Research Report

Professional Development and Educator Evaluations

May 19, 2020

Prepared for

THE HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
AND THE SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

2019-2020 Adequacy Study

BUREAU OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to review professional development funding, expenditures, and requirements as well as teacher and principal evaluations in Arkansas. In addition to analyses of relevant data, the report includes survey results from teachers, principals, and superintendents regarding these topics.

According to Arkansas statute, the purpose of professional development (PD) is to "improve teaching and learning in order to facilitate individual, school-wide, and system-wide improvements designed to ensure that all students demonstrate proficiency on state academic standards" (§ 6-17-704(b)). Professional development is funded through categorical funds to restrict the use of money for those purposes.

Arkansas has two statewide evaluation systems in place to observe, evaluate, and support teachers and principals. These include the Teacher Excellence and Support System (TESS) and the Leader Excellence and Development System (LEADS).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS

According to Arkansas statute, districts must include no fewer than six PD days in educator contracts; however, this requirement does not apply to "teachers employed in a Civilian Student Training Program or the Arkansas National Guard Youth Challenge Program" (§ 6-17-2402). Arkansas statute (§ 6-17-704) defines PD as a "set of coordinated planned learning activities for teachers, administrators, and non-licensed school employees" that is also required by statute or by the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) or meets the following criteria:

- Is part of the minimum number of PD hours or professional learning credits as determined by DESE required by law or by DESE;
- Improves the knowledge, skills, and effectiveness of teachers;
- Improves the knowledge and skills of administrators and paraprofessionals concerning effective instructional strategies, methods, and skills;
- Leads to improved student academic achievement; and
- Is research-based and standards-based.

Additionally, PD shall comply with DESE's Rules Governing Professional Development and may provide educators with the knowledge and skills needed to teach:

- Students with disabilities, including without limitation autism; and
- Culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Arkansas statute (§ 6-17-704) also requires districts to annually prepare a PD plan in which "teachers, administrators, and classified school employees shall be involved with in the design, implementation, and evaluation of their respective professional development offerings under the plan". Additionally, "evaluation results shall be given to each group of employees in the school district and used to improve professional development offerings."

Act 969 of 2013 established that one of the following topics is required for educators each year on a rotating basis over four years (previously some of the topics were required annually):

- Two hours on child maltreatment;
- Two hours on parental involvement;
- Two hours on teen suicide awareness and prevention; and
- Two hours on Arkansas history (to teachers who provide instruction in Arkansas history)

Act 1294 of 2013 required all teachers to receive professional awareness on dyslexia by 2014-15. Act 765 of 2017 requires that districts annually make available thirty minutes of PD on human trafficking.

Athletic coaches working in school districts are required to complete training every three years on the following (§ 6-18-708):

- Concussions, dehydration, or other health emergencies;
- Environmental issues that threaten the health or safety of students;
- Communicable diseases; and
- Sudden cardiac arrest (added by Act 1013 of 2017).

Act 1063 of 2017 requires districts and open-enrollment public charters to provide PD in specific scientific reading instruction. For teachers licensed at the elementary level, districts and charters must provide PD for one of the "prescribed pathways to obtaining a proficiency credential in knowledge and practices in scientific reading instruction." For teachers licensed at levels other than elementary, districts and charters must provide PD for one of the "prescribed pathways to obtaining an awareness credential in knowledge and practices in scientific reading instruction." Act 83 of 2019 changed some of those requirements. The requirements for teachers licensed at the elementary level also now include teachers with a special education license in K-12 and teachers licensed as reading specialists in K-12. It also added that school districts and charter schools must include a literacy plan in their annual school-level improvement plan that also includes a PD program that is aligned with the literacy needs of the public school districts and is based on the science of reading.

Act 1029 of 2019 made additional changes to the PD requirements. It requires two hours of PD for licensed public-school personnel in bullying prevention and recognition of the relationship between incidents of bullying and risk of suicide.

PD can be earned in the following ways: approved conferences, workshops, institutes, individual learning, mentoring, peer-coaching, study groups, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification, distance learning, micro-credentialing[1] approved by the department, internships, and college or university course work (§ 6-17-704(d)). Additionally, up to 12 hours of PD credit may be earned by licensed personnel for time required at the beginning of the school year for planning and preparing a curriculum and other instructional materials (§ 6-17-705(a)), contingent on meeting certain requirements.

Act 666 of 2019 changed language in all statutes that referenced "PD" hours to also include "professional learning credit". This gives teachers more flexibility because they can include real-world experience, like micro-credentialing, to meet their required PD.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY HISTORY

The General Assembly provided PD funding for the first time in 2004-05. In their 2003 report to the General Assembly, Lawrence O. Picus and Associates, an education finance consulting firm hired by the General Assembly in 2003, recommended that additional funding be provided for PD. They also stated that "improving teacher effectiveness through high quality PD is arguably as important as all of the other resource strategies identified; better instruction is the key aspect of the education system that will improve student learning."[2] The report outlined four strategies to implement an effective PD program:

1. Some time during the summer for intensive training institutes;
2. On-site coaching for all teachers;

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[1] Microcredentials involve educators earning credits by demonstrating competency of a skill or skill set in their classroom while receiving effective and timely feedback.

[2] *An Evidence Based Approach to School Finance Adequacy in Arkansas.* Lawrence O. Picus and Associates.

3. Collaborative work with teachers in their schools during planning and preparation periods; and
4. Funds for trainings.

In response to these recommendations, the General Assembly passed multiple laws. Act 59 of the 2nd Extraordinary Session of 2003 extended the basic teacher contract length to 190 days, which was previously set at 185 days in the Rules and Regulations Governing the Standards for Accreditation, and included a total of ten PD days. To pay for these additional days, about $101 per student was added to the funding allocated for teacher salaries. The foundation funding rate established by Act 59 included funding for 2.5 instructional facilitators to help with the on-site coaching Picus and Associates recommended. Act 462 of 2003 called for teachers to have planning periods (200 minutes each week) in increments of no less than 40 minutes to allow for more collaborative work with other teachers. Act 59 provided $50 per student in PD funding, or $25,000 for a prototypical school of 500 students, to bring in trainers, pay for travel associated with intensive summer institutes, and cover other miscellaneous PD costs.

These provisions remained relatively unchanged through 2013, when the General Assembly significantly reduced the amount of PD funding provided to districts. To buoy the public-school employee insurance plan, Act 2 of the 1st Extraordinary Session of 2013 reduced the PD funding rate by 40%, from $54 (which had been established for FY2015 during the 2013 regular session) to $32.40 per student. This funding change was made with the expectation that the State Board of Education would reduce the required number of PD hours from 60 to 36. DESE's Rules Governing Professional Development were then changed to reduce the required PD days to six days (or 36 hours) of PD in the basic contract for educators (1.02.1). In 2015, the General Assembly passed Act 44, which reduced the number of PD days in the basic teacher contract from ten to no less than six. DESE's Rules Governing Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts still requires ten PD days but is in the process of revising that to match the requirements set forth in statute. Even though the number of PD days were reduced to six, the total number of contract days remains at 190.

The BLR asked about the loss of these days when it surveyed superintendents in fall 2019.[3]

Table 1 - District Survey Question: In 2015, the General Assembly reduced the number of days districts are required to use as PD days from 10 to 6 but did not reduce the number of days required in the basic teacher contract. What is your district doing with the remaining 4 days?

Continuing to treat them as PD days	87%
Increasing the student interaction days	3%
Paying teachers for these days, but not requiring them to work	2%
Other, Describe	8%

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[3] As part of the 2020 Adequacy Study, the BLR conducted online surveys of superintendents and principals in Arkansas. The BLR also visited a randomly selected, representative sample of 74 schools and interviewed their principals. Teachers in the 74 randomly selected schools were also invited to complete an online survey. The online surveys allowed the BLR to collect specific, quantitative data from districts, while the principal interviews were asked more open-ended, qualitative questions. This report provides the questions and responses from all four surveys related to PD and TESS/LEADS. Responses to other survey questions have been or will be presented in other reports throughout the Adequacy Study process. The superintendent surveys were conducted using online questionnaires. The superintendent survey was distributed beginning July 23, 2019, and the last district responded on November 21, 2019. The BLR received responses from all 235 school districts and 24 of the 25 open-enrollment public charter schools. The Friendship Aspire-LR open-enrollment public charter school (formerly Covenant Keepers) did not respond. (The Excel Center open-enrollment public charter school was not surveyed because they serve adult students). The online principal survey was distributed from Oct. 14 through Dec. 12, 2019 with a 72% response rate.

As seen in Table 1, 87% of superintendents said they continue to treat the extra four days as PD days. About 8% of superintendents responded that they are treating these days in other ways. Among the 8%, 55% said they use these days in a combination of the options noted in the chart as well as using the days as parent interaction time. Two superintendents responded that at least one or more of these additional days are used to work on their professional learning community (PLC). PLCs will be discussed later in this report.

ARKANSAS IDEAS

ArkansasIDEAS (Internet Delivered Education for Arkansas Schools) is a partnership between DESE and the Arkansas Educational Television Network (AETN) to provide online PD for Arkansas licensed educators and those wishing to obtain an Arkansas educator license. ArkansasIDEAS "connects K-12 educators with quality ADE-approved PD and educational opportunities."[4] It also offers programs of study to assist teachers in "obtaining an Arkansas Educator License or additional grade band endorsements added to an existing license."[5]

Additionally, it provides PD that helps teachers understand new statutory requirements such as dyslexia intervention and Common Core State Standards.

ArkansasIDEAS resulted from Act 2318 of 2005. Act 2318 created the Arkansas Online Professional Development Initiative. The idea for the statewide program was to pool resources and create one online system that individual school districts and educational service cooperatives could use for PD at no charge. DESE set up the online system by awarding grants to AETN and other organizations to establish and maintain a portal for online courses, known as ArkansasIDEAS. The program develops some course content and subscribes to other course content developed by outside vendors. While AETN now receives all the program funds, other organizations, such as educational cooperatives, have received funding in the past.

Special language included in Act 2131 of 2005 authorized DESE to use up to $4 million of the PD funding to "develop and implement statewide PD support systems for teachers that will benefit student achievement." This special language was included in each Public-School Fund appropriation bill until 2015 when it was removed to reduce unnecessary language. However, it was re-added in 2017 with Act 1044 at the urging of DESE and made effective July 1, 2017. When this special language was re-added in 2017, the language was amended to require DESE to report information back to the state including annual expenditure information, statistics pertaining to users, course offerings, course hours completed, and certificates awarded. The new language also reduced the $4 million amount to $3.5 million due to DESE's new grant review process. AETN is required to report at the end of the fiscal year the amount of their grant monies that remain unspent. DESE lowered the grant award amount in response to these reports to have AETN use existing fund balances for the program.

In 2015, ArkansasIDEAS switched to a new Learning Management Software (LMS). The LMS user registration system is now integrated in the DESE's educator licensure system, allowing teachers who are registering to use ArkansasIDEAS to be more quickly identified as licensed educators and granted access. The new system requires all users to register or reregister annually, allowing a fresh look at the numbers of people using the system. By the end of 2015, 20,537 educators had registered to access the portal. That number increased to 58,825 at the end of FY19 with 631 courses being offered. As of the end of 2019, ArkansasIDEAS has awarded 2.8 million PD credit hours since 2007.[6]

According to the FY19 year-end report, the most popular courses taken include trainings on the science of reading, family and community engagement, human trafficking, child maltreatment, and dyslexia. Most of those are state-mandated subject areas of PD.

