

Master of Arts in Teaching, Secondary Education (508)

Division: Gallaspy College of Education and Human Development Department:

School of Education

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Northwestern State University 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 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: To prepare teacher candidates to become certified secondary teachers for grades 6-12. The mission underlying the initial certification of candidates in the MAT Secondary Program is to provide the knowledge and skills necessary to implement literacy- and standards based instructional strategies for increasing student content learning in each candidate's discipline of study.

Methodology: The assessment process for this program is as follows:

1. Data from assessments tools are collected and returned to the department chair 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, faculty collaborate to make any necessary changes to course instruction and/or assessments for program improvement purposes.

Student Learning Objectives:

SLO 1

Course Map:

Candidates take the Praxis PLT in their second year of coursework, prior to their residency/internship (EDUC 5430 Secondary Internship in Teaching).

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Demonstrate discipline-specific content knowledge	Candidates will demonstrate knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices relating to secondary education.

Measure 1.1. (Direct – Knowledge)

SLO 1 is assessed through the PRAXIS Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT): Grades 7-12 (#5623) exam, 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 as a secondary teacher.

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

For candidates to be successful, they must achieve a qualifying score that is at least as high as the State minimum requirement of 157. The target is for 100% of candidates to achieve the minimum requirement of 157.

Findings: Target was met. 100% of candidates met the target.

- AC 2022-2023: 100% of candidates met target.
- AC 2021-2022: 100% of candidates met target.

Analysis:

Based on the analysis of the 2021-2022 results, in 2022-2023 the following changes were implemented. To drive continuous improvement, maximize student learning, and continue to improve the program, the faculty offered PRAXIS seminars, advised students to use 240 Tutoring, and partnered with the Natchitoches Parish Library to offer access to Learning Express, a source for PRAXIS test preparation to supporting candidate learning and their ability. Students were offered a discount on the software Tutoring 240, an online program that guarantees success with lesson completion, or students receive their money back.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2022-23, 100% of candidates met the target. The qualifying score for the PLT Grades 7-12 is 157. Candidates' scores ranged from 157 to 183, with a mean score of 170.3 and a standard deviation of 9.1. As a cohort, the target was met.

These changes had a direct impact on the student's ability to demonstrate developmentally appropriate pedagogical knowledge.

Action - Decision or Recommendation:

In AC 2022-2023, the target was met.

Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2022-2023 data, the following changes will drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2023-2024, the faculty will offer 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.

These changes will improve the student's ability to demonstrate knowledge of Developmentally Appropriate Practices relating to secondary education, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

SLO 2

Course Map:

Completion of SLO 2 occurs during the internship courses **EDUC 5430 and EDUC 5431.**

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Apply discipline-specific content knowledge in professional practice (NIET TAP Big 6 Evaluation Instrument)	Candidates will demonstrate knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices relating to secondary curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Measure 2.1. (Direct – Knowledge, Skills)

NIET/TAP Big 6 Evaluation Instrument

The evaluation instrument used in prior years was aligned with the Danielson and Compass rubrics. To improve program alignment, it was determined that this instrument, which was content specific, needed to be a universal instrument measuring teaching pedagogy across programs. Partner districts had recently adopted the NIET/TAP evaluation instrument, and as a result, offered full-time faculty training on the NIET evaluation process. The NIET/TAP instrument is widely known throughout the state and aligns closely with the foundational Danielson model; however, the School of Education Advisory Council chose to adopt the abbreviated USPREP version of the instrument which focuses on the six core domains. These domains are based on effective teaching behaviors listed on the Danielson Framework for Teaching instrument and aligned to the InTASC standards. Domains of assessment include (1) instructional planning (2) standards and objectives (3) presenting instructional content (4) activities and materials (5) Assessment and feedback (6) classroom management.

This tool was adopted for pilot use during AY 2022-2023 and will undergo reliability and validity testing in Fall 2023.

University field supervisors and cooperating principals evaluate each criterion using a five-point rating scale with the following options: Unsatisfactory = 1, Approaching Proficiency = 2, Proficient = 3, Mastery = 4, and Exemplary = 5. Items on the instrument are evaluated multiple times during the two internship semesters.

The target for this assessment is for 85% of candidates to attain a minimum 3.0 (proficiency) score on the evaluation instrument.

Finding:

- AC 2022-2023: Target was not met. 73% of candidates met target.
- AC 2021-2022: 100% of candidates met target.

