

A Review of Tennessee's Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs

Joseph Woodson, Associate Legislative Research Analyst
(615) 401-7874/ Joseph.Woodson@tn.gov

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Introduction

In the last two decades, many state and federal education reform initiatives have focused on teacher effectiveness and quality. Recent attention has been given to accountability standards for teacher preparation programs. According to the Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB), "Accountability systems for teacher preparation programs, both traditional and alternative, are critical to states' efforts to produce quality teachers for all students."¹

States are still learning how to collect, analyze, and evaluate data from teacher preparation programs. In Tennessee, teacher preparation program evaluation is annually represented in the *Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs* (the report card).

This legislative brief will review the information included in the current report card and limitations of the report card. The brief will also outline ongoing Race to the Top (RTTT) initiatives aimed at redesigning the report card to make it more readable and a more useful tool for institutions to evaluate their teacher preparation programs.

Current Report Card

State law (*T.C.A.* § 49-5-108(f)) requires the State Board of Education, with assistance from the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) and Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), to annually assess and report on the effectiveness of teacher training programs. As part of Tennessee's RTTT initiatives, THEC has taken primary responsibility for preparing the report card. THEC was selected due to the agency's long-standing relationship with the higher education programs as well as its data collection abilities. (See Appendix B for the THEC response to this legislative brief.)

The report card must include data on each training program's graduates in the following areas:²

- Placement and retention rates;
- Praxis (teacher candidate test) results;³ and
- Teacher effectiveness as measured by Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) scores.⁴

In 2009–10 the report was presented to institutions and policymakers for the third school year.⁵

There are 42 teacher preparation programs in Tennessee as of summer 2011. All of these programs, which include public and private higher education institutions, as well as alternative teacher preparation programs (e.g., Teach for America), are included in the report card. (See Appendix A for a list of institutions to be included in the 2011 report card).⁶

THEC officials indicate the following as key findings from the 2010 report card:⁷

- Veteran teachers show higher teacher effect when compared to institutions' beginning teachers.
- Public and private institutions, as well as alternative preparation programs, each had at least one preparation program showing statistically significant teacher effect scores.
- Approximately 50 percent of graduates from in-state teacher preparation programs continue teaching in Tennessee public schools for four consecutive years and about 46 percent continue for five consecutive years.
- Tennessee teacher candidates have high passing rates on the Praxis II exams, with a state average pass rate of 98 percent.

As a part of Tennessee's Race to the Top (RTTT) initiative, the report card is being redesigned to include more information and improve the quality of the data.⁸ Exhibit 4 provides a comparison of the types of information included in the current report card and planned for future report cards. (For more information on RTTT initiatives, see "Report Card Redesign.")

Limitations of the Current Report Card

The following are limitations to Tennessee's current *Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs*, most of which are mentioned within the report card document itself:⁹

- **The report card does not include teacher effect data for all teachers in Tennessee classrooms, such as, for example, special education and art.**

Teacher effect data for the report card is provided by the SAS Institute, the statistical research group that provides the TVAAS methodology. The SAS Institute averages teacher effect data from graduates of Tennessee's teacher preparation programs to create a standard of comparison for each program based on average teacher effect gains for the highest and lowest quintiles.¹⁰ (Using quintiles, the distribution of teacher effect data is divided into fifths, with the highest quintile reflecting a positive effect on student learning and the lowest, a negative effect.) Using this standard of comparison, teacher preparation programs are able to determine whether graduates have a statistically significant positive or negative effect on student learning. The report card also provides statistics on the following variables:¹¹

- 1) the percentage of a teacher preparation program's graduates (beginning teachers up to three years of experience) that fall in the highest and lowest teacher effect quintiles;
- 2) how a teacher preparation program's beginning teachers compare to the average of all other traditional and alternative programs' beginning teachers; and
- 3) how a teacher preparation program's beginning teachers compare to the

average of all veteran teachers (i.e., those with three or more years of experience).

For a list of preparation programs with statistically significant differences, see the [2010 report card](http://www.tn.gov/thec) (<http://www.tn.gov/thec>, pages 6–7 of the PDF).

