

Policy update

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State Accountability Update

HB 2804, passed last session, established a new state accountability system for Texas.

The following are key facets of the new system:

Texas schools and districts will earn letter grades of A, B, C, D or F instead of the current rating labels of Met Standard and Improvement required in the state's revised accountability system, beginning with the 2017-2018 school year.

Before that time, by January 1, 2017, the Commissioner must submit a report to the Senate Education Committee and the House Public Education Committee that provides for a preliminary evaluation of how school districts and campuses would have been rated for the 2015-16 school year if using an A-F rating system based on the indicators required in the new accountability system. Additionally, the report must include the correlation between each designated letter performance rating the school district or campus would have received and the percentage of students at each district and campus: qualifying for free or reduced-price breakfast, that are limited English proficient, and disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status used to assign ratings in the system.

The legislation creates a five-domain rating system. Districts and schools will receive a letter grade for each domain, as well as an overall letter grade (see attached overview graphic).

- **Domain 1/Student Achievement** will include the results of the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) for grades 3-8 and all end-of-course (EOC) assessments aggregated across grade levels by subject area, including the percentage of students reaching the satisfactory passing standard and college readiness standard.
- **Domain 2/Student Progress** will include the percentage of students who meet the standards for annual improvement regardless of whether they meet the satisfactory or college readiness standards.
- **Domain 3/Closing Performance Gaps** will evaluate academic achievement gaps among students from different racial and ethnic groups, as well as socioeconomic backgrounds.
- The new law requires that 55 percent of the overall grade be based on Domains 1, 2, and 3.
- **Domain 4/Postsecondary Readiness** evaluates different indicators depending on campus type: For elementary and middle schools, student attendance will be the indicator.

Middle schools will also be evaluated on dropout rates and the percentage of seventh and eighth grade students who receive instruction in preparing for high school, college and career.

The law creates the following indicators for high schools: dropout, completion and graduation rates; the percentage of students completing the distinguished level of achievement; the percentage of students earning an endorsement; the percentage of students who complete a coherent sequence of Career and Technical Education courses; the percentage of students meeting the Texas Success Initiative benchmarks; the percentage of students who earn 12 hours of dual credit; the percentage of students who complete Advanced Placement courses; the percentage of students who enlist in the military; and the percentage of students who earn an industry certification.

- Domain 4 accounts for 35 percent of the overall grade awarded.
- **Domain 5/Community and Student Engagement** will include three programs related to locally-determined community and student engagement ratings, which will count for 10 percent of the overall performance grade.
- Because student testing is being pushed back three weeks, the accountability release date in statute will move from Aug. 8 to Aug. 15 beginning with the 2015-2016 school year.

Texas Commission on Next Generation Assessments and Accountability

HB 2804 also created a Texas Commission on Next Generation Assessments and Accountability, to be appointed by the Governor, Lt. Governor, Speaker of the House, in addition to the chairs of the Senate and House education and higher education committees, and a State Board of Education member.

The Commission is charged with developing and making recommendations for new systems of student assessment and public school accountability that address certain listed attributes (see attached chart). The Commission is required to submit a report to the governor and legislature that recommends statutory changes to improve systems of student assessment and public school accountability by September 1, 2016.

The members of the Commission have been named as follows:

Chair: Kim, Andrew – Superintendent, Comal ISD, New Braunfels

Vice-Chair: Hock, Stacy – Co-owner of Hock, LLC, a financial services technology consulting firm, and manager of the Joel & Stacy Hock Charitable Fund, Austin (newly apptd since Andrew Kim = Chair)

Alexander, Kim – Superintendent, Roscoe Collegiate ISD, Roscoe

Aycock, Jimmie Don – Chair, House Committee on Public Education, Texas House of Representatives, Killeen

Beltran, Erika – Member, State Board of Education, District 13, Fort Worth

Castro, Paul – Superintendent, A+Unlimited Potential Charter School District, Houston

Dow, Pauline – Chief Instructional Officer, North East ISD, San Antonio

Hernandez Ferrier, Maria – Director, Texas A&M University System Office of Mexico and Latin America Relations and President Emeritus of Texas A&M University San Antonio, San Antonio

McLendon, Michael – Dean, School of Education, Baylor University, Waco

Seliger, Kel – Chair, Committee on Higher Education, Texas State Senate, Amarillo

Susser, Catherine – Member, Board of Trustees, Corpus Christi ISD, Corpus Christi

Taylor, Larry – Chair, Committee on Education, Texas State Senate, Friendswood

Treviño, Theresa – Board Member TAMSA, President, Texans Advocating for Meaningful Student Assessment, Austin

Vance, Quinton – Executive Director, KIPP: Dallas-Fort Worth College Preparatory Charter Schools, Dallas

Zerwas, John – Chair, Committee on Higher Education, Texas House of Representatives, Richmond

The Committee held its first meeting on January 21, 2016. Most of the first meeting was devoted to presentations to the Commission by TEA staff regarding the state assessment and accountability system as well as a presentation by an assessment expert, Dr. Andrew Ho, Harvard Graduate School of Education. Included among Dr. Ho's recommendations for wise use of assessments in accountability systems was to emphasize school improvement over school rankings, and design accountability systems to build in the time necessary to establish valid, reliable measures of accountability.

Members were interactive with the presenters throughout the meeting, revealing possible areas of interest by particular commission members through their line of questioning. Several members expressed an interest in how Texas will be able to establish that high school students graduate college and career ready (especially since HB 5 eliminated passage of the Algebra II and English III EOCs as a graduation requirement, which had been used as measures of college/career readiness); others were interested in how/whether norm-referenced tests could be used in our state accountability system, whether sampling of student test results could be used for accountability purposes, and what different forms testing could take, other than standardized tests (such as performance tasks, computer adaptive testing).

In order to accomplish the statutory requirement to submit a report to the governor and legislature by September 1, 2016, the Commission has set an ambitious meeting schedule, with meetings scheduled for:

February 23, 2016 (public testimony taken)

March 23, 2016

April 20, 2016

May 25, 2016

July 27, 2016

In addition, State Board of Education chairwoman Donna Bahorich has been holding a series of Community Conversations on the topic in different areas of the state, to which parents, educators and business leaders are invited to give input and offer ideas.

<p>Domain I: Student Achievement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STAAR satisfactory standard • STAAR college-readiness standard 	<p>Domain II: Student Progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress measure expectations for STAAR satisfactory standard • Progress measure expectations for STAAR college-readiness standard 	<p>Domain III: Closing Performance Gaps</p> <p>Academic achievement differentials among students from different racial and ethnic groups and socioeconomic backgrounds</p>	<p>Domain IV: Postsecondary Readiness</p> <p><u>Districts and High Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dropout Rate • Graduation rate • College and Career Readiness • Other indicators as determined by the commissioner <p><u>Middle/Junior High Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student attendance • Dropout rate • Students receiving instruction in preparing for high school, college, and career • Other indicators as determined by the commissioner <p><u>Elementary Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student attendance • Other indicators as determined by the commissioner 	<p>Domain V: Community and Student Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three indicators from Community and Student Engagement Ratings chosen by the district • Three indicators from Community and Student Engagement Ratings chosen by the campus
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HB 2804 does not prescribe how each of the first three domains is to be individually weighted to calculate the combined 55%.

55% of Overall Rating

35% of Overall Rating
 For districts and high schools, graduation rate is 10%; the remaining indicators are 25%.

10% of Overall Rating

Districts and campuses are assigned a rating of A, B, C, D, or F for each of the first four domains. Districts and campuses self-assign a rating of A, B, C, D, or F for Domain V. Each district's and campus's overall rating is based on the weighted performance across all five domains.

<p>Domain I:</p> <p>Student Achievement</p>	<p>Domain II:</p> <p>Student Progress</p>	<p>Domain III:</p> <p>Closing Performance Gaps</p>	<p>Domain IV:</p> <p>Postsecondary Readiness</p>	<p>Domain V:</p> <p>Community and Student Engagement</p>
<p>STAAR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase-in Level II—Percentage of students who met performance standard aggregated across grades levels by subject area College Readiness—Percentage of students who met college readiness performance standard aggregated across grades levels by subject area STAAR Alternate 2—Percentage of students who met performance standard aggregated across grades levels by subject area Percentage of students who met or exceeded ELL progress measure expectations (STAAR or STAAR L) - TBD EOC Substitute Assessment - TBD 	<p>STAAR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase-in Level II—Percentage of students who met standard for annual improvement aggregated across grades levels by subject area College Readiness—Percentage of students who met standard for annual improvement aggregated across grades levels by subject area STAAR Alternate 2—Percentage of students who met standard for annual improvement aggregated across grades levels by subject area Percentage of students who met or exceeded ELL progress measure expectations (STAAR or STAAR L) - TBD 	<p>Academic achievement differentials among students from different racial and ethnic groups and socioeconomic backgrounds</p>	<p><u>Districts and High Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dropout Rate Graduation rate Percentage of students who do at least one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete requirements for FHSP distinguished level of achievement Complete the requirements for an endorsement Complete a coherent sequence of CTE courses Satisfy the TSI benchmark Earn at least 12 hours of postsecondary credit Complete an AP course Enlist in the armed forces Earn an industry certification Any additional indicators of student achievement not related to performance on standardized assessment, as determined by the commissioner <p><u>Middle/Junior High Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student attendance Dropout rate Percentage of 7th and 8th grade students who receive instruction in preparing for high school, college, and career Any additional indicators of student achievement not related to performance on standardized assessment, as determined by the commissioner <p><u>Elementary Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student attendance Any additional indicators of student achievement not related to performance on standardized assessment, as determined by the commissioner 	<p>Three indicators from the following list, as chosen by each district and campus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fine arts wellness and physical education community and parental involvement, such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> opportunities for parents to assist students in preparing for assessments under Section 39.023; tutoring programs that support students taking assessments under Section 39.023, and opportunities for students to participate in community service projects the 21st Century Workforce Development program the second language acquisition program the digital learning environment dropout prevention strategies educational programs for gifted and talented students
<p>HB 2804 does not prescribe how each of the first three domains is to be individually weighted to calculate the combined 55%.</p>			<p>35% of Overall Rating</p> <p>For districts and high schools, graduation rate is 10%; the remaining indicators are 25%.</p>	<p>10% of Overall Rating</p>

55% of Overall Rating

35% of Overall Rating

For districts and high schools, graduation rate is 10%; the remaining indicators are 25%.

