

# **T-TESS**

## **Texas Teacher Evaluation Support System**



## **2025-2026**

## **T-TESS Reference Manual**

**TORNILLO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

*Vision: Believe we can succeed; with pride we will achieve.*

*Mission: Tornillo ISD's Mission is to empower our learning community to live their purpose by honoring values and beliefs for a holistic postsecondary journey.*

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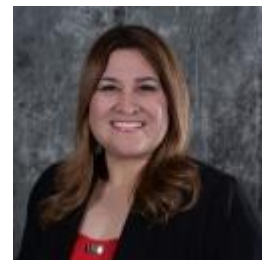
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The Tornillo Independent School District prohibits discrimination, including harassment, against any employee on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, or any other basis prohibited by law. Retaliation against anyone involved in the complaint process is a violation of District policy. Reports of discrimination based on sex, including sexual harassment, may be directed to the Title IX coordinator. The District designates the following person to coordinate its efforts to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended and Reports of discrimination based on disability may be directed to the ADA/Section 504 coordinator and to coordinate its efforts to comply with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, which incorporates and expands upon the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended: Superintendent, 19200 Cobb Avenue, Tornillo, TX 79853, (915) 765-3000.

# T-TESS Reference Manual

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## Introduction

T-TESS (Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System) is the Texas recommended appraisal process to evaluate teachers and establish a system of support. T-TESS focuses on providing continuous, timely and formative feedback to educators so they can improve their practice.

## Purpose

The Tornillo ISD T-TESS Reference Manual has been put together to ensure that you are informed on the different components that guide Tornillo ISD and the implementation of T-TESS for the 2025-2026 school year. Throughout this manual, you will find:

- **District T-TESS Calendar:**  
Information on the District appraisal schedule and procedures associated with T-TESS.
- **T-TESS Domains and Dimensions:**  
These are descriptors used in the T-TESS rubric. The Domains and Dimensions were created with the Texas Teacher Standards as the foundation of T-TESS. (For additional detailed information, download the T-TESS Teacher Handbook at <https://teachfortexas.org>.)
- **New Hire Orientation Information:**  
Schedule of T-TESS Orientation Information provided to those teachers hired after the initial District training in July 2025.
- **T-TESS Frequently Asked Questions:**  
Easily accessible information on the most commonly asked questions regarding the T-TESS.
- **Policy and Regulations:**  
Tornillo ISD guideline on what and how to implement the T-TESS.

## T-TESS Components

1. Goal-Setting
2. Evaluation Cycle (pre-conference, observation, post-conference)
3. Student Growth

## Teacher Appraisal Calendar

### Appraisal Process Timelines:

Excluded Observation Days      No appraisal observations may be conducted the day before or after a school holiday or the day of district or state testing.

**Complete by September 05, 2025      Goal Setting (All Teachers)**

**Complete by February 27, 2026      Announced Observation**

**Complete by March 27, 2026      Post Observation Conference**

**Complete by April 24, 2026      Minimum of 2 Walk-Throughs with Feedback per 9 Weeks, per Appraisee.**

**Complete by May 08, 2026      Complete EOY Summative Goals / Conferences**

- All T-TESS Appraisers must be T-TESS certified.
- All Post Observation Conferences must be completed within five (5) to seven (7) working days after the observation.
- Appraisers should ensure that all teachers have been T-TESS trained prior to beginning the appraisal cycle.
- T-TESS training for teachers hired after July 31, 2025 will be trained within one month of their hire date. Please contact the respective Campus Principal or the Human Resources Manager for orientation / training information. Appraisals may not begin until 3 weeks after the training is completed.
- “Teacher Response and Appeal” and “Request for Second Appraiser” information is included in the following section.

