Question 5: Tell us about a time when the results of a standardized test EITHER undermined OR enhanced the information you gained through other assessments.

Placement/Instructional Pathway Decisions

The FCAT (now FSA) Reading Assessment has pigeon-holed many of my students as struggling readers, when they are not. Years of stress over this exam causes them to believe that they can not read and snow-balls into general academic failure. Approximately 10% of my level 1 and 2 readers are actually reading below grade-level.

My districts often use mock tests that are supposed to imitate the stats exam. These tests are slapped together by the district office and are not checked for reliability or validity. However, these exams are used to place students in mandatory tutoring. (Even though subjects tested were not necessarily covered in class yet). Admin relied more on these test scores than teacher observation and assessments. Thus placing many students in tutoring who didn't need to be there.

I have often had students who failed or did poorly on the state assessment but were successful in class. The state assessment purported to be a reading test, but was more of a critical thinking test. It could definitely undermine a child's future by placing him in remedial classes. I cannot recall a time when it enhanced my knowledge of a student's abilities.

Feelings/Emotions—Students and Teachers

I feel depressed every time test scores come out. My students and I work diligently to improve skills and yet, I feel like many of my students do not showcase their learning on these tests. When I ask students, especially ones who worked hard in class to improve, but showed little/no growth, they say they were "burned out" and "didn't feel like writing" that day. The prompt was "boring" or they just had a bad day. Sometimes they admit, they were just being lazy. For these reasons (and more), I just don't find value in standardized tests of this nature.

I can't say that they enhance, I keep tabs on students via reading assessments, conferring, writing samples, and various other ways all year long. Students who I know are struggle show up as struggling on the test. The problem is when it undermines both my assessment and more importantly my students' self-worth. When I assess I always talk with students about next steps and help them see assess as finding ways to keep growing. Test scores, however, calling a kid a "1" or a "3," does the opposite. Kids have cried, thrown up, and the like on test day and after getting scores. Many kids I know are strong learners turn out to be poor test takers and are devastated.
My biggest frustration with being an 11th grade English teacher in Virginia is that students' EOC SOL scores always directly reflect my teaching. Yes, teachers and administrators recognize that students who don't pass may have an ELL or SPED background; yes, they acknowledge that any number of factors could have influenced learning from any number of previous English teachers. Still, the 11th grade team is issued a score report following the SOL to identify your pass/fail percentages. Teachers who teach AP or honors will have little to worry about; teachers, like me, who struggle with behavior and absences and apathy in academic, team-taught, or self-contained classes will feel the heavy disappointment of our "failures" before remediation begins to get these kids to pass. I know I've taught the skills, I know we've practiced the skills, I know I've done my part to reach out to parents and to be available an hour and half before and after school every day to assist struggling students, and I know, deep inside, that it's not my fault when students don't pass, but I feel the defeat nonetheless.

It's difficult to remember a specific example, but each year when our school's results are released, I see the disappointment in the eyes of my administrators and colleagues. They wonder why our scores aren't higher and what we are doing...or aren't doing...in the English department to get those scores where they need to be. And each year I look at the list of students who didn't pass the test and, for many of them, I remember moments where the lightbulb went off for them or I think about the multiple ways that I could have changed what and how I taught them if I hadn't been forced to focus so much on test prep. I want to tell everyone in the room that the tail is wagging the dog and that this is not only ineffective, it's very dangerous. Students are tested "to death," and sometimes their results in assessments do not accurately reflect their actual performance or knowledge. While using an online literacy program (Achieve 3000), students are required to take "level-set" assessments. Their results were far below what I know it should be. Some of this is due to testing fatigue--just not having the energy or desire to complete yet another assessment.

**Timeliness/Appropriateness**

The data is valuable. The issue comes in devoting the time it takes to mine the data and analyze it. If school leadership does not have supports in place, then data is viewed as an extra step or an obstacle. In that sense, it undermines the power of the data.

This testing cycle was not unique. Things like this happen all of the time, and what they clearly show two things: a single test is not enough (though that's what states are willing to fund), and that it's the personal attention and perseverance of the teacher that ascertains what students know and don't know. Assessments are tools. Not the whole picture.

**Bullshit. Absolute total waste of time. Robs teachers of valuable class time.**

In Florida my VAM score was based on students I didn't teach.

I am a brand new teacher, so I've had very little experience in this arena, but you know something is wrong when your mentor and teaching professor fails a reading comprehension test designed for eighth graders.

**Mismatch/Ineffectiveness**

A test has not undermined anything for me. I just often look at data and put it in a folder because it's not useful. AP scores, however, have helped me to gauge how I need to adjust my focus in certain areas. The AP Language exam encompasses so many higher-order skills that I actually don't mind using that kind of standardized data to
drive my instruction. For my freshmen, though, state assessment data means nothing to me because the test itself is flawed and inadequate in measuring meaningful skills. ACT data is meaningless as well because it's a test that's used to "rank" students, which means it's impossible to get every student to a 36. So why even attempt to use that as a barometer?

Every year standardized testing undermines information I gain from portfolios. Students who come to me reading on a 4th grade level can grow to the 8th grade level, but a standardized test written on a 10th 11th grade level never shows the student progressed.

There is a lot about smart kids who do poorly on tests, but I see the opposite is true as well. I see students who can't read well, who struggle in the ELA and content courses, but still pass the state mandated test because of the test prep. The test is a game and it has been corrupted. We teach kids how to game the system because so much is at stake. One year, our school had 98% pass the 6th grade reading test (state) and over 30% were reading two or more grades below level. How does that happen? We teach tricks like if the question is all in italics, you don't need to read the story. Just circle the word "that" in the question and look for the answer choice that is a restatement of the rest of the question. Yup, we did that. And yup, it still galls.

All these tests do is confirm for me what I already know. Based on attendance, quality of work, missing assignments etc. I can predict accurately who will pass and who will struggle. Sure there are always a few who surprise either way...for me these test validate our kids who value learning and reinforces in the others an already poor estimation of themselves, despite the constant encouragement, help, one-on-one time after school. Sad.

Teaching 11th and 12th grades, I am not subjected to standardized testing done by our district, which currently stops at 10th grade. My students are compelled to take the SAT by state mandate, but I never see individual information. I was told that students at my school struggle with dangling participles. I see that my students struggle with examining their biases. I have much greater concerns about the latter.