Gwinnett Effectiveness Initiative
TEACHER

A PRIMER FOR TEACHERS

2026-27

About the Evaluation System

We know that we cannot improve what we do not measure, and a teacher's effectiveness has a powerful impact on student achievement. In order to measure teacher effectiveness and to increase student achievement, Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS) partnered with the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) to develop an evaluation system that includes multiple components to provide data and feedback regarding teacher performance. GCPS is one of 26 school districts that has worked with the GaDOE and the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) to develop a fair and equitable system that will help teachers become even more effective in the classroom and lead to improved student learning and achievement gains. Teacher and leader focus groups indicated that an evaluation system should be based on multiple measures of teacher effectiveness.

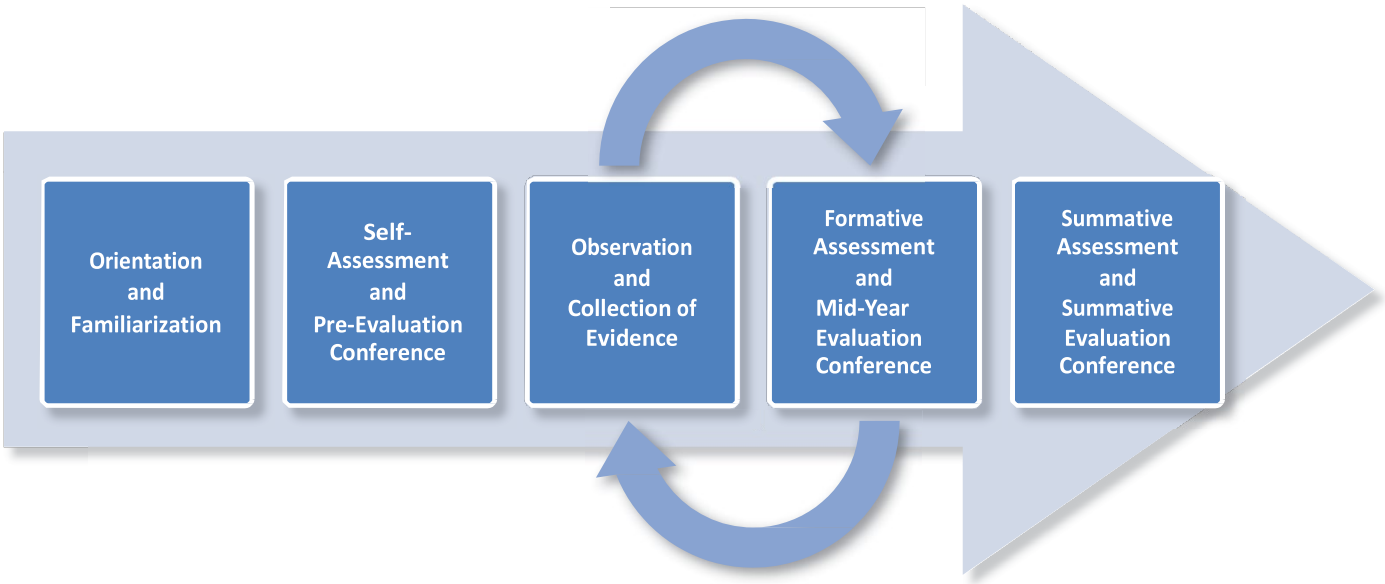
In Gwinnett, we call it the Gwinnett Teacher Effectiveness System. *Why the focus on "effectiveness"?* Because the goal is to implement a system that is more than an evaluation tool. It also should increase the effectiveness of our employees by identifying areas of strength and growth and individualizing professional development based on specific needs.

The primary purposes of the Gwinnett Teacher Effective- ness System are to:

- Increase student achievement for all students;
- Identify areas of strength and growth for each teacher; and
- Individualize professional growth based on specific needs.

The Gwinnett Teacher Effectiveness System (GTES) is used by schools to provide multiple measures of teacher effectiveness along with specific support for areas of indicated growth. Teachers and administrators have access to learning opportunities directly aligned with each performance standard assessed in the Gwinnett Teacher Effectiveness System. The evaluation system provides teachers and administrators with the tools to determine strengths and areas for needed improvement, enabling instructional leaders to individualize professional learning opportunities for each teacher, based on specific needs. This collaborative improvement process supports teachers and leaders in pursuing excellence in academic knowledge, skills, and behavior for each student, resulting in measured improvement against local, national, and world-class standards.

