

Texas Student Learning Objectives Process Overview



This document is designed to present an overview of the Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) process. The goal is to outline the general processes for districts considering participation in the SLO refinement year in 2016-2017. More detailed information will be made available to those districts who elect to participate.

Texas SLO Process Overview

Vision Statement

The Student Learning Objective (SLO) Model in Texas provides a framework for continuous dialogue between students, teachers and principals to support teacher development and student growth throughout the year.

Guiding Principles

- **Support Growth and Development:** Provide a meaningful framework to support student growth and teacher development.
- **Support Local Autonomy:** Provide flexibility for districts, campuses, and classrooms to adapt as needed.

Design Attributes

- **Instructionally Valuable:** Support educators to make responsive instructional decisions throughout the year.
- **Standards-Aligned:** Address academic standards that are critical to student learning.
- **Equitable:** Meet the unique needs of all students and teachers.
- **Transparent:** Be clear, concise and easily understood.
- **Manageable:** Be easily incorporated into and enhance existing methods for measuring student learning.

Overview

The Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System, Student Growth, and SLOs

The Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) was created by an educator steering committee comprised of teachers, principals, and representatives from higher education and educator organizations with a goal to support teachers in Texas with ongoing feedback and development to continually improve teacher practice.

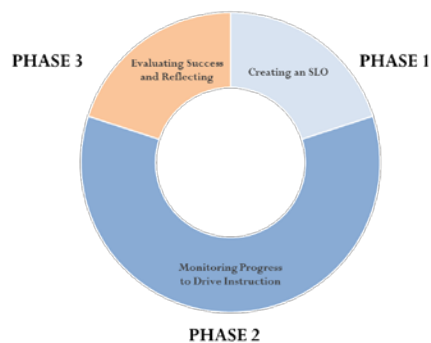
The goal of T-TESS is to be a formative system, providing a framework for ongoing conversation and feedback to support teachers and students. In order to provide holistic support for teachers, T-TESS is comprised of three measures of teacher effectiveness. The three measures are:

- Classroom Observation
- Goal-Setting & Professional Development Plan, and
- Student Growth

The focus of this overview is on Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), one option for measuring Student Growth as part of T-TESS or a locally developed appraisal system.

What are Student Learning Objectives?

Excellent teachers regularly set learning goals for their students and use a variety of data sources to monitor progress towards these goals throughout the year. The Student Learning Objective process aims to capture this best practice.



Student Learning Objectives, or SLOs, are student growth goals set by teachers to help them plan instruction and drive student learning throughout the year. Setting learning goals and measuring student progress allows educators to better understand their students’ strengths and how best to support student growth. These goals help teachers define what success looks like for their students and plan backwards to ensure that instruction is purposefully guiding teachers and schools toward a common vision of success.

Why use Student Learning Objectives as a Measure of Student Growth?

SLOs drive both teacher practice and student learning by strengthening instruction. The use of SLOs has been associated with improved student outcomes on standardized assessments. Teachers crafting SLOs report improved understanding of how to use data to determine student needs and to measure progress toward goals. SLOs encourage collaboration among teaching peers as well as between teachers and their appraisers. SLOs also encourage the adoption of a long-term vision for student learning and contribute to more meaningful discussions about vertical planning.

For teachers, SLOs are often seen as a growth measure that provides specific feedback about which instructional strategies and choices prove effective with particular students. The process prompts deliberate thinking about what decisions a teachers makes and why he or she makes them. They enable teachers, in collaboration with their appraisers, to assess their strengths and weaknesses, such as analyzing data or linking instruction to standards. Those insights then allow for specifically tailored professional development, improvement of instruction, and, ultimately, improved student learning.

SLO Process

Process Overview and Planning Considerations

The Student Learning Objective process should be used throughout the school year to help teachers plan backward from an end vision for student success. This process helps encourage regular conversations and collaboration between teachers, students and appraisers in order to ensure that instruction facilitates students’ progress toward growth goals.

