

# Value-Added Frequently Asked Questions

## *Why is measuring both achievement and progress important?*

Achievement measures provide educators with a snapshot of students' growth at a single point in time and how well those students perform against a standard. Progress measures provide a more complete, accurate picture of student growth from year-to-year, including how much growth or gain a student or groups of students make over time. By combining achievement and progress information with other data sources, schools and districts will have a more robust, comprehensive picture of their impact on student learning.

## *How can value-added information help educators improve teaching and learning?*

Value-added information provides important diagnostic information that was not previously available with traditional achievement reporting. Value-added information allows educators to assess their schools' impact on student learning, and can help initiate conversations about the efficacy of curriculum, instructional practices and programs. Value-added information also allows educators to better identify what is working well and areas for improvement to help individual students and groups of students.

## *Is it possible to show progress with all groups of students — special ed, gifted and low-performing?*

Yes. If tests have enough "stretch" to measure the growth of both low- and high-achieving students, it is possible to measure all groups of students' progress. The value-added methodology used is sensitive to individual students' achievement levels. It measures growth from the end of one year to the end of the next year, regardless of whether a student performs below or above grade level. People may disagree with the amount of progress a student or groups of students should make, but most people agree that an educator's role is to take students from where they start and add value to their educational experiences.

## *The value-added methodology seems complicated. How can people understand the measure?*

While the statistical methodology used for value-added analysis is complex, the data produced are valid, reliable and presented in easy-to-read charts and graphs. Understanding this methodology can be compared to understanding the statistics behind the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which measures the change in the cost of living between two periods of time. Few people understand how to calculate the CPI, but many people take advantage of the information and use it to make decisions in their daily lives. If educators understand the information derived from the value-added reports, they can use the information to make sound decisions about improving student achievement.

## *Does value-added analysis require additional testing?*

No new testing is required. Value-added analysis uses existing standardized test data to produce progress reports and can only be done where annual testing is provided.



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## *What kinds of test data are used for value-added analysis?*

Test data must meet the following criteria to be used in value-added analysis:

- Be highly correlated with curricular objectives
- Have enough “stretch” to measure the growth of both low- and high-achieving students
- Meet appropriate standards of test reliability

## *How can teachers be innovative or creative if student progress is based on test scores?*

The value-added approach was developed to estimate each student’s academic growth over his or her school year in each subject. It does not suggest a particular method for encouraging this growth. Thus, teachers can and must be flexible, innovative and creative in their approaches to move all students toward higher levels of achievement. The methods teachers use to help their students are still left to their professional judgment.

## *Do socioeconomic or other demographic factors of a school’s student population impact progress?*

Leading experts have shown student demographic variables have no significant relationship with student progress measures. This may be because value-added analysis measures the change in students’ academic achievement levels from one point in time to another (i.e., year-to-year), and factors that remain relatively constant over time, such as socioeconomic status, have shown little or no impact on student progress.

## *Can you measure the progress of schools and students with high mobility rates?*

Yes. Currently, value-added analysis includes all students for which there is sufficient test data, including highly-mobile students. A school’s impact on highly-mobile students may be less than their impact on students with longer enrollment histories. However, all students must be included in the school’s analysis to ensure that highly-mobile students receive the same level of attention as non-mobile students. Highly-mobile students also tend to miss more tests than other students. As a result, their scores are “weighted” less than students who are able to take all of the tests. In this situation, students with a more complete testing history have a greater influence on a school’s value-added results.

## *To Learn More*

For additional information about value-added analysis and professional development opportunities and resources, contact Battelle for Kids at **(614) 481-3141** and visit [www.BattelleforKids.org](http://www.BattelleforKids.org).



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