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*Richard Woods, Georgia's School Superintendent*  
*"Educating Georgia's Future"*

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**STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES**  
As Measures of Educator Effectiveness

**A Guide for  
Teachers**

## What is an SLO?

A Student Learning Objective (SLO) is a measurable, academic goal informed by available data that districts set for teachers and students. District-determined SLOs are content-specific, grade level learning objectives that are measurable, focused on growth in student learning, and aligned to curriculum standards. SLOs are one component of Georgia's Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) which is a multi-dimensional approach to teacher evaluation. In addition, SLOs are required, recommended, or identified as an example of student growth in nearly half of the U.S. states (Lachlan-Hache, Cushing, & Bivona, 2012, p.1).

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## What is the purpose of SLOs?

The primary purpose of SLOs is to improve student growth in every classroom. An equally important purpose of SLOs is to provide evidence of each teacher's instructional impact on student learning in non-tested areas. SLOs give educators, school systems, and state leaders an additional means by which to understand, value, and recognize each teacher's effectiveness in classrooms.

## How SLOs improve teacher practice.

The SLO process improves teaching practice by ensuring that educators:

**All components of the SLO process promote reflection, collaboration, and improvement of teacher practice.**

- Have an in-depth understanding of course standards
- Know what subject content and skills each student has at the beginning of the course
- Set goals for students
- Monitor student progress
- Examine outcomes to determine next steps

## How are SLOs developed?

1. Districts, in collaboration with teachers and school leaders, examine current data and historical data to determine the focus of the SLO for specified courses. Overarching standards are selected for the SLO.
2. A method for measuring student academic growth on selected standards is either procured or developed by the district. Measures are selected to determine student knowledge of content/skills at the beginning and end of the course. The pre and post assessments do not have to be the same but should measure the same standards.
3. Based on student pre assessment scores or other results, district teams set growth targets for each student.
4. The SLO statement includes the duration of the instruction period, the focus of student learning, how growth will be measured, and specific growth targets which reflect each student's target for meeting or exceeding SLO standards.
5. The District SLO Statement form, which includes all of the information stated in 1-4 above and other pertinent details, is completed and submitted to the GaDOE for audit and approval.
6. Districts share SLOs with teachers. Teachers dovetail SLO components with their curriculum, instruction, and collaboration with colleagues and school leaders.



## An SLO Statement Example

From **September 2015 to May 2015** 100% of third grade reading students will improve their knowledge of vocabulary and comprehension skills as measured by the Mountain County Schools Third Grade Reading SLO Assessments. Students will increase from their pre-assessment scores to these post-assessment scores as follows:

The minimum expectation for individual student growth is based on the formula which requires students to grow by increasing his/her score by 35% of his/her potential growth.

$\text{Pre-Assessment Score} + [(100 - \text{Pre-Assessment Score}) * \text{Expected Growth}] = \text{Target}$

Example using 40 on a pre-assessment:

$40 + [(100 - 40) * .35]$   
 $40 + [(60) * .35]$   
 $40 + [21]$

61 is the expected target for the post-assessment

Students increasing their score by at least 60% of their expected growth would be demonstrating high growth. A score of 76 or above is the high growth target.

Duration of Target

Growth Target for Expected Growth

Growth Target for High Growth

The growth target in the example above is based on a formula of increasing the pre assessment score by 35% of the student's expected growth. Please note the criteria for the high growth target is also stated.

This is only one of several ways growth targets may be set by districts. Additional information and examples of growth target options may be reviewed at <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/School-Improvement/Teacher-and-Leader-Effectiveness/Pages/default.aspx>

## What do teachers do with SLOs?

- 1
  - Become familiar with course SLO(s)
- 2
  - Administer the pre measure based on guidance from district
- 3
  - Analyze the classroom data; determine what instruction is needed for each student or groups of students
- 4
  - Meet with evaluator to obtain approval of SLO classroom implementation plan; provide effective instruction
- 5
  - Monitor student progress; meet with evaluator mid-course to discuss student progress toward targets
- 6
  - Administer post measure based on guidance from district
- 7
  - Meet with evaluator to discuss student progress; evaluators note rating on SLO Evaluation Rubric

## Planning for SLO Conferences

Teachers will meet with their evaluators at least three times each school year. The Pre-Evaluation Conference and the Mid-Year Conference can be held individually or in small groups such as grade level or content groups. The Summative Evaluation Conference needs to be held individually.

