

## What is an SLO?

A student learning objective (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 a subset of students. SLOs are focused on the most valuable learning that takes place in a course. They are specific and measurable goals that are based on student data and aligned to curriculum standards.

## Who should use SLOs?

Teachers of any grade and subject who seek to measure the academic growth of their students might benefit from the use of SLOs.

## Why use SLOs?

Education legislation in Michigan requires that the student growth and assessment component of a teacher's evaluation consist of the state student growth and assessment measurement standards and a local student growth assessment. SLOs are one way to measure the academic growth of students.

## How are SLOs being used and implemented?

States and districts across the country currently use SLOs as one measure in their educator evaluation system because of the strengths of the SLO process. A review of publicly available documents found that 35 states have policies or recommendations related to the use of SLOs in their evaluation systems.

## What are potential strengths of the SLO process?

Some of the reasons the SLO process is used so widely are because SLOs are:

- **Versatile.** SLOs can be used to measure student growth for all teachers, not just those teachers in tested grades and subjects.
- **Teacher driven.** The use of SLOs allows teachers to set goals for their students, thus playing a critical role in their own evaluations.
- **Adaptable.** As schools implement new standards and curriculum, SLOs can still be used to measure student learning.

## What does research say about SLOs?

Early research on the SLO process is limited, but some studies show promise. In one study, teachers reported that the SLO goal-setting process helped them become more focused on student achievement and data use. As a result, the teachers employed more evidence-based practices (Community Training and Assistance Center, 2013). In two recent evaluations of

implementation, teachers reported that the SLO process provided them with the opportunity for data use; they reported that the SLO process was an empowering aspect of their evaluations and they engaged in their evaluations more actively after SLO implementation (Donaldson, 2012; The New Teacher Project, 2012). Finally, positive correlations have been found between the quality of SLOs and student achievement.

### **How will MDE support SLO implementation?**

Although the use of SLOs as a measure of student growth is not required, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has consulted with other states and districts to gain useful information about SLO implementation. As such, MDE will provide documents, such as an SLO checklist, SLO template, and a decision-making guide, that can be used to help implement SLOs at the local level.

### **How does SLO implementation flow with the school improvement process?**

Similar to the school improvement process, the SLO process follows a cycle of data analysis, goal setting, goal refinement, and evaluation. Although the school improvement process focuses on the goal attainment of the entire school, SLOs are specific to the content a teacher is responsible for teaching. In this way, SLOs can serve as an extension of the school improvement process.

### **Who can I contact at MDE to learn more about SLO implementation?**

For more information about the use of SLOs in Michigan, please contact Sam Sinicropi at [SinicropiS@Michigan.gov](mailto:SinicropiS@Michigan.gov).

### **What online resources might be useful in my search for more information about SLOs?**

Although the following list is not exhaustive, the websites can provide information about the use of SLOs in states and districts around the country.

**Center on Great Teachers and Leaders:** <http://www.gtlcenter.org/learning-hub/student-learning-objectives>

**Center for Assessment SLO Toolkit:** <http://www.nciea.org/slo-toolkit/>

**Ohio Department of Education:** <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Teaching/Educator-Evaluation-System/Ohio-s-Teacher-Evaluation-System/Student-Growth-Measures/Student-Learning-Objective-Examples/Student-Learning-Objectives-FAQs>

**District of Columbia Public Schools:** <http://osse.dc.gov/service/student-learning-objectives-slos>

**EngageNY:** <https://www.engageny.org/resource/student-learning-objectives>

**Reform Support Network:** <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/implementation-support-unit/tech-assist/targeting-growth.pdf>