

COVID-19 and T-TESS

Though the governor has waived all annual academic assessment requirements for the 2019-20 school year, and the US Department of Education has waived accountability reporting requirements in ESSA, Texas teachers may still be subject to T-TESS appraisals and appraisal ratings.

In a nutshell, while districts do not have to complete appraisals and can apply for a waiver from the obligation to evaluate all teachers, districts may still elect to evaluate a teacher based on the completed aspects of the appraisal system during school closures AND can use these completed aspects to justify non-renewal. Teachers cannot demand a second observation but CAN demand a second appraisal (but only based on the same existing, incomplete data). Teachers also still have the right to respond to, appeal, or otherwise challenge decisions made.

In more detail, this is what TEA has decided:

GENERAL

- Although districts that are unable to meet the requirements for teacher appraisal are to apply for a waiver, teacher appraisals are not being universally waived for the 2019-20 school year
- It is up to the district to decide which aspects of the appraisal process they can complete, and which aspects cannot be completed and thus must be covered under a waiver
- If a district's appraisal policies are local (there aren't many of these), then these would not need to file a waiver but instead would need to go through the district's board of trustees

TEACHER EVALUATIONS

- EVEN WITH A WAIVER a district may still evaluate an educator and determine an appraisal and appraisal rating for the teacher based on completed aspects of the appraisal process
- Teachers would still have the right to respond and otherwise appeal an appraisal or appraisal rating
- Districts do not have to grant a request for a second observation in 2019-2020 school year due to COVID
- Districts do have to grant a request for a second appraisal based purely on existing data
- If the only aspects of a teacher's appraisal process that have not been completed are post-observation conferences or end-of-year conferences, then those CAN be completed by phone or video conference

EDUCATOR NON-RENEWAL

- Districts CAN justify non-renewal of an educator based just on the completed aspects of an appraisal process if the district received a waiver
- That said, the lack of completed steps also would not deprive an educator of the right to respond to, appeal, or otherwise challenge the appraisal, appraisal rating, or non-renewal decision

