



# SNAPSHOT

## Student growth portfolios for teacher evaluation

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In 2019, Representative John Ragan requested that the Comptroller's Office of Research and Education Accountability (OREA) analyze the use and effectiveness of student growth portfolios in Tennessee's teacher evaluation system. OREA was asked to examine the statewide implementation of portfolio models; school districts' compliance with portfolio requirements; the reliability, validity, and repeatability of portfolio models; the extent of portfolio use in other states; teacher time burdens in compiling portfolios; and implementation issues with portfolio models in rural districts.

**Student growth portfolios** are collections of student work, selected by teachers, from two points in time during the school year to show students' progress in mastering specified state academic standards. Fellow teachers score the work, and the resulting student growth scores are translated into growth level ratings and incorporated into teachers' overall annual evaluation scores. Current portfolio models are available for pre-k/kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade, and for fine arts, physical education, and world languages. There is no statewide standardized test for these grades and subjects and, thus, no individual Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) scores for such teachers.

### Key Points

**The number of teachers who receive portfolio scores is low: for the 2018-19 school year, 9 percent of teachers received portfolio scores as part of their annual teacher evaluations.** Most of these teachers taught pre-k or kindergarten and are required by state law to be evaluated, in part, through portfolio models as a condition of their school districts receiving state Voluntary Pre-k (VPK) program funding. In comparison, other teachers receive annual evaluation growth scores based on either an individual TVAAS score (29 percent of teachers) or a school level TVAAS score (62 percent of teachers).

**Several factors in the design of portfolio models weaken their validity and reliability as a quantitative measure of student growth.** Such factors include the lack of standardized assessment tasks, the use of teachers' self-scoring, the expansion of score categories that teachers and reviewers can assign to portfolio work, and the possibility of teachers selecting work samples from as few as three students as a basis to measure growth for a whole class. Tennessee appears to be the only state using portfolios as a student growth measure for teacher evaluation purposes. The portfolio model process may be more effective in providing professional development opportunities and improving teacher instructional practice than in serving as a quantitative measure of student growth.

**Teachers with portfolios were considerably more likely to receive the top score for the student growth component of their evaluations than teachers with individual or school level TVAAS scores.** In 2018-19, 74 percent of teachers with portfolios received the top growth score of 5, compared to 19 percent of teachers with individual TVAAS scores and 34 percent of teachers with school level TVAAS scores.

**In response to a 2019 change in state law, the Tennessee Department of Education has proposed guidelines to the State Board of Education for approving alternatives to the required pre-k/kindergarten portfolio model.** The board is expected to consider final approval of the guidelines in February 2020.

To learn more about this study and the accompanying policy options, see the full report at [tncot.cc/orea](http://tncot.cc/orea).