

Value-Added Frequently Asked Questions

March 2024

This document serves to provide answers to general questions about the value-added model (VAM) used in school performance score calculations and annual teacher evaluations.

BACKGROUND ON THE VALUE-ADDED MODEL (VAM)

1. What is the value-added model?

The value-added model (VAM) measures students' success compared to similar peers year to year. Value-added is a statistical model that uses student characteristics to determine anticipated student performance in the current year. The VAM anticipates how well students will perform on the test in comparison to their peers with similar prior test scores and background. Once a student has taken state assessments, the model shows the extent to which his or her achievement was on target with what was expected (student expected score). The difference between a student's actual achievement and his or her expected achievement is known as the "value added."

2. Why use VAM?

Value-added data is an objective way of looking at student success, comparing a student's performance to his or her peers. Value-added data is sensitive to an individual student's prior achievement levels and demographics. By including these variables, the model takes into account individual student differences, which allows for a more accurate prediction of student scores.

3. Which data are used in VAM?

As recommended by the Advisory Committee on Education Evaluation (ACEE), the value-added model includes the following student characteristics: prior achievement on assessments for up to three years, special education status and disability category, gifted status, section 504 status, economically disadvantaged status, English language proficiency status, student absences, mobility, and student discipline (suspensions and expulsions). These demographic data are as reported by the districts to the LDOE.

- The special education disability categories are grouped as follows: Emotional Disturbance, Specific Learning Disability, Mild Intellectual Disability, Other Health Impairment, Speech or Language Impairment, Autism, and Disability - Other. The categories listed represent high incidence disabilities, with sufficient number of cases to conduct value-added calculations.
- Student absences are a count of the days a student is absent from school.
- Student mobility is defined as a student who has attended more than one school during the school year.

- Student suspension is a count of times a student has been suspended from school.
- Student expulsion is a count of times a student has been expelled from school.

4. How is VAM calculated?

Louisiana’s value-added model incorporates students’ prior achievement and a number of other variables to determine the expected score for that student (See question 3). The actual score for each student is compared to the expected score to determine if he or she has made more, less, or an expected amount of progress. The following example illustrates how these variables would apply to a student.

- Suzy scored Approaching Basic in ELA each of the past three years with no grade retention. Comparing Suzy to students with the same prior year pattern, her peers, she is expected to score Approaching Basic (719) this year.
- Suzy has a speech/language disability. Based on regression, the unique contribution of speech/language disability is -1.5, meaning that all students with speech/language disabilities scored, on average, 1.5 points below their peers. Thus, her expected score is reduced to 717.5.
- Suzy missed 15 days of school. Regression results indicated that the unique contribution of absences is -0.1, meaning that students missing 15 days of school scored, on average, 1.5 point below their peers (15 X -0.1). Thus, her expected score is further adjusted to 716.
- No other characteristics (e.g., mobility, discipline, retention) apply to Suzy, so they do not impact her expected score.
- Suzy’s actual score was 726, thus Suzy exceeded her expected score by 10 points.
- Suzy’s VAM score was a +10.

5. How does VAM measure high-performing students?

High-performing students are compared to their peers and are expected to perform as well as their peers. A small minority of students, less than 0.01% of students in grades 4-8 and less than 1.5% in Algebra I or Geometry, score near the ceiling of the assessments. Since Louisiana’s state assessments have a ceiling of 850, it is not possible to score beyond the ceiling. As a result, an adjustment is made to the statistical model to address this ceiling. For students whose scores fall between 835 and 850, the VAM model automatically adjusts the expected score to 835 so that the students contribute positively to a teacher and/or school result.

6. Why do some students have higher or lower expected growth than others?

Once a student has taken state assessments, the VAM model shows the extent to which a student’s achievement was on target with what was expected (student expected score) compared to peers with similar prior test histories and demographic characteristics. Students may have different expected scores because they have different prior test histories and/or background characteristics.

7. How can VAM be used when standards being assessed within a content change across grades?

Prior test data from all subjects (up to 3 years) are used to predict current year performance as part of the VAM analysis. While all subjects are included as predictors, a student’s result from the same subject in the previous year is consistently the strongest predictor of their current year result.

VAM FOR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY (SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SCORES)

8. How is VAM used for school Accountability?

For schools, VAM will be used in the progress index. Schools can earn up to 150 points per student in the progress index portion of school accountability. See the [Grade 4-8 Progress Index Frequently Asked Questions](#) or [High School Progress Index FAQ](#) for detailed information about the progress index.

9. Which students get VAM results for school Accountability?

Beginning in 2017-2018, the [school accountability progress index](#) calculation includes all students who have eligible LEAP or EOC assessment results in both the current and prior school year for the same content area. Student scores are excluded from the progress index (growth to Mastery and VAM) if any of the following are true:

- Student did not take the ELA or math assessment, or assessment result was voided in current or prior year.
- Student has more than one missing prior year score in the available subject tests. For example, if the contents available in the prior year were ELA, math, science, and social studies, a student missing more than one score in those contents would be excluded.
- Assessment results for current or prior school year are in multiple grade levels in the same year.
- Current or prior year assessment results could not be matched to a valid student enrollment record needed for student characteristics used in the model.
- Assessment results for current and prior year are not sequential. For example, a student's prior year assessment record was for a 5th grade test and his/her current year assessment record was for a 4th grade test.
- Insufficient numbers of comparable students for valid calculations within the value-added model.

