



Tennessee Early Literacy Assessment

Educator Pass Rate Report

Tennessee Department of Education | October 2024



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Executive Summary

This report's purpose is to communicate the first-time pass rate of applicable candidates on the Tennessee Early Literacy Assessment (TELA) to the State Board of Education (SBE), pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-5-5619(d). To ensure all educators are adequately trained in foundational literacy skills, beginning on August 1, 2023, the Tennessee Literacy Success Act (TLSA) required teachers endorsed to teach in grades kindergarten to third (K-3) and instructional leaders to complete a foundational literacy skills assessment or professional development course to acquire, renew, or advance a license. The Tennessee Department of Education (department) launched the TELA following SBE approval and communicated the assessment's availability in August and September 2023 across various stakeholder groups. The TELA tests educators' knowledge of foundational literacy skills standards and the passing score for the assessment is 80 percent.

The TELA aligns to Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) Foundational Literacy Standards and the emphasis of high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) use and familiarity. The TELA is uniquely designed for Tennessee educators and teacher candidates. The TELA is not a substitute for any required assessments found in the State Board of Education's Professional Assessments for Tennessee Educators Policy 5.105, but it is one of the options for certain educators to meet the requirements of the Tennessee Literacy Success Act to acquire, renew, or advance their license. The TELA is free to test takers and EPPs.

Introduction

The department proposed the TELA, a foundational literacy skills assessment to be administered to teacher candidates in Tennessee to prepare for grades K-5 licensure, to the SBE in May 2023. The SBE approved the assessment in June 2023 and approved an 80 percent cut score as the passing score to indicate appropriate teacher knowledge.

The administration of the TELA is made available online to Tennessee teacher candidates in grades K-5 through the department's Best for All Central learning platform. The TELA assesses a teacher candidate's knowledge around evidence-based literacy instruction based on the foundational literacy

skills and use of high-quality instructional materials (HQIM). The purpose of this assessment is to ensure that all Tennessee educators have a shared body of knowledge about the research and science behind learning to read.

The 25-item assessment represents categories and subcategory domains of teaching and learning, including sounds first instruction, decoding and fluency, phonemic and phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, morphology and vocabulary and includes items referencing the use of HQIM. The assessment items include various question types, such as multiple choice, multiple select (selection of correct responses in a series of choices), drop-down (select from a list of choices) and matching.

The passing score for the assessment is 80 percent. This allows candidates to miss five (5) or fewer questions on a four-point scale. The recommendation and indication of a passing score aligns with the cut score established for both the Early Reading Training and the Secondary Literacy Training assessments.

Purpose of Reporting

[Tennessee Code Annotated § 49-5-108](#) requires the department to report the first-time pass rate of applicable candidates on the TELA to the SBE. The SBE is required to include the first-time pass rate of applicable candidates on the TELA from each approved Educator Preparation Program (EPP) in the SBE's annual Teacher Preparation Report Card prepared pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-5-108.

Licensure Requirements

Effective August 1, 2023, candidates seeking to obtain, renew, or advance a teaching license with at least one qualifying endorsement as identified in the SBE Educator Licensure Policy 5.502 must provide evidence documenting the completion of an approved foundational literacy skills course or passage of the TELA. Completing the free Tennessee Early Reading Training, Secondary Literacy Training, or passing the TELA meets this training requirement. Any licensure transactions received on or after August 1, 2023, for initial licensure, licensure renewal, licensure advancement, licensure reactivation,

and additional endorsements with at least one qualifying endorsement must meet this requirement prior to transaction approval.

Participants Accessing the Assessment

Since the TELA launched online through May 20, 2024, 5,050 users have enrolled to take the assessment, but only 2,581 have taken the assessment. While some users have chosen not to complete the assessment, 642 decided to take the Early Reading Training instead, 506 decided to take the Secondary Literacy Training, and 29 took both.

