

Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)

A Guide to Using SLOs as a Locally-Determined Measure of Student Growth



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Preface

Over the past decade, Ohio has made important education policy advances, with a focus on student learning and achievement, standards, and accountability. Ohio is serious about its commitment to quality schools and honors this commitment by providing Local Education Agencies (LEAs) a research-based, transparent, fair teacher evaluation system adaptable to the specific contexts of Ohio's LEAs. The Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) builds on what we know about the importance of ongoing assessment and feedback as powerful vehicles to support improved practice. It is anticipated that as LEAs design or revise their teacher evaluation system, the OTES will be used as a model. The OTES and all LEA models must comply with [Ohio Revised Code \(ORC\) 3319.111; 3319.112](#) to:

- Provide for multiple evaluation factors, including student academic growth, which shall account for fifty percent of each evaluation;
- Align with the standards for teachers adopted under section 3319.61 of the Revised Code;
- Require observation of the teacher being evaluated, including at least two formal observations by the evaluator of at least thirty minutes each and classroom walkthroughs;
- Assign a rating on each evaluation conducted in accordance with the following levels of performance: Accomplished, Proficient, Developing, or Ineffective.
- Require each teacher to be provided with a written report of the results of the teacher's evaluation;
- Implement a classroom-level, value-added program developed by a nonprofit organization as described in division (B) of section 3302.021 of ORC;
- Identify measures of student academic growth for grade levels and subjects for which the Value-Added progress dimension prescribed by section 3302.021 of the Revised Code does not apply;
- Provide for professional development to accelerate and continue teacher growth and provide support to poorly performing teachers;
- Provide for the allocation of financial resources to support professional development.

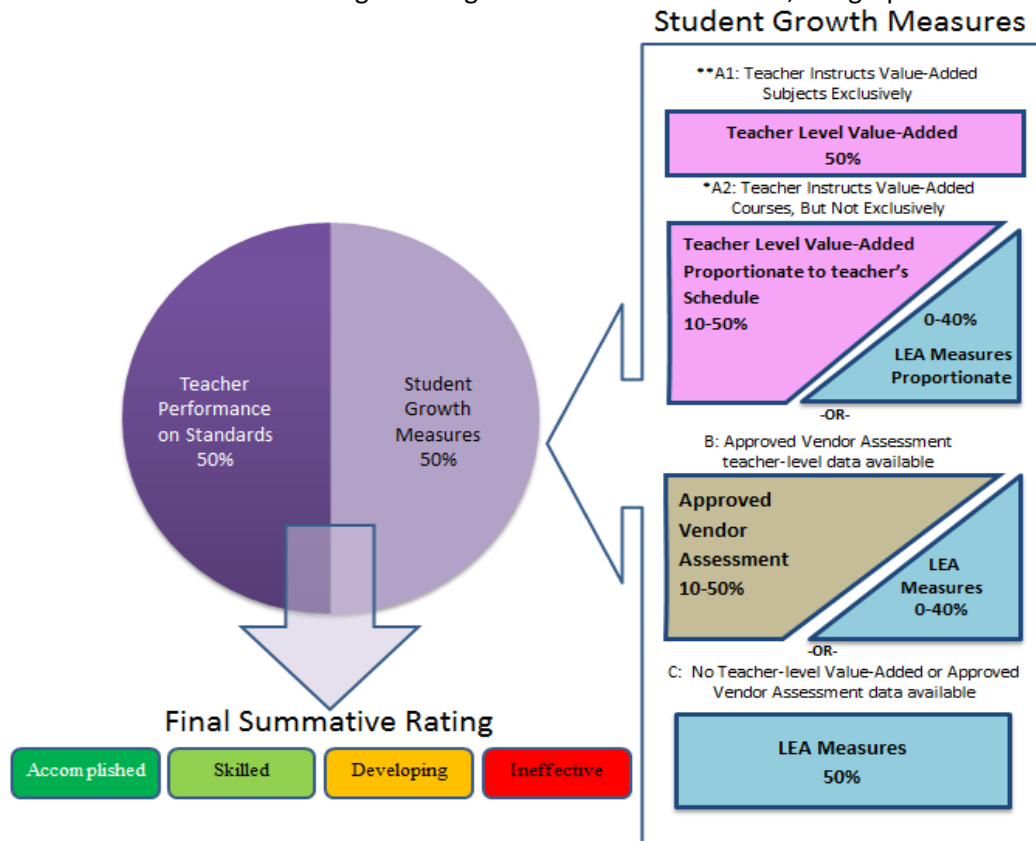
The OTES Overview

The OTES System is divided into two components: (1) Teacher Performance on Standards and (2) Student Growth Measures (SGM). Each component counts for 50 percent of the teacher’s overall evaluation score. When both components are combined, a summative performance rating of Accomplished, Proficient, Developing or Ineffective will be assigned to every teacher.

Under the Student Growth Measures, teachers are divided into three categories:

- Category A: Teachers for whom teacher-level Value-Added data is available
- Category B: Teachers for whom data from an assessment that is on the [ODE Vendor Approved List](#) is available
- Category C: Teachers for whom no teacher-level Value-Added or vendor approved assessment data is available

LEAs can choose to implement LEA measures for Category A and Category B teachers in accordance with the graphic below. If LEAs choose to implement multiple measures of student growth, they must allocate a specific percentage weight to the measures as shown in the graphic below. In addition to illustrating the weight bands available to LEAs, the graphic below illustrates how teacher evaluation ratings are developed.



