SCORE State Collaborative on Reforming Education

Teacher Evaluation in Tennessee

Advisory Committee on Innovations in K-12 Education

August 20, 2025

SCORE State Collaborative on Reforming Education

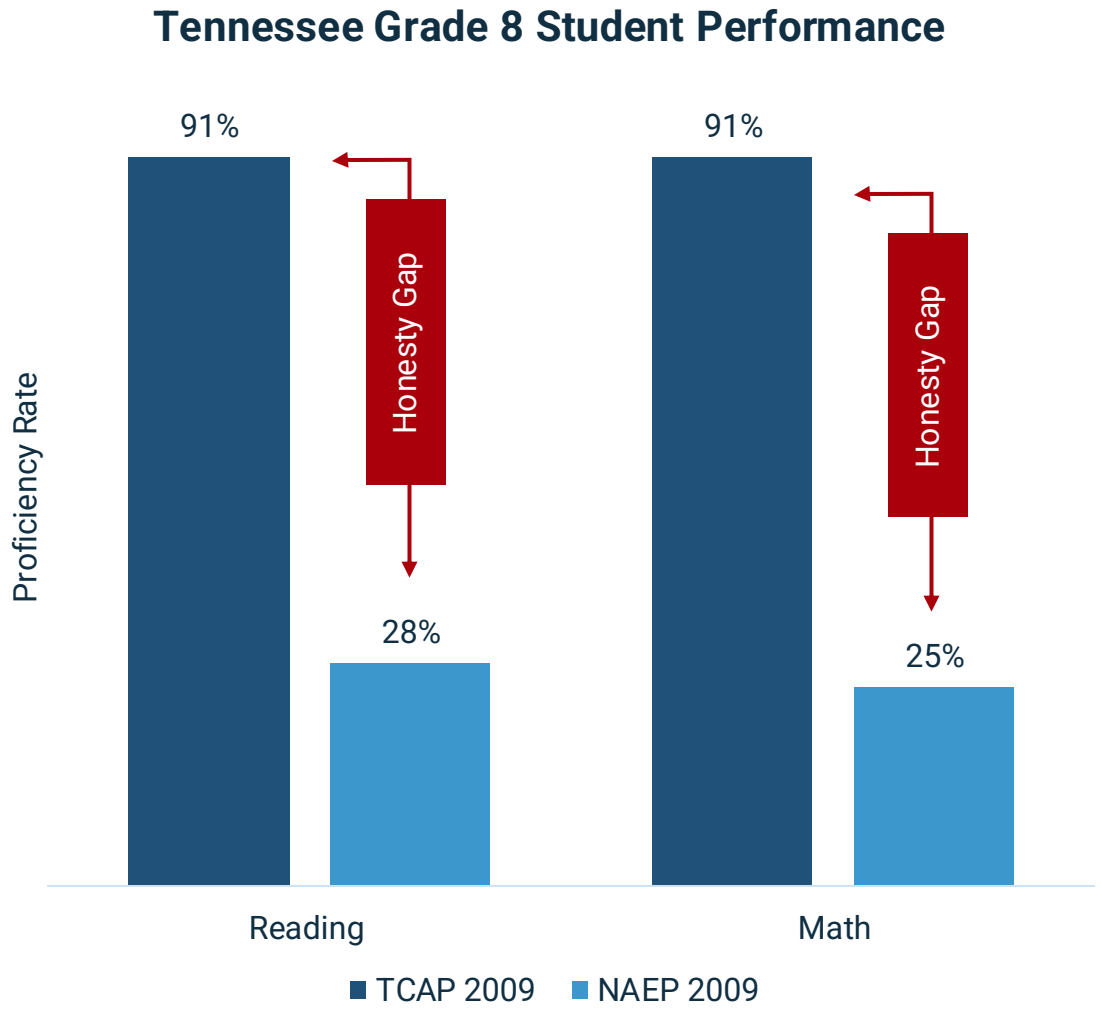
SCORE believes all Tennessee students deserve success in college, career, and life.

We are an independent, nonprofit, and nonpartisan advocacy and research institution, founded in 2009 by Senator Bill Frist, MD, former US Senate Majority Leader.