10% of Overall Rating

Texas Commission on Next Generation Assessments and Accountability	
Purpose	<p>To develop and make recommendations for new systems of student assessment and public school accountability to address the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The purpose of a state accountability system and the role of student assessment in that system ▪ Opportunities to assess students that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide actionable information for a parent or person standing in parental relation to a student, an educator, and the public; • support learning activities; • recognize application of skills and knowledge; • measure student educational growth toward mastery; and • value critical thinking. ▪ Alignment of state performance standards with college and career readiness requirements in collaboration with the Texas Workforce Commission and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board ▪ Policy changes necessary to enable a student to progress through subject matter and grade levels on demonstration of mastery ▪ Policy changes necessary to establish a student assessment and public school accountability system that meets state goals, is community based, promotes parent and community involvement, and reflects the unique needs of each community
Deliverable	A report to the governor and legislature that recommends statutory changes to improve systems of student assessment and public school accountability
Deadline	September 1, 2016

Texas Commission on Next Generation Assessments and Accountability (continued)

<p>Membership</p>	<p>The commission will have 15 members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Four members appointed by the governor ▪ Three members appointed by the lieutenant governor ▪ Three members appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives ▪ The chair of the senate committee on education or a designated representative ▪ The chair of the senate committee on higher education or a designated representative ▪ The chair of the house committee on public education or a designated representative ▪ The chair of the house committee on higher education or a designated representative ▪ A member of the State Board of Education, as designated by the chair of that board <p>The ten members appointed by the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the house must include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a parent or person standing in parental relation to a student enrolled in the public school system; ▪ an educator in the public school system; ▪ an educator in a school district that is a participant in the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium; ▪ a member of the business community; ▪ a member of the civic community; ▪ a leader in student assessment development and use; and ▪ a leader in research concerning student assessment and education outcomes.
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Texas Assessment Update

(source: TEA update to Next Generation Assessment Commission, Jan. 20, 2016)

HB 743: passed last session. Requires the following for the grades 3-8 assessments:

- For grades 3-5 assessments, 85 percent of students must be able to complete the assessment instrument within 120 minutes.
- For grades 6-8 assessments, 85 percent of students must be able to complete the assessment instrument within 180 minutes.
- Assessments must be completed in a single day.

For 2016 only, TEA will remove all currently-embedded field-test questions for STAAR grades 3–8, which will reduce the length of each assessment by five to eight questions. TEA will then collect data regarding students' ability to finish the tests in the required time, which will help TEA determine how many, if any, operational test items need to be removed from the tests in order to fully comply with HB 743 for the next assessment administration.

Additionally, TEA has redesigned the STAAR grades 4 and 7 writing tests so they can be completed in one four-hour administration starting in spring 2016.

HB 743 also requires the TEA to independently verify the validity and reliability of the STAAR grades 3-8 assessments before the spring 2016 administration. TEA has contracted with the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) for the independent evaluation of the STAAR assessments.

HB 1164: passed last session. Beginning with the 2016-2017 school year, establishes a pilot program for the assessment of writing.

- Prior to the 2016-2017 school year, TEA and its testing contractor are required to conduct a study to determine an alternative method to assess writing in place of the grades 4 and 7 writing assessments and the English I and English II EOC assessments.
- For the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years, the agency must designate at least one rural, one medium-sized, and one large urban school district to participate in the writing assessment pilot program.

The method to assess writing must measure:

- a student's mastery of the TEKS through timed writing samples;
- improvement in writing from beginning of year to end of year;
- a student's ability to follow the writing process from rough to final draft; and

◦ a student's ability to produce more than one type of writing.

Following the approval of pilot study design, TEA will provide a trainer-of-trainer system for the scoring of assessments at the local level.

At the conclusion of the pilot study, a comprehensive technical report will be submitted on or before September 1, 2018.

Other assessment items:

TEA has communicated that students will be able to leave the testing environment once they finish tests (source: Moak/Casey TASA Midwinter presentation on accountability).

The requirement that students in 5th and 8th grade must pass both the reading and math assessments in order to be promoted to the next grade level will return this year (the Commissioner suspended these requirements for math assessments for 5th and 8th graders last year).



Every Student Succeeds Act

Congress shocked many observers when, in early December 2015, after eight years of delay, it passed a reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act, now called the “Every Student Succeeds Act” to replace the much maligned No Child Left Behind Act. President Barack Obama signed the bill into law on Dec. 10. Of most immediate significance to Texas is the fact that the bill removed a looming requirement to establish a test-based teacher evaluation system under the state’s current ESEA waiver. The U.S.

Department of Education recently put Texas’s waiver on high-risk status with potential loss of the waiver starting with the 2016-17 school year, due to Texas’s failure to assure USDE that it would implement such a system. The bill specifically provides that USDE has no authority to require states to implement any kind of teacher evaluation system, and that all waivers have no legal effect on or after Aug. 1, 2016. (However, the current plan is for Texas to continue to move forward with TTESS, the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System, that potentially requires school districts using the system to count student performance as 20 percent of a teacher’s evaluation).

Additionally, the bill returns much of the authority over education to states and local school districts, while retaining federal authority in some key areas. Below are selected provisions from the Act.

Accountability

Although the bill eliminates federal adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirements after Aug. 1, 2016, it requires states to submit to the U.S. Secretary of Education for review accountability systems that establish ambitious state-designed long-term goals for all students and separately for each subgroup of students and include:

- Academic achievement based on the annual assessments and on the state’s goals.
- A measure of student growth or other statewide academic indicator for elementary and middle schools.
- Graduation rates for high schools based on the state’s goals.
- Progress in achieving English proficiency for English Learners in each of grades 3 through 8 and the same high school grade in which the state assesses for Math/ELA.
- At least one measure of school quality or student success (several examples are listed including student and educator engagement, access and completion of advanced coursework, postsecondary readiness, school climate and safety, and another state selected indicator).

“Substantial weight” is required to be given the academic indicators (first four described above) and these four indicators must in the aggregate be given “much greater weight” in the differentiation process than any measures of school quality or student Success (described in last bullet above).

Based on the performance of schools and subgroups in schools on the indicators described above, states are required to “meaningfully differentiate” public schools in the state on an annual basis.

States are to exclude the results of any state math/ELA assessments or English Language Proficiency assessments taken by these students from the state accountability system for the first year of the student’s enrollment in a school. In the second year of the student’s enrollment in the school, a measure of the student’s growth on the state assessments described above must be included in the state accountability

system; in the third year of a student's enrollment, the student's proficiency results must be included in the state accountability system. States may include the results of former ELLs in the ELL subgroup for up to four years after a student ceases to be identified as an ELL.

Assessment

Annual state tests: The bill retains federal authority to require states to administer the same annual state assessments currently required under NCLB/ESEA (annual, statewide assessments in reading and math in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school, as well as science tests given three times between grades 3 and 12), with results disaggregated and reported by student subgroup, and to require that 95 percent of states' students participate in the annual assessment.

It requires that state assessments involve multiple, up-to-date measures of student academic achievement, which may include measures of student academic growth and may be partially delivered in the form of portfolios, projects or extended performance tasks.

The bill allows states to develop and administer computer adaptive assessments if such assessments measure, at a minimum, each student's academic proficiency based on the challenging state academic standards for the student's grade level and growth toward such standards; and may measure the student's level of academic proficiency and growth using items above or below the student's grade level, including for use as part of a state's accountability system.

English Language Learners: States must assess students in English who have attended school in the U.S. for three or more consecutive school years, unless the state determines, on a case-by-case basis, that assessments in another language would likely yield more accurate and reliable information regarding what the students knows, in which case, they can do so for an additional two consecutive years.

States may exempt from the state reading or language arts assessments recently arrived English language learners who have been enrolled in school in the U.S. for less than 12 months.

8th graders taking high school level math assessments: The bill addresses a long-standing problem under ESEA in which 8th graders taking high school level math assessments were required to also take the corresponding 8th grade math assessment because ESEA required that states that offer only one mathematics assessment at the high school level which could also be taken by middle school students, to ensure there is a separate mathematics result that can be attributed to a high school. ESSA now allows states to exempt any 8th grader from taking the 8th grade math assessment if:

- The student takes an end-of-course exam that the state typically administers to meet the Act's high school math assessment requirements;
- The student's results are used for purposes of reporting on/accountability for the 8th grade math assessment;
- The student takes an EOC in HS that is more advanced than the EOC taken by the student in 8th grade; and
- The results are used for purposes of reporting/accountability for high school math assessment.