10. How are VAM and Growth to Mastery different?

Growth to Mastery is a simple calculation of the points a student needs to achieve each year to reach Mastery status by the grade 8 or the second high school assessments. It consists of the prior year performance, the distance to Mastery, and the number of years left to grade 8 or the second high school assessments. This measure is known in advance.

VAM provides information about how a student is expected to perform compared to his or her peers. The actual score for each student is compared to the expected score to determine if he or she has made more, less, or an expected amount of progress. Student VAM results are also percentile ranked which gives a good comparison of how students are performing on VAM growth statewide.

11. Why can targets be given prior to the start of the school year for Growth to Mastery but for VAM not until after assessment results?

Growth to Mastery is a simple growth target that measures whether students are on track to Mastery by grade 8 or by the second high school assessment. It is the same for every student at the same scaled score in a given grade, regardless of circumstance.

Value-added considers the unique characteristics of each student to compare how well s/he did compared to peers with similar characteristics in the current school year. Therefore, it must include the current year results to be calculated and cannot be provided in advance.

VAM FOR COMPASS (Teacher Evaluations)

12. What contents are included in VAM for teachers?

During the 2023-2024 school year, VAM results are produced for teachers in the following contents and grades:

Content	Grade
ELA	Grades 4-8
Math	Grades 4-8
Science	Grades 4-8
Algebra I	All grades
Geometry	All grades
English I	All grades
English II	All grades

Social Studies is not available because a new Social Studies test is being piloted in the 2023-2024 school year.

Historically, the following contents were produced for teachers:

Content	Inclusion in VAM for Teachers							
	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
ELA	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
Math	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
Science	Yes	No	No	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social Studies	No	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	No
Algebra I	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
Geometry	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
English I	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
English II	No	No	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes

2019-2020 no statewide assessments were administered because of school closures due to COVID-19.

2020-2021 no Teacher VAM because no prior year assessment available.

2023-2024 Social Studies is not available due to a new Social Studies assessment being piloted statewide

13. How is VAM used to measure teachers?

As described in question 1, the model produces a student’s expected score as well as the difference between the actual and expected score (called a student residual). Those student residuals, which can be positive or negative, are averaged by content in a teacher’s classroom to measure the teacher effect.

The teacher effect shows, on average, how well students met expected scores for a given teacher. A *positive teacher effect* indicates that, on average, students in a teacher’s classroom met or exceeded their expected scores. A *negative teacher effect* indicates that, on average, students in a teacher’s classroom did not meet their expected scores.

Teachers are percentile ranked by content area and overall (combining all content areas). The percentile rank is the teacher performance compared to peers statewide. The overall percentile rank is the teachers’ final VAM score, which is categorized into four effectiveness ratings as shown in the following chart. For example, a teacher ranked as 75 has performed at or better than 75% of the teachers statewide and would receive an effectiveness level of Effective: Proficient. The table included below contains the teacher percentile ranks aligned to Compass effectiveness levels.

Teacher Percentile Rank	Compass Effectiveness Level
1-10	Ineffective
11-49	Effective: Emerging
50-79	Effective: Proficient
80-99	Highly Effective

14. How has VAM changed in terms of teacher evaluations?

State law requires that teacher evaluations are composed of two parts: 50 percent professional practice and 50 percent student growth. For those teachers applicable for VAM, VAM will be 35 percent of a teacher’s student growth score beginning in 2017-2018. Student learning targets make up the remaining 15 percent. If VAM data are not applicable for a teacher, the student growth portion will consist of only student learning targets to account for 50 percent of the total evaluation.

VAM scores are reported in percentile ranks as teachers are compared on student growth statewide to other teachers. Those percentiles range from 1-99. Per recommendations by the Act 54 legislation, the Advisory Committee on Education Evaluation (ACEE) was convened to establish recommendations for the teacher effectiveness evaluations. This committee, which was comprised of teachers, parents, principals, senate and house members, superintendents, teacher unions, and BESE; recommended in 2011, five effectiveness levels were based on percentile ranks. These five levels were later changed in 2012 to four effectiveness levels approved by BESE after LDOE focus groups were conducted.

15. Are VAM results consistent from year to year?

The value-added results have shown stability year after year since the pilot data in 2009 to the most recent year these data are available. Annually, the value-added data have shown that 90 percent of teachers remained in the same or adjacent effectiveness categories over a two year period.

16. In the past, VAM scores were not issued for classes with less than 10 students. Will this still be the case when VAM scores are issued?