Effect data estimates are available only for educators who teach:

- o TCAP-tested subjects (math, reading/language arts, science, and social studies for grades 4–8) and
- o high school courses for which there are Gateway/End-of-course exams.¹²

Teachers in non-tested subject areas, such as arts and special education, are not included in the report card results since they do not have TCAP-related teacher effect data.¹³

Data is not currently available to calculate the percentage of completers (all graduates of teacher preparation programs) included in the value-added analysis of the report card. The data provided for the report card lists the number of teachers from each institution included in value-added data by subject area. However, many completers teach in more than one tested subject area and are therefore counted more than once. There were a total of 3,242 counts of teachers in the value-added analysis for the 2008–09 report card, which represents teachers counted more than once. Furthermore, institutions with five or fewer graduates in a subject area are not included in the teacher effect score section of the report card to protect the privacy of those teachers. However, THEC estimates that 40 percent of completers from Tennessee teacher preparation programs are represented in the value-added analysis. THEC is working with SAS to report the actual percentage of completers by the release of the 2011 report card.

- **Data for placement and retention rates do not include all teachers from Tennessee teacher preparation programs or any Tennessee teachers who graduated from out-of-state programs.**

Placement and retention rates in the current report card are based on the number of consecutive years that graduates teach in Tennessee public schools. See Exhibit 1 for a statewide summary of placement and retention rates from the 2010 Report Card.¹⁴

The report card includes only data for teachers who:¹⁵

- 1) were licensed through traditional teacher preparation programs in Tennessee from 2002–2009 (with one to three years of experience), or through alternative programs from 2003–2010 and
- 2) teach in a Tennessee public K–12 school.

The report card does not account for all teachers, including:¹⁶

- Tennessee graduates teaching in private schools or out-of-state schools;
- Tennessee graduates who do not teach consecutively for the 3–5 year period. For example, teacher graduates who wait a year to begin teaching after graduation from a Tennessee teacher preparation program or who take extended leave (maternity or other) during the first five years of employment; and
- All graduates from out-of-state preparation programs teaching in Tennessee schools.

The statewide placement and retention summary does not include data for alternative programs (i.e., Teach Tennessee and Teach for America) due to the differences in data methodology for these programs under the current report card. The statewide summary for 2011 will contain data for all institutions, as well as Teach Tennessee.¹⁷

However, since Teach for America requires only a two-year teaching commitment after graduation, the new report card will not include those teachers in the statewide summary for placement and retention because of the difference in expectations for the number of years spent teaching.¹⁸

According to individual institution reports within the report card, 57.5 percent of Teach Tennessee graduates from the 2006–07 cohort continued teaching in Tennessee schools for four or more years, compared to 8.9 percent of Teach for America 2006–07 graduates.¹⁹

- **Teacher candidate test results provide little information for policymaking decisions since nearly every teacher candidate who takes the exams passes them.**

All teacher candidates in Tennessee are required to pass Praxis II exams to be licensed or to receive endorsements in specific academic content areas. Results from graduates' Praxis II exams are included in the report card; however, since nearly every teacher candidate passes the Praxis II exams (the statewide pass rate for 2007–08 was 98 percent), Praxis test results have limited use for assessing or comparing the quality of teacher training programs. (See Exhibit 2.)²⁰

Exhibit 1: Statewide summary of teacher placement and retention rates

Cohort Year	Completers	Teaching in Year 1	Teaching 3 Consecutive Years	Teaching 4 Consecutive Years	Teaching 5 Consecutive Years
2003–04	3500	61.3%	53.0%	49.9%	45.7%
2004–05	3791	62.5%	52.8%	47.8%	45.6%
2005–06	4030	62.9%	52.0%	49.7%	
2006–07	3822	62.3%	51.0%		
2007–08	3662	56.1%			

Note: These estimates do not include Teach Tennessee or Teach for America.

Source: State Board of Education and Tennessee Higher Education Commission, *Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs*, Dec. 1, 2010, p. 7, <http://www.tn.gov/thece/> (accessed June 27, 2011).

- **The report card does not evaluate the overall quality of or provide a ranking system for Tennessee’s teacher preparation programs.** The 2010 report card received a great deal of media attention²¹ when graduates of private schools—including Vanderbilt University and alternative teacher training programs such as Teach for America— showed significantly higher teacher effect data based on TVAAS scores when compared to traditional teacher training programs provided by state higher education institutions, such as Middle Tennessee State University and Tennessee State University. However, THEC suggests that the report card should not be used as a tool for evaluating the quality of teacher preparation programs, and is primarily to be used for reporting purposes and to provide information on teacher effect by institution in the areas outlined in *T.C.A. § 49-5-108(f)*.²²

According to THEC, the “report card should not be used to rank programs. It does provide useful information for evaluating programmatic quality in specific areas.”²³

Report Card Redesign

As part of the Tennessee Race to the Top initiative, THEC is redesigning the report card with input from the State Board of Education, Department of Education, teacher training program representatives, and other stakeholders in the form of advisory committees held in the spring of 2011.²⁴ The purpose of the redesign is to ensure “the institutions responsible for preparing our state’s teachers have the ability to use relevant data to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their programs and work towards making improvements,” and to make the report more readable.²⁵

The redesign process includes the following steps as outlined in Tennessee’s Race to the Top application:²⁶

1. Examine the three current variables of the report card (i.e., placement and retention rates, Praxis exam results, and teacher effect data);
2. Study report redesign options to make data clear and readable; and
3. Discuss ways the report card can be used (i.e., teacher preparation program improvement, renewal or nonrenewal of program).