History of Teacher Evaluation in Tennessee

Tennessee Received Report Of Academic "Honesty Gap" In 2007 That Spurred Changes

- Inflated proficiency rates, large achievement gaps, and poor college and career readiness
- Tennessee proficiency rates on state assessment (TCAP) higher than national assessment (NAEP) in math and reading



Source: TDOE and Nation's Report Card

Tennessee Committed to a Bold Strategy

- Rigorous academic standards
- Aligned assessments
- Robust educator feedback
- Strong accountability systems

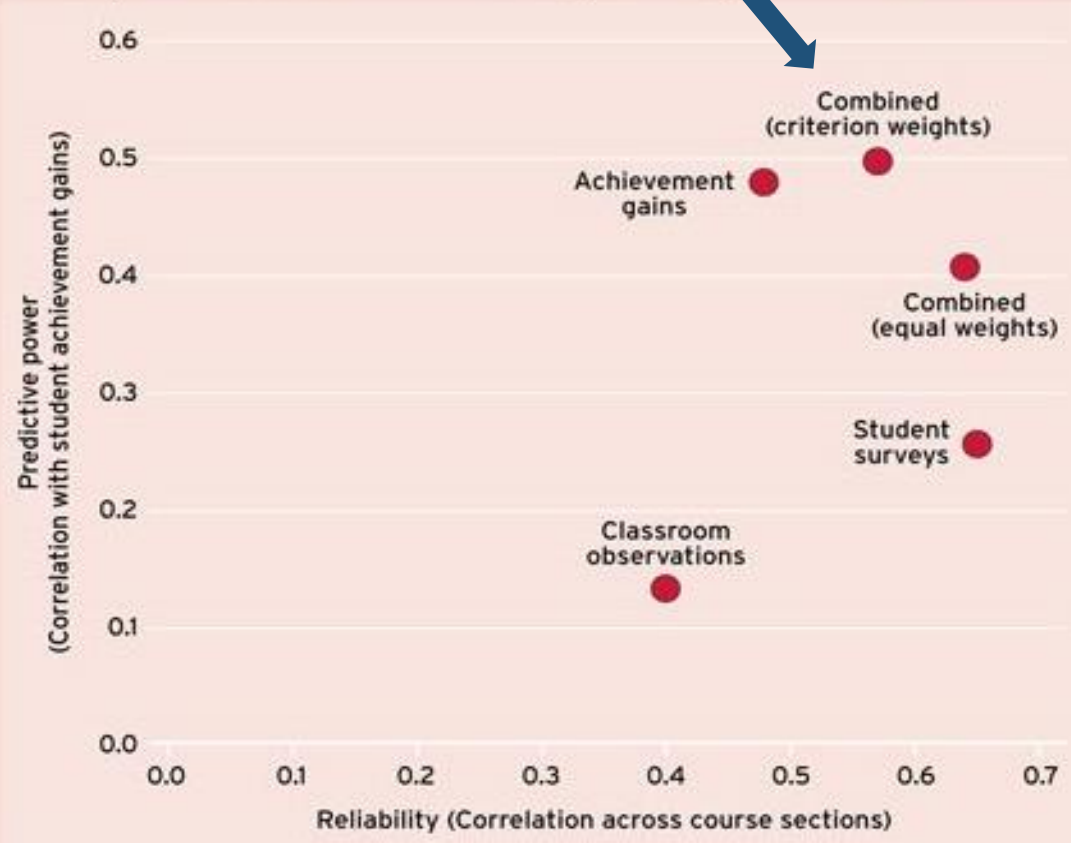
Teacher Evaluation Before 2010

- Framework for Evaluation and Professional Growth (FEPG)
- Evaluations included classroom observations, self-assessments, teacher reflections, and future growth plans
- **Student outcomes did not contribute to evaluation scores**
- Teachers with apprentice licenses were required to be evaluated **at least once a year** and professional-licensed teachers evaluated only **twice every 10 years**

Tennessee Shifted To A Multiple Measure System Backed By Research

- Study launched in 2009 to develop and test measures of teacher effectiveness
- Combining and weighting **multiple measures** of teacher performance increases the predictive power and reliability of overall evaluation scores

Achievement gains in one class are strong predictors of gains in another class taught by the same teacher; combining evidence from multiple sources yields a more reliable measure of teacher effectiveness.