Locally-selected, nationally-recognized high school assessments in lieu of state high school assessments: The bill allows school districts to use locally-selected, nationally-recognized high school academic assessments in lieu of the state high school assessments, if approved by the state. However, the tests must be aligned with the state academic content standards, address the depth and breadth of such standards, and be equivalent in content coverage, difficulty, and quality to the state-designed assessments AND must provide comparable, valid, and reliable data on academic achievement, as compared to the state-

designed assessments, for all students and for each subgroup of students among all local school districts within the state.

Alternative tests for severely cognitively disabled students: The bill provides that alternative tests aligned with the state academic content standards and alternate academic achievement standards are allowed for up to 1% of the most significantly cognitively disabled students (codified current federal regulation).

Limitation on assessment time: Allows states to set a target limit on the aggregate amount of time devoted to the administration of assessments for each grade, expressed as a percentage of annual instructional hours.

Testing transparency: The bill requires that local school districts provide transparency about testing, including making publicly and widely available information on each assessment required by the state under ESEA, other assessments required by the state, and where available and feasible to report, assessments required by the local school district including the subject matter assessed, the purpose for which such assessments are designed and used, the source of the requirement for the assessment, the amount of time students will spend taking the assessment, and the schedule for the assessment.

Local districts are also required to notify parents that they may request, and the district will timely provide, information regarding any state or local district policy regarding student participation in any assessments required by federal or state law or by local district policy, which shall include a policy, procedure, or parental right to opt the child out of such assessment, where applicable.

Funding for state development/improvement of balanced assessment systems: The bill requires the secretary to make grants to states to use for, among other options, developing or improving balanced assessment systems that include summative, interim and formative assessments, including supporting local educational agencies in developing or improving such assessments; and for evaluating student academic achievement through the development of comprehensive academic assessment instruments (such as performance and technology-based academic assessments, computer adaptive assessments, projects, or extended performance task assessments) that emphasize the mastery of standards and aligned competencies in a competency-based education model.

State/local district option for assessment audits: The bill requires the secretary to make grants to states that so choose for the state to conduct audits of the state assessment system and for local districts to do the same for local school district assessment systems. If a state receives such a grant, state and local school district audits must include, among other things, the purpose for which the assessment was designed and the purpose for which the assessment is used; and the legal authority for the administration of the assessment.

The state and local districts must also seek feedback on the system from stakeholders, including information such as the amount of time teachers spend on assessment preparation and administration and the assessments that administrators, teachers, principals, other school leaders, parents and students, if appropriate, do and do not find useful. State and local school district audits must include a plan to improve and streamline the state and local school district assessment systems, including activities such as eliminating any unnecessary assessments.

In addition to conducting audits of local district assessment systems, the bill allows other uses for local district subgrants, including hiring instructional coaches, or promoting teachers who may receive increased compensation to serve as instructional coaches, to support teachers in the development of classroom-based assessments, interpreting assessment data and designing instruction.

Innovative assessment systems: The bill allows the secretary to provide up to seven states and four state consortia with the authority, for up to five years, to establish an innovative assessment system that may

include competency-based assessments, instructionally embedded assessments, interim assessments, cumulative year-end assessments, or performance-based assessments that combine into an annual summative determination for a student, which may be administered through computer adaptive assessments.

State applications must include, among other things, a description of how the state will gather data, solicit regular feedback from teachers, principals, other school leaders, and parents about their satisfaction with the system; assess the results of each year of the program; and respond by making needed changes to the innovative assessment system.

Approved states can use the result of the innovation assessment system in lieu of or in addition to ESEA-required assessments in state accountability systems.

If, upon completion of its demonstration period, a state can show that it has scaled the innovative assessment system up to statewide use, and demonstrated that such system is of high quality, the state shall be permitted to operate the innovative assessment system for purposes of ESEA-required testing and accountability.

School Improvement

Instead of mandating a required set of prescriptive interventions for low performing schools, the bill requires that, beginning with school year 2017-2018 and at least once every three years, states must identify schools for “comprehensive support and improvement.” States are also required to set exit criteria for schools that are identified to exit such status. Schools that meet the following criteria are required to be identified:

- The 5% lowest performing schools receiving Title I funds in the state (as determined by the index and differentiation process).
- High schools that graduate less than two-thirds of their students.
- Schools for which a subgroup is consistently underperforming in the same manner as a school under lowest 5% category for a state-determined number of years.

The bill requires local school districts with schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement to, in partnership with stakeholders (including principals and other school leaders, teachers, and parents), locally develop and implement a comprehensive support and improvement plan with evidence-based interventions to be used to improve student outcomes, which must be approved by the local school board and the state education agency.

After a state-determined period of years (not to exceed four years) states must take more rigorous state determined action if a school identified for comprehensive support and intervention has not met the exit criteria.

The bill requires schools identified for targeted support (due to having consistently underperforming subgroups) to develop in partnership with stakeholders (including principals and other school leaders, teachers and parents) and implement a targeted support and improvement plan with evidence-based interventions to improve outcomes for the relevant subgroups, which must be approved and monitored by the local school district. In addition, if the plan is not successfully implemented after a local school district-determined number of years, additional action must take place.

Instead of requiring that school districts spend 20 percent of their Title I funds on tutoring for students at low performing schools, the bill provides that states can reserve 7% of their Title I funds (increased from 4% under current law) to provide school improvement subgrants to local school districts, and may reserve up to 3% of funds for direct student services to be awarded in subgrants to local school districts. The funds can be used to provide for initiatives like enrollment and participation in academic courses not otherwise available at a student’s school, including advanced courses, AP and IB courses, and career and technical education coursework, credit recovery, personalized learning, including high-quality tutoring, and transportation costs

for students in such schools to transfer to a better school (if a local district offers this option – unless state law requires it).

Failure to meet requirements of the state plan could result in withholding of all funds for state administration, compared to 25% in current law (according to summary from Council of Chief State School Officers).

Highly Qualified

Rather than require that all teachers of core academic subjects be “highly qualified,” the bill simply requires that state-submitted Title I plans requiring approval by the U.S. Secretary of Education contain assurances regarding how the state will ensure that all teachers and paraprofessionals working in schools receiving Title I funds meet applicable state certification and licensure requirements; a description of how low-income and minority children enrolled in these schools are not served at disproportionate rates by ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers, as well as the measures that will be used to evaluate that this is indeed the case; and how this will be publicly reported.

The bill also requires local districts to notify parents that they can request, and the district will provide in a timely manner, information about whether their child’s teacher has met state qualifications and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction, is teaching under emergency or other provisional credentials, and is teaching in the field of discipline of the certification of the teacher; and whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

School districts are required to notify parents if a student has been assigned, or has been taught for four or more consecutive weeks by, a teacher who does not meet applicable State certification or licensure requirements at the grade level and subject area in which the teacher has been assigned.

Student Discipline

In both state and local Title I plans, the bill requires information regarding how the state will support, and local districts will improve, school conditions for student learning, including through reducing incidences of bullying and harassment, the use of aversive behavioral interventions that compromise student health and safety and the overuse of discipline practices that remove students from the classroom, which may include identifying and supporting schools with high rates of discipline, disaggregated by student subgroups.

State Academic Achievement Standards

Instead of requiring states to establish college- and career-ready standards, the bill requires that each state establish challenging state academic standards that are aligned with entrance requirements for credit-bearing coursework in the system of public higher education in the state and relevant career and technical education standards. The bill prohibits the secretary mandating, directing, controlling, coercing, or exercising any direction or supervision over any of the challenging state academic standards adopted or implemented by a state.

Reporting Requirements

The bill requires states to submit annual report cards including measures of school quality, climate, and safety, including rates of in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, school-related arrests, referrals to law enforcement, chronic absenteeism (including both excused and unexcused absences), and incidences of violence, including bullying and harassment. States must also report the professional qualifications of teachers in the state; the number and percentage of inexperienced teachers, principals, and

other school leaders; teachers teaching with emergency or provisional credentials; and teachers who are not teaching in the subject or field for which the teacher is certified or licensed.

Local report cards require all of the information reported on the state report cards with the exception of NAEP results as applied to the local school district and school and how the performance of each school's students compare to performance of the local school district and state as a whole.

Prohibitions on U.S. Secretary of Education

With respect to the state accountability system, the Education Secretary may not add requirements or criteria that are inconsistent or outside of the scope of Title I -A or in excess of statutory authority granted to the Secretary.

As a condition of the state plan or any waiver, the Secretary may not require a state to add new requirements, require a state to add or delete specific elements to the standards, prescribe goals of progress or measurements of interim progress that are set by states under the accountability system, prescribe specific assessments or items to be used in assessments, prescribe indicators that states must use, prescribe the weight of measures or indicators, prescribe the specific methodology states must use to differentiate or identify schools, prescribe school improvement strategies or exit criteria, prescribe min. N-sizes, **prescribe any teacher or principal evaluation system, prescribe any measures of teacher or principal effectiveness,** or prescribe the way in which the state factors the 95% requirement into its accountability system.

The Secretary is also not empowered to: issue new non-regulatory guidance that seeks to provide explanation of the requirements under section 1111, provides a strictly limited or exhaustive list for implementation purposes, purports to be legally binding or requires new data collection beyond data from existing federal, state and local reporting. The Secretary is also prohibited from defining a term that is inconsistent with or outside the scope of Title I, Part A.

