



Research Report

Teacher and School Leader Evaluations

July 12, 2018

Prepared for

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



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INTRODUCTION

As part of the 2018 adequacy study, the Bureau of Legislative Research (BLR) is taking a closer look at teacher and principal evaluation in Arkansas. This report summarizes the evaluation systems currently required under state statute: the Teacher Excellence and Support System (TESS) and the Leader Excellence and Development System (LEADS). It also reviews TESS and LEADS ratings for teachers and administrators, presents relevant findings from the BLR's survey of superintendents, principals, and teachers, and discusses national trends in public school educator evaluations.

TESS

Act 1209 of 2011 created a statewide teacher evaluation system known as the TESS (§ 6-17-2801 et seq.). This law requires the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) to develop and all districts to implement the TESS system. TESS began with a soft roll out in 11 schools in 2012; followed by a statewide pilot in 2013-14; and fully implemented 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 four domains listed below. These domains are shown in more detail on page four.

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 ADE, 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 in order 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-credentialing¹.

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

- **Direct Observation:** being 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 as a result 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;

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

- **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 of the evaluation domains as a whole (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, and unsatisfactory. The teacher is given an annual overall rating that is based on all domains included in the framework and student growth.

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, 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 2 on page 5 shows what the TESS process looks like.

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 assessments² 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

² An evaluation of a student's learning that is given before the student completes a course of instruction.

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 in the 2012-13 or 2013-14 school years used a nationally recognized system of teacher evaluation and support that is substantially similar to TESS may continue to use that system and is deemed to have met TESS requirements. Other districts or charter schools can seek approval from the State Board of Education (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". Currently, there are four districts/schools that have a waiver from using TESS and LEADS. These include Cross County School District, KIPP Delta public schools, Arkansas School for the Blind, and Arkansas School for the Deaf. To receive the waiver, the district or school must demonstrate that the system is comparable to the TESS system.

Since it was first created in 2011-12, TESS has undergone multiple changes. 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:

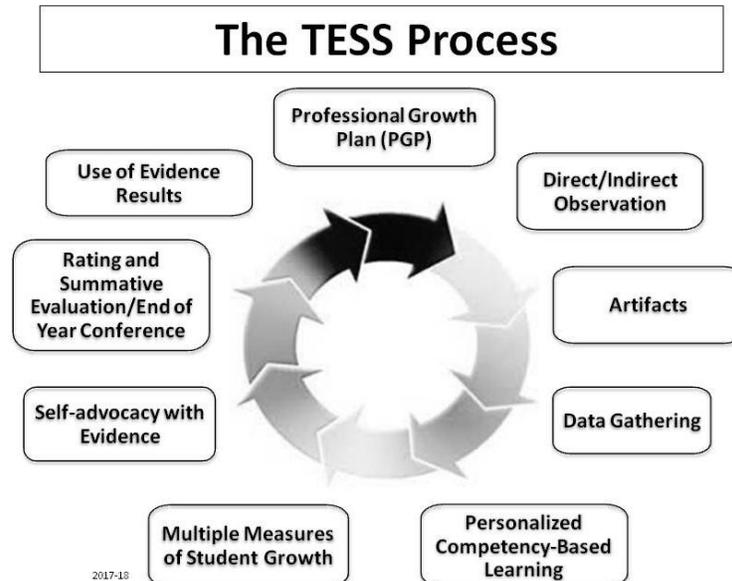
- Novice teachers are those that have less than three school years of public school classroom teaching experience, instead of one year;
- Defines formative years for teachers and removed interim teacher appraisals which were a form of teacher evaluations given during non-summative years (now known as formative years);
- Broadens what evidence can be used to demonstrate a teacher's effectiveness in the evaluation. 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. Currently, there are four schools/districts opting out of using TESS; and
- Schools and districts are no longer required to determine a rating for each domain but only one overall score that takes into account all domains and components.

Chart 1: Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching

Chart 1 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.

