

## Teacher Perceptions of Evaluation Fairness and Burden

*Wesley Morris*

### About this snapshot

In the seven years since Tennessee implemented a statewide teacher evaluation system, the percentage of Tennessee teachers who agree that the evaluation system has improved their teaching doubled, going from 38 percent in 2012 to 76 percent in 2019. This rise in satisfaction with evaluation has coincided with increases in student performance on the National Assessment of Education Progress (especially in 2013) and teacher effectiveness (Aldrich, 2019; Putman, Walsh, & Ross, 2018).

Still, there is room for improvement. One-quarter of current teachers don't agree that evaluation has improved their teaching, and this group of teachers is especially likely to view the system as unfair and burdensome.

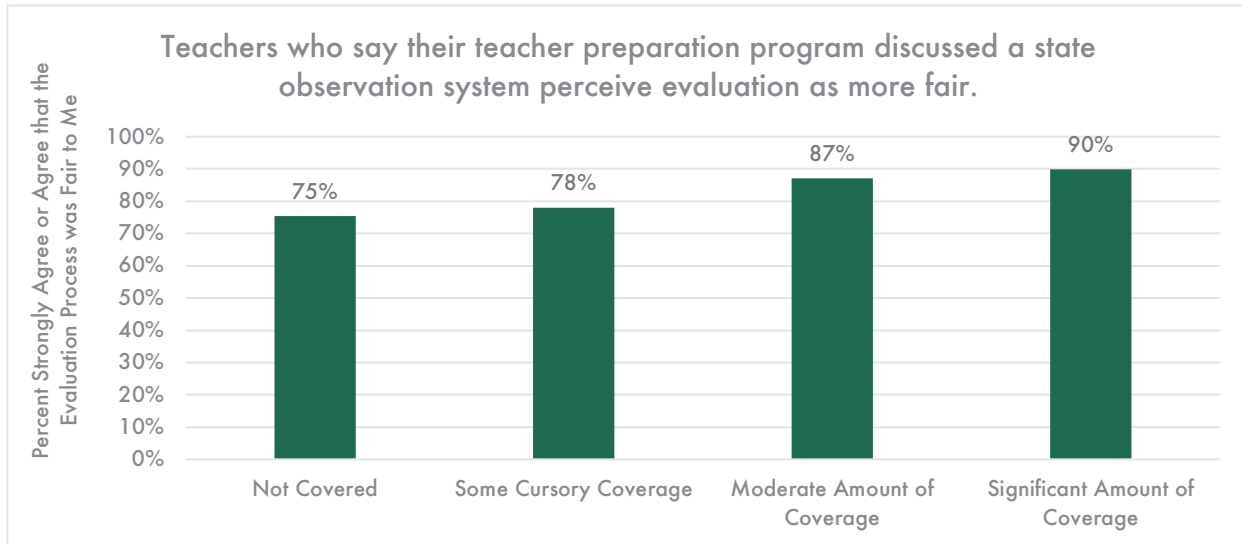
Using data from the annual Tennessee Educator Survey, this snapshot investigates ways that teacher preparation programs, districts, and schools provide teachers with information and supports for evaluation, and how these supports are associated with teacher perceptions of evaluation fairness and burden. Better understanding of how teachers feel about the evaluation process and the supports they receive provides insight into potential levers available to districts and schools to improve the implementation of Tennessee's statewide educator evaluation system.

### Teachers who say evaluation was embedded within their preparation programs and their student teaching are more likely to view evaluation as fair.

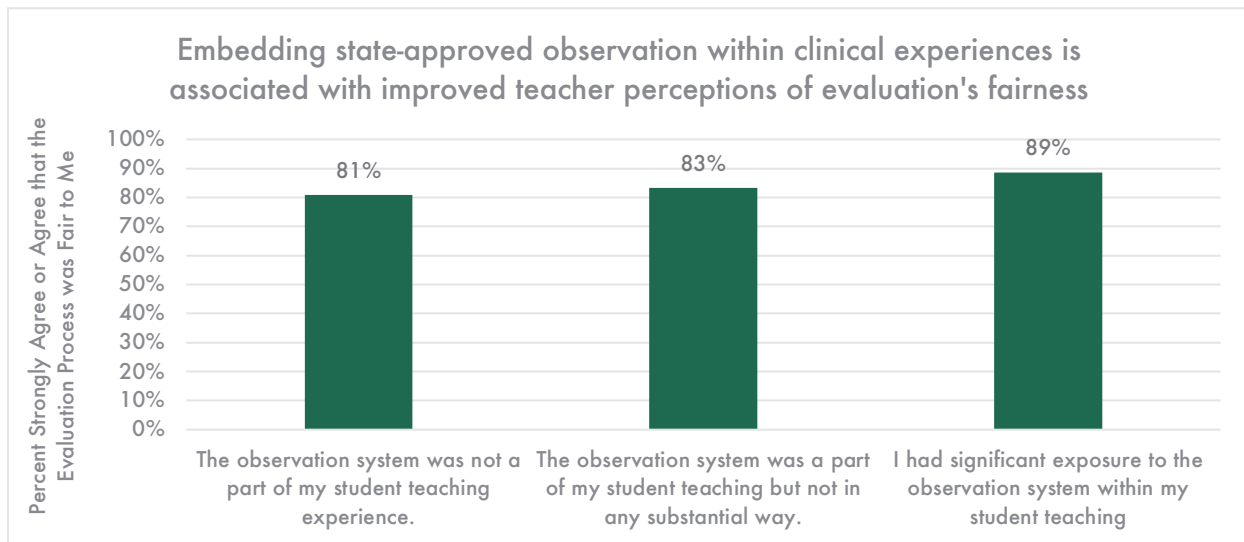
Teachers' perceptions of evaluation are likely shaped before they step into their own classrooms. Even though evaluation is a given for all Tennessee teachers, the degree to which educator preparation programs discuss the components of evaluation (i.e. classroom observations and student achievement and growth data) varies across the state. About 70 percent of teachers say that their preparation program discussed TEAM or another state-approved observation system either significantly or moderately, and 16 percent report only some cursory discussion. Another 14 percent of teachers say that they did not discuss observation systems in their program.

