IMPLEMENTATION GUIDEBOOK

T-TESS

Texas **Teacher** Evaluation & Support System

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Introduction

Texas has developed a new evaluation system for teachers, the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS). The system consists of an evaluation rubric, a goal-setting and professional development plan, and a student growth measure embedded in processes of support that encourage professional growth, goal identification, and the establishment of strengths, as well as professional development needs.

Designed by Texas educators, education leaders, and policy experts in 2013-2014 and piloted by 57 Texas districts in 2014-2015, the T-TESS evaluation system and process has been refined so that it reflects the experiences, recommendations and ongoing feedback from districts and campus practitioners.

T-TESS was designed to extend beyond the current teacher evaluation system, the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS), so that the evaluation process promotes professional growth at all levels of the organization. Key aspects of the system include the following:

> A key feature of T-TESS is that it is designed to support teachers and promote specific and targeted feedback, which results in improvement of their practice.

- T-TESS is based on newly updated Texas Teacher Standards. Texas teachers, principals, and representatives from higher education and educator organizations revised the state's 1997 Texas teacher standards to address six broad standards for performance: Instructional Planning and Delivery; Knowledge of Students and Student Learning; Content Knowledge and Expertise; Learning Environment; Data-Driven Practice; and Professional Practices and Responsibility. These standards, along with research and best practices, serve as the impetus for the new teacher evaluation system.

- T-TESS is growth-oriented. A key feature of T-TESS is that it is designed to support teachers and promote specific and targeted feedback, which results in improvement of their practice.

- T-TESS is not a checklist or compliance-oriented evaluation. T-TESS is optimized when an appraiser and teacher engage in ongoing, supportive, and meaningful dialogue regarding teaching and learning. The evaluation rubric helps to enhance the quality of the feedback and information that appraisers and teachers can use to make decisions about professional practices and development that result in student growth.

- The T-TESS performance dimensions have been consolidated into the rubric's four domains: Planning, Instruction, Learning Environment, and Professional Practices and Responsibilities. The T-TESS rubric consists of five performance levels that, based on evidence collected during the observation, define where practices are occurring. Performance levels are as follows: Distinguished, Accomplished, Proficient, Developing, and Improvement Needed.

- T-TESS Summative evalution ratings consist of a summative rating determined through a matrix approach that yields an overall ordinal rating for each teacher. The summative ratings is derived from the rubric (80% of the rating) and student growth (20% of the rating). Student growth will not factor into ratings until the 2017-2018 school year.

It is recommended that districts and campuses establish an annual evaluation process that includes at least one formal observation. Districts and schools may find that their efforts

to promote an open, collaborative culture that focuses on continuous professional growth will best be served by establishing an evaluation system that consists of multiple informal observations or walkthroughs and additional formal observations. The observations are supported by pre- and post-conferences between teachers and appraisers.

The Texas Education Agency provides direct implementation oversight and support to personnel from the 20 regional service centers who provide comprehensive appraiser training and support for administrators, teacher leaders, and district staff to become qualified appraisers, promoting professional growth priorities of the evaluation system. The regional service centers identify and provide services and support for districts to implement the process with fidelity at respective campuses.

This guidebook was designed to provide district leaders and teachers with a quick reference about T-TESS. The following pages provide brief descriptive summaries about the essential aspects of T-TESS, district policy considerations for implementing T-TESS, and the purpose and goals for those implementing T-TESS. Included are comments and suggestions that reflect the best practices and insights collected from the practical experiences of district personnel who were integral to the implementation of T-TESS during the pilot year. References to additional resources that support T-TESS implementation are also included.

T-TESS Annual Appraisal Process

Current Year			Next Year
Weeks 1-6	**Weeks 6 through End-of-Year Conferences**	**At Least 15 Days Prior to the Last Day of Instruction**	**Weeks 1-6**
Teacher Orientation (No later than the first three weeks of school and at least two weeks before the first observation) **Goal-Setting and Professional Development (GSPD) Plan** - Submitted to the appraiser for approval within six weeks from the day of completion of the orientation. - A GSPD Conference is required for a teacher in the first year of appraisal under T-TESS and teachers new to the district.	**Teacher Orientation for Late Hires** **Goal-Setting and Professional Development Plan for Late Hires** - Submitted to the appraiser within six weeks from the day of the completion of the orientation. **Ongoing review of teacher and student data** **Ongoing review of the GSPD plan to formatively assess progress towards goals, professional development impact, and teacher and student performance** **Ongoing collection of evidence to support Domain IV** - Teacher and appraiser	**End-of-Year Conferences** - Review summative scores for Domains I, II and III - Review the data and evidence gathered throughout the appraisal year for Domain IV, including the teacher's evidence for this domain/dimensions - Review results of the performance of the teachers' students - Review potential goals and professional development plans for the next school year *Note: Domain 4 is not scored until after the teacher has been afforded an opportunity to present evidence related to each of the four dimensions during the end-of-year conference.*	**Teacher Orientation for teachers new to T-TESS, the district, and when district policy has changed from the last orientation.** *(No later than the first three weeks of school and at least two weeks before the first observation)* **Goal-Setting and Professional Development (GSPD) Plan** - *Returning teachers review the goal(s) established at the EOY Conference to determine if changes are needed, and submit within first six weeks of instruction.* - *New teachers are guided through the GSPD process to self-assess, develop goals, and establish a professional development plan, then submit within six weeks of the orientation.*
Informal observations and walkthroughs with ongoing feedback to support and develop teacher practices			
	Formal observation window established per local policy – Excludes/prohibits observations in the two weeks following the orientation		

District Policy Considerations

When districts identify key local considerations for T-TESS, they support leaders, teachers, and staff with their understanding of the system, its components, and any additional requirements for implementation. Additionally, the district policy considerations help clarify T-TESS expectations including timelines, areas for flexibility, and reporting requirements.