Timeline

The bill specifies that the part of ESEA related to required assessments remains in effect through the close of August 1, 2016, and that provisions under ESSA related to accountability systems and school improvement do not go into effect until beginning with school year 2017–2018. Schools and districts must continue to implement ESEA-required interventions (corrective action, restructuring) until either the state's Title I plan under ESSA is approved by the U.S. Secretary of Education or the beginning of the 2017-18 school year. USDE issued a guidance letter to states regarding the transition to ESSA assessment and accountability provisions in late December 2015. The letter stated that states with waivers from NCLB/ESEA adequate yearly progress will continue to be exempt for the remainder of the 2015-16 school year. The letter also stated that states will not be required to submit annual measurable objectives to USDE for review and approval for the 2015-16 school year; however, states and districts must continue to publish report cards for the 2015–16 school year and beyond. Report cards must continue to include information that shows how a district's student achievement on the state assessments compares to students and subgroups of students in the state as a whole. At the school level, the district must include information that shows how a school's student achievement on the state assessments compares to students and subgroups of students in the district and in the state as a whole.

Teacher Quality

Title II/Part A – Supporting Effective Instruction

The bill provides \$2.2 billion in Title II funding for formula grants to states and local school districts to be used to increase student achievement consistent with the challenging state academic standards; improve the

quality and effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other school leaders; increase the number of teachers, principals, and other school leaders who are effective in improving student academic achievement in schools; and provide low-income and minority students greater access to effective teachers, principals, and other school leaders. The bill adjusts the allocation of Title II formula funds by ensuring that states with higher numbers of students in poverty receive funding that is reflective of their current student populations.

State grants

States receiving a grant must award not less than 95% of grant funds to local school districts, and can use the remaining 5% for one or more of 21 authorized state-level activities, including reforming teacher, principal, or other school leader certification, recertification, tenure systems or educator preparation program standards; **developing, improving, or providing assistance to local educational agencies to support the design and implementation of teacher, principal, or other school leader evaluation and support systems that are based in part on evidence of student academic achievement, which may include student growth, and shall include multiple measures of educator performance and provide clear, timely, and useful feedback to teachers, principals, or other school leaders;** carrying out programs that establish, expand, or improve alternative routes for state certification of teachers; developing, or assisting local school districts in developing, among other things, strategies that provide differential pay, or other incentives, to recruit and retain teachers in high-need academic subjects; providing training for all school personnel, including teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, and paraprofessionals, regarding how to prevent and recognize child sexual abuse; supporting and developing efforts to train teachers on the appropriate use of student data to ensure that individual student privacy is protected as required by FERPA; and supporting other activities identified by the state that are, to the extent the state determines that such evidence is reasonably available, evidence-based and that meet the purpose of this title.

State applications must include, among other things, if applicable, a description of how the state educational agency will work with local school districts in the state to develop or implement State or local teacher, principal, or other school leader evaluation and support systems that meet the requirements set out above, and a description of how the State educational agency will encourage opportunities for increased autonomy and flexibility for teachers, principals, or other school leaders, such as by establishing innovation schools that have a high degree of autonomy over budget and operations, are transparent and accountable to the public, and lead to improved academic outcomes for students.

States must meaningfully consult with teachers, principals, organizations representing educators, and other stakeholders in developing the state application.

Prohibitions

The U.S. Secretary of Education or any other officer/employee of the federal government may not mandate, direct or control the development, improvement, or implementation of elements of any teacher, principal, or other school leader evaluation system; any state or local school district's definition of teacher, principal, or other school leader effectiveness; or any teacher, principal, or other school leader professional standards, certification, or licensing.

Local school district grants

Local school district applications must include a description of how the school district will prioritize funds to schools in the district that are implementing comprehensive or targeted support and improvement activities. Local school districts must meaningfully consult with teachers, principals, organizations representing educators, and other stakeholders in developing the state application.

Local school districts may use subgrant funds for a list of activities, including, among other things, developing or improving a rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation and support system for teachers, principals, or other

school leaders that is based in part on evidence of student achievement, which may include student growth; and shall include multiple measures of educator performance and provide clear, timely, and useful feedback to teachers, principals, or other school leaders; reducing class size to a level that is evidence-based, to the extent the state (in consultation with local educational agencies in the state) determines that such evidence is reasonably available, to improve student achievement through the recruiting and hiring of additional effective teachers; providing high-quality, personalized professional development that is evidence-based, to the extent the state (in consultation with local educational agencies in the state) determines that such evidence is reasonably available, for teachers, instructional leadership teams, principals, or other school leaders, that is focused on improving teaching and student learning and achievement; and **developing feedback mechanisms to improve school working conditions, including through periodically and publicly reporting results of educator support and working conditions feedback.**

Title II/Part B – Teacher and Leader School Incentive Fund

The bill provides funds for three-year grants that can be renewed for an additional two years. States, local school districts and nonprofit organizations can apply for the grants to develop, implement, improve, or expand comprehensive performance-based compensation systems or human capital management systems for teachers, principals, or other school leaders (especially for those in high-need schools) who raise student academic achievement and close the achievement gap between high- and low-performing students; and to study and review performance-based compensation systems or human capital management systems for teachers, principals, or other school leaders to evaluate the effectiveness, fairness, quality, consistency, and reliability of the systems.

Applications must include, among other things, evidence of the support and commitment from teachers, principals, or other school leaders (including organizations representing them) for the activities proposed under the grant; a description of how the eligible entity will develop and implement a fair, rigorous, valid, reliable, and objective process to evaluate teacher, principal, or other school leader performance under the system that is based in part on measures of student academic achievement, including the baseline performance against which evaluations of improved performance will be made; and how the proposed activities are evidence-based.

Funds may be used for one or more of a list of activities, including,

- Developing or improving an evaluation and support system, including as part of a human capital management system as applicable, that reflects clear and fair measures of teacher, principal, or other school leader performance, based in part on demonstrated improvement in student academic achievement; and provides teachers, principals, or other school leaders with ongoing, differentiated, targeted, and personalized support and feedback for improvement, including professional development opportunities designed to increase effectiveness;
- Conducting outreach within a local school district or a state to gain input on how to construct an evaluation and support system and to develop support for the evaluation and support system, including by training appropriate personnel in how to observe and evaluate teachers, principals, or other school leaders;
- Providing principals or other school leaders with balanced autonomy to make budgeting, scheduling, and other school-level decisions in a manner that meets the needs of the school without compromising the intent or essential components of the policies of the local school district or state; and authority to make staffing decisions that meet the needs of the school, such as building an instructional leadership team that includes teacher leaders or offering opportunities for teams or pairs of effective teachers or candidates to teach or start teaching in high-need schools together; and/or
- Implementing, as part of a comprehensive performance-based compensation system, a differentiated salary structure which may include bonuses and stipends to teachers who teach in high-need schools, teach high-need subjects, raise student academic achievement, or take on additional leadership

responsibilities; or to principals or other school leaders who serve in high-need schools and raise student academic achievement in the schools.

STEM Master Teacher Corps

The U.S. Secretary of Education may award grant to states, state/non-profit partnerships to support the development of a state-wide STEM master teacher corps or STEM professional development programs for teachers.

Criminal Background Checks

Requires states and local school districts that receive federal funds under ESSA to have in place laws, regulations or policies which prohibit any individual who is a school employee, contractor, or agent, or any state educational agency or local school district, from assisting a school employee, contractor, or agent in obtaining a new job, apart from the routine transmission of administrative and personnel files, if the individual or agency knows, or has probable cause to believe, that such school employee, contractor, or agent engaged in sexual misconduct regarding a minor or student in violation of the law.

An exception is provided if no charges in an open case have been filed against an individual for four years and if a case on an individual has been closed.

Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant Program

The bill authorizes this new grant program to help states and local school districts target federal resources on local priorities to better serve disadvantaged students by providing all students with access to a well-rounded education fostering safe, healthy, supportive, and drug-free environments that support student academic achievement; and improving the use of technology in order to improve the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students.

State activities may include supporting local school districts in fostering safe, healthy, supportive, and drug-free environments that support student academic achievement, which may include implementing mental health awareness training programs that are evidence-based (to the extent the state determines that such evidence is reasonably available) to provide education to school personnel regarding resources available in the community for students with mental illnesses and other relevant resources relating to mental health or the safe de-escalation of crisis situations involving a student with a mental illness; or expanding access to or coordinating resources for school-based counseling and mental health programs, such as through school-based mental health services partnership programs.

Local school districts must use the funds to develop and implement programs and activities that support access to a well-rounded education; foster safe, healthy, supportive, and drug-free environments that support student academic achievement; and promote the involvement of parents in the activity or program, including designing and implementing plans to reduce exclusionary discipline practices in elementary and secondary schools that are evidence-based.

Preschool Programs

The bill codifies an existing program, "Preschool Development Grants," in law. It is a competitive grant program using existing funding to support states that propose to improve coordination, quality, and access for early childhood education and will be administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services jointly with the Department of Education.

School Choice

The bill authorizes a pilot program allowing districts to try out a weighted student funding formula, which would also essentially function as a backpack of funds for kids. The program would allow 50 districts to combine state, local and federal funds into a single pot that could follow a child to the school of their choice. Participation would be entirely up to district officials.

The Charter Schools Program is enhanced by investing in new charter school models, as well as allowing for the replication and expansion of high-quality charter school models. The bill incentivizes charter school accountability, transparency and community engagement practices; prioritizes grants to evidence-based magnet school programs, including inter-district and regional magnet programs; and provides opportunities to expand magnet school programs with a demonstrated record of success.



Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS)

Texas is poised to adopt a new state-recommended teacher evaluation system, called the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System, to replace the Professional Development and Appraisal System. T-TESS is in the second year of being piloted and is scheduled to become the new state-recommended system in 2016-17, with all components fully operational in 2017-18. But with scheduled statewide implementation less than eight months away, there are many unknowns about the new system, and TCTA has serious concerns about some aspects of the plan.