GTES Full Evaluation Cycle



About the Standards

Grouped under five Key Domains, the 10 research-based performance standards are assessed through observations and documentation of teacher practice. Effectively implementing these performance standards leads to increased student achievement.

Standard 1: Professional Knowledge

The teacher demonstrates an understanding of the curriculum, subject content, pedagogical knowledge, and the needs of students by providing relevant learning experiences.

Standard 2: Instructional Planning

The teacher plans using state and local school district curricula and standards, effective strategies, resources, and data to address the differentiated needs of all students.

Standard 3: Instructional Strategies

The teacher promotes student learning by using research-based instructional strategies relevant to the content to engage students in active learning and to facilitate students' acquisition of key knowledge and skills.

"The 10 standards for which the teachers are held accountable encourage professional growth. The administrator/teacher conversations provide valuable feedback."
Principal

Standard 4: Differentiated Instruction

The teacher challenges and supports each student's learning by providing appropriate content and developing skills which address individual learning differences.

Standard 5: Assessment Strategies

The teacher systematically chooses a variety of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment strategies and instruments that are valid and appropriate for the content and student population.

Standard 6: Assessment Uses

The teacher systematically gathers, analyzes, and uses relevant data to measure student progress, to inform instructional content and delivery methods, and to provide timely and constructive feedback to both students and parents.

Standard 7: Positive Learning Environment

The teacher provides a well-managed, safe and orderly environment that is conducive to learning and encourages respect for all.

Standard 8: Academically Challenging Environment

The teacher creates a student-centered academic environment in which teaching and learning occur at high levels and students are self-directed learners.

Standard 9: Professionalism

The teacher exhibits a commitment to professional ethics and the school's mission, participates in professional growth opportunities to support student learning, and contributes to the profession.

Standard 10: Communication

The teacher communicates effectively with students, parents or guardians, district and school personnel, and other stakeholders in ways that enhance student learning.

KEY DOMAINS AND STANDARDS
Planning
1) Professional Knowledge 2) Instructional Planning
Instructional Delivery
3) Instructional Strategies 4) Differentiated Instruction
Assessment of and for Learning
5) Assessment Strategies 6) Assessment Uses
Learning Environment
7) Positive Learning Environment 8) Academically Challenging Environment
Professionalism and Communication
9) Professionalism 10) Communication

Gwinnett Teacher Effectiveness System:

Aligning the Standards

The 10 research-based performance standards are assessed through observations and documentation of teacher practice. The following alignment between the performance standards and the Quality-Plus Teaching Strategies (QPTS) helps teachers know how to focus their instruction. It also represents the priority instructional methods Gwinnett teachers are expected to use for students to learn the Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS).

GO 10 for 10!

Standard 1: Professional Knowledge

The teacher demonstrates an understanding of the ***Academic Knowledge and Skills,*** subject content, pedagogical knowledge, ***Quality-Plus Teaching Strategies,*** and the needs of students by providing relevant learning experiences.

Standard 2: Instructional Planning

The teacher plans using ***Academic Knowledge and Skills, Quality-Plus Teaching Strategies, online communication center resources,*** and data to address the differentiated needs of all students.

It is important for teachers to understand the alignment of the standards to the AKS and the QPTS.

Standard 3: Instructional Strategies

The teacher promotes student learning by using ***Quality-Plus Teaching Strategies*** relevant to the content to engage students in active learning and to facilitate students' acquisition of ***Academic Knowledge and Skills***.

AKS
ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS
GWINNETT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Standard 4: Differentiated Instruction

The teacher challenges and supports each student's learning by teaching the ***Academic Knowledge and Skills*** through differentiated instruction, with appropriate interventions and extensions which address individual student learning needs.

Standard 5: Assessment Strategies

The teacher systematically chooses a variety of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment strategies and instruments that are valid and appropriate ***for the mastery of the Academic Knowledge and Skills*** and student population.

Standard 6: Assessment Uses

The teacher systematically gathers, analyzes, and uses relevant data to measure student progress toward mastery of the ***Academic Knowledge and Skills,*** to inform ***instruction, and*** to provide ***consistent,*** timely feedback to both students and parents.

Standard 7: Positive Learning Environment

The teacher provides a well-managed, safe and orderly environment that is conducive to learning and encourages respect for all.

Standard 8: Academically Challenging Environment

The teacher creates a student-centered academic environment in which teaching and learning occur at high levels and students are self-directed learners.

Standard 9: Professionalism

The teacher exhibits a commitment to professional ethics and the school's mission, participates in professional growth opportunities to support student learning, and contributes to the profession.