## Teacher Response and Appeals and Request for Second Appraiser

A teacher may submit a written response or rebuttal at the following times:

- a. After receiving a written observation summary, or any other written documentation associated with the teacher's appraisal; and or
- b. After receiving a written summative annual appraisal report. §150.1005(a)

Any written response or rebuttal must be submitted within ten (10) working days of receiving written observation summary, a written end of year annual report, or any other documentation associated with the teacher's appraisal. At the discretion of the appraiser, the time period may be extended to 15 working days. §150.1005(b)

A teacher may request a **second appraisal** by another appraiser at the following times:

- a. For Domains I, II, and III, as identified in §150.10052(a), after receiving a written observation summary with which the teacher disagrees; and/or
- b. For Domain IV, as identified in §150.1002(a), after receiving a written end of year annual appraisal report with which the teacher disagrees.

Within ten (10) working days of receiving a written observation summary or written end of year appraisal report, the teacher shall submit a hard copy request to the Human Resources Manager to include the name of the campus, the name of the teacher's appraiser along with the date of receipt of the written observation summary and written summative annual appraisal report.

If a teacher requests a second appraisal by another certified district appraiser, the second appraiser will be determined in accordance with the following:

- The second appraiser will be randomly selected by the Superintendent or designee from a pre-established roster of trained appraisers.
- Trained Appraisers: Campus Administrators; Instructional Coordinator; and Superintendent.
- The formal observation for a second appraisal shall be unscheduled.

The second appraisal shall make observations and walk-throughs as necessary to evaluate Domains I through III. The second appraiser shall use cumulative data from the first appraisal to evaluate Domain IV. Cumulative data may also be used by the second appraiser to evaluate other domains. §150.1005

Should the teacher desire written comments in response to the written summative annual appraisal report, said written request must be made of the appraiser within ten (10) working days of receiving the report. The appraiser must respond within ten (10) working days of receipt of the request. A teacher desiring to present a grievance concerning his/her appraisal will utilize the procedure outlined in the District Policy DGBA.

## **T-TESS Domains and Dimensions**

### **Domain I: Planning**

#### **Dimensions:**

- 1.1- Standards and Alignment
- 1.2- Data and Assessment
- 1.3- Knowledge of Students
- 1.4- Activities

### **Domain II: Instruction**

#### **Dimensions:**

- 2.1- Achieving Expectations
- 2.2- Content Knowledge and Expertise
- 2.3- Communication
- 2.4- Differentiation
- 2.5- Monitor and Adjust

### **Domain III: Learning Environment**

#### **Dimensions:**

- 3.1- Classroom and Environment, Routines and Procedures
- 3.2- Managing Student Behavior
- 3.3- Classroom Culture

### **Domain IV: Professional Practice and Responsibilities**

#### **Dimensions:**

- 4.1- Professional Demeanor and Ethics
- 4.2- Goal Setting
- 4.3- Professional Development
- 4.4- School Community Involvement

### **Domain V: Student Growth**

## Student Growth

Beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, student growth became a required component in teacher appraisal for any district to which Texas Education Code Sec. 21.351 and 21.352 apply. During the 2025-2026 academic year, Tornillo ISD appraisees will follow the Student Learning Objective (SLO) process by identifying a focus area, developing the skill profiles rubrics and measuring student growth.

Tornillo ISD teachers will be provided with a single overall summative rating, student growth must count at least 20% of the overall summative rating. In that sense, student growth acts like the fifth domain, with the four rubric domains accounting for the other 80% of the teacher's overall summative rating.

For student growth to be a valuable tool in continuous improvement, educators should keep the following in mind:

- Although it's called student growth, it is really about teacher growth
- Student growth is not the end in itself – the key to a meaningful experience with student growth measures is the ability to translate the student growth outcomes into feedback on pedagogical practices
- In contrast to an observation, which captures impact in a snapshot of time, student growth captures impact over an entire course
- Honest assessment of pedagogy, sincere reflection on the approach to planning, and a commitment to adjustment are the best ways to improve student growth
- Ratings are less important than the process of professional growth

Student growth measures how much a student progresses academically during his or her time with a teacher. It takes into consideration a student's entering skill level when measuring how much the student grew over time, and, as opposed to measuring student proficiency on an assessment, student growth isn't concerned with whether a student passes a particular test or reaches a predetermined and uniform benchmark. It considers equally students who enter behind grade level, on grade level, and beyond grade level, tailoring growth expectations to each student's context.

