TN Department of Education

Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model

Teacher Evaluation Handbook

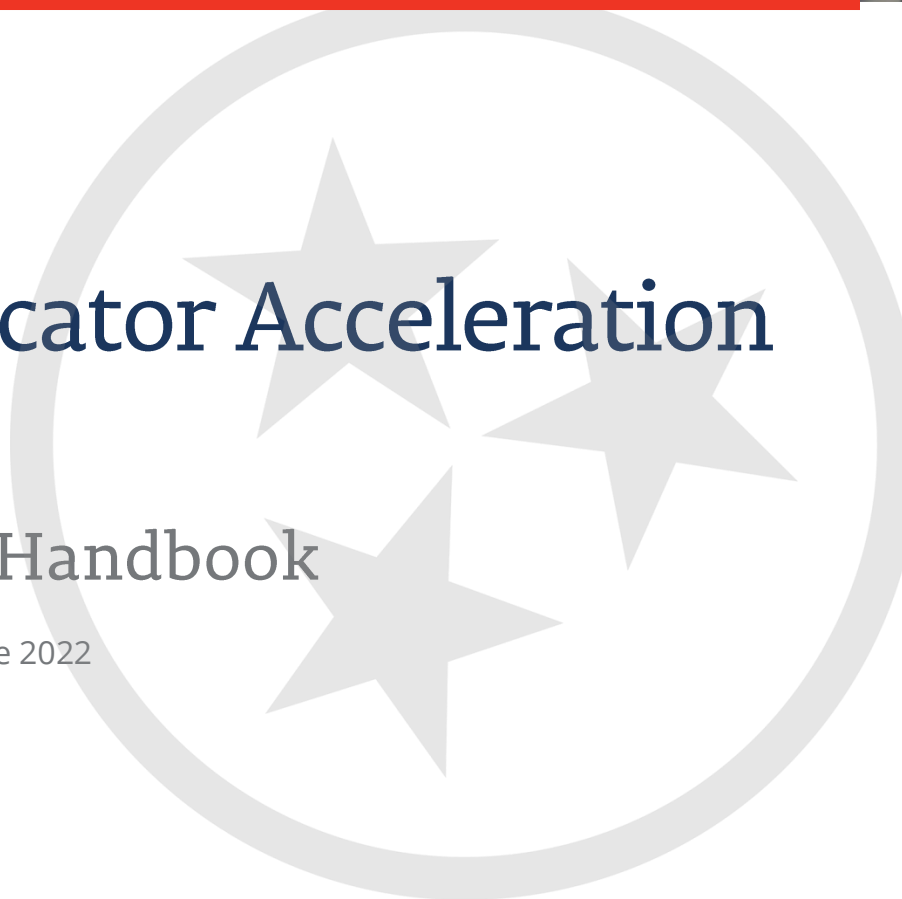Tennessee Department of Education | June 2022

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Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model

The Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) is designed around principals and teachers working together to ensure the best possible instruction every day. Through use of frequent observation, constructive feedback, student data, and professional development, TEAM is designed to support all educators doing their best work to help every student learn and grow.

Teachers are the most important factor influencing student success. The goal of the TEAM evaluation process is to provide educators with a model that helps them continuously improve their practice. A complete picture of what goes on in the classroom is essential to driving educator improvement; therefore, we want to look at how teachers deliver instruction and what students learn from those lessons.

Highly effective principals provide ways for teachers to continuously grow in their careers, arrange opportunities for staff to learn from one another, and delegate leadership roles.

By using observations and data together, TEAM allows teachers and school leaders to have an ongoing dialogue about how what happens in the classroom impacts student performance. Ultimately, growth in a teacher's skills leads to growth in student achievement.

All guidance provided in this handbook is in accordance with T.C.A. § 49-1-302, State Board Rule 0520-02-01, and State Board Policy 5.201.

Core Beliefs

As evaluators:

- We **observe** instructional practice; we **evaluate** student learning.
  - The rubric is designed to present a rigorous vision of excellent instruction so every teacher can see areas where he/she can improve student learning.
- We value **growth** and **improvement**.
  - Growth and improvement come through effort. Engage in co-observations, consult content area experts in your building, and ask questions!
- We understand the rubric is **not** a checklist.
  - Observers should look for the preponderance of evidence based on the impact of practice on student learning.
- We know that **common understandings** and **connections** are critical.
  - Student learning will improve when teachers and leaders are able to communicate around the connections between the instructional shifts necessitated by the standards and the instructional expectations outlined in the TEAM rubric.

