

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND APPRAISAL SYSTEM for Texas Teachers

Executive Summary

Legal Requirements

Senate Bill 1, passed in 1995, required the Commissioner of Education to develop a recommended appraisal system for Texas teachers with input from teachers and other professionals. In addition to specifying general characteristics of an appraisal system, Texas Education Code (TEC) §21.351 requires that criteria for the commissioner's recommended system include: (1) teachers' implementation of discipline management procedures; and (2) the performance of teachers' students.

Prior to the enactment of H. B. 1440, all teachers were required to have an annual appraisal by TEC §21.352(c). The new legislation allows districts to adopt policies at the local level to modify the appraisal schedule for qualifying teachers, as long as an appraisal is performed at least once during each five year period. A teacher must be rated as at least proficient on each PDAS domain to be eligible for less frequent appraisals permitted through H.B. 1440.

It should be noted that the individual teacher's consent is required prior to moving to less frequent appraisal for those who qualify. Should a teacher prefer to be appraised annually, the campus administrator should continue to perform annual appraisals.

Pursuant to local policy, if an appraiser becomes aware of a teacher who is performing below expectations (whether through direct observation or notification from a third party), the appraiser may place the teacher on the traditional annual appraisal cycle even if the teacher had agreed to less frequent appraisals based on his or her most recent evaluation. Nothing in the legislation prohibits a walkthrough or other informal observation by appraisers, even for those teachers who have qualified for less frequent appraisals. The use of cumulative data for teachers on a revised appraisal schedule is also permissible, in accordance with the rules established in 19 TAC §150.1003(f) for districts using the PDAS.

Overview of the System

The PDAS includes fifty-one evaluation criteria organized in eight domains. The eight PDAS domains are:

- Domain I: Active, Successful Student Participation in the Learning Process
- Domain II: Learner-Centered Instruction
- Domain III: Evaluation and Feedback on Student Progress
- Domain IV: Management of Student Discipline, Instructional Strategies, Time and Materials
- Domain V: Professional Communication
- Domain VI: Professional Development
- Domain VII: Compliance with Policies, Operating Procedures and Requirements
- Domain VIII: Improvement of Academic Performance of all Students on the Campus

Domain VIII addresses the student performance link. This domain is comprised of a total of ten criteria. Five of the criteria relate to teacher efforts to plan, analyze, and deliver instruction that are aligned with appropriate academic skills objectives addressed within the teacher's particular assignment. One criterion in this domain relates to the teacher's continuing efforts to monitor student attendance and to be proactive in intervening with regard to students who experience attendance problems. Three criteria relate to teachers' efforts to identify and intervene appropriately with students in at-risk situations. Finally, a tenth criterion is the shared score on the overall campus performance rating and AYP status.

Scoring of the domains is done primarily through classroom observational data and input from teachers through responses on the Teacher Self-Report (TSR) Form. Relevant out-of-classroom data may also be used if documented and shared with the teacher. The domains are scored in four categories: (1) Exceeds Expectations; (2) Proficient; (3) Below Expectations; and (4) Unsatisfactory. Each domain is scored independently, and thus there are no cumulative scores.

Implementation of the System

The system will require a minimum of one observation of at least 45 minutes, plus additional observations and walkthroughs as necessary. Observations may be scheduled or unscheduled at the discretion of the local district. Teachers and appraisers may mutually elect to adjust the length of observations so long as the total amount of time adds up to 45 minutes. A teacher is guaranteed a summative appraisal conference unless he or she expressly waives the conference requirement.

Teachers who have concerns about their appraisals may request a second appraisal, or may appeal the appraisal. For those teachers whose performance is appraised as less than proficient in any domain, adequate due process provisions have been incorporated in the rules. These teachers must be given the opportunity to improve their performance through the development of an intervention plan.

The PDAS also provides for teachers input into their own appraisal ratings, especially in Domain VI (Professional Development) and Domain VIII (Efforts to Improve Academic Performance), through the inclusion of the TSR Form. This enables teachers to submit concrete examples of their best work, in a limited format, to their appraiser for consideration in the appraisal process.

Training for Teachers

In the initial year of adoption and implementation of PDAS, campuses must provide opportunities for representative teachers to participate in appraisal training. Districts are required to offer opportunities for appraisal training to a number of teachers equal to the number of campus administrators. At the discretion of the principal, these teachers may facilitate the orientation and may assist in presenting the orientation.

These teachers may serve as orientation facilitators but are not certified as appraisers.

District Options

Under TEC §21.352, districts that elect to devise their own local system are encouraged to do so, as long as the local system meets the provisions of law, including a clear and direct link to the performance of teachers' students. Thus, if after reviewing the commissioner's recommended system, districts feel that they have appraisal practices more suited to local needs, they may feel free to use them.

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