Analysis:

In AC 2021-22, the target was met. Based on analysis results from AC 2021-2022, faculty further studied the observation results and the instrument used. Candidates were using this newly adopted pilot instrument to measure candidate performance. Candidate scores provided evidence for meeting state-identified standards aligned with artifacts tied to InTASC and content standards; however, faculty recognized the need to change the instrument to maximize program alignment and better our ability to identify strengths and weaknesses for each domain. Additionally, to maximize student learning and to continue to improve the program, faculty examined data gleaned from candidates' observation scores and oral reflections to determine necessary changes and find more ways to support candidates in their internship to help them be successful educators.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2022-2023 results, students' mean observation score was 3.196. Candidate scores on the NIET/TAP Big 6 instrument during the initial iteration in AC 2022-2023 provide evidence for meeting state-identified standards aligned with artifacts tied to InTASC and content standards. Teacher candidate scores exhibited strengths in lesson planning (mean 3.65) and indicated weaknesses in academic feedback (mean 3.34).

Action - Decision or Recommendation:

In AC 2022-2023, the target was not met.

Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2022-2023 data, faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2023-2024, faculty and university supervisors will engage in professional development which will allow them to provide additional resources and effective coaching to teacher candidates in the area of providing academic feedback (Domain 4, NIET/TAP Big 6).

These changes will allow teacher candidates to receive an improved coaching experience within their internship and ultimately improve their ability to demonstrate effective use of academic feedback as they teach in the classroom.

SLO 3

Course Map:

Completion of SLO 3 occurs during the internship courses **EDUC 5430 and 5431**.

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Model professional behaviors and characteristics. (Dispositional Evaluation)	Candidates pass a dispositions evaluation: Secondary 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.

Measure 3.1. (Direct – Dispositions)

Professional Disposition Evaluation

SLO 3 is assessed through the Professional Disposition Evaluation tool. In previous years, the faculty-created professional dispositional scale (PDS) was used to evaluate candidate dispositions. Upon analyzing trend data from previous years, it was determined that many responses given on the disposition evaluation scale were reported as “not applicable” or “not observed”. After gaining feedback from those being asked to complete the evaluations, it was determined that the evaluation tool included statements that could not be observed by the observer. As a result, the evaluation tool was streamlined to better reflect data needed regarding candidate dispositions. Additionally, the new form is electronic and allows for more efficiency to monitor ongoing candidate performance. This tool was adopted by the School of Education Advisory Council for pilot use during AY 2022-2023 and will undergo reliability and validity testing in Fall 2023.

The target for this assessment is for 85% of candidates to score a minimum mean score of 2.5 out of 3.

Finding: Target was Met. 96% met the target.

Analysis:

In AC 2021-2022, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the AC 2021-2022 data, the areas that needed improvement were managing time effectively, analyzes problems critically and attempts to resolve them independently (as appropriate), and responds to unforeseen circumstances in an appropriate manner and modifies actions or plans when necessary. As a result, in AC 2022-2023, faculty assessed candidates’ professionalism and motivation for

teaching with the use of the newly adopted evaluation tool which better identifies areas of weakness in professional dispositions. This tool better enabled on-site mentor teachers to effectively coach candidates by targeting specific areas of need to ensure candidates' ability to develop dispositions needed to ensure effective teaching and learning. Data indicated an area of strength to be Domain 1: Plan – values learners experiences and strengths as a basis for growth and their errors as learning opportunities (mean 2.8). The weakness indicated was Domain 6: Communication – habitually communicates effectively in all teaching and learning interactions, cooperates with all constituents, and values the communication of others (mean 1.9).

Action - Decision or Recommendation:

In AC 2022-2023, the target was met.

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2022-2023 data, the faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2023-2024, faculty will drive improvement by implementing added resources relating to the areas that need improvement which includes social-emotional learning, self-evaluation tools, and communication gametes on how to effectively communicate with others.

These changes will improve the candidates' ability to model behaviors and characteristics that are professional and ethical, thereby enabling them to communicate effectively with all stakeholders continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

SLO 4

Course Map:

Completion of SLO 4 occurs during the internship year while candidates are enrolled in EDUC 5430.

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 from Portfolio)	Secondary 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.