Key considerations and decision-making at the district level can be time consuming, requiring district staff to reach agreement quickly on internal processes, monitoring, expectations, and strategies for support. Districts have some discretion in determining how

schools should implement the new teacher evaluation system. Local decision-making is recommended for the following areas:

- District timelines associated with T-TESS implementation (e.g., observation windows, follow-up timeframes, pre- and post-conference deadlines, etc.);
- District procedures related to number and length of announced and unannounced observations;
- Expectations and requirements for principals, appraisers, observers, and teachers;
- Points of contact for requesting additional information;
- Guidance on teacher professional development and classroom observation self-reflection expectations;
- Requirements for collecting and maintaining teacher evaluation evidence (i.e., scripted notes, scoring sheets, conference plans/notes, etc., including reporting and data warehouse entries);
- Processes for teachers in need of improvement; and
- Processes for completing and sharing end-of-year scoring.

"Our goal next year is to begin completing announced observations earlier so we can also complete unannounced observations. We feel we will get a truer picture of each teacher's practices with respect to the rubric when we have the opportunity to complete the announced visit with a pre-conference & post-conference first, then later go back for an unannounced visit. While the walkthroughs provide some of that information, we feel strongly a 2nd unannounced visit will really give us the data we desire."

Principal, Texarkana ISD

District Role

Involving district-level leaders in T-TESS implementation ensures that T-TESS becomes a process for education innovation. Successful implementation hinges on collaboration within and among departments and a deepened commitment to growth-centered supervision of instruction and capacity building throughout the organization.

District Leader Responsibilities

Superintendent:

- Clarify district mission and vision as they relate to the basic purpose and goals of T-TESS;
- Cultivate a culture of continuous improvement and educator self-reflection;
- Message the idea that this comprehensive process about improving practices and establishing a culture of highly-effective teaching and, consequently, learning;
- Demonstrate commitment to this growth model in policy and practice;
- Identify who will lead overall implementation efforts and monitor implementation progress (district- and school-level leaders); and
- Convey and clarify the expectation for principals and other instructional leaders to embrace and model instructional leadership that promotes teacher efficacy.

"If we could do it differently, we would have had the system rollout as a standing agenda item."

Principal, Taft ISD

LEA Lesson Learned:
"Meeting together following the summer T-TESS training and planning for the year was invaluable!"

District T-TESS Contact and Lead:

- Facilitate ongoing communication with state leaders and education service center partners;
- Develop and implement a plan for central office support for campus T-TESS implementation;
- Initiate discussions about how T-TESS data can be used to help many areas of the organization;
- Ensure direct communication regarding T-TESS with district and campus leaders;
- Develop a clear timeline for T-TESS implementation in the district;
- Plan sufficient initial training before rollout and build capacity with campus leaders;
- Facilitate T-TESS overview session(s) to build understanding among all staff; and
- Ensure routine follow-through during the year (standing item on meeting agendas, etc.).

Human Resources:

- Develop a district-specific FAQ to help with understanding of T-TESS;
- Include teacher leaders as the district plans for T-TESS;
- Clarify the flow of the process in the district;
- Develop local guidelines/administrative procedures to ensure consistent implementation across schools regarding number of observations, walk-through visits, timelines, and collection of evidence and artifacts; and
- Establish calibration processes and structures to ensure consistency and reliability.

Curriculum and Instruction/Professional Development:

- Analyze T-TESS data at individual, school, and district levels;
- Provide opportunities for targeted professional development (PD) based on T-TESS data analysis;
- Establish local capacity-building for appraisers regarding effective instructional practices which incorporate both research-based practices and strategies and initiatives expected at the local level;

- Provide PD and coaching for appraisers on how to conduct effective conferences; and
- Develop a long-range implementation and PD plan for initial and ongoing training for all appraisers and educators.

Technology

- Determine technology needs for T-TESS implementation;
- Identify person(s) to take the lead on technology support;
- Ensure appraisers have adequate technology expertise and support;
- Support T-TESS in the technology plan; and
- Create common tools for principals and other appraisers to share information with teachers (e.g., forms and means of submission).

Communication

- Create talking points to share with staff prior to T-TESS implementation;
- Provide routine updates for various stakeholders—teachers, school boards, etc.; and
- Frame presentation/conversation for organizations such as PTO/PTA, Campus Advisory Councils, and the District Advisory Council.

Finance

- Conduct a comprehensive cost analysis for T-TESS implementation; and
- Create a plan in response to time/cost analyses to ensure full utilization and support of T-TESS.

"We made our own forms, where appropriate, so that the information captured and shared between appraisers and teachers better fit our district needs."

Central Administration, Wink-Loving ISD

"The biggest thing about implementing is how it is presented. I personally went to every campus and was 'a cheerleader' for T-TESS. I talked about what a great opportunity for us to be able to have input, PDAS is outdated, etc. Our administrators went to training, then each administrator did the training with staff and continued the positives of the new 'tool.'"

Central Administration, Brownwood ISD

LEA Lesson Learned:
"HR developed local administrative procedures prior to T-TESS implementation that was very helpful to campus leaders."

Teacher Role

As part of the continuous improvement process, teachers consistently hold themselves to a high standard for individual development and performance. They identify methods to collaborate with other educational professionals within and beyond the school to engage in purposeful and targeted professional learning opportunities, seek feedback, and refine their practices and skills. Including the teacher in a systematic way allows him or her to take an active role in his or her professional growth and development.

