

TEACHER EVALUATION IN TENNESSEE

A Report on Year 2 Implementation



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2010, Tennessee's General Assembly passed an ambitious set of education reforms in the landmark First to the Top Act. This act became the centerpiece of the state's strategic plan to significantly improve its public education system and increase the state's academic results. A key provision of the legislation was the state's commitment to design, field-test, and implement a new system for evaluating teachers using multiple measures and with a specific emphasis on student academic achievement.

Since that time, Tennessee has implemented a new multiple-measure teacher evaluation system in accordance with its original timeline. The process began in 2010–11 with the appointment of a statewide advisory committee to oversee the design and field-testing of a new evaluation system. After this initial design and pilot phase, the system, TEAM (Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model) was fully implemented across the state in the 2011–12 school year. Both during and following the first year of implementation, the state made important adjustments based on feedback and analysis. In July 2012, the Tennessee Department of Education issued a report on the first year of implementation as part of a commitment to ensure that the evaluation system was studied and modified based on stakeholder input, external and internal study, and detailed data analyses. The feedback and analysis process continued into the second full year of implementation in 2012–13, and this report is reflective of this commitment.

Changes to Teacher Evaluation for 2012–13

As a result of studying the first year of implementation, Tennessee made several key changes in advance of the 2012–13 school year to improve the overall evaluation system. This report details the results of these key changes, which are outlined below.

- **Changes to school-wide growth scores.**
- **Inclusion of students with disabilities in individual teacher value-added scores.**
- **Legislative change for teachers who receive the highest scores on student growth.**
- **Differentiation in the allocation of time spent conducting classroom observations.**
- **Increased district flexibility through approval of more than 40 plans to further customize the state evaluation model.**

The changes implemented in 2012–13 were all recommendations included in the Year 1 evaluation report. It is our belief that they helped make the evaluation system better and improved teacher support of the system. However, we remain committed to making adjustments every year to improve the system and facilitate constructive feedback and support for instruction.

Implementation in 2012–13

By virtually any objective measure, during the 2012–13 school year teacher evaluation was significantly improved from the initial 2011–12 school year. Measurable improvements included:

- Teachers' perceptions of the evaluation system improved across every major indicator including perceptions of fairness, accuracy, and positive impact on student achievement.
- Administrator perceptions improved significantly across the same areas.
- Observation scores, while still high, had a stronger relationship with student achievement indicators.

- The percentage of teachers who received individual growth metrics increased by 20 percentage points.
- Struggling observers (those with high rates of misalignment between teacher effect and observation scores) from Year 1 improved significantly in Year 2 when provided with targeted coaching.
- Extensive piloting of the Tripod student perception survey showed promising results, leading to increased use in districts across the state for the 2013-14 school year.
- More than 40 school districts implemented approved modifications to the state evaluation model in an effort to better meet local needs.

It is reasonable to say that teacher evaluation—while still challenging—moved from being the central conversation piece in public education in Tennessee in 2011–12 to being one key piece of a broader effort to support and develop teachers in 2012–13.

Changes for 2013–14 and Areas for Continued Growth

While implementation in Year 2 was significantly improved from Year 1, we continue to see opportunities to further refine and advance Tennessee’s teacher evaluation system. To this end, we have made additional changes for the 2013–14 school year, and have plans for continued study.

Changes made for 2013-14 include the following:

- A more comprehensive and rigorous certification exam is now required for all evaluators.
- The number of evaluation “coaches” working in the department’s regional field offices has increased, and the focus of their work has broadened to include regional and district support.
- The instructional rubric has been revised to better reflect the language and shifts required for successful implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).
- A new model for assessing growth for World Language teachers was approved in the summer of 2013. This model is similar in form to the previously approved Fine Arts model and is now an option for use in all districts.
- Significantly more districts are using student surveys as part of the formal evaluation system, comprising 5 percent of the overall score. In addition, the Achievement School District was approved this past August to use student surveys for 15 percent of the overall score for tested teachers and 25 percent for non-tested teachers.

There are also a number of areas where we will continue to study and learn in the 2013-14 school year related to both the evaluation system itself and related practices.

- Districts are increasingly identifying and implementing more nuanced, promising practices associated with evaluation and development, including co-observations, matching teachers for coaching and support based on results, and identifying high-performing teachers for additional leadership activities and roles.
- Nearly 150 wide-angle video cameras will be used in schools and districts throughout the state during the 2013–14 school year to support evaluation and development practices. The cameras can be used for a variety of purposes, but most commonly will be used by teachers to record their lessons for use in self-reflection.
- In its current form, the 15 percent student achievement component continues to pose challenges in selection, scaling, and scoring. We will study these challenges further during the 2013-14 school year and explore potential solutions in collaboration with educators.
- Through the first two years of teacher evaluation, the role of the principal has become more focused on supporting targeted, continuous learning and instructional improvement for all teachers. A

revised principal evaluation model is being piloted this year and will be implemented statewide in 2014–15 to better reflect this increased focus on instruction and development.

As with previous years, we will continue to measure progress and will make changes prior to the 2014–15 school year based on feedback and study of evaluation data. This ongoing review and refinement is important to the continuous improvement of the system over time.

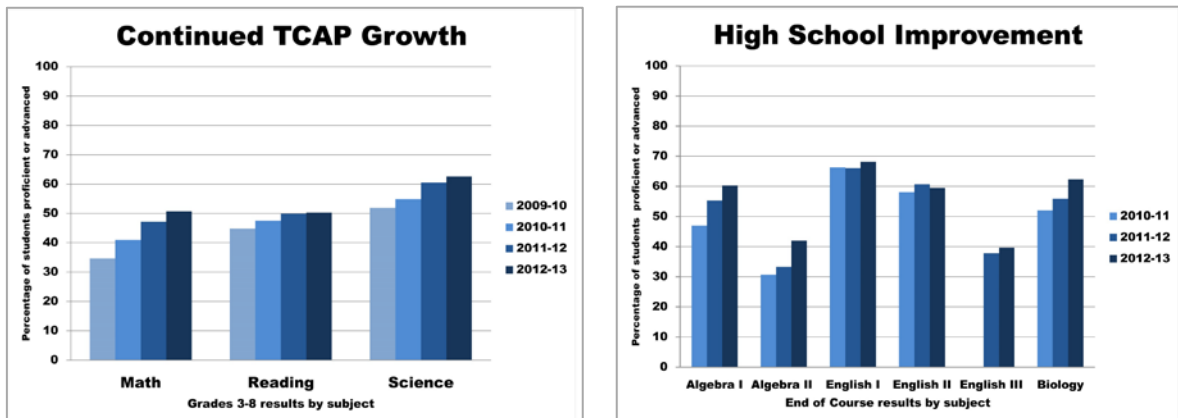
Tennessee Results

While the bulk of this report focuses on the specific details of Tennessee’s teacher evaluation system and the evolution of the system as it moves from its second to its third year of implementation, it is important to ask the question: does it work?

At the risk of providing simply more fodder for national education debates, we will provide evidence to support the position that the teacher evaluation system has made a significant positive impact on education outcomes in Tennessee. Correlation is not causation, and evaluation is not the only driver of the results below. Nonetheless, evaluation has played a significant role in improving results for students.