Charlotte Danielson's FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING

<p>DOMAIN 1: Planning and Preparation</p> <p>1a Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content knowledge • Prerequisite relationships • Content pedagogy <p>1b Demonstrating Knowledge of Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child development • Learning process • Special needs • Student skills, knowledge, and proficiency • Interests and cultural heritage <p>1c Setting Instructional Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value, sequence, and alignment • Clarity • Balance • Suitability for diverse learners <p>1d Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For classroom • To extend content knowledge • For students <p>1e Designing Coherent Instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning activities • Instructional materials and resources • Instructional groups • Lesson and unit structure <p>1f Designing Student Assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congruence with outcomes • Criteria and standards • Formative assessments • Use for planning 	<p>DOMAIN 2: The Classroom Environment</p> <p>2a Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher interaction with students • Student interaction with students <p>2b Establishing a Culture for Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of content • Expectations for learning and achievement • Student pride in work <p>2c Managing Classroom Procedures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional groups • Transitions • Materials and supplies • Non-instructional duties • Supervision of volunteers and paraprofessionals <p>2d Managing Student Behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations • Monitoring behavior • Response to misbehavior <p>2e Organizing Physical Space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and accessibility • Arrangement of furniture and resources
<p>DOMAIN 4: Professional Responsibilities</p> <p>4a Reflecting on Teaching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accuracy • Use in future teaching <p>4b Maintaining Accurate Records</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student completion of assignments • Student progress in learning • Non-instructional records <p>4c Communicating with Families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About instructional program • About individual students • Engagement of families in instructional program <p>4d Participating in a Professional Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships with colleagues • Participation in school projects • Involvement in culture of professional inquiry • Service to school <p>4e Growing and Developing Professionally</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancement of content knowledge and pedagogical skill • Receptivity to feedback from colleagues • Svs. to the profession <p>4f Showing Professionalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity/ethical conduct • Service to students • Advocacy • Decision-making • Compliance with school/district regulations 	<p>DOMAIN 3: Instruction</p> <p>3a Communicating With Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations for learning • Directions and procedures • Explanations of content • Use of oral and written language <p>3b Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of questions • Discussion techniques • Student participation <p>3c Engaging Students in Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities and assignments • Student groups • Instructional materials and resources • Structure and pacing <p>3d Using Assessment in Instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment criteria • Monitoring of student learning • Feedback to students • Student self-assessment and monitoring <p>3e Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson adjustment • Response to students • Persistence

Chart 2: The TESS Process

Source: Arkansas Department of Education

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 the ADE 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) the ADE to develop and implement an evaluation system for school administrators known as the Leader Excellence and Development System (LEADS) (§ 6-17-2809). However, the ADE did develop LEADS pursuant to this authorization. All districts and schools piloted LEADS in 2013-14, and the districts and schools fully implemented it beginning in 2014-15. Due to Act 295 of 2017, the ADE is now *required* to design a system of administrator leadership support. According to the ADE, the creation of LEADS in statute was intended to create a statewide and consistent form of evaluating administrators. Act 295 requires that LEADS does the following:

- Is aligned to current leadership standards adopted by the State Board of Education (SBOE);
- Uses multi-tiered systems of professional support and learning for what a leader should know and be able to do; and
- Provides a research-based framework to conduct administrator evaluations.

Currently, the LEADS framework is based on the Interstate School Leaders' Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA). The six standards are listed below:³

1. Vision
2. School Culture and Instructional Program
3. Operations, Management, and Resources
4. Collaboration with Faculty and Community
5. Ethics
6. Political, Social, Legal, Cultural Context

³ The Council of Chief State School Officers. *Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008 as adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration on Dec. 12, 2007.* (2008). Retrieved from: <http://www.danforth.uw.edu/uwdanforth/media/danforth/isllc-2008.pdf>

However, these standards are being updated to the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) by the NPBEA. These new standards have been adopted by the SBOE. They will be piloted in 2018-19 and implemented statewide in 2019-20.⁴ According to the ADE, the change was intended to simplify and more reasonably set standards for school leadership. The new PSEL are listed below. The process will continue in the same way but with a different rubric. The rubric format will be reworked to mirror the TESS rubric with domains and components.

1. Mission, Vision, and Core Values
2. Ethics and Professional Norms
3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness
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
8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community
9. Operations and Management
10. School Improvement

The LEADS system requires each administrator to be evaluated in writing under LEADS by the superintendent or his/her designee. 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. This includes administrators that are not principals but have a leadership role, like a gifted and talented (GT) coordinator. According to ADE, 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.

According to ADE, similar to 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. Similar to 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.

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 the ADE "through partnership grants with state or national

⁴ ADE. 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>

school leadership organizations, or institutions of higher education with school leadership programs that do the following” (ADE Rule 7:16⁵):

- 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.

In the formative years, LEADS “aligns professional support and learning opportunities to link a leader’s professional practice with support for targeted, personalized learning” (ADE Rule 7.05). 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 the ADE, 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 take many 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.

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, the administrator does not model ethical professional behavior or support a rigorous curricular system. The evaluator will notify the administrator in writing of the intensive support status. This notice should also include whether the 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. Similar to 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” (ADE Rule 7.14).