Observation Processes

Certification Process

According to State Board Rule 0520-02-01 and State Board Policy 5.201, all educators must be evaluated annually by a certified evaluator. The department conducts initial certification and recertification training, administers certification tests, issues evaluator credentials, and provides continuous evaluator support for the TEAM rubric.

Observers conducting observations must be certified. An educator may file a grievance if an observation is conducted by an observer without full certification. Certification entails participating in an official state-sponsored TEAM training and passing the subsequent online certification test. **Certification is valid through June 30 of the current school year regardless of the certification date.**

Observation Rubrics by Role

The following roles should be staffed as *teacher* in TNCompass. There are three teacher observation rubrics available for use with the TEAM evaluation model; these can be chosen from the drop-down menu when evaluators are adding an observation in TNCompass:

- **General Educator Rubric:** should be used for all teachers whose primary role is classroom instruction
- **Library Media Specialist Rubric:** should be used for teachers who spend more than half of their contract as a library media specialist
  School Services Personnel Rubric: should be used for those teachers who develop a plan of services and deliver those services outside of the general education classroom. These could include (but are not limited to) school audiologists, school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, speech language pathologists, vision specialists, interventionists, and instructional coaches.

Role	TEAM Rubric
Classroom teacher	General educator
Alternative educator	General educator
Special education teacher	General educator
Online teacher	General educator
Instructional coach	School services personnel
Interventionist	School services personnel
Audiologist	School services personnel
Counselor	School services personnel
Psychologist	School services personnel
Social worker	School services personnel
Speech language pathologist	School services personnel
Vision specialist	School services personnel
Library media specialist	Library media specialist

Observation Pacing

Observation pacing is based on a combination of teacher license status and the individual growth or level of overall effectiveness (LOE) score.

- All teachers shall have at least **one-half (½) of all observations be unannounced**.
- A **minimum of one (1) observation shall be announced** for teachers.
  - For teachers scoring **level 5** on individual growth or level of overall effectiveness, the required observation shall be **unannounced**.
- **All** observations for teachers using the **school services personnel rubric** shall be **announced** observations to keep students' privacy in the forefront of evaluation practice.
- Evaluators shall provide written feedback and a face-to-face debrief with the educator **within one week (5 business days)** of the conclusion of each observation.

Licensure Status	Previous Year Individual Growth or Level of Overall Effectiveness [2]	Minimum Required Observations*	Minimum Required Observations per Domain*	Minimum Number of Minutes per School Year
Practitioner	Levels 1-4	All domains observed, with a minimum of three (3) domains observed in each semester and a minimum of three (3) formal observations.	3 Instruction 2 Planning 2 Environment	90 minutes
	Level 5	One (1) formal observation covering all domains first semester; two walk-throughs second semester.	1 Instruction 1 Planning 1 Environment	60 minutes
Professional	Level 1	All domains observed, with a minimum of three (3) domains observed in each semester and a minimum of three (3) formal observations.	3 Instruction 2 Planning 2 Environment	90 minutes
	Levels 2-4	All domains observed with a minimum of two (2) domains observed in each semester and a minimum of two (2) formal observations.	2 Instruction 1 Planning 1 Environment	60 minutes
	Level 5	One (1) formal observation covering all domains first semester; two (2) walk-throughs second semester.	1 Instruction 1 Planning 1 Environment	60 minutes

- **Partial Year Exemption (PYE) Prior Year:** The number of required observations for educators who received a partial year exemption (PYE) in the previous year shall be determined by their performance level in the school year immediately preceding the PYE year.
- **No LOE Prior Year/New Teachers:** Any non-PYE educator without a LOE in the previous year shall have the maximum number of observations conducted based on the educator's license type.

Opportunities for Collecting Evidence

Observation scores are based on evidence collected prior to, during, and after the observation. When evaluators lack evidence for a given indicator, they are unable to score accurately. Evaluators are encouraged to collect evidence **throughout** the evaluation process to offer the most accurate ratings and to design effective support for educators. Evidence collection may occur appropriately before, during, and after the classroom observation.

