

ADVANCES IN GLOBAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

# GLOCCER'21

VOLUME 4

Editors:

**Dr. Wayne B. James**

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**Dr. Muhittin Cavusoglu**



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# Admitting Smarter: Refining the Admission Process Through Professional Dispositions

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## Abstract

Since 2018, news agencies have shifted from reporting teacher layoffs to teacher shortages. This swift shift in the industry left many floundering to recruit enough teachers to fill classrooms. Even in the midst of the Covid-19 crisis, there is still a demand for teachers, now with added online teaching skills. This article addresses one program's admissions improvement process: an analysis of the acceptance process, improvements and changes in the process with the goal of reducing attrition, and improving the quality of candidates admitted. Several improvements were made, specifically related to introducing dispositional tools and standardizing the acceptance process across the multiple stakeholders.

**Keywords:** teacher education, admissions, dispositions, retention, attrition

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## Introduction

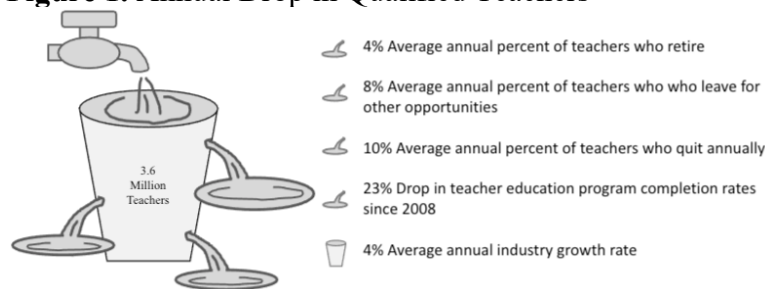
Since 2018, national and state news agencies have shifted from reporting teacher layoffs to teacher shortages. This shift in the industry happened swiftly and has still left many states floundering to recruit enough teachers to fill public school classrooms. Even in the midst of the Covid-19 crisis, there is still a demand for teachers, now with added online teaching skills. This article addresses one teacher preparation program's attempt to improve its acceptance processes so that the most qualified candidates are admitted and retained into the field. A complex analysis of the success of the acceptance process was first conducted, followed by systematic improvements and changes in the process with the goal of reducing attrition, and improving the quality of candidates admitted. Several improvements were made, specifically related to introducing dispositional tools and standardizing the acceptance process across the multiple stakeholders.

## Importance of the Problem

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, there are more than three and a half million public school teachers in the United States. Every year, four percent of them retire, representing roughly 144,000 individuals (<https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=28>). In addition to losing four percent of teachers annually due to retirement, approximately eight percent of teachers leave the profession annually to pursue other career options, representing an additional 288,000 <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=28>. This loss, along with the fact that that

fifty percent of new teachers leave within the first five years of their career ([http://www.mnase.org/uploads/4/7/7/9/47793163/peg\\_16teaching-profession-facts.pdf](http://www.mnase.org/uploads/4/7/7/9/47793163/peg_16teaching-profession-facts.pdf)) point to the need for continual recruitment of new teachers, and better processes to retain the nation's teaching force. Finally, the industry growth rate for teachers has held steady at four percent for the last several years (<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/high-school-teachers.htm>). Combined, these statistics conjure an image of a leaking bucket, with education programs struggling to recruit, graduate, and retain teachers in the profession. Additional alarming statistics are embedded within these numbers. According to 2013 National Center for Education Statistics data, teachers leave or retire from high need districts at a higher rate than from low need districts ([https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_slc.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_slc.asp)). According to Education Week, nationally enrollment in teacher education preparation programs is down twenty-three percent compared to 2008 enrollment levels (Will, 2018). And most recently, California published enrollment data indicating that overall enrollment in teacher preparation programs is down seventy-three percent since 2002 (Cosenza, 2020).

**Figure 1.** Annual Drop in Qualified Teachers



Despite this bleak perspective, there are actions teacher education programs can take to improve retention among teacher candidates. One university's education program, striving to meet the hiring needs of its P-12 partners, embarked on a retrospective study of retention rates in their Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program. The study revealed a clear opportunity for intake process and program refinement that would increase the persistence rate of their teacher candidates, thereby improving graduation rates. Refinements were implemented in 2015, and five years later, the MAT program has reduced program attrition from a high of 27% in 2014 to a recent two-year average of 4.5%.