The purpose of the teacher's role during this process is to share insights and think about his or her pedagogy and professional practices. A goal of the evaluation process is to include the teacher in a systematic way that assists with individualized professional growth and development.

During conferences, the teacher and appraiser engage in open dialogue to discuss the upcoming lesson (pre-conference) and reflect on the observed lesson (post-conference). Post-conferences allow teachers to authentically assess the effectiveness and impact of the lesson's outcomes with student performance. The evidence collected during the observation and the information from the T-TESS rubric are used to frame the conference discussions for areas of reinforcement and refinement. Both the teacher and appraiser should be clear about the necessary next steps to ensure that future practices and growth are addressed.

Appraiser Role

The appraiser has a vital role in assessing teaching proficiency and ensuring that teachers and administrators derive reliable and meaningful information from the teacher evaluation process.

By providing evidence-based feedback, appraisers help teachers and administrators make decisions that support efforts to improve instructional quality and student performance.

Administrators, teacher leaders, or district personnel who have met the certification requirements are eligible for participating in the teacher evaluation process as appraisers. Appraisers work with teachers throughout the evaluation cycle on goal-setting and professional development plans, formal and informal observations, and pre-, post-, and end-of-year conferences.

The appraiser is an integral part of supporting a teacher's focus on professional growth. During the pre-conference and post-conference, the appraiser will guide the teacher to focus on actions and practices that lead to instructional effectiveness with every student. The appraiser should be ready to explain aspects of the observation rubric that are reflected in the lesson ratings based on specific evidence collected during observations and guide the teacher to think about instructional practices that should be reinforced or refined.

Observer Role

The observer role is similar to that of an appraiser's role with the exception that he or she does not assign the final, end-of-year ratings.
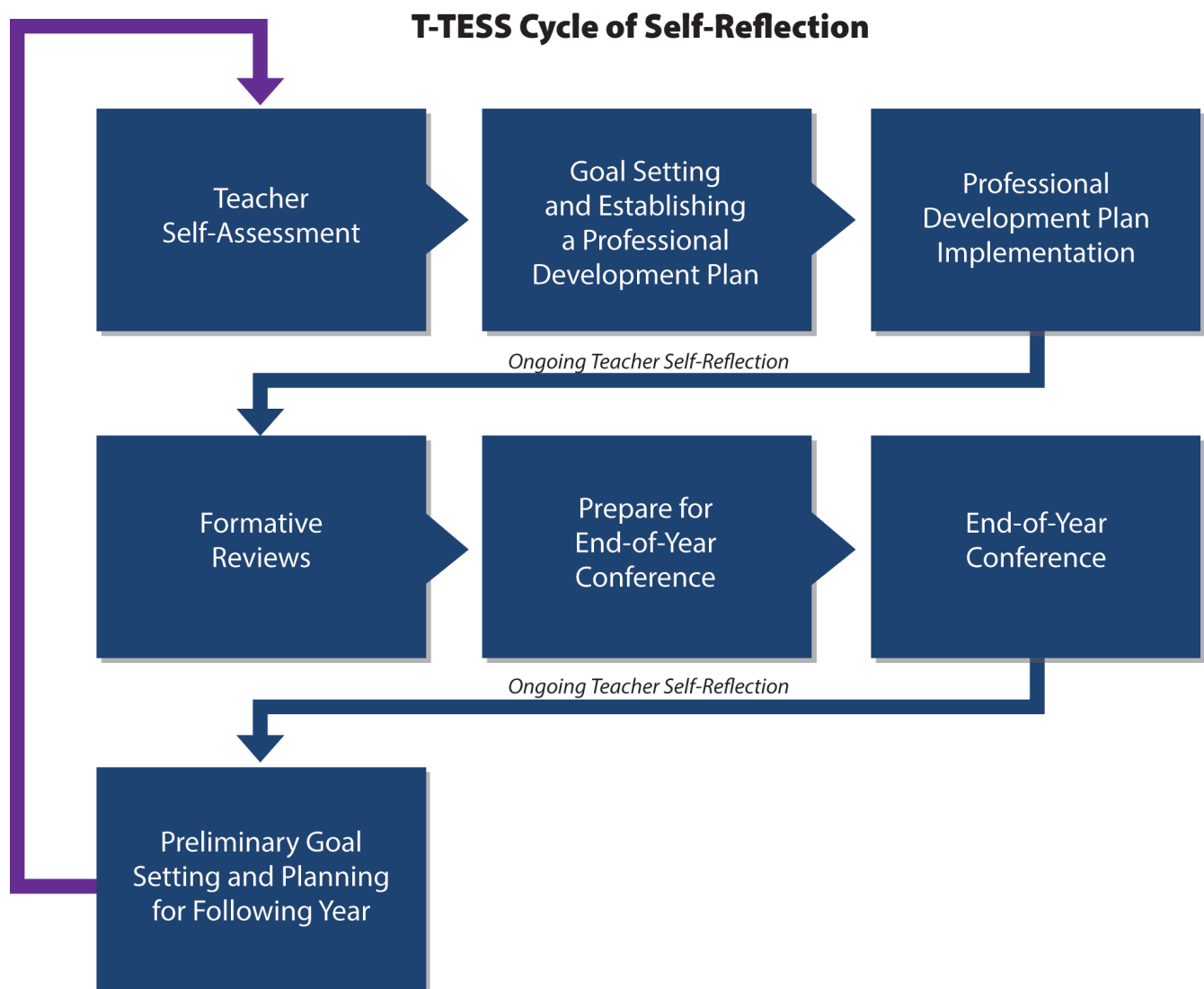
The feedback offered by the observer also helps teachers and administrators in making decisions that support efforts to improve instructional quality and student performance.