1. The first conference, called the Pre-Evaluation Conference (August/September) is an opportunity for teachers and their evaluators to review the teacher's Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS) self-assessment and to review the teacher's baseline data from the SLO pre-assessment. Consider how the SLO process supports the TAPS (Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.
2. The mid-course (typically December/January) conference focuses on the SLO data and performance standards feedback. At the Pre-Evaluation Conference, determine what evidence is needed for the Mid-Year Conference.
3. A Summative Evaluation Conference (May) will be held to provide written and oral feedback to teachers regarding the Summative Assessment Report which includes SLO data, TAPS, and student surveys of instructional practice results.

Teachers should consider the following actions in preparation for conferences with their evaluators:

- ✓ Provide a description of your class(es) and any defining characteristics so that your evaluator has an accurate picture of your classes. An art teacher's example is provided below:

I have five classes of art for third-grade students. There are 129 students total. Of the third graders I teach, three students are currently taking private art lessons. 67% of the students have been at our school since Kindergarten. Sixteen students are English Language Learners. All third grade students receive 45 minutes of art each week.

- ✓ Be sure pre and post assessments are administered during the designated district administration windows.
- ✓ Ensure that you have an in-depth knowledge of the SLO standards as well as all course standards.
- ✓ For locally or regionally development assessments, a review of the Table of Specifications (ToS) will be helpful.

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- ✓ Share your analysis of class(es) SLO pre assessment data. Simple statistical descriptions may be helpful such as the range of scores, the count or frequency of each score, how the scores were distributed across the range, the mean or median, and any outliers or unexpected results.

A brief example from an American Government teacher's SLO is provided below:

I have two sections of American Government. A total of 51 students took the pre assessment. The lowest score was a 5 and the highest score was a 54. Both classes have similar pre-assessment distributions.

19 students or 40% scored between 0-20.  
25 students or 53% scored between 21-40.  
7 students or 7% scored between 41-60. The mean was 27.

- What conclusions have you identified from the pre assessment data?
  - How will you use these results to differentiate instruction for individual students?
- ✓ Be sure you, as the teacher, know each student's expected and high growth targets based on the district SLO Statement. Ensure you know how and in what form to record student scores (percents, raw scores, etc.)
  - ✓ Consider how you can use the SLO process as evidence of the ten TAPS components of Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES).
  - ✓ Discuss high impact strategies you will consistently utilize in your classroom so that students attain their growth targets.
  - ✓ Review how you will regularly monitor student progress.
  - ✓ Determine what evidence you and your students can provide of mid-course progress toward SLO targets.
  - ✓ Discuss with your evaluator any areas of growth you need in order to effectively increase the growth of your students in the courses you teach.
  - ✓ Provide examples of how you and your colleagues are collaborating to improve student growth in the specific course(s) you teach.

