

## Texas Classroom Teachers Association



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**TCTA's T-TESS Video Tools****The Observation Cycle: Pre-Conference; Observation; Post-Conference  
PARTS 3-6: Observation I-IV****Notes**

*The links in this background information take the reader to the state's T-TESS website: Teach for Texas, [www.teachfortexas.org](http://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](http://www.tcta.org/t-tess)**

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**Expanded Transcript**

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

Welcome to this TCTA T-TESS video tool — part four of a short series on observations presented by the TCTA Legal Department as part of our look at the observation cycle. We will post a transcript on [www.tcta.org](http://www.tcta.org).

Please note that much of what we cover in this series on observation comes from guidance TEA offers to describe the new system. This represents TCTA's impressions about how T-TESS should function.

**Preparing for the Observation**

Depending on how much time teachers have to prepare, teachers can do a couple of things.

If a pre-conference took place, a teacher has already had a chance to review with the observer the teacher's planning process, upcoming lesson, and the particulars of the class.

If a pre-conference has not occurred, nothing the rules do not prohibit a teacher from sending an appraiser an email containing information a teacher would have presented during a pre-conference. For more on the pre-conference, see the [pre-conference video](#).

Again depending on available time, a teacher might review the rubric. Having worked with the rubric for a number of hours, I understand that 271 descriptors and their interconnections poses a big challenge, but to simplify the rubric, a teacher might review proficient in Domains I-III (46 descriptors) and look at the aspirational descriptors in Accomplished and Distinguished.

Appraisers have an advantage after they have observed several teachers and gone through post-observation conferences. They start to know the rubric. They map scripted notes from an observation to a rubric. Once an appraiser learns the rubric, they are more likely to experience and script the lesson with the descriptors in mind.

“It is essential to capture objective evidence during observations. As appraisers become more acquainted with the T-TESS rubric, collecting and categorizing evidence during the observation becomes a familiar practice.”

[https://www.teachfortexas.org/Resource\\_Files/Articulate/Teachers\\_Observation\\_Cycle/Observations/T-TESS\\_Capturing\\_Quality\\_Evidence/presentation.html](https://www.teachfortexas.org/Resource_Files/Articulate/Teachers_Observation_Cycle/Observations/T-TESS_Capturing_Quality_Evidence/presentation.html), segment 7.

Teachers could also review the “T-TESS Skill-Dimension Crosswalk.” It identifies 28 different instructional elements and coordinates them with the first 12 dimensions. For example, how a teacher anticipates and prepares for student misunderstanding relates to Dimensions 2.1-2.3. [https://www.teachfortexas.org/Resource\\_Files/Evaluation\\_Process/T-TESS\\_Skill\\_Dimension\\_Crosswalk.pdf](https://www.teachfortexas.org/Resource_Files/Evaluation_Process/T-TESS_Skill_Dimension_Crosswalk.pdf)

On a side note, the “Skill-Dimension Crosswalk” serves as a great resource to use in conjunction with the rubric to develop T-TESS based professional development goals.

There are some gems in the rubric. For example, Dimension 2.3 indicates that “rock solid” performance occurs when a teacher “asks remember, understand and apply level questions that focus on the objective of the lesson and provoke discussion.”

### **Is the Score the Bottom Line?**

TTAS and PDAS scores

For many teachers, little counts more than the score. Teachers learned, during the career ladder years (blessedly long gone), that a tenth of a point on a TTAS appraisal could mean the difference between a \$3000.00 stipend and no stipend. Teachers learned from PDAS that if a below expectations rating for a criterion put two domains below expectations on an observation summary, the rules required a TINA, which could mean a dreaded, draconian plan designed to insure that the teacher spent many hours working on an ambiguous plan that might lead to the nonrenewal of the teacher’s contract regardless of whether the teacher completed the plan.

Not in T-TESS

Lawyers from TCTA’s Legal Department recently participated in T-TESS appraiser training. To paraphrase part of the training message it appears that an inversely

proportional relationship exists between appraisal scores and T-TESS. A laser-like focus on a score, the good and the bad of a rating, can obscure the use of dimensions and descriptors to guide an analysis of what teachers can do in a classroom to help students learn and what appraisers can do to support teachers.

### Self-Reflection

For some teachers with the observation done, life returns to normal and the formal observation is over for the year. Not quite so T-TESS fast.

After an observation, an appraiser maps carefully scripted objective evidence to the rubric. That appraiser is probably doing two things. The appraiser is coming up with a rating that fairly and accurately represents the lesson taught. The appraiser is also evaluating the evidence and the descriptors in preparation for an observation post-conference during which the appraiser will collaborate with a teacher to identify areas of reinforcement and refinement, the glows and grows of T-TESS.

In preparing for a post-conference, a teacher can do a similar review of the lesson, thinking about the lesson structure, what the teacher said and did, what the students said and did, and possibly reviewing evidence produced by students. Teach for Texas created a “T-TESS Post-Conference Self-Reflection Form” that teachers can use in that analysis. To find that form, go to the teacher section of [www.teachfortexas.org](http://www.teachfortexas.org), click on “Evaluation Process,” then click on “Observation.”

More on post-conferences in the next segment.

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