*The student growth measure progress dimension shall be used in proportion to the part of a teacher’s schedule of courses or subjects for which the dimension is applicable.

**A1-If a teacher’s schedule is comprised only of courses or subjects for which the Value-Added progress dimension is applicable: Until June 30, 2014, the majority (>25%) of the student academic growth factor of the evaluation shall be based on the Value-Added progress dimension. On or after July 1, 2014, the entire student academic growth factor of the evaluation shall be based on the Value-Added progress dimension.

What is an SLO?

An 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 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 scores from previous years, results of pre-assessments), 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.*



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 have some flexibility in determining which teachers will use SLOs for the student growth measure; however, for those districts that have a pilot opportunity, ODE recommends that all teachers create at least one SLO to gain experience with the SLO process. In full implementation, teachers should create two to four SLOs per year representative of the teacher's schedule and student population.

- **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 recommends districts and SLO evaluators 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
4. Schedule mid-year check in meetings with teachers and teacher teams
5. Score and rate SLOs
6. Conduct a final meeting to discuss SLO scores and lessons learned
7. Input SLO scores into the electronic Teacher and Principal Evaluation System (eTPES)



Guiding Questions for LEA Building Level Committees

1. What categories of teachers will be creating SLOs?
2. How many SLOs are required? (ODE requires a minimum of 2 for teachers using SLOs.)
3. Who will review and approve SLOs? (ODE recommends the building team.)
4. What guidance and training will the LEA provide?

Setting SLOs: Steps for Teachers and Evaluators

ODE has identified five steps in the SLO development cycle. While local education agencies (LEAs) have flexibility to shape the SLO process to fit local contexts, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) recommends that teachers and SLO evaluators use the following steps to complete the SLO process.

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(s)

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

STEP 5: Monitor and prepare for SLO rating and discussion

STEP 1: Gather and review available data

Gather baseline and trend data. SLOs are based on a clear understanding of the student population under a teacher's charge. To begin the process, teachers should gather baseline data to better understand how prepared their students are for the standards addressed by the course. These data could include end-of-year data from the previous year, baseline data from district assessments, pretests, or student work samples. Once teachers have identified curricular priorities and gathered baseline data, they are ready to conduct a detailed analysis of student data.

Conduct an analysis of student data. This step helps the educator(s) determine where students will need to demonstrate the most growth. This process is similar to a gap analysis where the educator determines a plan for reducing the gap in a student's knowledge or skill. For this step, the teacher analyzes the baseline data for the most important content standards of the course. Based upon the data

analysis, the educator should include specific skills or knowledge the students are lacking within the SLO's overarching content for the course. To aid in this step, it may be helpful to organize your data into a chart like the one found in the *Sample Template for the Analysis of Student Data* in Appendix D.



Setting SLOs is an intensive process that requires teachers or teams of teachers to analyze data, review assessments, and set targets. This process requires time, ideally time set aside specifically for this work.

Throughout the process, teachers should refer to the *SLO Template Checklist* in Appendix B to ensure that all of the necessary information is included in each section of the SLO.

STEP 1: Gather and review available data

Identify the student population of focus for the SLO. In this step, teachers should outline the student population to which the SLO will apply. This step can take on many different forms. An important note: Teachers should try to cover as many students as possible in their SLO. The student population will be based largely on what courses the teacher teaches and the results of the data analysis.

1. **Course-level SLOs**—A teacher with three English I classes can write one SLO including all students enrolled in all three classes. Another teacher may have three prep periods (e.g., algebra 1, geometry, algebra 2), in which case, the teacher would develop a separate SLO for each course taught including all students enrolled in each course. Ultimately, the local SGM plan will determine the exact number of SLOs, within the required 2 to 4 per teacher, representative of the teacher’s schedule and student population.
2. **Tiered targets within a course-level SLO**—A teacher should consider developing tiered targets if the data analysis shows a wide range of skill and ability in student performance. If most of the class is deficient in a necessary skill, but a handful of students have already mastered the skill, a teacher might develop tiered targets for the students who are deficient in the skill and a separate tiered target for the students who have already mastered the skill.
3. **Targeted SLOs**—It is possible to write targeted SLOs after a course-level SLO is in place. Targeted SLOs are separate SLOs for subgroups of students or specific skills that students must achieve. In some cases, teachers will find it preferable to write separate SLOs that focus on specific content or specific groups of students who need additional attention. For example, 10 students in an environmental biology class might need specific support in using sound evidence to develop scientific explanations. The targeted SLO would target those 10 students as well as the specific skills they need to apply as a foundation for learning.

When completing this step, keep the following in mind:

- SLOs can apply to all students (course-level SLOs) or subgroups of students (targeted SLOs).
- Teachers should aim to include as many students as possible in the SLO and acknowledge in writing why any students are not included in the SLO. Students covered under a teacher’s SLO(s) must be proportional and representative of the teacher’s schedule. For example, if a science teacher teaches four sections of biology and two sections of earth science, two SLOs might cover the biology classes and one might apply to the earth science classes.
- In the rare case where a principal approves a student or subgroup omission, the teacher should note the rationale for the omission in the SLO student population field.

Student Population Guiding Questions:

1. Are all students enrolled in the course covered by the SLO?
2. Are there any contextual factors that may impact student growth?
3. Did the principal approve the exclusion of any subgroups?