Source: MET Project (2010); Kane, T. (2012)

Teacher Evaluation Reform After 2010

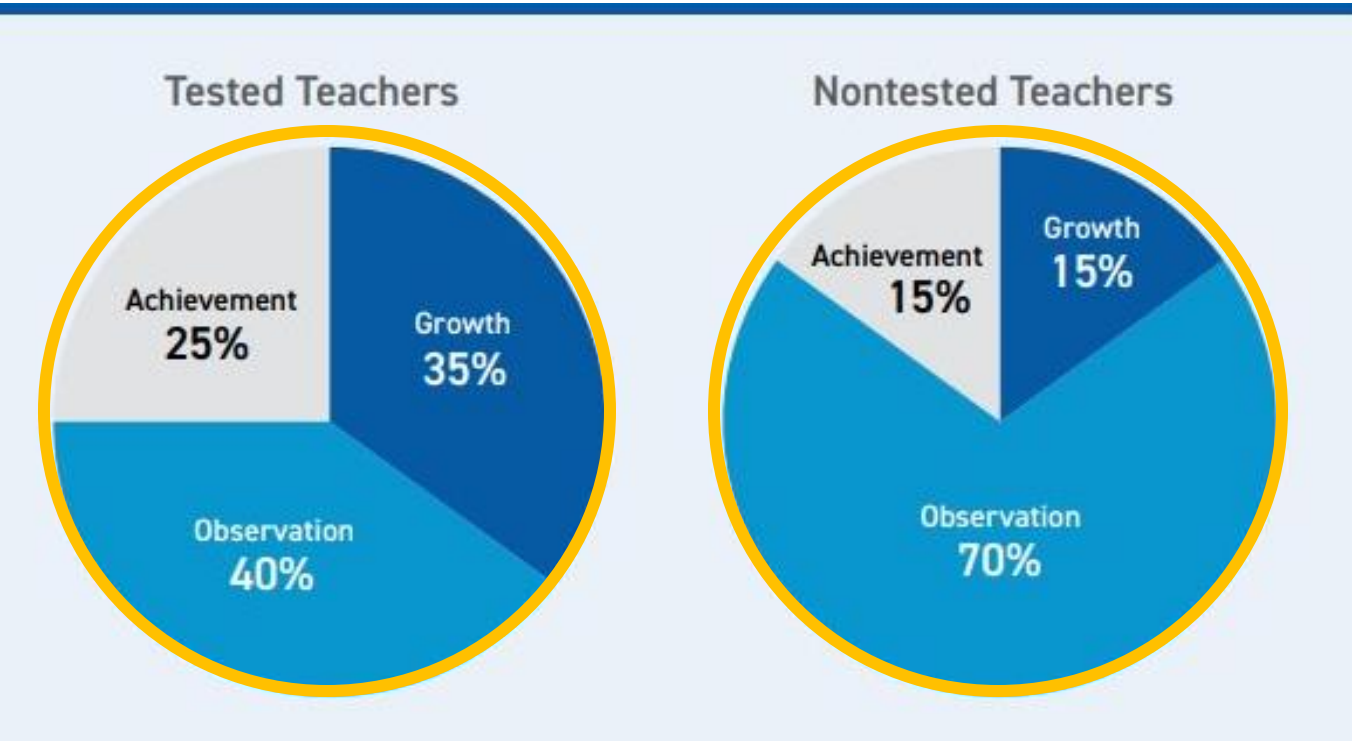
- **Teacher Evaluation Advisory Committee** developed teacher evaluation criteria recommendations
- Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) **observation rubric** developed across multiple domains of instructional practice
- **Student achievement** added as a weighted component in teacher and principal evaluations
- Established cadence of **annual evaluations** for all teachers

Regular Feedback And Coaching Are Critical To Improving Practice and Achievement

- Research emphasizes key components of evaluation:
  - Clear performance standards
  - Multiple observation rating options
  - Frequent monitoring and regular feedback
  - Professional development
  - Intensive support
- **Instructional coaching and targeted feedback** are positively connected with teacher performance, job satisfaction, and student academic growth

Sources: Frazier, R. A, (2018); MET Project (2013)

Tennessee Combines Objective Measures To Capture Teacher Effectiveness



Source: TN Department of Education

Evaluation

- Annual teacher evaluation is comprised of three weighted categories

Level of Effectiveness (LOE)

- Teachers receive a combined overall score levels 1 through 5 that informs support, licensure, and opportunity