Staff who support teachers through the observation role are facilitators of teacher learning and development. In this role, observers are responsible for engaging in regular conversations with his or her assigned teacher caseload—those teachers for whom the observer will support through the teacher observation process.

Observers will participate in the pre-conference, classroom observation, and post-conference cycle. Sometimes observers will conduct class "walk-throughs" that are short in duration and not meant to serve as a formal classroom observation.

Observers are responsible for meeting with teachers throughout the entire observation process, regularly engaging in conversations with teachers about instruction, lesson planning, teaching and learning, and other likely associated topics. Observers are encouraged to read teacher lesson plans in advance of formal observations, if they are available.

While pre-conferences allow the opportunity for meaningful dialogue between the teacher and his or her observers, other forms of reasonable communication can take place. During any of these meetings the observer should be listening for requests for assistance from teachers, taking notes when necessary, asking questions when clarification is needed, and serving as a guide for professional development and teacher growth.

T-TESS Cycle of Self-Reflection

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Teacher
Self-Assessment  →  Goal Setting
                    and Establishing
                    a Professional
                    Development Plan  →  Professional
                                         Development Plan
                                         Implementation

                    Ongoing Teacher Self-Reflection

Formative
Reviews  →  Prepare for
            End-of-Year
            Conference  →  End-of-Year
                           Conference

            Ongoing Teacher Self-Reflection

Preliminary Goal
Setting and Planning
for Following Year
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Evaluation System Overview

The purpose of T-TESS is to improve planning, instruction, the learning environment, and professional practices and responsibilities so that the refinement of each teacher's craft leads to improved student performance.

T-TESS aligns with the Texas Teacher Standards (TAC, Chapter 149, Section 149.1001) and is intended to be used for continuous professional growth through ongoing feedback and support which results in refinement of knowledge, skills, and practices that ultimately impact student performance. The recommended system encourages annual evaluations comprised

The recommended system encourages annual evaluations comprised of multiple informal observations and walk-throughs and at least one formal observation.

of multiple informal observations and walk-throughs and at least one formal observation. These collective observations, along with the end-of-year conferences with appraisers, provide actionable, timely feedback, allowing teachers to make efficient, contextually based PD decisions that lead to growth that impacts student performance.

> Goal setting and professional development planning allow teachers to make decisions for professional growth as part of a self-assessment of their professional practices as they relate to student needs.

T-TESS is a robust system that:

- Includes self-assessment and goal-setting processes that allow teachers to shape professional goals, establish a professional development plan to attain those goals, and track the progress of their development prior to the end-of-year conference;
- Promotes teacher growth through frequent and sustained feedback loops;
- Incorporates five distinct performance levels, which clearly differentiate practices and describe behaviors which elevate performance; and
- Provides the framework to define and demonstrate how the domains, dimensions, and descriptors support teachers as they implement strategies in ways that address the learning needs of all students.

T-TESS includes three components: a goal-setting and professional development plan, the evaluation cycle (pre-conference, observation, post-conference), and student growth. These components function as an integrated system to inform the individual teacher's potential areas of focus for growth and professional development.

Throughout the school year, teachers collaborate with their observer and/or appraiser to discuss teaching strategies, best practices, and techniques for effective instructional planning and execution of lessons.

Rubric

The rubric assists teachers in self-reflection on their pedagogy and professional practices and is central to the conversations teachers, observers, and appraisers engage in during pre- and post-conferences.

The rubric includes four domains: Planning, Instruction, Learning Environment, and Professional Practices and Responsibilities (see four domains on the next page). Because of the rubric's structure, discussions between educators should routinely center on the interaction loop between teachers and students. These conversations may result in changes to a teacher's instructional strategies, routines, and/or practices that target high-quality instruction involving students in their own learning.

To support teachers in their professional development during the year, teachers reflect on their teaching and identify areas that they will continually assess during the year, making necessary adjustments as appropriate. Teachers track their progress toward their professional development goals and include their observer or appraiser, as needed, to support their success.

The rubric clearly differentiates between teaching practices and embeds feedback within each dimension and descriptor. With the rubric, teachers have an opportunity to reflect as they plan and deliver their instruction.

"We felt that more time needs to be spent in working and training with teachers on Domain 1, Planning. The more we got into the rubric this year, the more we realized that our teachers need a much better understanding of this domain and how to plan to meet the requirements in the other Domains."

Principal, New Caney ISD

Four Domains of the T-TESS Rubric

Planning

Standards and Alignment

Data and Assessment

Knowledge of Students

Activities

Instruction

Achieving Expectations

Content Knowledge and Expertise

Communication

Differentiation

Monitor and Adjust

Learning Environment

Classroom Environment, Routines, and Procedures

Managing Student Behavior

Classroom Culture

Professional Practices and Responsibilities

Professional Demeanor and Ethics

Goal Setting

Professional Development

School Community Involvement

Orientation

Orientation provides teachers with an understanding of T-TESS, its components, key staff roles and responsibilities, information and resources available during implementation, where to seek assistance, and how to write goals and professional development plans. Teachers will become familiar with the T-TESS processes for conducting and participating in teacher evaluation and growth.

Campus and districts leaders are encouraged to provide teachers with T-TESS orientation as close to the beginning of the school year as possible. Teachers should be well informed of the system itself, its parts, and their roles and responsibilities, including expectations for professional growth. The ultimate goal of orientation is to introduce teachers to the T-TESS process for conducting and participating in teacher evaluation and growth.