Step 2: Determine the interval of instruction and identify content

Determine the interval of instruction. Also included in an SLO is the time period during which the educator expects growth to occur. The interval of instruction should be the length of the course (i.e., year long, semester long). For example, an elementary school mathematics class might meet every day, so the interval of instruction would be the duration of the academic year. The interval of instruction for a high school history class on a block schedule might be a trimester or semester. The interval of instruction should be an adequate time for the expected growth to occur.



Guiding Questions for Content and Standards

1. Are Common Core State Standards available for my content area?
2. What are the essential skills and content knowledge that students will need in order to be successful next year?
3. In which of the essential skills and content knowledge are the students struggling?
4. What are the specific academic concepts or skills that this SLO will focus upon?
5. Why is this skill or content knowledge important?

Determine the specific content and standards addressed by the SLO.

Based upon the data analysis, this section of the SLO should articulate the specific concepts or skills that students will gain during the course. The content or skill area should represent the essential learning of the course such as key skills or overarching content, and should be selected based upon the identified areas from the data analysis. The educator should also indicate the specific standard(s) that align with the SLO.

The educator should specify how the SLO will address applicable standards from the highest ranking of the following:

1. Common Core State Standards,
2. Ohio Content Standards, and
3. National standards put forth by education organizations.

STEP 3: Choose assessments and set the growth target(s)

The next step is to identify an appropriate assessment. This can be challenging, but it is one of the more important steps of the SLO process. ODE highly recommends that educators consult the *Guidance on Selecting Assessments* in Appendix C of this document and, if applicable, consult the district lists of acceptable assessments prior to and during this part of the process. ODE strongly recommends that districts not use assessments created by individual teachers. If a teacher must create an assessment that is unique to his or her classroom, ODE strongly recommends that the teacher develop the assessment with a school or district administrator with expertise in assessment, a special educator, an English language learner (ELL) specialist, and/or a content team member. At a minimum, the assessment should be reviewed at the district level by content experts such as grade-level or subject-level content experts. When choosing an appropriate assessment, the items on the test should cover all key subject and grade-level content standards.

Educators may compare their end-of-year data to baseline and trend data. Having a set of baseline and trend data will help develop a rich context for student growth that may produce higher quality targets than a simple pre-test could. Assessments do not need to be pencil-and-paper tests, but can be performance-based assessments as well. Educators are encouraged to select the assessment(s) that are most appropriate for measuring student growth in the subject area of the SLO.

Assessment options include:

- Performance-based assessments, such as presentations, projects, and tasks scored with a rubric;
- Portfolios of student work scored by an approved rubric;
- Results of subject- or grade-level specific district-created tests; and/or
- Vendor assessments not included on the ODE-approved vendor list.

When identifying assessments, educators should keep in mind that assessments must:

- Be aligned to national or state standards and to the SLO growth target (meaning that it measures the skills or content addressed by the SLO).
- Be reliable, meaning that the assessment produces accurate and consistent results.
- Be a valid measure, meaning that the assessment measures what it is designed to measure.
- Be realistic in terms of the time required for administration.

Assessment(s) Guiding Questions

1. Is this assessment the best way to measure student progress toward the objective?
2. Does the assessment allow all students to demonstrate developmentally appropriate growth?
3. Does the assessment follow state and district guidelines?
4. If planning to use multiple assessments to measure growth, how will the measures be combined?
5. How will you ensure that the assessments are graded in a fair and unbiased manner?
6. Will multiple teachers use the same assessments to ensure comparability and consistency?

STEP 3: Choose assessments and set the growth target(s)

When multiple educators adopt the same SLO, it is advisable that all educators adopt the same assessment measures to ensure that student progress is measured the same way and under the same testing conditions.

Develop the SLO growth target(s). Within the *SLO Template*, the educator should write a brief yet specific growth target for students that align with state or national standards, district priorities, and course objectives. These growth targets should include specific indicators of growth; such as percentages or questions answered correctly that demonstrate an increase in learning between two points in time. 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. This target should be rigorous, yet attainable, as determined by the baseline or pretest data. Below are examples of acceptable and unacceptable growth targets. The acceptable growth targets allow the teacher to demonstrate growth for *all* students while the unacceptable SLOs focus solely on student mastery.

SLO Growth Target Guiding Questions

1. How was baseline data used to inform the growth target?
2. Are tiered targets appropriate for the student population included in the SLO?
3. Are expectations ambitious yet attainable?

Acceptable SLO Growth Target		Unacceptable SLO Growth Target
All of my students will progress at least one fitness level on the FitnessGram during the fall semester.		80 percent of students will pass the end-of-course exam. (This is unacceptable because it does not show growth.)
Using the American Government pre-assessment, all students will meet their target score:		Students scoring 80 or lower on the pre-assessment will increase their scores by at least 10 points. Any students scoring 81 or higher on the pre-assessment will maintain their scores. (This is unacceptable for two reasons: (1) typically students scoring at 50 need to make greater gains than only 10 points to reach an acceptable level of growth; (2) teachers must aim to grow all students, so those students scoring high on the pre-assessment need to be challenged with a higher goal and likely an additional assessment/project to illustrate acceptable growth.)
Pre-assessment Baseline Score Range	Target Score on End-of-Year Portfolio	
20–30	70	
31–50	80	
51–70	90	
71–85	90 + score of 85 or higher on capstone project	
86–95	95 + score of 90 or higher on the capstone project	

STEP 3: Choose assessments and set the growth target(s)

Explain the rationale for the growth target. High-quality SLOs include strong justifications for why the growth target is appropriate and achievable for this group of students. The rationale should be a precise and concise statement that describes the student needs and refers to the evidence that informed the creation of targets. When applicable, rationales should also reference school and district goals or priorities.