Exhibit 2: Statewide summary of 2007–08 Praxis pass rates

Praxis Results	Number Tested	Number Passed	Pass Rate
<i>Summary Pass Rates</i>	3,527	3,471	98%
<i>Professional Knowledge</i>	3,399	3,353	99%
<i>Academic Content Area</i>	3,904	3,872	99%

Source: State Board of Education and Tennessee Higher Education Commission, *Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs*, Dec. 1, 2010, p. 8, <http://www.tn.gov/thecl/> (accessed June 27, 2011).

Exhibit 3: Report card redesign process timeline

August – October 2010	Data gathering for report card
November 2010	Form the advisory committees that will be involved in the development of the new report card
December 1, 2010	Report card released in same format as previous years
November 2010–February 2011	Convene advisory committees to recommend changes to the report card for future iterations
April 2011	Training on new data collection
June–October 2011	Data gathering for new report card; will need data on additional indicators as recommended
November 1, 2011	Report card released in new format
June 2011–January 2012	Individual feedback reports provided to institutions to assist in program improvement

Source: Tennessee First to the Top, “*Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Preparation Programs*,” p. 2, <http://www.tn.gov/thecl/> (accessed June 30, 2011).

In the spring of 2011, advisory committees met to make recommendations for changes to future report cards.²⁷ According to THEC officials, the redesigned report card will include the following (see Exhibit 4 for more detail on information to be included in the 2011 report card):²⁸

Changes

- The technical language on each institution page will be easier to understand.
- The executive summary will be shorter and provide specific findings.
- The report will be available through a user-friendly portal that will enable comparisons across programs and years.
- Teacher preparation programs will report student data directly to THEC to be used on the report card; additional variables will be collected.

Additions

- Each preparation program report will include a summary information page in order to provide greater detail such as school location, number of approved endorsement areas, student demographic information, and student academic history.

- There will be a glossary of terms to ensure consistent use and understanding of technical terms throughout the report.
- Growth measures for teachers in non-tested subjects and grades will be integrated into the report as they are developed for the new teacher evaluation system.
- Data on where graduates from each program are teaching will be provided, including the percentage in high-need areas.
- Institutions will receive individual feedback reports in addition to the public report card to help identify specific strengths and weaknesses and areas that can be improved.
- THEC and the SAS Institute will determine the percentage of completers from Tennessee teacher preparation programs, which will be included in the report card’s value-added analysis.

The report card will be presented in its new format by the fall of 2011.²⁹

Exhibit 4: Type of information on teacher preparation programs provided in the report card

Type of information	2010 Report	Revised Report (2011)	Notes
Teacher effect scores	Yes	Yes	New growth measures are being developed for teachers in non-tested grades and subjects, and will be incorporated into future versions of the report card.
Placement and retention	Yes, includes only consecutive years	Yes—will be enhanced	The revised report will include those teaching “3 out of 4” and “4 out of 5” years, instead of only consecutive years.
Praxis II exams results	Yes	Yes	Since Praxis exams show a 98% statewide pass rate, this provides little information useful for policymaking.
Summary of Report Findings	Yes, somewhat	Yes—will be enhanced	The revised report card will include a clearer summary with a list of key findings.

Explanation of methodology and terminology	Yes	Yes—will be enhanced	Methodology and terminology explanations will be enhanced to be more readable for the public and institutions.
Statistical Summary of preparation programs statewide	No	Yes	The revised report will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ number of public, private, or alternative programs ▪ methods of accreditation ▪ number of programs offered (for specific endorsement and licensure areas)
Indicators on individual program's completers	No	Yes	The revised report will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ demographics, ▪ academic criteria (i.e., high school, college, major GPAs, and average ACT scores) ▪ information on districts that program completers are teaching in across the state
Program-specific reports	No	Yes Note: This will not be included in the public report card, but is available for programs upon request.	Following the new report card, THEC will help answer research questions posed by institutions. If possible, SAS will help in this process by providing data analysis as needed.
Details on curriculum and training approaches per program (e.g., amount of exposure to pedagogy skills, lesson planning, in-classroom teaching).	No	Somewhat Some descriptive data on curriculum will be included, specifically for programs that have changing or unique curriculum.	In future years, more descriptive information may be available. This information would be helpful in identifying possible trends in programs that show statistically significantly negative and positive scores in teacher effect data.
Evaluate the quality of or provide a ranking system for Tennessee's teacher preparation programs	No	No	According to THEC, the report card does not rank teacher preparation programs.

