

Frequently Asked Questions on TNReady & Accountability

December 2015

Beginning this school year, TNReady is the state's new and improved TCAP test for English language arts and math in grades 3-11. While we are excited to administer an assessment that will fully assess the breadth of the state's academic standards in math and English language arts, TNReady is the biggest assessment change that has happened in Tennessee since 1983, and we understand there are concerns about its potential impact – specifically its impact on teachers and students.

Recognizing these concerns, Gov. Haslam and the Tennessee General Assembly worked together to pass the [Tennessee Teaching Evaluation Enhancement Act](#) last spring, which temporarily reduces the impact of the TNReady assessments on teacher evaluations during this transition period.

How will the Teaching Evaluation Enhancement Act affect teachers?

This year, student growth on TNReady will account for **only 10 percent** of a teacher's total evaluation score, unless the use of TNReady growth scores at a higher percentage will *benefit* the teacher. You can find additional information about this legislation online: <http://team-tn.org/evaluation/statute-and-policy/>. As districts, schools, and teachers become more comfortable with the online platform and administration logistics, the weight of student growth on TNReady will gradually return to the original 35 percent.

Will TNReady cause teacher evaluation scores to drop?

While we do expect overall student proficiency to drop in the first year of TNReady, teacher evaluation is based on *student growth* from one year to the next, not whether a student is proficient. Based on testing transitions we have seen in prior years, we are confident student *growth* scores will remain steady and, therefore, **have no discernible impact** on teacher evaluation. You can find additional details about previous test transitions in this FAQ focused on TVAAS: <http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/update/other/TVAAS-Transitions-with-TNReady.pdf>.

What is the difference between a student's growth and a student's overall achievement?

A student's *overall achievement* tells us if they are performing on grade level (also called being proficient). *Growth* measures a student's progress from year to year. For example, a student may have been *below basic*, or well below grade level, as a second grader. While that student still may not be *proficient* or on grade level in third grade, they may have shown considerable growth in their learning. Growth scores honor that student's progress.

We will *not* compare students' overall achievement on TNReady to their overall achievement on the previous TCAP tests. Instead students will be expected to perform about as well on TNReady as their peers who had similar TCAP scores last year. Because all students are making the

transition to a new assessment at the same time, this levels the playing field. Based on testing transitions we have seen in prior years, we are confident student *growth* scores will remain steady and, therefore, **have no discernible impact** on teacher evaluation.

So, why did Gov. Haslam propose and the General Assembly adopt legislation lowering the impact of TNReady on teacher evaluations if student growth is expected to remain steady as seen in other test transitions?

The Tennessee Teaching Evaluation Enhancement Act was a decision based on feedback from educators concerned about moving to a new test, particularly the *logistics* involved in a new online environment. As districts, schools, and teachers become more comfortable with the online platform and administration logistics, the weight of student growth on TNReady will gradually return to the original 35 percent.

Why might districts exclude TNReady in students' final grades this school year?

Tennessee law provides districts the option to exclude TNReady scores from a student's final grade if the scores are not received at least five days before the school year ends. Because this is the first year of TNReady, results will likely be delayed due to the completion of the initial scoring process for the assessment, which will be led by Tennessee teachers. This is standard practice for the first year administration of any large-scale assessment and will mean that districts will likely have the choice to exclude TNReady scores for the 2015-16 school year. This does not constitute a waiver of inclusion of TNReady scores on the student's final grade, but is the reality of the logistics of getting scores back on a delayed timeline.

Is TNReady too difficult for our students?

TNReady measures the problem solving and critical thinking skills that are required in postsecondary education, the workforce, and in the real world. The test is designed to assess true student understanding, *not* just basic memorization and test-taking skills, and will provide more and better information to teachers, parents, and students about where students truly are on their path to postsecondary education or the workforce and what supports students may still need. While TNReady is more rigorous than our previous TCAP tests in math and English language arts, the assessment will measure real-world readiness, not a student's ability to take a multiple-choice test.

Because this is the first year of a new large-scale assessment, Tennessee teachers will complete an initial scoring process this summer, prior to calculating student scores. This is a best practice for any large-scale assessment, but it does mean scores will be delayed until fall 2016. Tennessee teachers will lead this process over the summer and will determine what it means to be on grade level (in the past this was called being proficient). Teachers will rely on real student examples to determine what is reasonable and appropriate based on the rigor of the test, creating criterion for all tests to be graded on.

What additional flexibility is provided this year during the assessment transition?

Per the Tennessee Teaching Evaluation Enhancement Act, local districts have **complete discretion** in how they choose to factor test data into employment decisions like promotion, retention, termination, and compensation. In other words, local school districts have considerable **flexibility to pause any policies or programs that emphasize the use of TNReady results in these types of personnel decisions.**

Are districts utilizing this flexibility?

Yes, districts were made aware of this flexibility over the summer after the Tennessee Teaching Evaluation Enhancement Act was passed. As a result, many districts have already made decisions based on the flexibility provided in the law. For example, many districts have already proactively decided that they will not use scores if they are not received in time for student grades. In addition, many districts are reviewing current personnel policies related to retention, compensation, and promotion and determining if revisions are appropriate and beneficial to their unique situations this year.