Rationale for Growth Target Guiding Questions

1. How will this target address student needs?
2. Why is this target important?
3. What baseline data informed this target?
4. How does this target relate to school and district goals and priorities?
5. How will attainment of this target help the student learn necessary content for future grade levels?

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

SLO Review and Approval

Prepare to submit your SLO. Prior to submitting an SLO, the educator should do a final comparison with the *SLO Template Checklist* in Appendix B of this document. Once the educator has created his or her SLO, he or she should submit it for review by the school-building SLO team or the designated SLO approval person(s). Educators should expect to receive feedback on the rigor and completeness of the SLO from the review team by the end of October of the current school year for yearlong courses. *Timing will depend on the school calendar and the local SGM plan* (e.g., start of the school year, end of quarter, use of trimester schedule). If the SLO is not approved, the educator should have approximately 10 days to complete requested revisions and then resubmit the SLO.

Schedule the SLO conference. Once the SLO has been submitted for approval, the educator and evaluator(s) should plan to meet. In cases where a district team evaluates the SLO, the educator may meet with the whole-building SLO team or a representative of the team. Keep in mind that all SLOs must be finalized by November of that school year, and educators may need time to revise their SLOs before that deadline. Though the location of the conference can be determined based on the preferences of the evaluator(s) and educator, it may be advisable to meet in the teacher's classroom. This venue might make teachers feel more comfortable and also will allow them easy access to additional data or resources that might be needed during the conference.

Review guidance materials and the SLO. Teachers should submit SLO materials prior to the SLO conference. Materials may include the student needs assessment, baseline and trend data, and assessments used in the SLO. Ideally, evaluators will have access to and review the SLO to assure that all required elements are complete prior to the SLO conference. Evaluators should generate notes about the SLOs prior to the conference and include clarifying questions that will support a quality approval process.

Initiate building committee review discussions and approval. The building committee should be prepared to engage in a meaningful discussion with teachers on their SLOs if they have questions about the content or growth target. As the committees prepare for these discussions, it is important to note that all criteria identified in the *SLO Template Checklist* must be included in order to approve the SLO. Therefore, if there is a component on the checklist that is not addressed in the SLO, the committee or evaluator will have to address the component with the teacher(s).

Recommendations for the SLO Approval Process

ODE recommends that the SLO approval process should not be a solitary event but rather a discussion and collaborative effort between the teacher or team of teachers and the building committee.

STEP 5: Final Scoring of the SLO

SLO Final Scoring Overview

After the SLO is approved, the teacher is responsible for compiling the evidence for the final scoring process. The final scoring process must be completed by May 1 to ensure that the teacher evaluation is completed in accordance with the timeframes established by law. This section provides information on:

- Directions on the organization of evidence and information teachers and teacher-teams should compile at the end of the year;
- Teacher guidance on how to present the information to the evaluator(s);
- Protocols for the evaluator(s) for reviewing and scoring SLOs;
- Guidance for rating single SLOs.

Recommendations for Educators in Preparing for SLO Scoring

In preparation of the scoring of the SLO, the educator may want to complete the following steps to ensure an efficient use of time:

1. Include a copy of the committee approved *SLO Approval Checklist* from the beginning of the school year.
2. Transfer the baseline data, the established growth targets, and the post-assessment scores to the *SLO Scoring Template* to provide the evaluator / scoring committee with a quick reference to determine whether stated growth targets were met. If the educator is using tiered growth targets, they may want to sort the data based on those tiers.
3. Organize the evidence to support the attainment of the SLO into an easily recognized, readable format. Organizing the materials will aid the evaluator / scoring committee as they evaluate the success of the SLO at the end of the interval.

Organizational Tip

Arrange SLO Evidence in the following order:

1. Previously approved *SLO Template*
2. Completed *SLO Scoring Template*
3. Assessments used in the SLO process, including student work and other pertinent documents

Scoring the Individual SLO

SLO Scoring Process

The *SLO Scoring Template* is a document that can be used to assess whether or not SLO targets have been met when rating the individual SLO. There are several steps teachers must follow in order to arrive at a final determination.

Preparing for Scoring

Prior to the end-of-year review, teachers are responsible for collecting relevant information and compiling it in a useful way. For example, evaluators will have limited time, so having all student work or other documentation clearly organized and final student scores summarized (as noted below) will be valuable for saving time and reducing paperwork. Information that could be collected includes student performance data and the completed *SLO Scoring Template* document.

Complete the SLO Scoring Template

The *SLO Scoring Template* is a document that must be used to assess whether or not SLO targets have been met as well as the overall teacher rating for the SLO. There are several steps teachers must follow in order to arrive at a final calculation. The calculation and scoring must be completed prior to May 1 of each year. Ample time for evaluator / committee review must be given to ensure that the entire teacher evaluation process is complete by the May 1 deadline as defined in law.