Source: Emily Carter, Race to the Top Program Coordinator, Tennessee Higher Education Commission, interview, Feb. 3, 2011; Emily Carter, telephone interview July 13, 2011; State Board of Education and Tennessee Higher Education Commission, *Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs*, Dec. 1, 2010, pp. 3–9, <http://www.tn.gov/thecc/> (accessed June 27, 2011).

Endnotes

- ¹ Southern Regional Education Board, *Increasing Accountability for Teacher Preparation Programs*, Dec. 2006, p. 2, <http://www.ecs.org/> (accessed June 30, 2011).
- ² *Tennessee Code Annotated*, § 49-5-108(f).
- ³ In Tennessee, all teacher candidates must pass Praxis II exams before being recommended for licensure to teach by their teacher preparation program to the Tennessee Office of Teacher Licensing. Praxis II exams are also required for teachers seeking endorsements in specialty areas (e.g., reading, mathematics, early learning) or status as a highly qualified teacher. Tennessee Department of Education, “Praxis Series Exams Required for Licensure in Tennessee,” <http://www.tn.gov/education/> (accessed July 5, 2011).
- ⁴ State Board of Education and Tennessee Higher Education Commission, *Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs*, Dec. 1, 2010, p. 3 of the PDF, <http://www.tn.gov/thecc/> (accessed June 27, 2011).
- ⁵ SBE and THEC, The Report Card, Dec. 1, 2010, p. 3 of the PDF.
- ⁶ SBE and THEC, The Report Card, Dec. 1, 2010, p. 189 of the PDF.
- ⁷ Emily Carter, Race to the Top Assistant Director, Tennessee Higher Education Commission, telephone interview, July 8, 2011.
- ⁸ SBE and THEC, The Report Card, Dec. 1, 2010, p. 8 of the PDF; Emily Carter, Race to the Top Assistant Director, Tennessee Higher Education Commission, interview, Feb. 3, 2011.
- ⁹ SBE and THEC, The Report Card, Dec. 1, 2010, pp. 8–9 of the PDF.
- ¹⁰ SAS EVAAS, <http://www.sas.com/govedu/> (accessed June 30, 2011); SBE and THEC, The Report Card, Dec. 1, 2010, pp. 3–6, 180–188 of the PDF.
- ¹¹ SBE and THEC, The Report Card, Dec. 1, 2010, p. 4 of the PDF.
- ¹² Gateway/End-of-course tests are given to all students in English I, English II, English III, Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, U.S. History, Biology I, Chemistry, and Physics for grades 9–12. SBE and THEC, The Report Card, Dec. 1, 2010, pp. 3, 181, 180–188 of the PDF; Tennessee Department of Education, “Secondary Assessments,” <http://www.tn.gov/education/> (accessed July 7, 2011).
- ¹³ SBE and THEC, The Report Card, Dec. 1, 2010, pp. 180–188 of the PDF.
- ¹⁴ SBE and THEC, The Report Card, Dec. 1, 2010, pp. 7 of the PDF.
- ¹⁵ SBE and THEC, The Report Card, Dec. 1, 2010, pp. 3–4, 180–90 of the PDF.
- ¹⁶ SBE and THEC, The Report Card, Dec. 1, 2010, pp. 180–188 of the PDF; Emily Carter, Race to the Top Assistant Director, Tennessee Higher Education Commission, telephone interview, July 8, 2011.
- ¹⁷ Emily Carter, Race to the Top Assistant Director, Tennessee Higher Education Commission, telephone interview, July 8, 2011; Teach for America, “What We Do,” <http://www.teachforamerica.org/> (accessed July 13, 2011); SBE and THEC, The Report Card, Dec. 1, 2010, p. 7 of the PDF.
- ¹⁸ Emily Carter, Race to the Top Assistant Director, Tennessee Higher Education Commission, telephone interview, July 8, 2011; Teach for America, “Our Approach: Enlisting Committed Individuals,” <http://www.teachforamerica.org/> (accessed Aug. 30, 2011).
- ¹⁹ SBE and THEC, The Report Card, Dec. 1, 2010, pp. 121, 125 of the PDF.
- ²⁰ Emily Carter, Race to the Top Assistant Director, Tennessee Higher Education Commission, interview, Feb. 3, 2011.
- ²¹ OREA review of news articles.
- ²² SBE and THEC, The Report Card, Dec. 1, 2010, p. 3 of the PDF.
- ²³ Katrina Miller, Race to the Top Director, Tennessee Higher Education Commission, Oct. 10, 2011.
- ²⁴ The Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Preparation Programs Committee Meeting, agenda and materials provided, Feb. 2, 2011; Tennessee First to the Top (TFTTT), *Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Preparation Programs*, not dated, p. 1, <http://www.tn.gov/thecc/> (accessed June 30, 2011).
- ²⁵ SBE and THEC, The Report Card, Dec. 1, 2010, p. 8 of the PDF.
- ²⁶ TFTTT, *Report Card*, not dated, p. 1.
- ²⁷ The Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Preparation Programs Committee Meeting, Agenda and materials provided, Feb. 2, 2011; TFTTT, *Report Card*, not dated, p. 1.
- ²⁸ Emily Carter, Race to the Top Assistant Director, Tennessee Higher Education Commission, interview, Feb. 3, 2011.
- ²⁹ SBE and THEC, The Report Card, Dec. 1, 2010, p. 9 of the PDF.

