Teachers' Implementation Guide to Student Learning Objectives 2017-2018

TEA
Texas Education Agency

This document is designed to provide teachers with a step-by-step guide to the development of Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). The goal is to provide teachers with a strategy for SLO development, monitoring, and reflection on outcomes. Additional SLO samples will be provided on the TEASLOpilot.com website.

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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.

Using this SLO Handbook

The purpose of this Implementation Guide is to provide step-by-step information about crafting, implementing, and reflecting on SLOs. This guidance is not designed as a stand-alone resource for SLO implementation but should accompany training on the SLO process and support throughout the year. It is designed to follow the steps in the SLO Thinking Map (see p. 5). Teachers will be able to find support on a particular step by locating the general question in the table of contents and jumping to that section of the guide.

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 Objectives process aims to capture this best practice as a means to allowing teachers and teacher appraisers to determine and reflect on a teacher's pedagogical strengths and areas for growth.

Student Learning Objectives are:
- Student growth goals
- Set by teachers
- Focused on a foundational student skill that is developed throughout the curriculum
- Tailored to the context of individual students
- Designed to help teachers better understand the impact of their pedagogy
- For the purposes of refining instruction.

Why use Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) 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.

Student Learning Objective Thinking Map

YEAR 2	YEAR 1					
Before school begins	Before school begins	**What is the focus for my SLO?**	Decide general content area for focus	Identify most important content in course	Find TEKS that align to selected content	Consult historical data to narrow selection, if needed
Weeks 1-3	Weeks 3-6	**Who are my students?**	Describe typical students – Initial Skill Profile	Select class or classes	Collect data about students to identify current level of learning	Map current students to ISP
Weeks 3-6	Weeks 6-9	**What are my expectations for these students?**	Develop Targeted Skill Profile to describe expectations	Review supplemental data for each student covered in SLO	Establish a target for each student covered in SLO	Identify evidence sources to determine growth
Weeks 3-6	Weeks 6-9	**How will I guide these students toward growth?**	Describe plan for differentiation	Identify strategies to monitor progress	Plan for conferencing with colleagues	Review SLO plan with appraiser for approval
Week 6 to near end of course	Week 9 to near end of course	**Are students progressing toward targets?**	Monitor progress	Meet with colleagues to plan instruction	Adjust instruction to meet the needs of students	Conference with appraiser at the mid-point
Near end of course	Near end of course	**Did students grow and what did I learn from the process?**	Collect evidence of student growth	Record student outcomes on growth tracker	Review student progress/ consider areas to refine practice	Meet with appraiser to discuss outcomes

Improved student learning and teacher practice

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etag | SLOs — An evidence-based strategy

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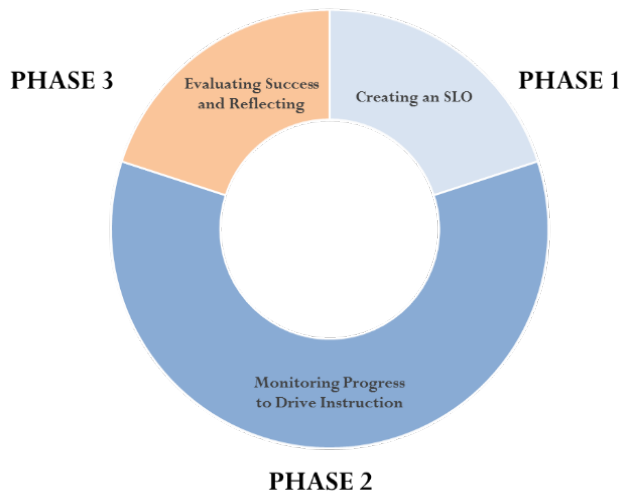
The SLO process represents a continuous cycle of improvement embodied in strong teaching practice. Teachers and their appraisers will use SLOs to design strategies to meet their goals for student success, beginning with planning and leading to thoughtful instructional design and delivery. Throughout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

For ease of understanding, the SLO process has been grouped 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 foundational skills to address, create an instructional plan, and identify student starting points as the SLO is crafted. During this phase, teachers will develop and articulate a clear vision for student growth and strategies to be used to monitor progress toward those goals.