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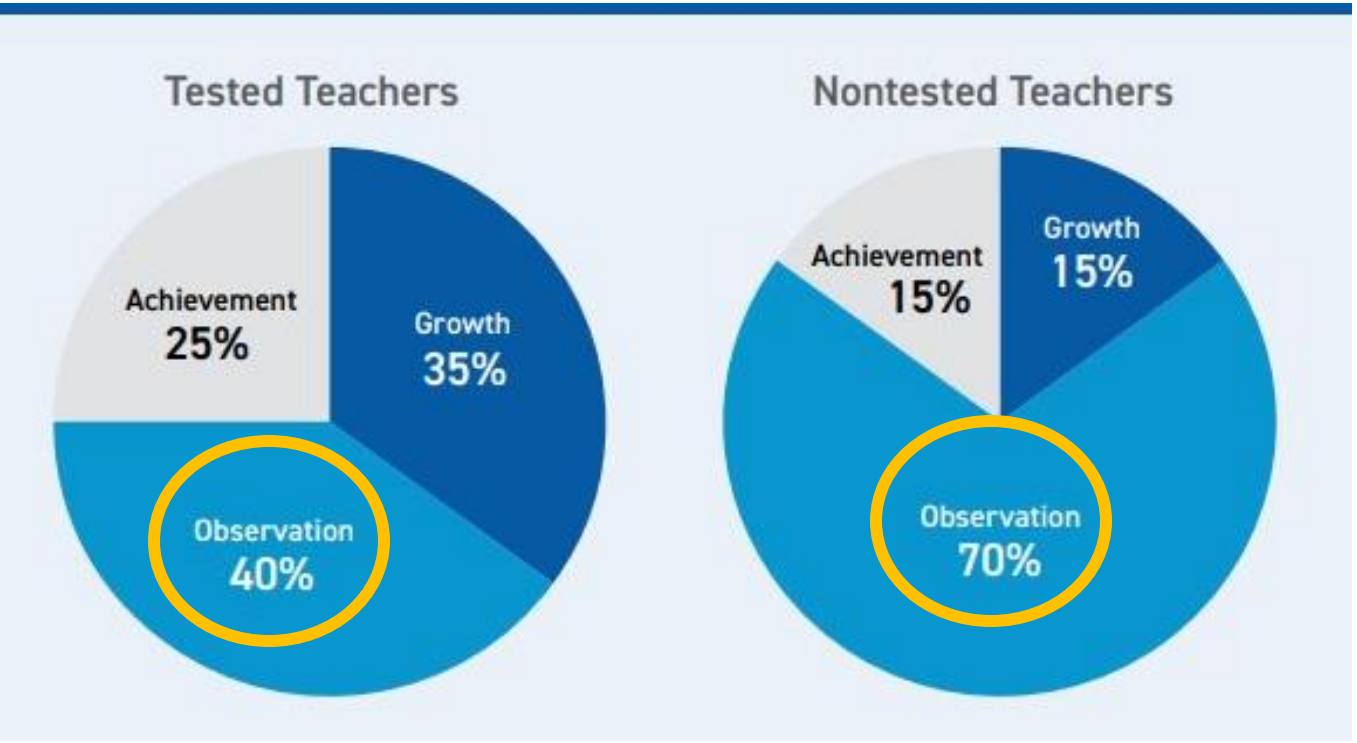

Classroom Observations

- Intended to provide teachers with a model to continuously improve instructional practice
- Teachers are required to be observed less as they advance in experience and effectiveness