### **Background**

The teacher education program is located at a university in the northeast in a small city. The thirty-year-old graduate-only teacher education program has a current total enrollment of approximately 120 students. The MAT program certifies teachers in most secondary disciplines including the sciences, math, English, social studies, and seven languages. The MAT also certifies teachers in P-12 disciplines including English to speakers of other languages, technology, business, and computer science. The program boasts a one hundred percent job placement rate since 2016, with the demand for new hires outstripping the program's ability to recruit and retain qualified teacher candidates. Built on the standards of the National Board for Professional Teaching, the program's alumni have a ninety-three percent, five-year industry persistence rate, regular news of national, state, and local awards, and industry-leading program advancements.

The MAT program operates on a cohort model and typically recruits candidates with content-specific bachelor's (and in some cases, master's or doctoral) degrees. Most candidates enter the program with little education coursework or teaching experience. The goal each year is to accept a cohort of diverse students representing a wide range of disciplines who have strong content-knowledge in their fields. Historically, the program began in June for all candidates with a seven-week intensive summer term. This was followed by an academic year during which students were in their residencies at P-12 schools during the day, and in classes in the evening. Students, again historically, graduated in twelve months with their master's degree and initial state certification.

## Literature Review

### *Defining Dispositions*

As indicated above, professional dispositions were identified as the most common reason for candidates' program separation. This finding led to a review of the literature regarding teacher professional dispositions and effective admissions processes. While there is little consensus in the research on either professional dispositions or effective admissions processes, there were lessons to be learned and applied to improving the program's admissions process.

Within the North American educational tradition, John Dewey is credited by most as the educator who first identifies dispositions as a critical aspect of teacher success, but like contemporary educators, he struggled with its definition. In his seminal work, *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922), Dewey explained that positive dispositions were part of a repertoire of skills a person could bring to teaching to promote a more equitable society, and that those skills were best considered within specific contexts. He used terms such as "sympathy, curiosity, exploration, experimentation, frankness, pursuit—to follow things through—circumspection, to look about at the context..." (p. 196) and "benevolence, purity, love of perfection, loyalty" (p. 231) and indicated that the use of these dispositional characteristics would lead to future "reasonable" decision-making (p. 247). Dewey did complicate his explanation, though, by also pointing out that these characteristics are not "the same in quality" (p. 216), but rather are useful in different measures depending on the context. He advised that different dispositions both "form and foster" the situations in which those very dispositions "plunge us" (p. 217).

Moving from an original definition to the most-used definition in the literature today, the standards document for the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (2002) (now part of the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Preparation) defines dispositions as "Professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities. These positive behaviors support student learning and development." (pp. 89-90). Like Dewey, this definition is context-based and recognizes that dispositions impact the larger learning community while still representing the individual teacher.

The collection of definitions presented below, written by a variety of scholars and organizations over the years, provides a stronger sense of the scope and depth of the term, its complexity, and centrality to teacher effectiveness.

**Table 1. Definitions of Dispositions**

Author	Date	Definition
Dewey	1922	"...sympathy, curiosity, exploration, experimentation, frankness, pursuit—to follow things through—circumspection, to look about at the context..." (p. 196); "...benevolence, purity, love of perfection, loyalty..." (p. 231)
Arnstine	1967	"...a tendency to behave in certain ways when certain conditions are realized..." (p. 32)
Buss & Craik	1983	"...summaries of act frequencies..." (p. 105)
Katz & Raths	1985	"...an attributed characteristic of a teacher, one that summarizes the trend of a teacher's actions in particular contexts...an internalized, stable habit of mind..." (p. 301)
Taylor	2000	"personal qualities or characteristics that are possessed by individuals, including attitudes, beliefs, interests, appreciations, values and modes of adjustment..." (p. 1)
Ritchhart	2001	"...Intellectual character...curiosity, skepticism, or open-mindedness..." (p. 143)
NCATE	2008	"Professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities. These positive behaviors support student learning and development." (pp. 89-90).
Thornton	2006	"...habits of mind, including both cognitive and affective attributes that filter one's knowledge, skills, beliefs, and impact the action one takes in classroom or professional settings. They are manifested within relationships as meaning-making occurs with others and they are evidenced through interactions in the form of discourse. (p. 62)
InTASC	2013	"The habits of professional action and moral commitments that underlie an educator's performance." p. (6)

The research points toward strong agreement regarding the general characteristics of dispositions as well as the importance of dispositions to the profession. It is no surprise, then, that dispositions became an integral aspect of the revised admissions process the education program developed.

