



Introduction to Student
Learning Objectives (SLOs)

2012

Ohio | Department
of Education

SLO Introduction

What Is a SLO?

A SLO is a measure of a teacher's impact on student learning within a given interval of instruction. An SLO is a measurable, long-term academic goal informed by available data that a teacher or teacher team sets at the beginning of the year for all students or for subgroups of students. The teacher(s) and students work toward the SLO growth targets throughout the year and use interim, benchmark, summative, and formative assessments to assess progress toward the goal. At the end of the year, the teacher(s) meet with a principal or building team to discuss attainment of the SLO and determine the teacher's impact on student learning.

High-quality SLOs include the following:

- ✓ **Baseline and Trend Data.** *The SLO data should summarize student information (test score from previous years, results of preassessments), identify student strengths and weaknesses, and review trend data to inform the objective and establish the amount of growth that should take place.*
- ✓ **Student Population.** *The students, course, grade level, and number of students should be included in the objective.*
- ✓ **Interval of Instruction.** *The duration of the course that the SLO will cover should include the start and end dates.*
- ✓ **Standards and Content.** *This section should explain the content, skills, and specific standards to which the SLO is aligned. All SLOs should be broad enough to represent the most important learning or overarching skills, but narrow enough to be measured.*
- ✓ **Assessment(s).** *The assessment(s) that will be used to measure student growth for the objective. The assessment selection should be reviewed by content or grade-level experts or, in cases where an appropriate assessment does not exist, created at the district level. The assessment(s) should effectively measure course content and have sufficient "stretch" so that all students may demonstrate learning. If supplemental assessments are needed to cover all ability levels in the course, this section should provide a plan for combining multiple assessments.*
- ✓ **Growth Target(s).** *The target for student growth should reflect high expectations for student achievement that are developmentally appropriate. The targets should be rigorous yet attainable. The target can be tiered for specific students in the classroom to allow all students to demonstrate growth, or the target can be equally applicable to all students in a class, grade, or subject.*
- ✓ **Rationale for Growth Target(s).** *High quality SLOs include strong justifications for why the goal is important and achievable for this group of students. Rationales should draw upon assessment, baseline and trend data, student outcomes, and curriculum standards and should be aligned to broader school and district goals.*



What are the Steps for Setting SLOs?

ODE has identified five steps in the SLO development cycle. Further detail regarding each step can be found in *Setting Student Learning Objectives (SLOs): Steps for Teachers and Evaluators*. The following pages will guide readers through the rationale, challenges and solutions, and local education agencies (LEA) decisions required.

STEP 1: Gather and review available data

STEP 2: Determine the interval of instruction and identify content

STEP 3: Choose assessments and set the growth target

STEP 4: Submit your SLO and prepare for approval and review

STEP 5: Monitor and prepare for SLO rating and discussion

Why Use SLOs?

There are many benefits to using SLOs as a measure of student growth:

- **Reinforce best teaching practice.** Setting goals for students, using data to assess student progress, and adjusting instruction based upon that progress are all part of good teaching practice. SLOs help formalize good teaching by requiring each of these steps and using the growth targets to inform evaluation results.
- **SLOs are adaptable.** All educators can demonstrate their impact on student learning and receive recognition for their efforts because SLOs are not dependent upon the availability of standardized assessment scores. Instead, SLOs can draw upon different data sources such as end of course exams, performance-based assessment scored by a rubric, or district-created or team-created assessments. SLOs can be highly adaptable, quickly reflecting changes in curriculum and available assessments.



Do all teachers need to follow the SLO process and create an SLO?

LEAs can determine which measures teachers will use for the student growth measure; however, districts have a pilot opportunity during the 2012–13 school year. During this time, ODE recommends that all teachers create at least one SLO to gain experience with the SLO process. In subsequent years, teachers should create two to four SLOs representative of the teacher's schedule per year.

- **SLOs acknowledge the value of teacher knowledge and skill.** The SLO process allows teachers to have input on how student learning will be measured and how teachers will be evaluated. Also, the process allows educators to focus on the objectives that are most relevant for their student population and content areas and provide a clear, measurable connection to instruction.
- **Potential for collaboration.** SLOs can be used to promote collaboration and reflection on practice among teachers.

LEA Decision Points: Setting SLO Policy

LEAs have some flexibility to shape the SLO process to fit local contexts, but the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) recommends that LEAs begin by establishing a building-level committee. The following recommendations may streamline the process, but LEAs have the autonomy to establish their own SLO process that best fits their context.

Use existing committees. ODE recognizes that most LEAs and schools already have district-level teams (DLTs) and building-level teams (BLTs) that are in charge of leading various efforts within their communities. Using a team that already exists and repurposing that team reduces the burden on both individuals and resources. While the use of existing committees is recommended, it is important to note that specific LEA agreements and processes be taken into consideration before assigning approval, monitoring, and scoring of SLOs to an existing committee.

