



Student Learning Objectives Framework

**For TIF 3 and TIF 4 Maine Schools for Excellence
Districts**

**Maine Schools for Excellence SLO Workgroup
May 2013**

Appreciation is given to the many Maine teachers and leaders in the Teacher Incentive Fund MSFE districts who have contributed countless hours and immeasurable effort and expertise to the development and continual refinement of this work.

Student Learning Objectives Framework

For TIF 3 and TIF 4 Maine Schools for Excellence Districts

May 2013

Maine Schools for Excellence SLO Workgroup



23 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0023
207-624-6600

www.maine.gov/doe/excellence

Contents

	Page
The Maine Schools for Excellence Vision	1
Introduction	2
Introduction to SLOs and their use in MSFE	3
What are SLOs?	3
Why Are the Maine Schools for Excellence (MSFE) Districts Implementing SLOs?.....	3
How Do SLOs Fit Into an Educator’s Evaluation?.....	3
What Other Districts or States are Implementing SLOs?	3
The SLO Cycle.....	5
Developing the SLO	6
Interval of Instruction.....	6
Needs Assessment and Student Population.....	7
Content Standards.....	7
Summative Assessment	7
Growth Target.....	10
Instructional Strategies	11
Progress Monitoring Plan.....	11
Approving the SLO.....	12
Monitoring Progress	14
Discussing Student Progress	14
Revising the SLO	14
Scoring the SLO.....	16
Preparing for SLO Scoring.....	16
Meeting With the Administrator or Administrator Team.....	17
Calculating the SLO Score.....	18
Integrating the SLO Score With Other Evaluation Measures	18
Guide for District Decision Making	19
Overall Management and Oversight	19

Developing the SLO.....	19
Approving the SLO.....	20
Monitoring Progress.....	20
Scoring the SLO.....	20
Appendix A. Student Learning Objective Template.....	21
Appendix B. SLO Approval Checklist	23
Appendix C: Alignment Between the SLO Cycle and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Core Propositions.....	25
Appendix D: Frequently Asked Questions on SLOs.....	26
General Questions	26
Needs Assessment and Student Population.....	28
Content Standards.....	29
Summative Assessment	29
Growth Targets	30

The Maine Schools for Excellence Vision

Improving student learning and educator effectiveness is at the heart of the Maine Schools for Excellence (MSFE) initiative, which is assisting two cohorts of districts in their design and implementation of comprehensive human capital measurement systems.

The vision of MSFE is as follows:

- **To** enhance educator effectiveness and student learning
- **For** the benefit of all stakeholders, including students, educators, parents, and the community
- **By** developing an integrated and coherent human capital management system that aligns with the district mission and includes the following key features for all educators: regular, specific measurement and feedback; ongoing, targeted professional development; and fair and sensible recognition and rewards
- **So that** schools can better attract and retain high-performing educators and benefit from a workforce of teachers and administrators who are aligned in purpose, teamed in their efforts, and motivated to succeed in delivering high-quality instruction to students

MSFE is the umbrella initiative for two five-year Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grants from the U.S. Department of Education, TIF 3 and TIF 4. One reform strategy is the revision of evaluation and professional growth systems to include measures of student growth. MSFE districts will use student learning objectives (SLOs) as measures of student growth that will be integrated into the teacher evaluation.

Introduction

In spring 2013, teacher and administrator representatives from MSFE districts met to develop a set of recommendations and guidelines for implementing student learning objectives (SLOs). This document outlines a model SLO process and highlights the recommendations made by the teachers and administrators that participated in the MSFE SLO workgroup. 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 offers a set of recommendations that will inform local design and implementation of SLOs as well as development of additional resources, such as training and guidebooks

This framework is divided into the following sections.

- Introduction to SLOs and their use in MSFE
- Alignment Between SLOs and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Core Propositions
- Introduction to the SLO Cycle
- Developing the SLO
- Approving the SLO
- Monitoring progress
- Scoring the SLO
- Frequently Asked Questions About SLOs
- Guide for District Decision Making

Introduction to SLOs and their use in MSFE

What are SLOs?

- SLOs are measurable goals that teachers set for their students at the start of a course or period of study and are approved by administrators.
- SLOs target the specific learning needs of students – honing in on specific local, state, or national standards that require emphasis based on a thorough review of available data.
- Within each SLO, teachers specify a growth target - a quantifiable amount of student learning expected by the end of the course, usually measured as growth between preassessment and postassessment.
- In 2013–14, each SLO will target all students in a course.
- The creation of SLOs, in most cases, is a team effort. Each SLO is the result of collaboration and consultation among teacher colleagues and administrators.

Why Are the Maine Schools for Excellence (MSFE) Districts Implementing SLOs?

The SLO process provides a valuable opportunity for teachers and principals to have rich professional conversations that are focused on educational expectations. Research demonstrates that educators who set rigorous objectives for their students often realize greater improvement in student performance. In addition, SLOs give educators, districts, and state leaders an additional means by which to understand, value, and recognize success in the classroom.

How Do SLOs Fit Into an Educator’s Evaluation?

SLOs will be used as part of each teacher’s evaluation as a measure of student growth. All teachers participating in MSFE will write one SLO in 2013–14. The SLO development process will give teachers a voice in how they will be evaluated, while providing a vehicle for connecting teacher-set goals to content standards, district goals, and local initiatives.

What Other Districts or States are Implementing SLOs?

Many states and districts are beginning to implement or are already implementing SLOs as a measure of student growth. In some places, just teachers working in nontested grades and subjects (NTGS)¹ write SLOs; in other places, all teachers or teachers and administrators write SLOs. SLOs are increasingly included in teacher evaluation

¹ Teachers are usually considered teachers of NTGS if they do not teach in a grade or subject where a standardized test is administered for accountability purposes. Such tests are typically used to develop other measures of student growth used in teacher evaluation, like value-added scores.

systems, but SLOs also may be used for compensation purposes. The following table lists some of the places currently piloting or implementing SLOs.

District/State	Who writes SLOs?	How are SLOs used?
Austin, Texas	Teachers and administrators in a subset of schools	Compensation and Evaluation
Connecticut	All teachers in the state pilot	Evaluation
Denver	All teachers and support staff	Compensation
District of Columbia	All teachers	Evaluation
Georgia	All teachers in NTGS	Evaluation
Hazelwood, Missouri	All teachers in schools that received a school improvement grant	Evaluation
Indiana	All teachers in the default model	Evaluation
Kentucky	All teachers	Evaluation
Louisiana	All teachers in NTGS	Evaluation
Maryland	One option for teachers in NTGS	Evaluation
McMinnville, Oregon	All teachers	Compensation
New Haven, Connecticut	All teachers in NTGS	Evaluation
New York	All teachers in NTGS	Evaluation
Ohio	Encouraged as a measure with teachers in NTGS, optional measure for all teachers and principals	Evaluation
Pennsylvania	Teachers in NTGS in pilot sites	Evaluation
Rhode Island	All teachers	Evaluation
Wisconsin	All teachers in the developmental pilot	Evaluation

This extensive list is not exhaustive because the field is ever-changing. For example, a review of approved Race to the Top applications and ESEA waivers indicates that at least 19 additional states not listed above have committed to implementing or intend to allow SLOs as part of teacher evaluation systems.

The SLO Cycle



The SLO cycle consists of four steps:

1. **Developing the SLO.** The teacher collaborates with colleagues and administrators to create an SLO. See page 6 for greater detail on the SLO development process.
2. **Approving the SLO.** A district-designated administrator or administrator team reviews the SLO to ensure that the SLO meets minimum criteria in terms of appropriateness, rigor, and completeness. See page 12 for a list of recommendations related to approving the SLO.
3. **Monitoring progress.** The teacher delivers high-quality instruction and monitors student progress throughout the course. As needed, the teacher adjusts his or her approach to ensure that all students are making progress. This step may include a formal or informal midcourse conversation between the teacher and administrator to discuss progress thus far. See page 13 for guidelines related to monitoring progress.
4. **Scoring the SLO.** The teacher meets with a district-designated administrator or administrator team at the end of the year to review data and determine whether students met their growth targets. The teacher and administrator use the SLO results to inform professional development and SLO development for the next year. The administrator or administrator team assigns an SLO score. See page 15 for an overview of the scoring process.

Developing the SLO

At the beginning of the course, each teacher, as defined by state regulations² and regardless of full-time equivalency, develops the SLO.

- In 2013–14: Each teacher writes one SLO that includes all the students in a course.
- In 2014–15: Each teacher writes two SLOs. One SLO is an individual SLO. Districts may permit the second SLO to be an individual SLO or a team SLO in which teachers have shared accountability of students. Districts also may allow the second SLO to be a targeted SLO, meaning that the teacher would write a focused goal for a particular group of students (e.g., English language learners).

Generally, teachers should prioritize core classes (mathematics, reading/English language arts, science, and social studies) over noncore or elective classes. Districts and school administrators may provide more specific guidelines on the subjects or courses for which teachers should write SLOs. For example, districts may specify that teachers need to write an SLO for the course with the most students or the subject with the greatest student needs.

Each SLO consists of seven components, which are highlighted in the SLO template (see Appendix A):

- Interval of instruction
- Needs assessment and student population
- Content standards
- Summative assessment
- Growth target
- Instructional strategies
- Progress monitoring plan

Interval of Instruction

The interval of instruction is the period of time between administration of the preassessment and postassessment. In most cases, the interval of instruction should be close to a semester or school year in length, whichever fits the length of the course. In 2013–14, districts may allow teachers of yearlong courses to write semester-long SLOs in order to accommodate additional training that needs to occur during the first year of implementation. It is critical that districts convey to all stakeholders that in 2014-15 teachers of yearlong courses should write yearlong SLOs.

² 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.”

Needs Assessment and Student Population

The SLO development process begins with a needs assessment. The teacher selects a course and identifies the interval of instruction (usually the course length). The teacher then analyzes data available on students to determine student strengths and weaknesses. Ideally, this analysis is collaborative. During the needs assessment, the teacher should identify an area of need that the SLO will target. Each SLO must address an area of need.

For example, after analyzing trend and baseline data, a teacher team may recognize that most students are weaker in informational text reading skills than in literature reading skills. Based upon this information, each teacher might then create an SLO that focuses on the grade-level Common Core State Standards for Informational Text.

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. This preassessment is part of the needs assessment because it provides important data on current student performance. In some courses and subjects, teachers may need to create an appropriate preassessment and should follow the guidelines for assessments (see pages 9 and 10) during assessment writing.

When completing this portion of the SLO template, the teacher

- Identifies available data used to determine areas of need and strength.
- Analyzes available data for areas of strength and need by subject area, student group, concepts, skills, and behaviors.
- Discusses, when possible, how the analysis was collaborative.

Content Standards

After conducting the needs assessment, the teacher identifies the focus of the SLO. The SLO should address a need for included students and should align with broader school and district goals. The content focus of the SLO should address essential area(s) of learning within grade and content area(s) that align with national and/or state standards and identify standard(s) that address both process and content. The standard(s) should be broad enough to cover an extended interval of instruction, such as an academic year or semester, but focused enough to be measured by an appropriate assessment tool.

Summative Assessment

A critical piece of the SLO is the summative assessment used to capture student growth. This summative assessment can take a variety of forms (e.g. performance

based assessment, portfolio)—not just a paper-and-pencil test. The assessment should correspond with the preassessment.³

Districts may provide additional guidance on which assessments are appropriate for use in SLOs.

An assessment that is appropriate for use in an SLO follows these 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

³ It is recommended that, when using teacher-created assessments, the preassessment and postassessment be the same or slightly different forms (e.g. same questions in a different order) of the same assessment.

If the assessment is a vendor assessment, the preassessment and postassessment may be different in accordance with test administration guidelines from the vendor.

Guidelines for Test Fidelity and Verifiability

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.

Growth Target

When setting growth targets, teachers use baseline and pretest data to set developmentally appropriate expectations for students on the summative assessment. Teachers should follow state and district guidelines to ensure that SLO growth targets are rigorous, attainable, and developmentally appropriate. Growth targets should be informed by the teacher’s knowledge of students, content, and assessment. All students, regardless of their preassessment score, should be expected to demonstrate significant and appropriate growth.

Student growth targets may be formatted in a variety of ways. Districts may set additional guidelines or requirements related to the formatting of growth targets. The following are sample formats, but not the only formats, for growth targets.

Growth Target Format 1: Expected Growth in Points

All students will increase their preassessment score by 18 points on the postassessment.

Growth Target Format 2: Differentiated Growth in Points

Baseline Score (out of 100)	Growth Target
35–50	Increase baseline score by 20 points
51–70	Increase baseline score by 18 points
71–82	Increase baseline score by 16 points

Growth Target Format 3: Differentiated Cut-Scores

Baseline Score (out of 100)	Growth Target Score (out of 100)
35–50	59
51–70	79
71–82	91

Growth Target Format 4: Advanced Tiered Target

Pre-Assessment Score	Growth Score
0-45 points	65 or +35 points, whichever is greater
46-70 points	75 or +15 points, whichever is greater
70+ points	85 or + 20 points, whichever is greater

Growth Target Format 5: Individual Targets

Student Number	Baseline Score (out of 100)	Growth Target Score (out of 100)
1234	50	75
5678	25	50
9012	25	55
3456	34	54
7899	60	85

Growth Target Format 6: Formula

All students will increase their scores by one half the difference between 100 and the preassessment score. For example, a student who scored 50 on the preassessment would be expected to score a 75 on the postassessment.

Instructional Strategies

Strong instruction is the foundation for a successful SLO. In this section of the SLO template, teachers describe the instructional strategies they intend to use throughout the year to help students reach their growth targets.

Progress Monitoring Plan

Effective teachers know that students respond differently to instruction. In this section of the SLO, teachers identify the ways in which they will monitor student progress throughout the year and how they intend to use data to inform modifications to instruction as needed.

Approving the SLO

After the teacher develops the SLO, a district-designated administrator or administrator team reviews the SLO to ensure that the SLO meets minimum criteria in appropriateness, rigor, and completeness. If the SLO does not meet the criteria for approval, the teacher has an opportunity to review and resubmit the SLO.

Table 1. SLO Approval Checklist

	Meets Expectations
General	<input type="checkbox"/> Includes all students in the identified course (2013–14).
	<input type="checkbox"/> Includes only students on the teacher’s roster in the student population (2013–14).
Interval of Instruction	<input type="checkbox"/> Includes the number of instructional days between the preassessment and postassessment.
Needs Assessment and Student Population	<input type="checkbox"/> Identifies available data used to determine areas of strength and need.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Includes analysis of available data for areas of strength and need by subject area, student growth, concepts, skills, and behaviors.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates evidence of collaboration during data analysis, when possible.
Content Standards	<input type="checkbox"/> Aligns to national and/or state standards.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Addresses essential area(s) of learning.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Includes both process and content standards.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Are broad enough to represent learning over the course of an interval of instruction.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Are focused enough to be measured using an appropriate assessment.
Summative Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> Aligns with identified content and process standards.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Provides all students with an opportunity to demonstrate growth.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets all identified guidelines.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Is accompanied by a high-quality rubric, if it is a performance or rubric-based assessment.
Growth Target	<input type="checkbox"/> Uses baseline or pretest data to determine appropriate growth.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Follows state or district guidelines, if applicable.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Is rigorous, attainable, and developmentally appropriate.

	<input type="checkbox"/> Expects all students to demonstrate growth.
Instructional Strategies	<input type="checkbox"/> Describes teacher’s approach to instruction that will help students reach their targets.
Progress Monitoring Plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Identifies ways the teacher will monitor student progress.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Explains how the teacher will use data to inform instruction.

Monitoring Progress

Teachers monitor student progress throughout the year and adjust instruction as needed. Between SLO approval and scoring, teachers should analyze and reflect upon the success of instructional strategies and adjust instruction as needed. In some cases, the teacher may need to adjust the targets.

Discussing Student Progress

Districts have the option of requiring or recommending that teachers meet with their administrator in the middle of the interval of instruction. This optional conversation can provide a valuable opportunity to celebrate successes to date and brainstorm ways to address challenges. During this conversation, teachers and administrators might discuss professional development opportunities, new instructional strategies, or specific students. 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.

Revising the SLO

If unique circumstances warrant revisions, the teacher may change the SLO at or before the middle of the interval of instruction. 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	Interval of instruction Needs assessment and student population Content standards Summative assessment Growth target Instructional strategies Progress monitoring plan
Change in student population	Needs assessment and student population Content standards Growth target Instructional strategies Progress monitoring plan
Maternity or other extended leave	Growth targets
Natural disaster	Growth targets
Extensive snow days	Growth targets

The teacher presents 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.

Scoring the SLO

Teachers meet with their administrator or administrator team at the end of the semester or year to discuss the score of the SLO. The score is based upon the percentage of students who met their growth targets. The teacher is responsible for collecting data on student progress prior to meeting with the administrator or administrator team.

Preparing for SLO Scoring

Prior to the end of the interval of instruction, the teacher should identify and discuss with the administrator or administrator team any students who are eligible for exemption from scoring. These students are those with extenuating circumstances that may have affected their ability to demonstrate progress. The allowable reasons for exemption are

- The student was absent for 20 percent or more of the interval of instruction. 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 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.

At the end of the interval of instruction, the teacher administers and scores the postassessment. Test administration should comply with the guidelines for test fidelity and verifiability outlined on page 9 of this document.

After scoring the student postassessments, the teacher calculates the percentage of students who met their growth targets. A table can be helpful during calculations and when presenting information to the administrator, such as the sample shown in Table 3. To help ensure consistency across teachers, districts may want to consider adopting a standard template to use across the district.

Table 3. Sample Completed Scoring Template

Student ID	Preassessment Score (out of 100)	Growth Target	Postassessment Score	Met Growth Target?
12345	54	Increase score by 20 points	70	No
67890	23	Increase score by 30 points	59	Yes
09876	42	Increase score by 20 points	69	Yes
54321	39	Increase score by 30 points	70	Yes
01928	49	Increase score by 20 points	60	No
			Percentage of students who met growth targets	60%

Teachers may also gather other evidence of student progress to discuss with the administrator during the SLO scoring conversation.

Meeting With the Administrator or Administrator Team

Once the teacher calculates the percentage of students who met their growth targets, teachers submit that information, as well as any other contextual information or data, to the administrator or administrator team. The administrator or administrator team meets with the teacher to discuss SLO scoring. This conversation may occur in conjunction with another evaluation-related meeting or can be a standalone meeting.

The purpose of this conversation, beyond calculating the SLO score, is to have a meaningful conversation about student progress. Teachers and the administrator or administrator team analyze the data and identify strengths or weaknesses in student progress. For example, if students in the teacher's class demonstrated exceptional growth, the discussion might focus on how the teacher can mentor or share instructional strategies with colleagues. If a particular subgroup of students did not demonstrate sufficient growth, the teacher and administrator or administrator team might brainstorm reasons why and identify potential opportunities for professional learning, especially in thinking about professional learning goals for the following year.

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.

Calculating the SLO Score

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

For example, consider the following scenario. A teacher’s SLO covers a course with 42 students. The administrator approves the exemption of two students. Of the remaining 40 students, 30 students (75%) meet their targets. On the basis of this information, the administrator would determine the SLO score to be 3 because 75 percent falls in the 71–84 percent range on the lookup table.

Integrating the SLO Score With Other Evaluation Measures

After the administrator determines the SLO score, this measure will be integrated with the rest of the measures in the Teacher Evaluation and Professional Growth Program. The exact weighting of SLOs in the evaluation will vary based on district and TIF cohort.

Guide for 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.

AIR recommends that each district creates 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 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.)
 - Assessment administration window
 - Deadline to have all SLO scores submitted to the district
2. 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?
3. 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. In 2014–15, will team SLOs, where multiple people share accountability of students, be required, recommended, or prohibited?
2. If team SLOs will be allowed, what guidance or requirements will the district provide on who should be on a team?
3. How will the district support development of SLOs? (allocating time for teachers to conduct parts of the process in teams, providing resources, etc.)

4. What guidance will the district provide on assessments?
5. How will the district support development of preassessments and summative assessments for use in all grades and subjects?
6. What requirements will the district set on test fidelity and verifiability?
7. Is there a preferred growth target format that teachers should use?
8. What if any additional guidelines will the district provide on SLO development?

Approving the SLO

1. Which administrator(s) will be responsible for approving SLOs at each school?
2. How will the district support approval of SLOs? (allocating time for administrators to review and approve SLOs, etc.)
3. Under what circumstances may an administrator approve the exclusion of a student from an SLO student population?

Monitoring Progress

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

Scoring the SLO

1. Will the district set a procedure for determining exemption eligibility and documenting student exemptions from scoring?
2. How will the district support teachers in preparing for scoring SLOs?
3. How will the district support leaders in scoring SLOs?

Appendix A. Student Learning Objective Template

Date: _____

Teacher Name: _____ Position: _____

Subject/Grade/Course Number: _____ Interval of Instruction: _____

Needs Assessment and Student Population

What do you know from the data about your students' needs and strengths? How does this SLO address a need for included students?

Content Standards

What standards and content will you target in your SLO? How do these standards and content capture the essential areas of learning that align to national and/or state standards? How do these standards capture both process and content standards?

Summative Assessment

What assessment will you use to capture student growth? What modifications and accommodations will you provide to students with IEPs, 504 plans, or ELL status?

Growth Target

What growth do you expect your students to demonstrate by the end of the interval of instruction?

Instructional Strategies

Which instructional strategies will you use to help students reach their growth targets?

Progress Monitoring Plan

How will you monitor progress throughout the year?

Is this SLO approved?

Yes

No

Teacher Signature: _____

Date: _____

Administrator Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B. SLO Approval Checklist

	Meets Expectations
General	<input type="checkbox"/> Includes all students in the identified course (2013–14).
	<input type="checkbox"/> Includes only students on the teacher’s roster in the student population (2013–14).
Interval of Instruction	<input type="checkbox"/> Includes the number of instructional days between the preassessment and postassessment.
Needs Assessment and Student Population	<input type="checkbox"/> Identifies available data used to determine areas of strength and need.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Includes analysis of available data for areas of strength and need by subject area, student growth, concepts, skills, and behaviors.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates evidence of collaboration during data analysis, when possible.
Content Standards	<input type="checkbox"/> Aligns to national and/or state standards.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Addresses essential area(s) of learning.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Includes both process and content standards.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Are broad enough to represent learning over the course of an interval of instruction.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Are focused enough to be measured using an appropriate assessment.
Summative Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> Aligns with identified content and process standards.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Provides all students with an opportunity to demonstrate growth.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets all identified guidelines.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Is accompanied by a high-quality rubric, if is a performance or rubric-based assessment.
Growth Target	<input type="checkbox"/> Uses baseline or pretest data to determine appropriate growth.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Follows state or district guidelines, if applicable.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Is rigorous, attainable, and developmentally appropriate.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Expects all students to demonstrate growth.
Instructional Strategies	<input type="checkbox"/> Describes teacher’s approach to instruction that will help students reach their targets.
Progress	<input type="checkbox"/> Identifies ways the teacher will monitor student progress.

Monitoring Plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Explains how the teacher will use data to inform instruction.
----------------------------	--

Appendix C: Alignment Between the SLO Cycle and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Core Propositions

Proposition	Alignment With the SLO Cycle
Proposition 1: Teachers are Committed to Students and Learning	Before setting targets for students, teachers analyze data and contextual information to get to know their students: their strengths, their weaknesses, and their needs. Teachers then use this information to inform goals for students and their own instruction to help students meet their goals.
Proposition 2: Teachers Know the Subjects They Teach and How to Teach Those Subjects to Students	Through the SLO process, teachers apply their deep understanding of the subjects they teach to identify instructional strategies and address skill gaps and preconceptions. Although the goal-setting aspect is important, the instruction that the teacher provides to move students toward those goals lies at the heart of the SLO process.
Proposition 3: Teachers Are Responsible for Managing and Monitoring Student Learning	Teachers use multiple sources of data and information to identify student needs, set goals for students, and then monitor and assess student progress. SLO growth targets are developmentally appropriate, and ideally rigorous yet attainable. Progress is assessed by appropriate and high-quality assessments.
Proposition 4: Teachers Think Systematically About Their Practice and Learn From Experiences	The SLO process promotes reflection. Throughout the year, teachers monitor progress and then adjust instruction as appropriate to student progress. At the end of the year, teachers reflect upon student growth, identify trends, and then use that information to inform subsequent SLOs, professional goals, and instructional plans for the next year.
Proposition 5: Teachers Are Members of Learning Communities	The SLO process provides teachers with multiple opportunities for collaboration. When writing SLOs, teachers are encouraged to analyze data and review content standards in teams. Administrators and teachers interact several times throughout the SLO process to discuss the targets the teacher sets, the progress students are making throughout the year, which students are experiencing challenging circumstances, and the extent to which students met their growth targets. Beginning in 2014–15, districts may allow or require team SLOs in which teachers have shared accountability of students and work cohesively to bring about student growth.

Appendix D: Frequently Asked Questions on SLOs

MSFE staff will add to this document over time as new questions arise.

General Questions

Q. Do all teachers have to write SLOs?

A. Beginning in 2013–14, all teachers, as defined by Chapter 180, participating in MFSE, regardless of full-time equivalency, will write one SLO. In 2014-15, all teachers participating in MFSE will write two SLOs.

Q. Who approves SLOs?

A. District-determined administrators or administrator teams review and approve SLOs.

Q. Can an administrator set the SLO for the teacher?

A. Districts and administrators have some autonomy in how they manage the SLO process, but ultimately teachers are responsible for writing the SLO. Teachers should consult with colleagues, including administrators, when writing the SLO, but the administrator should not set the SLO for the teacher. The SLO process can be a valuable goal-setting process and professional learning opportunity for the teacher; having an administrator develop the SLO for the teacher negates some of the benefits of writing SLOs.

Q. Is a growth target similar to an IEP goal?

A. SLO growth targets and IEPs are similar in that they both are goals for students designed to meet student need and baseline data. SLO growth targets can be differentiated for students, but they are different from individualized education programs (IEPs) or individual student goals in that a whole course or classroom of students is targeted and assessed.

Q. Does a teacher have to write an SLO for each course taught?

A. No. In 2013–14, teachers will write at least one SLO. In 2014–15, teachers will write at least two SLOs.

Q. In 2014-15, if a teacher writes two SLOs for the same course or class of students, can the standards in the two SLOs overlap?

A. No, if the same group of students is included in two SLOs, the content of the two SLOs should differ. For example, a teacher cannot have one SLO that focuses on all the informational text standards for her Grade 4 reading students and then a second, targeted SLO that focuses on the craft and structure subset of informational text standards with eight of her Grade 4 reading students because then the teacher would be doubly rewarded or penalized for those eight students' growth on craft and structure informational text standards.

Q. If teacher provides instruction for multiple courses, how does the teacher select the course for the SLO?

A. Districts and schools may specify the courses for which teachers should write SLOs. Principals will have discretion over whether they advise teachers to select a course with the most sections or a course with the greatest student needs. In general, teachers with multiple courses should consider writing an SLO for a core subject before a noncore subject or elective course.

Q. What is the average page length of an SLO?

A. The length of the SLO is not an important factor. Administrators will review SLOs for the quality of the content—not the length of the document. Teachers should use the SLO checklist to ensure that the SLO contains all the required information needed for approval.

Q. What if students in the student population are absent frequently? Will they be excluded from the calculation of the SLO score?

A. Section 7 of the proposed state regulations (<http://www.msmaweb.com/Stories/proposed-language.pdf>) stipulates that students may be included in measures only if they are present 80 percent or more of the time. It is strongly recommended that teachers clearly document student absences throughout the year.

Q. Are there instances when students will be excluded from an SLO because of unique circumstances?

A. Administrators may use their professional judgment and determine whether a student should be excluded from calculations of the SLO score. That said, teachers are responsible for identifying a student as eligible for exclusion and discussing that student with administrators prior to the administration of the postassessment. After the postassessment has been administered and during the SLO scoring conversation, a teacher may request an exemption and the administrator use professional judgment to determine whether that student should be excluded from the SLO score calculation. Students may be eligible for exclusion in the following circumstances:

- The student was absent for 20 percent or more of the interval of instruction. State regulation stipulates 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 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 ESL status.

Q. How do I write SLOs as a teacher of students with special needs?

A. Teachers of students with special needs will follow the same SLO guidelines and procedures as other teachers. All teachers, including but not limited to those working with students with special needs, will consider the unique needs of students when selecting standards, identifying an appropriate assessment, and setting growth targets. Teachers of students with special needs are encouraged to include relevant student background information in the Needs Assessment/Student Population section of the SLO to help evaluators understand the classroom context and how that informed the growth targets.

Q. How do teachers in alternative settings develop SLOs?

A. Teachers in alternative settings often work in unique situations that may make it difficult to set a meaningful goal for a single group of students for an extended period of time. Teachers in such settings should work with districts and administrators to determine a solution that will make sense with the configuration of their classes and the degree of turnover in their student population. For example, a teacher in alternative setting may need to set growth targets for a particular group of students for a shorter period of time than a semester.

Needs Assessment and Student Population

Q. Do teachers have to administer a preassessment?

A. Yes, regulations specify that student growth must be based upon growth between a preassessment and a postassessment. The preassessment does not, however, have to be administered in the current school year. The preassessment could be an end-of-course assessment from the prior year.

Q. Should teachers consider only data from standardized tests when conducting a needs assessment?

A. The creation of SLOs should be informed by data from multiple data sources, including but not limited to standardized tests, portfolios of student work, and district-created assessments.

Q. Can teachers use data that is two or three years old in the needs assessment?

A. Yes. Trend data can provide valuable information. Data on how current students have performed in the past can alert teachers to areas where students have persistently struggled over time. In addition, data on how students historically perform in the teacher’s class can help the teacher identify important content or skills that the teacher might want to focus on during the year.

Q. Can a teacher use words like “most,” “several,” and so on when describing students?

A. These terms can be open to interpretation, and so, whenever possible, use specific numbers and reference specific data.

Q. Can teachers exclude students from the SLO?

A. The student population of the SLO should include all students in that course. In rare cases, a school administrator may exclude students for extenuating circumstances.

Q. Should teachers include student names in the SLO?

A. Teachers should maintain the privacy of their students when possible. It is acceptable to summarize your students’ needs overall, but not to call attention to specific students. For example, a teacher may mention that she or he has three students with IEPs (dyslexia, emotional disturbance, and concomitant disorders) and two homeless students, but the teacher cannot say that John, Mary, and Skylar have IEPs and that Lisa and Eric are homeless.

Content Standards

Q. What is the difference between a process standard and a content standard?

A. Process standards describe skills that students should develop or refine. Content standards describe specific learning. SLOs should identify both process and content standards. Teachers must include standard(s) that address both process and content.

Summative Assessment

Q. What types of assessments can we use in our SLO?

A. Assessments used in SLOs can be pencil-and-paper tests, portfolios, or performance tasks graded with rubrics. Assessments can be vendor-created or teacher-created, but all assessments should follow the guidelines for assessments outlined on pages 9-10.

Q. Can teachers use a NECAP assessment as the summative assessment?

A. Teachers often do not receive NECAP results until after the school year ends. The SLO process should be completed by the end of the school year, so NECAP assessment results may not be usable as a summative assessment in the SLO. NECAP results from prior years, however, may be used as valuable sources of data in the needs assessment.

Q. Do teachers need to attach copies of the assessment to the SLO?

A. Districts will determine what documentation, if any, teachers should include with the SLO when they submit it for approval.

Q. Do teachers need to describe the assessments they use throughout the year with students?

A. Not in the summative assessment portion of the SLO. Teachers who use formative assessments to assess student progress in the content and skills in the SLO should describe these assessments in the progress monitoring section of the SLO template.

Q. How do we assess students with disabilities?

A. Assessments should be designed to assess as many students as possible. In most cases, students with disabilities should be assessed using the same assessment as students without disabilities. All students with individualized education programs and 504 plans should receive the modifications and accommodations specified on those plans.

Growth Targets

Q. How do teachers set growth targets for my lowest-performing students?

A. All targets should be developmentally appropriate. Expecting a student to demonstrate three years' worth of growth in one year may be very difficult and not developmentally appropriate. Teachers may need to set a goal for a student that is below what is considered "proficient" in order to ensure that the goal is developmentally appropriate for the student. In some cases, however, more than a year's worth of growth is both possible and necessary to close the achievement gap. When determining appropriate growth targets, teachers should consult with colleagues, curriculum directors, administrators, special educators, and instructional coaches.

Q. Can teachers revise the growth targets after the SLO has been approved?

A. Teachers may revise growth targets only in extenuating circumstances. Districts have discretion to determine whether a teacher may or may not revise growth targets. Sample extenuating circumstances are changes in teaching assignments, changes in student population, maternity or extenuated leave, natural disasters, and extensive snow days. Any changes to the SLO growth targets after the SLO has been approved

must be made prior to the midpoint of the course and be approved by a school administrator.