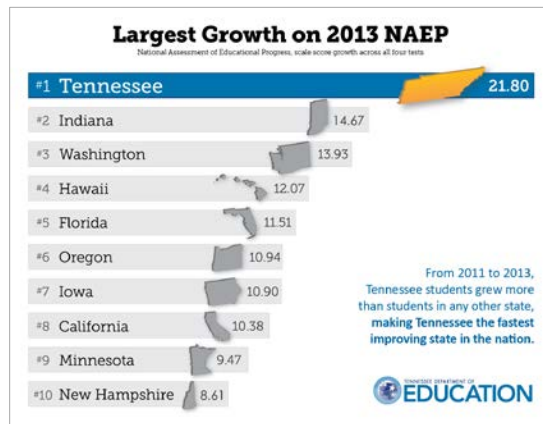
State Test Results

Since the end of the 2010–11 school year, Tennessee students have improved in every major subject area and grade level on state assessments. The following are the state’s recent gains in different subject areas:

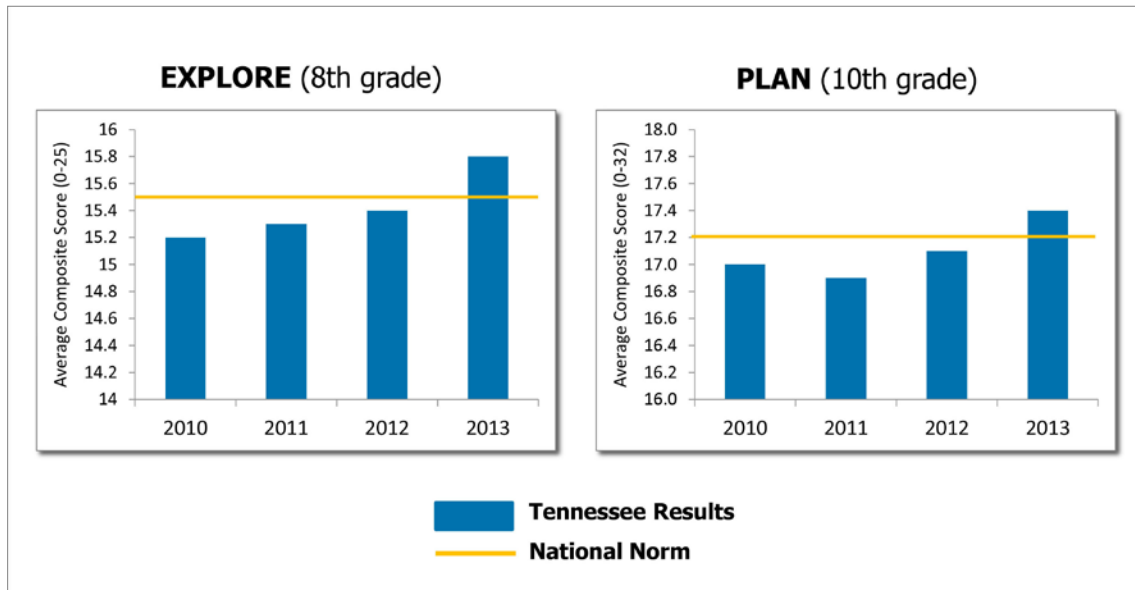


National Test Results

Comparing growth across different state assessments is an impossible task, so it is also important to look at national assessments to see whether students have learned more. According to the 2013 **National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP)** results, Tennessee students grew more than any other state in the nation on all four areas measured by NAEP.



Tennessee students also take the ACT battery of assessments in 8th, 10th, 11th grades. These assessments are nationally normed and show significant progress in 8th and 10th grades, though less progress for last year's 12th graders:



In essence, while Tennessee's high school seniors continued to struggle against college-ready standards, younger students made significant progress over the course of the last two years. Again, while this is not conclusive evidence of the success of the state teacher evaluation model, it is evidence of significant student growth during the first two years of implementation against national norms.

Teacher Work Perceptions

As part of Tennessee's Race to the Top grant, the state administered the TELL (Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning) survey in 2011 and 2013 to teachers across the state. Over 60,000 Tennessee teachers took the survey in 2013, weighing in on a variety of work conditions. While TELL does not endeavor to measure morale of teachers, it does ask specific questions about the work conditions most closely correlated with teacher success. As such, it is considered an excellent indicator of working conditions for teachers, and of the strength of local leaders in building environments conducive to student growth.

Tennessee’s TELL results from 2013 tell an interesting story on two fronts. First, they show significant improvement over a two-year arc. More teachers feel supported across virtually all of the measured areas in 2013 compared to two years prior. In short, in spite of—or perhaps because of—the significant challenge of implementing a major evaluation overhaul, local district and school leaders have created stronger environments for teachers to succeed.

Second, Tennessee teacher perceptions of their workplace are actually more positive than their peers in other measured states. The New Teacher Center released a [report](#) tracking the TELL results of the nine states that have given the survey to all teachers at least twice, and Tennessee teachers gave more positive ratings to their work conditions than their peers in other states.

Survey questions about evaluation itself are more nuanced, and this report details the answers across multiple survey instruments. However, in light of the significant anxieties of implementing a teacher evaluation model, it is important to ask whether work conditions – beyond perception of the evaluation instrument – have improved or declined during the implementation phase. The answer is plain: they have improved.

TNCRED

In addition to the TELL survey, for the past two years, the Tennessee Consortium for Research, Evaluation, and Development (TNCRED) has surveyed teachers and administrators across Tennessee about their perceptions of the TDOE’s Race to the Top initiatives. The results from the 2012–13 survey were released in fall of 2013 ([here](#)), and the findings offer several important themes and lessons as the state enters the third year of its statewide teacher evaluation system. Below are some of the major takeaways from the results:

- Teachers’ perceptions of the evaluation system have grown far more positive over the past year, although there is still considerable room for improvement.
- Teachers and evaluators are increasingly seeing the evaluation process as a tool for improving teaching and learning across the state, with more than half of respondents reporting that teacher evaluation will improve teaching in their schools.
- Teachers in districts that chose to adopt district-specific observation models look more positively on the evaluation process than those that use the state-provided model, although it is hard to know whether this is a cause or outcome of the alternative system.
- More than 90 percent of teacher evaluators felt adequately prepared to carry out all aspects of teacher evaluation in 2013, up from three-quarters of evaluators in 2012.
- Teachers who viewed the evaluation process as focused on improving teaching tended to engage with the system to a far greater extent than teachers who saw the process as one aimed only at judging their performance.

In sum, the survey shows that Tennessee teachers are feeling increasingly more positive about the teacher evaluation system. Specifically, survey results show 20 to 30 point increases over the past year in the percent of teachers that attest to a growing comfort with the evaluation of their work. In particular, it is useful to see that more than two-thirds of teachers now feel that the process of teacher evaluation treats them fairly, since one of the primary concerns with the system centered on the potential for biased evaluations.

At the same time, the positive increases in teacher opinions about evaluation over the past year should not hide the fact that nearly half of Tennessee teachers still feel some dissatisfaction with the system. If teacher evaluation is truly to become a central element of the professional culture in Tennessee, the

system will need to continue to improve in ways that produce greater satisfaction from all teachers within the system. We look forward to continuing to partner with districts, schools, and teachers to make necessary enhancements and adjustments to the evaluation system.

Conclusion

Tennessee is in the middle of a journey to improve systems to ensure that they are providing quality, timely feedback to teachers, providing summative evaluations of their performance in a way that is fair, driving the development of instruction, and improving student outcomes. We began this journey because our previous system did not work. Teachers were evaluated twice every 10 years, they generally received the highest rating in the system, and student performance did not play a role in the scoring or targeting of development. Now two years into our new evaluation system, we see clear indications that the system itself is improving rapidly. Most importantly, we see encouraging signs that students are learning more, and that Tennessee is making progress to move itself from the bottom of the national performance curve and provide the education that our students and their families expect and deserve.

INTRODUCTION

The 2012–13 school year was the second full year that Tennessee implemented a comprehensive, multiple-measure, student outcomes-based, educator evaluation system. Implementation was a key tenet of Tennessee’s First to the Top Act, adopted by the General Assembly with bipartisan support during 2010’s extraordinary session under the backdrop of the federal Race to the Top competition.

The act was a precursor to the state’s successful Race to the Top application in the spring of 2010, which resulted in an award of \$501 million to improve educational offerings and student outcomes through a core set of reforms. Teacher evaluation was a foundational component of the state’s plan, and resulted in the creation of the Teacher Evaluation Advisory Committee. This group of diverse stakeholders, appointed by then Governor Bredesen, guided the design and pilot phase of the state’s new system during the 2010–11 school year. The committee’s work culminated in a policy recommendation to the State Board of Education, which laid the framework for local implementation in 2011–12.

During 2011–12, the first year of implementation, the Tennessee Department of Education invested heavily in helping districts implement with fidelity and gathering feedback on the system. The emphasis on systematized learning during the first year of implementation yielded valuable knowledge and led to policy and system enhancements. Most importantly, Tennessee saw improvement in the most critical area – student outcomes. Test scores in Tennessee improved at a faster rate in 2011–12 than any previously measured year.