Standard 10: Communication

The teacher communicates effectively with students, parents or guardians, district and school personnel, and other stakeholders in ways that enhance student learning.

About the Components

The evaluation system consists of two components which can be found in the PD&E tool, TAPS and the Professional Learning Goal.

Part I: Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS) Observations and documentation of a teacher's practice will inform one summative assessment each year. TAPS provides evaluators with a qualitative, rubrics-based evaluation tool to measure teacher performance on 10 performance standards. The primary data source for the standards is teacher observations. During the school year, trained evaluators will conduct a minimum of two formative observations of 30 or more minutes for tenured teachers. In addition, non-tenured teachers and those teachers with identified performance concerns will receive four brief observations (a minimum of 10 minutes each) throughout the school year and the resulting data will be used as an additional data source for the performance standards. A review of existing teacher documentation may be necessary if all of the performance standards are not observed. The Performance Appraisal Rubric describes acceptable performance levels for each teacher performance standard.

The categories include Exemplary, Proficient, Needs Development, and Ineffective. **Proficient is the expected level of performance.**

SAMPLE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL RUBRIC			
Exemplary In addition to meeting the requirements for Proficient.	**Proficient** Proficient is the expected level of performance.	**Needs Development**	**Ineffective**
The teacher continually demonstrates extensive content and pedagogical knowledge, enriches the curriculum, and guides others in enriching the curriculum. (Teachers rated as Exemplary- Level 4 continually seek ways to serve as role models or teacher leaders.)	The teacher consistently demonstrates an understanding of the curriculum, subject content, pedagogical knowledge, and the needs of students by providing relevant learning experiences.	The teacher inconsistently demonstrates understanding of curriculum, subject content, pedagogical knowledge, and student needs, or lacks fluidity in using the knowledge in practice.	The teacher inadequately demonstrates understanding of curriculum, subject content, pedagogical knowledge and student needs, or does not use the knowledge in practice.

Prior to the beginning of the annual evaluation cycle, each teacher will have a pre-evaluation conference with an evaluator to review the teacher's self-assessment and set expectations for the school year. The purpose of the mid-year conference is to monitor progress relative to performance goals. The teacher and evaluator review relevant data and modify implementation plans as needed. The annual evaluation conference provides an opportunity to review the TAPS and RBES evaluation results for the school year. This is a time to celebrate accomplishments and plan for the upcoming school year.

"I really liked that the administrator stayed in my classroom for an extended period of time [during the observation] so that he could see not just how I run things but how things develop."

Teacher

About the Components

Part II: Professional Learning Goal

GTES serves as an evaluation system that is a true coaching tool. Gwinnett's Results-Based Evaluation System (RBES) shall be the tool in which the **Professional Learning Goal** will be paired with the **Student Achievement Goal** in order to paint a more complete picture of how these two go together. The professional learning goal makes GTES a better tool for teachers because it gives credit for meeting important professional development goals that ultimately help students in the classroom. These goals are reflective of the Professional Learning Goals as defined by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC). For additional information concerning GaPSC recertification requirements, see GaPSC adopted rule 505-2-.36.

- **Student Achievement Goals** are aligned with the school's Local School Plan for Improvement (LSPI). These goals are based upon student achievement needs and are approved by administrators. Accompanying each goal is an implementation plan that describes the steps a teacher plans to take throughout the year that will support the Student Achievement Goal.
- **Professional Learning Goals (PLGs)** are created by teachers and should be based upon a variety of data including GTES self-assessment, previous performance evaluations, student learning data, and school improvement goals. Teachers' PLGs should reflect their individual learning needs and are approved by their administrators. These goals should align with Student Achievement Goals established by the teacher. Each goal includes an implementation plan which outlines the professional learning the teacher will actively participate in for professional growth and the steps the teacher will take to transfer the learning to classroom practice. While teachers are not required to fully meet their professional goals, they are expected to make progress toward meeting their goals.

Overall performance is rated using the following categories:
Exemplary, Proficient, Needs Development, and Ineffective

1. **Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS)**
   The TAPS component of GTES provides evaluators with a qualitative, rubrics-based evaluation method by which they can measure teacher performance related to ten quality performance standards that are scored from 0 to 3 (sum score can range from 0 to 30).
2. **Professional Learning Goal**
   Gwinnett's Results-Based Evaluation System (RBES) is the tool in which the Professional Learning Goal will be housed. The teacher will share how these goals have supported Student Achievement Goals during the Summative Conference. While teachers are not required to fully meet their professional goals, they are expected to make progress toward meeting their goals.

