which is nationally normed. The assessment is a standardized test published by ETS, and the target performance is the successful passing of the PLT according to the minimum qualifying score set forth by the State of Louisiana for certification in the Candidate's certification area.

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

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For candidates to be successful, they must achieve a qualifying score that is at least as high as the State minimum requirement of 160 for Elementary, 160 for middle school, and 167 for secondary grade certification. The target is for 100% of candidates to achieve the minimum requirement.

Finding. AC 2025 – 2026 the target was met.

Analysis.

In AC 2024 – 2025, the target was met. 100% (n=11) of candidates achieved proficiency (minimum score on PLT of Elementary (160), Middle (160), Secondary (157)) on Praxis PLT: Principles of Learning & Teaching Elementary (5622), Middle (5623), Secondary (5624).

Based on the information gathered from an analysis of the AC 2024 – 2025 data, program faculty made the following changes in AC 2025-2026 to drive the cycle of continuous improvement. Faculty provided enhanced support through a newly established educational lab, offering targeted resources to help candidates prepare for the PLT exam. Faculty also aligned coursework with PRAXIS content, incorporating test-style questions, and offering structured preparation through workshops and platforms like 240 Tutoring. They provided access to practice exams, diagnostics, and personalized study plans. These changes helped to improve candidates' ability to demonstrate knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices relating to elementary, middle and secondary education; 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 student's ability to achieve proficiency (minimum score on PLT of Elementary (160), Middle (160), Secondary (157)) on Praxis PLT: Principles of Learning & Teaching Elementary (5622), Middle (5623), Secondary (5624).

100% (n=8) of candidates achieved proficiency on the PLT exam 2025-2026.

Decision.

In AC 2025 – 2026, the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 results, the faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2026-2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. Program faculty will provide additional support through faculty mentoring, academic labs, and campus resources like writing centers and libraries to further enhance student readiness and performance. Students will also have access to a praxis resource guide with hyperlinks that offer additional practice materials.

These changes will improve candidates' ability to demonstrate discipline-specific content knowledge, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

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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 curriculum, instruction, and assessment. <i>[100% of candidates will demonstrate knowledge of Developmentally Appropriate Practices relating to curriculum, instruction and assessment with a score of 2.0 or higher.]</i>

Course Map: EDUC 5411 Elementary Internship in Teaching, EDUC 5421 Middle School Internship in Teaching, and EDUC 5431 Secondary Internship in Teaching.

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).

Finding. AC 2025 – 2026 the target was met.

Analysis.

In AC 2024 – 2025, the target was met.

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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. Teacher candidates demonstrated a weakness in the area of Student Work and Critical Thinking. Program faculty implemented strategies that emphasized active student engagement and visible thinking during instruction. This included modeling techniques that prompted higher-order questioning, encouraged student-led discussions, and integrated strategies like think-pair-share and written reflections. These changes helped to improve candidates' ability better use data to drive instruction, ultimately improving their ability to ensure mastery of the content by their students; 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 student's ability to achieve proficiency (minimum of 3.0) on the Teacher Candidate Observation Form.

100% (n=8) of candidates achieved proficiency (minimum of 3.0) on the Teacher Candidate Observation Form in 2025-2026.

Decision.

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

Based on the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 results, the faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2026-2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. Candidate data indicated a marked increase in "Teacher Knowledge of Students" (4.1). The weakest area of performance was in the "Assessment" domain (3.2). Therefore, faculty will incorporate video analysis of effective teaching that demonstrates informal formative assessment, and guide candidates in designing assessments that require critical thinking while aligning to the objective of the lesson. To ensure increased performance in Assessment, candidates will take EDUC 5031 in lieu of the current seminar course.

These changes will improve candidates' ability to be able to align assessment with their daily objective and unit goals, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

SLO 3: Model professional behaviors and Characteristics.

