

# Tennessee's Teacher Evaluation System

*November 20, 2025*



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# Overview

- Committee Background
- Current Evaluation Trends and Data
- Landscape Analysis
- Initial Committee Takeaways
- Discussion
- Looking Ahead



# Committee Background

# Chapter 325 of the Public Acts of 2025

## Overview

- This act added a new section to T.C.A. Title 49, Chapter 1, Part 2 and requires the department to:
  1. Conduct a landscape analysis of teacher evaluation practices in Tennessee and other states
  2. Convene a teacher evaluation advisory committee composed of experienced Tennessee educators and experts to review and evaluate current teacher evaluation practices
  3. Present the findings of the teacher evaluation advisory committee and the landscape analysis to the state board of education and develop a final report to share with the legislature

# Teacher Evaluation Advisory Committee Members

- Margaret Bright
- Raeven Brooks
- Melissa Collins
- Jerry Cox
- Meg Foster
- John Frizzell
- Alexa Guynes
- Sandra Howard
- Kim Inglis
- Danielle Johnson
- Kerri Newsom
- Morgan Rankin
- Sheron Smith
- Bob Sparks
- Missy Testerman



# Current Evaluation Trends and Data

# Educator Evaluation in TN

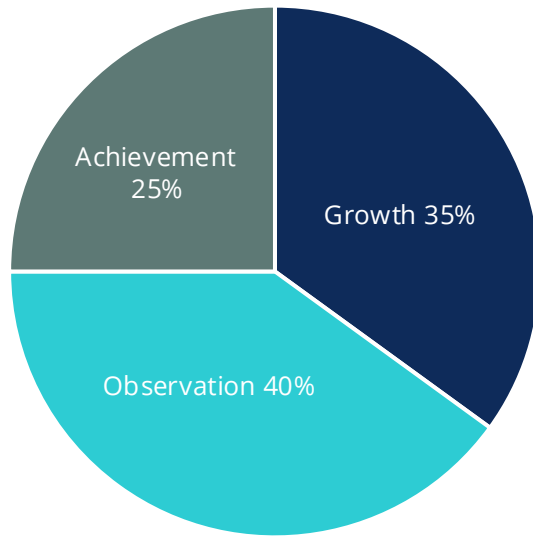
## Why it matters:

- Research shows that educators are the single most important lever in driving student outcomes.
- Evaluation is about both improving instructional practice and ensuring all students have an effective teacher leading their classroom.
- Teacher Educator Survey Results:
  - Approximately 81% of all teachers and 91% of teachers in their first three years of teaching agreed or strongly agreed that the teaching evaluation process has led to improvements in their teaching.
  - Teacher satisfaction was high with various aspects of the evaluation system, 86% of teachers said they feel the processes used to conduct their evaluation are fair, and 85% agreed that the evaluation system helps them identify areas for improvement.

# Evaluation Overview: Weights

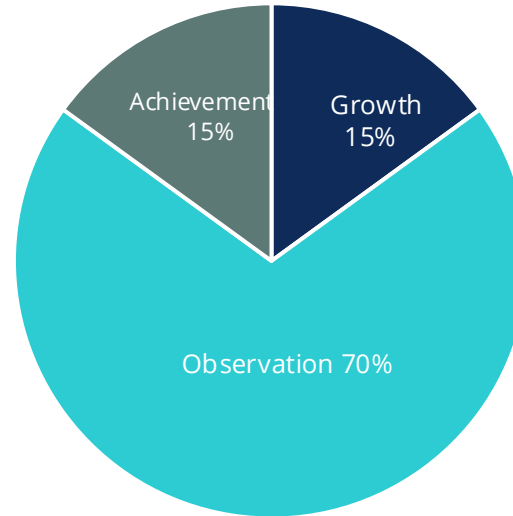
- **Weighted components** are combined to calculate a Level of Overall Effectiveness (LOE).