Final Ratings	TAPS Summative Cut Scores
Ineffective	0–6
Needs Development	7–16
Proficient	17–26
Exemplary	27–30

Glossary–Acronyms and terms you need to know

Conferencing: Discussions between the teacher and evaluator(s) that take place throughout the school year. A pre-evaluation conference, mid-year conference, and annual conference are required in the Teacher Effectiveness System process, but additional conferences may occur as needed.

Gwinnett Teacher Effectiveness System (GTES): GCPS' method of evaluating teacher of record performance, based on multiple components that provide data and feedback from different sources and perspectives. The Gwinnett Teacher Effectiveness System is consistent with the state's Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) model, but with minor procedural differences.

Key Domains: A realm of knowledge or responsibility. A strategy for grouping the content of a particular field of knowledge. The 10 standards are grouped under five domains.

"I feel with the effectiveness system we as teachers will grow and become better teachers. Just as we want our students to grow and learn, we should too."
Teacher

Observation: An in-classroom review of a teacher's performance. Trained evaluators will conduct a minimum of two formative observations annually. These observations are at least 30 minutes in length and will inform the teacher's performance on the 10 performance standards. Four brief observations (a minimum of 10 minutes each) also will occur throughout the school year and the resulting data will be used as an additional data source for the performance standards.

Performance Appraisal Rubric: A behavioral summary scale that describes acceptable performance levels for each teacher performance standard. The categories include Exemplary, Proficient, Needs Development, and Ineffective. *Proficient is the expected level of performance.*

Performance Indicator: Examples of observable, tangible behaviors for each standard. Examples of the types of

performance that will occur if a standard is being successfully met. Listings are neither exhaustive nor intended to be prescriptive.

Performance Standard: Qualitative, rubrics-based performance standards. Also known as Teacher Performance Standards. These standards are supported by extensive research and are proven to help increase student achievement.

Professional Learning Goal: A goal-setting process that focuses on teacher professional growth and includes a student achievement component to measure progress toward goal attainment as written in each teacher's RBES plan. Professional Growth shall be measured by progress toward or attainment of Professional Learning Goals as written in each staff member's Results-Based Evaluation System (RBES) plan.

RBES: The Results-Based Evaluation System, a tool for student achievement goal-setting, evaluation, and instructional planning in Gwinnett. GCPS teachers continue to use this process with the Teacher Effectiveness System.

Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS): The qualitative, observation component of the Teacher Effectiveness System. Evaluators assess each teacher's performance, using multiple data sources, on the 10 performance standards. Ratings— Exemplary, Proficient, Needs Development, and Ineffective— are given on each standard.

Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES): Georgia's teacher evaluation system developed through Race to the Top.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who developed the evaluation system?

The evaluation system was developed by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA), and the 26 Race to the Top (RT3) partner school districts, including Gwinnett County Public Schools. Race to the Top was a school improvement program administered by the GaDOE and funded by competitive grants from the U.S. DOE. The evaluation system was one component of RT3. Dr. James Stronge of the College of William and Mary guided much of the work around the teacher performance standards.

How will the system affect my work in the classroom?

The Teacher Effectiveness System is designed to help identify teachers' strengths and areas for growth. Once these areas are identified, teachers are provided with specific professional development individualized to support professional growth as needed.

How does the evaluation process work?

Observations:

- Observations are the basis of ratings on 10 research-based performance standards.
- Observations generate specific feedback to help teachers improve classroom effectiveness.
- Teachers also complete a self-assessment.
- Teachers are observed under one of two plans:
  - **Full Evaluation Plan**—Non-tenured teachers and those teachers who have been identified as having performance concerns have two formative observations (30 minutes each) during the school year as well as a minimum of four additional brief observations (a minimum of 10 minutes each).
  - **Modified Evaluation Plan**—All other teachers have two formative observations (at least 30 minutes each) during the school year.

What is an observation like?

Trained evaluators observe instruction and provide feed-back regarding the 10 performance standards. Evaluators formally observe teachers at least twice annually for 30 minutes each observation. Teachers receive specific feedback on each observed performance standard. Evaluators may ask teachers to provide existing documentation as evidence of standards not observed in the classroom.

What kind of documentation is used for TAPS?

If any of the 10 standards were not observed during the formative assessment, the teacher is responsible for submitting requested documentation to the evaluator that provides evidence of the teacher's level of performance on the standard.