- First, the teacher adds the name or identification number for each student into the worksheet. Additional rows may be added as needed.
- Then, the teacher enters each student's baseline score. This may be from a combination of data points and available information such as scores on the assessment administered at the beginning of the school year or from the previous year /class if available, or other measures that help to set the baseline of the student performance.
- Next, using their completed SLO template as a guide, the teacher enters each student's established growth target.
- The teacher enters the final performance data for each student.
- The teacher enters if each individual student exceeded/ met the growth target by answering yes or no.
- Once all the relevant information has been entered in the worksheet, attainment of the students' growth targets and overall teacher rating of student growth measures on this SLO will need to be computed.

The teacher is responsible for this portion of the SLO process.

Score Individual SLOs Using the SLO Scoring Matrix

The teacher must now use the *SLO Scoring Template* to determine the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the established growth targets. If the teacher used tiered targets as recommended by ODE, they can sort the students by the identified tiered targets and then sort again based on the difference of the target score and the baseline score from highest to lowest.

This matrix should be used in conjunction with the *SLO Scoring Template*. ODE developed the five-level rating for SLOs to align with the 5-levels of Value-Added scores.

SLO Scoring Matrix

Percentage of students that met or exceeded growth target	Descriptive rating	Numerical rating
90-100	Most Effective	5
80-89	Above Average	4
70-79	Average	3
60-69	Approaching Average	2
59 or less	Least Effective	1

The teacher is responsible for collecting the evidence, using the *SLO Scoring Matrix* to determine an SLO rating, and providing the scores to the reviewing body (principal or committee as determined at the local level).

The administrator, after reviewing the information provided by the teacher, enters the numerical rating for each SLO into eTPES.

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> in Appendix C of this document 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 for 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 sample SLOs featured on the ODE website highlight 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 district priorities.</p>

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 and common assessments 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>

Appendix A. Student Learning Objective (SLO) Template

*This template should be completed while referring to the **SLO Template Checklist**.*

Teacher Name: _____ Content Area and Course(s): _____ Grade Level(s): _____ Academic Year: _____

Please use the guidance provided in addition to this template to develop components of the Student Learning Objective and populate each component in the space below.

Baseline and Trend Data

What information is being used to inform the creation of the SLO and establish the amount of growth that should take place?

Student Population

Which students will be included in this SLO? Include course, grade level, and number of students.

Interval of Instruction

What is the duration of the course that the SLO will cover? Include beginning and end dates.

Standards and Content

What content will the SLO target? To what related standards is the SLO aligned?

Assessment(s)

What assessment(s) will be used to measure student growth for this SLO?

Growth Target(s)

Considering all available data and content requirements, what growth target(s) can students be expected to reach?

Rationale for Growth Target(s)

What is your rationale for setting the above target(s) for student growth within the interval of instruction?

Appendix B. Student Learning Objective (SLO) Template Checklist

This checklist should be used for both writing and approving SLOs. It should be made available to both teachers and evaluators for these purposes. For an SLO to be formally approved, ALL criteria must be met, and every box below will need a check mark completed by an SLO evaluator.

Baseline and Trend Data	Student Population	Interval of Instruction	Standards and Content	Assessment(s)	Growth Target(s)	Rationale for Growth Target(s)
<i>What information is being used to inform the creation of the SLO and establish the amount of growth that should take place within the time period?</i>	<i>Which students will be included in this SLO? Include course, grade level, and number of students.</i>	<i>What is the duration of the course that the SLO will cover? Include beginning and end dates.</i>	<i>What content will the SLO target? To what related standards is the SLO aligned?</i>	<i>What assessment(s) will be used to measure student growth for this SLO?</i>	<i>Considering all available data and content requirements, what growth target(s) can students be expected to reach?</i>	<i>What is your rationale for setting the target(s) for student growth within the interval of instruction?</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Identifies sources of information about students (e.g., test scores from prior years, results of preassessments) <input type="checkbox"/> Draws upon trend data, if available <input type="checkbox"/> Summarizes the teacher's analysis of the baseline data by identifying student strengths and weaknesses	<input type="checkbox"/> Includes all students in the class covered by the SLO <input type="checkbox"/> Describes the student population and considers any contextual factors that may impact student growth <input type="checkbox"/> Does not exclude subgroups of students that may have difficulty meeting growth targets	<input type="checkbox"/> Matches the length of the course (e.g., quarter, semester, year)	<input type="checkbox"/> Specifies how the SLO will address applicable standards from the highest ranking of the following: (1) Common Core State Standards, (2) Ohio Academic Content Standards, or (3) national standards put forth by education organizations <input type="checkbox"/> Represents the big ideas or domains of the content taught during the interval of instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Identifies core knowledge and skills students are expected to attain as required by the applicable standards (if the SLO is targeted)	<input type="checkbox"/> Identifies assessments that have been reviewed by grade-level and content-level district experts to effectively measure course content and reliably measure student learning as intended <input type="checkbox"/> Selects measures with sufficient "stretch" so that all students may demonstrate learning, or identifies supplemental assessments to cover all ability levels in the course <input type="checkbox"/> Provides a plan for combining assessments if multiple summative assessments are used <input type="checkbox"/> Follows the guidelines for appropriate assessments	<input type="checkbox"/> Ensures all students in the course have a growth target <input type="checkbox"/> Uses baseline or pretest data to determine appropriate growth <input type="checkbox"/> Sets developmentally appropriate targets <input type="checkbox"/> Creates tiered targets when appropriate so that all students may demonstrate growth <input type="checkbox"/> Sets ambitious yet attainable targets	<input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates teacher knowledge of students and content <input type="checkbox"/> Explains why target is appropriate for the population <input type="checkbox"/> Addresses observed student needs <input type="checkbox"/> Uses data to identify student needs and determine appropriate growth targets <input type="checkbox"/> Explains how targets align with broader school and district goals <input type="checkbox"/> Sets rigorous expectations for students and teacher(s)

