

# PARENTS ACROSS AMERICA

## Fact Sheet: Value-Added Measurement (VAM)

In recent years, under pressure from the Department of Education, many states revised their teacher evaluation systems to include "growth" or "value added" (VAM) ratings calculated from student standardized test scores.

Producing a VAM rating for every teacher requires a standardized evaluation for every course. As a result, states and districts have spent hundreds of millions of dollars to develop, purchase, administer and grade additional tests. Students and teachers have spent countless hours preparing for and taking those tests.

These efforts have not produced improvements that justify the time, money and energy invested in them. Nor are they likely to, for several reasons.

- The standardized test results used to calculate most VAM scores involve only a few of the skills that twenty-first century students need. According to the [National Research Council](#), standardized tests cover a limited range of knowledge and abilities. They generally omit "the portion of the curriculum that deals with higher levels of cognitive functioning and application of knowledge and skills."

- Studies of teacher effects on test score gains or losses indicate that [only 10-15 percent](#) of the variation in student academic growth is due to variation among teachers.

- VAM calculations are plagued by [widely documented technical problems](#). The number of student test results used to calculate individual teachers' value-added ratings is generally too small to be statistically meaningful. Even seemingly simple tasks such as assigning student scores to the correct teacher can be quite difficult. Not surprisingly, studies have shown that teachers' value-added ratings [often swing dramatically](#) from year to year.

- The proliferation of high-stakes standardized tests has had [many negative side effects](#). Over-testing has led to increased stress, a narrowed curriculum and widespread teaching to the test. It has caused students to lose interest in school and learning, driven excellent teachers from the profession and discouraged young people from pursuing teaching careers. It has [fueled the school-to-prison pipeline](#), sparked cheating scandals, and diverted time, energy and resources from other educational goals. These negative effects have been especially evident in schools that [serve low-income children of color](#). Even if VAM ratings could be calculated accurately, the limited information they provide is simply not worth the effort or the consequences.

In December of 2015, passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act returned power over teacher evaluation to the states. State leaders should immediately use their restored authority to overhaul their testing and teacher evaluation systems in order to eliminate the damage caused by the VAM experiment.

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