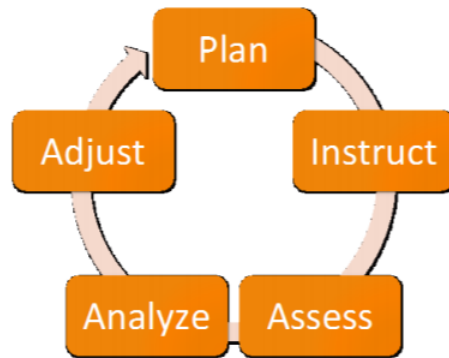
Student growth has the following characteristics:

- Measures academic progress over time
- Establishes a baseline for each student covered in the measure that captures what learning the student brought into class
- Tailors the expectation for growth to the student (reflects rigorous instruction and high expectations, but is not a uniform expectation for all students) considering...

Student Growth Measures Are:


- A means to teacher growth (reflect, assess, adjust, and develop over time)

- A concentration look at instructional impact through the lens of the most important skill(s)
- A part of a teacher's own cycle of development (results could feed in to Goal Setting and Professional Development plans)
- Evidence-based



Process-based student growth measures are less about cut-scores and single assessments and more about the “teaching loop,” where teachers engage in evidence-based instruction and leads to consistent adjustments and improvements to practice and planning:

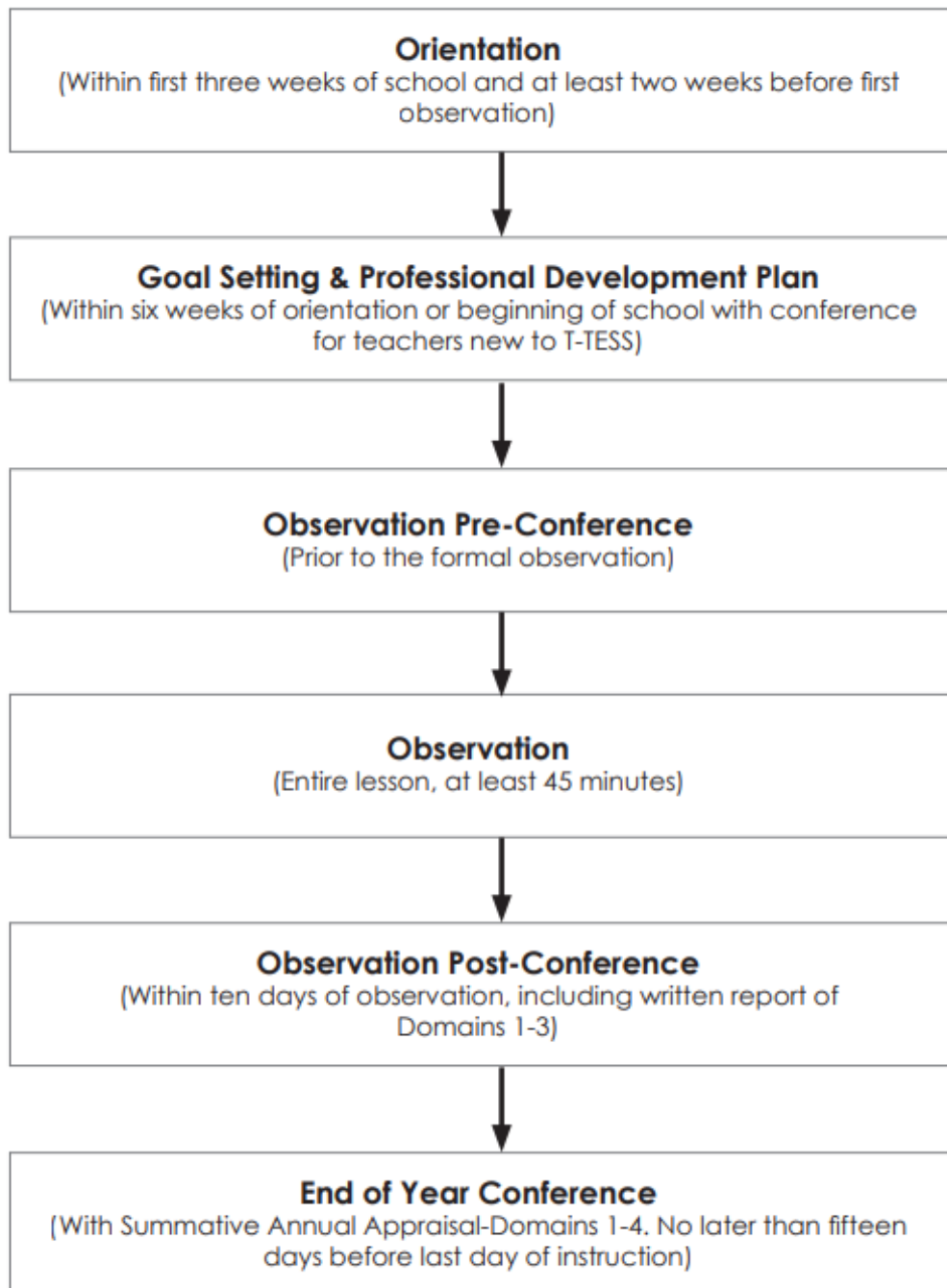
## Evaluation Process



Current Year			Next Year
Weeks 1-6	Weeks 6 through End-of-Year Conferences	At Least 15 Days Prior to the Last Day of Instruction	Weeks 1-6
<b>Teacher Orientation</b> (No later than the first three weeks of school and at least two weeks before the first observation)	<b>Teacher Orientation for Late Hires</b>  <b>Goal-Setting and Professional Development Plan for Late Hires</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Submitted to the appraiser within six weeks from the day of the completion of the orientation.</li> </ul>	<b>End-of-Year Conferences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review summative scores for Domains I, II and III</li> <li>- Review the data and evidence gathered throughout the appraisal year for Domain IV, including the teacher's evidence for this domain/dimensions</li> </ul>	<b>Teacher Orientation for teachers new to T-TESS, the district, and when district policy has changed from the last orientation.</b> <i>(No later than the first three weeks of school and at least two weeks before the first observation)</i>
<b>Goal-Setting and Professional Development (GSPD) Plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Submitted to the appraiser for approval within six weeks from the day of completion of the orientation.</li> <li>- A GSPD Conference is required for a teacher in the first year of appraisal under T-TESS and teachers new to the district.</li> </ul>	<b>Ongoing review of teacher and student data</b>  <b>Ongoing review of the GSPD plan to formatively assess progress towards goals, professional development impact, and teacher and student performance</b>  <b>Ongoing collection of evidence to support Domain IV</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher and appraiser</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review results of the performance of the teachers' students</li> <li>- Review potential goals and professional development plans for the next school year</li> </ul> <i>Note: Domain 4 is not scored until after the teacher has been afforded an opportunity to present evidence related to each of the four dimensions during the end-of-year conference.</i>	<b>Goal-Setting and Professional Development (GSPD) Plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Returning teachers review the goal(s) established at the EOY Conference to determine if changes are needed, and submit within first six weeks of instruction.</li> <li>- New teachers are guided through the GSPD process to self-assess, develop a goals, and establish a professional development plan, then submit within six weeks of the orientation.</li> </ul>
<b>Informal observations and walkthroughs with ongoing feedback to support and develop teacher practices</b>			
<b>Formal observation window established per local policy – Excludes/prohibits observations in the two weeks following the orientation</b>			