Tested Teachers, Teachers  
Implementing Student  
Growth Portfolios or URS



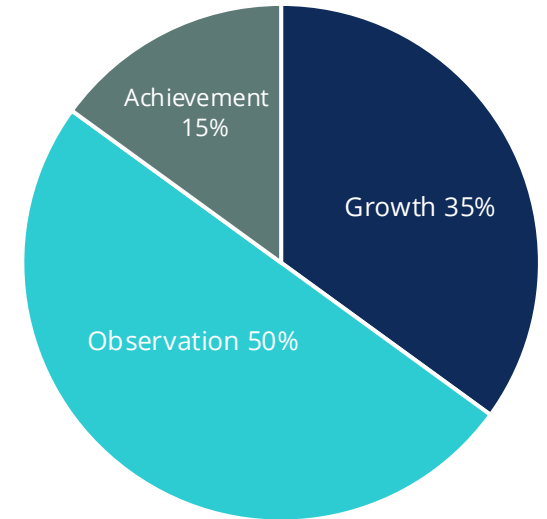
- Growth 35%
- Observation 40%
- Achievement 25%

Non-Tested Teachers



- Growth 15%
- Observation 70%
- Achievement 15%

Administrators



- Growth 35%
- Observation 50%
- Achievement 15%



# Observation Cycles

| License Level | Individual Growth or LOE Score | Minimum Required Observations   | Minimum Required Observations per Domain     | Minimum Number of Minutes per School Year |
|---------------|--------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Practitioner  | Levels 1-4                     | All domains observed, with a minimum of three domains observed in each semester and a minimum of three formal observations. | 3 Instruction<br>2 Planning<br>2 Environment | 90 minutes                                |
|               | Level 5                        | One formal observation covering all domains first semester; two walk-throughs second semester                               | 1 Instruction<br>1 Planning<br>1 Environment | 60 minutes                                |
| Professional  | Level 1                        | All domains observed, with a minimum of three domains observed in each semester and a minimum of three formal observations. | 3 Instruction<br>2 Planning<br>2 Environment | 90 minutes                                |
|               | Levels 2-4                     | All domains observed with a minimum of two domains observed in each semester and a minimum of two formal observations.      | 2 Instruction<br>1 Planning<br>1 Environment | 60 minutes                                |
|               | Level 5                        | One formal observation covering all domains first semester; two walk-throughs second semester                               | 1 Instruction<br>1 Planning<br>1 Environment | 60 minutes                                |

# Overview of Evaluation Model Usage in Tennessee

- While TEAM remains the state’s primary observation model, there are several additional models that the State Board has approved for use both statewide and in specific charter schools.
- For all models listed below, observation scores have been found to be strongly correlated with student achievement.

| Teacher Evaluation Model   | # Districts Currently Using (2024) | % of Districts | Participating Districts  |
|--|------------------------------------|----------------|--|
| Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM)                           | 124                                | 84%            | All others   |
| Project COACH  | 11                                 | 8%             | Anderson, Blount, Bradley, Franklin, Giles, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lawrence, Rhea, Tullahoma, Warren               |
| Teacher Effectiveness Model (TEM)                                      | 1                                  | 1%             | Memphis-Shelby County  |
| The Teacher Instructional Growth for Effectiveness and Results (TIGER) | 12                                 | 8%             | Alcoa, Maryville, Alamo, Trenton, Bradford, Greeneville, Lexington, Paris, Knox, Lenoir City, Trousdale, Lebanon |

# Evaluation Trends

- Average scores in all domains on the TEAM observation rubric have *improved* over time. The highest scores tend to be in the Environment domain, and the lowest are in Instruction.
- In 2023-2024, over **75%** of educators received an LOE score of 4 or 5. Teachers who received the highest observation scores also tended to have the highest individual growth scores on average.
- According to the Educator Preparation Report Card, which evaluates Tennessee educator preparation provider effectiveness, **96%** of new teachers earned at least a 3 (Meets Expectations) on observations.

# Landscape Analysis

# History of Teacher Evaluation Reforms in Tennessee



# Key Refinements to Tennessee's Teacher Evaluation System since 2011

| Refinement Area              | Improvements   |
|------------------------------|--|
| Student Growth Measures      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of portfolio growth models for non-tested teachers</li> <li>• Approved use of universal reading screener data for generating individual growth scores for educators in grades pre-K-2</li> <li>• Introduction of 4/5 trump rule</li> </ul>   |
| Student Achievement Measures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased flexibility in achievement measure selection</li> <li>• Option to apply TVAAS score of 3, 4, or 5 in lieu of achievement measure score if doing so results in a higher overall evaluation score</li> </ul>  |
| Observation Measures         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addition of High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) indicator to multiple domains of educator rubric</li> <li>• Development of differentiated rubrics and guidance for occupational teachers and noninstructional personnel</li> <li>• Refinement of observation pacing to prioritize new educators and those in need of greater support</li> </ul> |
| Student Claiming             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of 150-day rule</li> <li>• Establishment of partial year exemption (PYE) for teachers on extended leave, teachers transferring to a different school, or teachers moving into different roles that impact their ability to provide instruction</li> </ul>  |

# Recognition & Research Findings for TN Evaluation Reform Efforts

- The National Council for Teacher Quality praised Tennessee as a high-quality teacher evaluation system, as studies indicated that Tennessee was the only state that managed to sustain observable outcomes five years after evaluation.
- Another national study identified Tennessee as one of two state exemplars where teacher evaluation reform resulted in positive effects on student achievement in math and ELA.
- TERA found that student performance in Tennessee districts increased at a much faster rate after evaluation reform.

# Other States' Teacher Evaluation Practices

- States in the Southeast typically strike a balance between district flexibility and state level control in educator evaluation. In Alabama, districts adopt their own evaluation systems but are required to incorporate a state-designed evaluation tool. In 2025-2026, Louisiana began implementing a statewide evaluation system, but districts will be allowed to opt out if they prefer to substitute with a locally-adopted rubric.
- The majority of states use at least four distinct categories to describe educator effectiveness (e.g., "meets expectations," "exceeds expectations), and North Carolina uses a five-category system similar to Tennessee.
- States like Florida and Louisiana require evaluators to provide written feedback to teachers after a specified number of days following a teacher's observation or evaluation.
- Many states require annual evaluations, although states like Texas and Kentucky allow for less frequent evaluations for more experienced and effective educators.
- States like North Carolina require evaluators to undergo state-approved training before being allowed to conduct observations, similar to Tennessee.

# Initial Committee Takeaways

# Key Takeaways

- Participants agreed that Tennessee has a robust system that holds teachers accountable and provides them with useful feedback for improving practice, particularly for novice teachers and those needing additional support.
- Committee members discussed potential opportunities for training and additional resources to address subjectivity in scoring and demystify key components of the evaluation system.
- The group also examined design elements of the current system in relation to teachers in tested and non-tested subjects/grade levels, as well as noninstructional school services personnel.

# Key Takeaways

- A key area of discussion centered around determining the proper balance of announced and unannounced observations depending on educator experience and past performance.
- The committee also examined the weighting of growth and achievement data and discussed the impact this can have on educators in various subjects, grade levels, and instructional settings.

# Discussion

# Discussion

- What kinds of comments do you receive from administrators regarding the impact of educator evaluation systems on their own workstreams and decision processes?
- What revisions (if any) should be made to observation cycles to ensure new and developing educators receive necessary supports while also respecting educator time and expertise?

# Discussion

- In your view, are there circumstances where a teacher should be able to receive a high LOE even if their students do not demonstrate high achievement and/or growth?
- Are the observation, achievement, and growth domains weighted fairly for different types of educators?
- Are there any other recommendations you would like to share?



# Looking Ahead

# Looking Ahead

- The final teacher evaluation advisory committee meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 8, 2025.
- During this meeting, participants will dive deeper into topics like weighting and observation cycles and finalize their recommendations.
- Committee recommendations and board member insights will be included in the department's landscape analysis report, which is currently in development and will be made available by January 31, 2026.



# Thank You!

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