

In 2018, Senator Gresham requested that the Comptroller's Office of Research and Education Accountability (OREA) complete a study about student placement and teacher effectiveness. The request specifically asked OREA to answer two questions.

Question 1: How many students in Tennessee were instructed for two consecutive years by ineffective teachers (i.e., teachers with low evaluation scores)?

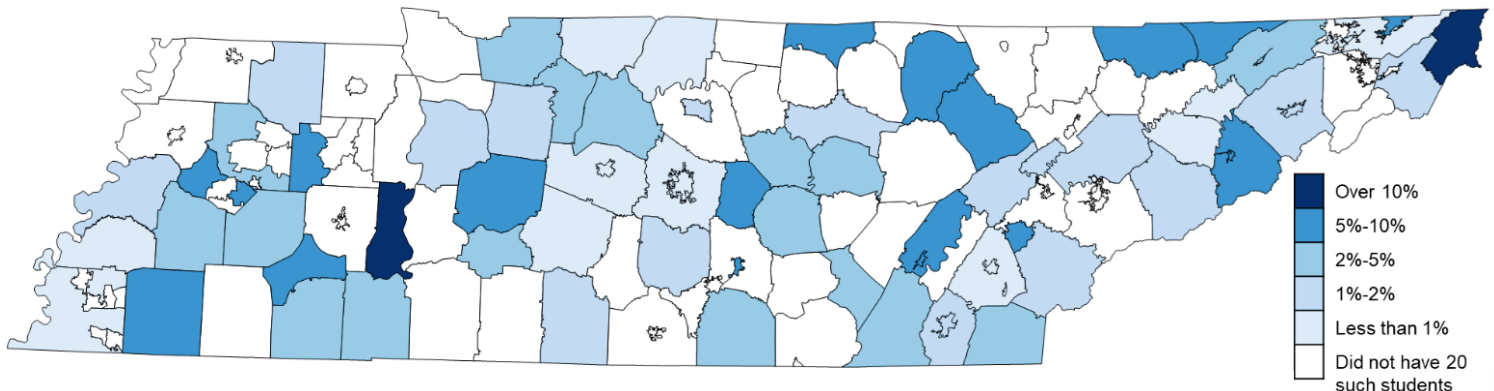
Methodology: Who was included in this analysis?

Students were included if they were enrolled in a Tennessee public school in the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years and were in tested grades each of those years (grades 3-11 in English and grades 3-10 in math). In total 517,772 students were included in this analysis for English, math, or both subjects.

OREA found that **8,115 students** (1.6 percent of students included in the study) had a teacher with a low evaluation score in both the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years in math, English, or both subjects. English learners, students in special education, and students in high-poverty schools were over **50 percent more likely** than other students to have consecutive ineffective teachers.

In English, 5,817 students had consecutive ineffective teachers. The grade 6 to grade 7 progression had the highest number (1,892) and percentage (3 percent) of students with consecutive ineffective teachers. **In math, 2,880 students** had two consecutive ineffective teachers. The grade 8 to grade 9 progression had the highest percentage of students (2 percent), but the grade 3 to grade 4 progression had the highest number (594).

Exhibit 1: Of the 146 districts in the 2014-15 academic year, 63 had at least 20 students who had ineffective teachers in consecutive years (shown in blue). In those districts the percentages ranged from 0.8% to 14.7%.



In 18 districts, at least 5 percent of students had consecutive ineffective teachers. The districts were spread across the state's three grand divisions (east, middle, and west), and **almost all were rural districts**.

Question 2: What was the academic impact of two consecutive ineffective teachers?

After two years with ineffective English teachers, 42 percent of students were proficient or advanced, which was **6 percentage points behind** their peers who did not have consecutive ineffective teachers. (See Exhibit 2 on the following page.) OREA found that the magnitude of this effect differs depending on students' previous academic achievement and inclusion in identified subgroups.