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[4] http://ideas.aetn.org/
[5] http://ideas.aetn.org/
[6] AETN. ArkansasIDEAS FY 2018-19 Year-End Report.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Beginning in the 2017-18 school year, DESE, in partnership with Solution Tree (a private organization that provides PD resources, training, and support to K-12 educators), started the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) at Work Pilot Program. This was a result of recommendations from the 2016 Adequacy report. Funding was first provided by Act 427 of 2017, which required that additional funding provided for PD above the amount required by statute (currently $32.40 per student) shall be used by DESE for the development and administration of the PLCs. In 2017-18, this excess amount included $4 million which was paid to Solution Tree to implement a pilot PLC program. In each school year since 2017-18, 10-12 additional schools and districts have been chosen from a rigorous application and evaluation process to participate in the program. The participating schools and districts are listed in Table 3 at the bottom of this page and are representative of all five regions in the state. Table 2 below shows the breakdown of how the PD appropriation was distributed in the last two school years.

In 2019, Act 667 increased the PD per-student amount to $40.80 beginning in 2020-21, but also increased the amount available for PLCs. In the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years, additional funding of up to $12.5 million will be provided for PLCs.

Table 2: Breakdown of how PD funding is distributed

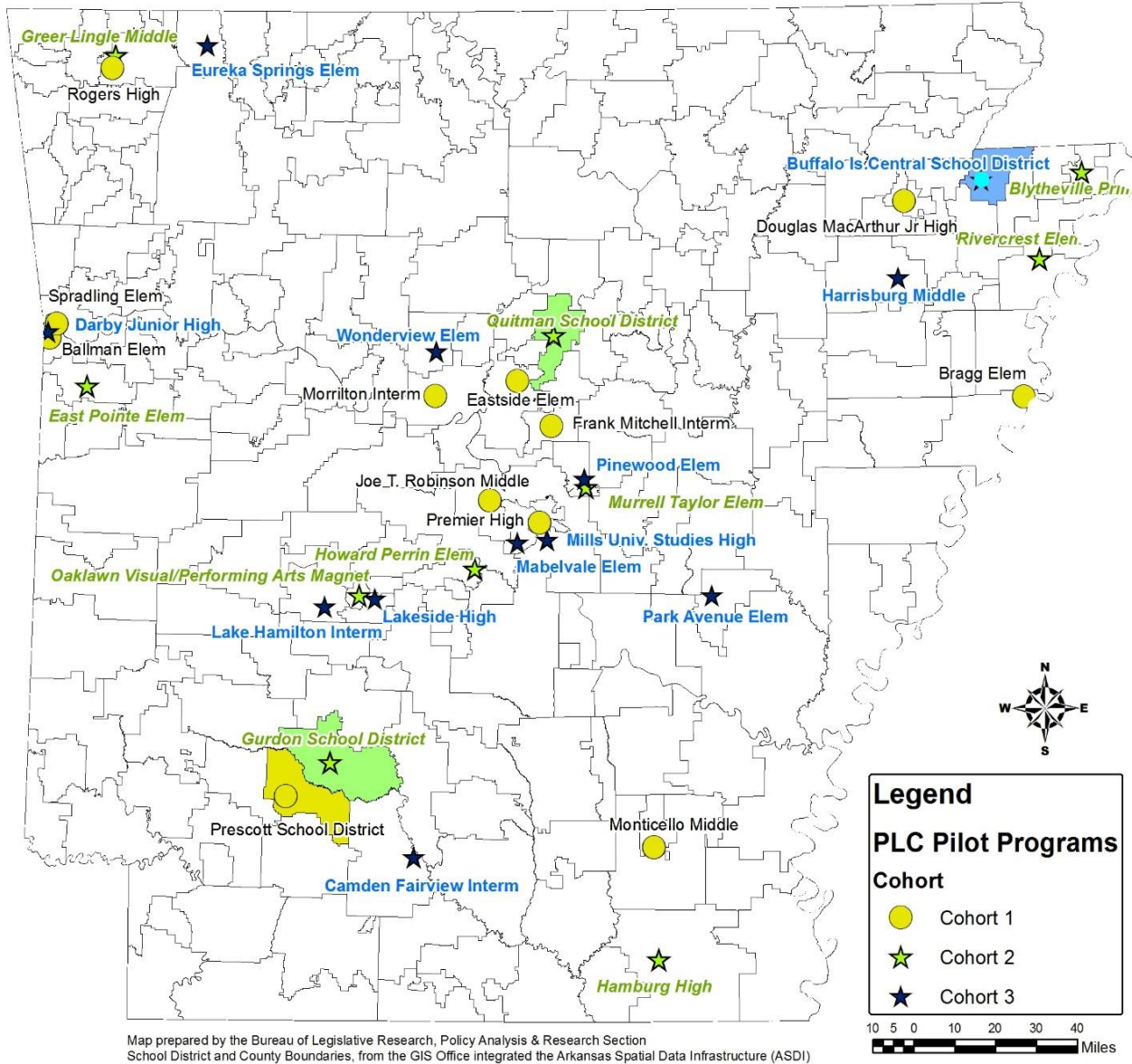|	**2017-18**	**2018-19**	**Funding Method**
Total Appropriation	**$20,617,836**	**$25,143,702**	**-**
Districts	$11,983,248	$12,604,959	Per-Student
Charters	$393,952	$477,041	Per-Student
AETN (Arkansas IDEAs)	$3,138,941	$2,830,230	Per-Student
Solution Tree (PLC Pilot Program)	$4,000,000	$8,500,000	Flat Amount
Estimated Remaining PD Funds*	$1,101,695	$731,472	-

*Estimate determined based on the amount remaining after distributing to districts, charters, AETN, and Solution Tree. Act 667 of 2019 appropriated up to $12.5 million for Solution Tree in the 2020 and 2021 school years.

Table 3: Professional Learning Community Pilot Program Participating Schools/Districts

Cohort 1 (2017-18 – 2019-20)	
Ballman Elementary School (Fort Smith SD)	Monticello Middle School (Monticello SD)
Bragg Elementary School (West Memphis SD)	Morrilton Intermediate School (So. Conway Co. SD)
Douglas MacArthur Junior High School (Jonesboro SD)	Premier High School (Little Rock)
Eastside Elementary School (Greenbrier SD)	Prescott School District
Frank Mitchell Intermediate School (Vilonia SD)	Rogers High School (Rogers SD)
Joe T. Robinson Middle School (Pulaski Co. Spec. SD)	Spradling Elem. School (Fort Smith SD)
Cohort 2 (2018-19 – 2020-21)	
Blytheville Primary School (Blytheville SD)	Murrell Taylor Elementary School (Jacksonville SD)
East Pointe Elementary School (Greenwood SD)	Oaklawn Visual & Performing Arts Magnet (Hot Springs SD)
Greer Lingle Middle School (Rogers SD)	Rivercrest Elementary School (Rivercrest SD)
Gurdon School District	Quitman School District
Hamburg High School (Hamburg SD)	Howard Perrin Elementary School (Benton SD)
Cohort 3 (2019-20 – 2021-22)	
Buffalo Island Central School District	Lakeside High School (Lakeside SD–Garland Co.)
Camden Fairview Intermediate (Camden Fairview SD)	Mabelvale Elementary (Little Rock SD)
Darby Junior High (Fort Smith SD)	Mills University Studies High School (Pulaski County Special School District)
Eureka Springs Elementary (Eureka Springs SD)	Park Avenue Elementary (Stuttgart SD)
Harrisburg Middle School (Harrisburg SD)	Pinewood Elementary (Jacksonville SD)
Lake Hamilton Intermediate (Lake Hamilton SD)	Wonderview Elementary (Wonderview SD)

Note: The fourth cohort of schools/districts, beginning in 2020-21, are not included here. Cohort 4 includes the following: Bayyari Elementary (Springdale SD), Camden Fairview High (Camden Fairview SD), Centerpoint SD, Clinton School District (Clinton Elementary School and Clinton Junior High School), Crossett High School (Crossett SD), Hot Springs Junior Academy (Hot Springs SD), Lake Hamilton Junior High School (Lake Hamilton SD), Northside High School (Fort Smith SD), Rivercrest High School (Rivercrest SD), Valley Springs Elementary School (Valley Springs SD), and Watson Elementary School (Little Rock SD).

Map 1: PLC Pilot Schools and Districts (as of 2019-20)

Greer Lingle Middle
Rogers High
Eureka Springs Elem

Buffalo Is. Central School District
Blytheville Prim.
Douglas MacArthur Jr High
Rivercrest Elem.

Spradling Elem
Darby Junior High
Ballman Elem
Wonderview Elem
Quitman School District
Harrisburg Middle

Bragg Elem

East Pointe Elem
Morrilton Interm
Eastside Elem
Frank Mitchell Interm

Joe T. Robinson Middle
Pinewood Elem
Murrell Taylor Elem
Premier High

Howard Perrin Elem
Mills Univ. Studies High
Oaklawn Visual/Performing Arts Magnet
Mabelvale Elem
Lakeside High
Park Avenue Elem
Lake Hamilton Interm

Gurdon School District

Prescott School District
Monticello Middle

Camden Fairview Interm

Hamburg High

Legend
PLC Pilot Programs
Cohort
○ Cohort 1
☆ Cohort 2
★ Cohort 3

Map prepared by the Bureau of Legislative Research, Policy Analysis & Research Section
School District and County Boundaries, from the GIS Office integrated the Arkansas Spatial Data Infrastructure (ASDI)

Note: The fourth cohort of schools/districts, beginning in 2020-21, are not included here. Cohort 4 includes the following: Bayyari Elementary (Springdale SD), Camden Fairview High (Camden Fairview SD), Centerpoint SD, Clinton School District (Clinton Elementary School and Clinton Junior High School), Crossett High School (Crossett SD), Hot Springs Junior Academy (Hot Springs SD), Lake Hamilton Junior High School (Lake Hamilton SD), Northside High School (Fort Smith SD), Rivercrest High School (Rivercrest SD), Valley Springs Elementary School (Valley Springs SD), and Watson Elementary School (Little Rock SD).

In the pilot program, Solution Tree implements its PLC at Work model in the selected schools/districts. Selected schools/districts participate in the program for three years. According to DESE, Solution Tree is the only vendor that can deliver the PLC at Work process. The resources are copyrighted and are the intellectual property of Solution Tree.[7]

DESE defines a PLC as an "ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve."[8] The underlying assumption behind the PLCs is that it is the "key to improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators." Broadly, a PLC can also refer to some form of structured collaboration between educators within a school in which educators share experiences, ideas, resources, and strategies for improved student achievement. It can also be a formal program implemented in the school or include informal meetings among educators in a school.

Some states are utilizing learning communities or collaborative teaching statewide. For example, in Missouri, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) sponsors the Missouri Professional Learning Communities Project.[9] This school improvement initiative first started in 2003-04. Schools can opt in, and the state provides comprehensive ongoing training, technical assistance, and support. In 2017, New Jersey added a new category in its state budget for general aid to schools: PLC aid. New Jersey is providing $10 per student per district to "support the development of learning communities within and across districts in order to help teachers and administrators analyze and use the assessment data they collect to improve classroom instruction."[10] PLCs have been in use for decades, but their popularity has increased over the last several years. However, since PLCs can be interpreted and implemented in multiple ways, it is hard to determine exactly how many schools/districts are using a form of a PLC.

Solution Tree's PLC at Work program is a specific way of implementing a PLC. Each school is matched with a certified PLC at Work Associate (or Pilot School Site Coach) who coordinates the school's PLC services. The site coaches are overseen by a PLC project manager. A Solution Tree project administrator will coordinate the internal Solution Tree team with the project manager and the site coaches to form the project administration and evaluation team. This team will monitor, assess, and report on the pilot school services and will provide periodic feedback to DESE. According to the Solution Tree contract, each school will have its own Pilot School Plan that will be collaboratively developed based on a needs assessment at the beginning of the year. Each customized plan will be built on the following components[11]:

- Up to fifty days of onsite PD from certified PLC at Work associates;
- Book, video, and online resources for school staff;
- Schoolwide subscriptions to global PD (PD tool for PLCs);
- Registrations for PLC events; and
- Ongoing phone and email support from the Pilot School Site Coach.