"The effectiveness system allows administrators to give more specific feedback to the teachers about the instruction in the classroom. The standards are an excellent guide and when you conference with the teachers, there is a common vocabulary and rubric. The conference part is the most valuable piece of the system. The administrator can give specific praise to a teacher and give suggestions for improvement in a one-to-one conversation."

Principal

Professional Development and Evaluation (PD&E) Tool

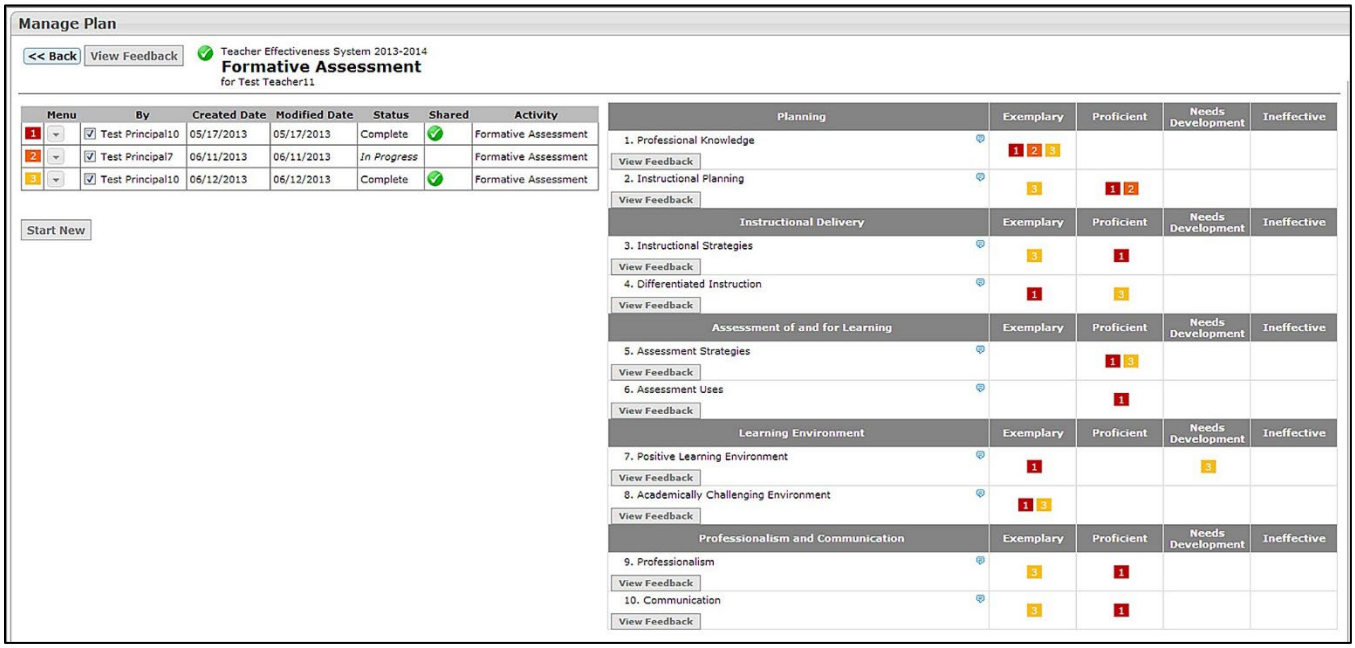
The *e*CLASS Professional Development & Evaluation (PD&E) application aligns employee evaluation with professional development initiatives.

Click on this icon in the employee portal

PD&E

- Users can search for learning opportunities aligned with the teacher or leader effectiveness standards.
- Evaluators are able to view the professional learning transcript of their employees and conduct classroom observations either online or offline.
- In the PD&E system, all forms of professional learning are captured on an employee's transcript, including the Staff Development Log, courses, and self-paced online practice.
- The application allows users 24/7 online access and eliminates the need for manual or paper processing.
- Employees can easily search for learning opportunities that are specific to their school or have been recommended based on their roles.
- District leaders also can use the application to tailor specific announcements to different user groups to ensure any communication is meaningful for the recipients and reduce mass e-mails.
- Lastly, the applications reporting features inform decision making at both the school and district levels.

The summary page shows ratings and qualitative feedback on each of the performance standards. Teachers can see their evaluator's name and the dates items were completed. They can review the ratings received on various standards. In addition, a teacher can view his or her identified strengths along with comments about areas for growth.



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GWINNETT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS