

FIRST DRAFT OF TEACHER EXCELLENCE SYSTEM (TES): AN EVOLUTION OF T-TESS

Houston ISD (HISD) is excited to release the first draft of the Teacher Excellence System (TES), a comprehensive framework designed to evaluate and enhance teacher performance and to ensure every student in every classroom across the district has access to the education that they deserve. The Teacher Excellence System (TES) has been designed specifically for our district's unique needs.

TES is a system that has been built with teacher and leader voice. Shared Decision-Making Committees (SDMCs) and the District Advisory Council (DAC) developed the plan in conjunction with the district. All campuses convened a SDMC to vote on their ideal TES framework and ensure that significant teacher voice was captured in this draft.

A Comprehensive Approach Tailored for HISD's Unique Context: T-TESS, developed for the entire state of Texas, does not entirely capture the diverse educational landscape of Houston ISD, the largest school district in Texas. TES was created with these unique needs in mind, ensuring that the evaluation system reflects the broad spectrum of teaching and learning occurring across our district.

TES considers the full breadth of teacher efforts to advance student success. TES recognizes the value of planning, instructional strategies, and the role teachers play supporting their students.

The first draft of our guidebook is included in this release. **Please see below for highlights of TES we are excited to share:**

1. **Recognizing A Teacher's Work Outside of the Classroom:** TES goes beyond traditional classroom teaching and acknowledges the many other ways in which teachers contribute to their students' success. Teachers invest substantial time outside of instructional hours—whether planning lessons, attending professional development, or collaborating with colleagues. TES captures these critical activities as part of the evaluation process via the Professionalism & Planning rubric component, ensuring that the professional growth and preparation that go into delivering high-quality instruction are valued. This component is detailed in the first draft of TES; the final rubric is undergoing teacher focus groups and feedback and will be shared in the next draft of TES. See Chapter 3 of the draft guidebook for more detail.

The Distinguished Teacher Review (DTR) process in TES takes this one step further by recognizing how teachers lead at their campus, commit to lifelong learning, and contribute to enhancement of the teaching profession. This includes, but is not limited to, recognizing the teachers who are coaching athletic teams, sponsoring extracurricular clubs, leading community engagement initiatives, and working to earn certifications and advanced degrees. These efforts are crucial to the development of well-rounded

students, and TES provides a structured way to evaluate and appreciate these additional roles. See Chapter 6 of the draft guidebook for more detail.

2. **Ensuring A Calibrated Evaluator for Every Teacher:** Teachers deserve a fair, equitable evaluation. To accomplish this, HISD must ensure that all evaluators are calibrated on the spot observation form and all rubrics used in TES. TES introduces a new Evaluator Certification process where appraisers must demonstrate calibration before being allowed to evaluate teachers. This is an important check in our system to ensure all teachers receive an accurate evaluation and have a leader they can collaborate with to advance student success.

TES also introduces more clarity to the spot observation process, specifying that teachers should receive at least one but no more than four spots per month and emphasizing that on-the-job coaching can and should happen without an evaluative component. This clarifies that coaching is meant to be collaborative and supportive so that teachers can learn and grow for our students. TES also makes the 45-minute formal observation optional for a majority of teachers.

We expect the observation and feedback process to be positive for most teachers, and we recognize that in a district this large, there may be isolated instances in which evaluation procedures are not followed by an appraiser. TES introduces a streamlined way for teachers to elevate any concerns they have about their spot or general evaluation to ensure that we can monitor and address issues and promote evaluation integrity. See Chapters 1 and 7 of the draft guidebook for more detail on the above.

3. **Valuing A Teacher's Contributions to Campus Goals:** Both SDMCs and the DAC agreed that Campus Action Plan should be included as part of the teacher's evaluation. Teachers actively contribute to the success of their entire campus every day, through delivering high quality instruction in their classroom and also serving as an active participant in their campus' larger goals. This includes, but is not limited to, the effort teachers put in to improving culture and climate amongst students, serving our highest-need student populations, and most importantly, advancing student learning. See Chapter 4 of the draft guidebook for more detail.

After gathering input from teachers and SDMCs, the majority did not recommend including the Student Survey as part of the main framework for TES. In alignment with our commitment to building TES based on input from teachers and leaders, the Student Survey will not be incorporated into teacher evaluations under TES. However, for teachers applying for Distinguished Teacher Review, the student survey for grades 3-12 will be included as part of their application. Additionally, Campus leaders may opt in or out of campus-wide participation in the student survey for non-evaluative purposes. See Chapter 8 of the draft guidebook for more detail.

4. **Measuring Student Growth and Achievement Across All Subjects:** There is a need for our teacher evaluation system to more fully account for student growth or achievement in subjects that lack standardized state or national assessments, such as the arts and special education (e.g., Group F teachers). TES addresses this by offering more clarity for Group F teachers to demonstrate student growth through a variety of metrics. Teachers have the option to choose from a menu of performance indicators to measure their students' progress. This customization ensures that every teacher, regardless of subject area, has an opportunity to show the impact they are making on their students' learning. This component is detailed in the first draft of TES (see Chapter 2); the final menu of metric options will be reviewed by teacher focus groups and SDMCs, and a final recommendation from the DAC will be included in the draft of TES submitted to the Board for adoption.

CONCLUSION

The Teacher Excellence System (TES) is an evolution of teacher evaluation that offers a more comprehensive, flexible, and holistic evaluation of teachers. It is an evaluation that considers both classroom instruction and student outcomes, and the many other ways teachers contribute to their students' academic, social, and emotional growth. In the proposed TES plan, HISD is investing in a system that better supports teacher development and, ultimately, student success.