According to the DESE contract with Solution Tree, the intended outcomes of the pilot project include "increasing student achievement through teacher collaboration, a focus on learning, and a results orientation." Student achievement and process data is collected, analyzed, and used to make decisions. This is done through a needs assessment given to PLC schools/districts (to examine process and achievement data) and formative assessments throughout the year (to evaluate growth and determine next steps). Additional data specific to each school is also

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[7] DESE contract with Solution Tree (2017)

[8] http://www.arkansased.gov/divisions/special-projects/professional-learning-communities-in-arkansas

[9] https://dese.mo.gov/quality-schools/school-improvement-initiatives/professional-learning-communities

[10] NJ DOE, Office of Professional Development. *Using Professional Learning Community (PLC) Aid to Improve Classroom Instruction.* Non-Regulatory Guidance Document. (Oct. 2016).
http://www.state.nj.us/education/profdev/resources/LearningCommunityAid.pdf

[11] DESE contracts with Solution Tree (2017, 2018, 2019)

determined and monitored. Additionally, a national research organization, Education Northwest, will conduct an independent research study by collecting and interpreting meaningful data to provide an objective evaluation of the project.[12] The evaluation began in 2017-18 and was scheduled to end in May 2020 with a final report available in Spring 2021. However, due to the lack of assessments this spring due to COVID-19, the study end date is unclear.[13]

In 2019, the BLR surveyed three principals (and an instructional facilitator) at three different PLC schools by phone. All three were part of the first group of schools to participate in the program and are now in their third year. Each school was asked how the program was working, what other impacts the program made on the school, what challenges arose, and whether their school would recommend the program to others.

All three schools recommended the program and generally spoke favorably about it. A couple of them noted that it was the best PD/training they had received. Each of these schools also responded that they had experienced increased student achievement, though they noted that it was not always reflected in the state assessment (ACT Aspire) or school letter grade. Other positive impacts of the program included increased teacher collaboration, increased attendance, and decreased discipline referrals. One school noted growth among students with disabilities in that these students were now spending more time in traditional classrooms and having increased student achievement. Additional impacts of the PLC pilot program included students having more ownership of their learning and being able to explain their grades to their parents as well as discuss other schoolwork matters with them. Meanwhile, teachers reportedly are more confident and better understand what their students need to learn.

Each school did note some challenges. Two discussed challenges related to accessing some Solution Tree resources. For example, while both noted the benefits of the PLC events and the free registration to their PLC events provided by Solution Tree, the districts still must pay for travel, which can be challenging. In addition, two noted scheduling being a challenge because the program requires a lot of time out of the classroom for teachers. Even so, one of these schools noted that time out of the classroom is simultaneously beneficial because of the PLC trainings.

Additionally, for the program to be successful, one school noted that district/school support is needed and the principal [or leader] needs to have a growth mindset. The school/district needs to be willing to change. One school noted that, even though their coach's individualized support was beneficial, some of the Solution Tree resources are not tailored enough to specific school needs. For example, a school may already be strong in science but needs more help in literacy. However, as the program works now, the school will spend equal time on both subjects instead of focusing more on literacy. In video interviews with several participating schools available on the DESE website[14], multiple schools noted that participating in the pilot was challenging at first as they were trying to learn about the program and its resources, but that it became less so in subsequent years as they became more familiar with the process.

Inclusive Practices PLC Pilot Program

Beginning in the 2020-21 school year, DESE partnered with Solution Tree again to develop and expand the PLC at Work process within select schools. This will be known as the Inclusive Practices Project. This project "will have an intentional focus on inclusive practices ensuring students who are IEP [individualized education program] eligible as well as other groups of struggling learners have meaningful access to core instruction and established systems of intervention." Selected schools will "serve as laboratory schools for the PLC at Work process

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[12] dese.ade.arkansas.gov/public/userfiles/Special_Projects/PLC_FAQ_Document_4_30_18.pdf

[13] Email from Missy Walley, DESE from April 22, 2020.

[14] http://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/divisions/special-projects/professional-learning-communities-in-arkansas

conducting action research and sharing best inclusive practices with other schools throughout the state."[15]

The application process began in Spring 2020 and participants were not selected in time for inclusion in this report. All K-12 public and open-enrollment public charter schools in Arkansas are eligible except schools in the PLC project cohort two, three, or four. Four schools are anticipated to participate in the yearlong pilot program. Like the original PLC pilot project, each participating school will be matched with certified PLC at Work Associate with Solution Tree and receive 12 days of onsite support (instead of 50 in the current PLC pilot program). Each school "will create action plans that focus on increasing student achievement through aligned curriculum, formative assessment practices, and proven instructional strategies."[16]

Following full implementation, the project is intended to do the following:

- Increase levels of student achievement through teacher collaboration;
- Create a relentless focus on learning and a results orientation for all students with an intentional focus on outcomes for students with disabilities;
- Increase academic performance as measured by district and state assessments;
- Increase collaboration between the district and the corresponding regional educational cooperative for project sustainability.

This project differs from the original PLC pilot project in a few ways. It will be funded through discretionary funds made available for other state level activities through Title VI-B (Special Education) federal funds, not any of the state's categorical PD funds. DESE's Special Education Unit will award four grants to educational cooperatives that partner with the selected school. Educational cooperatives will be responsible for making any payments to Solution Tree. DESE is projecting the pilot project will cost between $400,000 to $500,000.[17]

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SURVEY RESULTS

As noted earlier, the BLR invited certified teachers in the 74 randomly selected schools to complete an online teacher survey. Each principal was asked to provide the name of a teacher or staff member who would distribute the teacher survey instructions and individual access codes to his/her colleagues. Generally, only certified teachers assigned to teach a class were invited to complete the survey (i.e., not administrators), but the survey pool also included guidance counselors, English as a second language teachers (ESOL), alternative education (ALE) teachers, library/media specialists, and instructional facilitators, regardless of whether they were assigned to teach a class. Teachers accessed the survey online using an individual code that was distributed to them by the teacher representative assigned by the principal.

A total of 2,482 surveys were distributed, and 1,288 teachers responded by January 15, 2020, for a response rate of nearly 52%.

To elicit the most candid responses, district and school staff were assured their answers would not be individually identified, therefore responses are provided only in aggregate. Quotes used from the surveys and site visits are provided only where the respondent and school cannot be identified.

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[15] http://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/divisions/special-projects/inclusive-practices
[16] https://zoom.us/rec/play/6ZZ_f-Cg-mk3SYaXtgSDU_R8W46_LK6s1iUY_KBYxEa2AHlWZwKjZLtHardjjZyzKGW6VZKUG7JaVkgt?autoplay=true&startTime=1582055955000
[17] Email from Matt Sewell, DESE, from April 24, 2020.

Table 4: Teacher Survey Question: What percentage of your PD is provided by each of the following options?

District- or school-provided PD NOT using Arkansas IDEAS	30.6%	Collaboration with school leaders/administrators	5.8%
PD provided by educational cooperatives	16.8%	Collaboration with instructional facilitators/academic coaches	5.3%
District- or school-facilitated use of Arkansas IDEAS	15.9%	College graduate level courses	1.9%
Collaboration with other teachers	8.6%	Out-of-state conferences or workshops	1.5%
Individual use of Arkansas IDEAS	6.6%	Other	0.8%
In-state conferences or workshops	6.4%		

Table 4 shows the average percentage of time each type of PD makes up of teachers' overall PD. The largest percentage of teachers' PD came from districts or schools that were NOT Arkansas IDEAS (31%) followed by educational cooperatives (17%).

Of the teachers who responded to this question, 0.8% noted other sources of PD. The most common of these responses were related to content specific to certain kinds of teachers or subjects not covered in traditional PD like advanced placement, ESOL, social/emotional skills, and EAST. A few teachers noted self-guided trainings and research and collaboration with teachers in other school districts across the state.

Table 5: Teacher Survey Question: Please RATE the usefulness of each form of PD in terms of enhancing your teaching and knowledge.

		Essential	Very Useful	Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not Very Useful
1.	Collaboration with other teachers	42%	29%	23%	4%	3%
2.	Collaboration with school leaders/administrators	18%	27%	36%	12%	7%
3.	PD provided by educational cooperatives	10%	29%	42%	14%	5%
4.	Collaboration with instructional facilitators/academic coaches	17%	29%	34%	12%	9%
5.	In-state conferences or workshops	14%	27%	37%	13%	9%
6.	District- or school-provided PD NOT using Arkansas IDEAS	8%	25%	41%	19%	7%
7.	College graduate level courses	7%	22%	37%	16%	20%
8.	Individual use of Arkansas IDEAS	5%	18%	36%	26%	15%
9.	District- or school-facilitated use of Arkansas IDEAS	5%	17%	37%	27%	14%
10.	Out-of-state conferences or workshops	6%	18%	34%	17%	25%

Table 5 above shows how teachers rated different forms of PD. Forms of PD are ranked using the total percentage of teachers ranking each form of PD not very useful, somewhat useful, useful, very useful, and essential. Collaboration with other teachers was considered the most useful with 94% rating it useful or better. More than 40% considered it essential. In 'other' responses, nearly 20% of teachers noted virtual collaboration with teachers from across the state as a useful type of PD. The top five forms of PD included collaboration with teachers, school leaders/administrators, or instructional facilitators/academic coaches. Among the 'other' types of PD listed by teachers, content specific PD (e.g. ESOL, social/emotional skills, art) was the most mentioned as essential. Other useful types of PD mentioned included student feedback, professional texts, self-directed research, their master's degree, and the Arkansas Education Association. One teacher noted that more PD funding is needed.

During the BLR site visits, several principals noted some PD challenges – the need for more PD on technology and on mental health issues, for instance. One principal noted a PD funding issue. The principal stated that because more PD funding is being directed to AETN, their

district receives less money to provide PD for its teachers and staff. The district is having to use district funds on PD more than its allotted amount to ensure its staff gets everything they need.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDING

Table 6 below shows the per-student amount of PD funding the state has provided since 2010-11. The cut in funding in 2015 was the result of Act 2 of the 1st Extraordinary Session of 2013. The savings generated by the reduction were redirected to the public-school employee insurance plan. Starting in 2017-18, any PD funding that exceeds $32.40 per student will go to the PLC Pilot Program. Act 427 of 2017 requires any increase in PD funding above the per-student amount ($32.40) to be used for PLCs. Beginning in the 2020-21 school year, the per-student PD funding amount will increase to $40.80 due to Act 667 of 2019.

Table 6: PD Funding Per-Student

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
$50	$51	$52	$53	$32.40	$32.40	$32.40	$32.40*	$32.40*	$32.40*

Note: Beginning in the 2017-18 school years, any funding amount above $32.40 will support the PLC Pilot Program due to Act 427 of 2017.

Table 6 above shows the combined amount distributed to districts and charter schools and the amount set aside for use under the statewide online PD program. The PD funding designated for the PLC Pilot Program is not included here since it is not distributed as part of the per-student amount.