## T-TESS Process

# T-TESS Process



## T-TESS Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. Who will the District choose to conduct classroom observations on each campus?**
  - *District and Campus administrators who are trained in T-TESS will conduct classroom observations.*
- 2. How many formal observations shall be conducted each year?**
  - *One formal observation shall be conducted for the 2025-2026 school year with unlimited walkthroughs.*
- 3. Will the observation be announced (scheduled) or unannounced (not-scheduled)?**
  - *The observation will be announced (scheduled).*
- 4. Will this number be the same for both beginning and veteran teachers?**
  - *Yes, one formal observation with unlimited walkthroughs will be the same for both beginning and veteran teachers.*
- 5. Will this number be the same for core and non-core subject area teacher?**
  - *Yes, one formal observation with unlimited walkthroughs will be the same for both core and non-core subject area teachers.*
- 6. How will the District provide T-TESS orientation for teachers who are hired after the academic year begins?**
  - *The District will provide an orientation for New Teacher Hires*
- 7. Will walkthroughs be conducted for the purpose of feedback only, or will the data be included in the overall scoring?**
  - *Walkthroughs are inclusive of the overall scoring for the end of year score.*
- 8. Will the District choose to make the pre-conference a required component?**
  - *Yes, the pre-conference is a required component of the T-TESS cycle.*
- 9. Does the beginning of the year teacher self-assessment and goal setting require a face-to-face conference with an administrator?**
  - *Yes, teachers and appraisers work collaboratively to complete the requirement.*
- 10. If the pre-conference is required, what will the teacher and appraiser do in preparation? What artifacts will be expected?**
  - *Being that the pre-conference is required, the teacher and the appraiser may have a checklist of artifacts to have prepared such as lesson plans, student expectations, and or a daily schedule.*
- 11. Will teachers be expected to conduct a self-assessment (self-scoring) on the rubric following the lesson observation?**
  - *No, teachers will not be expected to conduct a self-assessment following the lesson observation.*
- 12. What guidelines will be put in place to ensure post-conferences are conducted in a timely manner? What will the time parameters be for completion of the face-to-face post-conference?**

- *The post-conference is required for all formal classroom observations and must be conducted between 5 to 7 but definitely by no later than 10 business days from the date of the observation (see the T-TESS Calendar).*
- 13. If a teacher has a question or concern about an observation score or process, what guidelines are in place to afford due process?**
- *If a teacher has a question or concern about an observation score or process, the teacher may rebut or request a second appraisal.*
- 14. If a teacher has T-TESS Dimensions scored as Improvement Needed, what local measures will be put in place to guide professional growth and improvement?**
- *Campus administration will provide and put a support system in place to assist the educator in the area(s) of deficiency.*
- 15. How will the District document the T-TESS process?**
- *The District will document through Eduphoria.*
- 16. What will appraisers archive, in addition to the end of year observation summary, each year to document T-TESS performance?**
- *The appraisers will archive goal setting and walkthroughs.*
- 17. Who will be responsible for monitoring proper and timely data entry and reporting of T-TESS appraisal data?**
- *The department of Human Resources will ensure to monitor proper and timely data entry reporting of the T-TESS appraisal data.*
- 18. Will the District use the state-provided data management system for T-TESS?**
- *The District will use the Strive (Eduphoria) as the data management system for T-TESS.*
- 19. How will T-TESS observation data and summary reports be used systematically to inform professional development?**
- *Campus administration will provide professional development opportunities in response to data gathered from T-TESS observation and summary report.*
- 20. How will Student Growth affect my overall rating?**
- *Teachers will be provided a single overall summative rating. Student growth will count at least 20% of the overall summative rating. The Student Growth component acts like the fifth domain, with the four rubric domains accounting for the other 80% of the teacher's overall summative rating.*

## Policy and Regulations

TORNILLO ISD  
071908

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL  
EVALUATION OF TEACHERS

DNA  
(LOCAL)