When users access the assessment, they are asked to choose a category that best describes them and select from the following options:

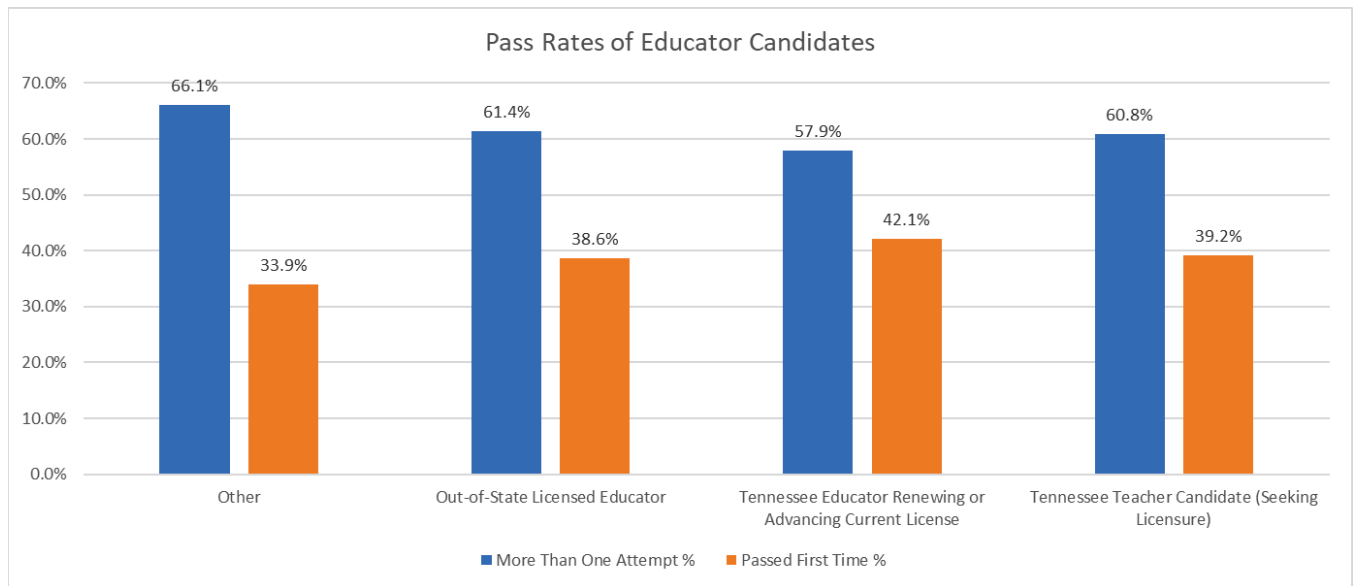
- Out-of-State Licensed Educator
- Tennessee Teacher Candidate
- Tennessee Educator Renewing or Advancing Current License
- Other

In a follow-up question, they are asked to select their EPP. Users will select their EPP from a pre-populated dropdown menu that includes an “N/A” option.

Pass Rates of Educator Candidates

Users may take the TELA more than once. To meet the statutory requirement of reporting first-time pass rate, the graph below shows first-time pass rates for the different user categories. The graph also shows overall pass rates - that is, whether candidates who took the TELA more than once ever passed - for the different user categories. The overall first-time pass rate of the TELA is 40.2 percent. The pass rate when participants are broken up into categories closely mirrors the overall pass rate. The graph below shows pass rates by category, including those who selected “Other.” Of the four groups, “Tennessee Educator Renewing or Advancing Current License” performed slightly better than “Tennessee Teacher Candidate” (2.9 percent higher) and “Out-of-State Educator” (3.5 percent higher), and much higher than those that chose “Other” (8.2 percent higher).