Campus principals may choose to individualize orientation for school staff based on the needs of the campus and any other factors that assist the school leader in conveying this information in a clear and timely manner. During orientation, teachers should receive information on the overall evaluation system components and process (including timelines), where to go for assistance and support (including the Teach for Texas portal), how to begin the evaluation process, how to develop goals and a professional development plan, and

Ideally, T-TESS orientation occurs as close to the beginning of the school year as possible.

LEA Lesson Learned:
"Every bit of planning and preparation that can be completed in the summer prior to actual implementation will receive return to the investment!"

Web Portal Support
(https://teachfortexas.org/)
Orientation modules, both half and full day, are available on the T-TESS portal for elementary, middle, and high schools.

responsibilities of the teacher, observer, evaluator, and campus leadership. District local decisions affecting implementation should also be shared during the teacher orientation, particularly any additional requirements and/or guidance provided by the district.

Goal-Setting and Professional Development Plan

Goal setting and professional development planning allow teachers to make decisions for professional growth as part of a self-assessment of their professional practices as they relate to student needs.

Setting goals and developing a professional development plan will help teachers maintain high standards for improving their overall professional craft.

Once fully implemented, the goal-setting and professional development plan should first be crafted during or in response to the end-of-year conference. It should be based on the accumulation of data over the course of not just a single year, but the summative progression of a teacher's practice.

It is recommended that a teacher and appraiser meet early in the new school year to review the goal-setting and professional development plan developed at the end of the preceding year in order to assess the suitability of the plan in light of the teacher's assignment and the teacher's student population.

Ideally, teachers and appraisers meet within the first three weeks of school for a goal-setting conference.

"We found our teachers fresh out of educator preparation were better prepared for this stage. We would have been better served with additional modeling and revisiting the goals and professional development plan regularly."

Principal, Taft ISD

During the school year, a teacher and appraiser should periodically revisit the goals, monitor progress, and modify the goals if necessary. At the end of the year, the teacher will bring his or her goal-setting and professional development plan documents and evidence to the end-of-year conference so that the teacher and appraiser can review the progress the teacher made on goal attainment and accomplishing professional development activities. From here, the process repeats itself so that improvement of practice becomes a cyclical, recursive process over the course of a teacher's career.

For teachers new to T-TESS, the goal-setting and professional development plan process will start at the beginning of the school year. For all teachers, a goal-setting form can be used to facilitate the process of coming to an agreement on the goals, recording milestones to indicate progress, and listing indicators that can serve as evidence of goal attainment.

LEA Lesson Learned:
"The goal-setting conference was new to teachers and appraisers. We provided a brief training in advance that was well received."

Web Portal Support
(https://teachfortexas.org/)
A goal-setting overview, template, samples, and a training module are available on the T-TESS portal. Districts are welcome to customize a goal setting template to satisfy the expectations of Domain 4.

Pre-Conference

The pre-conference will orient the appraiser to the teacher's chosen lesson prior to a formal classroom observation. Together, the appraiser and teacher will discuss the upcoming lesson observation with a focus on the interrelationships between planning, instruction, the learning environment, and student outcomes.

Teachers and those conducting teacher observations are encouraged to meet prior to the classroom observation in what is called a pre-conference. While in-person meetings are preferred, agreements may be made to meet virtually, via phone, or some other convenient method. The purpose of the pre-conference is to mutually discuss the upcoming lesson

"We wrote a set of prompting questions teachers considered as they prepared for their pre-conferences. We felt this really helped teachers better understand what we were looking for with respect to the rubric. We plan to continue using that set of questions and tweaking them as needed."

Principal, Texarkana ISD

to gain clarity about the expected outcomes and deliverables.. Teachers may find it helpful to orient the observer to his or her classroom, students, routines, expectations, and plans for the lesson. Topics that might be addressed include unique circumstances, classroom's content pacing, student goals and expectations, or even challenges students may be experiencing with the current content standards. Ultimately, the goal of the pre-conference is to help the teacher further his or her development in planning and instruction.

The observer may ask the teacher questions about how he or she selected the lesson, whether he or she anticipates easy, moderate, or difficult student responses, or even what the teacher perceives as aspirations for the class period.

Pre-conferences are most successful when completed in close proximity to the observation date. Both the teacher and observer can discuss questions and areas that require further clarification during the pre-conference and even afterward in follow-up communication. Both participants may choose to take notes during the conference or subsequent meetings; the teacher may even make adjustments to his or her lesson based on conversations with an observer. Any assistance the observer can provide the teacher in advance of the observed lesson is considered beneficial.

Web Portal Support

(https://teachfortexas.org/)
A pre-conference training module and sample questions are available on the T-TESS Portal. While the preconference is not required by T-TESS, it is highly recommended and is reported to be one of the most helpful supervisory elements for both teachers and appraisers by pilot districts.

Observations (Informal and Formal)

The purpose of an observation is for observers and appraisers to have a means of viewing and collecting evidence of teacher's instructional practice from the observed lesson. By seeing the teacher in action, observers and appraisers can determine how best to support the teacher's instructional practices and promote student performance.

The purpose of an observation is for an observer or appraiser to observe teacher and student actions, interactions, conversations, and the learning context during a specific lesson or portion of a lesson. It is recommended that teachers participate in a robust evaluation system that is comprised of multiple informal observations or walk-throughs and one or more formal observations during the school year. Districts and schools should endeavor to develop observation procedures that foster an open environment of collaborative interaction between district and campus administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers.