TEACHER AND LEADER RATINGS

The 2015-16 school year is the first year in which TESS and LEADS ratings are available. The ratings for the 2017-18 school year are not available in time for inclusion in this report. Data provided by ADE for the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years are not broken down by whether the ratings of educators were based on summative evaluations or non-summative evaluations (interim ratings provided at the discretion of the evaluator based on select domains and/or categories due to focused guidance during the educators’ formative years). In the 2017-18 school year, only summative ratings will be included. However, beginning in the 2018-19 school year, data for both summative and non-summative ratings will be included but broken out.

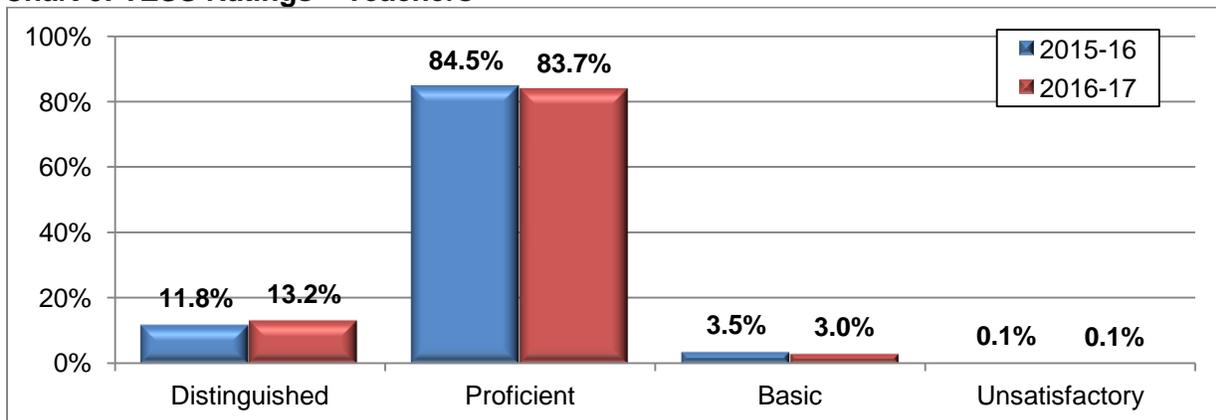
In addition to how summative and non-summative ratings will be reported, evaluation ratings for the 2017-18 school year and beyond will look different in other ways from previous years’ ratings. Due to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the ADE will receive overall ratings

⁵ Arkansas Department of Education. Rules Governing Educator Support and Development. Dec. 2017. Retrieved from: http://www.arkansased.gov/public/userfiles/rules/Current/2017/Educator_Support_Rules_FINAL.pdf

only from teachers and administrators who have been in their position for at least three years (career summative educators) starting in the 2017-18 school year. The 2015-16 and 2016-17 data include ratings from novice teachers and beginning administrators in addition to ratings from career summative educators.

Chart 3 below shows how K-12 teachers were rated in 2016 and 2017. These ratings do not include specialty teachers like school counselors or gifted and talented teachers. In 2017, nearly 25,000 teachers received either a summative or non-summative evaluation rating. Nearly 97% of those teachers scored either “proficient” or “distinguished”. The percentage of teachers scoring “proficient” dropped slightly in 2016-17, but the percentage of teachers scoring distinguished increased slightly as well.

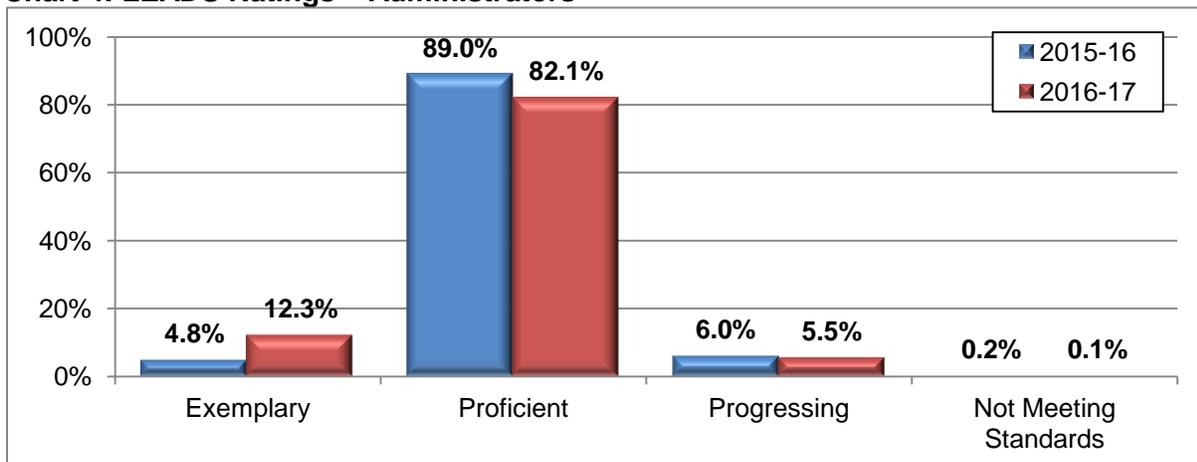
Chart 3: TESS Ratings – Teachers



Note: Data may include a small number of preschool teachers.