When Arkansas IDEAS was first created, districts' per-student PD amount dropped by nearly $9. When the overall per-student rate dropped from $53 in 2013-14 to $32.40 in 2014-15, districts' and charters' per-student amount dropped again by nearly $18. Though the districts lost some PD funding with creation of Arkansas IDEAS, the statewide program was expected to offer an efficient online course delivery system that would be free to educators and their employers.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURES

Table 7 on the next page shows the total amount of funding provided to districts and charters in recent years and the total and per-pupil amounts of expenditures made from those categorical funds. (The expenditures do not include any PD funding districts and charters transferred to other categorical funds.) The table also calculates the PD funding and expenditures as a per-student amount. These data show that, since 2015, collectively districts continue to spend more money than they received in PD funding. Districts were able to spend more money than they received in PD funding, in part, because they transferred money from other categorical funds (such as National School Lunch (NSL), English language learner (ELL), and alternative learning environment (ALE) state categorical funds). Since 2015, the amount transferred from other categorical funds to PD has fluctuated between $4 million and $5.6 million and the amount transferred from PD to other categorical funds has remained around $800,000 for the last three years

Table 7: PD Funding and Expenditures for Districts and Charters

	Total State PD Revenue Provided by Statute	Transfers from Other Categorical Funds to PD	Total PD Expenditures	Transfers from PD to Other Categorical Funds	Per-Student PD Funding by Statute	Per-Student PD Expenditures	% of PD Expenditures from Other Categorical Funds
2014-15	$12,584,187	$4,273,795	$17,089,118	$507,214	$26.67	$36.22	26.36%
2015-16	$12,309,392	$4,751,780	$17,439,887	$353,979	$26.05	$36.91	29.42%
2016-17	$12,315,169	$5,605,307	$17,124,973	$772,216	$26.05	$36.22	28.09%
2017-18	$12,377,204	$5,096,416	$17,292,153	$827,673	$26.05	$36.39	28.42%
2018-19	$13,082,000	$4,691,790	$16,925,400	$783,219	$26.05	$35.45	22.71%

Data Source: DESE's State Aid Notices and APSCN.
Note: For districts and some charters, PD funding is based on the prior year ADM. However, some charter schools (those receiving foundation funding based on current year enrollment), will receive PD funding based on projected enrollment student count as of July 1 of the current school year ((§6-23-501)(a)(4)).

Chart 1: PD Expenditures, 2017-2019

Chart 1 above shows that purchased services have been the most common PD expenditure with roughly 70% of districts' and charters' total expenditures being spent on this since 2017. The percentage of PD funding spent on purchased services has slightly increased over the last three years. The amount of PD funding going towards salaries and benefits has dropped since 2017 and the other types of expenditures held steady. Purchased services expenditures are broken down in Chart 2 below. It shows that the most common purchased services have included consultants, speakers, and other professional employee training and development services since 2017.

Chart 2: Purchased Services Expenditures, 2017-2019

EDUCATOR EVALUATIONS

NATIONAL TRENDS IN EDUCATOR EVALUATIONS

The way states evaluate public school teachers and principals has changed in multiple ways over the last several years. In 2017, the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), a not-for-profit education research and policy organization centered on teacher effectiveness, found that ten states require districts to use the state's evaluation system. In nine states, districts can choose to use the state's evaluation system or develop their own. In the remaining 31 states and the District of Columbia, districts can design their own evaluation system based on specific criteria from the state.[18]

One trend that has received national attention is the use of student growth measures to evaluate teachers. Many states are beginning to *back away* from requiring student growth measures or at least minimizing the impact on the ratings teachers receive. According to a 2017 article in Education Week,[19] teacher evaluations were historically based on a single source, principal observations. However, in 2009, multiple factors led to more than 24 states toughening their teacher-evaluation requirements. First, a report released by TNTP (formerly the New Teacher Project) found that 99% of all teachers were being rated "satisfactory". (The NCTQ recently noted that in 2011, only 17 states required teacher evaluation systems to have two or more rating categories. In 2019, that increased to 41 states.[20]) This raised questions about the validity of evaluation systems.

Another factor was the Race to the Top (RTT) program that began in 2009. RTT was a federal competitive grant program that offered financial incentives to "states to include student-test data in their evaluation systems". Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) began offering waivers to states in 2011 from requirements in No Child Left Behind (NCLB). In order to get a waiver, states were required to link "student achievement outcomes to their teacher evaluation systems."[21] The number of states using student growth data in teacher evaluations increased from 15 states in 2009 to 43 by the end of 2015, according to NCTQ, which supports the use of student growth measures in teacher evaluations.

Due to new requirements from ESSA, there are no longer federal incentives to create a teacher evaluation system or specific requirements for state teacher evaluations. Since then, the number of states using student growth data (for teacher **and** principal evaluations) decreased to 34 in 2019.[22] According to NCTQ, Arkansas was among the 43 states considered to require student growth data in teacher evaluations in 2015 but not among the 34 states in 2019.

According to NCTQ, there is significant variance in how heavily student growth measures are weighted among the 34 states using student growth measures. In 2017, in more than half of these states, student growth measures made up less than a third of their teachers' overall rating. In 2019, NCTQ found that only one quarter of the 34 states using student growth measures do not currently require the state's standardized test to be the source of those data for at least some teachers, but rather district assessments or student portfolios.[23]

The NCTQ also found that many states have made changes regarding the use of observations in determining a teacher and principal's overall rating, including: reducing the weight of observations, making modifications to achieve more reliability, and pressing for early and frequent observations of new teachers. Additionally, since 2015, slightly fewer states require annual teacher and principal evaluations.

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[18] https://www.nctq.org/yearbook/national/Measures-of-Student-Growth-77
[19] Education Week. Are States Changing Course on Teacher Evaluation?; Test-score growth plays lesser role in six states." Nov. 15, 2017
[20] https://www.nctq.org/pages/State-of-the-States-2019:-Teacher-and-Principal-Evaluation-Policy#PStudentGrowth
[21] Education Week. "Are States Changing Course on Teacher Evaluation?; Test-score growth plays lesser role in six states." Nov. 15, 2017
[22] https://www.nctq.org/pages/State-of-the-States-2019:-Teacher-and-Principal-Evaluation-Policy#footnote-1
[23] https://www.nctq.org/pages/State-of-the-States-2019:-Teacher-and-Principal-Evaluation-Policy#footnote-1

TESS

Act 1209 of 2011 created a statewide teacher evaluation system known as the Teacher Excellence and Support (TESS) system (§ 6-17-2801 et seq.). This law requires DESE to develop and all districts to implement the TESS system. TESS began with a soft roll out in 11 schools in 2012. That was followed by a statewide pilot in 2013-14 and then full implementation in all schools beginning in 2014-15. This system is used to observe, evaluate, and support licensed and non-licensed K-12 classroom and specialty teachers (gifted and talented coordinators, instructional specialists, library media specialists, school counselors, school psychologists, and speech language pathologists).

TESS is based on Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching*. The framework measures teachers' effectiveness in the four domains listed below. These domains are shown in more detail on page 17.

1. Planning and preparation;
2. Classroom environment;
3. Instruction; and
4. Professional responsibilities

Through TESS, every teacher who is not a novice (a teacher with less than three years of experience in public school classroom teaching) must receive at least one summative evaluation every four years. According to DESE, teachers with at least three years of public-school teaching experience are known as career summative teachers. However, districts and schools can choose to conduct summative evaluations more frequently. As part of the TESS process, each teacher will work with the evaluator to create a professional growth plan (PGP) for themselves. If the teacher and evaluator disagree on the PGP, the evaluator has final say. The PGP is designed to identify professional growth outcomes to improve professional skills. The PGP is a living document that continually focuses on the learning of the teacher. It also links "personalized, competency-based professional learning opportunities to growth outcomes of an individual teacher." The PGP may include but is not limited to teacher collaboration, self-directed research, and approved micro-credentialing.

During the formative years (years in which the teacher is not being summatively evaluated), the district should provide teachers with ongoing support for targeted, personalized learning that is aligned with their PGP. This support includes providing timely feedback on the teaching process and engaging with teachers in a collaborative and supportive process. It also includes helping teachers use evidence-based assessment methods and the evaluation framework to inform them about student progress and better adapt to teaching practices. While novice teachers do not receive a summative evaluation rating, they continue to receive feedback from their evaluators, support, and mentorship. The district or charter school is responsible for providing mentoring that provides training and support to increase teacher retention, establish norms of professionalism, and improve student achievement by increasing teacher performance. These resources will be primarily provided through the educational service cooperatives (ESC). Chart 3 on page 18 shows what the TESS process looks like.

The evaluation is based on multiple sources of evidence that include the following:

- **Direct Observation**: the evaluator is physically present in the classroom during the implementation of instruction or using appropriate technology to observe a lesson;
- **Indirect Observation:** the evaluator observing systems that operate because of a teacher's research, planning, and implementation inside or outside of the classroom, i.e., observing students forming a line in the hallway without their teacher present;
- **Artifacts**: materials that document the teacher's professional practice (e.g., peer observation, student feedback, or work done since the previous summative evaluation like National Board components); and
- **Data**: teacher performance data, student performance data, or overall school performance data. This can also include multiple measures of student growth, school quality, or student success.

Evidence is chosen by the teacher, evaluator, or both. The evaluator and teacher discuss the evidence used, and the evaluator provides the teacher with feedback based on the framework to improve his/her teaching and student learning. A charter school or district can choose to include peer observations, student feedback, and any work completed by a teacher for certification or renewal from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards as evidence. The evaluator gives the teacher a written evaluation determination for a teacher's performance on all four of the evaluation domains (planning and preparation, classroom environment, professional responsibilities, and instruction). The evaluator will use an evaluation rubric and evidence that is appropriate to the teacher's specific role. A teacher can receive a rating of **distinguished, proficient, basic, or unsatisfactory**. The teacher is given an annual overall rating that is based on all domains included in the framework and student growth.

An evaluator can place a teacher in intensive support status if the teacher receives low performance ratings on a summative evaluation as evidenced by:

- Not continuously improving professional practice;
- Not demonstrating commitment to students, the school, and the profession;
- Failing to demonstrate growth or progress in professional practice after receiving targeted feedback and support; or
- Not advancing student growth or progress as demonstrated on local and state measures.

If a teacher is placed in intensive support status, the evaluator will work with the teacher to develop clear goals and tasks to support the teacher's progress and provide ongoing support to the teacher. When placed in intensive support status, an Intensive Professional Growth Plan (IPGP) will be written with goals and a timeline for the work. The evaluator sets a time period long enough to complete these goals but not any longer than two consecutive semesters unless the teacher shows significant progress and agrees in writing along with the evaluator to continue. If the intensive support status is given due to student performance, the district will support the teacher's use of formative assessments to measure student progress. At the end of the period, the evaluator will determine if the teacher met the goals and completed the tasks. The evaluator will then provide written notice to the teacher about whether he/she failed or will be removed from the status. If the teacher failed, the superintendent, after reviewing and approving the evaluator's documentation, may recommend termination or nonrenewal of the teacher's contract.

A school or district that previously was approved to use a nationally recognized system of teacher evaluation and support that is substantially like TESS may continue to use that system. This waiver is provided through the office of Educator Effectiveness, not the Arkansas State Board of Education (SBOE). According to DESE, schools or districts that apply for this waiver must provide certain information to DESE.[24] This includes details on the type of system they will be using and how it relates to TESS's rubric and components. That school or district had to also agree to report their annual ratings to DESE. Originally, there were seven districts or charters that applied for this. Only two remain in the 2019-20 school year: Cross County school district and KIPP Delta Collegiate Charter. The Arkansas School for the Blind and Arkansas School for the Deaf also have waivers for TESS and LEADS but were required through state statute to use another evaluation system prior to TESS and have continued to do so. However, they patterned their performance objectives after the TESS domains and have access to EdReflect.[25] This means that the ratings shown below will include ratings of educators from all schools and districts using EdReflect regardless of whether they have a TESS/LEADS waiver, including the Arkansas School for the Blind and the School for the Deaf.

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[24] Email from Becky Gibson, DESE from April 4, 2020.
[25] EdReflect (powered by Bloomboard) is the online system used by Arkansas educators to collect ratings, evidence, artifacts, and other information needed for TESS and LEADS.

Additionally, other districts or charter schools can seek approval from the SBOE to opt out of using TESS and utilize a "locally adopted system for support, development, and appraisal of teacher performance as part of a system of educator effectiveness that meets federal and state requirements."[26] In the 2019-20 school year, three charter schools had this waiver: LISA Academy, Arkansas Arts Academy, and the Excel Charter. However, DESE noted that these charters do not work with the Educator Effectiveness and Licensure Division so it is likely that they may still use the TESS and LEADS system.