The type, number, timing, and procedures for informal observations and walk-throughs will be determined at the district or campus level. Teachers and appraisers can use these informal classroom visits to establish a continuing dialogue about instructional practices and lay the groundwork for other observations. Teacher leaders can play an

Teachers and appraisers can use informal classroom visits to establish a continuing dialogue about instructional practices and lay the groundwork for other observations.

Web Portal Support
(https://teachfortexas.org/)
A training module on logistics and yearly planning, including scheduling observations, pre- and post-conferences, collecting evidence and artifacts, and analysis of observation data is available on the T-TESS portal.

important role in giving teachers feedback about their progress toward goal attainment observed during their instruction with students. As part of their own self-assessment, teachers may want to suggest that an observer use the informal observation to focus on a specific domain, dimension, or instructional practice. Teachers can also use informal observations as a means to prepare for pre- and post-conference conversations about their own practices. Appraisers use information from the informal observations as evidence for performance ratings on various dimensions in the T-TESS rubric, especially those that are emphasized for growth over time.

Formal observations involve a certified appraiser collecting evidence and determining ratings for the dimensions in the first three domains of the T-TESS rubric: planning, instruction, and learning environment. While only one formal observation is required, best practices indicate that teachers benefit from more than a single observation during a year. The appraiser will use procedures and tools that enable him or her to collect evidence that supports the ratings for each dimension and domain.

Evidence and Artifacts

T-TESS is an evidence-based evaluation system that allows teacher input through the collection of artifacts and evidence.

The active participation of both the teacher and the appraiser in the evaluation process, supported by the gathering of evidence and artifacts, will result in a collaborative approach to evaluation and ongoing professional growth. Sources of evidence include teacher input, observations, instructional documents, and student outcomes. Strategies for gathering evidence from these sources include conferences before and after lessons, strategic scripting during the direct observation of teaching, and the collection of instructional artifacts, including student work. An example of an observation sheet for collecting evidence is provided below and can be found on the Teach for Texas portal.

T-TESS Observation Evidence Sheet

Domain: Planning		
Dimension	Evidence	Rating
Standards and Alignment 1.1	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
Data and Assessments 1.2	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
Knowledge of Students 1.3	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
Activities 1.4	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
Domain: Instruction		
Dimension	**Evidence**	**Rating**
Achieving Expectations 2.1	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
Content Knowledge and Expertise 2.2	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
Communication 2.3	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
Differentiation 2.4	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
Monitor and Adjust 2.5	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
Domain: Learning Environment		
Dimension	**Evidence**	**Rating**
Classroom Environment, Routines and Procedures 3.1	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
Managing Student Behavior 3.2	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
Classroom Culture	Click here to enter text.	Click here to

Artifacts are documents, records, objects and other items that provide evidence of the impact of instructional and professional practices. Artifacts may also be items that result from student learning and are essential for teachers to demonstrate proficiency in all four domains and correlating dimensions.

Although essential for Domains 1 and 4, artifacts are not limited to supporting those domains. Much can be learned from student work, instructional materials, and other items present during both a formal and informal observation. Artifacts and evidence should be acquired and reviewed throughout the year.

The professional work of every teacher in T-TESS culminates in an annual end-of-year conference prior to the scoring of Domain 4. At this time, additional artifacts may be identified and become part of the teacher's overall appraisal.

The professional work of every teacher in T-TESS culminates in an annual end-of-year conference prior to the scoring of Domain 4.

Post-Conference

The post-conference provides teachers with opportunities to reflect on the impact of their lessons with guidance and support from the administrators or teacher leaders who conducted the observation. Results are used to inform and guide the teacher's future practices and growth.

Post-conferences are required after formal observations, must be conducted in person with teachers, and are most successful when completed shortly after the observed lesson. Appraisers prepare for the post-conference by organizing and examining the evidence obtained during the observed lesson, pre-conference, and planning process.

After an observation, appraisers should map evidence collected during the observation to the rubric and allow the evidence to drive the ratings for each dimension rather than selecting evidence to justify perceptions of the lesson. The appraiser will then prepare for the post-conference by reviewing the rubric ratings and determining which areas would have the most potential for the teacher's professional growth and the biggest benefit for student performance. Finally, the appraiser will prepare questions, evidence, examples, and recommendations to use during the post-conference.

During the post-conference (ideally, 20-30 minutes), the appraiser uses coaching questions he or she selected to guide the teacher through a discussion about an observed area of strength to reinforce and an observed area that needs improvement or refinement. The appraiser draws the teacher's attention to specific examples of teacher or student actions and statements collected during the lesson and prompts the teacher to reflect on the language from the rubric that relates to an area of reinforcement or refinement. The appraiser prepares to model and provide specific recommendations for teacher refinement, although well-facilitated post-conferences will often lead to the teacher self-identifying the area of refinement. Finally, at the end of the conference, the appraiser discusses the performance ratings derived from evidence collected during the lesson observation.
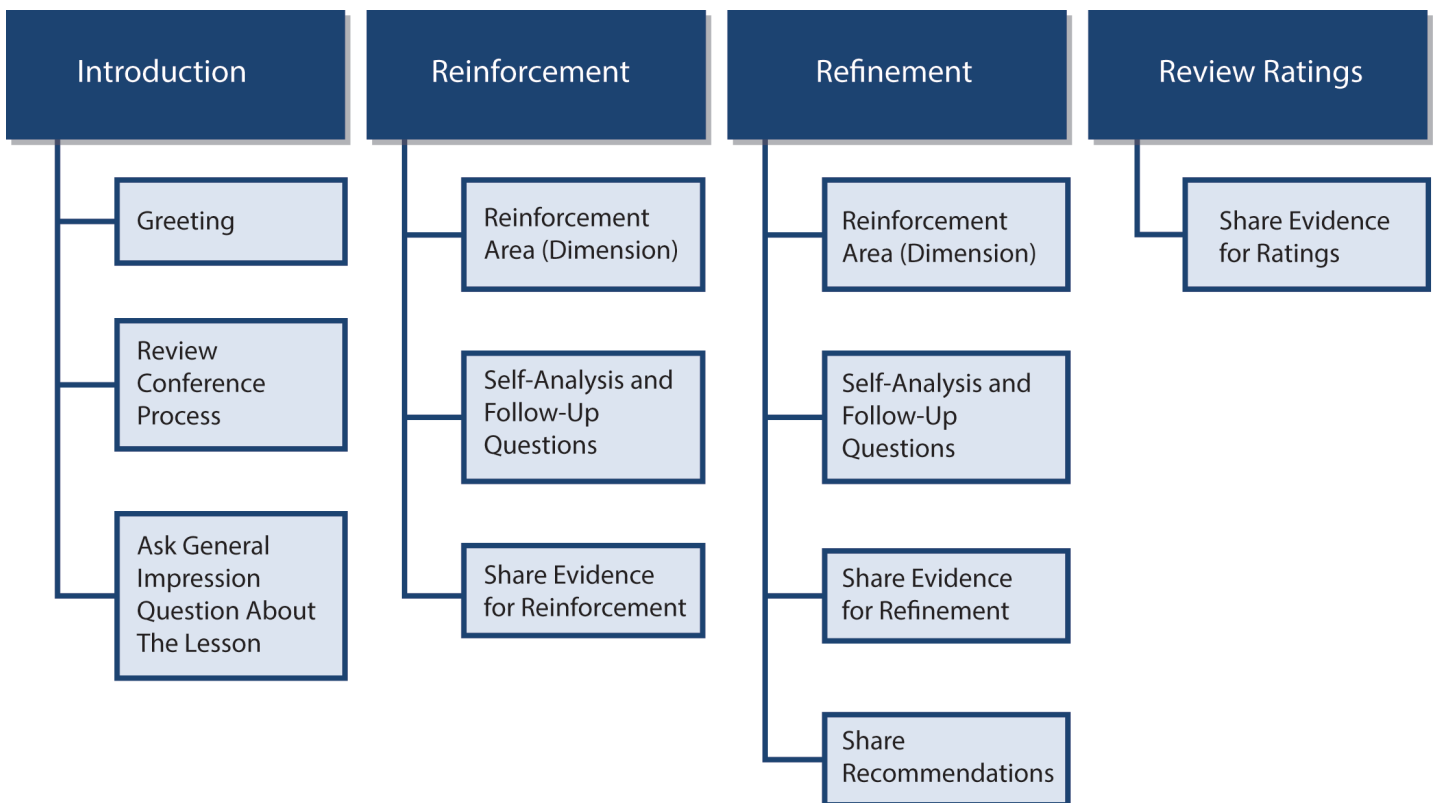
Teachers should be aware that the goal of a post-conference is to support a teacher in his or her professional growth. Teachers should be prepared to spend the post-conference time reflecting on and discussing the lesson that was observed and how it had an impact on student learning. Engaging in a collaborative discussion anchored in

> Post-conferences are in-person and required after formal observations with teachers.

the rubric can help teachers think about aspects of the lesson that worked well with the students and identify areas to reinforce or refine that result in greater instructional effectiveness. Teachers will also have an opportunity to view and discuss performance ratings on the observed lesson. For guidance, please refer to the T-TESS Post-Conference Process.

Web Portal Support
(https://teachfortexas.org/)
A post-conference training module and sample self-analysis questions are available on the T-TESS portal.

T-TESS Post-conference Process

Introduction	Reinforcement	Refinement	Review Ratings
Greeting	Reinforcement Area (Dimension)	Reinforcement Area (Dimension)	Share Evidence for Ratings
Review Conference Process	Self-Analysis and Follow-Up Questions	Self-Analysis and Follow-Up Questions	
Ask General Impression Question About The Lesson	Share Evidence for Reinforcement	Share Evidence for Refinement	
		Share Recommendations	

Performance Ratings

The T-TESS rubric contains five performance levels – Distinguished, Accomplished, Proficient, Developing, and Improvement Needed.

Appraisers anchor ratings in Proficient until the evidence pulls the rating to another level. Unlike PDAS, the Proficient performance level in T-TESS contains strong teaching practices; a campus filled with Proficient teachers is indicative of a high-functioning campus.

The teacher steering committee that developed the T-TESS rubric wanted to ensure that this rubric was a growth tool. In order for that to occur, the ceiling (Distinguished) had to be a very lofty measure that captured what all teachers strive toward but very few teachers consistently attain.

One way to conceive of the T-TESS rubric is that the practices categorized as Exceeds Expectations in PDAS are now represented in the Proficient level in T-TESS with two higher performance levels, Accomplished and Distinguished, added for growth and aspiration. Conceptually, the Accomplished and Distinguished performance levels in T-TESS capture levels of practice not formerly covered in PDAS.

> The system is most beneficial when appraisers and teachers focus on evidence-based feedback and professional development decisions based on that feedback.

> "We asked teachers to self-assess their lesson and we read through the descriptors in the Developing and Proficient columns of the rubric with them as we discussed the lesson. When doing that, the teachers better understood the rubric, better understood their own strengths and challenges, and were more accepting of how the lesson rated."
>
> Principal, Ballinger ISD

Ultimately, T-TESS is a process that seeks to develop habits of continuous improvement, and the process itself best leads to that outcome. Although performance ratings are inevitable, the system is most beneficial when appraisers and teachers focus on evidence-based feedback and professional development decisions based on that feedback.