Chart 4 below shows how K-12 administrators were rated in 2015-16 and 2016-17. These ratings include principals, assistant principals, and non-principal administrators like special education coordinators. In 2017, about 1,500 administrators received either a summative or non-summative evaluation rating. In 2017, about 94% of these administrators scored either “proficient” or “exemplary”. The percentage of administrators scoring “proficient” dropped nearly seven percentage points but the percentage scoring “exemplary” increased by about eight percentage points.

Chart 4: LEADS Ratings – Administrators



Due to the ESSA, there is another change impacting educator evaluation data. Under ESSA, “the state shall determine the rate at which low-income and minority students are disproportionately taught by educators who are ineffective, inexperienced, or teaching a subject for which they are not currently licensed. If there is disproportionality, the state will evaluate and publicly report the progress in addressing the disproportionality” (ADE Rule 8.02). In order to meet this requirement, each district or charter will report to ADE the following information.

- Each teacher’s professional practice rating from the summative evaluation (Individual teacher ratings will not be publicly reported, but aggregate data about the number of teachers rated proficient or above will be);
- The number of educators who are teaching or leading with less than three years of experience, those with emergency or provisional credentials, and those teaching a subject in which they are not currently licensed; and
- Any additional data pertaining to teacher and leader qualifications and effectiveness as identified by ADE.

Beginning in the 2018-19 school year, information regarding unequal access to effective educators for districts and schools will be available on the ADE website.

BLR SURVEY OF SUPERINTENDENTS, PRINCIPALS, AND TEACHERS

As part of the 2018 adequacy study, the Bureau of Legislative Research (BLR) distributed online surveys to all superintendents and had a 100% response rate. BLR also distributed online surveys to all 1,050 principals and 52% completed the survey. Additionally, BLR visited 73 randomly selected schools to interview the principals and distribute surveys to teachers in these schools. BLR distributed 2,875 teacher surveys and 42% completed the survey. The questions and responses described below are related to teacher and administrator evaluation.

Superintendent Survey

The data below show superintendents’ responses to two multiple-choice questions about TESS and LEADS from 2015 and 2017. They also show how superintendents rated the usefulness of BloomBoard. BloomBoard is the online website used for the TESS and LEADS observation tool, EdReflect. Administrators and teachers use EdReflect to schedule meetings with their evaluator, upload artifacts, and report ratings.

Table 1 below shows how superintendents rated the usefulness of TESS. In 2015, nearly 59.6% of superintendents felt that TESS was “useful” to “essential” in terms of providing support and improving teaching in their district. In 2017, that percentage dropped to 54.7%. However, the percentage of superintendents that considered TESS to be “essential” increased from 5.7% to 6.3%, while the percentage dropped in both the “very useful” and “useful” ratings.

Table 1: Superintendent Survey Question - How useful is the new TESS evaluation system in terms of providing support to teachers and improving teaching in your district?

	2015	2017
Number of Completed Surveys	249	259
Number of Responses to This Question	245	254
Essential	5.7%	6.3%
Very Useful	20.0%	18.1%
Useful	33.9%	30.3%
Somewhat Useful	30.6%	39.8%
Not Very Useful	9.8%	5.5%

Table 2 below shows how superintendents rated LEADS. About 47% of superintendents considered it to be “useful” to “essential” in 2015. By 2017, that percentage increased slightly to 48.9%. The percentage of superintendents that considered LEADS to be “essential” increased by 1.5 percentage points and by nearly 2 percentage points for those who considered it “very useful”. For both TESS and LEADS, the percentage of superintendents that found the evaluation systems to be “not very useful” dropped 3-4 percentage points since 2015.

Table 2: Superintendent Survey Question - How useful is the new LEADS evaluation system in terms of providing support to school leaders and improving leadership in your district?

	2015	2017
Number of Completed Surveys	248	259
Number of Responses to This Question	246	256
Essential	2.8%	4.3%
Very Useful	12.6%	14.5%
Useful	31.7%	30.1%
Somewhat Useful	37.0%	39.1%
Not Very Useful	15.9%	12.1%

Table 3 below shows that in 2016-17, 62.3% of superintendents felt “somewhat satisfied” with Bloomboard and nearly 73% felt either “somewhat” or “very satisfied” with it. About 6% felt “very dissatisfied” with it.