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. To improve efficiency in implementation, SLO processes should be integrated into existing support frameworks at each school.

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 the quality of the SLO, the level of expectations for student growth, the teacher's effectiveness at monitoring students' progress and adjusting instruction, and how well students did in meeting or exceeding growth targets. This conversation results in an overall rating that is based on these factors. The final conversation is designed to help teachers and appraisers reflect on student progress and teacher practice throughout the course in order to plan for the refinement of instruction for the following year.

Phase 1: Creating a Student Learning Objective
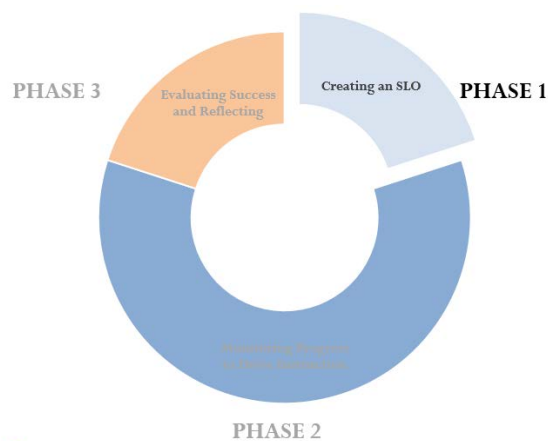
Phase 1 will occur over the first 1-2 months of school for yearlong courses, or in the first 3-4 weeks for semester courses. During Phase 1, teachers will work with other teachers and with their appraiser to develop Student Learning Objective(s) for one or more selected courses.

Although teachers will use the Student Learning Objective form (Appendix A) to craft the SLO, the form simply captures the thinking prompted by the first four overarching questions found on the SLO Thinking Map (see p. 5). Following the guidance below, teachers will spend time gathering resources and information to complete Steps 1 through 5. To improve the quality of the SLO, teachers may wish to refer to the SLO Quality Tool (Appendix D).

Question 1: What is the focus for my SLO?

The goal of this step is to identify a foundational skill for this course that would be appropriate for the focus an SLO. This skill should be the "must have" for students in the course. To determine the foundational skill, teachers should ask themselves, "When students leave my course, what is the one thing they must be able to do as they move forward in their education?" Typically the answer to this question will be the skill identified for the SLO. If there are multiple, competing skills that appear to be equally important, teachers will locate relevant TEKS and will use data to narrow the selection. Details on each element of this step follow below:

Decide on a general content area for focus

Recommendations for content areas for focus can be divided into two categories – one recommendation for a teacher's first year implementing SLOs and one for each additional year of SLO implementation.

For the first year of implementation, teachers should focus on learning the SLO process. If teachers have the ability to work in teams in a common content area or to work with content with which they've had success in the past, they should consider taking that opportunity.

For each year after the first year of implementation, teachers should focus on a content area that provides the greatest opportunity to improve instructional practices. The primary goal of appraisal and SLOs within an appraisal system is to help identify a teacher's areas of strength and areas for refinement. SLOs function best when used as a process that facilitates teacher growth and development.

Begin the process by reviewing the courses or content areas that you teach. What you are looking for is a general content area to review further.

- If you are an elementary generalist, determine what content area you might choose. Should it be ELAR, math, science, or social studies?
- If you are a secondary teacher with multiple course preparations, consider a particular course for focus.
- If you are a teacher of special education or English language learner students, could you collaborate with classroom teachers on a similar SLO? Open up a dialogue with those colleagues to determine if you can join the team to develop an appropriate SLO.

What should you consider in this deliberation? Is one content area more worthy of focus due to teachers' challenges or professional development goals? Or students' challenges?

Identify the most important content for the course

The next step is to identify foundational skills associated with our content area. Teachers may be able to make these selections based on their knowledge of what components of the class were key elements to the success of previous classes. Educators should collaborate with their peers in this selection process. This will be especially important for new teachers who do not have the historical basis for this selection. Keep in mind:

- SLOs should be designed to address foundational skills that are pivotal to the current course as well as students' subsequent education.