Determine the timeline for the SLO evaluation cycle. ODE requires districts and SLO evaluators to use the following steps in the evaluation process:

1. Provide teachers with data that will support data and assessment review
2. Support SLO development with common planning time
3. Review and approve SLOs by committee (required)
4. Schedule mid-year check in meetings with teachers and teacher teams
5. Rate and score SLOs
6. Conduct a final meeting to discuss SLO scores and lessons learned
7. Input SLO scores into eTPES (required)



Guiding Questions for LEA Building Level Committees

1. What categories of teachers will be creating SLOs?
2. Are teacher-team SLOs required or acceptable?
3. How many SLOs are required? (ODE recommends at least one per teacher.)
4. Who will review and approve SLOs? (ODE recommends the building team.)
5. What guidance and training will the LEA provide?

Challenges and Solutions for Implementing SLOs

While there are obvious benefits for using SLOs as a measure of student growth, the process is not without challenges. ODE recognizes that LEAs will face difficulties when implementing, monitoring, and scoring SLOs, particularly in the first few years of implementation. In an effort to proactively address these challenges and support LEAs, ODE offers the following support and guidance.

| LEA Challenge | Potential Solutions |
|--|--|
| Identifying high-quality assessments for all grades and subjects | ODE has developed a document that will support teachers and evaluators in identifying the most rigorous assessments for the teacher’s class. The <i>Guidance on Selecting Assessments for Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)</i> includes information on the criteria that every high-quality assessment should meet, frequently asked questions on assessments, and an assessment checklist to select appropriate assessments. The assessment should be, at a minimum, reviewed at the district level by grade-level and/or content-level experts. |
| Creating appropriate growth targets classrooms that contain students who are at different achievement levels | Because SLOs are flexible, they allow teachers to create growth targets that are appropriate to the teacher’s individual class, grade, or subject. Using tiered targets for students allows teachers to identify where each student begins the course and to determine the appropriate amount of growth for the student based on their baseline data. Tiered targets help more accurately capture a teacher’s contribution to learning because SLOs are not focused on the attainment of proficiency but are focused on academic growth. The document entitled <i>Sample Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)</i> provided by ODE highlights what a tiered target might look like in practice. |
| Setting rigorous but realistic targets | <p>In the beginning years of SLO implementation, knowing how to set rigorous yet realistic targets may be a challenge for teachers. The SLO process allows teachers to review available data on past and current students, work with colleagues to create team objectives, and formatively assess student knowledge throughout the year in order to set appropriate targets for students.</p> <p>ODE also recommends that building-level committees review and approve all of the SLOs so that they develop an understanding of the type and rigor of the SLOs across a school. Please note, however, that LEAs are not required to use the committees and can choose their own evaluator(s) for the SLO process. By centralizing the approval process, the committee will be able to support those teachers who set targets that are too high or too low, ensuring consistency within the building. Also, the committee will ensure that all SLOs are aligned to the academic standards as well as school and</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | district priorities. |
| LEA Challenge (continued) | Potential Solutions (continued) |
| Addressing the culture change that will take place in the school or district | <p>ODE understands that the SLO process will require a significant shift in how teachers participate in their evaluation system. A lot of the work will be conducted at the teacher and teacher-team level and this shift requires support. ODE recommends several processes that can help with the culture change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create building teams that will work together and become experts in the SLO setting and approval process. • Encourage teams of teachers in the same grades and subjects to collaboratively develop integrated growth targets for their students. • Phase in the implementation of SLOs by requesting that all teachers create and implement one SLO during the 2012–13 school year. • Provide consistent communication on SLOs and provide support as the LEA implements the SLOs. This includes guidance on the components of an SLO, examples of quality SLOs, and training on how to approve and score SLOs. • Offer professional development to teachers on crucial topics that can facilitate the SLO process. These topics include assessment literacy, reviewing grade-level standards, and setting appropriate growth targets. |
| Preventing unintended consequences that could arise from using SLOs | <p>SLOs will not be useful tools in advancing teacher practice if they become less rigorous over time due to the pressure to meet expected targets. To safeguard against this, ODE will conduct random audits of the SLOs developed by teachers and teacher-teams to ensure that they maintain rigor over time, accurately represent the content covered in a class, and include a representative and proportional population of the teacher’s schedule. Technical support from ODE may be necessary in some circumstances.</p> <p>Another potential common mistake is using assessments for evaluation that are designed to be used for diagnostic purposes. ODE developed the <i>Guidance on Selecting Assessments for Student Learning Objectives</i> to address this concern.</p> |