Table 3: Superintendent Survey Question - How would you rate your experience with BloomBoard in 2016-17?

	2016-17	
Number of Completed Surveys	259	
Number of Responses	257	
Very Satisfied	27	10.5%
Somewhat Satisfied	160	62.3%
Somewhat Dissatisfied	49	19.1%
Very Dissatisfied	16	6.2%
N/A	5	1.9%

Superintendent Survey Question - General Comments

On the online survey, superintendents also had the option to leave a general comment, unrelated to any specific question. Of the 259 superintendents participating in this survey, 23 left a comment. Two of these comments were related to evaluation systems. One noted that teachers and administrators spent too much time on paperwork for TESS and LEADS instead of instruction preparation. The other noted that EdReflect was not user-friendly and the PGP did not match up with TESS.

Principal Surveys

Data below show how all principals responded to questions pertaining to TESS and LEADS, including the 73 principals who were interviewed as part of BLR’s site visits. The principal survey sent to all principals was conducted for the first time in 2017, so it cannot be compared to 2015.

Tables 4 and 5 on the next page show how principals surveyed in 2017 rated TESS and LEADS. A total of 546 principals answered the online survey question regarding TESS. Of those 546 principals, 54.8% considered TESS to be “useful” to “essential”. For LEADS, 48% of responding principals considered it to be “useful” to “essential”.

Table 4: Online Principal Survey Question - How useful is the new TESS evaluation system in terms of providing support to teachers and improving teaching in your school?

	2016-17	
Number of Completed Surveys	546	
Number of Responses	542	
Essential	31	5.7%
Very Useful	86	15.9%
Useful	180	33.2%
Somewhat Useful	191	35.2%
Not Very Useful	54	10.0%

Table 5: Online Principal Survey Question - How useful is the new LEADS evaluation system in terms of providing support to school leaders and improving leadership?

	2016-17	
Number of Completed Surveys	546	
Number of Responses	540	
Essential	18	3.3%
Very Useful	63	11.7%
Useful	178	33.0%
Somewhat Useful	184	34.1%
Not Very Useful	97	18.0%

Principal Site Visit Survey Question - Please describe your experience with the TESS evaluation system. What challenges have you encountered so far, if any?

The most common response received was that the program was time-consuming. Of the 73 principals interviewed, 39 principals (53.4%) noted that the system was time-consuming, even among some principals who considered TESS useful and made positive comments. Similar to the 2015 site visits, there were still some mixed reviews on EdReflect, the online tool used by principals and teachers to submit data for TESS and LEADS. Some had challenges with the online system, while others found it to be user-friendly. There were also mixed reviews on the training received to use the evaluation system. Additionally, there was some confusion regarding the types of artifacts needed and about the rubric/domains. Other notable negative comments include the length of time it takes to remove failing teachers, the subjectivity of the system, and the pushback against evaluations being done more electronically. However, the most common positive comments were that was that the rubric/framework was helpful (12 principals or 16.4%). The same amount of principals also noted that TESS was an improvement over previous evaluation systems and saw potential in the program going forward. Other positive feedback included approval of the change to evaluate novice teachers every four years instead of annually and TESS providing more accountability for teachers. Among the other positive attributes noted about the system, the most common was the meaningful conversations with teachers that come up due to TESS. Other notable positive comments included the system providing immediate feedback, evaluations being objective, and the video component of the system. The video component allows evaluators to observe teachers in their classroom electronically without being physically present in the classroom, especially in virtual classroom settings. It also allows principals to share videos with ESCs that are mentoring novices to demonstrate best practices.

Principal Site Visit Survey Question - Please describe your experience with the LEADS administrator evaluation system. What challenges have you encountered so far, if any?

The most common response was that LEADS was helpful and/or a good system. Of the 73 principals interviewed, 26 (35.6%) considered it to be helpful. The most common positives about the program included the good conversations and the opportunity for reflection generated through the evaluation, clear expectations, and a helpful rubric. The second most common response (26%) was that LEADS was time-consuming, even among some of those who viewed LEADS as “useful” and made positive comments about the evaluation system. Other notable negative comments about LEADS include the rubric being confusing and not comprehensive enough to cover specific leadership components, the logistics of evaluating multiple administrators in different facilities, and the challenges collecting enough artifacts and uploading those online. Several principals noted that LEADS felt like just another requirement and was not a big focus in the school or district. In a couple cases, the principal felt LEADS was unnecessary since there was already good communication between the principal and the superintendent. Some principals noted that more administrator training was needed to be more effective.

Teacher Survey

The following tables summarize the teachers’ responses about questions related to teacher evaluations from the 2015 and 2017 teacher surveys.