Since it was first created in 2011-12, TESS has undergone multiple changes. As noted earlier, these changes include the use of student growth measures. The law originally required that external assessments (student growth measures) make up half of the artifacts used in the teacher evaluation. In 2013, Act 709 stated that student growth measures should still be considered as part of the teacher evaluation, but there was no longer a specific requirement to how much they should impact the teachers' ratings. Act 1091 of 2015 made additional significant changes. One of these included repealing the original requirement that schools use student growth measures as a separate component for teacher evaluations. Act 1091 also changed the frequency of the evaluations from once every three years to once every four years.

Act 295 of 2017 again made additional changes to TESS, giving more flexibility and local control to schools and districts. Additionally, it created support for professional learning opportunities that are personalized, and competency based. These changes include:

- Novice teachers are those who have fewer than three school years of public-school classroom teaching experience, instead of one year;

- Defines formative years for teachers and removed interim teacher appraisals which were a form of teacher evaluations given during non-summative years (now known as formative years);

- Broadens what evidence can be used to demonstrate a teacher's effectiveness. The definition of artifacts was expanded to include any materials that document the teacher's professional practice instead of a specific list of required materials. Artifacts are also no longer required for each rubric component when observation documentation is used. Act 295 also added indirect observations as a form of evidence and minimized the requirements for classroom observations including specific requirements surrounding the duration of the observation;

- A school or school district can choose to adopt policies that incorporate peer observations and student feedback to contribute to the summative ratings and substitute for the portion of the evaluation or entire evaluation any part of a teacher's work completed for certification or renewal of a certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards;

- A school or district can seek approval from the SBOE to opt out of TESS and utilize a locally adopted system for support, development, and appraisal of teacher performance that meets federal and state requirements; and

- Schools and districts are no longer required to determine a rating for each domain but only one overall score that considers all domains and components.
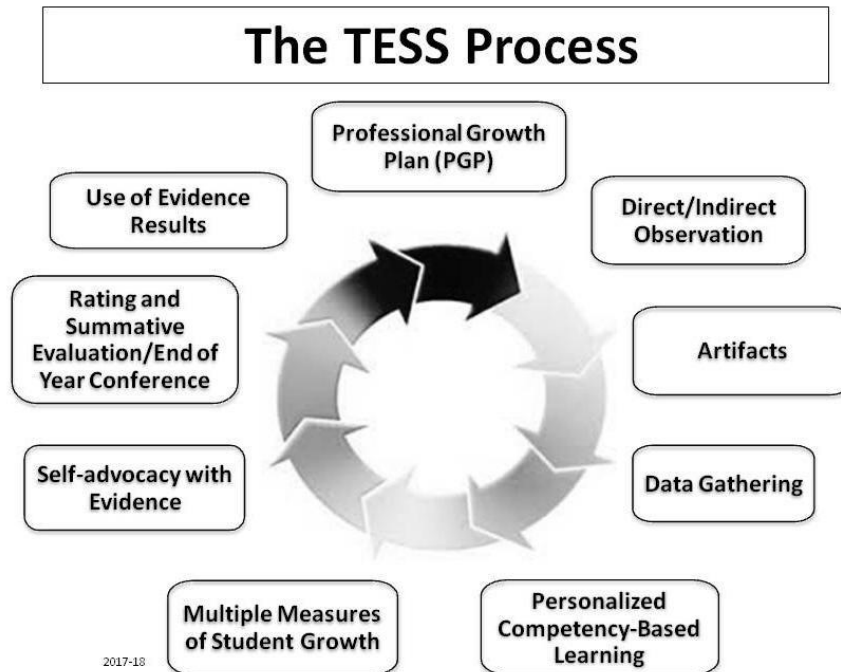
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[26] DESE. "Rules Governing Educator Support and Development." Dec. 2017.

Table 8: Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching

Table 8 below shows the framework used for TESS. Each box details components and elements of those components in each domain used to evaluate teachers: planning and preparation, the classroom environment, professional responsibilities, and instruction.

DOMAIN 1: Planning and Preparation	DOMAIN 2: The Classroom Environment
1a Demonstrating Knowledge of Content & Pedagogy • Content knowledge • Prerequisite relationships • Content pedagogy **1b Demonstrating Knowledge of Students** • Child development • Learning process • Special needs • Student skills, knowledge, and proficiency • Interests and cultural heritage **1c Setting Instructional Outcomes** • Value, sequence, and alignment • Clarity • Balance • Suitability for diverse learners **1d Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources** • For classroom • To extend content knowledge • For students **1e Designing Coherent Instruction** • Learning activities • Instructional materials and resources • Instructional groups • Lesson and unit structure **1f Designing Student Assessments** • Congruence with outcomes • Criteria and standards • Formative assessments • Use for planning	**2a Creating an Environment of Respect & Rapport** • Teacher interaction with students • Student interaction with students **2b Establishing a Culture for Learning** • Importance of content • Expectations for learning and achievement • Student pride in work **2c Managing Classroom Procedures** • Instructional groups • Transitions • Materials and supplies • Non-instructional duties • Supervision of volunteers and paraprofessionals **2d Managing Student Behavior** • Expectations • Monitoring behavior • Response to misbehavior **2e Organizing Physical Space** • Safety and accessibility • Arrangement of furniture and resources
DOMAIN 4: Professional Responsibilities	DOMAIN 3: Instruction
4a Reflecting on Teaching • Accuracy • Use in future teaching **4b Maintaining Accurate Records** • Student completion of assignments • Student progress in learning • Non-instructional records **4c Communicating with Families** • About instructional program • About individual students • Engagement of families in instructional program **4d Participating in a Professional Community** • Relationships with colleagues • Participation in school projects • Involvement in culture of professional inquiry • Service to school **4e Growing and Developing Professionally** • Enhancement of content knowledge and pedagogical skill • Receptivity to feedback from colleagues • Service to the profession **4f Showing Professionalism** • Integrity/ethical conduct • Service to students • Advocacy • Decision-making • Compliance with school/district regulations	**3a Communicating with Students** • Expectations for learning • Directions and procedures • Explanations of content • Use of oral and written language **3b Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques** • Quality of questions • Discussion techniques • Student participation **3c Engaging Students in Learning** • Activities and assignments • Student groups • Instructional materials and resources • Structure and pacing **3d Using Assessment in Instruction** • Assessment criteria • Monitoring of student learning • Feedback to students • Student self-assessment and monitoring **3e Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness** • Lesson adjustment • Response to students • Persistence

Chart 3: The TESS Process

Source: DESE

LEADS

Unlike the TESS requirements first put forth in Act 1209 of 2011, the only initial requirement for evaluating administrators (also referred to as leaders) was that DESE provide technical assistance to districts to develop and implement an administrator evaluation system similar to TESS. Act 709 of 2013 authorized (but did not require) DESE to develop and implement an evaluation system for school administrators known as the Leader Excellence and Development System (LEADS) (§ 6-17-2809). However, DESE did develop LEADS pursuant to this authorization. All districts and schools piloted LEADS in 2013-14, and all districts and schools fully implemented it beginning in 2014-15. Due to Act 295 of 2017, DESE is now *required* to design a system of administrator leadership support. According to DESE, the creation of LEADS in statute was intended to create a statewide and consistent form of evaluating administrators. Act 295 required that LEADS does the following:

- Be aligned to current leadership standards adopted by the SBOE;
- Use multi-tiered systems of professional support and learning for what a leader should know and be able to do; and
- Provide a research-based framework to conduct administrator evaluations.

Previously, the LEADS framework was based on the Interstate School Leaders' Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA). The six ISLLC standards are listed on the next page in Table 9 alongside the new LEADS standards, the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL), which were piloted in 2018-19 and are being implemented statewide in 2019-20 as LEADS 2.0.[27]

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[27] DESE. TESS & LEADS Update from ADE Educator Support. March 29, 2018. Retrieved from: http://www.arkansased.gov/divisions/educator%20effectiveness/educator-support-development/teacher-excellence-and-support-system-tess

Table 9: ISLLC and PSEL Crosswalk

ISLLC 2008 (LEADS)	PSEL 2015 (LEADS 2.0)
1. Vision	1. Mission, Vision, and Core values 10. School Improvement
2. School Culture and instructional Program	4. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment 5. Community of Care and Support for Students 6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel 7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff
3. Operations, Management, and Resources	5.Community of Care and Support for Students 6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel 9. Operations and Management
4. Collaboration with Faculty and Community	8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community
5. Ethics	2. Ethics and Professional Norms 3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness
6. Political, Social, Legal, Cultural Context	3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness 8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community

Source: Teacher and Leader Support and Development 2019-2020. DESE.

The new standards also come from the NPBEA and have been adopted by the SBOE. According to DESE, the change was intended to simplify and more reasonably set standards for school leadership. The evaluation process will continue in the same way but with a different rubric. The rubric format was reworked to mirror the TESS rubric with domains and components. The LEADS 2.0 rubric is shown in Table 10 below.

Table 10: LEADS 2.0 Rubric

Domain 1: School Organization & Management	Domain 2: School Culture & Climate
A. Organizational Focus Unique to school's identity; Promoted; Supports monitoring for continuous improvement	**A. Safe & Orderly** Facilities; Student handbook; Crisis management plans; Perceptions
B. School Plan Student-focused; Collaborative & strategic; Progress monitoring & revision	**B. Equitable & Culturally Responsive** Welcoming; Culturally competent; Supporting programs or initiatives
C. Time Management Strategies & tools; Master schedule	**C. School Discipline System** Positive & unbiased; Growth-path orientation; Protected learning participation
D. School Resource Management Efficient and effective use; Equitable consideration & distribution	**D. Family & Community Engagement Communication; Meaningful family involvement; Strategic community partnerships**
E. Shared Leadership & Responsibility Principal efficacy: Leadership development; Shared responsibility	**E. Collaborative Teaming** Systemic support; Teaming skillset; Individual & team accountability
Domain 4: Human Capital Management	Domain 3: Teaching & Learning
A. Personal Professional Practice Ethical behavior; Organizational & Interpersonal Skills; Research orientation	**A. Curriculum** Provided & available; Clear content & expectations; Supported planning & implementation
B. Personnel Management Recruitment & hiring; Induction & career pathways; Conflict resolution	**B. Instruction** Student-focused; Reflection-driven; Protected instructional time
C. Educator Professional Capital Instructional capital; Social capital; Decisional capital	**C. Observations & Ratings** Strategic observations; Actionable feedback/coaching; Needs-based professional learning
D. School Advocacy Educates self & others on issues; Shares the story; Leverages multiple media formats	**D. Appropriate Instructional Support for ALL Students Organized interventions for additional learning supports; Accelerated learning for the gifted; Aligned curriculum & instructional practices with feeder/connecting schools**
E. Contributions to the Profession Professional associations & resources; Beginning educators	**E. Effective Instructional Change Leadership** Communication: consistent and connected; Support for planning & implementation; Cultural incorporation

The LEADS system still requires each administrator to be evaluated in writing under LEADS by the superintendent or his/her designee. Administrators are building or district level administrators. This does not include superintendents, assistant superintendents, or an equivalent role since districts are not required to use LEADS to evaluate superintendents, assistant superintendents, or individuals in an equivalent role. However, a district can choose to perform a summative evaluation on them. According to DESE, superintendents were initially evaluated by their respective school boards. However, many of the evaluation details were negotiated into superintendents' contracts of employment, which led to inconsistencies in how superintendents were evaluated across the state. The Arkansas School Board Association developed a system for superintendent evaluation that is voluntary for districts.[28]

According to DESE, like teachers, administrators with at least three years of experience (career summative leaders) will be required to have a summative evaluation once every four years. Administrators with less than three years of experience in their position, or beginning administrators, will not be required to have a summative evaluation but instead will receive support. Like teachers, the district or charter school can still choose to conduct an evaluation at any time. Administrators can receive a rating of **exemplary, proficient, progressing, or not meeting standards.** Administrators shall develop a PGP based on the standards and functions that are determined in collaboration with the superintendent or designee. The PGP shall indicate the following:

- The school's or district's goal(s) for improvement;
- The leadership strategies to address the goals;
- Results indicators (staff and students); and
- Sources of data to be monitored.