Appendix A: List of participants included in Tennessee’s 2011 *Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs*

Aquinas College	Memphis Teacher Residency
Austin Peay State University	Middle Tennessee State University
Belmont University	Milligan College
Bethel College	Southern Adventist University
Bryan College	South College
Carson-Newman College	Teach Tennessee
Christian Brothers University	Teach for America – Nashville and Memphis
Cumberland University	Tennessee State University
David Lipscomb University	Tennessee Technological University
East Tennessee State University	Tennessee Wesleyan College
Fisk University	The New Teacher Project – Memphis Teaching Fellows
Free-Will Baptist Bible College	Trevecca Nazarene University
Freed-Hardeman College	Tusculum College
Johnson University	Union University
King College	University of Memphis
Lane College	University of Tennessee, Chattanooga
LeMoyne Owen College	University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Lee University	University of Tennessee, Martin
Lincoln Memorial University	Vanderbilt University
Martin Methodist College	Victory University
Maryville College	

Source: State Board of Education and Tennessee Higher Education Commission, *Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs*, Dec. 1, 2010, p. 189, Appendix 2, <http://www.tn.gov/theec/> (accessed June 27, 2011).



RICHARD G. RHODA
Executive Director

STATE OF TENNESSEE
HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION
PARKWAY TOWERS, SUITE 1900
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243-0830
(615) 741-3605
FAX: (615) 741-6230

BILL HASLAM
Governor

October 4, 2011

Dr. Phillip E. Doss, Director
Offices of Research and Education Accountability
Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury
Suite 1700, James K. Polk Building
505 Deaderick Street
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Dr. Doss:

Thank you for providing the Tennessee Higher Education Commission with the opportunity to review and respond to the Office of Research and Education Accountability's report on *Tennessee's Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs*.

THEC was given primary responsibility for producing the report card as part of Tennessee's Race to the Top initiatives because of the agency's longstanding relationships with the higher education programs as well as excellent data collection ability. While several aspects of the report card are outlined specifically in state law (*T.C.A. § 49-5-108(f)*), there is ample opportunity to improve the report and make it more useful to both preparation programs and the general public. THEC has made significant changes to the report card for the 2011 publication, as noted in your report, and will continue to make improvements in subsequent reports.

Many of the limitations outlined in both your report as well as the *2010 Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs*, are due to the nature of the data that are currently available for the various analyses included in the report. As part of the state's Race to the Top reforms, work is underway to improve data collection mechanisms and develop new measures to assess teacher effectiveness. Such efforts will help THEC continue to improve the report card and ensure that it is a valuable tool for evaluating the effectiveness of teacher training programs in the state.

Thank you again for the opportunity to review and respond to your report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard G. Rhoda".

Richard G. Rhoda



OFFICES OF RESEARCH AND EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY
Phillip Doss, Director
Suite 1700, James K. Polk Building ▪ 505 Deaderick Street
Nashville, Tennessee 37243 ▪ (615) 401-7911
www.tn.gov/comptroller/orea