For teachers, there must be at least 10 students in a content (in any eligible grade level) for a teacher to receive VAM scores. For example, a teacher instructs two sections of ELA: one section with eight 4th grader students, and one section with four 5th grade students. Together, the teacher instructs twelve students in ELA, which is above the minimum of 10 students per content and is eligible for the VAM analysis. Note: to receive VAM, there must be 10 students per content, regardless of grade.

For school Accountability, there is no minimum student count for a growth index to be calculated.

17. Is a VAM score calculated based upon all students on the teacher's roster who are enrolled in the same subject in that school year?

In the calculation for VAM for teacher evaluations, the students enrolled in the teacher's classes are included in the VAM score by subject. If the teacher teaches more than one class in the same subject, those students from all classes in that subject are part of a teacher's VAM score.

18. What is CVR (Curriculum Verification and Roster portal)?

CVR was created so that teachers have the opportunity to review and approve their associated courses and students for the purposes of VAM calculations. Teachers are given the opportunity to view, correct, and approve their rosters each year. For example, Suzy was enrolled in Mrs. B's class at the beginning of the school year but in December Suzy transferred to Mr. D's class. Mrs. B can remove Suzy from her class roster during the CVR roster verification period because Suzy wasn't with Mrs. B for the entire school year. Principals also verify teachers' rosters. CVR only applies to teacher VAM for evaluations. For information about this process, please refer to the [CVR User Guide](#). For assistance relating to roster verification, please email systemsupport@la.gov.

19. What happens if a teacher doesn't verify rosters in CVR?

If the teacher and/or the principal fail to verify the rosters in CVR, the data will be used as originally submitted to the LDOE by the school district to the source data systems.

20. What if a student with excessive absences is included in a teacher's final VAM?

Prior to VAM being calculated, teachers and principals are given the opportunity for roster verification. Roster verification provides an opportunity for teachers to review and edit rosters, including the removal of students with excessive absences that meet specific criteria in the [CVR User Guide](#). Additionally, the count of absences is taken into account when calculating a student's expected score. No changes can be made for VAM once it is run statewide.

Student absences are captured in Edlink via data submissions by the district, and the roster verification dashboard in Edlink will automatically flag students for exclusion with the following excessive absences that meet specific criteria in the [CVR User Guide](#): (1) students with 20 or more consecutive absences during the class dates, and (2) students with 10 or more unexcused absences (does not have to be consecutive) within any school semester ([Act 515](#) of the 2014 Regular Session). Additionally, the count of absences is taken into account when calculating a student's expected score. No changes can be made for VAM once it is run statewide.

21. What are the reasons that a teacher with rosters in CVR would not have a VAM result in CIS?

VAM data is uploaded to CIS for all teachers with rosters in CVR, where most will have a VAM result and some will not. There are multiple reasons why a teacher may have expected a VAM score but did not receive one. Please refer to the VAM reports for the teacher using the VAM tab in CIS, which will show why a teacher didn't get VAM. The most likely reason is there were not 10 or more students with eligible assessment scores associated with the teacher in order for VAM to be calculated. On rare occasions, the teacher's SSN in CIS and CVR do not match; if this occurs, a correction in one of the systems must be made in order for the results to be loaded in CIS.

22. Who do I contact if I have a question about my teacher VAM result?

Please contact Compass@la.gov for additional information about your teacher VAM result.

VAM AVAILABILITY

23. What if a student takes the Louisiana Innovative Assessment Program (IAP) for ELA instead of LEAP 2025?

The feasibility of IAP was examined and it met technical criteria for inclusion in VAM. Beginning in 2022-2023, IAP data will be included in VAM calculations.

24. Why isn't VAM produced for the 3rd grade?

While students in grade 3 take the LEAP assessments, there must be a prior year state assessment for VAM to be calculated. There is not a statewide assessment for grade 2.

25. What if a student takes Algebra I prior to the 9th grade?

As long as there is a prior year state assessment available, students taking Algebra I will receive a VAM score in the teacher and school growth models.

26. What if a student doesn't take Geometry or English II until the 11th grade?

For some students, high school courses may not be completed in consecutive years. Per [Bulletin 111](#), as long as the student has a prior year state assessment, even if it was the second prior year, the student will be included in VAM results for school Accountability.

For the teacher results, students must have state assessment scores in consecutive years (cannot skip a school year without a state assessment). VAM produces a student expected score. The difference between what a student is expected to score and what a student actually scores is considered the "value added" by the teacher in a single school year. If a student has experienced multiple teachers in the same content over more than one year, the value added will not be attributed to a single teacher.

27. Why isn't VAM produced for the other high school LEAP 2025 subjects (Biology and US History)?

Unlike ELA and math, Biology and US History do not have a prior year statewide assessment. For teacher VAM, there must be a prior year state assessment available in the same content for VAM to be produced.

28. Will students with disabilities who qualify for an alternate assessment be included on a teacher's VAM score?

Students with disabilities taking the regular statewide assessments will be included in VAM for applicable grades and subjects. Students taking alternate assessments (i.e., LEAP Connect) are currently not included in the VAM analytics as the population is too small for comparison purposes.