Source: TN Department of Education

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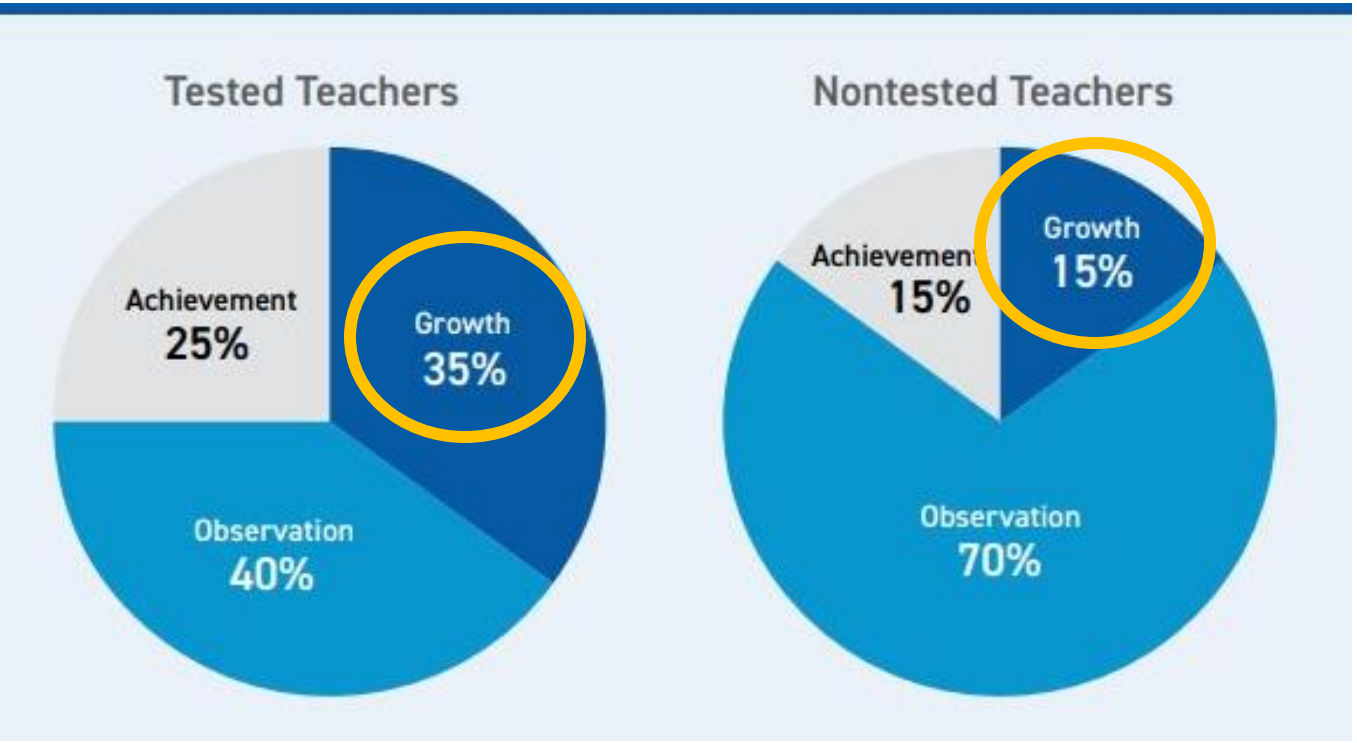

Student Growth

- TVAAS measures the impact teachers have on student academic progress in a year
- Teachers with individual TVAAS growth scores are automatically included, but options exist for teachers without TVAAS