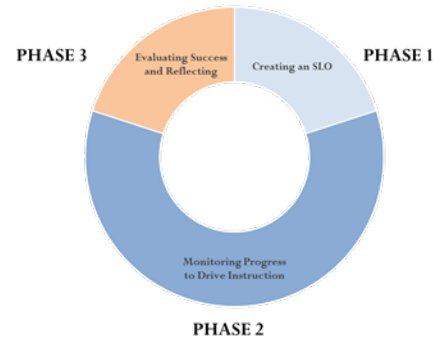
The SLO process represents a continuous cycle of improvement embodied in strong teaching practice. Teachers and their appraisers will use SLOs to design strategies to meet their goals for student success, beginning with planning and leading to thoughtful instructional design and delivery. Throughout the year,

teachers will collect evidence of student learning and adjust instruction accordingly. At the end of the cycle, teachers will reflect on outcomes and prepare for next cycle of growth and improvement.

For ease of understanding, we have grouped the SLO process into three key phases to define the sequence of actions to be taken.

Phase 1: Creating a Student Learning Objective

The first phase focuses on purposeful planning of instruction. At the beginning of the course, teachers work with each other, their appraisers, and other support staff to identify the SLO focus, create an instructional plan, and identify where their students are academically at the beginning of the course as well as expectations for growth. During this phase, teachers will develop and articulate a clear vision of success and strategies to be used to achieve this vision.



Phase 2: Monitoring Progress to Drive Instruction

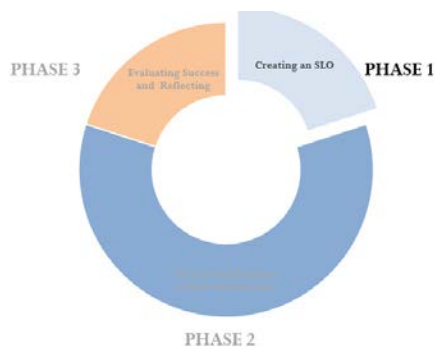
After the Student Learning Objective is completed and approved by the appraiser, teachers will work with each other and their appraiser, engaging in ongoing dialogue about progress toward goals. These discussions will also be opportunities for teachers to receive feedback and support, and to develop strategies to adjust instruction based on how students progress. SLO processes will be integrated into existing support frameworks at each school, improving efficiency in implementation.

Phase 3: Evaluating Success and Reflection

This last phase takes place at the end of the course and includes a conversation between the teacher and his or her appraiser regarding students’ overall progress throughout the year. This conversation results in an overall student growth rating based holistically on how well the teacher engaged in the SLO process and how well students have met growth targets in the course. The final conversation is designed to help teachers and appraisers reflect on student progress and teacher practice throughout the course in order to prepare for the following year.

Phase 1: Creating a Student Learning Objective

Phase 1 will occur over the first 1-2 months of school for yearlong courses, or in the first 3-4 weeks for semester courses. During Phase 1, teachers will work to develop Student Learning Objective(s) for one or more selected courses. During this phase, teachers will identify what foundational skill(s) to cover in the SLO and where the teacher’s students are with the skill(s) upon entering the course. Once this is determined, the teacher then looks at other data to determine where students should be at the end of the course with the identified skill(s) if the teacher provides effective instruction. The teacher then plans on what instructional strategies would best meet the needs of students so that they can reach their growth targets.



See below for a sample of identified skills articulated in an SLO statement and a beginning-of-year student skill profile.

Sample: SLO Statement Using Key Words from TEKS Introduction	
Social Studies: Grade 8	Excerpt from §113.20. Social Studies, Grade 8, Beginning with School Year 2011-2012. (29) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired through established research methodologies from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. (30) Social studies skills. The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms.
SLO Statement	Critical Thinking: Students will use primary and secondary sources of evidence to evaluate the purpose and impact of historical events in the U.S. in both written and oral form.
: Initial Student Skill Profile: Science Grade 4	
SLO Statement	Investigation and Reasoning: Students will use critical thinking and scientific problem solving to make informed decisions.
5	<i>Student uses critical thinking to analyze, evaluate and critique scientific explanations by using logical reasoning and experimental and observational testing in all areas of science and; Student is able to examine all sides of scientific evidence and communicate findings in writing, orally, through demonstrations and by creating models.</i>
4	<i>Student uses critical thinking to analyze, evaluate and critique scientific explanations by using logical reasoning and experimental and observational testing in all areas of science including the history of science.</i>
3	<i>Student is able to analyze and provide explanations in some areas of science by using logical reasoning or by conducting experimental or observational testing.</i>
2	<i>Student uses scientific inquiry methods to investigate the natural world in the laboratory and in outdoor environments.</i>
1	<i>Student is unable to select and use tools, materials and questions to appropriately investigate the natural world.</i>

Once the Initial Student Skill Profile is developed, teachers will determine which descriptor best matches the students in the current class. And, to identify expectations for students, a Targeted Student Skill Profile is developed to describe teachers' expectations for student performance levels on the skills identified for focus in the SLO. In some cases, especially where courses are not vertically aligned, a Targeted Student Skill Profile may not parallel the initial student skill profile for various reasons, often because students will not yet have been exposed to the key content of the course. The sample below demonstrates how these profiles might appear in the first Automobile Mechanics course.

	Initial Student Skill Profile	Targeted Student Skill Profile
5	Students have typically scored in the Level III range on recent STAAR scores, early work is promising, and responses on a survey of auto mechanics knowledge indicate some practice of simple car maintenance procedures.	Students are able to accurately diagnose problems with engines and electrical systems using reasoning and critical thinking skills, as well as independently service and repair engines, brakes, electrical systems, power train, and complete safety inspections
4	Students have scored Level II on most STAAR results, although one or two were Level IIIs, early work is promising with students showing initiative, and survey responses indicate some knowledge of car maintenance procedures.	Students are able to accurately diagnose problems with engines and electrical systems with some prompting, as well as service and repair engines, brakes, electrical systems, power train, and complete safety inspections with limited guidance.
3	Students have typically scored in the Level II range on most recent STAAR scores, early work is promising although directions may need to be repeated, and responses on a survey of auto mechanics knowledge indicate a small amount of knowledge of simple car maintenance procedures.	Students are able to service and repair engines, brakes, electrical systems, power trains and complete safety inspections with guidance.
2	Students have scored mostly Level II on STAAR results, although one or two Level 1s were seen, early work has been difficult as students have difficulty following directions, and responses on a survey indicate little knowledge of car maintenance issues.	Students are able to service and repair most of the following systems: engines, brakes, electrical, power train, as well as complete safety inspections with close guidance.
1	Students have struggled with STAAR assessments, with some Level I scores, early work has been difficult for students who do not seem to understand directions, and the survey indicates little knowledge of car maintenance issues.	Students are able to service and repair some of the following systems: engines, brakes, electrical, power train with hands-on guidance, and complete safety inspections following directions.

Phase 2: Monitoring Progress to Drive Instruction



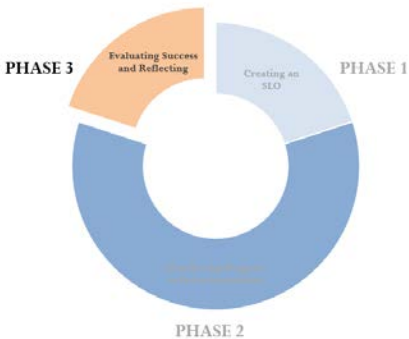
Phase 2 is designed to last throughout the majority of a course and aligns with best practices in teaching as captured throughout the T-TESS observation rubric, principally within the three dimensions “Standards and Alignment (1.1),” “Data and Assessment (1.2),” and “Monitor and Adjust (2.5).”

During Phase 2, teachers continuously engage in a cycle that includes planning, instruction, evidence collection, analysis, and reflection in order to further student learning.

If possible, teachers should plan regular reflection and discussions with their colleagues regarding student progress towards their SLO during the year. Teachers should

spend time discussing their progress towards SLOs, sharing successful instructional strategies, and helping each other plan for future instruction. These check-ins should be planned around existing team meetings whenever possible. Appraisers will also meet with teachers at the midterm (ideally during a post-observation conference) to review the progress students have made and receive feedback and support prior to the end-of-year conference.

Phase 3: Evaluating Success and Reflection



In Phase 3 (near the end of the course), the appraiser and teacher will meet to discuss progress throughout the year and overall student growth, using the SLO Skill Profile, Student Growth Tracker, and the SLO Rating Rubric. It is recommended that this discussion is integrated with the appraisal end-of-year conference, but these can also be scheduled separately.

Step 1: Teacher Self-Reflection

- Teachers will collect any finale evidence of student growth, assessment student work, and using the Targeted Student Skill Profile, complete the Student Growth Tracker.
- Teachers reflect on progress with students throughout the year:
- Which students met growth targets?
 - What instructional strategies worked best for them?
 - Which students didn't meet growth targets?
 - What instructionally could be improved to better impact students like this moving forward?
 - What will you do differently the next time you teach this skill?
- Teachers will gather any student work or other evidence to demonstrate growth to support the conversation.
- Prior to meeting, teachers should submit the following items along with any supplementary materials to the appraiser:
 - The completed Student Learning Objective, including the SLO Skill Profile, and Growth Tracker.
 - Any (optional) relevant prior progress discussion notes with teams or appraiser.
 - Any final evidence of student growth, particularly pointing to why students ended where they did.

Step 2: Appraisers Review Materials

- Prior to the end-of-year discussion, the assigned appraiser reviews the SLO Rating Rubric along with the teacher materials submitted.
- Appraisers should carefully consider the evidence provided and identify any questions about progress made toward SLOs or areas that may need further information prior to the discussion.
- Appraisers will use the rubric shown below, along with the evidence of student growth, and conversations throughout the year to determine the final rating.

Districts will select which of two alternatives for SLO rating will be used at the end of the interval to review teachers work on the SLO development, monitoring, and reflection.

Form D: SLO Rating Rubric – Option 1

Distinguished	<p>All or most of the following have been accomplished:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher has crafted a high quality SLO (above level three on the Quality Tool) • Teacher has set student growth goals that reflect high expectations for students • Teacher has consistently monitored student progress, collected data, reflected on his or her pedagogy, and made successful adjustments to strategies, as needed • All or almost all students demonstrated targeted growth • Most students exceeded targeted growth
Accomplished	<p>All or most of the following have been accomplished:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher has crafted a quality SLO (above level two on the Quality Tool) • Teacher has set student growth goals that reflect high expectations for students • Teacher has monitored student progress, collected data, reflected on his or her pedagogy, and made adjustments to strategies, as needed • Most students demonstrated targeted growth • Some students exceeded targeted growth
Proficient	<p>All or most of the following have been accomplished:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher has crafted a quality SLO (above level two on the Quality Tool) • Teacher has set student growth goals that reflect high expectations for students • Teacher has monitored student progress, collected data, reflected on his or her pedagogy, and made some adjustments to strategies • Most students demonstrated targeted growth
Developing	<p>All or most of the following have been accomplished:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher has crafted an adequate SLO (level two on the Quality Tool) • Teacher has set student growth goals that reflect adequate expectations for students • Teacher has attempted to monitor student progress, collect data, reflect on his or her pedagogy, and make some adjustments to strategies, although with limited success • Some students demonstrated targeted growth
Improvement Needed	<p>Few or none of the following have been accomplished:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher has crafted an adequate SLO (level two on the Quality Tool) • Teacher has set student growth goals that reflect adequate expectations for students • Teacher has attempted to monitor student progress, collect data, reflect on his or her pedagogy, and make some adjustments to strategies, although with limited success • Some students demonstrated targeted growth