- Prior to the observation:
    - Review instructional plans for evidence of differentiation, content-specific instructional practices, activities and materials aligned to the lesson's objective, and evidence of thinking and problem solving.
    - Conduct a pre-conference **(announced only)** asking probing questions to gain insight on how the teacher identifies potential difficulties for students and what strategies they have planning to implement in order for students to master the objective.
- During the observation:
    - Script the lesson capturing what students say and do as well as what the teacher says and does.
    - Collect evidence related to both teaching and learning such as visuals, handouts and student work. Student work samples can be collected before leaving the observation and reviewed before scoring the lesson.
- After the observation:
    - Ask clarifying questions as needed prior to the post-conference. For example, "What thought process did you use to group your students?"
    - Analyze the student work. What is the student work assessing? Does it provide evidence of mastery of the lesson's objective? Does the student work require thinking and/or problem solving?

Performance Level Guide

Use the performance level guide to align evidence to scores. Each performance level has nuanced differences, described below, that will help identify the expertise with which practice is implemented.

1	**Significantly Below Expectations:** A teacher at this level has **limited knowledge** of the instructional skills, knowledge, and responsibilities described in the rubric and **struggles** to implement them. He/she has **little to no impact on student outcomes**.
2	**Below Expectations:** A teacher at this level demonstrates **some knowledge** of the instructional skills, knowledge, and responsibilities described in the rubric but implements them **inconsistently**. His/her **impact on student outcomes is below expectations.**
3	**At Expectations:** A teacher at this level **understands and implements most** of the instructional skills, knowledge, and responsibilities described in the rubric. His/her **impact on student outcomes is meeting expectations**.
4	**Above Expectations:** A teacher at this level **comprehends** the instructional skills, knowledge, and responsibilities described in the rubric and implements them **skillfully and consistently**. He/she makes a **strong impact on student outcomes**.
5	**Significantly Above Expectations:** A teacher at this level **exemplifies** the instructional skills, knowledge, and responsibilities described in the rubric and implements them **adeptly and without fail**. He/she **meets ambitious teaching and learning goals and makes a significant impact on student outcomes**. Performance at this level should be considered a **model of exemplary teaching**.

Scoring Ranges

Qualitative data, student growth data, and student achievement data are all combined to create a scale score (score range) between 100 and 500. Pursuant to T.C.A. 49-1-302, the calculations for overall levels of effectiveness depend on whether a teacher has an individual growth score or a school- or system-wide growth score.

Score Range	Level of Overall Effectiveness (LOE) Scale
<200	1
200-274.99	2
275-349.99	3
350-424.99	4
425-500	5

Pre-Conference

Prior to announced observations, observers conduct a pre-conference meeting to obtain pertinent background information about the lesson plan and students involved for additional context and to address any potential areas of concern before the lesson. During the pre-conference, the observer engages in a coaching conversation with the teacher being observed. As part of this conversation, the observer asks questions about the lesson plan, grouping structures, classroom configuration, specific students, etc. The teacher provides background information (including the makeup of the students in the class), the context of

this lesson in the larger unit plan, assessment information, extenuating circumstances, and evidence of planning with the rubrics. In the pre-conference meeting, teachers are provided with specific support for improvement when possible. Every evaluation-related conversation should be focused first on supporting strong instructional practice.

General Tips
- Sit close to the teacher and maintain eye contact.
- Nod and show signs of active listening, including writing down some of the teacher's responses.
- Paraphrase what the teacher is saying to demonstrate active listening; provide a summary at the end.
- Adjust questioning and use the teacher's responses to develop probing follow-up questions.

Sample Pre-Conference Questions
- What do you expect the students to know and be able to do after the lesson?
- Where is this lesson in the context of your unit plan?
- What are the prerequisite skills that the students need to know in order to be successful in this lesson?
- Where will we see productive struggle within the lesson?
- What changes or adjustments to the lesson will you need to make if students do not show evidence that they have mastered the sub-objectives?
- How will you know that students have mastered the objectives in this lesson?
- How will you differentiate your instruction in order to address a variety of students' needs?
- How have you structured grouping for this lesson? How were students placed within the groups? How will students be held accountable for group work?
- What are your plans for lesson closure and reflection?
- Let's think back to your last observation, particularly your area of refinement. How might I see improvement in that area in this lesson?
- Are there any other special circumstances that I should be aware of before the announced observation?