In the formative years, LEADS "aligns professional support and learning opportunities to link a leader's professional practice with support for targeted, personalized learning" (DESE Rule 7.05[29]). Additionally, the administrator should focus on elements of his/her PGP that are designed to help improve his/her leadership practices to achieve school and district goals. While the evaluation process is similar for teachers and administrators, there are some differences. According to DESE, instead of scheduling and conducting announced and unannounced observations for teachers, the system for administrators is based on evidence gathered in "formative observation conferences" which can consist of several formats. The administrator may or may not be observed directly, and the evaluator may gather evidence from stakeholders, students, or the school's physical environment.

Each school district or charter school is responsible for providing LEADS support opportunities to the administrator for his/her first three years of employment as a beginning administrator. This support program is supported by DESE "through partnership grants with state or national school leadership organizations, or institutions of higher education with school leadership programs that do the following" (DESE Rule 7:16):

- Include opportunities for a summer or fall conference and regionally organized professional learning communities; and
- Focus on topics designed to meet the specific needs of beginning administrators.

Administrators can also be placed in intensive support status if they demonstrate a pattern of ineffective leadership practices that are evidenced by low performance ratings on the evaluation rubric. For example, if an administrator does not model ethical professional behavior or support a rigorous curricular system, the evaluator will notify the administrator in writing that he or she is being placed in intensive support status. This notice should also include whether the

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[28] Email from Ivy Pfeffer, DESE. Dated July 10, 2018.
[29] DESE. Rules Governing Educator Support and Development. Dec. 2017. Retrieved from: http://www.arkansased.gov/public/userfiles/rules/Current/2017/Educator_Support_Rules_FINAL.pdf

administrator's contract is being renewed while being in intensive support status, and whether the fulfillment of the contract term is subject to the administrator's accomplishment of the goals and tasks set forth by the evaluator.
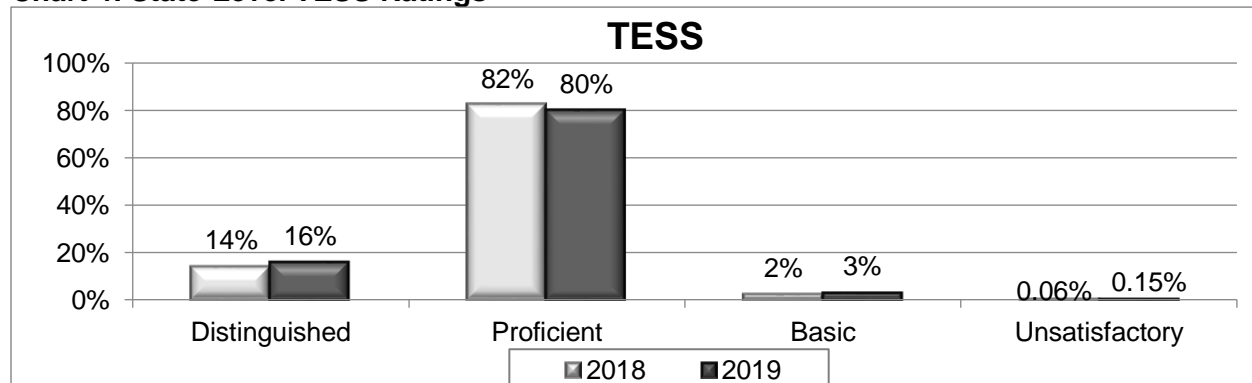
The evaluator should work with the administrator to develop clear goals to support the administrator's progress on his/her PGP and evaluation framework and provide necessary support to the administrator to accomplish his/her goals. Like what happens with teachers, the evaluator will establish a time period for the intensive support status that is long enough to complete the goals set forth but is not longer than two consecutive semesters. That time period can be extended if the administrator has substantially progressed and both the evaluator and administrator agree in writing to extend the intensive support status. At the end of the set time period, the evaluator should provide written notice to the administrator as to whether he/she is removed from intensive support status or failed to progress. If the administrator does not accomplish his/her set goals, the superintendent, upon review and approval of documentation, "may recommend termination or nonrenewal of the leader's contract" (DESE Rule 7.14).

TESS AND LEADS RATINGS

Charts 4 and 5 on the next page show the state level TESS and LEADS ratings for 2017-18 and 2018-19. Ratings for 2015-16 and 2016-17 were not included since the evaluation and reporting processes changed beginning in 2017-18. Prior to 2017-18, the ratings included summative and non-summative evaluations. This means that prior to 2017-18, ratings included ratings of novice teachers and beginning administrators. Beginning in 2017-18, only summative ratings are used. These include ratings of teachers and administrators who have been in their position for at least three years (career summative educators). The state requires that educators be evaluated only once every four years. Additionally, novice educators (those in their first three years of teaching) are not required to receive a summative evaluation. However, schools/districts can choose to evaluate any educator at any time.

Chart 4 on the next page shows that 96% of between 6,600 and 8,000 teachers who were summatively evaluated in each of the past two years received a rating of proficient or exceeding. The percentage of teachers scoring proficient dropped by two percentage points, while the percentage of teachers scoring distinguished increased by two percentage points. About 3% of teachers received a rating of basic or unsatisfactory, which is a decrease of one percentage point. These ratings do not include specialty teachers like school counselors or gifted and talented teachers and include ratings from districts and charters that have a waiver from TESS, as well as the Arkansas School for the Blind and School for the Deaf, preschools, and the Excel Charter.
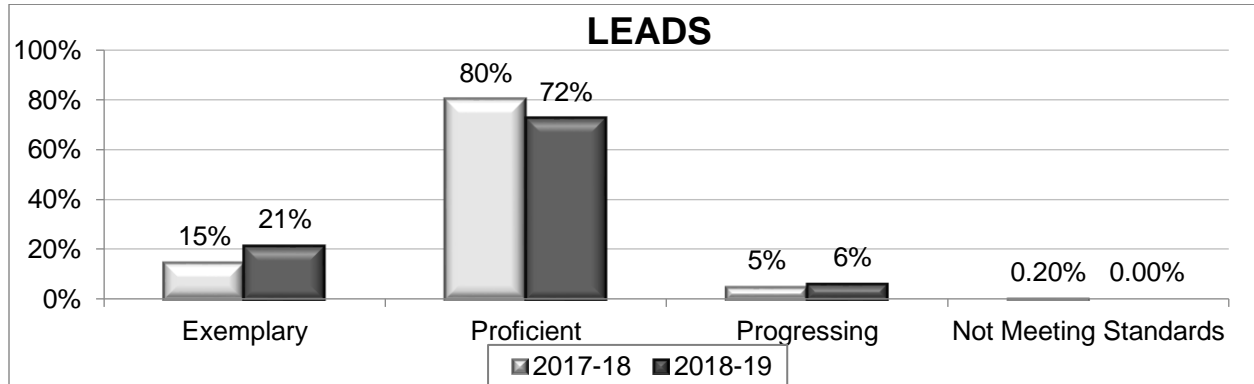
Chart 4: State-Level TESS Ratings

TESS

	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory
2018	14%	82%	2%	0.06%
2019	16%	80%	3%	0.15%

Note: State totals shown above include summative evaluation scores from all districts and charters that input evaluation data. This includes the Arkansas School for the Blind, School for the Deaf, Cross County SD, KIPP Delta Charter, and any other district or charter that may otherwise have a waiver from it or do not serve K-12 students like preschools and the Excel Center.

Chart 5 below shows the combined state level ratings for principals, assistant principals, and non-principal administrators like special education coordinators. About 93% of administrators received a rating of proficient or exemplary. This has decreased two percentage points since 2017-18. About 6% of administrators received a rating of progressing in 2018-19, a decrease of one percentage point since 2017-18.
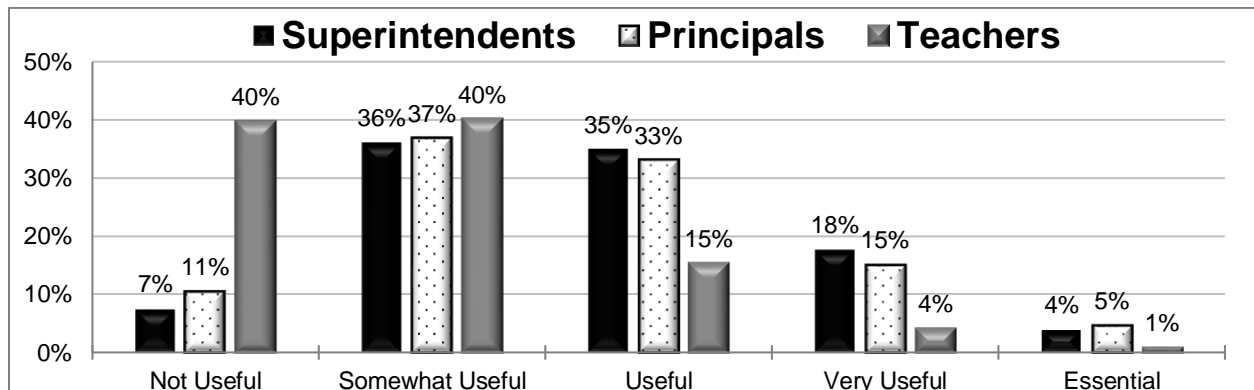
Chart 5: State-Level LEADS Ratings

Note: State totals shown above include summative evaluation scores from all districts and charters that input evaluation data. This includes the Arkansas School for the Blind, School for the Deaf, Cross County SD, KIPP Delta Charter, and any other district or charter that may otherwise have a waiver from it or do not serve K-12 students like preschools and the Excel Center.

TESS AND LEADS SURVEY RESULTS

In the 2020 Adequacy survey, teachers, principals, and superintendents were asked how useful the TESS evaluation system was in terms of providing support and improving teaching in their districts. About 40% of teachers considered TESS to not be useful compared to 7-11% principals and superintendents. Only 20% of teachers considered TESS to be useful, very useful, or essential, compared to about 45% for principals and superintendents. Less than 5% of all teachers, principals, and superintendents found it to be essential.

Chart 6: Survey Question: How useful is the new TESS evaluation system in terms of providing support and improving teaching in your district - 2019?