APPRAISAL SYSTEM	<p>The formal appraisal of district teachers shall be in accordance with the Texas Teacher Evaluation Support System (T-TESS).</p> <p>All district teachers will be appraised each year.</p> <p>Components of the appraisal process, such as classroom observations and walk-throughs, will be conducted as frequently as necessary to ensure that teachers receive appropriate guidance.</p> <p>The district shall establish an appraisal calendar each year.</p>
T-TESS GOAL SETTING	<p>Goal setting will take place on a yearly basis. Goals collaboratively developed by the educator and administrator will be aligned with the Texas Educator Performance Standards.</p>
PRE-CONFERENCE	<p>A pre-conference meeting will be held prior to each formal evaluation. During the pre-conference meeting the date and time of the formal observation will be scheduled. Pre-conference meetings cannot be waived.</p>
FORMAL OBSERVATION	<p>All district teachers will receive one formal observation. The appraiser will observe a minimum of 45 minutes or for the duration of a full cycle (beginning, middle, and end).</p>
POST- CONFERENCE	<p>A post conference meeting will be held within ten (10) business days following the formal observation. Post conference meetings cannot be waived.</p>
END-OF-YEAR CONFERENCE	<p>A summative annual conference will be held with each teacher each year. Summative conference meetings cannot be waived.</p>
ALTERNATE APPRAISER	<p>A teacher may request a second appraiser within ten working days of receiving a written observation summary or a written summative annual appraisal report. If a teacher requests a second appraisal by another certified district appraiser, the second appraiser will be determined in accordance with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The second appraiser will be randomly selected by the Superintendent or designee from a pre-established roster of trained appraisers.</li><li>• Trained Appraisers: Campus Administrators; Bilingual Coordinator; and Superintendent.</li><li>• The formal observation for a second appraisal shall be unscheduled.</li></ul>

SCORES	The Board of Trustees shall ensure that the Superintendent or designee establishes procedures regarding how domain scores from first and second appraisals will be used.
GRIEVANCES	Complaints regarding a teacher appraisal should be addressed in accordance with DGBA(LOCAL).

NOTE:	This document aligns with the appraisal practices recommended by TEA for the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) as described at the TEA site <a href="https://teachfortexas.org">https://teachfortexas.org</a> .
TEACHER APPRAISAL SYSTEM	<p>T-TESS is a process that seeks to develop habits of continuous improvement with evidence-based feedback and professional development decisions based on that feedback through ongoing dialogue and collaboration.</p> <p>Components of the appraisal process, such as classroom observations and walk-throughs, will be conducted as frequently as necessary to ensure that teachers receive appropriate guidance.</p>
SELF-ASSESSMENT AND GOAL SETTING	<p>The teacher self-assessment, goal setting, and professional development processes are all interwoven and applied throughout the school year to positively impact each teacher's professional practices and ultimately increase student performance.</p> <p>Each teacher will review data and reflect on his or her professional practice, including reviewing the domains, dimensions, and descriptors of the T-TESS rubric.</p> <p>A teacher who is new to the district or who is in the first year of the appraisal process will receive an orientation and will be guided through the self-assessment and goal-setting process to establish a professional development plan. Within six weeks of completing the orientation, a teacher who is new to the district or who is in the first year of the appraisal process will formulate targeted goals on the Teacher Self-Assessment and Goal-Setting Form and schedule an in-person goal setting conference with his or her appraiser. After the conference, the teacher will submit his or her Goal-Setting and Professional Development Plan to the appraiser for approval.</p> <p>A returning teacher will review the goal(s) and professional development plan established at the end-of-year conference to determine if changes are needed. The teacher will submit to the appraiser his or her Goal-Setting and Professional Development Plan within the first six weeks of the school year to the appraiser for approval.</p>
IMPLEMENTATION OF GOALS	Each teacher will regularly monitor progress toward his or her goals. If the teacher feels the goals need to be modified, the teacher should make an appointment with his or her appraiser to discuss individual progress toward his or her goals and / or obtain additional support.

PRE-CONFERENCE	<p>The purpose of the pre-conference is for the appraiser and teacher to mutually discuss the upcoming formative observation with a focus on the interrelationships between planning, instruction, the learning environment, and student outcomes. The pre-conference will be conducted with ten working days of an announced observation.</p> <p>The pre-conference will provide the teacher an opportunity to demonstrate his or her knowledge and skills for the planning domain and its correlating dimensions. The conference is primarily focused on the upcoming observation and what the teacher has planned to ensure that the instructional objective(s) are met.</p>
FORMAL OBSERVATION	<p>The teacher will be formally observed in the classroom one time unless the appraiser / teacher deem additional observations to be necessary. A classroom observation will be an instructional period or a complete lesson within an instructional period that consists of a minimum of 45 minutes of instruction.</p> <p>By mutual, written consent between the appraiser and the teacher, the required minimum of 45 minutes of observation may be conducted in shorter time segments. The time segments must aggregate to at least 45 minutes.</p> <p>Each teacher may have additional walk-throughs that provide actionable, timely feedback, which will allow the teacher to make efficient and contextual professional development choices to help refine the practice. If data gathered during the additional walk-throughs will impact the teacher's summative appraisal rating, a written summary will be shared with the teacher within ten working days after the completion of the additional walk-throughs.</p>
NOTICE	<p>The formal observation for a teacher's appraisal will be announced by date and time.</p> <p>The district will establish an appraisal calendar each year, and provide the calendar to teachers within the first three weeks of the school year.</p>
POST- CONFERENCE	<p>All observations will include an in-person post conference within ten working days of the observation.</p> <p>The overall purpose of the post-conference is to provide a teacher an opportunity to self-reflect on the execution of his or her lesson, including the impact on student performance. The results will be used to inform and guide the teacher regarding future practices and growth.</p>

END-OF-YEAR CONFERENCE	<p>The end-of-year conference will be held at least 15 days prior to the last day of instruction to discuss overall performance for the year. End-of-year conference are mandatory.</p> <p>Each teacher will provide his or her appraiser with an update regarding the professional goals and development plan that were developed at the beginning of the year.</p>
PRELIMINARY GOAL-SETTING AND PLANNING FOR THE FOLLOWING SCHOOL YEAR	<p>Following the end-of-year conference, the appraiser and teacher will discuss how the current year self-assessment and goal-setting process will continue into the next school year for continuous improvement including professional development to support learning.</p>
SUMMATIVE ANNUAL APPRAISAL REPORT	<p>A written summative annual appraisal report will be provided to the teacher within ten working days of the conclusion of the end-of-year conference. The report will be shared with the teacher no later than 15 working days before the last day instruction for students. The written summative annual appraisal report will be placed in the teacher's personnel file by the end of the appraisal period.</p>
APPRAISER	<p>Each teacher will be appraised by a certified appraiser. If the certified appraiser is not the teacher's supervisor, the appraiser will be selected from the list of certified appraisers approved by the Board of Trustees.</p>
SECOND APPRAISER	<p>A teacher may request a second appraiser within ten working days of receiving a written observation summary or a written summative annual appraisal report. If a teacher requests a second appraisal by another certified district appraiser, the second appraiser will be determined in accordance with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The second appraiser will be randomly selected by the Superintendent or designee from a pre-established roster of trained appraisers.</li><li>• Trained Appraisers: Campus Administrators; Instructional Coordinator; and Superintendent.</li><li>• The formal observation for a second appraisal shall be unscheduled.</li></ul>
TEACHER RESPONSE AND REBUTTAL	<p>A teacher may submit a written response or rebuttal within ten working days of receiving a written observation summary, a written summative annual appraisal report, or any other written documentation associated with the teacher's appraisal.</p>

Tornillo ISD  
071908

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL  
EVALUATION OF TEACHERS

DNA  
REGULATION

GRIEVANCES

Complaints regarding a teacher appraisal should be addressed in accordance with DGBA(LOCAL).

LAST REVISED

July 26, 2017

DATE ISSUED: 07/19/2016  
DNA  
REGULATION

ADOPTED:

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## References

For additional information, see the following sources:

- <http://tea.texas.gov>
- <https://teachfortexas.org/>
- <https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/laws-and-rules/texas-administrative-code/texas-administrative-code-title-19-part-2>

For additional assistance, please contact the Human Resources Department: 915-765-3050.