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Model professional behaviors and Characteristics. (Dispositional Evaluation)	Teacher candidates demonstrate the professional dispositions and characteristics of effective educators in their interactions with students, administrators, co-workers, parents, and university faculty throughout the program. <i>[100% of candidates will model behaviors and characteristics that are professional and ethical achieving a 3 or higher on the evaluation.]</i>

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Course Map: *EDUC 5411, 5421, and 5431 Internship in Teaching*

Measure 3.1 (Indirect/Dispositions) Professional Disposition Evaluation. This SLO is assessed through a disposition form in *Internship in Teaching*, which is the candidates' second semester of the last year.

SLO 3 is assessed through an electronic Professional Disposition Evaluation tool. The tool was implemented in the 2022-2023 AY and re-evaluated after first-year implementation. The Louisiana CAEP Consortium has also drafted an updated dispositional evaluation tool to be piloted in the 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).

Finding. AC 2025 – 2026 the target was met.

Analysis.

In AC 2024 – 2025, the target was met. 100% (n=9) of candidates achieved proficiency (minimum of 3.0) on the Dispositional Evaluation.

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. Program faculty implemented clear expectations and consistent routines to improve student punctuality and responsibility. This included providing detailed course calendars, regular reminders, and structured deadlines to help students manage their time effectively. Additionally, incorporating accountability measures such as participation points, reflective check-ins, and early intervention for missed assignments encouraged students to arrive on time and complete their coursework consistently. These changes helped to improve candidates' ability to model behaviors and characteristics that are professional and ethical, thereby enabling them to communicate effectively with all stakeholders; 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 student's ability to achieve proficiency (minimum of 3.0) on the Dispositional Evaluation.

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100% (n=8) of candidates achieved proficiency (minimum of 3.0) on the Dispositional Evaluation in 2024-2025.

Decision.

In AC 2025 – 2026, the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 results, the faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2026-2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. Based on their latest performance, candidates scored lowest on *Initiative* (3.40) and highest on *integrity* (3.66). Candidates will participate in monthly virtual meetings where case studies/real-life scenarios are discussed to better ensure candidates' understanding of proactively implementing initiatives.

These changes will improve candidates' ability to model professional behaviors and characteristics in the area of initiative, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

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

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Demonstrate creative thinking that yields engaging ideas, processes, materials, and experiences appropriate for the discipline. (Lesson Plan execution)	Teacher candidates demonstrate the ability to select/create appropriate formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate the continuous intellectual, social, and physical development of the learner <i>[85% Candidates will design and implement developmentally appropriate lesson plans that reflect research on best practices of the respective curriculum with a minimum 3.0 score.]</i>

Course Map: EDUC 5411, EDUC 5421, and EDUC 5431 *Internship in Teaching*

SLO 4 is assessed through the standards and objective domain on the intern's final evaluation.

The **Assessment for Lesson Plan Implementation** addresses the Louisiana State Standards and interns' ability to execute best teaching practices as reflected on the lesson plan. This assessment requires interns 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. Interns demonstrate competency of written lesson plan design in EDUC 5600 through course assignments before the internship. However, this lesson plan assessment measures the intern's ability to effectively execute the components as planned in the final semester of internship.

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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.

Finding: Target was met.

Analysis:

In AC 2024-2025, the target **was met**. 100% of students scored 3.0 or higher on the Standards and Objectives domain which is reflective of the candidate's ability to implement and effectively execute the lesson plan. Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2024-2025 data, faculty implemented the following in AC 2025 – 2026. Faculty increased instruction in the areas of Performance-based Lesson Planning and implemented these practices in additional courses prior to internship. Candidates/Interns were scored on lesson planning with the use of the performance evaluation rubric. These changes allowed faculty to better identify and improve the candidates' ability to effectively plan and execute lessons to ensure student mastery of standards and objectives, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward. These changes resulted in more in-depth and targeted instruction in this area of need in an effort to drive the cycle of improvement.

Decision:

In AC 2025-2026, the target **was met**. 87% (n=8) of students scored 3.0 or higher on the Standards and Objectives domain which is reflective of the candidate's ability to implement and effectively execute the lesson plan. Based on information gathered from an analysis of the AC 2025-2026 data, faculty will implement the following in AC 2026 – 2027. Because post-test data indicates that this weakness stems from candidates' ability to accurately assess and adjust instruction to meet the needs of their students, assessment practices will be the focus for monthly virtual meetings with candidates. This will provide candidates greater support and preparation regarding components necessary to ensure P-12 students meet the daily objective. These changes will allow faculty to improve the candidates' ability to effectively plan and execute lessons to ensure student mastery of standards and objectives, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

SLO 5

Course Map: Paper-in-lieu-of-thesis assessed in EDUC 5840: Using Research to Improve Instructional Practice

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Make responsible decisions and problem-solve, using data to inform actions when appropriate	Candidates applied the educational research process through a review of literature, analysis of data, and plans to improve instructional practice with empirically supported decisions

Measure 5.1. (Indirect – Applied Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions)

The Graduate School requires each master's level candidate to complete a paper-in-lieu-of-thesis prior to graduation. Guidelines are specified by the Graduate Council and follow a traditional format

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with a paper introduction section, review of related literature subsections for each variable, analyses of data, and plans for improving instructional practices.

Candidates were 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 allowed 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 developed 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 was graded using an 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 included 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 (needed more explanation, details, or correction), 4-Minor Polishing Needed (few errors were present in APA guidelines, mechanics, and/or grammar), 5-Target (achieved what was asked for in the directions), and 6-Beyond Expectations (exceeded expectations asked in the directions in both scope and depth with exemplary writing). The benchmark score of 3 indicated that an evaluative criterion was minimally acceptable with the required elements from the directions present in the subsection of the paper, but more editing was needed in terms of explanation, details, or corrections. Additionally, candidates had to earn an overall letter grade of C or higher (175 out of 250 points) on the paper-in-lieu-of-thesis before it was submitted to the Graduate School to meet the graduation requirement.

Finding. The target was met.

Analysis.

In the 2024-2025 assessment cycle, the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the 2024-2025 assessment cycle results, changes were proposed for the 2025-2026 assessment cycle to drive the cycle of improvement. First, the university's Academic Success Center helped candidates with proofreading and editing candidates' course papers. Changes in leadership of the Academic Success Center resulted in more efficient help for candidates, although this change was not originally planned in the previous year's report. Next, due to fewer candidates enrolled in MAT programs, a decision was made to remove the course from the fall schedule. This change was based on data from multiple years showing fall semester enrollment for the course was consistently lower than spring and summer enrollment. This change was successfully implemented. Finally, the course piloted additional feedback to candidates before grading the final version of the paper. After candidates submitted their paper-in-lieu-of-thesis to

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Turnitin, they were directed to make an appointment with the professor to go over needed corrections in the paper by phone or through WebEx. This change resulted in higher quality papers.

In the 2025-2026 assessment cycle, the target was met with 100% (4 out of 4) candidates passing the paper-in-lieu-of-thesis. The teacher education candidates enrolled in the MAT programs met the student learning outcome (SLO) because they successfully applied the educational research process through a review of literature, analysis of data, and plans to improve instructional practice with empirically supported decisions. The SLO was met at 100%, which is the same as the previous assessment cycle. However, it should be noted that only half the number of candidates completed the course as the previous year (4 in this assessment cycle verses 8 in the previous assessment cycle). The following table summarizes data for the assessment cycle organized by Master of Arts in Teaching programs for elementary, middle level, and secondary education.

Program	Number of Candidates Who Took the Course During the Assessment Cycle	Target Indicator: Number of Candidates Passing the Paper (A, B, C Grade)	Number of Candidates Failing the Paper (D, F Grade)	Number of Candidates Continuing the Paper (In Progress Grade)
Elementary Education GR 1-5, (506)	0	0	0	0
Middle School Education GR 4-8, (507)	0	0	0	0
Secondary Education GR 6-12, (508)	4	4	0	0

Decision.

In the 2025-2026 assessment cycle, the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the 2025-2026 assessment cycle results, the following changes will be made for the 2026-2027 assessment cycle to drive the cycle of improvement. First, the course will be updated to comply with new ADA regulations for accessibility. Second, mid-course appointments will be held to ensure students are on-track with typing their papers. This change provides an extra checkpoint for students. It also provides the instructor with an additional opportunity to answer students' questions and address any concerns. These two changes will continue to push the cycle of improvement forward.

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 student learning and program

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improvement in AC 2025-2026.

SLO 1. Faculty offered additional online resources to help prepare students for the PLT exam in conjunction with PRAXIS seminars, the use of 240 Tutoring, and opportunities with the Natchitoches Parish Library to offer access to Learning Express, a source for PRAXIS test preparation to supporting candidate learning and their ability.

SLO 2. Faculty and university supervisors engaged in professional development allowing them to provide additional resources and effective coaching to teacher candidates in the area of remediation strategies for reteaching content as mastery of content is measured in the standards and objectives domain (Domain 2, NIET/TAP).

SLO 3. Faculty drove improvement by implementing added resources relating and additional instruction focused on aligning assessment to content to better improve student outcomes. However, based on feedback from mentor teachers and school administrators, the current instrument was not relevant to attributes that were observable in the field. Therefore, faculty decided to adopt the newly created Disposition instrument developed by the Louisiana CAEP Consortium, pending current validity and reliability testing (which was completed in AC 2024-2025).

SLO 4. Faculty added additional instructional materials and resources in AC 2024-2025 to support contextual factors and student learning adaptations and higher order thinking. Also, interns/candidates were given additional instruction in executing the lesson plan and measuring the implementation and effectiveness of planning through student outcomes. Faculty also increased instruction in the areas of Performance-based Lesson Planning. Candidates/Interns were scored on lesson planning with the performance evaluation rubric.

SLO 5. First, the curriculum and instruction degree was redesigned so that students in that program did not need to complete EDUC 5840. This redesign resulted in no longer needing to alter the course to accommodate students outside MAT degrees, as originally planned. Secondly, rather than relying on the Graduate Student Success Coach, students were directed to the university's Academic Success Center for help with their course paper. Changes in leadership of the Academic Success Center resulted in more efficient help for candidates, although this change was not originally planned in the previous year's report.

Plan of Action for Moving Forward: Program faculty examined the evidence and results of data analysis from AC 2025-2026 and will take steps to continue to improve student learning in AC 2026-2027:

SLO 1. In AC 2026-2027, program faculty will implement aligning coursework with PRAXIS content, incorporating test-style questions, and offering structured preparation through workshops and platforms like 240 Tutoring. They will also provide access to practice exams, diagnostics, and personalized study plans. Additional support through faculty mentoring, academic labs, and campus resources like writing centers and libraries will further enhance student readiness and performance.

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SLO 2. Faculty will provide targeted instruction to candidates in the area of assessments in relation to standards and objectives to ensure that content mastery is being accurately measured.

SLO 3. Program faculty will implement clear expectations and consistent routines to improve student punctuality and responsibility. This includes providing detailed course calendars, regular reminders, and structured deadlines to help students manage their time effectively. Additionally, incorporating accountability measures such as participation points, reflective check-ins, and early intervention for missed assignments will encourage students to arrive on time and complete their coursework consistently. Instructors will also focus on alignment of content with learning outcomes and assessment criteria to ensure accurate measures of student mastery are captured.

SLO 4. Faculty will increase instruction in the areas of Performance-based Lesson Planning and incorporate this concept in additional courses where lesson plans are written and implemented prior to the residency. Candidates/Interns will be scored on lesson planning with the performance evaluation rubric.

SLO 5. Due to fewer candidates enrolled in MAT programs, a decision was made to remove the course from the fall schedule. This change is based on data from multiple

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years showing fall semester enrollment for the course is consistently lower than spring and summer enrollment. Second, the course will pilot additional feedback to some candidates before grading the final version of the paper. After candidates submit their paper-in-lieu-of-thesis to Turnitin, they will be directed to make an appointment with the professor to go over needed corrections in the paper by phone or through WebEx.