State law requires the commissioner of education to adopt a state-recommended teacher appraisal system, which is why PDAS was first adopted. Although state law also allows local school districts to use teacher appraisal systems developed by district and campus site-based decision-making committees that include the same two criteria as the state system (teachers' discipline management procedures and the performance of teachers' students), it is estimated about 86 percent of Texas school districts use PDAS.

NCLB/ESEA influence

As states began approaching NCLB's deadline of 2014 for all students to be proficient on state reading and math assessments and Congress continued to fail to pass a replacement law for NCLB, the USDE took matters into its own hands and started issuing states waivers from having to meet the deadline. Needless to say, a vast majority of states sought (and received) these waivers. But with the waivers came conditions that, if not met, could result in the waiver being discontinued. Chief among those conditions was that a state had to implement teacher evaluation systems in which student growth, including student growth on state tests for teachers of tested subjects/grades, was a significant factor in determining a teacher's evaluation rating.

Texas sought and received its NCLB waiver in 2013. It, too, was conditioned on Texas submitting guidelines for a teacher evaluation system that included the use of student growth, including growth on state tests for teachers of tested subjects and grades, as a significant factor in determining a teacher's evaluation rating. In a series of back and forth negotiations over the next several years, USDE remained dissatisfied with Texas' proposed teacher evaluation system requirements and in 2015 placed the conditional waiver on high-risk status, jeopardizing the possibility that the waiver would be continued beyond the 2015-16 school year. Specifically, USDE wanted Texas to make assurances that it would:

- commit to implementing a teacher evaluation system that bases a significant part of a teacher's evaluation on student growth, and for teachers of tested subjects, a statewide approach to measuring student growth on standardized tests;
- ensure that every local school district, regardless of whether it is using the state-recommended system or a locally developed and adopted one (as currently authorized under Texas law) does so as well; and
- ensure that local school districts use the evaluation results for personnel decisions.

Texas was given a January 15, 2016 deadline to submit these assurances to USDE. Texas appealed the designation, with Education Commissioner Michael Williams pointing out that he did not have statutory authority to mandate that local school districts use a statewide appraisal system, but the appeal was denied. So things were at a stalemate between Texas and USDE with the January deadline quickly approaching. Miraculously, Congress intervened, pulling off something it had been unable to do for the preceding eight

years, and passed a law replacing NCLB/ESEA in December 2015. Called the Every Student Succeeds Act, the new law contains many provisions that are a direct result of Congress's anger at the actions taken by the U.S. Secretary of Education in issuing waivers from NCLB with strings attached. Many members felt that the conditions placed on the waivers by the Secretary were an excessive federal intrusion in state and local matters but that he was also exceeding his statutory authority in taking these actions.

Specifically, the Act provides that the U.S. Secretary of Education has no authority to require states to implement any kind of teacher evaluation system, and that all waivers have no legal effect on or after Aug. 1, 2016.

Following passage of the Act, USDE sent a letter to states expressly absolving them of having to submit follow-up responses to USDE regarding any waiver requirements that aren't also required under ESSA.

Given these two events, the teacher evaluation requirements of Texas's ESEA/NCLB waiver have effectively been nullified.

Appraisal rules

In mid-October 2015, Twila Read and Sheri Taylor participated on the TEA appraisal rules review stakeholder committee. Committee members were asked to weigh in on various aspects of the proposed system, including whether observers (as distinct from appraisers) should be trained and certified; how many dimensions a teacher should be rated at least proficient on to be deemed "proficient" for purposes of less-than-annual appraisals; whether the current timelines for post-observation conferences, teacher responses/rebuttals, requesting second appraisals, summative (end-of-year) conferences and sharing cumulative data should be maintained; and what requirements there should be in the off-years for those teachers not being appraised annually.

After this, TEA developed draft rules and presented them to committee members electronically to gather their feedback electronically. Following that, TCTA met with TEA staff about concerns we had about the draft rules. TEA released official proposed rules for public comment on the same day that Congress passed ESSA. Unfortunately, the official proposed rules only contained a couple of the changes TCTA had requested (providing the appraisal calendar to teachers and requiring that the written summative appraisal report be shared with the teacher at least 15 working days prior to the last instructional day). Additionally, they still contained problematic vestiges of the ESEA/NCLB waiver requirements including:

- Beginning in the 2017-18 school year, each teacher appraisal must include the academic growth of the teacher's students at the individual teacher level as measured by one or more of four options chosen by the local school district, including student performance on state assessments.

There is significant research that says using student test performance to evaluate individual teachers is not a valid measure of teacher effectiveness. <https://tcta.org/node/13251-issues-with-test-based-value-added-models-of-teacher-assessment>

- If calculating a single overall summative appraisal score for teachers, the measure of student growth must count for at least 20 percent of a teacher's summative score.

*This provision is a holdover from federal waiver requirements that have been nullified by ESSA, and by saying "at least" allows for the possibility that local districts could make student growth count for an even larger percentage. **Proposed TEA T-TESS rules provide that student growth only counts for 20% of a teacher's evaluation if a district chooses to issue the teacher a summative score. See proposed TEA T-TESS rule Section 150.1002 (e) "If calculating a single overall summative appraisal score for teachers, the measure of student growth,***

as described in subsection (d) of this section, shall count for at least 20% of a teacher's summative score.”

<http://tea.texas.gov/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=25769824388&libID=25769824486>.

TEA has emphasized that districts are NOT required to issue a summative score for purposes of T-TESS, and in fact, TEA has encouraged districts to handle scoring by issuing separate scores for student growth and each of the 16 dimensions in the rubric.

- Even districts choosing to use a locally-adopted system instead of T-TESS must include the performance of a teacher's students, defined as student growth at the individual teacher level.

TCTA believes that mandating such a provision for local appraisal systems exceeds TEA's authority because the Commissioner of Education does not have rulemaking authority over locally-developed and adopted teacher appraisal systems. Local districts should have the flexibility to adopt their own appraisal systems, which are developed and approved by the site-based district-level committees, free of such restrictions.

- Teachers would have to be appraised every year under a locally-adopted appraisal system, despite a state law (initiated by TCTA) that allows less-than-annual appraisals.

TCTA, administrator groups and legislators worked out an approach years ago that allowed districts to focus their attention on teachers most in need of additional guidance, by providing that proficient teachers did not have to be appraised every year. Returning to required annual appraisals runs counter to this law and is another overreach of TEA authority.

TCTA sent an Action Alert to members asking them to submit comments on the rules by the January 11, 2016 deadline, and TCTA submitted comments as well.

TCTA is looking at possible recourse regarding the legality of the rules in that they are an illegal overreach of the Commissioner's rulemaking authority. This issue is hugely important because otherwise, local school districts could not continue to use PDAS if they wanted to as their local appraisal system without adding a student growth at the individual teacher level component.

For districts that choose to use T-TESS, at this point, if the requirement remains in the state system that student growth at the individual teacher level, including value-added data on state assessment results, must count for at least 20% of a teacher's evaluation, the fact that only a handful of the larger school districts are going to be able to afford to contract with a vendor to calculate value-added data means that most districts using the state system should opt not to use that particular measure of student growth.

New Commissioner Mike Morath, a former Dallas ISD board member, took office in January. In the short time he has been in office, he has made clear that he is keenly focused on teacher evaluation and led an effort in DISD to implement a teacher evaluation system in which student performance counts for up to 35% of a teacher's evaluation (STAAR performance by individual teacher's students counts for up to 15% for teachers whose students take STAAR).

T-TESS Components

The new state-recommended teacher appraisal system includes five primary facets:

1. STUDENT GROWTH

What it is: The growth of a teacher's students on one or more of four options for measures of student growth chosen by a district:

- A value-added score based on student growth on state assessments for teachers of tested subjects and grades
- Student Learning Objectives
- Portfolios
- District pre- and post-tests

Scoring/Weight: At least 20% of a teacher’s summative evaluation rating **IF a local district chooses to issue a summative score.** Note that proposed TEA T-TESS rules provide that student growth is only required to count for at least 20% of a teacher’s summative score if a district chooses to calculate a single overall summative appraisal score for teachers. **TEA has emphasized that districts are NOT required to issue a summative score for purposes of T-TESS, and in fact, TEA has encouraged districts to handle scoring by issuing separate scores for student growth and each of the 16 dimensions in the rubric.**

The 20% requirement for student growth came from Texas’s federal ESEA/NCLB waiver, which has now been nullified by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act. The four allowable measures for student growth under T-TESS to be chosen by local school districts came from Texas’s waiver and include a value-added measure of student performance on state tests for teachers of tested subjects in grade 5 through high school. TCTA has consistently objected to the use of student performance on state tests as a measure of teacher effectiveness based on the fact that the weight of the research shows that it is an invalid, unreliable, and unfair measure of teacher effectiveness. Accordingly, TCTA has called for this measure to be removed from T-TESS.

2. GOAL SETTING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN/SELF ASSESSMENT

What it is: Every teacher independently reviews data about professional practices and formulates targeted goals in a GSPD. During the year, each teacher regularly monitors progress toward the goals in the GSPD by collecting evidence, discussing progress with the appraiser, and modifying the plan as necessary. Prior to the end of year conference, each teacher completes the goal reflection section of the GSPD in preparation for discussion about targeted areas for continued professional growth, new goals and a professional development plan for the following year.

- Note: Unlike PDAS, T-TESS does not have a “Teacher In Need of Assistance” component that requires an intervention plan if a teacher is evaluated as unsatisfactory in one or more domains, or evaluated as below expectations in two or more domains.

