LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Value-Added Frequently Asked Questions

March 2026

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)

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."

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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)

How is VAM used in accountability for schools and alternative schools?

For school accountability, the 2024-2025 school year was the last year of school accountability results calculated using the formula first implemented in the 2017-2018 school year, which included the value-added model as part of the progress index. Beginning in the 2025-2026 school year, the state will transition to a revised accountability system, and the growth indicator does not include the value-added model. See the 2025-2026 Accountability Model FAQ for detailed information about how students are identified for inclusion in the growth indicator of the revised formula. For alternative school accountability, the formula includes the value-added model as part of the progress index. See Bulletin 111 for additional information about the transition to a revised formula for school accountability (chapter 17) and the formula for alternative school accountability (chapter 35).

How are VAM and Growth to Mastery different?

The two parts of the progress index for alternative school accountability includes Growth to Mastery and VAM. 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.

VAM for Teacher Evaluations

What contents are included in VAM for teachers?

During the 2025-2026 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
Social Studies	Grades 4-8
Algebra I	All grades
Geometry	All grades
English I	All grades
English II	All grades

Historically, the following contents were produced for teachers:

Content	Inclusion in VAM for Teachers							
	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
ELA	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Math	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Science	No	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social Studies	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Algebra I	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Geometry	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
English I	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
English II	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	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.

What are the VAM eligible courses and grade levels?

The VAM Eligible Courses and Grade Levels document lists the state course codes and grade levels that are included in the calculation of VAM for teacher effectiveness. Only teachers instructing the courses and grade levels listed in this document are eligible for roster verification and teacher VAM results.

What are the dates in which a teacher and student must be present in a class?

During the view-only period, rosters should accurately reflect what the district submitted to Edlink. Rosters are present in LEP based on the course start and end date and include teachers and students present within the course start and end dates included in the district's submissions to Edlink.

During roster verification, the rosters should reflect teachers who are teaching and students who are enrolled from the start of the class until the class' schedule state testing date for a year-long, fall block/semester, or spring block/semester class. Prior to EdLink 360, only October 1st data were available and used as a "proxy" for class start date. The purpose of roster verification is to ensure the accurate connection of teachers teaching classes with those students for the entirety of the class. This date is not intended to reflect the school making staffing changes at the beginning of the school year.

How is VAM used to measure teachers?

As described previously, 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.

Teacher content results are combined into an overall result, which represents the teacher performance compared to peers statewide. The overall result is categorized into effectiveness ratings, which represents 35 percent of a teacher's student growth score.

How is VAM included in 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.

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.

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.

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.

What is roster verification?

Beginning in the 2024-2025 school year, roster verification will be in the LEP Educator Portal. Roster verification grants teachers 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 roster verification period because Suzy wasn't with Mrs. B for the entire school year. Principals also verify teachers' rosters. Roster verification only applies to teacher VAM for evaluations. For information about this process, please refer to the Roster Verification User Guide and the Roster Verification Support page. For assistance relating to roster verification, please create a ticket through LDOE's Data System Support portal.

Are co-teachers eligible for roster verification?

Teachers are populated in roster verification based on the teaching percentages as submitted to the LDOE by their school systems. For example, if two teachers are submitted as co-teaching a class with one teacher responsible for 75% of the class and the other teacher responsible for 25%, only the teacher responsible for the larger percentage would be included in roster verification. If the two teachers are

submitted as co-teaching a class at equal percentages (e.g. 50% for teacher 1 and 50% for teacher 2), both would be included in roster verification.

What happens if a teacher doesn't verify rosters during the roster verification window?

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

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 to review and edit rosters, including the removal of students with excessive absences that meet specific criteria in the Roster Verification 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 the state's data system via data submissions by the district, and students may be removed during roster verification if the excessive absences meet specific criteria in the Roster Verification User Guide: (1) students with 20 or more consecutive absences during the class dates, and (2) students with 10 or more absences, whether excused, unexcused, consecutive, or non-consecutive, in any semester in that school year (Act 270 of 2025). 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.

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

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

Are VAM ratings moving from a 4 point to a 5 point rating?

Yes, VAM ratings have been adjusted to a 5-point scale to align with the new Louisiana Educator Advancement and Development System (LEADS) that will have statewide implementation in 2025-2026. The VAM ratings are based on the percentile rank of teacher effects which 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. A teacher effect of 0 (zero) indicates, on average, the teacher's students performed as expected. That teacher is considered Proficient with a rank, on average, at the 50th percentile.

The 5-Point Rating Categories are as follows:

Effectiveness Level	Percentile Rank	Interpretation
Exemplary	**90th to 99th**	Evidence that the teacher's students made significantly more progress than expected
Highly Effective	**70th to 89th**	Evidence that the teacher's students made more progress than expected
Proficient	**50th to 69th**	Evidence that the teacher's students made progress as expected
Emerging	**11th to 49th**	Evidence that the teacher's students made less progress than expected
Ineffective	**1st to 10th**	Evidence that the teacher's students made significantly less progress than expected

VAM Availability

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.

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.

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. 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.

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.

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.

Will Social Studies teachers be eligible for VAM with the reduction in testing starting in 2027-2028?

Social Studies testing will be reduced starting in 2027-2028, where it will be administered in grades 3, 5, and 8 instead of every year in grades 3-8. Teachers instructing grade 3 Social Studies and high school Civics are not eligible for Social Studies VAM due to the lack of a prior year score in the same content for grade 3 Social Studies and high school Civics students. Eligibility in VAM for teacher evaluations is noted below.

In 2027-2028, teachers instructing grades 5 and 8 Social Studies may be eligible for VAM, pending research completed on. Grades 5 and 8 Social Studies classes will be eligible for roster verification. In 2028-2029, VAM will no longer be viable for any grade. Grades 4 and 7 assessments are no longer administered, and grades 3, 5 and 8 will no longer be viable since there will be no prior scores from grades 2, 4 and 7.

Will high school students taking the new comprehensive exams in English and Math be eligible for VAM in Accountability and teacher evaluations?

Beginning with entering ninth grade students in 2026-2027, a comprehensive exam model will be used for ELA and math. Instead of taking two separate exams in both ELA and math during high school, students will take one comprehensive exam in each subject at the end of tenth grade. Eligibility in VAM for Accountability and teacher evaluations are noted below.

VAM for Accountability: Beginning with entering ninth grade students in 2026-2027, a comprehensive exam model will be used for high school ELA and math. Starting in 2027-2028 (tenth grade year of entering ninth grade students in 2026-2027), a tenth grade ELA and math score will have a two-year gap between the next available prior scores in eighth grade ELA and math. VAM for use in Accountability will be run with a "skip year" approach, pending appropriate correlations between the eighth and tenth grade scores.

VAM for teacher evaluations: Beginning with entering ninth grade students in 2026-2027, a comprehensive exam model will be used for high school ELA and math. Starting in 2027-2028 (tenth grade year of entering ninth grade students in 2026-2027), a tenth grade ELA and math score will have a two-year gap between the next available prior scores in eighth grade ELA and math. Without a sequential test progression, it is not possible to produce separate VAM results for two years of teachers instructing Algebra I, Geometry, English I, and English II.