   Hint: Consider the question: When students leave my course, what is the one thing they must be able to do as they move forward in their education?

- Focus skills should be threaded throughout the term of the course. These should not be unit-based selections, rather they are broad skills that are addressed multiple times in lessons and, more importantly, are applied by students throughout the course.

For example, suppose a high school statistics teachers is considering appropriate content for an SLO. There are a variety of topics discussed throughout the year from descriptive statistics to inferential statistics. The content, however, builds from the beginning of the course to the end. If the teacher elected to focus on inferential statistics, for example, that content would not likely be reached until nearly the end of the course.

If instead, the teacher stated a focus on interpreting statistics and explaining what they mean in every day terms, that is content that could be carried throughout the term of the course. This a skill that applies when you are talking about graphs and when you are talking about the more complex analysis of variance. Students' ability to explain what they have computed or what they are reading in research will be an over-riding and important skill that will help them use that knowledge moving forward.

Consult historical data to narrow the selection of a focus (if needed)

In some courses, there may be a number of foundational skills from which to choose. If there are multiple, competing foundational skill(s) readily apparent, teachers may need to review data to assist in selecting a focus. The goal of the data review will be to differentiate students' level of success on these skills. To begin the process, identify data that is relevant to all the skills of interest. Next, you will need to be sure that you can determine relative performance on the skills from the data consulted.

- If STAAR results are available and relevant to the course, consider reviewing trends in the data in terms of the reporting categories. The category with the lowest overall performance may be the most difficult for students and may be an ideal candidate for focus.
- Consider other potential data sources with a similar ability to be disaggregated by either standard or reporting categories. These might include benchmark assessments, district quarterly or common assessments, or vendor-developed assessments that are given on a regular basis.
- A single year of data or a single source of data may not be enough. Ideally, you will look for trends, so you will need multiple years to establish whether the same area has been problematic. Similarly, a single source of data may not paint the whole picture of student performance. Multiple data sources triangulate findings – especially when there is ambiguity in the data that you have.
- That said, don't allow yourself to get bogged down in the data review process. SLOs are about learning and adjusting. If the data remains ambiguous, the teacher may need to make a selection. Just remember to keep long term planning in mind during the year. If it turns about the focus you selected was not really appropriate -- too broad, too narrow, not rigorous enough, too rigorous, or something the students really did not need – plan to use that as data for next year's SLO.

Find TEKS that align to the selected content

Now that you have specified a particular focus, the next task will be to review the TEKS to determine which key standards are aligned to the focus.

> Hint: If you have multiple competing skills you are considering but are still unsure about which one to select, move on to the next paragraph for guidance on narrowing the focus.

To find your TEKS, visit this website: http://tea.texas.gov/curriculum/teks/
Remember that the introductory paragraphs often identify key skills and content areas for the course.

As you review, consider:

- In some disciplines, process standards may be more applicable than content standards. For example, a high school social studies class will address a significant number of standards addressing major events in history. Standards attached to each of those events will vary in content, depth, and emphasis. Social studies skills, such as using primary and secondary sources to develop an argument supported with evidence from the literature, however, can be applied across eras and across content areas.
- In mathematics, consider using the word "concept" as a strategy for identifying appropriate TEKS. For example, number sense is a concept that moves through multiple strands of student learning. It is possible that an SLO could result in asking students to display their grasp of the concept through different kinds of problems over the term of the SLO.
- Measurement of the standards will be required. Consider whether you will be able to assess students' skill level in this content at each stage of SLO development, monitoring, and conclusion. Measures must be aligned to the learning content.

"This is my 10th year of teaching art in high school. And although we have four key areas we address in the introductory class, the principles and elements of art are the foundation. Once students understand that content, they can begin to express it in their creative work and use it in critiques of others' works. So that is going to be the focus for my SLO."

