Texas Student Learning Objectives Process Overview

Texas Education Agency

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 pilot in 2015-2016. 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.

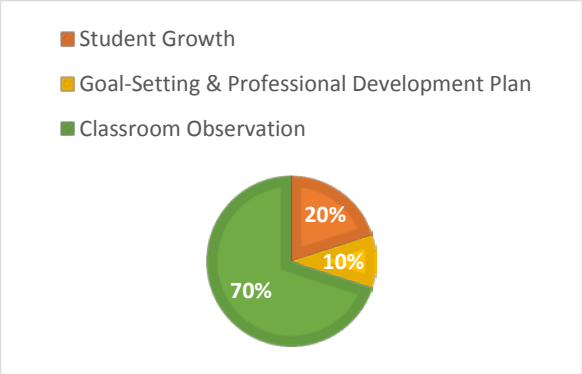
Overview

The Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System

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 (70%)
- Goal-Setting & Professional Development Plan (10%), and
- Student Growth (20%)



The focus of this overview is on one type of model that can be used for measuring Student Growth (20%) as part of T-TESS, Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). For more information on the other components of T-TESS, Classroom Observation (70%) or the Goal-Setting & Professional Development Plan (10%), please visit the Teach for Texas Portal at https://teachfortexas.org and click on Document Library > View Documents.

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?

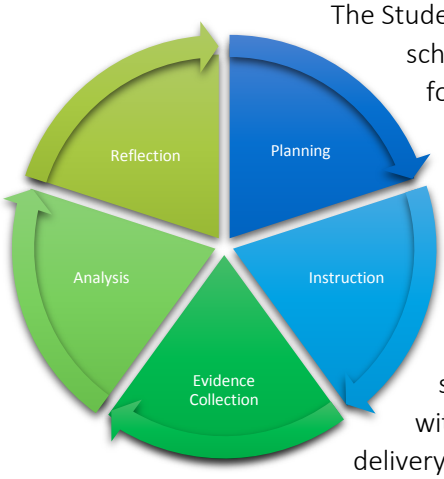
SLOs drive both teacher practice and student learning by strengthening instruction. The use of SLOs has been associated with improved student outcomes on standardized assessments. Teachers crafting SLOs report improved understanding of how to use data to determine student needs and to measure progress toward goals. SLOs encourage collaboration among teaching peers as well as between teachers and their appraisers. And, SLOs 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 encourages consistency and collaboration – with all teachers being able to craft and implement SLOs. SLOs work in tandem with classroom observations to more accurately understand learning and teachers' contributions to that learning. 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 to meet those needs, improve instruction, and, ultimately, bolster 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 → **Phase 2 | Monitoring Progress to Drive Instruction** → **Phase 3 | Evaluating Success and Reflection**

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 student needs, draft their SLO, create an instructional plan, and identify student starting points. 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 progress monitoring findings. SLO processes will be integrated into existing support frameworks at each school, improving efficiency in implementation.

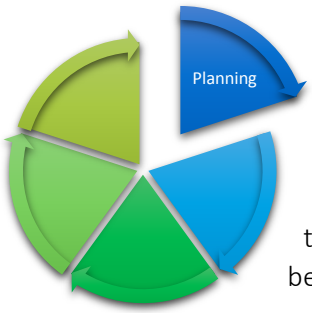
Phase 3: Evaluating Success and Reflection

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 score based holistically on the amount of growth students have achieved throughout 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 | Creating a Student Learning Objective | Phase 2 | Monitoring Progress to Drive Instruction | Phase 3 | Evaluating Success and Reflection



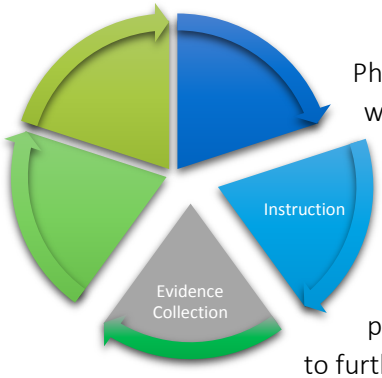
Phase 1 will occur over the first 1-2 months of school for yearlong courses, or in the first 3-4 weeks for semester courses. During Phase 1, teachers will work with other teachers and with their appraiser to develop Student Learning Objective(s) for one or more selected courses. During this phase, teachers will identify the learning content of focus and develop a profile of student success to begin planning instruction to achieve student growth. See the examples below.

Sample 1: SLO Statement Summary of Several TEKS Statements	
CTE: Principles of Architecture	Excerpt from §130.42. Principles of Architecture and Construction (c) Knowledge and skills. (5) The student writes clear and effective English to prepare information. (6) The student uses industry-specific verbal and visual skills to accomplish effective communications. (7) The student listens attentively and speaks clearly to convey information correctly. (8) The student listens to and speaks with a variety of individuals to enhance communications skills. (10) The student identifies the relationship between available resources and requirements of a problem to accomplish realistic planning. (11) The student evaluates and adjusts plans and schedules to respond to unexpected events and conditions
SLO Statement	**Problem-solving and Communication:** Students will use both written and verbal communication to design and clearly articulate a project plan
Sample 2: 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.
Sample SLO Skill Profile: Science Grade 4	
SLO Statement	**Investigation and Reasoning:** Students will use critical thinking and scientific problem solving to make informed decisions.
Level 5: Exceeds	*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.*
Level 4: Proficient	*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.*
Level 3: Emerging	*Student is able to analyze and provide explanations in some areas of science by using logical reasoning or by conducting experimental or observational testing.*
Level 2: Novice	*Student uses scientific inquiry methods to investigate the natural world in the laboratory and in outdoor environments.*
Level 1: No Familiarity	*Student is unable to select and use tools, materials and questions to appropriately investigate the natural world.*

Phase 2: Monitoring Progress to Drive Instruction

Phase 1 | Creating a Student Growth Plan → **Phase 2 | Monitoring Progress to Drive Instruction** → Phase 3 | Evaluating Success and Reflection



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.

Teachers should plan regular reflection and discussions with their colleagues regarding student progress towards their SLO during the year. Teachers will 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 as well to review the progress students have made and receive feedback

and support prior to the end of the year discussion. These meetings are designed to coincide with other planned one-on-one conversations, post-observation conferences, or other informal discussions.

Phase 3: Evaluating Success and Reflection

Phase 1 | Creating a Student Growth Plan → Phase 2 | Monitoring Progress to Drive Instruction → **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 Scoring 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 final evidence of student growth, assess student work, and using the SLO Skill Profile, complete the Student Growth Tracker.
- Teachers reflect on progress with students throughout the year:
  - Which students showed the most growth? Why might this be?
  - Which students showed the least growth? Why might this be?
  - 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 at the level of proficiency that they did.

Step 2: Appraisers Review Materials

- Prior to the end-of-year discussion, the assigned appraiser reviews the SLO Scoring 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, conversations and discussions throughout the year to determine final rating.

Form D: SLO Scoring Rubric	
Distinguished (5)	Teacher practice has resulted in all (or almost all) students demonstrating dramatic growth during the course OR reaching the Exceed level of the SLO Skill Profile.
Accomplished (4)	Teacher has consistently relied on data collection and reflection to make regular adjustments to practice, as needed. This has resulted in all (or almost all) students demonstrating growth towards the SLO.
Proficient (3)	Teacher has made many adjustments to practice throughout the year based on ongoing data collection and reflection, as needed. This has resulted in many or most students demonstrating growth towards the SLO.
Developing (2)	Teacher has made some adjustments to practice throughout the year based on ongoing data collection and reflection, as needed. This has resulted in some students demonstrating growth towards the SLO.
Improvement Needed (1)	Teacher has made few adjustments to practice throughout the year when needed. As a result, few students have demonstrated growth. OR Sufficient evidence has not been collected to demonstrate student growth.

Final Thoughts: Student Learning Objectives

The SLO model described above provides teachers with a framework to set a vision of student success, plan for standards-aligned instruction, monitor progress using student work as evidence, and adjust instruction accordingly, to ensure that instruction facilitates student progress toward growth goals.

The process is designed to mirror best practice that already exists across the state and formalize this in a way that can be used to measure student learning as part of T-TESS or other evidence-based appraisal systems. It is the hope of the Texas Education Agency that districts and schools choosing to use this model will adapt it to fit within existing structures and best practices for measuring student learning within individual districts.