

## HB15-1324: Reps. Jessie Danielson and Dave Young Student Learning Objectives (SLOs): A Tool for Measuring Student Learning Growth

Setting goals for students, using data to assess student progress, and adjusting instruction based on that progress are good teaching practices employed by educators every day. Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) solidify good teaching by formalizing these steps. Established by educators or educator teams, SLOs are *measurable learning goals that align with specific standards taught and allow for the measure of progress toward those goals.*

- **For Students:** SLOs provide actionable data that help determine student progress and interventions, leading to improvements in learning.
- **For Teachers:** SLOs encourage reflective and collaborative teaching practices and provide an additional way for educators to demonstrate their effectiveness through student progress.
- **For Principals/APs:** SLOs promote conversations between administrators and those they evaluate around student results, which can foster improved instructional practice.

### What are the key elements of an SLO?

- **Clear identification of the student population:** At least one SLO ought to include every student in a teacher's class, but additional SLOs may be written for subgroups of students.
- **Specific time period:** Educators establish a clear timeline within which students will reach an academic goal (semester, school year, etc.).
- **Assessment(s) of student progress:** At the core of the SLO is a high-quality assessment (not necessarily standardized) used to measure student progress toward that objective.
- **Rigorous yet realistic expected student growth or achievement target to be met by the students and rationale for target:** This requires identifying baseline student performance and setting challenging learning expectations for all students.
- **Strategies for achieving SLOs:** For an SLO to be an instrument of good instructional practice, not simply an evaluative tool, teachers must be able to identify the specific approaches they will use in the classroom to meet the expectations for student growth.

### Examples of SLOs

<b>Secondary Math: Individual Teacher Goal</b>	<b>Third Grade Music: Individual Teacher Goal</b>
<b>Population:</b> 75 eighth grade algebra students	<b>Population:</b> 32 third grade students
<b>Timeframe:</b> SY 2014-2015	<b>Timeframe:</b> 12 weeks
<b>Assessment:</b> District-wide interim assessment	<b>Assessment:</b> District-developed written exam requiring reading and writing notes on a treble staff.
<b>Assessment Baseline:</b> 83% of students scored a "one" on a pre-assessment that focused on pre-algebra and basic algebra skills.	<b>Assessment baseline:</b> No students met or nearly met expectations on the pre-test. 80% of students earned a 2 out of 5; 20% earned a 1 out of 5.
<b>Expected Student Growth:</b> 80% of the students who attend 85% of classes or more will score a "three or better" on the district-wide algebra assessment.	<b>Expected student growth:</b> 80% of students will earn a 4 out of 5 (Meets Expectations) or better and 20% will score 3 out of 5 (Nearly Meets Expectations)
<b>Strategies:</b> Experiential exercises and meaningful math tasks; multiple solution pathways and representations; analysis of student work samples	<b>Strategies:</b> Whole and small group instruction, peer-to-peer teaching using 4 <sup>th</sup> -graders, one-on-ones, progress-monitoring, application of skill by teaching students to play the xylophone and recorder

## What are the benefits of utilizing SLOs?

- **Good instructional practice:** Research has shown that formative assessment associated with rigorous and high-quality growth objectives leads to higher student achievement.
- **Additional measure of growth:** SLOs can help provide a more comprehensive picture of student achievement in a specific subject (on their own or in addition to local and state assessment data).
- **Adaptability:** SLOs are flexible and can be adjusted or revisited based on changes in standards, curriculum, or shifts in student population and student needs.
- **Shareability:** Groups of teachers in the same subject area, grade or even district can use the same SLO, so educators are sharing best practices instead of working in isolation.
- **Credibility:** SLOs have been documented to have high levels of credibility with educators because they are situated directly within the classroom context and are usually developed by educators themselves.

## How do SLOs align with Colorado's assessment system and evaluation framework?

Colorado's educator evaluation framework requires that student achievement account for 50 percent of a teacher's annual evaluation. Measures of student learning growth used for educator evaluation must include the following: at least one *individually* attributable measure; at least one *collectively* attributable measure; and when available, state summative assessment and/or Colorado Growth model results.

Currently, state-provided assessments do not include all content areas and grade levels (only about 30-40 percent of teachers are in tested grades and subjects). Districts may purchase or develop local assessment instruments to measure student learning growth, but many districts lack the resources, capacity, and in-house psychometric expertise to develop or evaluate the technical rigor of locally developed assessments. Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) are a viable and potentially high-quality alternative measure that may be implemented to address this challenge, but they can also be used to complement existing measures of student learning.

Successful implementation of SLOs depends upon educators' capacity to select accurate measures and appropriately interpret assessment results, and this requires building educator capacity. Otherwise, SLOs may be seen as an add-on to the demanding work that educators are already doing.

## Where can I find more information and examples of SLOs?

- **Measures of Student Learning: Approaches for Selecting and Using Multiple Measures in Educator Evaluations** (Colorado Department of Education)  
<http://www.cde.state.co.us/educatoreffectiveness/measuresofstudentlearningguidanceteacher>
- **A Quality Control Toolkit for Student Learning Objectives** (Reform Support Network)  
<https://www.engageny.org/sites/default/files/resource/attachments/rsn-slo-toolkit.pdf>
- **Targeting Growth: Using Student Learning Objectives as a Measure of Educator Effectiveness** (Reform Support Network) <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/implementation-support-unit/technical-assist/targeting-growth.pdf>
- **Student Learning Objectives as Measures of Educator Effectiveness** (American Institutes for Research)  
[http://educator.talent.org/inc/docs/SLOs Measures of Educator Effectiveness.pdf](http://educator.talent.org/inc/docs/SLOs%20Measures%20of%20Educator%20Effectiveness.pdf)
- **Student Learning Objectives: Benefits, Challenges, and Solutions** (American Institutes for Research)  
<http://westcompcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/SLO-Benefits-and-Challenges-American-Institutes-for-Research.pdf>