Scoring/Weight: The GSPD/Self-Assessment informs the scoring of two of the dimensions in Domain 4 of the observation rubric and comprises 10% of a teacher’s summative evaluation rating.

3. OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT/RUBRIC

What it is: A rubric with five performance levels that differentiates teaching practices. It is comprised of four domains with 16 dimensions ([see chart](#)).

Unknowns with this component: This observation instrument is much more specific than PDAS, requiring more training and checkpoints to ensure the appropriate application of rubric criteria. It also requires more specific and comprehensive documentation by appraisers. Given this, questions arise about the capacity, in terms of administrator time and ability, to perform these functions as intended.

Scoring/Weight: 70% of a teacher’s summative evaluation rating.

4. MORE CONFERENCES

What it is: T-TESS requires a pre-conference, post-conference, end-of-year conference and training on how to engage in constructive conferencing to encourage better communication between teachers and appraisers and to provide more feedback throughout the year.

Unknowns with this component: Will teachers and appraisers have time for the extra conferences and requirements to facilitate better feedback that leads to improved performance?

5. FIVE PERFORMANCE LEVELS

T-TESS scores teachers on five performance levels. They are designed to reflect a continuum from the lowest rating reflecting teacher-centered instruction to the highest rating reflecting student-centered instruction.

T-TESS performance levels also reflect a broader range of abilities than under PDAS, particularly by providing two performance categories above “proficient”, which is designed to promote continuous improvement even for the highest-performing teachers. Accordingly, the level of performance that formerly earned a rating of “Exceeds Expectations” under PDAS will now earn a rating of “Proficient” under T-TESS.

- Distinguished
- Accomplished
- Proficient
- Developing
- Improvement Needed

Student Learning Objectives explained

One of the four options for measures of student growth under T-TESS is Student Learning Objectives. TCTA’s Donna Corbin served on the TEA SLO-design stakeholder committee. According to TEA, SLOs are student growth goals set by teachers to help them plan instruction and drive student learning throughout the year. The process includes three phases:

Phase 1: Creating a Student Learning Objective: The first phase focuses on purposeful planning of instruction. Phase 1 will occur over the first 1-2 months of school for yearlong courses, or in the first 3-4 weeks for semester courses. At the beginning of the course, teachers work with each other, their appraisers and other support staff to identify student needs, draft an SLO, create an instructional plan, and identify student starting points for one or more selected courses. During this phase, teachers will identify the learning content of focus and develop a profile of student success to begin planning instruction to achieve student growth.

Phase 2: Monitoring Progress to Drive Instruction: Phase 2 is designed to last throughout the majority of a course and involves teachers continuously engaging in a planning, instruction, evidence collection, analysis and reflection cycle. Teachers should spend time discussing their progress toward SLOs, sharing successful instructional strategies, and helping each other plan for future instruction. Appraisers meet with teachers at the midterm to review the progress students have made and receive support and direction before the end-of-course discussion.

Phase 3: Evaluating Success and Reflection: This last phase takes place at the end of the course and includes a conversation between the teacher and appraiser regarding students’ overall progress throughout the year and a determination of the score for the SLO. The conversation also is designed to help teachers prepare goals for the following year.

Examples of SLOs

Sample 1: SLO Statement Summary of Several TEKS Statements	
CTE: Principles of Architecture	<p>Excerpt from §130.42. Principles of Architecture and Construction</p> <p>(c) Knowledge and skills.</p> <p>(5) The student writes clear and effective English to prepare information.</p> <p>(6) The student uses industry-specific verbal and visual skills to accomplish effective communications.</p> <p>(7) The student listens attentively and speaks clearly to convey information correctly.</p> <p>(8) The student listens to and speaks with a variety of individuals to enhance communications skills.</p> <p>(10) The student identifies the relationship between available resources and requirements of a problem to accomplish realistic planning.</p> <p>(11) The student evaluates and adjusts plans and schedules to respond to unexpected events and conditions</p>
SLO Statement	<p>Problem-solving and Communication: Students will use both written and verbal communication to design and clearly articulate a project plan</p>

Sample 2: SLO Statement Using Key Words from TEKS Introduction	
Social Studies: Grade 8	<p>Excerpt from §113.20. Social Studies, Grade 8, Beginning with School Year 2011- 2012.</p> <p>(29) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired through established research methodologies from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology.</p> <p>(30) Social studies skills. The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms.</p>
SLO Statement	<p>Critical Thinking: Students will use primary and secondary sources of evidence to evaluate the purpose and impact of historical events in the U.S. in both written and oral form.</p>

Sample SLO Skill Profile: Science Grade 4

SLO Statement	Investigation and Reasoning: Students will use critical thinking and scientific problem solving to make informed decisions.
Level 5: Exceeds	<i>Student uses critical thinking to analyze, evaluate and critique scientific explanations by using logical reasoning and experimental and observational testing in all areas of science and; Student is able to examine all sides of scientific evidence and communicate findings in writing, orally, through demonstrations and by creating models</i>
Level 4: Proficient	<i>Student uses critical thinking to analyze, evaluate and critique scientific explanations by using logical reasoning and experimental and observational testing in all areas of science including the history of science</i>
Level 3: Emerging	<i>Student is able to analyze and provide explanations in some areas of science by using logical reasoning or by conducting experimental or observational testing.</i>
Level 2: Novice	<i>Student uses scientific inquiry methods to investigate the natural world in the laboratory and in outdoor environments</i>
Level 1: No Familiarity	<i>Student is unable to select and use tools, materials and questions to appropriately investigate the natural world.</i>

Overview of TTESS Rubric

PLANNING Domain

Standards and Alignment Dimension 1.1

The teacher designs clear, well-organized, sequential lessons that reflect best practice, align with the standards and are appropriate for diverse learners.

Data and Assessment Dimension 1.2

The teacher uses formal and informal methods to measure student progress, then manages and analyzes student data to inform instruction.

Knowledge of Students Dimension 1.3

Through knowledge of students and proven practices, the teacher ensures high levels of learning, social-emotional development and achievement for all students.

Activities Dimension 1.4

The teacher plans engaging, flexible lessons that encourage higher-order thinking, persistence and achievement.

INSTRUCTION Domain

Achieving Expectations Dimension 2.1

The teacher supports all learners in their pursuit of high levels of academic and social-emotional success.

Content Knowledge and Expertise Dimension 2.2

The teacher uses content and pedagogical expertise to design and execute lessons aligned with state standards, related content and student needs.

Communication Dimension 2.3

The teacher clearly and accurately communicates to support persistence, deeper learning and effective effort.

Differentiation Dimension 2.4

The teacher differentiates instruction, aligning methods and techniques to diverse student needs.

Monitor and Adjust Dimension 2.5

The teacher formally and informally collects, analyzes and uses student progress data and makes necessary lesson adjustments

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT Domain

Classroom Environment, Routines and Procedures Dimension 3.1

The teacher organizes a safe, accessible and efficient classroom.

Managing Student Behavior Dimension 3.2

The teacher establishes, communicates and maintains clear expectations for student behavior.

Classroom Culture Dimension 3.3

The teacher leads a mutually respectful and collaborative class of actively engaged learners.

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES Domain

Professional Demeanor and Ethics Dimension 4.1

The teacher meets district expectations for attendance, professional appearance, decorum, procedural, ethical, legal and statutory responsibilities.

Goal Setting Dimension 4.2

The teacher reflects on his/her practice.

Professional Development Dimension 4.3

The teacher enhances the professional community.

School Community Involvement Dimension 4.4

The teacher demonstrates leadership with students, colleagues, and community members in the school, district and community through effective communication and outreach.



TEA Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System FAQ (modified by TCTA)

(note: this is an evolving document so the online version should be checked frequently for updates:
http://txcc.sedl.org/our_work/tx_educator_evaluation/teachers/teacher_faq.php)

A. Overview

1. What is T-TESS?

T-TESS is the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System. It is a new teacher evaluation system for the state of Texas designed to support teachers in their professional development and help them grow and improve as educators. It is being piloted by approximately 60 districts in the 2014-2015 school year, will be implemented as a refined system in the 2015-2016 school year in approximately 250 districts, and is scheduled to be rolled out statewide in the 2016-2017 year.

2. What are the components of T-TESS evaluation?

T-TESS has three measures of teacher effectiveness. The three measures are:

- Observation
- Goal-Setting and Professional Development
- Student Growth

Entering the pilot year, the following percentages were assigned to determining the overall rating – Observation 70%, Goal-Setting and Professional Development 10%, and Student Growth 20%. Those percentages are better understood as 80% rubric and 20% student growth, as the rubric captures Goal-Setting and Professional Development results in Dimensions 4.2 and 4.3. *Student growth will not be implemented statewide until the 2017-2018 school year. See question D.7 for more information. *(TCTA notes that the 20% requirement for student growth came from Texas's federal ESEA/NCLB waiver, which has now been nullified by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act. TCTA also notes that the four allowable measures for student growth under T-TESS to be chosen by local school districts came from Texas's waiver and include a value-added measure of student performance on state tests for teachers of tested subjects in grades 5- End of Course exams (see Section D of FAQ following). TCTA has consistently objected to the use of student performance on state tests as a measure of teacher effectiveness based on the fact that the weight of the research shows that it is an invalid, unreliable, and unfair measure of teacher effectiveness. Accordingly, TCTA has called for this measure to be removed from T-TESS. For more information on this, see accompanying TCTA handout.)*

3. How was T-TESS developed?

T-TESS was developed by a steering committee comprised of teachers, principals, and representatives from higher education and educator organizations. They began their work in the fall of 2013 by updating teacher standards and, through the spring of 2014, continued with building a rubric tied to the standards. While the Texas Comprehensive Center at SEDL and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) facilitated the process, T-TESS is a system designed by educators to support teachers in their professional growth. *(TCTA served on the steering committee and notes that this answer does not address the significant role the state's federal NCLB/ESEA waiver had on T-TESS development,*

particularly regarding the student growth component – for more information, see accompanying TCTA handout regarding influence of federal NCLB/ESEA waiver requirements on development of T-TESS.)

4. **What is the timeline for T-TESS development and implementation?**

During the 2014-2015 school year, T-TESS was piloted in approximately 60 districts across the state. TEA will take feedback from pilot districts to refine T-TESS for implementation in approximately 250 districts during the 2015-2016 school year. Statewide rollout will occur during the 2016-2017 school year. However, it should be stressed the agency is committed to collecting feedback from districts that use T-TESS and will continue to improve and refine the system beyond the 2016-2017 school year.

5. **How will the TEA support school districts toward implementing the new system?**

TEA, in conjunction with the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET), provided statewide “train the trainer” sessions at Education Service Centers (ESCs) during the spring of 2015 to prepare a cadre of experts to train district appraisers for the 2015-2016 refinement year. ESCs will continue to enhance their training capacity during the 2015-2016 school year in order to support statewide rollout during the 2016-2017 school year. Similar to what is currently in place with the existing teacher appraisal system, ESCs will continue to provide support systems for districts as they implement best practices in evaluation, including professional development and guidance for appraisers on pre-conferences, post-conferences, coaching teachers, and utilizing teacher and instructional leaders in the observation process.

6. **Why is PDAS being replaced?**

When PDAS was implemented in 1997, it was a step forward from the previous state evaluation system. Over time, however, PDAS drifted from its original intent – to be a professional development system for teachers – and became a system focused more on compliance with rules. In addition, education has evolved in the last 17 years, and T-TESS seeks to update the tools of evaluation to complement what’s happening in classrooms throughout the state and to align with what many districts are already doing on their campuses – creating open, collaborative campus environments with a constant focus on instructional and professional improvement. *(TCTA again notes that another major driver of replacing PDAS was Texas’s federal NCLB/ESEA waiver requirements to implement a test-based teacher evaluation system.)*

7. **Will Texas school districts be required to use T-TESS when it is ready for statewide rollout?**

As the Texas Education Code indicates, districts have the option of creating their own evaluation system. T-TESS will replace PDAS as the state recommended evaluation system. *(TCTA notes that state law provides local school districts the option of creating their own locally-developed teacher appraisal system through the campus and district site-based decision-making committees.)*

8. **How will teacher and principal preparation align with T-TESS?**

One of TEA’s major ongoing initiatives is to better align preparation, evaluation, professional development, mentorship and career pathways around a set of standards and practices that act as a foundation and bring the entire timeline of an educator’s career into alignment. One of the first steps was to establish the teaching standards as the curricular base of preparation for teaching candidates. In addition, preparation programs will be trained on the new teacher evaluation system so that they can build in both aspiring teachers and principals the skills necessary to be effective teachers and appraisers of teachers.

9. **Are other districts and states implementing similar evaluation systems?**

Yes. The components of T-TESS – observation, goal-setting and professional development, and student growth – are elements of evidence-based evaluation systems which are used in many districts

throughout the state and in multiple states throughout the nation. They provide for three sources of information that create a more complete picture of a teacher's effectiveness.

B. Rubric

1. What are the components of the rubric?

The full rubric is available here:

<https://teachfortexas.org/Navigation/DocumentLibrary/ViewDocuments/tabid/1138/Default.aspx>

The rubric has four domains:

- *Planning*
- *Instruction*
- *Learning Environment*
- *Professional Practice and Responsibilities*

There are sixteen total dimensions within those four domains, five in Instruction, four in both Planning and Professional Practice and Responsibilities, and three in Learning Environment.

2. What is the difference between the PDAS rubric and the T-TESS rubric?

Although good instruction is captured in both rubrics, the biggest differences between the two are:

- T-TESS strives to capture the holistic nature of teaching – the idea that a constant feedback loop exists between teachers and students, and gauging the effectiveness of teachers requires a consistent focus on how students respond to their teacher's instructional practices. For those reasons, each of the observable domains in T-TESS focuses on both teachers and students rather than separating them out into separate domains, as under PDAS.
- In order to capture a better distribution of teaching practices, T-TESS has five performance levels where PDAS had four. All teachers, regardless of their relative effectiveness, should be able to see within the performance levels of T-TESS some practices that they can strive toward in their goal setting and professional development plan. *(TCTA notes that these are designed to reflect a continuum from the lowest rating reflecting teacher-centered instruction to the highest rating reflecting student-centered instruction. T-TESS performance levels also reflect a broader range of abilities than under PDAS, particularly by providing two performance categories above "proficient", which is designed to promote continuous improvement even for the highest-performing teachers. Accordingly, the level of performance that formerly earned a rating of "Exceeds Expectations" under PDAS will now earn a rating of "Proficient" under T-TESS.)*
- The descriptors in T-TESS differ from PDAS in that T-TESS articulates different practices between performance levels whereas PDAS differentiated between the performance levels based on how often a teacher did the same practice. T-TESS strives to show that accomplished and distinguished teachers often do different things than developing teachers rather than simply doing the same practices more frequently.
- T-TESS also strives to capture feedback built into the rubric itself. Any teacher can, after self-assessing on the rubric or getting feedback from their appraiser, find practices in the performance levels above their practice that they can work toward in professional development.

C. Goal-Setting and Professional Development

1. How does goal-setting and professional development in T-TESS differ from the self-assessment in PDAS?

As often implemented, the self-assessment in PDAS was a single submission in the fall that was

rarely referred to or used as a tool for professional growth. T-TESS uses the cycle of self-assessment, goal-setting and professional development as an ongoing process to promote and track professional growth. Teachers and appraisers agree on goals and a development plan to attain those goals, and, like in PDAS, the teacher submits the plan in the fall. Unlike PDAS, the T-TESS version serves as a living, dynamic document used to track progress toward those goals, professional development undertaken to achieve the goals, and revisions to goals as the teacher's context changes over the year.

2. **Teachers don't often get to choose their professional development. How can they set a development plan?**

The professional development plan would incorporate all forms of professional development, not just the traditionally provided courses offered by outside entities or to whole staff. Professional development could include job-embedded activities, such as working within professional learning communities (PLCs), with an instructional coach, a department chair, or another teacher on particular practices identified as improvement goals. It could also include self-directed professional development that seeks literature, online videos or modules that address particular practices that the teacher identified as improvement goals.

3. **What's the process for the goal-setting and professional development component?**

During the first year of T-TESS implementation, teachers will identify their improvement goals and map out a plan to achieve those goals. The goals and professional development plan can be established in a meeting with an appraiser or independently, although the appraiser does need to agree with the goals and the plan established. Teachers will submit that document to their appraisers and will then maintain that document throughout the year, tracking their progress in professional development and revising goals as needed because of changing circumstances. During the end-of-year conference, teachers and appraisers will go over the progress made in achieving goals (although on-going conversations about goals and development should ideally occur throughout the year) and set new goals and a new professional development plan for the next year based off of progress the teacher made during that school year and the ongoing discussions between appraiser and teacher about areas for refinement based on the observation process.

At the beginning of the next school year, teachers will have the ability to examine student growth data and make any revisions to their goals and professional development plan, as necessary. Teachers will also make revisions based on changing circumstances, such as a new teaching assignment. Teachers will then submit their goals and plan to their appraiser, and the process will repeat itself.

T-TESS seeks to establish with this process that:

- Development is an ongoing process for all teachers regardless of their level of proficiency
- Development isn't isolated in single-year snapshots of performance but is continuous and consistently building off prior efforts and attention; and
- Teachers have a say in and monitor their own goals and growth throughout the year with appraisers seeking to provide the support that teachers need to achieve their goals.

D. Student Growth

1. **When will student growth become a required component of T-TESS?**

Although some student growth measures are being piloted for informational purpose in select districts during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years, **student growth will not be a required component of T-TESS until the 2017-2018 school year.** This delayed rollout gives districts time to focus on successfully implementing the rubric portion of T-TESS, and it also gives teachers and

appraisers time to adjust to the primary purpose of T-TESS, which is to provide formative feedback to teachers and support them as they seek to improve their practice.

2. **What does student growth measures?**

Student growth measures how much a student progresses academically during his or her time with a particular teacher. It takes into consideration a student's entering achievement when measuring how much the student grew over the year, and, as opposed to measuring student proficiency on a single assessment, student growth isn't concerned with whether or not a student passes a test.

By measuring growth, a teacher who has students who enter multiple years behind grade level could still demonstrate his or her effectiveness based on how much those students progress during that year. Students who move from three years behind to one year behind make considerable growth, and although a proficiency measure would still show those students as unable to pass the test, student growth would capture the remarkable progress (two years' worth) those students made during their time with that teacher.

Student growth also incentivizes teachers to teach to all students – those who are unlikely to meet certain levels of proficiency and those who are likely to meet them regardless of how much they learn in a year. Measuring growth means that teachers can focus on the entire class, striving for each student to progress appropriately throughout the year, not just those students that hover around the proficiency line.