Appendix C. Guidance on Selecting Assessments for SLOs

Student Learning Objectives



2013

Guidance on Selecting Assessments

07/15/2013

Selecting and approving assessments can be one of the most challenging and important steps of the SLO process. These measures enable teachers and teacher teams to determine growth toward and attainment of the SLO. *Before selecting assessments, local education agencies (LEAs) should note that the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) strongly recommends that districts do not allow assessments created by one teacher for use in his or her classroom for an SLO.* In the rare case where a teacher must create an assessment that is unique to his or her classroom, *ODE strongly recommends that the teacher develop the assessment in consultation with a school or district administrator with expertise in assessments, a special educator, an English language learner (ELL) specialist, and/or a content team member.*

Criteria for Selecting Assessments

When selecting assessments, teachers or teacher teams need to consider two major questions. This section provides guidance around each of these questions.

1. Is the assessment aligned to both my students' learning objective and to the appropriate grade- or content-specific standards?

The assessment should cover the key subject and grade-level content standards and curriculum that will be taught during the interval of instruction. When examining assessments for alignment, teachers and teacher teams should look for the following:

- Items on the test should cover all key subject/grade-level content standards.
- No items on the test should cover standards that the course does not address.
- Where possible, the number of test items should mirror the distribution of teaching time devoted to concepts or the curriculum focus. For example, if a foreign language teacher devotes almost equal amounts of time to developing students' reading comprehension, listening comprehension, oral communication, and written communication skills, he or she should not use a test that devotes 90 percent of the test to reading comprehension. Instead, the distribution of the test should mirror instruction, meaning that about a quarter of the test should focus on each of the four skills listed above.

Resources for Creating and Evaluating Assessments

The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing developed jointly by the American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education

Educative Assessment: Designing Assessments to Inform and Improve Student Performance by Grant P. Wiggins

[*Guidance for Developing and Selecting Assessments of Student Growth for Use in Teacher Evaluation Systems*](#) by Joan L. Herman, Margaret Heritage, and Pete Goldschmidt

Teacher-Made Assessments: How to Connect Curriculum, Instruction, and Student Learning by Christopher R. Gareis and Leslie W. Grant

Creating Effective Classroom Assessments, a [webinar](#) presented by Stuart R. Kahl, Deborah Farrington, and Ellen Vorenkamp

- The items or tasks should match the full range of cognitive thinking required during the course. For example, if the main foci of the mathematics content standards are solving word problems and explaining reasoning, some questions or items on an assessment should require students to solve word problems and explain how they arrived at their answers.

The assessment should require students to engage in higher-order thinking where appropriate. These items or tasks may require students to use reasoning, provide evidence, make connections between subjects or topics, critique, or analyze.

Examples of assessment alignment with SLOs and the appropriate grade- or content-specific standards:

- A. An AP Biology teacher is evaluating available assessments to use for his SLO, which must align with the content of the AP course. He locates a district-created assessment geared toward first-year college students that cover both the major topics and the important skills associated with the course. The assessment includes 30 questions on organisms and populations, 14 questions on molecules and cells, and 16 questions on heredity and evolution.

The assessment sufficiently aligns with the content of the course. Because the AP course is designed to be the equivalent of a college introductory biology course, a test written to assess first-year college students would be appropriate. In addition, the distribution of questions nearly follows the AP Biology Development Committee's recommendations that teachers spend 50 percent of the time teaching organisms and populations, 25 percent teaching molecules and cells, and 25 percent studying heredity and evolution. Finally, the types of items mirror the AP Biology test, not just the content.

Examples of assessment alignment with student learning objectives and the appropriate grade- or content-specific standards:

- B. A second-grade mathematics teacher team is evaluating a commercially available end-of-course assessment. Looking at the items on the test, the team compares the foci of the test with the Common Core State Standards for Grade 2.

Foci of the Test	Common Core State Standards for Grade 2
Operations and Algebraic Thinking	Operations and Algebraic Thinking
Number and Operations in Base Ten	Number and Operations in Base Ten
Fractions	Measurement and Data
Geometry	Geometry
Statistics	
Probability	

The chart above indicates a discrepancy between the content of the test and the content of state standards. The test covers more topics than are taught with the Common Core and does not include measurement and data. An item analysis would be necessary to make a final determination, but given that the Common Core focuses on fewer topics in greater detail than may be on the test, a different assessment would be more appropriate.

- C. The fifth grade science curriculum contains three curricular units: cycles and patterns in the solar system; light, sound, and motion; and interactions within ecosystems. However, through these curricular units, students are expected to develop scientific inquiry skills in accordance with state standards. When the teacher team evaluates various available assessments to use with their SLOs, it finds that most of the assessments are multiple-choice questions that require basic recall, like “Which of the following is not a characteristic of Venus?”