The research, as well as national teacher education organizations and accrediting bodies, agree that there are three areas that make up the schema of good teaching: knowledge, performance (or skills), and dispositions. Knowledge is fairly easy to assess, with a wide variety of standardized, reliable, or trustworthy measures available to teacher education programs: transcripts, the SAT or GRE, state and national teacher certification exams, letters of recommendation, content-specific interview questions. Teacher education programs typically include multiple measures of performance and growth in performance over time: micro-teaching experiences in teacher education classes, student teaching observations, assessment of written lesson plans, and cooperating teacher feedback for example. Not surprisingly, there is consensus around the idea that identifying, defining, and measuring dispositions is challenging (Bland, 2014; Hampton, 2010; Hicks & Shere, 2003; Lachoney, 2013; Mettler et al., 2017; Ritchhart, 2001; Thornton, 2006; Wasicsko et al., 2004). In fact, DiGiacinto et al. (2017), went as far as to identify the need to measure dispositions in future teachers as a way to manage risk in hiring.

The challenge in defining professional dispositions stems from two factors: first, there are several components included in the definition of dispositions. Researchers seem most comfortable identifying what dispositions are not, rather than what they are. Most agree that dispositions are separate from professional skills and knowledge. And most will reference traits such as motivation, consistency and reliability of professional habits, and what Ritchhart refers to as a professional sensitivity (2001). Second, dispositions are hard to measure because they are predictors of actions to be taken in the future, which are fueled by an individual's knowledge and performance history (Bland, 2014; Cudahy, 2002; Hampton, 2010; Lanchoney, 2013; ommerfeld, 2011; Ritchhart, 2001; Smithrim, 2000; Thornton, 2006; Wasicsko et al., 2004). This temporal disconnect makes defining a concept such as professional dispositions much more difficult. The figure below encapsulates the broad categories that are most agreed upon in the dispositions literature.



**Figure 2.** Dispositions Literature Overview

*Source.* Based in part on the work of R. Ritchhart (2001).

An additional challenge specifically in regard to dispositions and admission to short-duration teacher education programs is the general belief that dispositions are hard to change over time. While not impossible, individuals tend to change their core beliefs only after considerable time, thought, and evidence. In the context of this research, candidates participate in a one- or two-year master's degree program. Thus, the question arises: if the candidate does not enter the program with the professional dispositions sought by the field, can they be taught? The work of Wasicsko et al. (2004) implies that it is unlikely. This is particularly true because in order to do so, one has to assume that the faculty also embody the dispositions necessary for professional success, and can model and teach those dispositions (Wasicsko, 2004). Wasicsko's research highlights the need to determine a dispositional goodness of fit prior to entry into a teacher education program because there will be minimal opportunity to shift dispositions across a short duration program.

### ***The Admissions Process***

Quantitative data is the most relied upon criteria for admission decision-making (Howell et al., 2014; Kuncel et al., 2001; Kuncel et al., 2007; Kuncel et al., 2010; Laman & Reeves, 1983; Riggs et al., 1992; Sacks, 1999; Smith & Pratt, 1996). Institutions regularly rely on standardized test scores and GPAs as the cornerstone of their admissions process. Along with these measures, most institutions incorporate an interview, and some form of rating scale with the interview. At the start of this project, the department's process was quite similar, with quantitative data as a first filter, followed by an unstructured interview with interviewer notes added to the admissions file.

Reliance on quantitative academic data reliably predicts academic success, which is of course a fundamental goal of any graduate teacher education candidate. However, the goal of the admissions process is not just academic success, but long-term professional success. With this goal in mind, quantitative data is still useful, but must be used in a more nuanced way. For example, studies indicate that the quality and quantity of undergraduate coursework, specifically in the discipline which will be used in the career, may be a strong predictor of future student satisfaction and professional success (Newton & Moore, 2007; Vecchio & Costin, 1977). Academic performance is the most common form of admission criteria (Laman & Reeves, 1983, Riggs et al., 1992). But the shortcoming of academic performance is its lack of ability to predict professional success. Put another way, GRE scores and undergraduate GPAs do not point toward whether

someone will be able to think on their feet, act respectfully and ethically, and make decisions in the best interests of the children in the classroom.

Understanding the limitations of the role quantitative data plays in the admissions process, it is logical to turn to interviews as a common form of qualitative data. Smithrim (2000) points out that quantitative data combined with some form of dispositions evaluation - most typically in the form of an interview - is the most common combination of admission criteria. Frequency, however, does not point toward accuracy. In fact, there does not seem to be a consensus in the literature surrounding interviews as an accurate measure of dispositions or success in a teacher education program (DeLuca, 2012; Denner et al., 2001; Shechtman, 1983; Shechtman & Godfried, 1993).