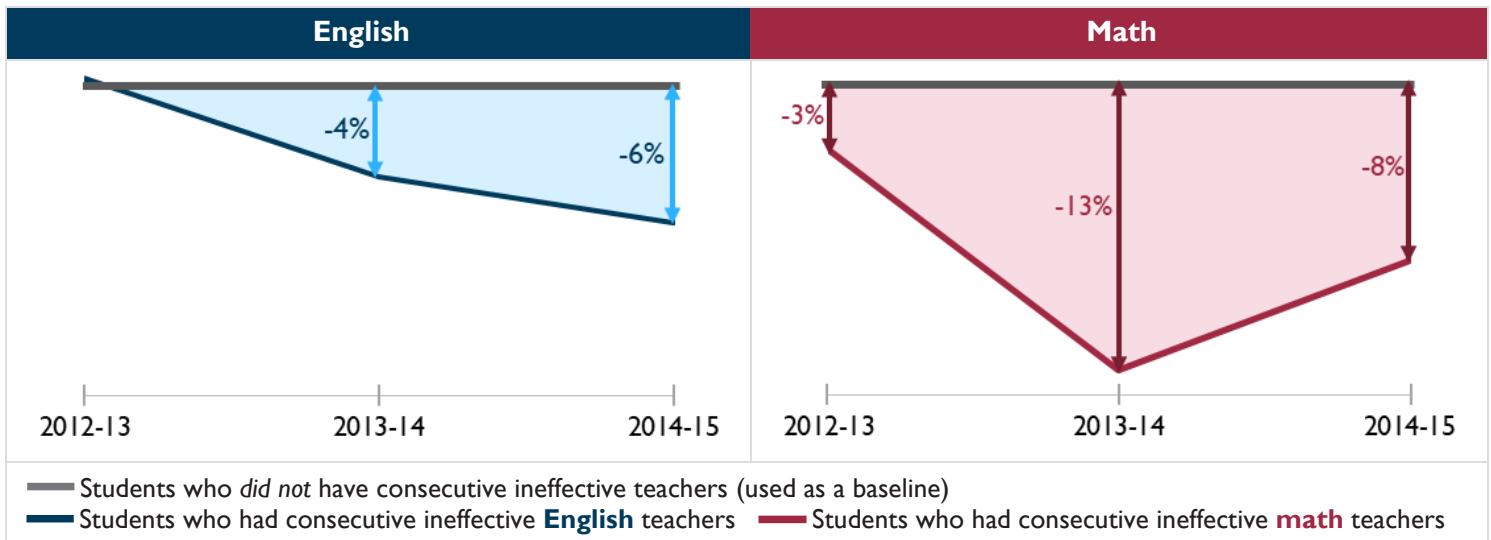
Methodology: Who was included in this analysis?

Students were included if they had assessment scores from academic years 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15, and attended a school in which at least 10 students had consecutive ineffective teachers. This ensures that students who had two ineffective teachers were compared to other students in their schools.

SNAPSHOT: Students in Tennessee instructed by consecutive ineffective teachers

In math, the difference between students who had ineffective teachers and those who did not **dropped from 3 percentage points to 8 percentage points**, as shown below.

Exhibit 2: Of students who had two ineffective teachers, the percent that were proficient or advanced, compared to students who did not have consecutive ineffective teachers



At all proficiency levels, students who had consecutive ineffective English teachers were more likely to have negative outcomes, but the largest effects were found for the highest and lowest performing students. Students who started as “below basic” in English and had consecutive ineffective teachers were **18 percent more likely to stay at “below basic”** and students who began “advanced” were **15 percent less likely to stay “advanced.”**^A

Policy Options

The following policy options address the placement of students with consecutive ineffective teachers, but a comprehensive approach to this issue would involve a concert of efforts. Such efforts might include engaging with educator preparation programs, targeting professional development, changing teacher compensation practices, and dismissing individuals who are repeatedly found to be ineffective teachers.

1. The General Assembly could require the Tennessee Department of Education to annually calculate and report the number of students who had consecutive ineffective teachers.
2. The General Assembly could amend state law to urge or require district and school leaders to follow certain criteria on how to increase equitable access to effective teachers:
 - a) Urge or require directors of schools to assign effective teachers more evenly across schools within a district.
 - b) Urge or require district or school leaders to assign effective teachers to grades and academic areas evenly within schools.
 - c) Urge or require school leaders to consider the evaluation scores of a student’s previous teacher when placing the student with their next teacher.
3. The General Assembly could require schools to ensure that no student has ineffective teachers in consecutive years.

To learn more about this study and the accompanying policy options, see the full report at:
<https://www.comptroller.tn.gov/OREA/>.

^AThe number of students who had consecutive ineffective math teachers was too small to perform an analysis that examined students based on previous academic achievement.