Additionally, perceptions of fairness are generally high (80 percent agree or strongly the process is fair), but perceptions do differ by reports of evaluation coverage during preparation. Ninety percent of teachers whose preparation program covered evaluation significantly say evaluation is fair compared to 75 percent among those who say their preparation program did not cover evaluation.

*Note: [Tennessee's statewide teacher evaluations system](#) consists of a combination of classroom observations and student achievement and growth data. Most survey questions asked about teachers' perceptions about the evaluation system as a whole.*



Having discussions about evaluation in educator preparation coursework is not the only way new teachers can learn about evaluation. They can also experience the system firsthand through their student teaching/clinical experience. Sixty percent of teachers report that they had significant exposure to the observation system during their student teaching, while 27 percent report being exposed but not in a substantial way, and 13 percent report not being exposed at all. Of those with significant exposure, nearly 90 percent agree that evaluation is fair. This evidence suggests that coverage of evaluation in preparation coursework or clinical experience may be helpful to teacher perceptions of the evaluation systems.

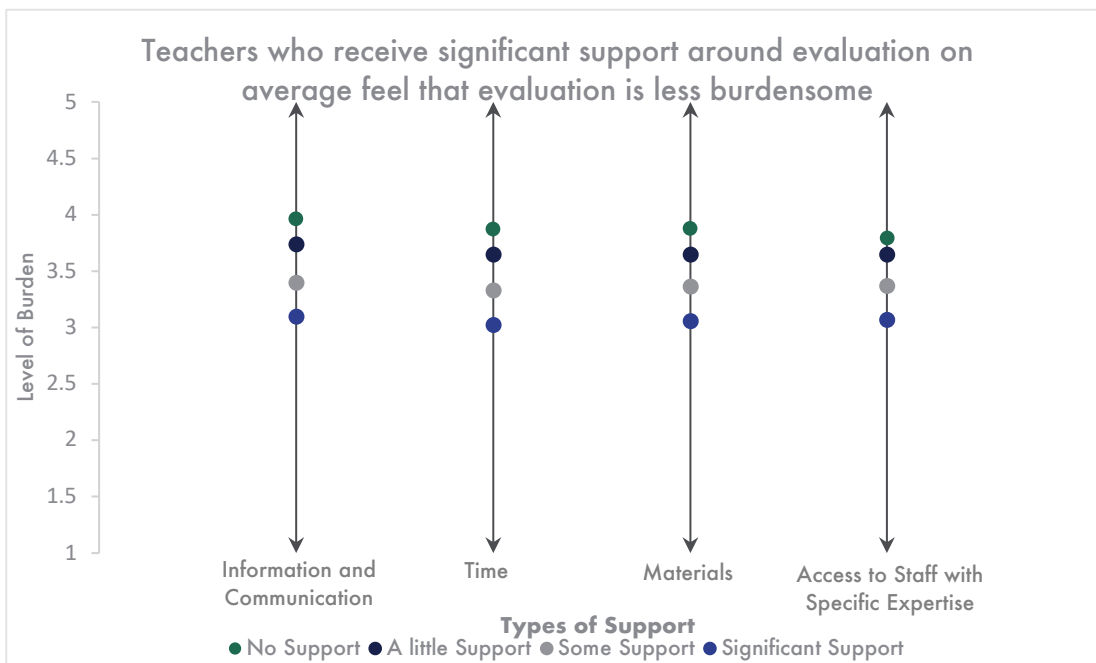


**Teachers who report receiving information and supports related to evaluation report that evaluation is less of a burden.**

Like teacher preparation programs, districts and schools can also play an important role in preparing teachers for evaluation. Providing support throughout the evaluation process is one way schools and districts may reduce the burden of the evaluation process. Schools can support teachers’ participation in the evaluation process by providing access to resources such as:

- Information and communication
- Time (such as planning or release time to complete evaluation materials)
- Materials (such as guidelines to facilitate the process), and
- Access to staff with specific expertise (such as instructional coaches).

Most teachers report at least some support related to information and communication (82 percent), time (71 percent), materials (75 percent), and access to staff expertise (74 percent). Teachers who report receiving more support view the evaluation process as less burdensome compared to those teachers who receive less support. For example, teachers who report significant support around information and communication about evaluation report a moderate level of burden (rating of 3) while teachers who reported receiving a little or no support reported a high burden (rating close to 4).



## Next Steps for Research

Teacher perceptions of fairness and burden are closely related to their beliefs about the usefulness of the evaluation system. A larger body of research about performance management supports this same idea, that fairness or perceived fairness is key to utility of evaluation systems (Jawahar, 2007; Lau et al., 2008).

The trends reported in this brief suggest that increasing transparency and information about how evaluation works may improve perceptions of fairness and utility. Preparation programs can provide opportunities for teachers to learn about, discuss, and be evaluated based on a state approved observation program before they enter the profession. Schools can relieve the burden of evaluation by providing resources such as information, communication, time, materials, and access to staff with specific expertise.

Teacher evaluation in Tennessee has served as a critical lever for educator accountability and improvement. Future research should further investigate how embedding evaluation in educator preparation and providing adequate school and district supports can improve the utility of evaluation while decreasing its burden on educators.

## References

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