

Wham! Bam! VAM! Ready for Primetime?

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Act 54 mandates very significant changes to the evaluation process even beyond the controversial requirement that half of teacher and certified personnel evaluation be based on student growth data by the beginning of the 2012-13 school year for grade levels and subjects for which growth VA data is available.

The Act further mandates that formal evaluations must occur annually, that evaluation results are changed from satisfactory and unsatisfactory to effective and ineffective, and that BESE shall establish measures of student growth for grade levels and subjects which VA data is not available.

VAM is currently being piloted now. **It becomes mandatory in 2012-13; however, the House and Senate Education committees have the authority to “disapprove the assessment model.”**

The Act’s sponsor, Representative Frank Hoffman, has also repeatedly and publicly stated that he will be among the first to move to kill the assessment model if it fails to deliver upon the promise of a fair, accurate assessment for all teachers.

The LFT has also publicly stated that if Louisiana’s version of this new science delivers on its promise of a fair, accurate assessment that also serves to inform instruction for all teachers, then LFT will be among the first to celebrate that success.

If it doesn’t deliver as promised, then LFT expects Representative Hoffman will hold true to his promise.

The fact is that nothing has happened since the legislative debate or the passage of Act 54 to instill confidence in the readiness of the value added model for use in high stakes decisions concerning teacher performance.

In fact, a recent New York Times report on the status of VAM in Tennessee, where value added has been in play for many years, prompts even more concern.

The LFT opposed what is now Act 54 because, as noted in the Rand Report entitled “The Promise and Peril of Using Value-Added Modeling to Measure Teacher Effectiveness,” *“current research base is insufficient to support the use of VAM to support its use for high stakes decisions.”*

During the 2010 legislative debates on the measure, the LFT did win significant amendments to the bill, specifically regarding due process protections, confidentiality assurances, and - most importantly - a phase in of the implementation of the new evaluation with the inclusion of legislative oversight and an active commission to monitor the “piloting” of the instrument.

Full implementation of VAM with real consequences is on the horizon. The House and Senate committees have the authority under the Act to “disapprove the assessment model” if the assessment is not working.

LFT will hold true to its stated position. We expect Representative Hoffman and others to hold true to their promise if it doesn't.

Therefore, consistent with its 2009 Standing Resolution and the legislative history, LFT will collect data from the field where the instrument / process is being piloted to share with legislators during the 2012 session.