Source: TN Department of Education

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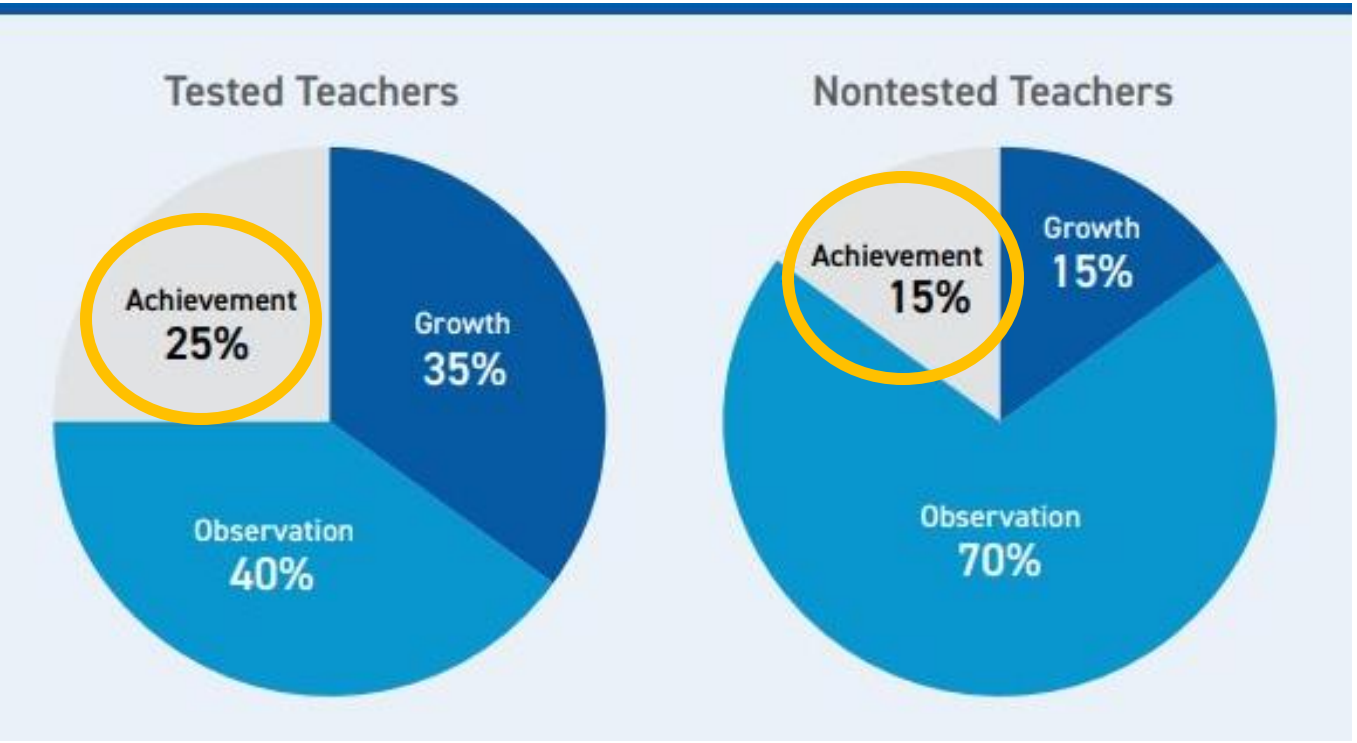


Student Achievement

- Intended to measure student mastery of grade level standards
- Teachers may select an achievement measure aligned to teaching assignment from an extensive list of options

Source: TN Department of Education

Evaluation Improves Student Outcomes

Research Supports The Correlation Between Tennessee Teacher Evaluation and Achievement

- The National Council for Teacher Quality **highlighted Tennessee as an exemplar for a high-quality teacher evaluation system**, informing a study that found Tennessee was the only state that sustained observable outcomes five years after evaluation.
- The Tennessee Education Research Alliance (TERA) at Vanderbilt University found that Tennessee student performance increased at a much faster rate after evaluation reform. After 10 years with the new teacher evaluation system, **student achievement growth and teacher growth can be attributed to the state's evaluation reform.**
- The Annenberg Institute found that **Tennessee** was one of two state exemplars in the country where **teacher evaluation reform resulted in positive effects on student achievement in math and English language arts.**