After the 2011–12 school year, the Tennessee Department of Education [released a report](#) detailing the results and lessons learned from the first year of implementation, along with recommendations for future policy and legislative changes. The following report takes up where the Year 1 report left off, providing an overview of 2012–13 results, including student outcomes and teacher evaluation data, a retrospective look at implementation of the policy changes outlined in last year’s report, and an outline for future areas of study related to teacher evaluation in Tennessee.

CHANGES TO TEACHER EVALUATION DURING 2012–13

Throughout the 2011–12 school year the Tennessee Department of Education committed to collecting feedback from educators across Tennessee in an effort to adjust and improve the evaluation system. During the summer of 2012, the report on Year 1 implementation was released, which included proposed policy and legislative changes in response to the feedback and first year data. Throughout the 2012–13 school year, work was done to implement the following changes as outlined in the Year 1 report.

- **Changes to school-wide growth scores.** The General Assembly unanimously passed legislation, on the TDOE's recommendation, changing the weighting of school-wide TVAAS from 35 percent of a teacher's evaluation score to 25 percent. This change was applied to results from the 2012–13 school year. The recommendation for this change was based on feedback from both teachers and principals who valued the culture-building effect of school-wide growth, but had concerns about the size of the impact on overall levels of effectiveness for teachers in both low- and high-growth schools. The reduction in weight has alleviated some of this concern for educators who currently do not have individual growth scores. However, the department remains committed to expanding access to individual growth scores where feasible, appropriate, and where measures can be developed that support student learning.

Additionally, based on educator feedback in Year 1 and collaboration with SAS®, our value-added partner, school-wide value-added scores were based on a one-year score rather than a three-year score in 2012–13. While it makes sense, where possible, to use three-year scores for individuals because of smaller sample sizes, school-wide scores can and should be based on one-year data.

- **Included students with disabilities in individual teacher value-add data.** Under prior statute, special education students were barred from inclusion in individual teacher growth scores. This sent the message that students with disabilities cannot achieve, and it also limited the number of teachers able to receive their own individual growth scores. Research conducted prior to the statutory change showed that for more than 97 percent of teachers, growth scores would not change based upon the inclusion of students with disabilities. For the minority of teachers who would have seen a change based on the inclusion of students with disabilities, an equal number would have improved scores as would have seen a decline in scores.

This change was applied to student results in the 2012–13 school year. As evidenced by ongoing communications with teachers and districts, the response to this change, especially for teachers in inclusion settings, was overwhelmingly positive. Many teachers sent emails to the assessment and evaluation teams expressing appreciation that they would now receive credit for the growth shown by all of their students. Approximately 3,000 additional educators received individual growth scores as a result of this change. Most importantly, as the state continues to prepare for the widespread implementation of Response to Instruction and Intervention, this change reinforces the shared responsibility of both special education and general education teachers to ensure all students are learning at high levels every year.

- **Legislative change for teachers who receive the highest score on student growth.** Under legislation passed in the 2013 session of the General Assembly, a district may choose to allow teachers who earn a 4 or a 5 on individual growth to use this score for 100 percent of their overall evaluation, if it would result in a higher overall rating. While multiple measures are critical to providing a full picture of a teacher's performance each year, ultimately the most important responsibility is helping students grow academically every year. This legislative change was made to ensure that teachers who are growing students at high levels have their success reflected in the overall evaluation score. While only a very small number of teachers saw their evaluation score increase as a result of this change, it allows additional discretion to districts and teachers in recognizing and rewarding student growth.

- ***Differentiated classroom observations requirements so teachers who earned a Level 1 (overall or on individual growth) received more feedback.*** Throughout the 2012–13 school year, teachers who received a 1 were formally observed a minimum of four times throughout the year, receiving the same amount of feedback as novice teachers in an effort to improve their performance. Additionally, a new expectation was introduced to conduct coaching conversation with teachers who received a 1 prior to the first observation to discuss strategies and supports to improve results for students. This change was in direct response to feedback from school leaders who felt they should spend more time with their struggling teachers and less time with their most effective educators. In order to allow time for school leaders to perform additional observations of teachers in need of more support, fewer observations are required now for educators who earned a 5 on their overall level of effectiveness or on individual growth. This change facilitates differentiation and support for teachers and ensures that practices are in place to help teachers who are struggling, while being cognizant of the limits on school leaders' time.
- ***Increased district flexibility through approval of more than 40 plans to modify the state evaluation model.*** Districts were given the opportunity to submit plans for approval as long as they met the minimum requirements outlined in state law. Nearly one-third of Tennessee districts made slight adjustments to customize the evaluation model to meet local needs. These changes took many forms, but were primarily focused on the specific scope and sequence of observations, introduction of additional unannounced visits, or other process adjustments tailored to local priorities, goals and needs. As will be discussed in the review of educator perceptions later in the report, we believe that the ability to make active choices regarding the form and function of evaluation is important for increasing the satisfaction with and utility of the system at the district and school level.
- ***Introduced new growth score options to provide more teachers with the option to earn individual growth scores.*** More than 12,000 additional teachers received individual growth scores in 2012–13 compared to 2011–12. This increased the population of teachers with individual growth data from just over 30 percent to just over 50 percent with potential for additional expansion in 2013–14. All approved, alternate growth measures are optional for districts. This is to ensure that districts are able to select approved measures that they feel can be implemented with appropriate support and fidelity, and that are consistent with local goals and priorities. It is interesting to note, however, that if all districts elected to use all approved measures, more than 65 percent of teachers would be eligible to receive individual growth scores. Recently approved growth measures have taken multiple forms, ranging from more traditional assessments that yield TVAAS scores, to rigorous, peer-reviewed portfolio models of student work, to focused school-wide measures that include only a specific subset of students, like Career and Technical Education student concentrators.

Combined with other modifications outlined in the Year 1 report, we believe that the changes discussed above strengthened implementation in 2012–13 and demonstrated responsiveness to feedback that is integral to continuous improvement efforts.

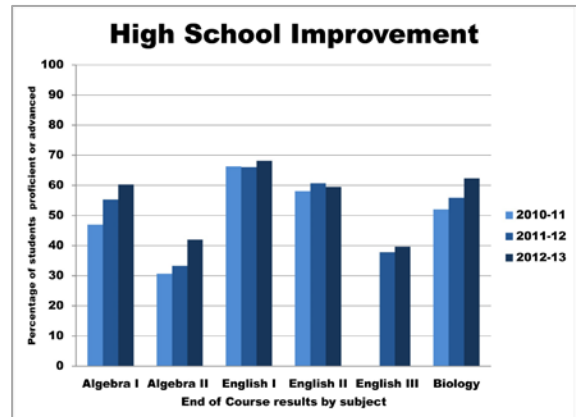
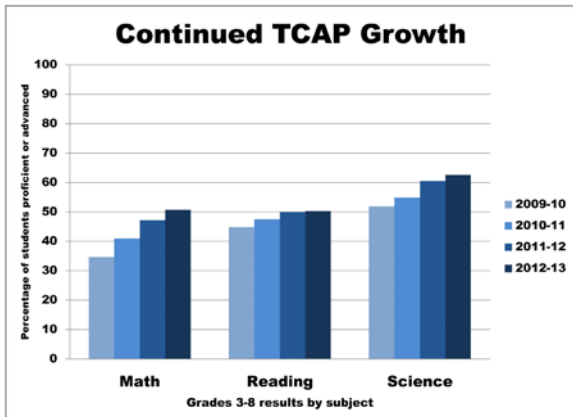
RESULTS FROM 2012–13

Student Results

As the evaluation system continued to improve during the 2012–13 school year, so did results for students in Tennessee. The high rate of student growth seen in the 2011–12 school year continued in 2012–13, as students in Tennessee grew notably across a variety of state and national assessments.

- Nearly 91,000 additional students are at or above grade level in all math subjects now, as compared to 2010 (73,400 in 3–8 math, 7,800 in Algebra I, and 9,800 in Algebra II).
- Nearly 52,000 additional students are at or above grade level in all science subjects, as compared to 2010 (50,100 in 3–8 science, 1,600 in biology).
- Economically disadvantaged students (those who receive free or reduced-price lunch) grew at a faster rate in 2013 than their peers.
- Some gaps between black, Hispanic and Native American students and their peers also decreased.
- More than 10,000 additional students took the regular TCAP in 2013 instead of a modified special education assessment, in an effort to increase rigor for all students.
- TCAP results also showed strong growth in STEM subjects over 2012 scores, with proficiency percentages up by 8.7 points in Algebra II, 6.4 points in biology, and 5 points in Algebra I.