The teacher team instead creates its own assessment that integrates the content of the course with scientific processes and inquiry. In addition to having a few multiple-choice questions, the assessment requires students to provide written explanations for scientific phenomena, analyze and interpret data relevant to the course content, and describe how they would construct a basic scientific investigation. The resultant assessment is rigorous and is better aligned to the expectations of the state content standards.

Examples of assessment alignment with student learning objectives and the appropriate grade- or content-specific standards:

- D. A seventh-grade social studies curriculum covers relevant world developments from 750 B.C. to 1600 A.D. A teacher examines an available district-created assessment for potential use with SLOs. The assessment features 40 questions, 20 of which are focused on Ancient Greece and 20 of which are focused on Ancient Rome.

The assessment mentioned above might be a district-created unit test that focuses on development in Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome. It does not adequately cover the breadth of the course, which covers world history up through global exploration. In order for the assessment to be aligned to the course, the assessment would have to measure student growth in understanding of key developments in a variety of cultures—not just Ancient Rome and Greece—over a larger period of time.

2. Does the assessment allow high- and low-achieving students to adequately demonstrate their knowledge? In other words, does the assessment have enough stretch?

All students should be able to demonstrate developmentally appropriate progress on the assessment(s) used with an SLO. In order for the assessment to work for most or all students, the assessment must have sufficient “stretch,” meaning that it contains questions that are of varying difficulty and covers some basic, low-level and advanced knowledge or skills. Teachers may not be able to make an informed judgment about the needed stretch of the assessment until they have analyzed the baseline or pre-assessment performance of students. When evaluating the assessment for sufficient stretch, teachers and teacher teams should keep their lowest performing and highest performing students in mind. Based upon students’ recent performance, will they be able to demonstrate growth on this assessment?

- All students should be able to demonstrate growth on the assessment.
- The test includes items that cover basic knowledge and skills and appropriate, content-relevant items that will challenge the highest performing students.

Examples of assessment that allow high- and low-achieving students to adequately demonstrate their knowledge:

- A. A teacher examines a district-created assessment of fourth grade reading. The assessment covers all reading standards for informational text and literature for fourth grade and often includes questions that are slightly less or more challenging than grade-level expectations. In addition, questions throughout the assessment cover the third grade and fifth grade expectations of the same standard. For example, three assessment tasks are aligned with fourth grade standards and require students to compare and contrast a firsthand and secondhand account of the same event and describe the differences in the two accounts in terms of focus and information. In addition, one question asks students to distinguish their own point of view from that of an author (a third grade expectation), and one task asks students to analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic and note differences in points of view (a fifth grade expectation).

Given that the teacher has one student who began the year reading below grade level and three students who were reading above grade level, this assessment has sufficient stretch.

- B. A high school band teacher distributed a district-created high school I music pre-assessment at the beginning of the year to his high school I class. Looking at the results, the teacher was surprised to see that a third of his students scored 85 percent or higher on the pre-assessment. The teacher is scheduled to distribute a post-assessment to students at the end of the year that contains questions of the same difficulty level.

Because so many students demonstrated mastery of course content at the beginning of the year, the high school I music posttest currently planned does not have enough stretch. In order to ensure that all students will be able to demonstrate developmentally appropriate growth, the teacher might need to supplement the high school I post-assessment with more challenging questions or tasks.

3. Is the assessment valid and reliable?

The assessment should be both valid and reliable. In other words, the assessment should measure accurately what it says it measures and should produce consistent results (that is, it should be administered in such a way that students with the same skills should obtain similar scores). When evaluating assessments for validity and reliability, teachers and teacher teams should consider the following:

- Unless the assessment aims to test reading skills, a test should not include overly complex vocabulary. For example, a mathematics test that includes word problems with complex names and language may be assessing reading skills rather than mathematical reasoning.

- Items or tasks should be written clearly and concisely. Performance-based assessments should contain clear directions that are easily understood.
- Clear scoring rubrics or guidance should be included for performance-based items.
- The teacher or teacher team should determine how the assessment will be administered consistently across classes. Testing conditions, instructions, and test items (if using different forms of a test across classes) should be similar across classes.

Examples of ensuring assessments are valid and reliable:

- A. The teacher evaluates a ninth grade pre-assessment and post-assessment in social studies. The tests are aligned with the content standards, contain sufficient stretch, and are sufficiently rigorous. However, the teacher notices that most of the questions are written at a 12th-grade reading level.

This test raises validity issues. If students do better on the post-assessment, would it be because their knowledge of social studies and reasoning skills has improved, or because their reading comprehension has improved? To create a more valid assessment, the teacher might convene a teacher team to create a new test that uses appropriate vocabulary and will be readable to all students.

- B. A team of band teachers in the district create a performance assessment for students. In addition to developing the tasks together, the teachers specify a set of directions and testing conditions that each teacher will follow. For example, each student will be asked to perform a short piece of music during their small-group lessons. All teachers will assess the students using the same band rubric. Prior to grading, teachers will practice using the rubric and make sure that they are all grading performances consistently.

By creating standard assessment procedures, the teacher team is increasing the reliability of the assessment. These procedures will help ensure that one student's results are not more valid than another student's. In other words, if Susie takes the test during a teacher's period 1 class and then again during the teacher's period 6 class, her results should be similar. Again, testing conditions, instructions, and test items (if using different forms of a test across classes) should be similar across classes.

Types of Assessments

The list below ranks assessment types based upon the likelihood that the assessments will be aligned to standards, rigorous, valid, and reliable.