Post-Conference
While the TEAM rubric is used to evaluate teachers' lesson planning and instruction, it also provides an opportunity for teachers to self-reflect on their teaching practices with support from their evaluators. This support should be provided in numerous ways from administrators and/or teacher leaders, including the modeling of specific indicators in professional development meetings, in teachers' classrooms, and in the post-conference.

The purpose of the post-conference is to provide teachers with opportunities to reflect on their lessons with guidance and support from the administrator or teacher leader who conducted the observation. The observer's guidance should be provided through the use of leading questions along with the identification of

an area of reinforcement (relative strength of the lesson) and an area of refinement (area in which the observer needs to help the teacher improve). Therefore, the focus of the post-conference is on two indicators or descriptors from the rubric as opposed to multiple areas. By focusing on just two areas, teachers have the opportunity to focus their own learning with support from an administrator or teacher leader.

When choosing an area of reinforcement and refinement from the rubric, observers should ask themselves several guiding questions to ensure that a teacher's professional growth will have the maximum impact on the achievement of his/her own students.

Guiding Questions and Considerations for the Observer in Choosing Areas of Reinforcement and Refinement
- Which areas on the rubric received the highest scores (reinforcements) and the lowest scores (refinements)?
- Which of these areas would have the greatest impact on student achievement?
- Which of these areas would have the greatest impact on other areas of the rubric?
- In which area will the teacher have the most potential for growth? *For example: With new teachers, it might be better to focus on developing objectives and sub-objectives instead of improving a teacher's ability in problem-solving.*
- Make sure that the reinforcement is not directly related to the refinement.
- Choose a refinement area for which there is sufficient and specific evidence from the lesson to support why the teacher needs to work on this area.
- Choose an area of refinement for which concrete next steps for improvement are provided. If an observer does not have the personal knowledge or experience to recommend next steps, he or she should seek out someone who can assist with more information. Another option is connecting the teacher with a person who is able to provide specific examples for improvement and model these examples for the teacher.

Once the areas of reinforcement and refinement have been selected by the observer, then the post-conference can be developed. Below is a format for developing an effective post-conference. It is important to note that **a post-conference does not begin with a presentation of the scores**, but with **coaching questions** that, through reflection, lead to the identification of the areas of reinforcement and refinement.

Characteristics of an Ideal Post-Conference:
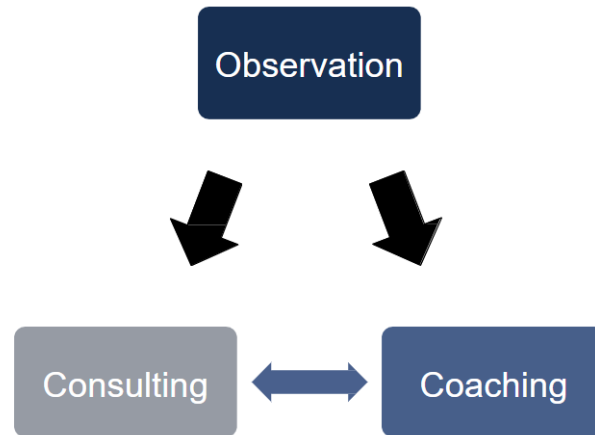
Post-Conference Introduction

- **Greeting/Set the tone.** This time should be used to put the teacher at ease.
- **Establish the length of the conference.** Assure the teacher that out of respect for his/her time, there is a time limit for the conference.
- **Review the conference process.** Review the conference format with the teacher so he/she knows what to expect.
    - *E.g., "Good afternoon, it was great for me to get to visit your classroom and observe your lesson. Our purpose in meeting today is for professional growth. We will spend time discussing your lesson with a focus on your instruction and how the students were involved with the lesson. The ultimate goal will be to develop ideas on how to enhance student achievement."*
- **Ask a general impression question.** This allows the teacher to begin the post-conference by self-reflecting on his/her lesson.
    - *E.g., "How do you think the lesson went?"*