3. **How will student growth data be a part of the evaluation process?**

Student growth data should be used just as observation data and goal-setting and professional development data – as information that will help to inform teachers about their strengths and potential areas of focus for professional development so they can better impact all students the following year. Student growth is one measure in a multiple measure evaluation system, and the inclusion of student growth data in a formative evaluation process provides for a more complete understanding of which students a teacher has reached and how much the teacher has reached them in a given year.

4. **What are the options for measuring student growth for teachers?**

At this time, districts have four options for measuring student growth: 1) value-add scores for teachers in tested subjects in grades 5 through End-of-Course exams (EOCs); 2) student learning objectives (SLOs); 3) portfolios; and 4) district-level pre- and post-tests.

Districts can choose more than one of those measures, provided that there is consistency throughout the district for a particular grade and subject. If a district decides to use portfolios for Art I, then all district Art I teachers would need to use portfolios. 2nd grade generalists could use SLOs in that scenario, but all 2nd grade generalists would need to use SLOs.

TEA will work with pilot districts, ESCs and experts in alternative growth measures to build the resources and guidelines that administrators and teachers will need to implement student growth measures.

As indicated in [FAQ D.2](#), the purpose of student growth data is to provide teachers with a better sense of how much of an impact their instruction has had on the academic progress of all their students, regardless of the student's achievement level, and, most importantly, from that data make informed decisions about professional development that will allow teachers to better impact all students the following year. *Although a score does need to be calculated, the value of a student growth measure lies primarily in the feedback it provides to teachers so that they can improve their practice. (TCTA notes that proposed TEA T-TESS rules provide that student growth only counts for 20% of a teacher's evaluation if a district chooses to issue the teacher*

a summative score. See proposed TEA T-TESS rule Section 150.1002 (e) “If calculating a single overall summative appraisal score for teachers, the measure of student growth, as described in subsection (d) of this section, shall count for at least 20% of a teacher’s summative score.”

<http://tea.texas.gov/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=25769824388&libID=25769824486>

TCTA notes that TEA has emphasized that districts are NOT required to issue a summative score for purposes of T-TESS, and in fact, TEA has encouraged districts to handle scoring by issuing separate scores for student growth and each of the 16 dimensions in the rubric.)

5. **What is a value-added measure (VAM)? How is it calculated? Is it fair?**

A set of FAQs focused specifically on VAM can be found here: <https://tea.sas.com/> *(TCTA disagrees with many of the statements made in the TEA VAM FAQ given that there is extensive research showing that value-added measures of teacher effectiveness are invalid, unreliable, and unfair. For more information on this, see TCTA’s compilation of the research at <https://tcta.org/node/13251-issues-with-test-based-value-added-models-of-teacher-assessment>)*

6. **When will student growth data be available?**

Student growth data won’t be available until after the end-of-year (summative) conference between a teacher and an appraiser. For alternative growth measures (those measures that aren’t value-add), that data will be completed by the end of the school year. For value-add measures (VAM), that data will be available during late August/early September.

The timing of finalized student growth data reinforces two critical concepts in T-TESS. First, no single year student growth data should be the trigger in any substantial decisions a district or campus makes about a teacher. Student growth is one of multiple measures of a teacher’s practice, and decisions should take into consideration more than just single year student growth. Second, in a formative evaluation process like T-TESS, the timing of student growth data reinforces the ongoing loop between evaluation, feedback, and development. Discussions about a teacher’s practice should be ongoing and should evolve over the course of the year. Student growth data can be analyzed when available and should be taken into consideration when a teacher modifies or adjust his or her goals and professional development plan at the beginning of a new school year.

7. **Will teachers be fired if their students do not demonstrate growth?**

The idea behind T-TESS is to provide teachers with more information and support as they develop as educators, not to create a punitive system. Personnel decisions have always been district decisions and not something TEA promotes as the driving force behind teacher evaluation. That said, districts make personnel decisions based on multiple factors, and TEA will continue to communicate to districts that single-year student growth data should not be the sole factor in employment decisions.

E. T-TESS Refinement Year 2015-2016

1. **What school districts will be participating in the refinement year for T-TESS?**

A list of participating districts will be available here: http://tea.texas.gov/Texas_Educators/Educator_Evaluation_and_Support_System/Texas_Teacher_Evaluation_and_Support_System/

2. **What role do refinement districts play in the development of T-TESS?**

Like pilot districts, they will build on the work done by the teacher steering committee by providing feedback on the evaluation tools, the evaluation process, training, support and identifying what additional concerns need to be addressed prior to statewide rollout of T-TESS. Their feedback will

be instrumental in further refining the system so that the purpose of T-TESS, supporting teachers in their pursuit of improving their craft, can be realized.

3. **What will refinement districts implement during the refinement year?**

Districts will implement the goal-setting and professional development plan process, the observation process, and the end-of-year conference. Summative evaluation scores will be based on the rubric only.

The teacher steering committee that built this system during the spring of 2014 were very focused on the necessity of getting what would be the foundation of the system right – turning evaluation from a compliance driven process to a formative process that includes ongoing dialogue between appraiser and teacher, actionable feedback that provides insight into instruction and professional development decisions, and establishing a process that destigmatizes evaluation and leads to open, collaborative campus environments. In the minds of the teachers on the steering committee and teachers and principals who provided feedback throughout the state, this needs to be the central focus of the pilot and refinement years.

That was the driving factor around keeping student growth outside of the scoring process during the pilot year. Pilot year feedback needs to focus on the underpinnings of the system. Student growth is clearly an important part of the system, and one that will require adjustments along the way as the state begins to implement it. The state and districts will get better at alternative growth measures as they move forward. The hope is that all involved will stay focused on the point of student growth data – to provide another piece of information that will let teachers know what to focus on pedagogically so they can better reach all students moving forward.

4. **During the refinement year, will teachers be appraised on both PDAS and T-TESS?**

No, teachers will not be appraised on two separate systems in the same year. Teachers participating in the refinement year will be appraised on T-TESS only.

5. **How will student growth be a part of the refinement year?**

The refinement year will not include a student growth measure in the final evaluation score. Value-add data will be provided to interested refinement districts in August/September of 2016, once it becomes available, and will be used by refinement districts for formative purposes.

6. **Will there be additional training dates for those who miss the summer training or are late hires?**

Yes, local ESCs will work to schedule additional training dates to train those appraisers who either couldn't attend summer training or were late hires.

F. T-TESS Refinement Year Process

1. **How is a teacher's total score calculated?**

For the refinement year, a teacher's end-of-year score will include observation results and the goal-setting and professional development process. Since student growth will not be a part of a teacher's evaluation score, then that 20% will not be included in the final score. The teacher's performance on the rubric accounts for 100% of the summative score during the refinement year.

2. **Can only principals and assistant principals appraise teachers under T-TESS?**

Although principals and/or assistant principals need to be the ones to conduct end-of-year conferences and determine end-of-year scores, instructional coaches, department chairs and other instructional leaders can be trained and certified as appraisers to assist in conducting walkthroughs and observations. *(TCTA notes that we objected to this expansion of eligible appraisers in our comments on the proposed TEA T-TESS rules.)*

3. **What is discussed in the end-of-year conference?**

For the pilot year, the end-of-year conference will be a discussion of the teacher's areas of reinforcement and refinement for that school year, the teacher's progress toward accomplishing goals and following through with his or her professional development plan, and a time to establish goals and a professional development plan for the following school year.

Once districts move into year two of T-TESS implementation, the end-of-year conference will include those same discussions, but will also address the teacher's development over time. Goals, development plans and discussions of observation results and student growth should include results and progress over multiple years, as possible, although each evaluation year will be self-contained regarding evaluation scores.

4. **What is the timeline for a teacher to request a 2nd observation?**

As under PDAS, a teacher has ten working days after the observation post-conference to request a 2nd observation.

5. **What is the timeline for when the end-of-year conference must be held?**

As under PDAS, the end-of-year conference must be held no later than 15 working days before the last day of instruction.

6. **When are the end-of-year (summative) scores shared with the teachers?**

End-of-year scores should be shared with teachers within two working days after the end-of-year conference.

7. **Is the Teachers in Need of Assistance (TINA) process a part of T-TESS?**

For T-TESS, how a teacher rates on any dimension or dimensions will not trigger a required TINA.

An appraisal process focused on valuable, accurate feedback and support as teachers work to improve their practice functions best when teachers are encouraged to teach as they do every day. If scores automatically trigger high-stakes growth plans, then that dissuades teachers from teaching in a way that allows for the most useful feedback, and it attaches a pejorative connotation to appraisal.

8. **Does that mean appraisal results cannot be used for employment considerations?**

No, appraisal results can be used for employment considerations. What T-TESS strives to do is to make appraisal a process for development first and foremost. However, when a teacher falls short of performance expectations with his or her practice, and the teacher is not making the appropriate progress to get to where he or she needs to be, then appraisal data could certainly justify employment decisions.

9. **Will T-TESS allow for documentation that supports employment decisions, when applicable?**

Yes, the T-TESS process provides greater opportunities for evidence and data collection than PDAS typically did. Appraisers will have objective evidence collected through the observation process, on summary observation forms with indicated areas for refinement, through the goal-setting and professional development plans, which will include evidence of progress on goals and professional development activities, and most importantly, appraisers will have the ability to show progress over time on instructional and professional practices as the cycle repeats.

A positive aspect of T-TESS is that the appraisal process helps develop dialogue and collaboration between appraisers and teachers. When appraisal results over time show that a teacher is not making the necessary progress, then that reality is clear to both appraiser and teacher due to the multiple contact points and conferences conducted throughout an appraisal cycle. T-TESS strives to be an objective, transparent, and continuous process that provides data to support teacher development and, if necessary, employment-based decisions.