



## Georgia Department of Education Student Learning Objectives Addressing SLO Challenges and Concerns

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1. *What impact will SLOs have on student achievement?*

Setting goals for students, using data to assess student progress, and adjusting instruction based on that progress demonstrate good teaching practices (What Works Clearinghouse, 2009). Because SLOs connect course standards with effective classroom instruction and provide data on student academic growth, they are powerful tools for increasing student achievement in district schools.

2. *Students and teachers did not take the pre and post assessments seriously since they did not think they count this year.*

Some districts are incorporating SLO items into final exams, are building SLO measures onto current benchmarking work, and are grading the post assessments as a way of reporting student progress using a standards-based measure.

Using valid performance measures or other standard-based student work such as labs, simulations, complex problems, etc. in lieu of traditional tests may be more engaging to students and can be used for instructional purposes as well as assessment issues.

3. *The public domain assessments had errors in them.*

All reported, needed corrections have been made to the public domain measures. The input provided from all districts was recorded on a document noting all changes and all recommendations from districts. This document is on the RT3 Georgia website in the course folder. All items from the public domain assessments will be reviewed by the 2013 Content Week teams and those items will be entered into the item bank.

4. *The public domain assessments were inconsistent across courses. The scoring varied from measure to measure.*

Content teams who developed the public domain measures focused on developing valid and reliable measures. No attempt was made to develop measures that were similar or consistent from course to course. However, several districts are providing their SLO teams with a framework or format for SLO measures so that there will be more consistency in the future.

5. *Are the SLO measures valid and reliable?*

Currently, most measures, assessments, and sources of grades in non-tested courses have very low reliability and validity. Using a group of trained content experts who can unpack course standards, design measures at the appropriate cognitive demands and align the items and tasks to the standards with the proper emphasis will provide increasingly valid and reliable measures for determining student growth.

6. *Teachers will game the system.*

School leaders will add SLO data to classroom observations, walkthroughs, grades, passing rates, and student survey results, to more fully understand and evaluate a teacher's effectiveness. Inconsistencies in this triangulation of evidence may require leaders to take a more in-depth look at a teacher's practice in any areas of concern or discrepancies.

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7. *Growth targets may be too high or too low.*

Growth targets will allow for comparability across the school and the district. This comparability will be informative with regards to growth targets. Districts will use data during this first hold harmless year to ascertain the appropriateness of growth targets. Data from this year's SLOs will be used to set growth targets for next year's SLOs.

8. *SLO measures take too much instructional time.*

In the fall of 2012, district pre measures were duplicates of the post measures and the necessary extended time may not have been required for a pre measure score. There is much flexibility in the types of measures that may be used. Districts may want to consider other ways to gather the information needed to measure student growth between two points in time. Consider the type of work that students are doing now that can be utilized as an assessment, i.e. labs, essays, performance tasks, simulations, etc.

There have been reports from teachers that while the measures were time consuming, the information gleaned and the interactions with students were very valuable. SLO measures should be considered assessments not just *of* learning, but assessments *for* learning. Pre measures can help students and teachers see: What they need to learn, where the learner is in relation to the goals, where the learner needs to go next, how to get there.

9. *Teachers are fearful of how this will impact their evaluations.*

This is new work and there is much more to learn about setting highly effective SLOs. However, the focus on student academic growth in non-tested areas is important not only for teachers, schools, and other stakeholders but more importantly for students and their parents. Emerging research indicates that this work is increasing student achievement as well as teacher effectiveness. Consider shifting the focus from fear and "what if" to what teachers can do to improve student learning for each student.

On the contrary, groups of teachers, particularly in foreign language, art, music, and PE have stated that the SLO process is a validation of their work and the courses they teach. They welcome the accountability for their work especially when they are afforded the opportunity to have input into the development of the SLOs, the growth targets, and/or the SLO measures.

10. *The SLO measures took an inordinate amount of time, paper, and copying.*

Local leaders and teachers may want to explore and consider other cost effective and time efficient ways to accurately measure student growth between two points in time. As districts and schools gain proficiency with the SLO process, other options may be viable. For example, consider if students in some courses can take SLO measures on the computer or whether the end of the year score of a course can be used as the pre score for the following year. Utilizing student work, projects, or performance task may also reduce the management of and resources needed for SLO work.

11. *We don't have the staff to do all of the SLO work.*

Several districts have begun to incorporate the SLO work into existing structures such as Professional Learning Communities, Teachers and Student Advisory Groups, Data Teams, Leadership Teams, Grade Level and Departmental Meetings, Professional Development opportunities while other districts are creating SLO teams at each school to help to manage and lead the work. Clearly, a team approach and unifying districts processes and technologies will more smoothly run the SLO process.

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*12. Should teachers grade/score their own SLO measures?*

Looking at student work or scoring measures by the teacher should give teachers important and immediate information on planning his/her classroom instruction for groups or for individual students. Some districts have two teachers score together. Some districts randomly select three to five student pre measures and score again after the teacher as a form of determining inter-rater reliability.

*13. Our security for the SLO measures was like a state test so teachers were not able to use the pre measure to guide instruction.*

Pre and post measures should be sensibly secure so as to not compromise the validity of the measures. Teachers should not have unnecessary copies or exposure to the measures that would reduce the measures' ability to accurately measure student learning of the course standards. On the other hand, districts should ensure that teachers have pertinent information about the SLO in order to be effective. Information that may be helpful to teachers would include the information provided on the district SLO form (standards, type of pre and post measures, growth targets, teaching strategies, etc.) and the information provided on the table of specifications for each locally or regionally developed measure (located on the RT3 Georgia website).

District security procedures should be based on sound professional judgment and practice but should not prevent the teachers from knowing how to use the pre measure data in planning classroom instruction. Procedures for SLO measures should be consistent with other common district measures.

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