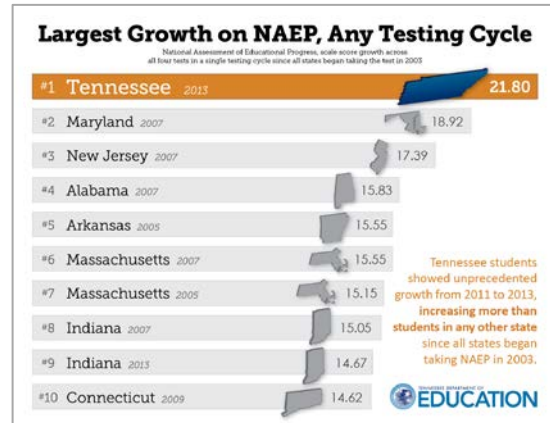
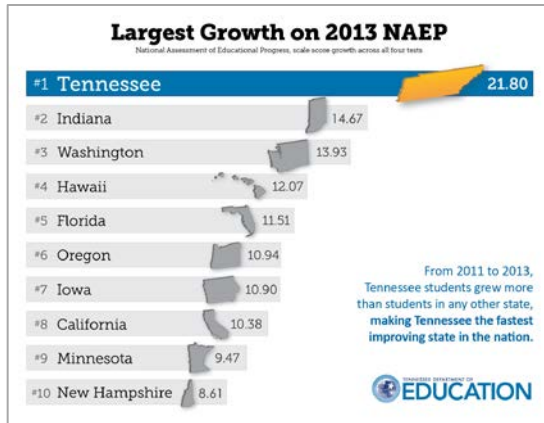
For the first time since the state implemented more rigorous standards in 2009, more than half of all students in grades 3–8 are on grade level in every TCAP Achievement subject, reaching higher levels of proficiency in 2013 on 22 of 24 tested subjects than in 2012. High school students also increased in proficiency, showing gains on six out of seven End of Course exams. Despite higher standards, students have demonstrated growth on the assessments for three consecutive years.



Tennessee students were also the fastest improving in the nation on the 2013 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP). In fact, the growth Tennessee students achieved in a single testing cycle, from 2011 to 2013, is the most growth any state has ever made on NAEP since all 50 states began taking the test.

- Tennessee moved from 46th in the nation in fourth-grade math to 37th, and from 41st in fourth-grade reading to 31st.

- These gains were made while significantly increasing the number of special education students who took NAEP.
- After years of ranking in the 40s on NAEP results, Tennessee is now within sight of the national average for three of the four tests.



Teacher Results

While student outcomes improved significantly in 2012–13, it is important to recognize that teacher experiences and perceptions of the evaluation system also improved. Using a variety of surveys, as well as anecdotal feedback, teachers feel more positive and are receiving more support.

Working Conditions

The TELL (Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning) survey is a nationally recognized working conditions and climate survey that has been used with more than one million educators across 20 states since 2008. Tennessee’s survey results from 2013 tell an interesting story on two fronts. First, they show significant improvement over a two-year period that included a great deal of change. More teachers feel supported across virtually all of measured areas in 2013 compared with two years prior. In spite of—or perhaps because of—implementation of a major evaluation overhaul, local district and school leaders have created more supportive environments for teachers to receive feedback and focus on instruction.

Second, Tennessee teacher perceptions of their workplace are actually more positive than their peers in other measured states. The New Teacher Center released [a report](#) tracking the TELL results of the nine states that have given the survey, and Tennessee teachers gave more positive ratings to their work conditions than their peers in other states. This is true across multiple categories of questions. Most notably, Tennessee teachers indicate that they are more likely than their peers in other states to be encouraged to try new things to improve instruction, to have their time protected from duties that interfere with teaching, and to experience professional development that is differentiated to their individual needs. These viewpoints, expressed by more than 61,000 Tennessee educators are an uplifting testament to the work being done in schools across the state to ensure conditions that support high-quality teaching and learning.

TNCRED

In addition to the TELL survey, for the past two years, the Tennessee Consortium for Research, Evaluation, and Development (TNCRED) has surveyed Tennessee teachers and administrators about their perceptions of the TDOE's Race to the Top initiatives. The results from the 2012–13 survey were released in fall of 2013 ([here](#)), and the findings offer several important themes and lessons as the state enters the third year of its statewide teacher evaluation system. Below are some of the major takeaways from the results:

- Teachers' perceptions of the evaluation system have grown far more positive over the past year, although there is still considerable room for improvement.
- Teachers and evaluators are increasingly seeing the evaluation process as a tool for improving teaching and learning across the state, with more than half of respondents reporting that teacher evaluation will improve teaching in their schools.
- Teachers in districts that chose to adopt district-specific observation models look more positively on the evaluation process than those who use the state-provided model, although it is hard to know whether this is a cause or outcome of the alternative system.
- More than 90 percent of teacher evaluators felt adequately prepared to carry out all aspects of teacher evaluation in 2013, up from three-quarters of evaluators in 2012.
- Teachers who viewed the evaluation process as focused on improving teaching tended to engage with the system to a far greater extent than teachers who saw the process as one aimed only at judging their performance.

In sum, the survey shows that Tennessee teachers are feeling increasingly more positive about the teacher evaluation system. Specifically, survey results show 20–30 point increases over the past year in the percent of teachers who attest to a growing comfort with the evaluation of their work. In particular, it is useful to see that more than two-thirds of teachers now feel that the process of teacher evaluation treats them fairly, since one of the primary concerns with the system was centered on the potential for biased evaluations.

A second major theme that emerges from the TNCRED survey is that there is growing evidence that the evaluation system is being viewed and used as a tool for improving teaching. In 2012, only around one-third of teachers believed that the feedback they were receiving from teacher evaluation was more focused on helping them to improve than making a judgment about their performance. By 2013, nearly half of teachers agreed with this statement.

Equally important, slightly more than half of survey respondents agreed that the overall teacher evaluation process would improve their teaching, and more than 40 percent agreed that the process would improve student achievement. Both rates increased by around 15 percentage points from the previous year. Interestingly, TNCRED finds that there is little difference in these responses by teachers' final 2012 evaluation rating. In other words, both teachers who were rated as most effective and teachers who were rated as least effective were equally likely to believe the process might lead to better teaching.

At the same time, the positive increases in teacher opinions about evaluation over the past year should not hide the fact that nearly half of Tennessee teachers still feel some dissatisfaction with the system. If teacher evaluation is truly to become a central element of the professional culture in Tennessee, the system will need to continue to improve in ways that produce greater satisfaction from all teachers

within the system. We look forward to continuing to partner with districts, schools, and teachers to make necessary enhancements and adjustments to the evaluation system.

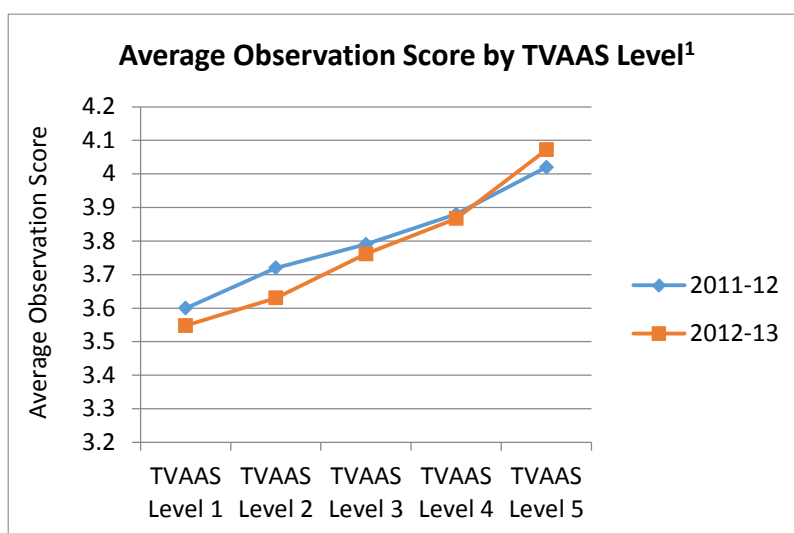
Evaluation Results

The second year of implementation produced observation distributions that were similar to the first year of implementation. The observation distribution in districts using the TEAM model was remarkably consistent between the first year and second year of implementation. The total percentage of teachers identified in the top two levels of effectiveness remained nearly identical, while there was a small increase in year two in the percentage of teachers identified in the bottom two levels of effectiveness.

TEAM 2012–13	Percent 1s	Percent 2s	Percent 3s	Percent 4s	Percent 5s
Observation	0.3	3.0	22.2	44.7	29.9
Individual TVAAS	16.8	9.6	25.8	11.5	36.3
TEAM 2011–12	Percent 1s	Percent 2s	Percent 3s	Percent 4s	Percent 5s
Observation	0.2	2.2	21.5	53.0	23.2
Individual TVAAS	16.5	8.1	24.5	11.9	39.1

There remains a notable discrepancy in distribution between individual growth scores and observation scores at the state level. However, it is important to note that in the 2012–13 school year the TVAAS average was 3.43 and the observation average on the instruction domain was a 3.78. While there is a gap between the instruction domain average and TVAAS, when teachers who scored a 1 on TVAAS are removed, the gap closes almost entirely. This indicates that, in general, observers are quite accurate in their observations of teachers who are at or above expectations in student growth, but continue to struggle to provide constructive feedback to teachers with low student growth.

A similar picture is seen when examining the average teacher observation score by TVAAS level. The chart below shows that even as observation scores are higher than expected for teachers who earn lower scores on TVAAS, observers are still differentiating between high, middle and low performers. This results in observation scores that are correlated with student growth. Furthermore, our data shows that this relationship strengthened between the 2011–12 and 2012–13 school year.



¹ This graph reflects on teachers who earned individual TVAAS scores.

Accurate observation is critical in order to understand which teachers need support in which areas, and is the first step to providing targeted, actionable feedback on instruction.

For evaluation to effectively serve as a tool to support and develop teachers, the system must accomplish two things simultaneously: accurately identify the most effective teachers and those in need of additional support, and provide actionable feedback to all teachers about how they can improve their practice. TVAAS provides a method by which we can identify which teachers are achieving academic results with students that are above expectations, at expectations, and below expectations. Observations are designed to identify and provide information that teachers can use to hone practices that are most effective in improving student learning. While one would not expect that the relationship between observation and TVAAS to be perfectly aligned, the two measures do work in tandem, and a strong relationship lends credibility to the accuracy of observation data.

The relationship between student growth and teacher observation is important in producing observation data that is reliable and useful in making a host of other decisions such as individualized professional development opportunities, selection of teacher leaders, and staffing assignments. Prior to the 2011–12 school year, nearly all educators received the highest ratings on observations regardless of student learning. While there is still much room to improve the relationship between student growth and observation, results continue to show that teachers are receiving better, more accurate feedback than they were prior to the 2011–12, and that evaluators are doing a good job of differentiating performance, especially for teachers achieving mid- to high-level growth results.

Alternate Models

An additional finding from the TNCREC survey shows more positive responses from teachers in the 18 districts using alternative teacher observation rubrics than from teachers in districts that use the state-developed TEAM rubric. In 2012–13, the list of approved alternate models included:

- Project COACH: used in four districts in the southeast area of the state
- Teacher Effectiveness Measure (TEM): used in Memphis City Schools
- Teacher Instructional Growth for Effectiveness and Results (TIGER): used in 12 independent school districts throughout the state

Each model uses a different observation rubric and a unique observation process, although all models must meet statutory and policy requirements and use the same overall evaluation components: 50 percent observation, 35 percent student growth, 15 percent student achievement for teachers with individual growth data; 60 percent observation, 25 percent student growth and 15 percent student achievement for teachers without individual growth data.

Despite rubric differences across models, all models address similar domains of practice. There is greater divergence in application and process. TIGER emphasizes growth over the course of the year, which is reflected in how scores are calculated. COACH puts an emphasis on more frequent, shorter walkthroughs over the course of the year, as opposed to fewer, lesson-length observations. TEM includes student survey data as 5 percent of the observation score.

To better understand promising practices and other takeaways associated with alternate observation systems within Tennessee, the department has partnered with the RAND research corporation to study the multiple systems being used across the state and draw lessons that might inform future decisions related to TEAM.

Across all districts and models, evaluation implementation tends to be more positive when the district has actively embraced the system. As evidenced in the TNCREC survey results that show greater satisfaction in districts using alternate models, choice at the district level appears to strengthen satisfaction and confidence with school leaders and teachers. While any number of factors may contribute to this finding, it seems that by virtue of making an active choice to select and implement a given model, districts generate greater ownership and buy-in of the evaluation system and practices.

Consequently, districts using the TEAM model are encouraged to take advantage of existing flexibility to tailor evaluation practices to local needs and context. More than 70 districts have indicated in 2013–14 that they are tailoring evaluation practices in their district by using multiple observers for observations, sequencing observations in a specific manner, conducting video observations, implementing evaluation-based mentoring programs, and implementing a host of other flexible, allowable practices.

As districts and school leaders continue to identify additional ways that evaluation can be adapted for use in their schools and districts, we expect teacher satisfaction and the impact on instruction and student outcomes to also increase.

ENHANCEMENTS FOR THE 2013–14 SCHOOL YEAR

While implementation in Year 2 was significantly improved from Year 1, we continue to see opportunities to improve Tennessee’s teacher evaluation system. To that end, we have made some additional changes for the 2013–14 school year.

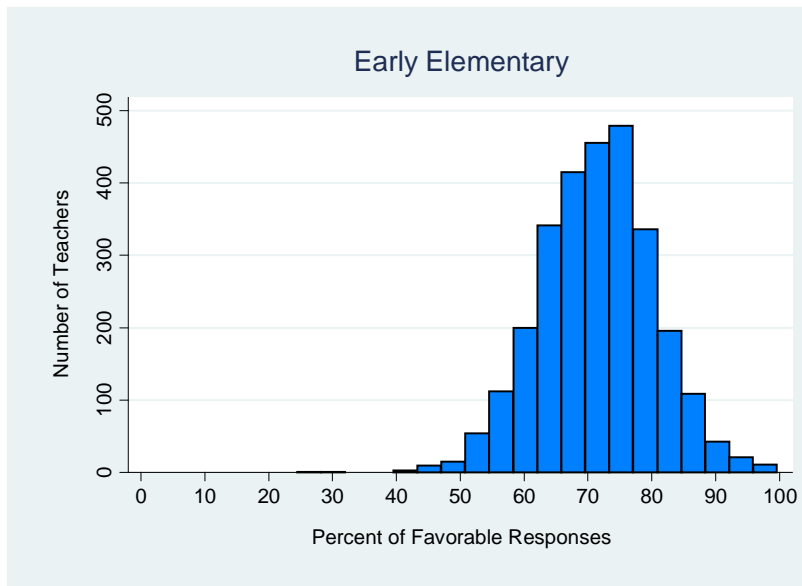
Incorporate student surveys into overall evaluation scores

For the 2013–14 school year, significantly more districts are using student surveys as part of the formal evaluation system. Last year, only one district (Memphis City Schools) used student surveys as 5 percent of its evaluation system. However, an additional 17 districts piloted the survey without counting results in the spring of 2013. This year, 19 districts, representing nearly a quarter of teachers in Tennessee, will use student surveys as a formal part of the evaluation model. Additionally, the Achievement School District was approved this past August to use a new, alternate evaluation model, in which student surveys will comprise 15 percent of the overall evaluation score for tested teachers and 25 percent for non-tested teachers.

Based on the recent [MET findings](#), student perception surveys represent an exciting, new way to assess classroom instructional practice and provide individualized feedback to teachers. To state the obvious, students spend more time with teachers than anyone else. And when questions are carefully constructed to address a teacher’s instructional practice rather than popularity, student surveys have been shown to be as predictive of student growth as principal observations.

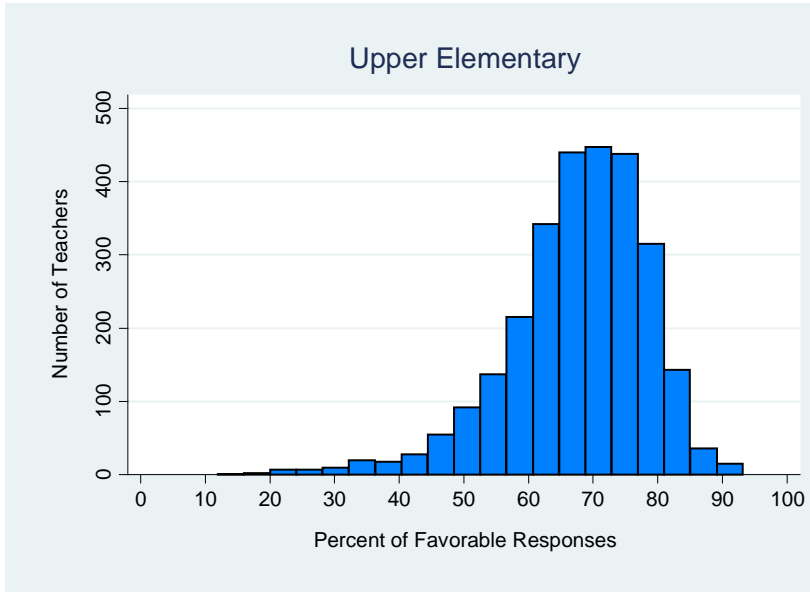
During the spring of 2013, more than 192,000 students in 323 schools across 17 districts in the state took the Tripod student perception survey. These surveys provided feedback to more than 10,000 teachers. The spring 2013 pilot administration included three levels of the Tripod Survey: early elementary (covering grades K–2), upper elementary (3–5), and secondary (6–12). The distributions shown below are a distribution of favorability ratings, or the percent of favorable responses received by each teacher who participated in the spring 2013 pilot.

Early Elementary Distribution



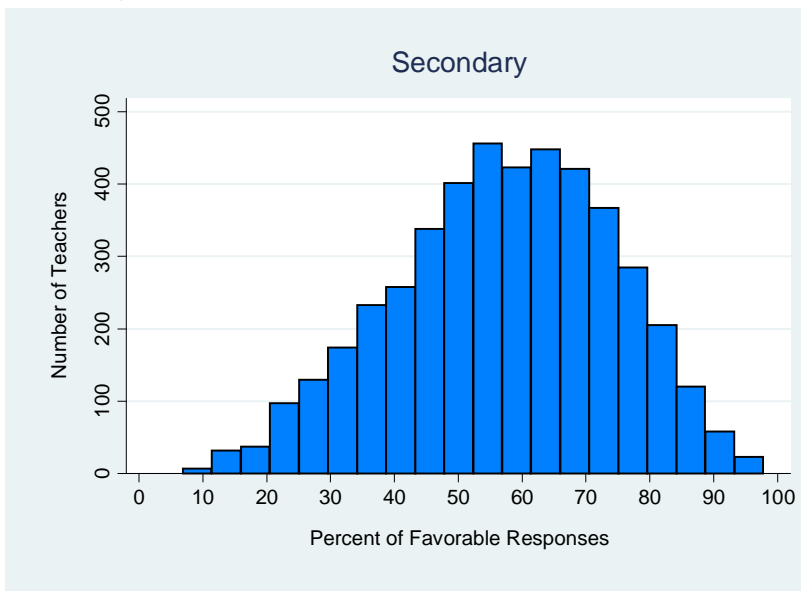
The early elementary distribution is tightly clustered in the middle and very positive. It does show differentiation between the top and bottom performing teachers. There is a relationship between survey responses and both student growth and observations.

Upper Elementary Distribution



The distribution of the upper elementary version of the survey is similar to the early elementary version with a tightly clustered middle. There is a stronger differentiation between the top and the bottom, especially at the lower end of the distribution. The relationship between survey results and both student growth and observations is stronger at the upper elementary level than the early elementary.

Secondary Distribution



The secondary version of the survey shows a distribution that differentiates across all levels of favorability. The relationship between surveys and both growth and observations is stronger at the secondary level than either the early or upper elementary levels.

Each of the three levels of the survey effectively differentiates between top performers and those who are struggling. Based on preliminary data, upper elementary and early elementary surveys tend to have larger clusters in the middle of the distribution.

Student perception data is especially powerful for teacher development because the feedback comes from students, it can be aligned to observation feedback, it is predictive of student growth, and it is based on specific questions that can be tied to specific actions.

In addition to learning more about how to provide effective feedback to participating teachers through the spring 2013 pilot, we also learned more about the importance of clear communication and logistics of student perception survey administration. This included the need to communicate more proactively with parents about student perception surveys, ensuring administration security protocols are followed with consistency, and streamlining the administrative work required at the district level.

The pilot administration allowed for important state- and district-level lessons, as well as valuable feedback for teachers. The use of student surveys as a component of evaluation remains relatively new to the landscape of teacher evaluation, but based on preliminary data and the pilot administration, it appears to be a promising component for participating districts.

Increase the rigor of the certification exam for evaluators

For the past two years, Tennessee has required anyone observing teachers to pass an inter-rater reliability test based on the TEAM rubric. This year, we increased the scope and rigor of the test, ensuring that evaluators have the ability to differentiate at even higher levels among high- and low-quality lessons and are able to provide actionable, appropriate feedback. The increase in rigor initially resulted in lower pass rates during the first attempt at completing the test. However, over the course of the summer, as evaluators were able to attend training or study independently, pass rates rose to over 90 percent. The high pass rate on a more rigorous test demonstrates both the increasing skill of observers across the state and a desire to continuously improve their own practice in an effort to support teachers.

Increase the number of evaluation coaches working in the state department's regional field offices, and broaden the focus of their work

In 2012–13, struggling evaluators who worked with state coaches demonstrated better accuracy than the rest of the state. For 2013–14 year, we have increased the number of coaches, and focused their work on both specific schools that need additional support, as well as district and regional efforts to strengthen and sustain high quality implementation.

During the 2012–13 school year, five TEAM Coaches, employed by The National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, were contracted to work with the department and deployed through the state's regional CORE offices to provide support directly to schools. Schools were identified by examining teachers' individual growth scores alongside their observation scores. Schools with a high percentage of teachers who were two levels apart or more on observation and individual growth (the definition of misalignment used by the department in 2012–13) were eligible for support. For example, if a large number of teachers in a school had an individual value added score of 1 and an observation average of 3

or higher, that school would have been eligible for state support. Just over 70 schools in 49 districts across the state were identified, almost all of which accepted direct support from a TEAM Coach.

The emphasis of the TEAM Coaches in 2012–13 was on identification and support in these roughly 80 schools. It was apparent early on that there were a number of potential reasons for misalignment, many of which were a function of fidelity of implementation and observer skill. However, identifying schools with high rates of misalignment provided a systematic way to focus both state and district support for implementation where it was needed most.

The TEAM Coaches were successful across a variety of measures. First, their success in reducing misalignment, or the number of teachers whose observation and individual growth scores were two or more levels apart, exceeded expectations:

- Nearly 90 percent of support schools identified reduced misalignment
- Nearly 70 percent of support schools identified reduced misalignment by more than 10 percentage points
- 13 support schools dropped from double digit misalignment to 0 percent misalignment

This level of change in a single year is indicative of success that goes beyond improved misalignment rates. Most notably, TEAM Coaches were received very positively in the schools where they provided support. Understandably, there was some initial wariness about accepting support from someone outside the school, but by the close of the school year many school leaders were actively seeking ways to maintain contact with their coaches.

The success of the TEAM Coaches shows that targeted, intensive support at the school level can change practice, and change it quickly. The next step for 2013–14 is to broaden the impact of the TEAM Coaches to build district and regional capacity for evaluation support.

For the 2013–14 school year, the number of TEAM Coaches will expand to one coach per region. The coaches will continue to focus on the support schools, but their role will expand to also provide district and regional support. Sharing the school-based practices that have proven to be effective will increase the capacity of district staff to provide direct support to their own schools, including schools that are not directly identified by the TDOE. District and regional activities will closely mirror school-level activities and include norming and feedback sessions, as well as the creation of evaluation collaboratives where practitioners are able to discuss their challenges and successes with peers.

As TEAM Coaches shift their work to focus more on district and regional work, sustainable support practices and systemic change will become more emphasized. Many districts around the state are already employing a variety of strong practices to improve the reliability of their evaluation data and their ability to use that data to positively impact instruction. Sharing those practices across districts creates the potential for systemic, state-wide change.

Revised language in the instruction domain of the general educator rubric to better reflect the language and shifts required for successful implementation of the Common Core State Standards

While evaluation and the Common Core State Standards are very much compatible and will work together over the coming years to support improved instruction for students, it is important to make adjustments, where appropriate, to the evaluation rubric to reinforce and reflect the language and expectations of the standards. Adjustments were made in collaboration with the Common Core

Leadership Council, a group of educators from across the state who provide input and expertise on Common Core implementation. These changes also incorporated feedback from Core Coaches, the educators who recently led training of more than 30,000 teachers on the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. Each adjustment included a [specific rationale](#) to ensure consistency between the language of TNCore and the language of evaluation.

Sixty wide-angle video cameras were deployed to 55 schools during the 2012–13 school year and nearly 100 more will be deployed during the 2013–14 school year

The cameras can be used for a variety of purposes, but most commonly will be used by teachers to record their lessons for use in self-reflection. Teachers and school leaders are only beginning to scratch the surface of the potential of video technology. The 2013–14 school year will be an important year in learning about how to use video to impact instruction.

Other potential uses include:

- Using video to conduct co-observations, allowing for improved feedback to teachers, and increased reliability in scoring
- Identifying strong practices and sharing them during professional development activities
- Analyzing lessons during PLCs
- Delivering sample lessons as part of recruitment and hiring

As more cameras are introduced into classrooms and educators become more comfortable using them for self-reflection and development purposes, the use of video technology is likely to expand and deepen many of the best practices that are at the core of high-quality evaluation and instructional learning. Just as evaluation has served to open up classroom doors and facilitate a more collaborative and supportive teaching environment, video technology can further expand the scope of collaboration and support beyond a teacher's classroom and beyond his or her home school. Sharing with other teachers across schools and districts will become easier. Receiving feedback from multiple sources will become a reality for many more teachers. Perhaps most importantly, Tennessee-specific examples of exemplary teaching will more readily reach every corner of the state.

During the 2013–14 school year, the Tennessee Department of Education will share lessons learned from schools and districts that received cameras during the past school year with those who will receive cameras this school year. The primary focus will be on discovering which activities have the greatest impact on instruction. Two part-time coaches have also been hired to support schools in using video cameras to positively impact instruction. These coaches will be able to be on the ground, in participating schools, able to share their instructional coaching as well as evaluation expertise. As we move beyond the 2013–14 school year, we hope to continue to increase the number of cameras available to schools and districts as well as our ability to surface and share best practices associated with using cameras to impact instruction.

Approved a new model for assessing growth for World Language teachers

Modeled after the successful Fine Arts growth model, the state board recently approved an alternative growth model for World Language teachers, which is available for districts to use in the 2013–14 school year. With the approval of this new growth measure, there is now the potential for more than 65 percent of all teachers to earn an individual growth score. The actual percentage of teachers may be

lower due to the fact that not all districts elect to use all approved measures. Nonetheless, we will continue to work to expand coverage of individual growth scores where they are useful and appropriate for student learning. We anticipate a model for Physical Education teachers to be approved for the 2014–15 school year. Potential coverage for 2013–14 will reach just over 70 percent.

Looking at all efforts and decisions regarding student growth options, it is important to balance the desire to develop new measures with the need to ensure that all approved options are also valuable and developmentally appropriate tools for improving student learning. Consideration must also be given to time, cost, and a measure’s ability to yield a spectrum of performance akin to TVAAS. There are some educator groups who have indicated that a school-level score, at an appropriate weight, is the best option for assessing their impact on student growth. For example, media specialists/librarians have expressed that school-level literacy scores are an appropriate way to measure their impact on student outcomes as opposed to developing a new measure for the purpose of their evaluation. Ultimately, we expect to have approved measures available that cover more than 80 percent of all teachers, should districts decide to utilize them.

Current Approved Growth Measures	Number of participating districts in 2013–14	Approximate coverage with full participation
TVAAS	All	42%
CTE Concentrator/Student School-wide TVAAS	51	5%
K-2 Assessment	90	16%
Fine Arts	12	5.5%
World Languages	1	1.5%
Total		70%

LOOKING AHEAD

As with previous years, we will continue to measure our progress and will make changes prior to the 2014–15 school year based on feedback and study of evaluation data. This ongoing review and refinement of the evaluation system will remain a process of continuous improvement. There are a few areas where we anticipate progress or plan to do further analysis as we prepare for the 2014–15 school year.

15 Percent Achievement

The 15 percent achievement component of the evaluation system was designed to allow teachers and their evaluators to collaboratively select and scale a student achievement goal relevant to the teacher’s work. There is a menu of state board approved options from which teachers and evaluators can choose. However, as noted in the Year 1 report, successful implementation of the 15 percent achievement measure has proven to be time-consuming and challenging. While available options were limited for 2012–13, as we prioritized options that can be calculated prior to the start of the following school year and ensured that the options provided legitimate measures of impact on achievement, in most cases the results of the achievement component still did not provide enough meaningful, additional information regarding a teacher’s performance to justify the effort required to implement 15 percent.

2013–14 15% Achievement Measure Choices	Percent Selected
TVAAS	39.8
State Assessments	30.0
Off the Shelf	13.1
Graduation Rate	10.6
ACT/SAT	6.1
AP/IB/NIC	0.4

Based on feedback from school and district leaders, there are multiple challenges related to the achievement measure:

- **Scaling** – The primary challenge is rigorous, reliable local scaling of measures. After a measure is selected, the teacher and their evaluator create a five-point scale that, at the end of the school year, translates into a 1–5 score for evaluative purposes. It is difficult to set a meaningful goal for every teacher across many different types of measures. This requires expertise in the nuances of assessment scaling.
- **Data entry** – The achievement measure also includes a sizeable amount of data entry. At specific points in the year, data must be entered for all staff members, causing a very real data entry burden that falls largely on school leaders.
- **Lack of differentiation and rigor** – Due to the fact that achievement tends to differentiate performance less effectively than other components, the achievement measure does not generally appear to provide additional useful information to teachers or school leaders. Unlike the other components that are used to inform professional development decisions, achievement more than any other measure, is an exercise in process rather than feedback.

Collectively these challenges are concerning. While there were improvements made in implementation during the 2012–13 school year and additional improvements can be expected from continuing to focus efforts on achievement, it must be noted that at present, achievement measures require extensive effort and yet do not yield meaningful returns.

The department will continue with the 15 percent achievement measure for a third year before making any recommendations to address the shortcomings of the achievement component. While the logistical

issues have largely been remedied, this has not solved either the school-level time and effort burden or the lack of meaningful differentiation associated with the achievement component.

During the 2013–14 school year, the department will explore potential solutions to address the achievement component in collaboration with educators across Tennessee. Any significant changes to the 15 percent achievement component will require legislative action, and the department will not recommend action of that magnitude without full confidence in the efficacy of a proposed solution.

Administrator Evaluation

Throughout implementation of teacher evaluation, the importance of strong, skilled school leaders has become increasingly apparent. Research has shown that second only to teachers, school leaders have the most direct impact on student outcomes. During the first two years of evaluation implementation, greater emphasis has been placed on teacher evaluation than administrator evaluation. As Tennessee enters the third year of evaluation, much greater focus will be placed on administrator evaluation. This will come in multiple forms, including the pilot of a revised rubric and evidence collection process and additional state level capacity to support and manage administrator evaluation.

During the 2012–13 school year, the department revised the Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards (TILS) to reflect the evolving role of school leaders in Tennessee. More than 400 instructional leaders provided input into the revisions prior to the State Board of Education adopting the updated standards.

With revised leadership standards, the department began work on revising the administrator evaluation rubric to align with the updated standards. School and district leaders provided feedback on both the rubric itself as well as the implementation plan. Based on this feedback, the department is piloting a new administrator evaluation rubric in eight districts during the 2013–14 school year with the intention of recommending the revised rubric to the State Board of Education for state-wide adoption in the 2014–15 school year.

The revised rubric is focused much more heavily on the school leader’s role in improving instruction, talent management, and culture building. It will facilitate the collection of more specific evidence to inform feedback conversations with school leaders, and place additional emphasis on inducting, developing, supporting, and extending the reach of effective teachers.

The administrator evaluation pilot will allow the department to provide intensive training and support to participating districts throughout the year and facilitate detailed input and data collection from participants to inform state roll out in the summer of 2014–15.

Participating districts received training specific to the revised rubric, with a focus on collecting evidence and applying that evidence to the rubric. Districts will also be asked to provide specific feedback at multiple points during the school year to ensure necessary adjustments are made prior to recommending revisions to the state board for approval. The department has also formed an educator advisory council to guide the pilot process and issue mid- and end-of-year reports on the pilot process.

Non-differentiating Observers

Misalignment between observation scores and student growth scores has been the most common measure by which observation data is used to flag observers that may need additional support or intervention. This has been true in Tennessee and in many other states and districts implementing similar teacher evaluation systems. While there are certainly advantages to this approach, we have

identified a new and potentially complementary methodology – non-differentiation – for identifying observers who may need additional support, retraining, or additional intervention.

Non-differentiating observers tend to give very similar scores on every indicator they score on the TEAM rubric across all of the observations they conduct throughout the year. This means that they are likely not giving educators strong feedback about their relative strengths and weaknesses on different competencies on the rubric, which in turn could limit teachers’ ability to identify which areas he/she should prioritize for development. We have established the following two definitions for systematically identifying non-differentiating observers, both of which include only observers in TEAM districts since the department only collects overall observation scores, not indicator-level scores, from alternate observation model districts:

- The observer scored at least 100 indicators during the 2012–13 school year and more than **90 percent** of indicators fell in two adjacent levels (1/2, 2/3, 3/4, or 4/5). These observers scored at least 9 of every 10 TEAM rubric indicators in just two levels.
- The observer scored at least 100 indicators during the 2012–13 school year and more than **95 percent** of indicators fell in two adjacent levels (1/2, 2/3, 3/4, or 4/5). These observers scored at least 19 of every 20 TEAM rubric indicators in just two levels.

The tables below display the number of observers flagged by each definition. Just over 10 percent of observers scored more than 90 percent of their indicators in two adjacent levels while about three percent of observers scored more than 95 percent of their indicators in two adjacent levels. Those exceeding the 90 percent threshold were most likely to give primarily 3s and 4s (155 of 306 cases) while those exceeding the 95 percent threshold tended to give primarily 4s and 5s (59 of 96 cases).

At least 90 percent of indicators in two adjacent levels (2012–13)

	Number of Observers	Percent of Observers
Non-Differentiating	306	11.0%
All Other Observers	2,483	89.0%

At least 95 percent of indicators in two adjacent levels (2012–13)

	Number of Observers	Percent of Observers
Non-Differentiating	96	3.4%
All Other Observers	2,963	96.6%

Preliminary results indicate that non-differentiating observers do not tend to be clustered in particular districts, suggesting that targeted, observer-level interventions may be beneficial. Additionally, because non-differentiating observers do not tend to be the observers with the highest levels of misalignment between observation and individual growth scores, we are optimistic that this approach could be complementary to the current focus on misalignment. The department’s Office of Research and Policy is conducting further analyses of non-differentiating observers and plans to produce a report that outlines where these observers are located, what characteristics they tend to have, when they can be reliably identified, and potential interventions and supports. The department will continue to monitor non-differentiation as a promising data point for identifying potential issues with the quality of observations that has the potential to improve the overall quality of feedback received by teachers.

Continued Learning

Implementation of state-wide evaluation is, at its heart, a learning process through which we continue to ask questions and to discover strong practices in teacher and principal development. Below are a few key areas that we will continue to explore in order to inform ongoing decisions regarding design and implementation of an evaluation system that best supports improved instruction and increased student growth:

Districts are engaging in innovative observation practices including extensive co-observations through which two observers work together to provide effective feedback to teachers.

Districts across the state have begun incorporating co-observations into their observation process in order to both provide more comprehensive feedback to teachers as well as continue to develop the skills of their observers. Many districts are focusing co-observations on those teachers in need of the most support. While widespread use of co-observations is still in the beginning phases, early feedback has been positive from participating administrators. Even though setting up co-observations increases the logistical challenges of conducting observations, administrators who engage in co-observations report that it is a powerful way to develop their own instructional leadership. Having a partner observer with whom to discuss observation scoring and feedback for the teacher has led to more confidence on the part of both the school leader participants and the teachers who they observe. Moreover, where it has occurred, the co-observation practice has increased collaboration and conversation about teacher observation, an activity that is often challenging and isolating for a school leader.

Facilitated by TEAM Coaches, regional collaboration and problem solving are identifying and creating a roadmap for spreading more district-developed best practices.

As district staff and school leaders continue to identify the best ways to implement and leverage evaluation for student, teacher, and school improvement, it has become increasingly important to facilitate the spread of great practices. The deep learning and problem solving that has occurred over the past two years as a result of evaluation implementation has led to new knowledge about what practices really drive instructional improvement and subsequently, student learning. Creating an open and sustainable environment for sharing successful school- and district-based practices has become a priority and reflects the same philosophy that we see at the teacher level: peer leaders are the most knowledgeable and credible sources for identifying and learning more about effective practices. While TEAM Coaches will continue to work with schools and districts over the 2013–14 school year, their evolving mission is to ensure that our school and district leaders are ultimately the ones willing and able to share with peers inside and outside the state about the great things happening in districts and schools around Tennessee as result of high-quality evaluation and targeted development.

Additional research continues to identify potential areas of improvement.

- Through a partnership with researchers from Brown and Stanford, research is being done on the impact of peer mentoring by high-performing teachers based on evaluation data.
- Ongoing research of the rubric itself will inform how we continue to think about and evolve the tool in order to provide a clear vision for effective teaching in Tennessee over time.
- Internal research will continue to monitor the power of student surveys, to learn more about non-differentiating observers and to monitor the ongoing relationship between the multiple measures of the evaluation system.

Even as evaluation becomes more and more entrenched in the way educators do business in Tennessee, the ability to continue to learn about and improve the evaluation system is central to ensuring that TEAM achieves its ultimate purpose: improving instruction to drive growth for every student, in every classroom, every year across the state.

CONCLUSION

Over the past two years, Tennessee educators have worked tirelessly to ensure that teachers receive timely, quality feedback, to evaluate instructional practices in a way that is fair, and to drive the development of excellent instruction. Although this work has not been easy, it has been taken on with a clear end goal in mind: improving educational outcomes for students. We firmly believe that Tennessee students can compete with students throughout the country and the world. To help them rise to that challenge, we must continue to provide the kind of instruction and support that will allow them to be competitive in both post-secondary education and their careers.

Now that we are two years into our new evaluation system, it is clear that progress is being made. Teachers are receiving feedback on instruction multiple times each year, giving school leaders a chance to target ongoing growth and development and to provide additional support when needed. Students are learning more. Both state and national measures of student growth show our students continue to make gains across all major subject areas. Lastly, teachers are feeling more supported. Evaluation was a tremendous change for educators in Tennessee, but they increasingly report that they view evaluation as a means of helping them improve instruction.

Although we are proud of the gains made thus far, our journey is just beginning. To ensure a process of continuous improvement at all levels, we will continue to listen to feedback, examine data, provide support, and make changes to the system. We will continue to lean heavily on district and school leaders to lead and support their teachers in making transformational change. Finally, we will continue to rely on parents, community leaders, and other stakeholders to support and encourage our students as they take on increasingly more challenging learning in the classroom.

In closing, none of this progress would be possible without the unrelenting commitment, dedication, and hard work of Tennessee educators. We hope that it is clear from this report the tremendous impact that effective teachers and instructional leaders can and do have on the lives of students. We appreciate their commitment to improving educational outcomes for Tennessee students and feel fortunate to count them as partners in this incredibly important work.