## Are SLO measures valid and reliable?

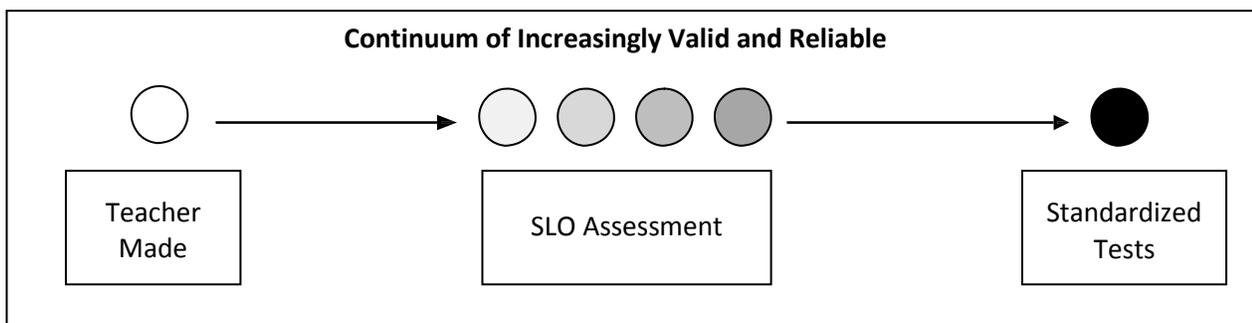
At the core of each SLO is the assessment to determine student learning toward the student learning objective. “The attribute of validity is arguably the most important quality of an assessment” (Gareis & Grant, 2008, p.35). A quality measure connects teacher, student, and course expectations/standards.

**“This was the best professional learning that I have ever had...I now understand how to write appropriate test questions...I also understand that assessment drives instruction.”**

Teacher, Henry County

SLO assessments are designed/selected to provide confidence to teachers and administrators that the measures will directly inform attainment of the SLO standards. This confidence is built on content expertise, teacher input, balanced and rigorous assessments, and immediate results which are meaningful for the teacher’s work in the classroom. SLO assessments are not standardized assessments but are more authentic, closer to classroom assessments that are designed to give timely feedback about individual student’s content knowledge and skill attainment.

Districts may procure, adapt, or create assessments. SLO assessments should be selected and/or developed based on their appropriateness for the grade and content standards chosen for the SLO. As districts review SLO assessments, it is important to be mindful of psychometric constructs but as noted by Garieis and Grant, “validity is not an either/or proposition, instead it is a matter of degree (2008, p. 35). Therefore, improving the reliability and validity of SLO measures will be an ongoing process for districts.”



## **Locally/regionally developed SLO measures**

Due to the unavailability of procured assessments in non-tested courses, many districts are developing their own SLO assessments. These assessments should be selected and/or developed based on their appropriateness for the grade and content standards chosen for the SLO. SLO assessments should be balanced measures which may include written assessments, performance assessments, and/or work products.

Typically educators feel most comfortable with assessments they develop and that are based on recent classroom work. However, the current literature on how to develop assessments is far from the process typically undertaken by classroom teachers. “In addition, research in the field suggests that assessment as a competency is an area of relative discomfort, if not weakness, among teachers” (Gareis & Grant, 2008, p.19).

The GaDOE offers professional development in the area of SLO assessment development. The GaDOE has developed an SLO assessment development process which supports districts as they develop and procure balanced and rigorous SLO assessments.

Many districts selected content experts to serve on teams which developed local or regional assessments using this rigorous development process. Teams consisted of exemplary teachers, personnel with assessment design expertise and district content leaders.

Teams selected overarching standards for their assigned course. Standards were analyzed to determine what content and skills students needed to master the standard. Based on the content and skills students need to demonstrate, appropriate types, such as performance tasks, supply response, or multiple choice, and number of items were determined. A Table of Specifications or blueprint was created for each measure which detailed the content and level of cognitive demand for the items as well as the standards, and specified the types, number, and emphases of each item (Gareis & Grant, 2008).

Improving SLO measures will be an ongoing process. The composition of these measures, the length of these measures, and their results should be regularly examined by groups of trained educators using a common set of criteria provided by the GaDOE.

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To learn more.....

The Georgia Department of Education's website (<http://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Teacher-and-Leader-Effectiveness/Pages/Student-Learning-Objectives.aspx>) has additional documents which include:

## References

Gareis, C.R. & Grant, L. (2008). Teacher-made assessments. Larchmont, New York: Eye on Education.

Lachlan-Hache, L, Cushing, E., &Bivona, L. (2012). Student Learning Objectives as Measures of Educator Effectiveness, The Basics. (Available from American Institutes for Research, 1000 Thomas Jefferson Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 2007-3835)