Smith and Pratt (1996) also summarized research on group interviews, concluding that they are generally a stronger instrument for selecting successful candidates than an individual interview. However, they also acknowledge that group interviews are more resource intensive. They cautioned that interviews favor candidates with commonly accepted character traits such as strong interpersonal skills and ability to align with the norms of the institution. Smith and Pratt (1996) do indicate that as structure increases within the interview format, so does its ability to predict success.

Structured interviews, in the form of interview protocols and scenarios, provide the most reliable data on interview effectiveness. Blouin (2010) conducted research on a structured, seven-part scenario-based interview protocol for candidates applying to an emergency medicine program. Findings revealed that the more scenarios, the stronger the predictive power of success in the program. The interview method used included three raters who evaluated all of the candidates as they proceeded through the scenario work. While more predictive, the amount of labor and time needs to be balanced with the potential positive outcomes.

The literature pointed, albeit tentatively, toward a few recommendations for changes in the Education program's intake process. First, both qualitative and quantitative data needed to be valued. First, some form of dispositional assessment needed to be incorporated into the process, preferably a scenario-based, multipart interview which would produce actionable data.

## **Methods**

The goal of this study was to identify aspects of the admissions process and program logistics that contributed most to attrition rates. By doing so, the program could then take steps to improve those processes to increase overall retention and graduation rates in the MAT program. Historically, and prior to the changes recommended by this study, it was not unusual to have attrition rates in the program as high as one in four students. This study starts with 2013 and 2014. During those two academic years, the program graduated sixty-six students, but lost an additional fifteen to attrition, or close to twenty percent of enrollment.

The study specifically set out to answer the following questions:

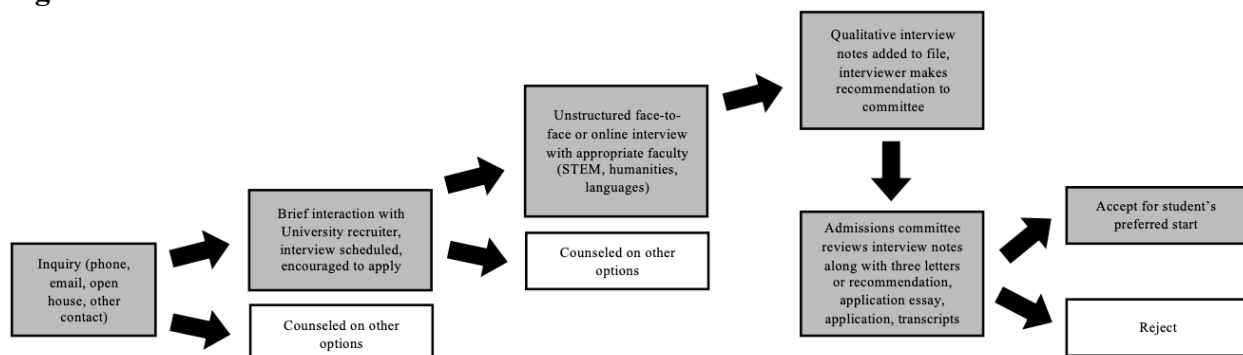
- What are the causes of attrition?
- How might those causes be mediated?
- What is an acceptable, rolling, three-year average attrition rate?

- To answer these questions, the program started with an analysis of the existing intake process.

### *The MAT Intake Process*

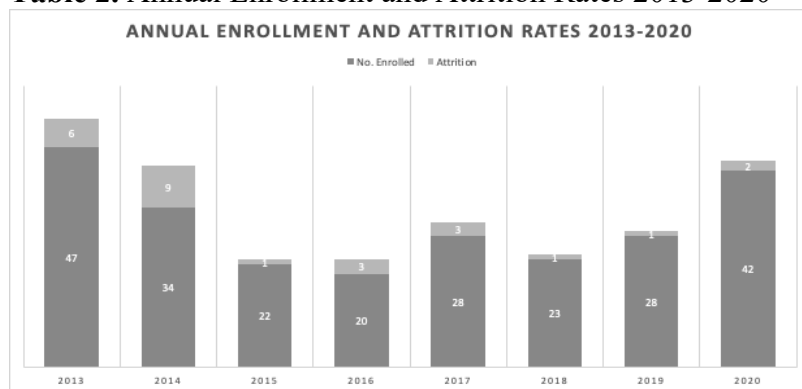
Historically, when potential applicants first inquired about the program they engaged with a recruiter or someone in the Department of Education to determine goodness of fit. If at any point in the interactions with potential applicants, it was determined that the potential candidate was not a good fit (for example, the candidate demonstrates poor content knowledge), they were directed to other possible options and career goals. In this way, the number of interviews and completed applications for review was reduced.

**Figure 3.** Pre-2016 Intake Process



This process was in place for years, with little revision or consideration for its effectiveness. The process was conventional, and acceptable to state and national accrediting bodies and required minimal human resources on the front end, with the majority of work done at the end of the process by the program chair. At no time did the intake process mirror the program's core values or gather data which might align an applicant's skills, knowledge, and dispositions with the program's expectations. Little historical data is available on conversion rates (the rate at which prospective applicants apply, are accepted, and enroll).

It is important to note that the time period under study includes a low point with regard to teaching and teacher education. From 2013 to 2017 the political environment was such that enrollments in teacher education programs across the state dropped by an average of sixty percent. The quality and quantity of applicants dropped significantly. The faculty worked to support students while also making it an imperative to maintain quality and standards. Hence, during that period the program saw volatile and dropping enrollment numbers with cohort averages in the twenties. Interestingly, the field of teacher education shifted swiftly from overproduction of teachers during the Great Recession to a shortage of teachers in more recent years. Enrollment trends lagged behind the recession by about two years, thus the program saw a drop in enrollment in 2015, which did not recover until 2019-2020. See figure below.

**Table 2.** Annual Enrollment and Attrition Rates 2013-2020

### Data Collection

Starting with the class of 2013, case files for each student who was separated from the institution prior to graduation were reviewed and primary causes for separation were determined. The reasons why students were separated from the university fell into four categories:

- Student initiated separation due to changing career goals
- Student initiated separation due to changed circumstances
- Program initiated separation due to dispositional factors (ethics, maturity, growth mindset)
- Program initiated separation due to content knowledge deficits and/or poor communication skills

In some cases, it was difficult to choose one category as there were confounding factors leading to the student's separation. In those cases, the faculty reached consensus on the main reason. In each case, only the primary reason was identified for the separation. The results of the analyses are seen in figure 6, starting with the class of 2013 and ending with 2020.

While the average annual separation rate during the study period is ten percent, this number represents a significant portion of enrollment in a small program. Also, the candidates who move through the separation process, regardless of the reason, often consume disproportionate amounts of administrative, faculty, staff, supervisor, and mentor time. For these reasons, a focused study of the intake process was undertaken to develop strategies to reduce the overall separation rate.

**Table 3.** Candidate Separation Analysis by Year

Separation Year Analysis	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	Total
Student initiated separation due to changing career goals				(1)		1	0	1	2
Student initiated separation due to changed circumstances			1	(1)			0		1
Program initiated separation due to dispositional behavior (ethics, maturity, growth mindset)	5	5		3	3		1	1,(1)	18
Program initiated separation due to content knowledge deficits and or poor communication skills	1	4					0		5
Candidate degree completion without teacher certification recommendation (started, 2019)							2	0	2
Total Separated Candidates	6	9	1	3	3	1	1	2	26
Total Number of Candidates	47	34	22	20	28	23	28	42	244
Total Candidates Graduating	41	25	21	17	25	22	27	40	220
Separated candidates as % of graduating candidates	13%	27%	5%	15%	10%	4%	4%	5%	

Numbers in parentheses indicate a student who separated from the program after completing no more than one course. In those three instances, those students were not included in the overall calculations. The students who chose to leave the program to pursue other careers, two in total, left for career paths that promised higher monetary returns on investment. The student who chose to separate from the program due to changing circumstances because of the need to relocate.

The surprising finding from this data analysis was the overwhelming number of students who were identified as separated due to reason three, *program-initiated separation due to dispositional behavior (ethics, maturity, growth mindset)*. While anecdotally it was apparent to the faculty that many cases of dismissal related to professional dispositions, the large number of separations credited to this category was unexpected. Over the study period, of the twenty-six students who separated from the university, eighteen, or sixty-nine percent, were separated for dispositional reasons. Secondarily, five of the twenty-six students were separated due to lack of content knowledge and/or communication skills. This additional number of students represented nineteen percent of the total number of students separated from the program. These two reasons made up eighty-eight percent of the student separations from the MAT program.

This finding represents an answer to the first research question: “What are the causes of attrition?” The next step was to investigate question two, “How might those causes be mediated?”

### ***Improvements Made to the MAT Intake Process***

Based on the analysis above, the Department initiated several changes to the intake process. Specifically, a two-year option for the MAT was institutionalized, a new approach to interviewing was adopted along with a new interview protocol, an on-demand writing prompt was integrated into the application process, and, the Miller Analogies Test was added to the options for the state required standardized test, and finally, a dispositions instrument was selected for use with newly accepted candidates.

The two-year program option was introduced in the fall of 2015, allowing the admissions committee to offer a two-year timeline to candidates who met program requirements, but may need additional time to develop the professional skills and dispositions needed for success. The one-year program consists of a full graduate course load with a full-year internship. In accordance with our goal to increase access and increase retention, the two-year pathway is seen as an option for students who might not otherwise have been successful in the program. Applicants who apply for the one-year program but are accepted into the two-year program are called prior to receiving the acceptance decision. A conversation between the advisor and candidate takes place explaining the decision and perspective of the Department of Education faculty. To date, the two-year candidates consistently graduate with a higher GPA and have a slightly higher retention rate than the one year candidates.

Beginning in the fall of 2016 a new approach to ‘sales’ was introduced. Members of the Department of Education faculty and staff attended a professional development workshop to learn the Sandler sales method (Williamson, 2016). Prior to this study, the recruiters and education program administrators involved in the recruitment process used what might be considered a hard sell strategy where both qualitative and quantitative data were presented to prospective applicants to prove that the program had to be the top choice. This approach did not consider an individual’s

specific interests or reasons for inquiring, but rather assumed that everyone would be interested in applying if they only knew how successful our graduates were. In 2016 the education department faculty and recruiters had the opportunity to participate in a Sandler Training workshop. Sandler Training ([sandler.com](http://sandler.com)) is the largest training agency in the U.S. with a strong reputation for providing pathways to success for its clients. At the heart of the Sandler method is the idea that the salesperson - in our case the recruiter - should come to the conversation on equal footing with the customer. The goal of the interaction is not to 'sell' the person on the product, but rather to find out what the customer wants, and whether or not the product we have to offer fits that customer's wants. It was a completely different approach to recruitment, and one that was more interpersonal, comfortable, and rewarding.

As a result of implementing a Sandler stance, an informational interview with the Department Assistant Director was added to the intake process. This pre-interview serves to insure a 'goodness of fit' between the potential applicant's career goals and the goals of the program. It also allows the potential candidate to ask questions about the program in what is perceived to be a low-stakes setting. This interaction allows for counseling early in the intake process if the Assistant Director concludes that the individual may not be a good fit for the program.

A new formal interview protocol was launched during the 2015-2016 academic year and revised during the 2016-2017, and 2017-2018 academic years. This new interview protocol standardizes the questions being asked and aligns the questions with programmatic goals. For example, a question designed to determine a candidate's growth mindset (Dweck, 2006) was added: "Please tell me about a time when you set a goal for yourself but fell short of that goal. How did you handle that situation?" Questions were aligned with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and the concept of growth mindset. Many of the interview questions were developed in response to the high number of dispositional separations noted in the chart above. While always a challenge to measure, the faculty feel more confident in their ability to better select applicants who align with the program's philosophy and goals.

On-demand writing prompts were also introduced for candidates who interviewed successfully. The writing prompts are designed to evaluate the candidate's confidence and ability to communicate effectively in writing and in their discipline. For applicants who are interviewed using Skype or some other means of face-to-face communication, the interviewer and applicant determine a mutual time when the prompt can be emailed. The applicant then emails the response back within 30 minutes. The writing prompts are given a score that is factored into the quantitative score provided by the formal interview.

In 2016 the state in which the program resides began to require a minimum GPA (3.0) and a GRE score (or other similar nationally normed standardized test score). Historically the MAT program did not require the GRE or other standardized exam score. In the thirty-year history of the program, when applicants did have a GRE score, no correlation could be established between success in the program and a strong GRE score. Although the question was revisited every few years, it was always decided that a GRE would not be made part of the admissions requirements. Starting in 2016, however, the state where the program resides required all teacher preparation programs add a nationally-normed, standardized test to the admissions process.

After some research, the Department decided to offer applicants two choices: the GRE or the Miller Analogies Test. This decision was made after interviewing several admissions recruiters and Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) officers. In all cases, recruiters and HEOP officers explained that marginalized candidates, candidates from historically underrepresented groups, and first-generation college students and graduate students perceive the GRE to be a bias exam. Research into linguistic, cultural, racial and socioeconomic bias with standardized tests, and in particular the GRE also point to concerns (Banks, 2006; Croizet, 2004; Jones, 2019; Lakin, 2012). In addition to the potential for test bias, applicants from China expressed concern about test dates. In Beijing in particular, there may be a six-month waiting list to sit for the GRE. We did not want potential applicants waylaid for logistical reasons.

Research into the Miller Analogies Test found no evidence of that test providing a less bias testing experience. However, the ease of access, less expensive testing fee, shorter test duration, and less expensive test preparation materials made it a choice worth offering.

In order to specifically address the issue of dispositions, the Department began to research available instruments used to measure teacher candidate dispositions. Prior to this study, it was assumed that the interview process ensured that candidates who might exhibit negative dispositions would not successfully complete the admissions process. Clearly that is not the case. In fact, there is no correlation between the students who were counseled to separate from the university and their interview scores. Members of the department attended workshops at national conferences in order to learn about other education programs' strategies for measuring dispositions. During this exploratory phase, one instrument stood out as meeting our needs, The Dispositions, Attributes, and Proficiencies Interview (DAP) developed by a team of education faculty at Indiana Wesleyan University and Central Michigan University (Ingles, 2010, 2013, 2016). The DAP, however, presented some solutions and some challenges.

The dilemma for the MAT program is that our candidates come from all over the world, and many of them arrive only days before the start of the summer program. So, we asked ourselves if this instrument could be useful if used on the first day of the summer program, not as an admission criterion, but as a diagnostic and formative instrument for our already accepted students. After discussions with Dr. Ingles, one of the creators of the DAP, and a pilot with the incoming 2017-2018 cohort, it was determined that the instrument could be used in this way, while maintaining protocols to insure instrument validity.

This portfolio of changes has taken several years to implement, but now that the changes have been institutionalized, results are beginning to be seen.

## **Findings**

We saw an immediate change in the way our recruiting events and one-on-one interactions evolved. We went from trying to recruit as many candidates as we could, to trying to connect with the candidates who were the best fit for our unique program.

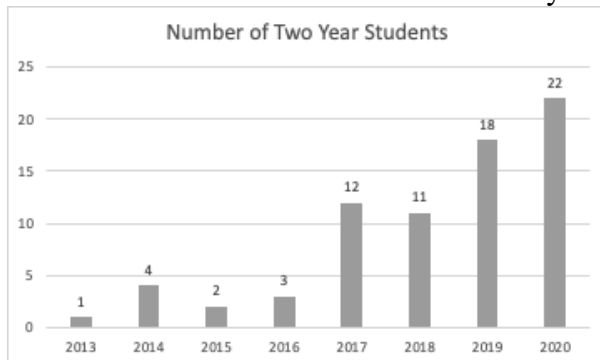
The Sandler method led us to integrate the new informal interview into the intake process. This interview led to fewer applications completed by individuals who have different expectations of the program or whose vision of what it means to be a teacher is different from the program's vision.

It also results in fewer declined applications overall. During 2018 and 2019 roughly eighty percent of the information interview candidates were encouraged to continue their application. The other twenty percent either chose not to move forward, or it was recommended to them that the program was not a good fit for their career goals. Applicants who fall into this category are still welcome to complete an application, but receive no nurturing from our recruitment office. The result is saved time and resources following leads that are less likely to be successful.

The new formal interview provides a quantitative score as well as qualitative interview notes. It is too early to determine any trends in the data. However, the faculty agree that the process is fairer and uniform. The quality of candidates has also improved, ensuring less time is spent with applicants less likely to complete the application process and/or be accepted. This improvement has resulted in increased confidence in the admissions process by the faculty, as well as increased buy-in, and less time spent on interviews.

As is the case with the new formal interview, it may be too soon to know if the on-demand writing prompt or two-year option has added to overall program success. Over the last two years (2018 and 2019), there have been three candidates who were identified as needing additional writing support as a result of the on-demand writing prompt. Those candidates were accepted into the two-year program and immediately connected to writing support services. To date, those candidates have been successful in the program.

**Table 4.** Number of Two-Year Students by Year



Currently sixty percent of our students complete the program in one year. Analysis of the last three years of graduates revealed that two-year candidates have an on-average higher GPA and higher retention rate. Prior to this research study, only candidates who chose the two-year option pursued it. Now, the admissions committee either honors the applicant's choice for a one or two-year program or dictates the choice based on the applicant's overall portfolio.

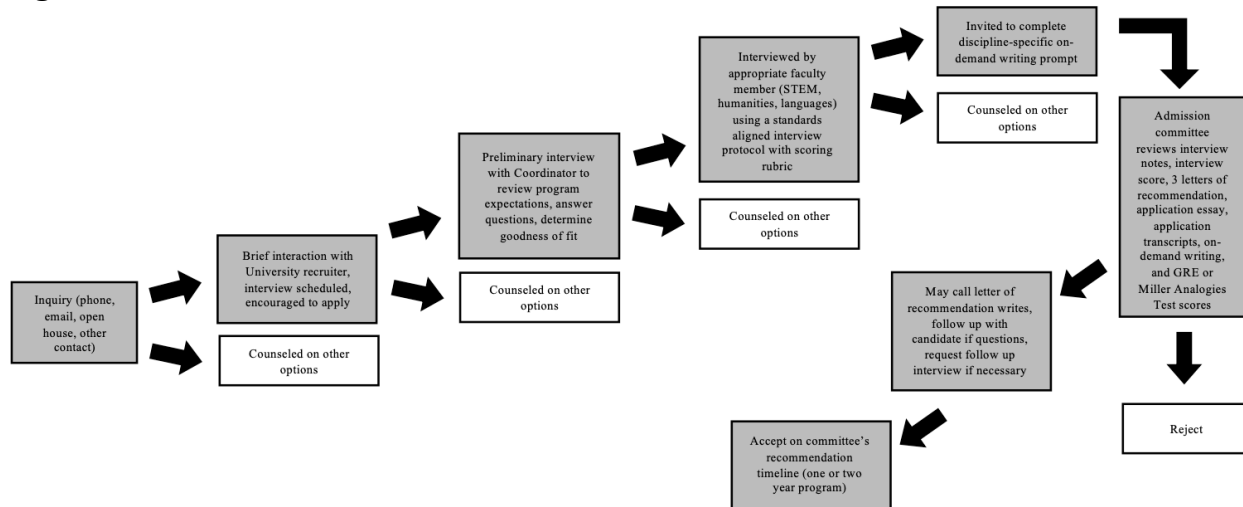
Once the Department made the decision to allow both the GRE and the Miller Analogies Test for admission, it was discovered that there were no Capital Region test sites for the Miller. We then worked to become a test site and now offer the exam once or twice a month depending on demand. Students are increasingly opting for the Miller Analogies Test over the GRE. In the current cohort of students, seventy percent chose the MAT over the GRE.

The final adjustment made to our overall intake process was the integration of the DAP, our dispositions tool. Five full-time faculty and six adjunct faculty became trained raters for the DAP



and one hundred percent of 2018 class (23 candidates) participated in the pilot. We have since used the DAP with all subsequent cohorts after having found in 2018 it did reveal trends in candidate dispositions that likely would have taken months to observe organically. Since successful completion of the summer program is a requirement to pass into the full-year residency, the faculty believes this instrument will be of assistance in guiding gateway decision making. Now in its third year of implementation, we are still working through how to take full advantage of this instrument in the service of our students' growth.

**Figure 4.** Post-2016 Intake Process



**Table 5.** Summary of Implementation Strategies Timeline

Goal	Action	Time	Implementation Cost
Introduce 1 & 2- year admissions option	Met with student services and admissions personnel	Fall 2015	None
Implement Sandler interviewing approach	Attended professional development, used to inform new interview protocol	Fall 2016	Faculty time, estimated total hours: 10
Add informational interview	Developed protocol for Department Coordinator	Fall 2016	Department Coordinator time, estimate 4 hours/week
Introduce formal interview protocol	Developed new interview protocol keyed to standards and research	Fall 2016	No cost, replaced unstructured interview format and qualitative score
Introduce on-demand writing	Developed on-demand writing prompts	Fall 2016	No cost
Offer Miller's Analogy Test	Register as a test site	August 2017	Time to establish and proctor. Long term, estimate 2-3 hours/week
Introduce DAP interview	Researched, attended conferences, piloted	June 2017	\$4,000 for instrument and training (20 hours). Long term, estimate 8 hours/semester for 3 faculty

## Conclusion

This several-year journey to improve the overall quality of applicants and candidates, increase access to our program, and increase retention of candidates has shown positive qualitative and quantitative results. While difficult to measure, the biggest benefit to the Department has been the positive shift in our professional time away from separating candidates from the program who were not succeeding, to ensuring acceptance of candidates whose vision of teaching matches the program's mission and vision. That shift has resulted in dramatic changes in the climate of the work environment as well as the tenor of each new cohort of future teachers.

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