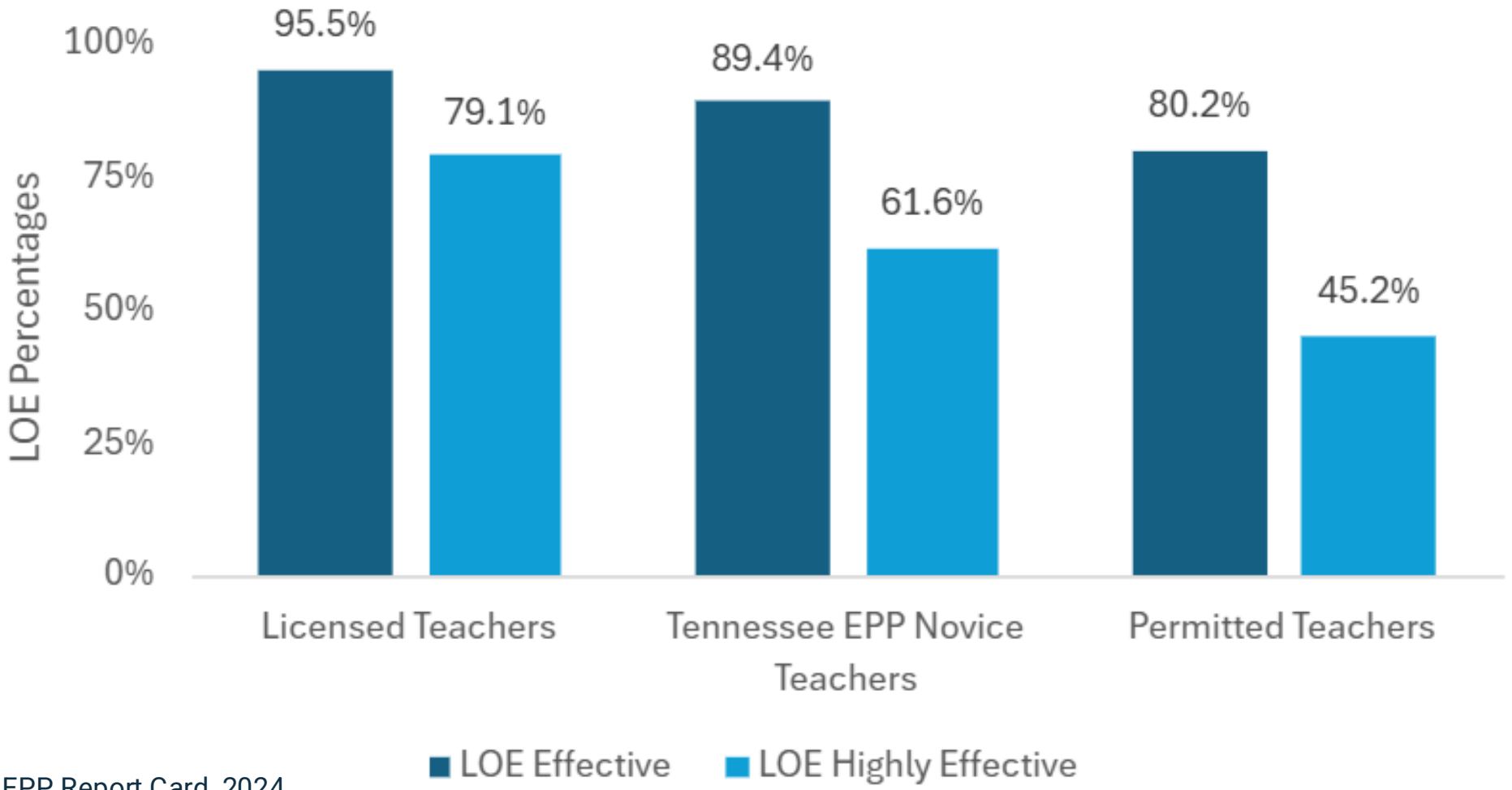
Tennessee's Commitment to Students Has Led To Progress Over The Last 15 Years

	2009	2024
Grade 4 Reading	Ranked 38th	**Ranked 24th**
Grade 4 Math	Ranked 45th	**Ranked 13th**
Grade 8 Reading	Ranked 34th	**Ranked 21st**
Grade 8 Math	Ranked 42nd	**Ranked 20th**

Data Title: Tennessee state rankings across grades and subjects for all students, 2009 to 2024
Data Note: Rankings based on scale scores
Source: NAEP, 2024