Form D: SLO Rating Rubric – Option 2	
Distinguished	<p>All of the following have been accomplished:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher has crafted a high quality SLO (above level three on the Quality Tool) <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher has set student growth goals that reflect high expectations for students <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher has monitored student progress, collected data, reflected on his or her pedagogy, and made successful adjustments to strategies, as needed <input type="checkbox"/> All or almost all of students demonstrated targeted growth <input type="checkbox"/> Most students exceeded targeted growth
Accomplished	<p>Four of the following have been accomplished:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher has crafted a high quality SLO (above level three on the Quality Tool) <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher has set student growth goals that reflect high expectations for students <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher has monitored student progress, collected data, reflected on his or her pedagogy, and made successful adjustments to strategies, as needed <input type="checkbox"/> All or almost all of students demonstrated targeted growth <input type="checkbox"/> Most students exceeded targeted growth
Proficient	<p>Three of the following have been accomplished:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher has crafted a high quality SLO (above level three on the Quality Tool) <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher has set student growth goals that reflect high expectations for students <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher has monitored student progress, collected data, reflected on his or her pedagogy, and made successful adjustments to strategies, as needed <input type="checkbox"/> All or almost all of students demonstrated targeted growth <input type="checkbox"/> Most students exceeded targeted growth
Developing	<p>Two of the following have been accomplished:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher has crafted a high quality SLO (above level three on the Quality Tool) <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher has set student growth goals that reflect high expectations for students <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher has monitored student progress, collected data, reflected on his or her pedagogy, and made successful adjustments to strategies, as needed <input type="checkbox"/> All or almost all of students demonstrated targeted growth <input type="checkbox"/> Most students exceeded targeted growth
Improvement Needed	<p>One or none of the following have been accomplished:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher has crafted a high quality SLO (above level three on the Quality Tool) <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher has set student growth goals that reflect high expectations for students <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher has monitored student progress, collected data, reflected on his or her pedagogy, and made successful adjustments to strategies, as needed

	<input type="checkbox"/> All or almost all of students demonstrated targeted growth <input type="checkbox"/> Most students exceeded targeted growth
--	--

A Few Additional Keys to SLOs

As districts get familiar with the state SLO process, please keep in mind what SLOs are **not**:

- Subtracting a beginning-of-year skill level from an end-of-year skill level
- Mathematical or mathematically precise
- Numerically standardized across a campus or district
- Focused on traditional testing

Estimation

The SLO process should allow for each teacher to tailor growth targets to his or her specific student population. The SLO process also necessarily entails estimation rather than measurement precision. Teachers estimate their students’ skill level at the beginning of the year based on multiple data sources. Teachers estimate how students should progress, if instruction is effective, over a particular academic period. Teachers estimate how far their students have progressed by the end of the course based on demonstrations of student skill. Because of these considerations – the necessary contextualization of SLOs and the estimation throughout the process – the SLO process is least valuable to instructional improvement when primarily implemented to produce a single score, rating, or result. Rather, it is the process of crafting, monitoring, and reflection on student learning that provides both teachers and appraisers with valuable learning and opportunities for feedback and support.

Appraiser Interaction

For Appraisers, interaction with the SLO process should focus on how teachers think. In that sense, conferences with teachers should focus on having teachers walk appraisers through the teacher’s thought processes in determining the skill focus, in synthesizing data to determine where a student is at the beginning of the course, in determining where a student should be at the end of the course, and why one student may require different instructional strategies from another student. It’s not necessary that an appraiser review how accurately a teacher treated each student covered in an SLO – talking through a handful of samples at the beginning, middle, and end of the year should provide sufficient evidence for appraisers.

One of the most important and beneficial actions an appraiser can take in facilitating the SLO process is to provide for time, at least once a month, for teachers to come together to discuss their SLOs, their students’ progress, and their instructional adjustments in response to data (both formal and informal). This keeps the SLO process alive during the school year and encourages consistent reflection on the part of teachers.