



Educators Guide: Identifying Growth Measures

What kind of work is being done by the Tennessee Department of Education and the Teacher Evaluation Advisory Committee around new growth measures for educators in untested subjects and grades?

As part of the state's First to the Top work, the Tennessee Department of Education is working with educators to identify growth measures in untested subjects and grades to comply with the state's new evaluation requirements. In early October, the Department reached out to national and state experts for assistance in identifying instruments for determining student growth in subjects and grades without TVAAS data (Tennessee Value Added Assessment System).

The Department and Tennessee Education Association invited teacher leaders in untested subjects and grades to attend an overview workshop with Dr. Laura Goe. Dr. Goe, a former 7th grade language arts teacher in Memphis, is a research scientist at the Learning and Teaching Research Center of Education Testing Services (ETS) and a principal investigator for the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality. Dr. Goe has been working closely with Delaware and other states and districts to identify growth measures, particularly for the purpose of teacher evaluation systems.

Educators were convened to represent the following untested grades, subjects and areas: Pre-Kindergarten-3rd-grade, high school core non-tested, foreign language, special education, music, performing arts, health and physical education, library and media, and school counselors.

What was the outcome?

Through presentations by Dr. Goe, representatives from the Governor's Office and the Department of Education, educators from across the state were able to learn more about the First to the Top Act, as well as work currently under way in several states and districts around the area of alternative growth measures. During break out sessions in the afternoon, educators began to consider what instruments might exist or be developed that would provide valid and reliable measures of student growth for use in the evaluation system. At the end of the day, educators made recommendations for next steps around this important work.

What are the next steps?

In the coming weeks, additional teams of educators from non-tested areas will be convened to continue the conversations around identifying options, criteria and a timeline for establishing valid and reliable measures of student growth. The Department of Education will continue to work with educators and the Teacher Evaluation Advisory Committee to refine the policy on measures of student growth beyond the use of school wide data.



An Educator's Perspective: Joel Denton, Director of Band at Ooltewah High School

On Tuesday, October 12, I had the opportunity to attend a session on Growth Management conducted by the Tennessee State Department of Education. The guest speaker was Dr. Laura Goe from the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality. The session began with representatives from the Governor's office and the State Department of Education sharing thoughts on Tennessee's plan for the "First to the Top" funds. These conversations were very enlightening as to what our state hopes to accomplish and the way they hope to proceed in reaching the goals for "First to the Top."

Dr. Goe's session was very informative as she presented many ideas on what and how to accomplish teacher assessment for teachers of non-tested subjects. While her ideas and concepts could and should be considered for future teacher assessment, she and the state officials agreed that using school test scores would be the quickest and easiest way to establish statewide teacher assessment. While this is in no way the model that most teachers would choose, it appears to be the only readily available option for meeting the immediate goals of "First to the Top." Personally, I was encouraged by the state officials' assurances that teacher assessment is a work in progress and that every effort will be made to produce an assessment that is a true measure of each individual teacher's work.

The session ended with the group working in small like-discipline groups. In my opinion, this was an extremely productive effort as teachers of the same disciplines discussed how and what should be assessed in their classrooms. The group I participated in shared contact information and has continued to share ideas and information concerning teacher assessment.

The meeting ended with an invitation and promise that this was only the beginning. We were told that there would be future opportunities for this type of dialogue and work to continue. We were asked to commit to our continued involvement in these efforts. I shared that the organizations representing these non-tested disciplines should also be invited to participate in future discussions. While no formal recommendations were made and no plans were enacted, the day did provide insight into what the plans are for improving education in Tennessee.

Mr. Denton, Ooltewah High School Director of Band and Chair of the Fine Arts Department, participated in the first workshop around alternative growth measures for educators without TVAAS data. He serves the Hamilton County Department of Education.

How can I stay informed about Tennessee First to the Top?

The success of Tennessee First to the Top will depend on the involvement of educators, parents and other education stakeholders across the state and nation. Visit the dedicated First to the Top website where you can sign up to receive periodic news and updates at www.tn.gov/firsttothetop.