



## Georgia Department of Education Frequently Asked Questions Student Learning Objectives

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### **What is an SLO or Student Learning Objective?**

SLOs are just one component of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES). It is the component that serves as an indicator of teachers' impact on student academic growth. District determined SLOs are course specific, grade level learning objectives that are measurable, focused on growth in student learning, and aligned to curriculum standards. As a measure of teachers' impact on student learning, SLOs give educators, school systems, and state leaders an additional means by which to understand, value, and recognize success in the classroom. SLOs are developed at the district level and approved by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE).

### **What is the purpose of SLOs?**

The primary purpose of student learning objectives is to improve student achievement at the classroom level. An equally important purpose is to provide evidence of each teacher's instructional impact on student learning. This process requires teachers to use assessments to determine student growth over the length of the course. Teachers plan for student success by ensuring that instruction is moving students, teachers, and schools toward the common vision of exemplary instruction and high levels of student academic growth.

### **Which courses have SLOs?**

Tested courses either have an End-of-Course-Test (EOCT) or a Criterion Reference Competency Test (CRCT) and those results will be factored into the Student Growth Percentile (SGP) component of TKES. As such, tested courses will not have SLOs. The one exception is third grade, which will have SLOs because this grade level does not have prior testing history; third grade CRCT will serve as prior data for fourth grade. All other courses without these standardized assessments are considered non-tested courses. Eventually, all non-tested courses will have an SLO.

### **How are different student needs (advanced students, students with disabilities, English language learners, etc.) accounted for in a student learning objective?**

The expectation is that all students in each course should demonstrate appropriate growth. Districts have the option to create SLOs that have tiers or levels. Tiers or levels may set varying growth targets based on the students' performance on the pre-assessment.

### **Can an SLO or SLO assessment be changed after the beginning of the course?**

Districts may utilize historical data and/or utilize current pre assessment data to determine growth targets. Once the growth targets are determined, the SLO and related assessments may not be changed until the next school year.

### **In what ways have teachers been involved in the development of district student learning objectives?**

The form of teacher involvement is up to each district. However, the majority of involved districts have their teachers serve as content experts on teams. These teams may be involved in developing the SLOs, determining the growth targets, and/or developing or evaluating SLO assessments.

### **Are the Public Domain Assessments (PDA) state tests?**

No. The PDAs were developed by local district teams which included educators from multiple districts, content specialists, district and state leaders. Districts have the option to use or customize PDAs to meet the needs of their districts.

### **What types of assessment items are available to support assessment development?**

Collaboratively developed assessments were developed for "Phase II" courses in the Spring of 2012. Districts may choose to use these assessments in their entirety, or may choose items from the assessment to use for their own locally created assessments. During the Spring of 2013, a variety of items (questions, tasks, etc.) were also developed by teacher teams. Districts may choose to use any of the items as they develop their own assessments to measure SLOs in their district. All items should be reviewed carefully by districts to ensure they meet district expectations and needs.

### **How do we know that the assessments used in SLOs are valid and reliable?**

Assessment development teams utilize a Table of Specifications which ensures that the created/selected assessment items are aligned to course standards, are at the same cognitive level of the standards, and that the standard emphasis on the assessment tool represents the same instructional emphasis as the classroom instruction. Teams that develop SLO assessments also utilize the Criteria Table to review the assessments for proper formatting, content validity, possible bias, administration procedures, scoring, etc. The research-based process and tools help local development teams to design assessments that are increasingly valid and reliable.

# Georgia Department of Education

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#### **How is the integrity of the SLO process maintained?**

The integrity of the process can be strengthened by collaborative teams working together, the use of performance items, the random use of multiple scorers, using assessments in a prudently secure manner, and the use of signed assurances.

#### **Some SLOs include all standards within a course and some SLOs include only overarching standards. Why is that?**

Whether to design an SLO on selected standards or to make the SLO comprehensive of all course standards is a district decision. Including all standards may result in lengthy pre and post assessments, requiring longer instructional time for administration. In addition, for the initial use of SLOs, some districts thought that student growth and teacher effectiveness could be ascertained on fewer overarching standards as well as measuring student growth on all course standards. In some instances, teams selected standards, which included essential skills and behaviors that thread through the majority of course content.

#### **Is there comparability between district SLOs for the same subjects across the state?**

The first stage of comparability work begins with SLO development teams, which may include teachers and other representatives from multiple districts, GaDOE staff, district and state leaders, and /or representatives from higher education. The next stage of comparability includes utilization of the GaDOE training and tools for the development of SLO assessments. Additionally, the GaDOE staff is working with other states on the development of various calibration tools and processes which will increase the quality of SLOs and its related processes.

#### **What should teachers say or not say to their students about the SLO process?**

As with any type of pre assessment, teachers should explain to students that the intent of a pre assessment is to determine what students already know. Teachers need to encourage students to do their best so that the teacher has an accurate picture of their current knowledge and skills. Discussing the connection of the pre and post assessments, as it relates to the teacher's evaluation, is not appropriate.

#### **How does the SLO data figure into the Teacher Effectiveness Measure (TEM)?**

Student growth and academic achievement will count as 50% of the TEM. An SLO evaluation rubric will be used to determine a teacher effectiveness rating which is based on the percentage of students within each teacher's course that met or exceeded their SLO learning targets.

#### **What does the mid-year or mid-course conference entail?**

The purpose of the mid-year or mid-course conference between teachers and their evaluators is to determine if students are on track to meet their pre-determined growth targets and whether instruction should be adjusted or if possible interventions are needed for particular students. The format of the conference and the evidence or data needed for the conference is determined by the school's evaluators.

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#### **Where can one go for more information?**

Teachers' greatest resource is their local school and district leaders. In addition, multiple resources are available on the Teacher and Leader Effectiveness page on the Georgia Department of Education website  
<http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/School-Improvement/Teacher-and-Leader-Effectiveness/Pages/default.aspx>.