1. **State assessment items in proportion to the content specified in the SLO**—These assessment item banks are provided by the state and include items from past Ohio Achievement Assessments and Ohio Graduation Tests. Note: Teachers instructing a course with a Value-Added measure should focus their SLOs on other courses that do not have a growth measure in place so long as the district plan permits LEA measures in addition to Value-Added data.
2. **Commercially available assessments**—Some commercially available assessments have been carefully created and reviewed by assessment and education experts. However, these assessments do not always align with state content standards. Teachers may use these measures for their SLOs, but ODE recommends that teachers review these assessments for alignment first.
3. **District or team-created assessments**—District-created or team-created assessments are appropriate for use with SLOs, provided they meet the criteria for selecting assessments. Wherever possible, the same assessments should be administered across classrooms and across the district to increase comparability across classrooms. ODE also recommends that teams harness the expertise of district or school administrators with expertise in assessments, content area specialists, special educators and ELL specialists when developing assessments.
4. **Teacher-created assessments**—ODE strongly recommends that districts not allow assessments created by one teacher for use in his or her classroom for an SLO. In the rare case where a teacher must create an assessment that is unique to his or her classroom, ODE strongly recommends that the teacher develop the assessment in consultation with a school or district administrator with expertise in assessments, a special educator, an ELL specialist and/or a content team member. Individual teachers should not create assessments *for this purpose*.

Frequently Asked Questions Related to Assessments

1. *Is a teacher-created assessment appropriate for an SLO?*

If no other assessments are available, ODE recommends that assessments be created in teacher or district teams following this guidance and the valuable guidance in other assessment literacy resources. Whenever possible, individual teachers should not create assessments.

2. *Why is baseline data important?*

Baseline data is an integral part of the SLO process. In order to demonstrate growth, teachers have to have information about their students' starting points. Teachers should consider using the following sources of information as baseline data:

- Results from a pre-assessment that is similar to the end-of-year assessment.
- Results from last year's end-of-course exams in the same subject.
- Data from a portfolio of student work from the prior year in the same subject.
- Results of the first unit test and other student work samples from the beginning of the year.
- Data on performance in a similar subject, if the subject is completely new to students (i.e., the class is a first-year foreign language class or an introduction to physics).

3. *I have students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and 504 plans. Am I allowed to provide them with the testing accommodations and modifications articulated in their plans?*

When possible, districts should follow the same guidelines for statewide testing when administering SLO assessments. Ohio does not allow modifications for statewide testing but rather accommodations that do not change what is being assessed/measured (e.g., extended time, directions read) are permitted.

Checklist for Selecting Appropriate Assessments

This checklist should be completed prior to SLO approval to ensure that the assessment chosen meets the basic requirements.

Alignment to Standards:			
<i>Is the Learning Objective clearly reflected in the assessment measure?</i>			
Yes	Somewhat	No	
			All items in the assessment align to the standard(s) addressed in the SLO.
			The assessment measure addresses the full range of topics and skills included in the SLO.
			The focus of the assessment mirrors the focus of the curriculum and standards.
			The items or task match the full range of cognitive thinking required during the course.
			The assessment requires students to engage in higher order thinking where appropriate.
Comments:			
Stretch:			
<i>Will all students be able to demonstrate growth on this assessment?</i>			
Yes	Somewhat	No	
			The test includes items that cover basic, low-level knowledge and skills; prerequisite knowledge when appropriate; and content-relevant items that will challenge the highest performing students.
			Test items cover knowledge and skills that will be of value beyond the school year.
Comments:			
Validity and Reliability:			
<i>Is the assessment measure a valid and reliable tool for the intended purpose?</i>			
Yes	Somewhat	No	
			The assessment does not include overly complex vocabulary.
			Items or tasks are written clearly and concisely.
			Clear scoring rubrics or guidance exists for open-ended questions or performance-based assessments.
			The teacher has a plan for administering assessments consistently across classes.
Comments:			

Appendix D. Sample Template for the Analysis of Student Data

This document is intended to help teachers review their student baseline data and to identify trends in student performance prior to writing their SLO(s). Teachers should identify the content standards of the course and then match any relevant assessment or baseline data available that demonstrates students' background knowledge and skill set related to each standard. Based upon the evidence from baseline data, teachers can use this tool to identify student strengths and weaknesses and use the data to improve the creation of growth targets.

Teacher: _____

Grade/Subject: _____

Standards Used: _____

School/District Priorities: _____

Content Standard(s) (The actual number of the standard and/or the expectation/topic of that standard)	Assessment or Baseline Data (Includes name of assessment, if it is a state assessment or commercially available assessment, and a description of the assessment)	Evidence (Summary of the assessment results including the range of scores, percentage of students that answered questions correctly, etc.)	Subgroups to Note (Note performances of groups of students, either groups of students that performed lower than others on a particular skill or a subgroup that scored exceptionally well)

Content Standard(s) (The actual number of the standard and/or the expectation/topic of that standard)	Assessment or Baseline Data (Includes name of assessment, if it is a state assessment or commercially available assessment, and a description of the assessment)	Evidence (Summary of the assessment results including the range of scores, percentage of students that answered questions correctly, etc.)	Subgroups to Note (Note performances of groups of students, either groups of students that performed lower than others on a particular skill or a subgroup that scored exceptionally well)