

# Professional Learning

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## T-TESS Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What is T-TESS?

T-TESS is the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System. It is the 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 was piloted by approximately 60 districts in the 2014-2015 school year, implemented as a refined system in the 2015-2016 school year in approximately 250 districts, and rolled out statewide in the 2016-2017 year.

### 2. What is the purpose of the Pre-Observation Conference?

The Pre-Observation Conference is an opportunity to collect evidence to score the Planning Domain. A recommendation is that the Pre-Observation Conference focus be on the Lesson Plan Cycle instead of a specific lesson. Conversation should focus on what considerations are taken by the teacher in planning any lesson.

### 3. Is there a required length of time for the Pre-Conference?

There is no pre-determined required length of time for the pre-observation conference.

### 4. How does T-TESS differ from PDAS?

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 accomplished and distinguished teachers often do different things than developing teachers rather than simply doing the same practices more frequently.

### **5. Is there a time requirement for the formal observation?**

The time requirement for a formal observation is a minimum of 45 minutes, however, it is highly recommended that the entire lesson cycle be observed in order to appropriately collect evidence for all the domains.

### **6. What happens if a teacher's lesson takes longer than the 45 minutes from start to finish?**

It is recommended that the entire lesson cycle be observed from beginning to end. This means that an observation may take longer than the minimum required time of 45 minutes.

### **7. During a post-observation conference, can the ratings be changed?**

Yes, the post conference provides yet another opportunity to collect evidence. If additional evidence is collected that would warrant ratings to be modified, they may be at this point.

### **8. Will post-conferences allow teachers to provide data/evidence?**

Both appraisers and teachers may provide additional evidence at a post conference. The post conference is an additional evidence collection point.

### **9. What data should be considered when setting the goals for the year?**

The T-TESS Teacher Self-Assessment and Goal Setting Form asks teachers to identify data that informs them about student needs and to identify data to inform them about their own professional growth. Standardized and non-standardized data can be considered and sample responses are provided on the goal setting form. Teachers and administrators can select any data that would be deemed appropriate to meet the needs of the campus and of the individual teacher.

### **10. What is an "artifact" in the T-TESS system and what is the purpose of artifacts?**

An artifact is any product/form/tool/data that provides evidence. The purpose of artifacts is to provide evidence about the T-TESS domains.

### **11. What if during the "window" for observation we are visited on a day students are on the assignment and the lesson was on a prior day?**

The purpose of the formal observation is to see the entire lesson cycle to include the beginning, middle, and end of the lesson. Appraisers and teachers can work collaboratively to identify the best time that the beginning, middle, and end of lesson can be observed.

## **12. How will an appraiser be able to tell if a teacher is consistent with teaching strategies?**

Consistency can be observed through walkthrough data.

## **13. Will there be walk-through observations under the T-TESS model? If so how many walk-through observations are required.**

Walk-throughs will be aligned to the T-TESS rubric and will serve as an additional method to collect evidence. Walk-throughs will occur during the 1st and 2nd semester of the school year. Additional walk-throughs and observations can be conducted at the discretion of the certified appraiser and in accordance with the Texas Education Code, §21.352(c-1).

## **14. What happens if an administrator is not able to conduct a formal observation on the date he or she designated? Will there be a need for an additional pre- observation conference?**

It is possible that an appraiser may not be able to conduct a formal observation on the designated date or time. For this reason, it is recommended that the pre- conference focus be on general lesson planning cycle and the considerations for effective lesson planning instead of on a specific lesson. This will allow the pre- conference to be relevant to any lesson observed on any day or time.

## **15. What happens if an appraiser conducts a walk through during a time when students are taking an assessment?**

Appraisers are looking to collect evidence on the entire lesson plan cycle, not just on direct teach. Assessment is part of the lesson cycle therefore observing students taking an assessment may be able to provide additional evidence.

## **16. Is there equity in the evaluation system for teachers who teach 45 minutes compared to those who teach 90?**

T-TESS recommends that the entire lesson cycle be observed including the beginning, middle, and end. Observing the entire lesson cycle ensures equity for all teachers regardless of the length of the class period.

## **17. Where can I find more information about the T-TESS model?**

Texas Education Agency: <http://tea.texas.gov/>

Teach for Texas Portal: <https://teachfortexas.org/>

Region Four ESC: <http://www.esc4.net/>

Katy ISD Professional Learning: <http://www.katyisd.org/dept/prolearn/Pages/default.aspx>

### **18. Can we request a second observation under the T-TESS model?**

Processes and polices for requesting a second observation will remain the same.

### **19. How will scores be calculated for teachers?**

Each of the 16 domains will receive an individual score.

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