In both 2015 and 2017 teacher surveys, the same question was posed to teachers regarding TESS. However, different multiple choice response options were given to teachers in 2015, 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. Table 6 below shows that, in 2017, nearly 72% of teachers believed that teachers in their school were evaluated fairly and consistently always or most of the time. This is compared to nearly 65% of teachers said they were evaluated fairly and consistently in 2015.

Table 6: Teacher Survey Question - Do you believe that teachers in your school are evaluated fairly and consistently?

	2017
Number of Completed Surveys	1,198
Number of Responses to this Question	1,182
Yes, Always	28.8%
Most of the time	43.1%
Some of the time	17.0%
Rarely	4.8%
No, never	1.7%
I'm not sure	4.7%

Table 7 on the next page shows that in 2015, 22.7% of teachers surveyed considered TESS to be “useful” to “essential” in terms of providing support and improving their teaching. In 2017, this percentage increased to 29.3% of teachers. The percentage of teachers who considered TESS “not very useful” decreased from 40.5% in 2015 to 34.2% in 2017.

Table 7: Teacher Survey Question - How useful is the new TESS evaluation system in terms of providing support and improving your teaching?

	2015	2017
Number of Completed Surveys	1,073	1198
Number of Responses to this Question	1,048	1184
Essential	1.0%	1.2%
Very Useful	4.1%	5.9%
Useful	17.6%	22.2%
Somewhat useful	36.9%	36.5%
Not very useful	40.5%	34.2%

Teacher Survey Question - Finally, are there comments you would like to make to legislators that would help them in making decisions about improving the teaching environment or student achievement?

A total of 132 teachers responded to this final open-ended question. Of these, 83 respondents (62.8%) mentioned TESS or teacher evaluations. All of these 83 respondents viewed TESS in a negative way. Many of the respondents viewed TESS as ineffective or as a “waste of time”, and some preferred just an impromptu classroom walk-through and a conversation with the principal/evaluator afterwards. One of the biggest complaints was how time-consuming the program was and that it required an unnecessary amount of paperwork, on top of their already overwhelming workload. Several teachers noted that TESS caused too much stress on teachers. Many teachers also commented that the program was too subjective and results could vary depending on who the evaluator was. Some teachers also noted that TESS has become about how well a teacher can manipulate the system instead how effective a teacher actually is. A few teachers viewed the TESS system as another form of punishment or “gotcha” system and noted it lacked respect for the work teachers do. Some teachers also felt frustrated by the amount of proof or evidence they had to supply to prove they were good teachers. One teacher even noted that it no longer seems to be about “teaching the students, but rather putting on a ‘dog and pony show’”. A few teachers suggested that TESS be targeted to teachers who need the greatest amount of support, such as those in their first few years in the classroom, rather than requiring all teachers to undergo the same evaluation process each year.

Chart 5 below shows how teachers, principals, and superintendents each rated TESS in 2017. Among superintendents, principals, and teachers, the majority considered TESS to be “somewhat useful”. Only 10% of principals and 6% of superintendents considered it to be “not very useful” compared to 34.2% of teachers. Only 6% of teachers considered it “very useful” compared to more than 15% of principals and superintendents.

Chart 5: How useful is the new TESS evaluation system in terms of providing support and improving teaching?

