

Texas Classroom Teachers Association



PO Box 1489 | Austin, Texas 78767
 888-879-8282 | 512-477-9415 | Fax: 512-469-9527
tcta.org

TCTA's T-TESS Video Tools

The Observation Cycle: Pre-Conference; Observation; Post-Conference PART 3: Observation Part I

Notes

The links in this background information take the reader to the state's T-TESS website: Teach for Texas, www.teachfortexas.org. Teach for Texas resources include training manuals, guidebooks, rubrics, videos, templates, documents, subject matter modules, and other resources that explain the components of the T-TESS process. This information is not part of the Commissioner's adopted rules that are enforceable by law. This information represents TEA's explanations of how the new appraisal system should work and TCTA's impressions about the new appraisal system.

This background material does not constitute legal advice or create an attorney-client relationship. TCTA provides this for information purposes only. TCTA members with questions about this information may call the TCTA Legal Department at 888-879-8282 to speak with a staff attorney.

For more on T-TESS, go to www.tcta.org/t-tess

Expanded Transcript

I'm Dohn Larson, Director of Legal Services for Texas Classroom Teachers Association.

Welcome to this TCTA T-TESS video tool.

Today, the TCTA Legal Department continues a series on the observation cycle: pre-conference, observation, post-conference, with a multi-part look at T-TESS observations. We will post a transcript on www.tcta.org.

Without any reported decisions of the Commissioner, our conversation at this point is limited to general impressions of the appraisal process.

New Appraisal – New Attitude

A number of statements suggest that the state wants to move T-TESS out of the realm of appraisal systems perceived as punitive and use appraisals for growth.

The "Appraiser Training Handbook" used during formal appraiser certification training describes a key T-TESS intent.

"In the redesign of the state evaluation system, the committee focused on creating a system that would be used for continuous professional growth, while de-stigmatizing

the observation process, moving the mindset away from compliance and toward feedback and support.”

In a module intended to guide T-TESS appraisers in how to script T-TESS observations, Teach for Texas states:

“The goal of any well-structured evaluation system is to improve professional practice, not simply to punish its absence.”

https://www.teachfortexas.org/Resource_Files/Articulate/Teachers_Observation_Cycle/Observations/T-TESS_Capturing_Quality_Evidence/presentation.html, segment 4.

In its August 2016 “T-TESS TIPS,” TEA said:

“Appraisal is culture. It’s not something that’s done to someone, but instead is a pervasive growth mindset within a district – effective educators consistently seek out opportunities to improve, and that commitment to the improvement process is modeled throughout the district.”

When TEA says “commitment to the improvement process is modeled throughout the district,” TCTA understands that to mean that the group of educators who should seek to improve their educational and organizational leadership practices encompasses teachers, appraisers, principals, and superintendents.

Are Those Statements Enforceable?

Those statements do not appear in the Commissioner’s legally enforceable T-TESS rules. TCTA believes that when a district adopts T-TESS as its appraisal policy, it adopts the letter and the spirit of T-TESS. If a district also adopts T-PESS for principals and assistant principals, the evaluation instrument includes the following descriptor in Indicator 2D:

“Implements evaluation of teachers and staff according to district policy and state statute ensuring fairness and consistency.”

How Many Observations? How Long?

The Commissioner’s new T-TESS rules require one observation. They do not require more than one, but Texas Education Code § 21.352(c-1) states that in some circumstances districts could require additional observations.

“[A] school district shall require that appropriate components of the appraisal process, such as classroom observations and walk-throughs, occur more frequently as necessary to ensure that a teacher receives adequate evaluation and guidance. A school district shall give priority to conducting appropriate components more frequently for inexperienced teachers or experienced teachers with identified areas of deficiency.”

Districts can elect to have multiple observations, especially for new teachers or for teachers with identified areas of deficiency.

Teach for Texas recommends that districts do more than one observation, e.g., one announced and one unannounced. That's a recommendation, not a rule.

As for length, the rules require a minimum of 45 minutes for an observation. During appraiser training, the state urged appraisers to observe the entire lesson. Teach for Texas makes that same recommendation. How can an observer understand how a teacher constructed a lesson without staying from beginning to end?

Walk-Throughs

The rules do not require walk-throughs.

The section of the education code quoted above suggests that appraisers should do extra walk-throughs for new teachers and teachers with identified areas of deficiency.

During a T-TESS pilot year, one district required appraisers to score the first three domains during every walk-through. That's certainly not required by any rule or any policy, and it does not make sense.

A Region 20 PowerPoint slide put an interesting twist on walk-throughs, defining them by style and purpose. During a 3-5 minute drive-by walk-through, an observer might gather as much information as possible. During a 5-10 minute targeted walk-through, an observer might gather information relate to a single dimension.

<http://www.esc20.net/users/0077/docs/TTESS/Lead%20Meetings/5.11.16/05.11.16.pdf>, slide 23.

That concludes Part I on Observation.

I'm Dohn Larson. Thank you for watching this TCTA T-TESS video tool.