"Our fifth grade team met and basically decided right away to do an ELAR SLO. Our students have done well in math for several years, so we feel confident that our planning for math works. But, once we got to thinking about foundational skills in ELAR, we could not agree where to focus. Two team members thought we should work on reading and two thought writing was more important. So, we looked at the 4th grade STAAR results for ELAR and writing. Clearly, writing outcomes were lower and particularly low in the composition reporting category. And the sixth grade team also reported that writing to a prompt was a weakness in many of our students for students who were coming into our fifth grade class this year. We also noticed that early student work from these students supported this as a weakness as well. So, we decided to focus there and found that the 5.15 and 5.18, which address writing process and expository writing work.""

In middle school social studies, we are just beginning to have students work on in depth research projects. This has always been a challenge for my students not because they can't write, but because they have difficulties understanding what they read, especially when it comes from primary sources and context plays a role in understanding. We have seen that reading of informational texts is an ongoing weakness for students in our school, based on STAAR results. I feel comfortable that this the right choice for a focus in our SLO."

Sample SLO Form for Step 1 (based on the first teacher's response above)

Step 1: What is the focus for my SLO?

a. Identify the content area or subject area for focus in the SLO.

> English Language Arts and Reading.

b. What is/are the most important skill(s) that my students need to be able to do when they finish this course?

> We are focusing on writing skills, particularly writing informational or expository texts. Students in the middle school are expected to write regularly, and our students in fifth grade have not typically done that to date. Our team leader spoke to the ELA-R teachers at the middle school and they indicated that students do not have the basis for the more extensive writing that is expected in their courses.

c. If you have identified multiple skills as equally important, what historical data did you review to identify one or two skills for focus? What did that data indicate?

> Our team did debate about where to focus our efforts. We were deciding between reading comprehension and writing skills. We looked at STAAR data from these students when they were in the fourth grade, both for ELA-R and for the writing test. Scores were quite a bit lower in writing than they were in reading, at the overall level. Then we looked at the reporting categories for writing. We noticed that the writing process skills as well as the informational writing were the weakest categories there. Interestingly, students were doing well on conventions. It was the actual composition in informational writing that was the larger issue. This is consistent with early work we have seen for our students.

d. What TEKS for the content area or subject correspond to these most important skills? You may provide an enumerated list of TEKS, but be prepared to share the verbiage of the TEKS with your appraiser.

> ((15) Writing/Writing Process. Students use elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to compose text.
>
> (18) Writing/Expository and Procedural Texts. Students write expository and procedural or work-related texts to communicate ideas and information to specific audiences for specific purposes.

Question 2: Who are my students?

The goal of this step is to describe students' typical skill level when they arrive in your course. You will describe the full range of students who come into your course from the highest to the lowest performing, as you expect for them to appear for the identified skill. Next, you will select a class for focus in your SLO. Then, you will collect data about your current students to decide which description best fits each student covered in the SLO. Finally, you will record the initial skill level for each student. Think of this as an answer to the question that you are often asked about classes, "What kind of students do you have this year?" For the foundational skill in question, you are establishing whether this is a typical class, a higher performing group, or perhaps a lower performing group.

Describe the typical students in your class

Picture your typical students. How would you describe them in terms of the skills associated with the focus of your SLO? Write that description in the middle block of the chart called the Initial Student Skill Profile. Next, think about the highest performing students and describe them in the top box. Next, think about the lowest performing students and describe them in the bottom box. Then fill in the gaps just above and just below typical. What you will see is something that looks like a rubric to assess students' entry level skills. The goal is to make this descriptions crisp and distinct. Later, you will need to be able to pick a description that best fits each student in your class.

> *Hint*: *What was just described is one strategy to complete the profile. Some teachers will state that it was easier for them to start with the highest performing student and work their way down through the other levels. Find a strategy that works for you.*

There are a couple of key elements to remember. First, this is _not_ based on your current students. That may seem odd, but the goal here is to try to understand if these students are the same as classes you have had in the past, higher performing, or lower performing. This will certainly impact instruction and will affect how you complete your SLO.