The following charts look at how these responses have changed over time. Excluding the sample of principals in the site visit surveys, principals were not surveyed in 2015 which is why no data is available for them in that year.
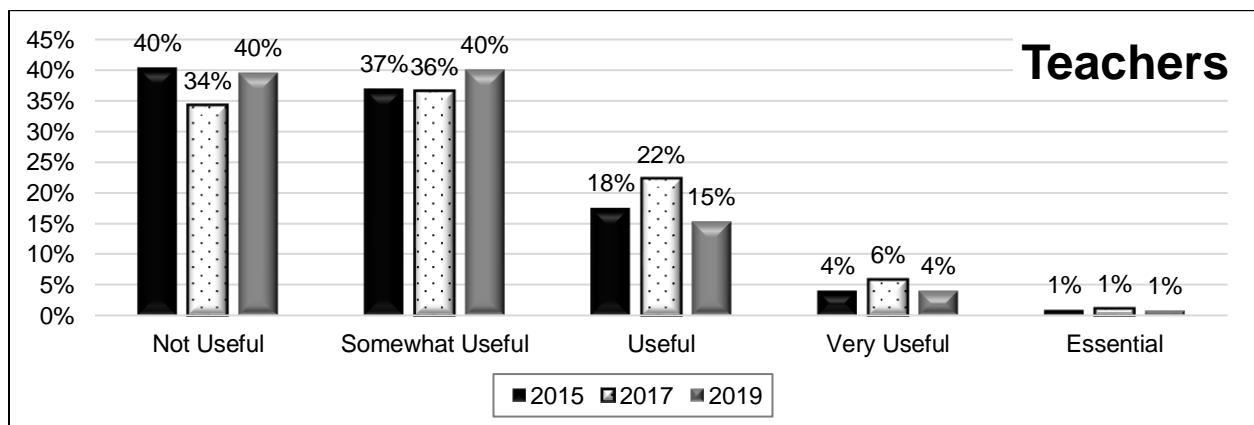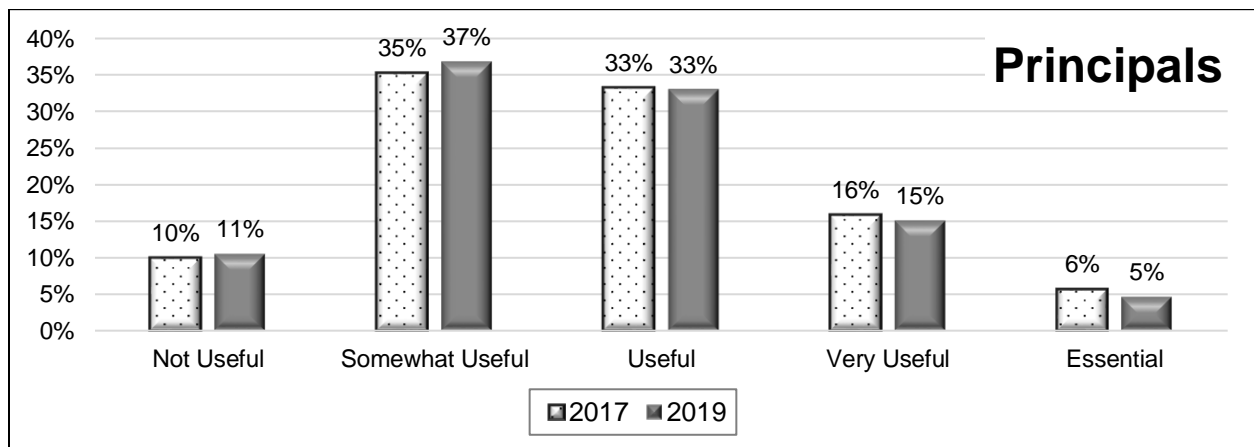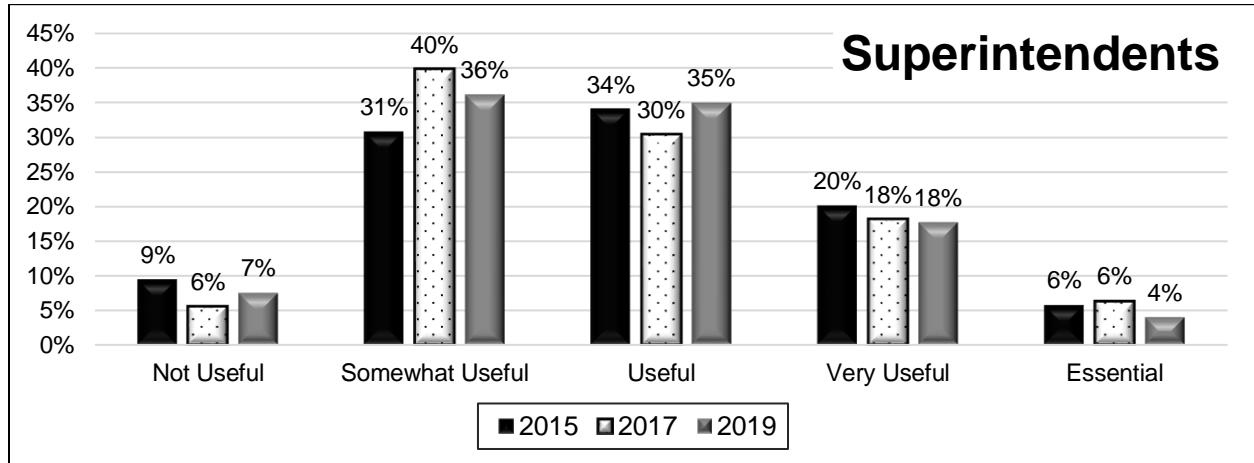
There were slight improvements in how superintendents have viewed TESS over time. The percentage of superintendents viewing TESS as not useful decreased slightly from 9% to 7% and those who viewed it as somewhat useful and useful increased slightly as well. However, the percentage finding it very useful or essential decreased.

There were slight drops in how principals have viewed TESS over time. The percentage of principals who viewed TESS as not useful and somewhat useful increased from 2017 to 2019 and those that viewed it as very useful or essential decreased slightly.

Teachers' views of TESS have held steady. There were decreases among teachers viewing TESS as not useful, useful, and essential, an increase in those viewing it as somewhat useful, and remained relatively the same among those viewing it as very useful.
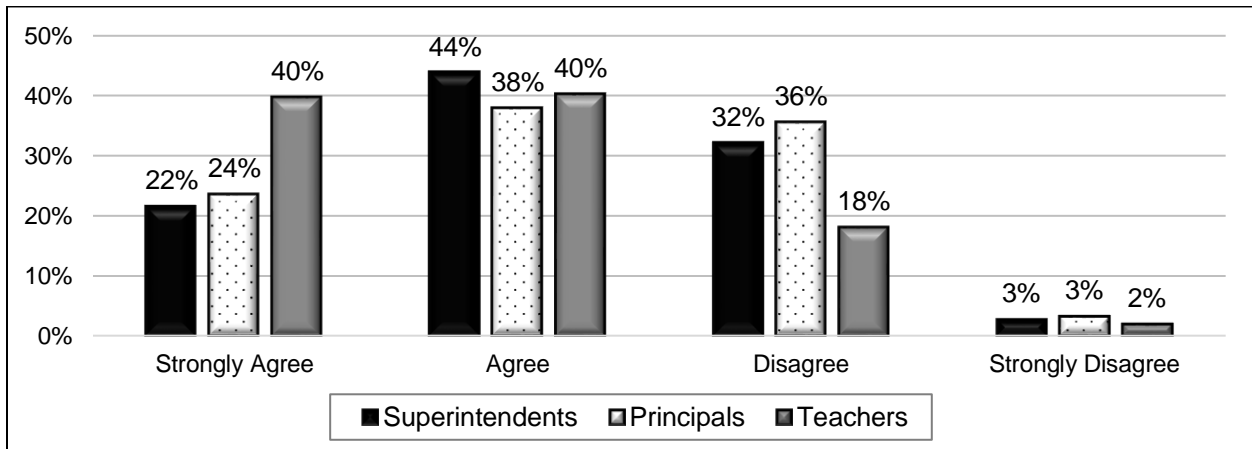
Just over half of superintendents and principals continue to view TESS as at least useful or better whereas more than half of teachers continue to view TESS as somewhat or not very useful.

Charts 7A-C: Usefulness of TESS Over Time

Superintendents

	Not Useful	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Very Useful	Essential
2015	9%	31%	34%	20%	6%
2017	6%	40%	30%	18%	6%
2019	7%	36%	35%	18%	4%

Principals

	Not Useful	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Very Useful	Essential
2017	10%	35%	33%	16%	6%
2019	11%	37%	33%	15%	5%

Teachers

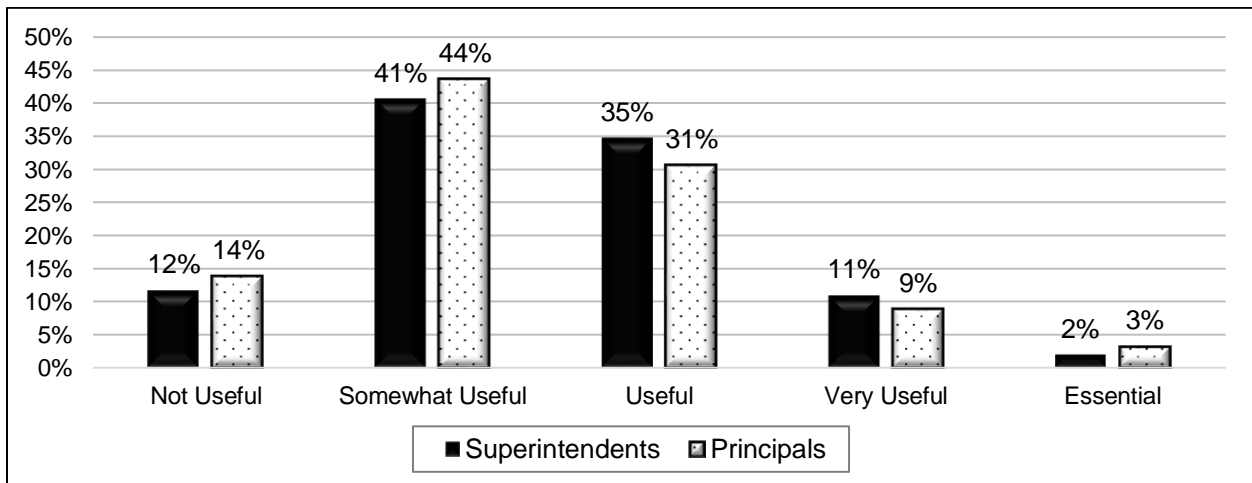|	Not Useful	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Very Useful	Essential
2015	40%	37%	18%	4%	1%
2017	34%	36%	22%	6%	1%
2019	40%	40%	15%	4%	1%

Chart 8 below shows how superintendents, principals, and teachers responded when asked about the time and effort needed to do the TESS evaluations. In the 2018 Adequacy survey on TESS and LEADS, there were many comments from teachers, principals, and superintendents that TESS and/or LEADS were time-consuming. The majority responded that they either agreed or strongly agreed that the TESS evaluation system requires too much time and effort. About 20% of principals and superintendents strongly agreed with that statement whereas 40% of teachers did.

Chart 8: Survey Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: The TESS evaluation system requires too much time and effort - 2019?

In the 2020 Adequacy survey, principals and superintendents were asked how useful the LEADS evaluation system was in terms of providing support and improving leadership in their districts. More than half of both superintendents and principals considered LEADS to be somewhat or not very useful.

Chart 9: Survey Question: How useful is the LEADS evaluation system in terms of providing support to school leaders and improving leadership in your district - 2019?

Charts 10A-B shows how the views of LEADS have changed over time. Superintendents' views of LEADS have been more mixed. There were decreases in those that viewed the program as not useful with increases in those viewing it as somewhat useful or useful, and decreases in those viewing it as very useful or essential.

There also appeared to be some worsening views of LEADS from principals. While there was a decrease in the percentage of principals viewing LEADS as not useful, there were also decreases in those viewing the program as useful, very useful, or essential. The only increases occurred among those viewing LEADS as somewhat useful.

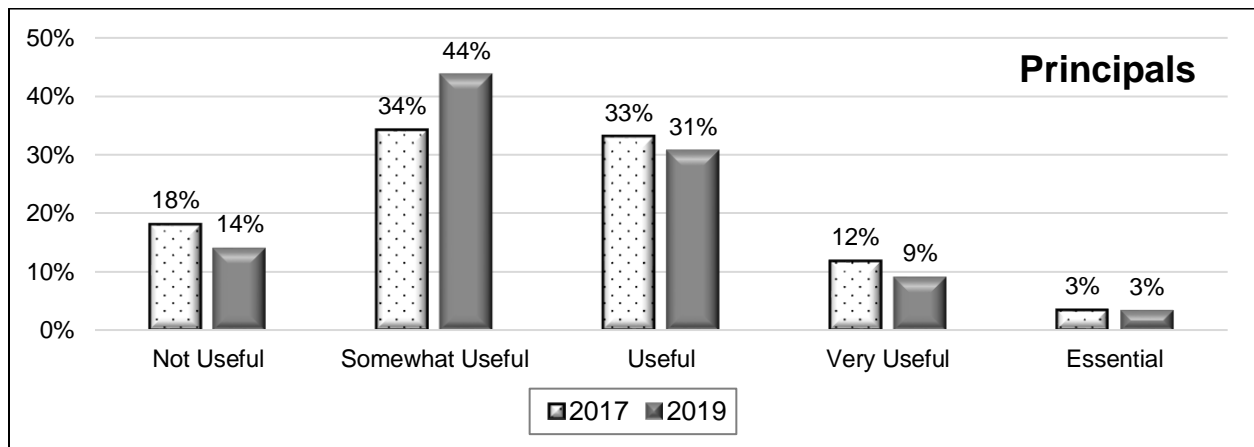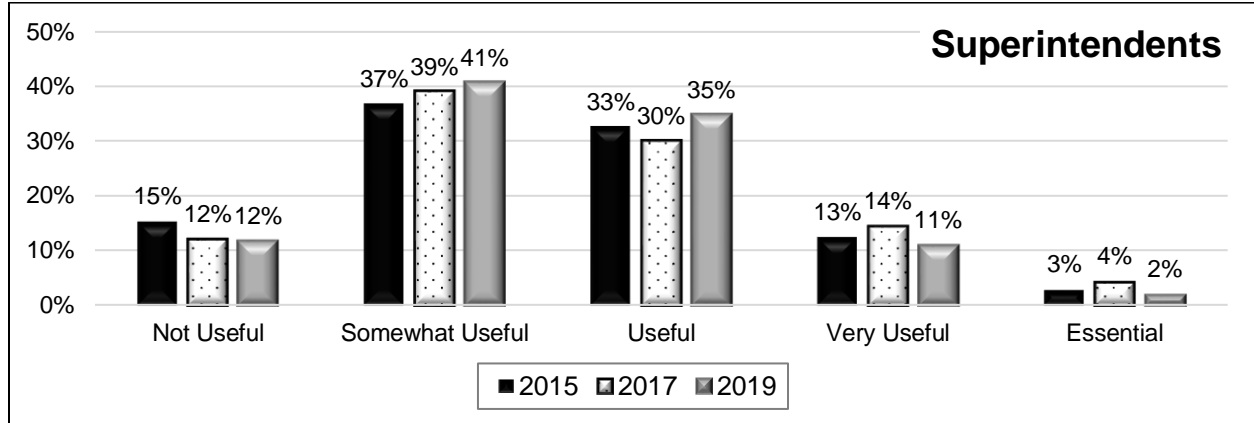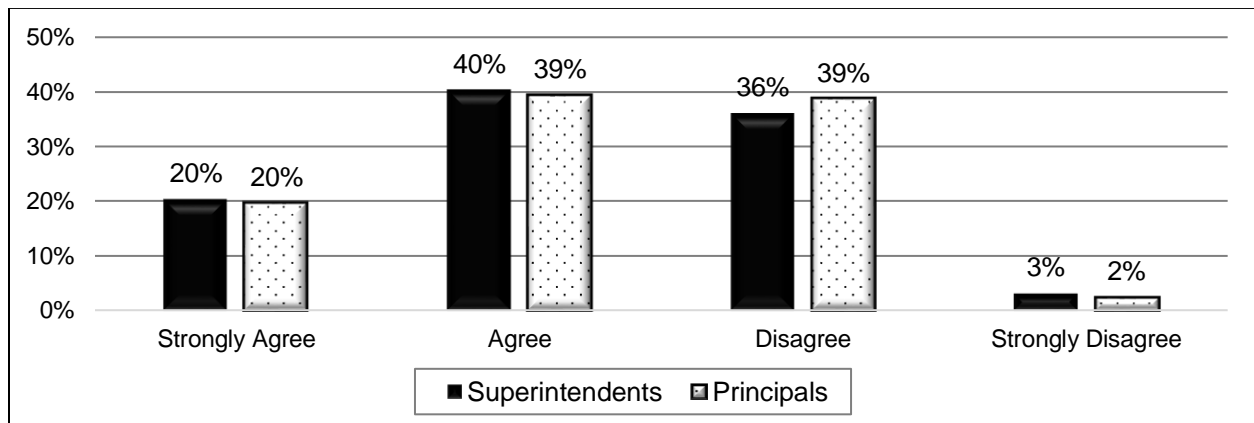**Charts 10A-B: Usefulness of LEADS Over Time**

Chart 11 below shows how superintendents and principals responded when asked about the time and effort to complete the LEADS evaluation system. About 60% of both responded that they either agreed or strongly agreed that LEADS required too much time and effort to complete.

Chart 11: Survey Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: The LEADS evaluation system requires too much time and effort – 2019?

Table 11: Teacher Survey Question - Which of the following do you believe are most valuable in evaluating teachers' effectiveness? (Please select your top three choices.)

Students' daily work/projects/portfolios	23%
Classroom observation by administrators	20%
Student academic growth scores (individual growth in student assessments)	19%
Classroom observation by teacher leaders	15%
Feedback/surveys of students	10%
Scores from student assessment	7%
Feedback/surveys of parents	4%
None of the above	2%
Other	1%

Table 11 above shows that teachers' top three most valuable choices in evaluating teachers' effectiveness were students' daily work/projects/portfolios, classroom observations by administrators, and student academic growth scores (individual growth in student assessments). Among the 'other' responses, there were several options given. A few noted that real life application and outcomes like getting jobs were good measures to use. A few also noted a combination of all the above, growth, observations, and building awareness were helpful. Other comments included the joy of students and teaching, teacher outcomes and traits (like the ability to adapt and implement good PD), IEP goal progress, teacher conferences, and the Wellington index.

Table 12: Teacher Survey Question - Do you believe that teachers in your school are evaluated fairly and consistently?

	2017	2019
Yes, always	29%	22%
Most of the time	43%	48%
Some of the time	17%	19%
Rarely	5%	6%
No, never	2%	2%
I'm not sure	5%	4%

Table 12 above shows that about 70% of teachers believed that teachers in their school were evaluated fairly and consistently most of the time or always in 2019. This is a decrease of about two percentage points since 2017. This question was also asked in the 2015 teacher survey, but different multiple-choice response options were given to teachers, so they are not completely comparable. In 2015, teachers could choose yes, no, or I'm not sure, so their responses could have varied if given different options. In 2015, nearly 64% of teachers who were surveyed responded yes.

In the teacher survey, teachers were also given the opportunity to share open-ended thoughts regarding specific questions on TESS as well as general opinions. Among the nearly 1,500 responses, 45 teachers left comments pertaining to the TESS evaluation system. Most of the comments consisted of complaints on how tedious, time-consuming, and cumbersome the program was. Some of those noted that their extensive existing responsibilities made TESS even more challenging to complete. Several teachers also noted that they did not see TESS as effective – that their time would be better spent working with students rather than finding pieces of evidence to upload into EdReflect. Additionally, several teachers noted that TESS was too subjective – the rating could vary by district, depending on how their principal chose to

implement it. This meant some principals may not use it to its full impact. Sometimes TESS could lead to helpful and reflective conversations with a principal and sometimes it was just a compliance piece that a principal went through the motions with. Other comments included that TESS could be demoralizing, more emphasis and time were needed for mentorship of new teachers, and a specific rubric for specialty teachers like special education was needed.

Site Visit Survey Responses:

In BLR's site visits, principals were asked to describe their experiences with TESS and LEADS.

Nearly three-quarters of the principals surveyed viewed TESS favorably. The most common favorable comment about TESS was that it was a good support and coaching tool. However, a few principals noted that TESS was great for supporting teachers but not great at evaluating them. Another common favorable response included support for the rubrics and domains. Other favorable comments included TESS being objective, providing a common language, and setting clear expectations for teachers.

While most principals surveyed viewed TESS favorably, many of those still noted challenges with the system. Most principals noted that the system took too much time to do. There was some variance in what caused the system to be so time-consuming and burdensome. In general, many principals simply felt there were just too many requirements of the system to get done, including scheduling meetings, uploading artifacts (and other evidence), and entering data in EdReflect. Some noted that being a small school or having high turnover exasperated that. A few principals also noted that the increase in mental health issues and discipline issues further limit the time they have available to complete the evaluations with fidelity. A few principals did note support for improvements that shortened some of that time, like changing the requirement for summative evaluations being done every four years instead of three years. Another TESS challenge noted in the site visits included difficulty with evaluating specialty teachers. This includes the differences in observing regular classroom teachers compared to observing a librarian or counselor, as well as the evaluation system not being specific enough. For example, one principal noted that while the goal of a student-led classroom may be great for some teachers, it may not be for others, like a Pre-K teacher.

The responses varied on how principals viewed the use of technology with TESS. Many educators noted issues with using the online platform for TESS and LEADS, EdReflect, while several also noted they found EdReflect to be relatively user friendly. Some principals commented that the video function on EdReflect was particularly helpful. EdReflect allows evaluators to watch teachers in the classroom remotely.

Among the principals who did not view TESS favorably, the most common challenge they noted was regarding the large amount of time needed to complete the program. For these several principals, TESS was not effective – even if it had been at some point prior. Some noted that the system may have started out strong and based on good data at the time, but that is no longer the case and a new system needs to be created. One noted that the evaluation system used should be up to the districts. Other challenges noted among these principals included the technology being antiquated and not user-friendly, as well as viewing the standards as vague. One noted that more observations than what was required was needed.

Most principals viewed LEADS favorably. A few found it to be a bad evaluation system. Several noted that it was viewed more of a compliance, "check off a box" type of thing. Several more noted that they were not familiar enough with the system. This included principals in their first years as a principal, principals who generally had not used LEADS much yet, or principals still adjusting to LEADS 2.0.

There was almost an even split when it came to opinions on the new rubric changes. Several noted that they did not think LEADS was properly aligned with the duties of principals and other

building level administrators. A couple noted that this was especially true for assistant principals. One noted that the domains and components are too broad – more like district goals – which makes it harder to provide artifacts and show growth. On the other end, several viewed the new rubric positively, noting they were more effective, vigorous, and better organized.

As with TESS, several principals also found the LEADS system to be time-consuming and sometimes overwhelming with uploading materials and taking time away from being an instructional leader. Though a few principals did note that LEADS was not as time-consuming as TESS.

Another challenge that came up included logistical issues. In some cases, the superintendent is located farther away from the school, especially in bigger districts, so the superintendent may not actually be in the principal's building or observing the principal often, which one principal noted could impact the objectivity of the evaluation if the superintendent was not regularly working with the principal. It can also impact how much support and feedback a principal or administrator will receive. Though, some principals noted that a bigger school district may mean there are additional administrators who can help with evaluations, whereas in a smaller district, a principal may have more responsibilities like substituting for a teacher or dealing with an increasing amount of behavioral issues, in addition to completing TESS or LEADS with fidelity. In one district, the evaluator of some building-level administrators rotated year to year and in another, there was high turnover among the superintendents, which both made evaluation consistency an issue.

One thing that came across in many of the responses was the variance in how the LEADS system was implemented and the relationship between principals (and other building level administrators) and their superintendents. This varied from some principals reporting they communicate and work with their superintendent regularly and do not feel they need as much from LEADS to some reporting that they felt their superintendent used LEADs only as a compliance piece and still did not communicate with or observe them regularly. Throughout the site visit responses, these relationships and types of LEADs implementation varied from school to school.

There were also many compliments and positive feedback given about LEADS. Several noted the system was user-friendly, set clear expectations, encouraged self-reflection, and generated good conversations. Additionally, several principals supported the move to align LEADS more with TESS.

There were mixed opinions about the training and preparation for LEADS. A few noted that there was not as much clear guidance on the new system while a few noted that DESE provided good support and were helpful in answering questions about the program.