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## Do Your Test Scores Reflect How Good Your Teachers Are?

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*Among educators, there is a lot of talk about “value-added modeling,” a system that uses specific data, including students’ standardized test scores, to determine teacher effectiveness and even, according to one Times [article](#), be used to “[rank] teachers from best to worst.” Do you think your test scores, class rank and other statistics related to your achievement accurately reflect how much you truly learn and how good your teachers are?*

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As Sam Dillon [reported](#), value-added modeling is “exploding nationwide,” and is being used as “a factor in deciding who receives bonuses” and “even who gets fired.” Critics call the system “flawed” for numerous reasons, including the so-called “ceiling effect” of high-performing students not showing improvements in scores. And in a Sunday Magazine [article](#), David Leonhardt explains other criticisms of the system:

Among the limitations, scores can bounce around from year to year for any one teacher, notes Ross Wiener of the Aspen Institute, who is generally a fan of the value-added approach. So a single year of scores — which some states may use for evaluation — can be misleading. In addition, students are not randomly assigned to teachers; indeed, principals may deliberately assign slow learners to certain teachers, unfairly lowering their scores. As for the tests themselves, most do not even try to measure the social skills that are crucial to early learning.

The value-added data probably can identify the best and worst teachers, researchers say, but it may not be very reliable at distinguishing among teachers in the middle of the pack.

**Students:** Tell us what you think the relationship is between your test scores and grades and how effective you believe your teachers are. Do you think your scores and grades accurately measure how much you learn from your teachers? What do you learn that isn’t measured by tests?