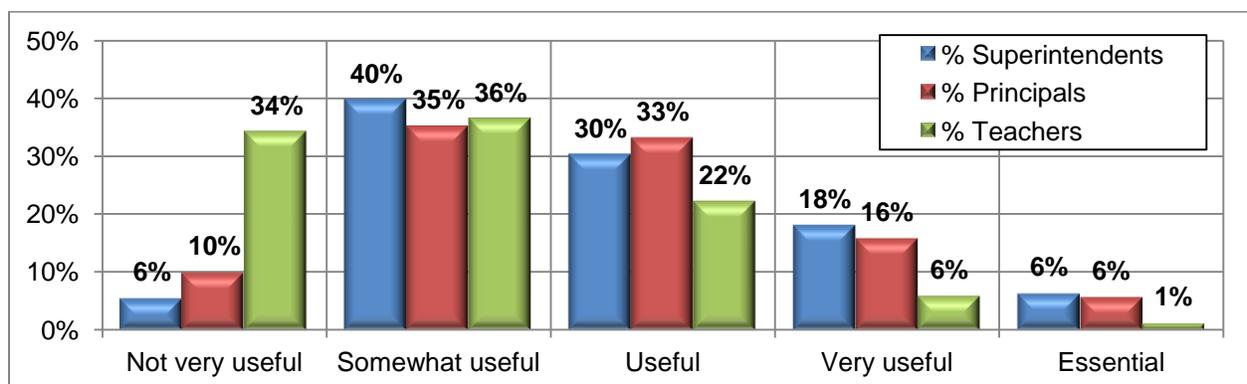
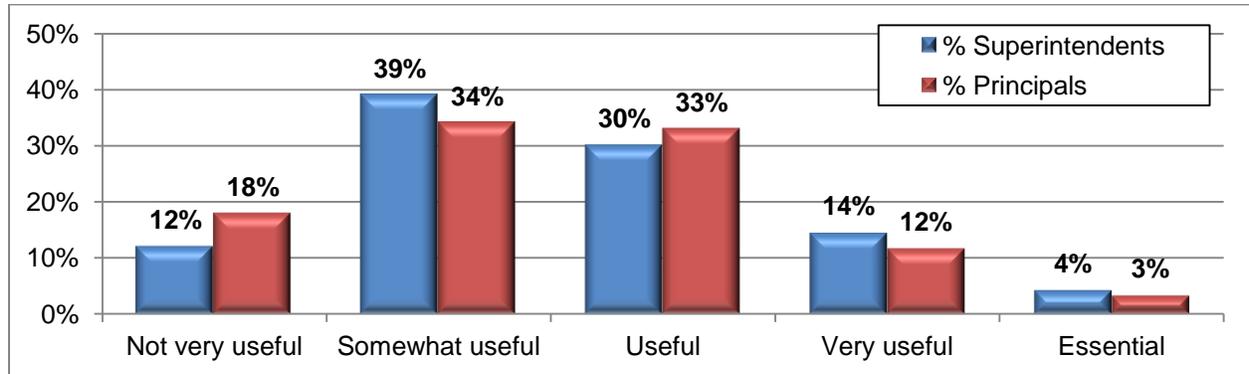


Chart 6 below shows how principals and superintendents each rated LEADS in 2017. Superintendents and principals had similar viewpoints of TESS & LEADS. The majority of both principals and superintendents considered LEADS “somewhat useful”.

Chart 6: How useful is the new LEADS evaluation system in terms of providing support to school leaders and improving leadership?



NATIONAL TRENDS IN EDUCATOR EVALUATIONS

The way states evaluate public school teachers 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 are allowed to 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. The NCTQ is made up of teachers, researchers, and other education professionals who conduct research “to assist states, districts, and teacher prep programs with teacher quality issues” and propose solutions to “help solve teacher quality challenges”.⁶

One particular 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 Week⁷, teacher evaluations were traditionally 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 was released by TNTP (formerly the New Teacher Project) and found that 99% of all teachers were being rated “satisfactory”. 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.”⁸ 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 the NCTQ, which supports the use of student growth measures in teacher evaluations. Due to new requirements from ESSA, there are no

⁶ National Council on Teacher Quality. “Our Approach.” 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.nctq.org/about/approach>

⁷ Education Week. “Are States Changing Course on Teacher Evaluation?; Test-score growth plays lesser role in six states.” Nov. 15, 2017.

⁸ Education Week. “Are States Changing Course on Teacher Evaluation?; Test-score growth plays lesser role in six states.” Nov. 15, 2017

longer federal incentives to create a particular kind of teacher evaluation system or specific requirements for state teacher evaluations. Since then, the number of states using student growth data decreased to 39 in 2017.⁹ According to the NCTQ, Arkansas was among the 43 states considered to require student growth data in teacher evaluations in 2015 but not among the 39 states in 2017 (following the passage of Act 1091 of 2015).

According to the NCTQ, there is significant variance in how much student growth measures are weighted among the 39 states using student growth measures. For more than half of these states, student growth measures make up less than a third of their teachers' overall rating. According to the Education Commission of the States (ECS), at least ten states, including Arkansas, enacted legislation or adopted resolutions impacting the use of student growth measures in teacher evaluations in 2017.¹⁰

CONCLUSION

Arkansas uses TESS to evaluate public school teachers and administrators. TESS was first created in 2011 and fully implemented in the 2014-15 school year. TESS is based on Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* which measures teachers' effectiveness in four domains: planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. Teachers with at least three years of public school teaching experience are evaluated every four years by their administrator. They can receive a rating of distinguished, proficient, basic, and unsatisfactory. Novice teachers receive feedback, support, and mentorship. Evaluation ratings are based on a combination of direct and indirect observation, artifacts, and data that are chosen by the teacher and/or the evaluator. Districts can also choose to incorporate peer observation, student feedback, and any work completed for certification or renewal from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards as evidence. During the formative years, the district or charter school should provide teachers with ongoing support for targeted, personalized learning that is aligned with their PGP. Additionally, an evaluator can place a teacher in intensive support status if the teacher has low performance ratings. During intensive support status, the evaluator establishes a set time period to work with the teacher to develop clear goals and tasks based on the IPGP that supports the teacher's progress and provide ongoing support to the teacher. Districts and charters can apply to opt-out of using TESS if they have a similar system. Currently, four districts, charters, and schools are receiving this waiver.