Reinforcement Plan

- **Self-analysis question.** Prompt teacher to talk about what you want to reinforce. Utilize a question that includes specific language from the rubric. This can lead the teacher to reflect on the indicator you have identified as his/her area of reinforcement as it relates to the lesson.
    - *E.g., "When you plan a lesson, how do you decide on the type and frequency of questions that you will ask?"*
- **Identify specific examples from the evidence about what the teacher did well.** It is critical that the observer leading the post-conference provides specific examples for the lesson of when the teacher incorporated descriptors from the indicator being reinforced.
    - *E.g., "You asked a variety of questions throughout the lesson to check for student understanding. You asked numerous questions on the knowledge and comprehension level*

that led students to review previous learning as they identified the elements of a pictograph and defined mean, mode, median, and range. You also asked them to define vocabulary within the lesson's objective, which allowed you to restate the objective, using their response. As you progressed through the lesson, you continually asked students to explain how they arrived at their answers and to explain their classmates' responses. This type of questioning moves students to a deeper understanding of the content being taught as they must justify their thinking. You also asked questions that required students to evaluate the purpose and advantages of using a pictograph."

Refinement Plan

- **Self-analysis.** Ask a specific question to prompt the teacher to talk about an intended area for improvement, as identified by the observer before the conference. Using specific language from the rubric can lead the teacher to reflect on the indicator previously identified as his/her area of refinement as it relates to the lesson.
    - *E.g., "When developing lessons, how do you decide on the pacing of the lesson so sufficient time is allocated for each segment?"*
- **Identify specific examples from the evidence about what to refine.** It is critical that the observer leading the post-conference provides specific examples from the lesson to support the indicator being refined. This is the most important element of the plan because it models a strong example and labels why it is a strong example. This provides support for the teacher as he/she applies the model to future lessons.
    - *E.g., "You began the lesson with an explanation of the lesson's objective and an overview of the lesson. Modeling for students how to analyze a pictograph followed, and then students were to work in groups to read a pictograph and complete questions on a worksheet. You mentioned earlier that you wanted students to be able to work in groups and then report their findings. However, there was not sufficient time for this to occur during the lesson."*
- **Recommendations/Next Steps.** Provide specific examples of what to refine with suggestions that are concrete. Ideally, the teacher should leave with next steps, a resource to support those next steps, and a date for follow-up to monitor progress.
    - *E.g., "As you plan your lessons, ask yourself which learning activities are essential for students to meet the objective, and then ask yourself how much time each segment of the lesson will need. In thinking back on this lesson, each of the segments you used were essential: the beginning hook using our high school baseball team's batting averages; the modeling of your analytical thinking with a pictograph; the students working in groups to apply their analytical thinking to their pictographs; the students reporting their findings and justifications; and the students reflecting in their math journals about their learning for the day, which is the part they didn't get to. When we think about the time spent on each segment, I know that learning happens when students are problem-solving, discussing, justifying, reflecting, and/or writing, so I want to ensure these chunks have the most time. The beginning hook that took twenty-*

one minutes could have been accomplished in four to six minutes; leaving you the fifteen minutes to have students share their learning, reflect on their learning, and write in their math journals. For future lessons, ask yourself which learning activities are essential for students to meet the objective and then ask yourself how much time each segment of the lesson will need. These questions will help you ensure you are able to focus on the learning experiences you know will help them succeed. Mrs. Smith has worked on this in the past, and she could be a great resource to support you. For next week's lessons, take the plans that you normally submit, and jot the time blockings you want for each segment of your math lessons. This shouldn't take any extra time, and it will help me support you because I will provide feedback and send it to you. I'll pop in sometime in the next couple of weeks to see how it is helping you provide your students with closure and reflection opportunities. Are there any other things I can do to support you? What questions do you have?"

- **Share the performance ratings.** At the very end of the conference, the observer will share scores and provide written next steps with the educator in TNCompass.