End-of-Year Conference

The end-of-year conference is for teachers and appraisers to review the information collected throughout the year, summarize the current year, and prepare for the next year. The end-of-year conference continues to support the teacher's development and professional growth.

The end-of-the-year conference provides the opportunity for a teacher to present evidence related to his or her attainment of the professional practices and responsibilities captured in Domain 4 of the T-TESS Rubric. The teacher will present evidence towards meeting district expectations for attendance, ethics, and professional demeanor (Dimension 1); evidence of growth towards the attainment of goals (Dimension 2); and evidence of contributions towards professional development (Dimension 3) and school/community leadership with district or school colleagues, students, or community members (Dimension 4). Teachers can use provided forms for goal setting and professional development to present their evidence to their appraisers as discussion points for summarizing the year's activities that relate to Dimensions 2 and 3. The end-of-year conference is required by T-TESS and allows the teacher the opportunity to participate fully in the exploration of Domain 4, which is not scored until after the end-of-year conference is completed.

The teacher and appraiser will also use the end-of-year conference to review final

"Next year, we'll request that our teachers tie at least one of their goals to their refinement area."

Principal, Taft ISD

"I feel I should have met with principals prior to end of year conferences and give a little better guidance. Y'all sent out some great guidance, and if we would have had that earlier it would have been much better. I know next year will be much better."

Central Administration, Brownwood ISD

The end-of-year conference is required by T-TESS and allows the teacher the opportunity to participate fully in the exploration of Domain 4, which is not scored until after the end-of-year conference is completed.

observation data from the other three T-TESS rubric domains and, if applicable, review teacher/student impact data (e.g., student learning objectives, district pre- and post-tests, portfolios, etc.) as an indicator of his or her students' academic progress during the year. Finally, the teacher and appraiser will use the end-of-year conference to develop goals and professional development plans for the next school year.

Beginning of the Next School Year

The beginning of the school year is a time for teachers and appraisers to review and revise goals and professional growth plans established during the previous end-of-year conference.

With the start of a new school year, it may have been several months since teachers and appraisers had their end-of-year conference. Teachers and appraisers can use the first several weeks of the school year to review and revise any goals and professional growth plans that were considered or made during the end-of-year-conference based on new information from student growth measures or district student performance data.

Teachers and appraisers can also examine the goals and professional development plans in light of the most current information available about their teaching assignments or students enrolled in their classes for the new school year. As teachers examine student performance data on their current students, they and their appraisers can modify goals and professional development activities so

> Teachers and appraisers can review and update any goals and professional growth plans based on the most recent information available.

T-TESS

that they are best positioned to positively impact student performance during the current year. Teachers who take time for this review and adjustment will be better prepared for collaborative meetings with their colleagues about student achievement or shared lesson planning. Teachers will also be better prepared for thinking about how to design their instructional lessons for any informal observations or pre-conference discussions with appraisers.

Evaluation Management Software

The T-TESS portal includes an evaluation management software as a web-based, on-demand resource that features powerful data reporting tools and provides real-time reports used to inform evaluation results and practices based on the submission of both formal and informal observation data over the course of the year. This cumulative data includes entry and reporting fields at the teacher, appraiser, and system levels. The system generates multiple reports that are used to analyze the strengths and needs of the evaluation process and guide decision-making at the district, campus, and department levels, including inter-rater alignment and professional development connections. Teacher reports are available to communicate overall averages by rubric dimension, teacher performance levels (distinguished, accomplished, proficient, developing, improvement needed), reinforcement goals, refinement goals, and others. Numerous reports are also available at the appraiser and organizational levels to express overall averages by observer, school, subject, and other data elements.

The evaluation management software provides an at-a-glance awareness of current performance at varying levels of the organization. This information management tool assists district and campus leaders in analyzing data to identify correlations, trends, and other unique attributes as they relate to the evaluation and appraiser certification processes.

Logistics

T-TESS was designed to operate on an annual school calendar, likely initiated with appraisers and observers who passed certification exams the summer before the school year for which they will serve in the role. Therefore, principals may communicate T-TESS related information to school staff even before school starts, but most likely they will share knowledge about the system during teacher orientation held at the beginning of the year.

For example, districts can provide guidance about the pre-conference, scripting, or the goal-setting process to assist in the teacher growth and development process. Districts may even choose to highlight any steps or minimum requirements for teachers and/or their appraisers and observers. Like many district initiatives, LEAs have discretion over the procedural aspects of the system's implementation, monitoring, and reporting processes, such as where district and campus staff can go for help, to whom to direct questions, and which forms best serve district needs. Ultimately, districts are responsible for determining any additional requirements above and beyond the state's minimum guidance.

> T-TESS was designed to operate on an annual school calendar.

Depending on a district's management and administration of T-TESS, teachers may receive notice about who their observer(s) and/or appraiser(s) are before attending teacher orientation. It is important that teachers stay abreast of teacher evaluation-related information all year; there are many local decisions or logistics that may be determined to better assist teachers and leaders with the T-TESS implementation process. Teachers should learn who or where they can turn to for information and support aside from state-provided tools and resources.

Conclusion

We hope that this guidebook has been helpful as you continue your T-TESS journey to promote the professional growth of educators and, ultimately, students. Additional resources are available through the Teach for Texas portal at www.teachfortexas.org. If further assistance is needed, please contact your regional education service center T-TESS representative.