

Student Learning Objectives (SLO) Framework

Introduction

In spring 2013 and spring 2014, teacher and administrator representatives from MSFE districts met to develop a set of recommendations and guidelines for implementing student learning objectives (SLOs). This document summarizes MSFE requirements and district decisions related to SLOs. This document is not intended to supplant a guidebook, which would be a more user-friendly and teacher-oriented step-by-step guide through the SLO process. Instead, this document distinguishes between MSFE requirements and district decisions.

This framework is divided into the following sections.

- Developing the SLO
- Approving the SLO
- Monitoring progress
- Scoring the SLO

Developing the SLO

MSFE Requirements

- At the beginning of the course, each teacher, as defined by state regulations¹ and regardless of full-time equivalency, develops the SLO.
- In 2014–15, each teacher in TIF 4 districts must write two SLOs. The first SLO must be an individual SLO. The second SLO can be a team SLO, a targeted SLO, or a second individual SLO (see District Decisions below).
- In 2014-15, each teacher in TIF 3 districts must write at least one SLO. At least one SLO should be an individual SLO.
- At least one SLO must include all students in all sections of the identified cours(es) for which the teacher(s) in the SLO is(are) a teacher of record
- Official rosters must accompany SLO submissions (when applicable)

¹ The proposed Chapter 180 of 05-071 defines “teacher” as “a person who provides classroom instruction to students in a general education, special education, or career and technical education program. It does not include adult education instructors or persons defined as “educational specialists” in State Board of Education Rule Chapter 115, section 2.20.”

- Each SLO should be course-long barring extenuating circumstances
- Generally, teachers should prioritize core classes (mathematics, reading/English language arts, science, and social studies) over noncore or elective classes.
- Each district should use the SLO template (which can be modified slightly based on needs.) The components of the SLO are highlighted in the SLO template:
 - Teacher demographics
 - Student demographics
 - Needs assessment
 - Content standards
 - Summative assessment
 - Growth targets
 - Instructional strategies and progress monitoring plan
 - Requested supports (optional)
 - Collaboration (optional)
- In order to determine the amount of student growth that students demonstrate, the SLO must include a preassessment, as stipulated in proposed Maine state regulations. The preassessment may be administered in the prior year (e.g., an end-of-course examination given in June may serve as a preassessment for the course the following year), but in most cases teachers administer a preassessment at the beginning of the year prior to SLO submission.
- Assessments that are teacher-created must be attached to the SLO when it is submitted for approval.
- The content standards identified in the SLO Template must align to the assessment, and visa versa.

MSFE Guidelines and Recommendations

- It is strongly recommended that teachers in TIF 3 districts write two SLOs in 2014-15.
- In some courses and subjects, teachers may need to create an appropriate preassessment and should follow the guidelines for assessments during assessment writing.
- It is strongly recommended that all assessments be approved *prior to* administration of the preassessment and the final approval of the completed SLO Template.
- The following list of guidelines applies to teacher-created assessments. However, exceptions may be made for districts may use their discretion to allow the use of standardized assessments that do not meet these criteria. For example, districts may allow kindergarten teachers or first grade teachers to use an assessment that does not include higher-order thinking questions if the focus of the SLO is a basic skill. Districts may adopt additional assessment guidelines.
 - Covers all standards identified in the Standards and Content component of the template.

- Measures individual student performance.
- Accommodates students' IEPs, 504 plans, or ELL status.
- Provides all students an opportunity to adequately demonstrate their knowledge.
- Allows all students to demonstrate growth.
- Contains a variety of question levels.
- Is administered similarly across classes within a district and, if applicable, similarly to the preassessment.
- Is a valid assessment already used in the classroom or has been created through collaboration, whenever possible.
- Is free of bias, avoids unnecessarily complex language, and is administered fairly and consistently to all students.
- Rubrics should accompany performance assessments. These rubrics should
 - Include a minimum proficiency-level scale of 1 to 4
 - Recommended scale: 4=exceeds proficiency, 3=proficient, 2=partially proficient, 1=needs improvement)
 - Contain specific, clear, and concise descriptions of each proficiency level
 - Contain positive, learner-appropriate language
- The MFSE Workgroup recommends that districts adopt the following requirements related to the assessment(s) used for the purposes of the SLO.
 - Tests may be administered at most twice per year (once as a preassessment and once as a postassessment).
 - Rubrics may be used instructionally throughout the year unless they are content-specific.
 - Teachers may use questions similar to assessment questions during instruction, but exact test questions may only be used during testing.
 - Students may not grade assessments.
 - Teachers may complete answer documents for students only when this accommodation is listed on the student's IEP.
 - Performance assessments should be recorded (audio or video as appropriate) whenever possible.
 - An official class roster must accompany all test scores.
 - Tests should be kept for at least one full year.

District Decisions

- Districts can decide to prohibit, permit, or require that the second SLO be one of the following types of SLOs:
 - Team SLO with shared accountability – A team of teachers writes an SLO together. All teachers are accountable for all students in the SLO. A team SLO

with shared accountability can also be a schoolwide SLO. **Note: This SLO cannot account for more than 25 percent of the student growth portion of the evaluation and teachers must agree to the inclusion of the measure.**

- Team SLO with individual accountability – A team of teachers writes part or all of an SLO together, but each teacher is only held accountable for his or her students.
 - Individual SLO – A teacher writes an SLO and is accountable for his or her students.
 - Targeted SLO – The teacher writes an SLO focused on a subgroup of students with a particular need. The teacher is held accountable for the performance of that subgroup of students.
- Districts and schools may specify the courses for which teachers should write SLOs.
 - Districts may provide additional guidance on which assessments are appropriate for use in SLOs.
 - Districts are encouraged to create menus of pre-approved assessments for teachers to select from.
 - Districts may set additional guidelines or requirements related to growth targets, such as formatting or minimum standards
 - Districts will determine what documentation, if any, teachers should include with the SLO when they submit it for approval. **It is strongly recommended that all SLOs be stored in an electronic system such as RANDA.**

Approving the SLO

MSFE Requirements

- The SLO must meet the criteria listed in the SLO approval checklist in order to be approved.
- District-determined administrators or administrator teams review and approve SLOs.

District Decisions

- Districts need to determine who will review and approve SLOs.

Monitoring Progress

MSFE Requirements

- If a teacher changes the SLO after approval due to unique circumstances, she or he may do so at or before the middle of the interval of instruction. The teacher must present evidence to the administrator that justifies a change to the SLO. The administrator and district determine whether to accept the teacher's proposed revisions to the SLO.

District Decisions

- Districts have the option of requiring or recommending that teachers meet with their administrator in the middle of the interval of instruction.
- Districts that decide to require or recommend a meeting between the teacher and administrator at the middle of the interval of instruction may want to consider crafting guidance for what the conversation should sound like and how discussion of the SLO should integrate with discussion of other aspects of the teacher evaluation. For an example, see Connecticut’s *Mid-Year Conference January/February: Guidance for Evaluators and Teachers*, which can be found at http://www.connecticutseed.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Mid-Year_Conference_Discussion_Guide_for_Evaluators_of_Teachers.pdf.
- Districts have discretion to determine whether a teacher may or may not revise growth targets. Table 2 provides a list of circumstances that may warrant a revision to the SLO and identifies the components affected by the revision. Districts may use their discretion to consider other circumstances not listed here.

Table 2. When SLO Revisions Are Permitted After Approval

Circumstance	Components Affected
Change in teaching assignment	Teacher demographics Student demographics Content standards Summative assessment Growth targets Instructional strategies and progress monitoring plan Request supports (optional) Collaboration (optional)
Change in student population	Teacher demographics Student demographics Content standards Summative assessment Growth targets Instructional strategies and progress monitoring plan Request supports (optional) Collaboration (optional)
Extended leave	Growth targets
Natural disaster	Growth targets
Extensive snow days	Growth targets

Rating the SLO

MSFE Requirements

- The SLO rating is based on the percentage of students who met their growth targets.
- A particular student's results may be included in the calculation of the SLO rating if one of the two following conditions are met:
 - The teacher is a teacher of record for that student, meaning that
 - The student was enrolled in a course or other learning experience taught by that teacher
 - The student was present and was subject to instruction by that teacher at least 80% of the scheduled instructional time for that course or learning experience with that teacher
 - The student took both the pre-test and the post-test designed to measure achievement in that course or learning experience.
 - The student is included on a team SLO with shared accountability, which has been agreed to by the teacher pursuant to the process set by the district.
- As stated above, state regulations stipulate that students can be included in student growth measures only if they are present for 80 percent or more of the instruction that occurs between the preassessment and postassessment. Students who do not meet this criterion **must** be excluded from the SLO scoring, including students who joined the course late and were not present for 80 percent of the interval of instruction. The teacher's attendance records should be used to calculate the percentage of absences in order to take into account tardies, in school suspensions, etc.
- In some circumstances students may be excluded for extenuating circumstances that may have affected their ability to demonstrate progress. The allowable reasons for exemption are
 - The student experienced a significant disruption in his or her education. Circumstances include but are not limited to homelessness, extended illness, change in foster care, natural disaster, and death in the family.
 - The student is in his or her first year of English as a second language (ESL) status.
- During the SLO scoring conversation, the teacher and administrator or administrator team identifies which, if any, students should be excluded from SLO scoring because of extenuating circumstances. The administrator or administrator team has the discretion and responsibility for approving all exemptions.
- The administrator determines the SLO score on the basis of the percentage of students, rounded to the nearest whole number, who met their growth targets. Table 4 below provides the percentage ranges that correspond with each final SLO score.

Table 4. SLO Scoring Lookup Table

Percentage Ranges of Students Who Met Their Growth Targets	SLO Score
85–100%	4

71–84%	3
41–70%	2
0–40%	1

District Decisions

- To help ensure consistency across teachers, districts may want to consider adopting a standard SLO rating template to use across the district.
- The exact weighting of the SLO will vary by district and cohort.

Additional Questions to Guide District Decision Making

Each district will need to make some decisions about the SLO process. This list provides a basic starting point for districts to have further conversations on how it will implement and manage the SLO process.

MSFE recommends that each district convene a district SLO team or steering committee comprised of multiple stakeholders. Stakeholders to consider inviting to join the group include professional development coordinators, human resource specialists, teachers, principals, and other critical stakeholders like union representatives. Leaders from the MFSE SLO Workgroup may be helpful in facilitating meetings and supporting decisionmaking because they have the foundation of the SLO workgroup to rely upon.

Overall Management and Oversight

1. What is the district's timeline for SLO implementation?
 - SLO training dates
 - Deadline for assessment approval
 - Preassessment administration window(s)
 - Deadline for submitting the SLO
 - Deadline by which all SLOs must be approved
 - Last date to revise the SLO (This date should be the middle of the school year for yearlong courses and the middle of the school course for semester courses.)
 - Postassessment administration window(s)
 - Deadline to have all SLO scores submitted to the district
2. If using team SLOs, how will the district or school seek approval of the use of collective measures?
3. How will the district ensure comparability in the rigor of SLOs across teachers?
 - Will the district conduct audits of SLOs?
 - Will district staff review SLOs?
4. How will the district monitor the SLO process?
 - Will the district provide a technology solution to house SLOs?
 - Will the district monitor adherence to timelines?
 - Who at the district level will be responsible for monitoring SLO implementation at the school level?

Developing the SLO

1. Will the district include the optional components (requested supports and collaboration) in its template?

2. Will the district customize the lists included in the student demographics and needs assessment components of the SLO template?
3. What guidelines or requirements, if any, will the district set related to a second SLO? What type(s) of SLO will be allowed, recommended, or required?
4. If team SLOs will be used, what guidance or requirements will the district provide on who should be on a team?
5. Will the district specify for which course(s) teachers should write their SLOs?
6. How will the district support development of SLOs? (allocating time for teachers to conduct parts of the process in teams, providing resources, etc.)
7. Will the district create a menu of preapproved assessments? How will this list be shared with teachers?
8. What guidance will the district provide on assessments?
9. How will the district ensure that assessments are rigorous and meet minimum quality standards?
10. Will the district require teachers to submit their assessment for approval prior to submitting the SLO?
11. What requirements, if any, will the district set related to growth targets?
12. How will the district support development of preassessments and summative assessments for use in all grades and subjects?
13. What requirements will the district set on test fidelity and verifiability?
14. Is there a preferred growth target format that teachers should use?
15. What documentation should teachers include with the SLO when they submit it for approval?
16. What if any additional guidelines will the district provide on SLO development?

Approving the SLO

17. Which administrator(s) will be responsible for approving SLOs at each school?
18. How will the district support approval of SLOs? (allocating time for administrators to review and approve SLOs, etc.)
19. Under what circumstances may an administrator approve the exclusion of a student from an SLO student population?
20. How will the district monitor SLO approvals to ensure principals are approving SLOs of similar quality and rigor?

Monitoring Progress

21. Will the district require or recommend a midcourse check-in meeting?
22. What guidance will the district provide on the format and structure of such a midcourse check-in?
23. Will the district provide additional guidance on the circumstances under which a teacher may revise his or her growth targets during the year?

Rating the SLO

24. How will the district allocate time for rating the SLO and engaging in reflective conversations?
25. Will the district set a procedure for determining exemption eligibility and documenting student exemptions from scoring?
26. How will the district support teachers in preparing for rating SLOs?
27. How will the district support leaders in rating SLOs?