TESS has undergone several changes since it was first created. The most substantial changes include the repeal of the original requirement that student growth measures be used as a separate component to determine overall educator ratings. This was done over several years with multiple pieces of legislation. This is a trend that has been seen in other states due to the ESSA, which is changing federal requirements regarding the use of student growth measures in evaluating educators. According to the NCTQ, in 2015, 43 states (including Arkansas) used student growth measures and that number decreased to 39 by 2017. Arkansas was among one of the states no longer requiring student growth measures in 2017. According to ECS, in 2017, at least ten states (including Arkansas) enacted legislation or adopted resolutions impacting the use of student growth measures in teacher evaluations.

Other more recent changes to TESS include but are not limited to changing the definition of novice teachers to those with less than three years of public school teaching experience instead of one and broadening the definition of what can be used as evidence during an evaluation. The

⁹ NCTQ. "2017 State Teacher Policy Yearbook: National Summary." 2017. Retrieved from: https://www.nctq.org/dmsView/NCTQ_2017_State_Teacher_Policy_Yearbook

¹⁰ Education Commission of the States. "Policy Snapshot: Teacher Evaluations." March 2018. Retrieved from: https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/Teacher_Evaluations.pdf

definition of artifacts was expanded to include any materials that document the teacher's professional practice (e.g. peer observation or student feedback), the use of indirect observations was added to the law, and the requirements for classroom observations was reduced. Additionally, schools and districts are no longer required to report a rating for each domain but only one overall score encompassing all domains and components.

To evaluate principals, assistant principals, and other administrators, Arkansas uses LEADS. While it was not required in statute until 2017, LEADS was first fully implemented in schools and districts in the same year as TESS. It relies on a different set of frameworks than TESS. Similar to TESS, administrators with at least three years of experience in their position are evaluated every four years. They can receive a rating of exemplary, proficient, progressing, or not meeting standards. Administrators also receive professional support and learning opportunities. Administrators also work with their evaluator to create a PGP and can also be placed into intensive support status. While the evaluation process is similar for teachers and administrators, there are some differences. Instead of scheduling and conducting announced and unannounced observations, the system for administrators is based on evidence gathered in "formative observation conferences", which can take many formats. The evaluator may or may not observe the administrator directly and may gather evidence from stakeholders, students, or the school's physical environment.

The 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years are the first years in which TESS and LEADS ratings are available. The ratings for the 2017-18 school year are not available in time for inclusion in this report. More than 95% of teachers and administrators scored "proficient" or "distinguished" in 2017. The percentage of teachers and administrators scoring "proficient" dropped slightly from 2016 while increasing slightly among those scoring "exemplary". Due to new ESSA requirements, the ADE will be responsible for determining the "rate at which low-income and minority students are disproportionately taught by educators who are ineffective, inexperienced, or teaching a subject for which they are not currently licensed". While this data will be available on the ADE website beginning in 2018-19, data on the percentage of inexperienced and the percentage of out of field or provisional licenses is already on the site.

In their survey of superintendents, principals, and teachers, the BLR found that the perception of TESS and LEADS varied among teachers, principals, and superintendents. In 2017, the majority of administrators and teachers considered TESS to be "somewhat useful". However, just over a third of teachers considered it to be "not very useful" compared to less than 10% of principals and superintendents. Despite less than a third of teachers considering TESS to be "useful", the percentage of teachers finding TESS to be "useful" increased by about six percentage points from 2015. Nearly half of superintendents and principals considered TESS to be "useful" to "essential" in 2017, a slight increase from 2015.

APPENDIX A: ACRONYM GLOSSARY

AAEA: Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators

ADE: Arkansas Department of Education

BLR: Bureau of Legislative Research

ECS: Education Commission of the States

EdReflect: Online TESS and LEADS observation tool that administrators and teachers use to schedule meetings with their evaluator, upload artifacts, and report ratings.

ESC: Educational Service Cooperative

ESSA: Every Student Succeeds Act

FRPL: Free or Reduced Price Lunch

ISLLC Standards: Interstate School Leaders' Licensure Consortium Standards

LEADS: Leader Excellence and Development System

NCTQ: National Council on Teacher Quality

NPBEA: National Policy Board for Educational Administration

PGP: Professional Growth Plan

PSEL: Professional Standards for Educational Leaders

SBOE: State Board of Education

TESS: Teacher Evaluation and Support System

U.S. DOE: United States Department of Education