Sample Post-Conference Questions

- How did you communicate your expectations to the students?
- What evidence do you have of students' mastery of the objective?
- How will you use the evidence of students' mastery to plan for future learning?
- Where did we see productive struggle within the lesson?
- How did you ensure the lesson was meaningful and relevant to the students?
- How did you develop learning experiences that provided opportunities for students to ask questions and explore?
- How did you reinforce and reward the efforts of all students?
- How did you model your expectations for students?
- What opportunities did you provide for students who progress at different rates?
- How did you decide on the types of materials and activities you used during the lesson?
- How did you decide on the types and frequency of questions you asked during the lesson?
- How did you support students through feedback during the lesson?
- How did you decide on the instructional grouping of students during a lesson?
- How did you hold groups and individuals accountable for work completed within a group?
- What instructional strategies did you use in this lesson?
- How did you differentiate instruction within your lesson?
- What types of thinking and problem solving did you reinforce during the lesson?

Summative Conference

A summative conference should **begin** at the end of the school year and include the following:

Required Components
- Discuss professionalism scores (during the last six weeks of school)
- Share final qualitative data (observation score average)
- Share final 15% achievement score (if the data is not available, let the teacher know how the score will be calculated)
- Review the growth measure chosen
- Explain how the overall score (LOE) will be calculated

Other Components
- Commend areas of progress
- Focus on the areas in need of continued refinement

Evaluators should **complete** the summative conferences with all educators to review their evaluation results from the previous school year after level of effectiveness (LOE) scores are generated in TNCompass for the prior school year.

Thinking Ahead
- Ensure teachers view their data in TNCompass prior to the meeting.
    - Incorporate this meeting with existing end-of-year wrap-up meetings or beginning-of-year initial coaching conversations.
    - Both the educator and the evaluator sign off on the evaluation in TNCompass for the prior year.
    - Note that there is no required form for the summative conference. Any documentation required is at the district's discretion.

Coaching Conversations

Prior to conducting any observations, evaluators should schedule initial coaching conversations with all educators receiving a LOE or individual TVAAS (Tennessee Value Added Assessment System) score of 1. All educators benefit from initial coaching conversations, but they are only required for educators with a LOE or individual TVAAS of 1. Begin the coaching conversation by communicating the purpose and goals to help reduce teacher anxiety.

- Emphasize the need for teacher growth and improvement through changing and refining strategies instead of stating the need to "bring up scores from last year."
    - Use formative and summative data from the previous year to discuss patterns in teaching practices related to student growth.

- o Provide specific strategies, based on analysis of the teacher's areas for growth, including timelines for regular check-ins.

Grievances

T.C.A. § 49-1-302 and State Board Rule 0520-02-01-18 provides for a local-level evaluation grievance procedure, which shall provide a means for evaluated teachers and school administrators to challenge only the accuracy of the data used in the evaluation and the adherence to the evaluation rules and policies adopted by the State Board of Education. Observation scores cannot be grieved unless the grievant is alleging the score was impacted by a violation of rule or policy.

Grievances may be filed at the end of each of the three (3) components of the evaluation model: qualitative appraisal; student growth measures; and other measures of student achievement.

A grievance shall be filed no later than fifteen (15) days from the date educators receive the results for each component; otherwise, the grievance shall be considered untimely and invalid. Nothing shall preclude educators from filing a grievance at any time prior to these deadlines.

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Evaluation Flexibility Options Determined by the District

Trump Rule

Pursuant to T.C.A. 49-1-302 and in compliance with State Board Rule 0520-02-01-.02, local boards of education may adopt a policy allowing teachers whose individual student growth data demonstrates an effectiveness level of 4 or 5 to use the individual student growth score as one hundred percent (100%) of the teacher's final evaluation score.

Pacing Based on LOE vs. Individual Growth

As per state board policy 5.201, the number of observations required for teachers is based on the license type and either the LOE or individual growth score from the prior year. Districts have the option to select the LOE to determine the number of observations for all teachers *or* select the individual growth score to determine the number of observations for teachers with individual growth scores (TVAAS or alternative growth measures), even if their LOE was higher.

Student Surveys

Students spend more time interacting with teachers and instruction than any outside observer can. Student feedback from developmentally appropriate and carefully designed surveys has been shown to correlate with and even predict student achievement gains. Districts can opt into the use of student surveys for five percent of a teacher's LOE or for feedback purposes only.