Opportunities To Advance Teacher Evaluation

Nearly All Tennessee Teachers Are Rated Effective, Most Highly Effective



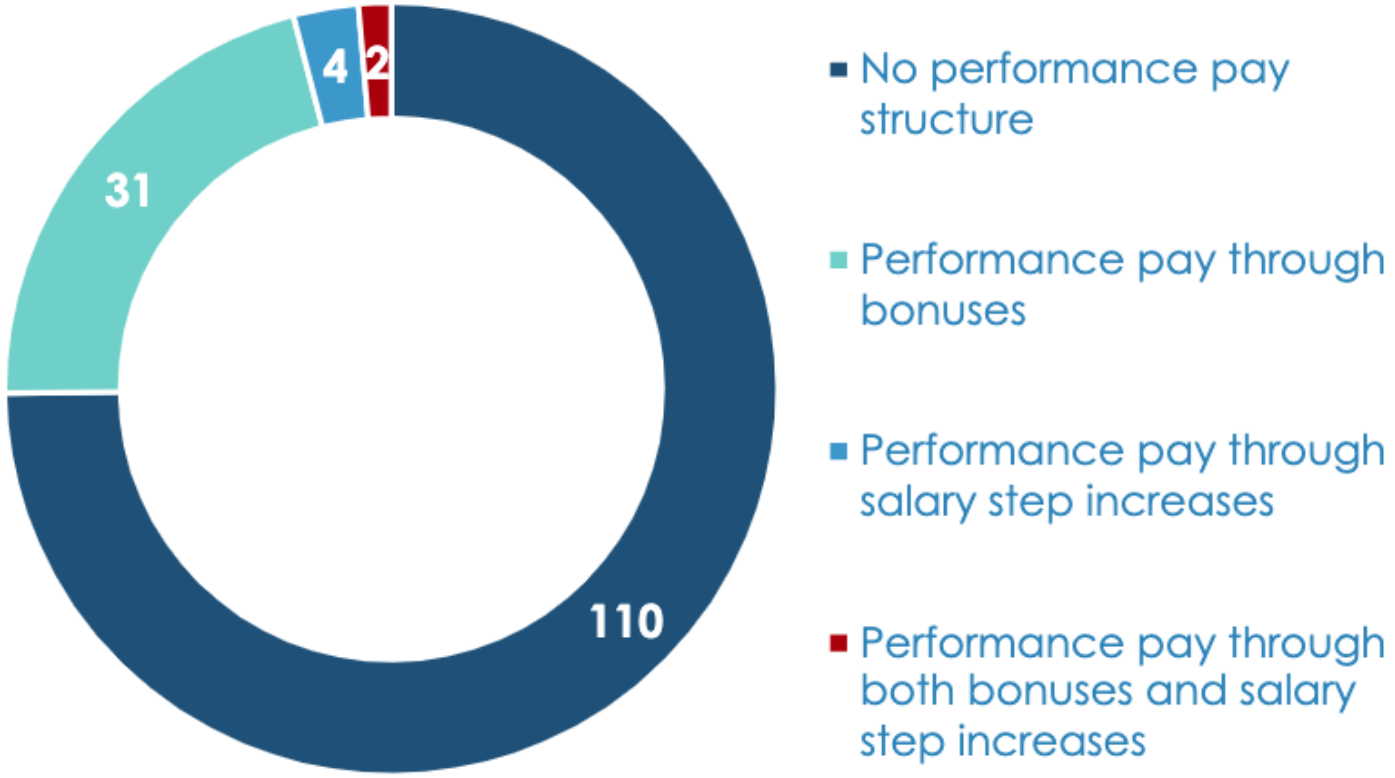
Source: TDOE, 2023; EPP Report Card, 2024.

Merit Pay Is A Beneficial Tool That Boosts Student Achievement

- A meta-analysis of 37 research studies found positive and significant effects of merit pay on student achievement.
- Merit pay also supports attracting high-performing teachers to hard-to-staff positions and retains high-performing teachers through teacher-leader roles.
- Public Chapter 256 of 2025 (Sen. Lowe / Rep. Marsh) encourages districts to adopt merit pay to reward and incentivize teacher performance.

Districts Use Teacher Evaluation to Reward Effective Teachers

- Districts use various evaluation measures to award performance pay, most through one-time bonuses.
- The state's minimum salary schedule offers increased pay for experience and advanced degrees.



Policy Recommendations To Advance Tennessee's Teacher Evaluation System

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- **Promote a culture of feedback and coaching by establishing and investing in a state network of districts that pilot observation flexibilities, strategic staffing, and merit pay structures**

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- Promote a culture of feedback and coaching by establishing and investing in a state network of districts that pilot observation flexibilities, strategic staffing, and merit pay structures
- **Publish evaluation and effectiveness data in an annual report and on the state report card**

Questions

Thank you!

Appendix

Teachers Are Observed Less As They Advance In Their License and Effectiveness

License Type	Level of Effectiveness (LOE)	Formal Observations
Practitioner	1 – 4	3
Professional	1	3
Professional	2 – 4	2
Practitioner & Professional	5	1 (+2 walkthroughs)

Growth Measure Alternatives and Growth Measure Flexibilities

- Individual student growth portfolios
- Individual universal reading screeners
- TVAAS composites for school-level
- TVAAS composites for district-level

- Growth meeting expectations counts for 60% of LOE
- Growth exceeding expectations may count for 100% of LOE

Many Options Exist For Achievement Measure Selections

- 5 categories of achievement options (PreK-12)
  - State assessment scores for classroom-level, grade-level, or school-level
  - TVAAS composites for school-level
  - Off-the-shelf assessments
- 3 additional categories of achievement options (grades 9-12)
  - Graduation rate, ACT, and EPSO exams