Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System FAQ

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 2016-201   the pilot yea

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3. How was T-TESS deve

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4. What is the timeline f

During the 2014-2015 school year, T-TESS will be 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), will provide 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.

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.

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:
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    -
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    There are sixteen total dimensions within those four domains, five in   , four in both   and   , and three in   .

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.
    - 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

- 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. <u>Goal-Setting and Professional Development</u>

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 7.9(t)u3(h)2.3(e)-hp711.

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

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

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

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 and refinement years. Pilot and refinement 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.

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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?

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