Currently approved student survey instruments are:

- Tennessee School Climate Survey
- Tripod Survey
- My Student Survey
- Panorama

Additional surveys instruments may be granted approval by the State Board for use as part of an approved evaluation model via the following process:

> **Step 1:** Potential vendor secures an LEA to pilot their instrument.
>
> **Step 2**: Vendor works with the Department of Education to determine the appropriate number of survey administrations and/or pilot participants.
>
> **Step 3:** Vendor shares data generated from the pilot with the Department of Education for analysis.
>
> **Step 4:** Vendor proposes rating scale based on pilot data.
>
> **Step 5:** The Department of Education reviews the instrument, rating scale, and analyzes pilot data.
>
> **Step 6:** The Department of Education recommends survey vendors to State Board of Education for final approval.
>
> **Step 7:** LEAs may use the survey instrument for evaluative purpose in the following school year

Business Rules Applied to Evaluation Data

3-4-5 Rule

Pursuant to T.C.A. 49-1-302, and in compliance with State Board Rule 0520-02-01-.02, If a teacher's student growth data reflects attainment of a level three (3), four (4), or five (5), then the student growth data shall comprise the full fifty percent (50%) student achievement data portion of the teacher's evaluation if such use results in a higher evaluation score for the teacher. **This is automatically applied without any action by the district.**

Most Recent Individual Growth Score Override

A teacher's **most recent year's individual student growth** data shall comprise the **full thirty-five percent (35%)** of the student growth data portion of the teacher's evaluation, if such use results in a higher evaluation score for the teacher. **This is automatically applied without any action by the district.**

Level of Overall Effectiveness (LOE) Calculations

For Level of Effectiveness (LOE) scores, the standard calculations are as follows:

Tested Teachers, Teachers Implementing TN-URS and Portfolios
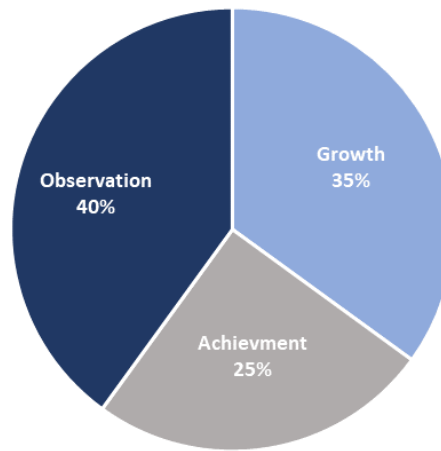
Non-Tested Teachers

Resources

The [TEAM website](#) provides resources and support for all components of the state's evaluation process including statue and policy, evaluator training, teacher and principal observation, and growth and achievement measure selection. Additionally, teachers and leaders have access to TNCompass resources, support for roster verification, and copies of the monthly evaluation configurator emails.

General TEAM Resources:

- [Observation FAQ](#)
- [TEAM Observation Guidance Documents](#)
- [TEAM Certification FAQ](#)
- [Level of Effectiveness (LOE) FAQ](#)
- [Partial Year Exemptions (PYE) Guidance](#)

TNCompass Resources: After evaluators have completed an observation for an educator, data should be put in TNCompass, the evaluation data management platform.

- [TNCompass User Guide](#)
- [TNCompass Evaluation Data Management](#)

Additional Support

With additional questions or needs for support, please reach out to the following contacts:

Questions about:	Contact	Resources
Evaluation questions	TEAM.Questions@tn.gov	https://team-tn.org/evaluation/
TNCompass technical support	Support@tncompass.org	https://tncompass.org
Portfolium technical support	Support@portfolium.com	https://portfolium.com
Portfolio content support	Portfolio.Questions@tn.gov	https://team-tn.org/portfolio-resources/
Accountability	TNED.Accountability@tn.gov	https://www.tn.gov/education/data/accountability.html
Licensure, PDPs, and experience	Educator.Licensure@tn.gov	https://www.tn.gov/education/licensing.html
TVAAS technical support	evaas_support@sas.com	https://tvaas.sas.com/contact.html
Claiming questions	Claiming.Questions@tn.gov	https://team-tn.org/data/claiming-guidance/
Assessments	TNED.Assessment@tn.gov	https://www.tn.gov/education/assessment.html