Measure 4.1. (Direct – Knowledge)

The **Lesson Plan Assessment** addresses the Louisiana State Standards and is aligned to InTASC standards for content validity. The template requires candidates to plan for and explain elements of lessons on which MAT Middle teacher evaluations were based for AY 2022-23. Interns were measured on a wide variety of knowledge and skills needed to teach effectively in accordance with the Louisiana Compass rubric, the Louisiana State Standards, and the AMLE; each lesson plan was scored for its application of specific content in an engaging and meaningful design and delivery format. Scores for the lesson planning expertise of interns were entered in the Middle MAT Portfolio on TaskStream under the heading of Aggregate Planning. To establish validity, a panel of 8 EPP faculty each conducted four independent rubric-based

evaluations of anonymous lesson plan work samples submitted by candidates in four different initial teacher preparation programs. Analyses were conducted using the Lawshe Content Validity Ratio (CVR) statistic (validity) and the Fisher Intra-class Correlation Coefficient (ICC) for reliability.

CVR mean = -.58 with CVR (Critical, 8) = .75 and 13 items (62%) meeting critical value of .75 ICC = .573. ICC of .4 - .59 reflects “fair” inter-rater agreement, and .6 is considered “good.”

Target for this assessment is that 85% of the candidates score a 3.0 Proficient.

Finding: Target was met. 100% met target.

Analysis:

As a result of the AC 2020-2021 data, Faculty added additional instructional materials and resources in AC 2021-2022 to support contextual factors and student learning adaptations and higher order thinking. These changes resulted in target attainment for AC 2021-2022. After analysis of AC 2021-22 data, additional links and resources were provided to students to support them in the area of lesson planning during AC 2022-2023. As a result, the target was met with an overall mean score of 3.41.

Action - Decision or Recommendation:

In AC 2021-2022, the target was met. Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2021-2022 data, faculty implemented the above changes in AC 2022- 2023 to drive the cycle of improvement. Although 100% of candidates met the target, faculty concluded that this measure does not yield quality feedback for program improvement due to the high level of support already in place for lesson planning, and multiple years of data reporting 100% of candidates meeting the target. Faculty noted that the Standards and Objectives domain (Domain 2) would serve as a better indicator of effective teacher performance. Therefore, for AC 2023 – 2024, faculty will utilize Domain 2 as the measure for this SLO. For AC 2022-2023, candidates scored a mean of 3.30 in Domain 2 indicating that 92% of candidates scored a minimum of 3.0 (Proficient) in the Standards and Objectives Domain. This data will serve as a baseline for AC 2023-2024.

These changes will allow faculty to better identify and improve the candidates' ability to demonstrate creative thinking that yields engaging ideas, processes, materials, and experiences appropriate for the discipline which 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 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 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 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. Target was met. 87% (27 out of 31) candidates passed the paper-in-lieu-of-thesis.

Analysis.

In the 2021-2022 assessment cycle, the target was met. Thirty-eight of the 49 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 78%, which is an improvement from the previous assessment cycle. Beginning in Fall 2021, a Graduate Student Success coach was hired in the department to assist and coach students struggling with the writing and research process.

Based on the analysis of the 2021-2022 assessment cycle results, the following changes were made for the 2022-23 assessment cycle to improve the paper-in-lieu-of-thesis assignment. First, comprehensive exam video assignments were updated and added to the course to help candidates reflect on their instructional practices prior to and after writing the paper-in-lieu-of-thesis. The goal of this change was to encourage candidates with time management concerns to stay engaged with the course content. Second, self-evaluation checklists were added to the course to guide candidates with proofreading and editing their papers prior to submitting the final version for grading. The goal of the self-evaluation checklists was to help candidates identify and correct common problems that typically occur each semester as new students learn APA guidelines and navigate the process of writing the paper. Third, a column was added to the holistic evaluation checklist for the seven evaluative criteria. The new column identified the breakdown of percentages each evaluative criteria was worth out of 100% and the points available for each evaluative criteria out of 250 points. This change helped to remove some subjectivity in assigning points. Finally, candidates were required to meet a list of pre-grading criteria for their paper based on the directions provided in the course and by the Graduate School. Example items included a statement that the paper was free of plagiarism by paraphrasing information in the writer's own words and the paper was graduate student quality work that would be accepted by the Graduate School. These pre-grading criteria were provided as a way for candidates to ensure their paper met minimum standards before submitting it for grading.

Based on the action plan for SLO 5 from the 2021-2022 assessment cycle, a construct-related validity analysis was conducted on the holistic evaluation checklist. Data was included from the 2022 calendar year to assess a couple types of validity. First, an external evaluator reviewed the face validity of the holistic 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 holistic 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.

As a result of these changes, in the 2022-2023 assessment cycle, the target was met. The self-evaluation checklists and pre-grading criteria helped to identify two candidates who needed to continue working on their paper to be successful in passing the course. Comprehensive exam video assignments helped candidates produce better reflections and writings for their paper. The new column on the evaluation checklist helped to remove some subjectivity in assigning points. Finally, the construct-related validity analysis provided reassurance that the holistic evaluation checklist was a valid instrument in preparation for the next program accreditation review.

