

DATE:	June 4, 2026
SUBJECT:	T-TESS Refresh: Engagement Update and Pilot
CATEGORY:	Teacher Appraisal
NEXT STEPS:	Learn more about the T-TESS Refresh engagement outcomes and begin to plan for implementation in 2027-28

The purpose of this communication is to provide districts with an update on the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) Refresh, including information on the updated pilot rubric, field testing findings, and early implementation considerations.

Background

T-TESS is used by 89% of Texas school systems and plays a central role in supporting teacher development and instructional quality across the state. With the updated educator standards, TEA has undertaken a multi-year process to align T-TESS with these standards and address educator and school system feedback.

The refresh process has been guided by several principles: aligning to updated standards, reducing subjectivity, increasing clarity and universal applicability, and maintaining continuity with the current system. The goal is to ensure that T-TESS continues to define excellent teaching for Texas educators and supports districts in developing, supporting, and recognizing effective instruction.

Overview of the Updated T-TESS Rubric

The updated rubric, referred to as T-TESS 2, includes 12 dimensions and maintains four domains: Instructional Preparation, Instructional Delivery, Learning Environment, and Professional Practices and Responsibilities. The rubric streamlines and clarifies expectations, reduces redundancy, and incorporates research-based instructional practices. Some key shifts include:

- The addition of indicators within dimensions. Indicators clearly name each skill and include evidence of student learning at higher performance levels.
- Performance levels remain on a five-point scale, with clearer distinctions between levels. The rubric now spans from 'Improvement Needed' to 'Distinguished,' which allows skills to build as teachers progress.

A full version of the rubric, along supporting materials, is available on [the T-TESS website](#).

Stakeholder Engagement and Field Testing

Over the past year, TEA has engaged educators statewide through a Stakeholder Advisory Committee, ESC partners, and field testing districts. The Stakeholder Advisory Committee included 30 members selected from more than 1,300 applicants, representing every region and bringing deep classroom and leadership experience.

Field testing occurred across multiple districts during the 2025-26 school year. Teachers and leaders reported that the updated pilot rubric is clearer, more coherent, and better aligned to district

instructional priorities. More than 95% of surveyed teachers and 100% of surveyed school leaders indicated that the updated pilot rubric represents an improvement over the current T-TESS rubric.

2026-27 T-TESS Pilot

During the 2026–27 school year, 15 school systems have been chosen to participate in a pilot of T-TESS 2.

The pilot will help TEA assess whether the updated rubric and system:

- clearly define effective teaching across contexts,
- support consistent calibration among appraisers,
- align with district instructional priorities and state initiatives, and
- function effectively under real-world implementation conditions.

Statewide Rollout Timeline

Below is the anticipated timeline for the adoption of T-TESS 2:

- 2026–27: Pilot and refinement of the updated rubric. Recertification training begins in spring and summer. More information on this will be available in the fall.
- 2027–28: Recommended implementation year for districts adopting T-TESS 2
- 2028–29: Implementation year for districts unable to implement in 2027-28

Training: ESC-led and TEA-supported training opportunities will be available prior to rollout. More details will be provided in the fall.

Next Steps for Districts

- Learn more about the T-TESS Refresh and the T-TESS 2 pilot rubric on [the T-TESS website](#).
- Begin initial planning discussions with relevant district personnel.