Figure 1. Tennessee Early Literacy Assessment scores by category



Pass Rates by Educator Prep Providers (EPPs)

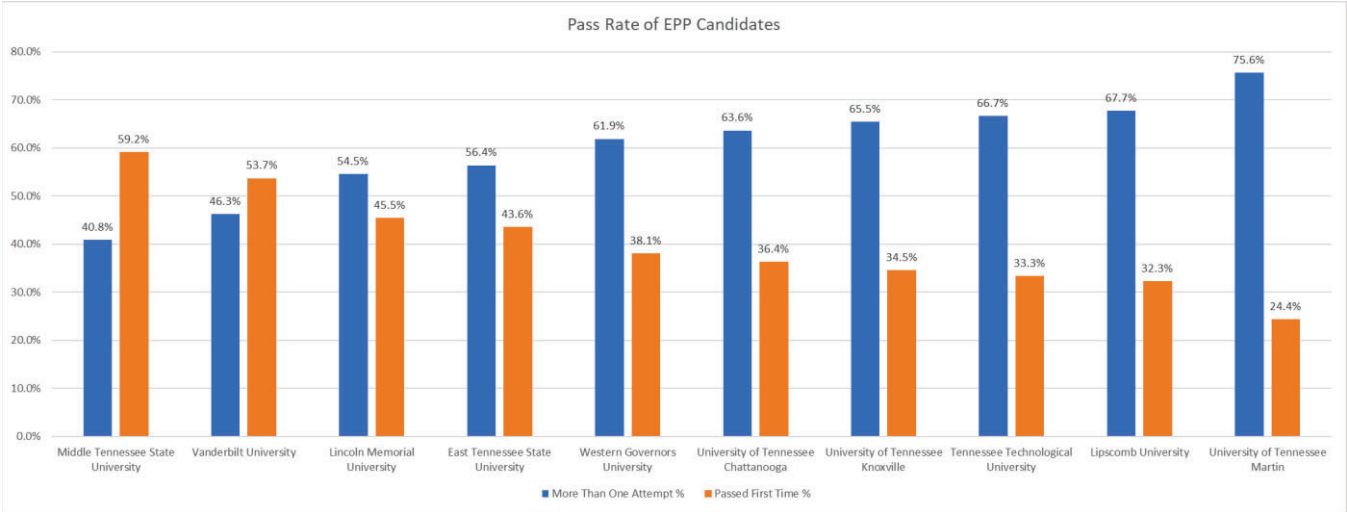
Among users who selected "Tennessee Teacher Candidates" and provided an EPP or selected "N/A" for their EPP, the first-time pass rate is 39.2 percent. Twenty-eight EPPs are represented in the data but only ten EPPs, plus the N/A category, have ten or more users. EPPs must have at least ten users for the department to share their data to protect users' data privacy. The EPPs with at least ten users are:

- East Tennessee State University,
- Lincoln Memorial University
- Lipscomb University
- Middle Tennessee State University
- Tennessee Technological University
- University of Tennessee Chattanooga
- University of Tennessee Knoxville
- University of Tennessee Martin
- Vanderbilt University
- Western Governors University

Two of the ten EPPs listed above had a higher first-time pass rate than the rate of those who took it more than once, Middle Tennessee State University (59.2 percent first time pass rate) and Vanderbilt

University (53.7 percent first time pass rate). The remaining eight EPPs had first time pass rates that ranged from 45.5 percent (Lincoln Memorial) to 24.4 percent (University of Tennessee Martin).

Figure 2. Tennessee Early Literacy Assessment scores by EPPs



Summary

Tennessee has made significant improvements to ensure all Tennessee educators have the knowledge and skills with evidence-based literacy instruction in foundational literacy skills and use of HQIM. As part of the improvements, the department adopted the TELA for all teacher candidates in Tennessee to prepare individuals to provide literacy instruction in the foundational grades (K-5).

Data obtained from the assessment demonstrated an overall first-time pass rate of 40.2 percent. Because there are multiple ways to demonstrate knowledge of literacy instruction, some individuals elected to abandon and/or complete a different literacy assessment (e.g., Early Reading Training, Secondary Literacy Training), which contributed to the pass rate. The TELA is one of two approved pathways to demonstrate compliance with the Tennessee Literacy Success Act. Educators have the option of an assessment or training pathway to meet requirements. some individuals may have elected to utilize the training-only pathway or attempted the Tennessee Early Literacy Assessment and then transitioned to the training pathway. The department will continue to monitor participation and interaction with the assessment and review data and report to stakeholder groups as needed.

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