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In the 2022-2023 assessment cycle, the target was met with 87% (27 out of 31) candidates passing the paper-in-lieu-of-thesis. The following table summarizes data for the 2022-2023 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, program 506	8	8	0	0
Middle School Education GR 4-8, program 507	18	16	1	1
Secondary Education GR 6-12, program 508	5	3	1	1

The table shows 27 out of 31 passing the paper-in-lieu-of-thesis. The table also shows that two candidates received an In Progress (IP) grade to indicate that they are still working on their paper and a score has not been assigned to their paper. Two candidates earned a failing grade on the paper.

Action: Decision or Recommendation

In the 2022-2023 assessment cycle, the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the 2022-2023 assessment cycle results, the following changes will be made for the 2023-24 assessment cycle to drive the cycle of improvement. Contact information for the Graduate Student Success Coach, who was hired in 2021 to assist and coach candidates struggling with the writing and research process, will be posted in the course for candidates to directly contact her for assistance. Additionally, contact information will be posted for NSU's Reference Librarian, who helps candidates find empirical research for their papers. Finally, point values will be added to each level on the rating scale to help remove subjectivity from the evaluation process. Point ranges will be provided for the following rating levels: 0-Missing, 1-Unsatisfactory, 2-Significant Development Needed, 3-More Editing Needed, 4-Minor Polishing Needed, 5-Target, and 6-Beyond Expectations.

These changes will improve candidates' ability to seek out resources and additional points of contact for assistance on the paper. The change to the holistic evaluation checklist will also make grading of the paper more objective. These changes will continue 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 2021-2022 which resulted in improved student learning and program improvement in AC 2022-2023.

SLO 1. Faculty actively communicated and promoted the use of 240 Tutoring (offered at a discounted rate) to help ensure a first time passing of the Praxis PLT.

SLO 2. Field supervisors specifically addressed two areas in need of improvement: The development of effective methods of inquiry and how to lead students to higher order thinking through these questioning techniques. These areas were placed on the remediation plans for interns who needed further support.

SLO 3. Faculty continued to add instructional materials and resources that strengthen professional dispositions of candidates. Faculty focused on ensuring that candidates were able to demonstrate modification of plans when necessary to support student learning and strengthen candidate readiness to demonstrate content and pedagogical mastery in this domain.

SLO 4. Students received comprehensive lesson plan design and instruction in EDUC 5600. Students participated in peer lesson plan feedback as well as instructor feedback using the NSU Lesson Plan Template (with hyperlinks) and rubric.

SLO 5. Changes were made in EDUC 5840 to improve the paper-in-lieu-of-thesis assessment, including updated comprehensive exam video assignments, the addition of self-evaluation checklists, the addition pre-grading criteria for their paper, and changes to the holistic evaluation checklist. Additionally, a construct-related validity analysis was conducted on the holistic evaluation checklist.

Plan of Action for Moving Forward: Program faculty examined the evidence and results of data analysis from AC 2022-2023 and will take steps to continue to improve student learning in AC 2023-2024:

SLO 1. Faculty will actively communicate and promote the use of 240 Tutoring (offered at a discounted rate) to help ensure a first time passing of the Praxis PLT.

SLO 2. Field supervisors will participate in professional development to gain resources for improved coaching in the field regarding all areas of the NIET/TAP Big 6 to ensure effective teaching by candidates. Candidates will be provided additional resources including strategies to address the noted weaknesses indicated on the evaluation instrument.

SLO 3. Faculty will continue to add instructional materials and resources that strengthen professional dispositions of candidates. Faculty will focus on ensuring that candidates are able to demonstrate modification of plans when necessary to support student learning and strengthen candidate readiness to demonstrate content and pedagogical mastery in this domain.

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Additional focus will be placed on ensuring candidates are equipped to implement culturally responsive teaching practices, and effectively communicate with all stakeholders.

SLO 4. Faculty will continue supporting students in the area of planning, while ensuring that plans include alignment of assessment and meaningful, research-based strategies that ensure student mastery of the content. This will align with the new measure to be used in AC 2023-2024 (Domain 2) which ensures that students can demonstrate data-driven instruction practices.

SLO 5. In EDUC 5840, additional resources and contact information will be provided to candidates to support them with the research, writing, and review processes involved with the paper-in-lieu-of-thesis. Additionally, point ranges will be added to each rating level on the holistic evaluation checklist to meet SLO 5.