Second, make sure there is no overlap between the rows. Below are a couple of rows from a high school automotive mechanics instructor. The well above typical level reads:

> *Students have rebuilt engines.*

And, imagine the above typical level reads:

> *Students have rebuilt engines with guidance.*

At first glance, they are different, but in practice, would you be able to differentiate one level from the other? Chances are a high school student would not have occasion to work on an engine without some form of supervision. In practical terms, it would be hard to distinguish between the two.

Another potential issue in Initial Student Skill Profiles is that many have a tendency to want to use words like "most", "many", and "some" in the descriptions. Ask friends to describe the difference in meaning between most and many. Some will tell you percentages, and if they do, the percentages may not match. Others will have a specific definition in mind, which may or may not concur with yours. The point is – there is ambiguity in those words. This does not mean that they cannot be used, rather, it means that

they need to be defined. For example, you could include a legend at the bottom of the profile, explaining the meaning of these ambiguous words, as you will use them.

One last thing to remember is that you want to be able to describe the full range of student performance that you are likely to see. Make sure that every student can be mapped to a description. If you make the profile too narrow, you may find that you cannot fit all of your students to a description.

> *What if you have never taught this course or you are new to teaching?* Consult your colleagues who may have taught the course before to determine what they have noticed with students in the past. In addition, you may need to review data on earlier student performance to determine appropriate descriptions. One other strategy could be used in cases where you have vertically aligned courses. In those cases, the end-of-year expectations as indicated in the TEKS might be helpful to describe what students should be able to do upon arrival in your course.

Finally, check with your colleagues. Review each other's' Initial Student Skill Profiles to check for clarity. Sometimes a fresh set of eyes will notice wording difficulties that you may not have noticed. A sample Initial Student Skill Profile is below for a fourth grade teacher focusing on critical thinking and problem solving in Science:

Well above typical	*Student selects and uses tools, materials, and questions to investigate the natural worlds, following methods prescribed by the teachers, using critical thinking skills to analyze, evaluate, and report findings.*
Above typical	*Student selects and uses tools, materials, and questions to investigate the natural world, following methods prescribed by the teacher, and uses basic logic to analyze findings.*
Typical	*Student selects and uses tools, materials, and questions to investigate the natural world, following methods prescribed by the teacher and uses basic logic to provide explanations for some observations.*
Below typical	*Student selects and uses tools, materials, and questions to investigate the natural world, following methods prescribed by the teacher but does not attempt to explain findings.*
Well below typical	*Student is unable to select and use tools, materials and questions to appropriately investigate the natural world.*

Select the class or classes

In their first year with this process, most teachers will select one class for their SLOs. The entire class should be included in the SLO – targeting particular students only is not permitted. SLOs are designed to help reveal the effectiveness of teaching practices, and to truly inform teacher development, the process can't just look at how some students in a particular class grow while ignoring whether or not the other students in the class grow, too.

- For elementary generalists, this will be the whole class.

- For elementary departmentalized teachers or secondary teachers, this will be the most representative class. Teachers should ask themselves, "Which class best represents the diversity in skill levels and challenges from among other class I could have selected?" It would be best to avoid selecting classes that are unique for a particular reason (i.e., particularly high or low performing students).

Note: In subsequent years of implementation, this will be modified as follows:

1. Teachers will be asked to select enough classes to participate in the SLO to allow for results to be generalizable to all of their students. For a secondary or departmentalized elementary teacher, this may mean that more than one class is selected. Ideally, the teacher would select multiple sections of the same course. If a secondary teacher has different preparations every period, he or she might complete two SLOs, balancing the value of the feedback from the SLO process with the capacity of the teacher to work through more than one SLO.

2. Teachers and appraisers will be expected to collaborate to determine an area of challenge for the teacher. This might be a content area that is new to the teacher or in which the teacher wants to expand his or her mastery of the material. It might be a course where guiding students to mastery has proven to be difficult. The decision on where to focus will be part of the conference in which the goal setting and professional development plan conversations occur (generally in conjunction with the end-of-year conference). It is important to think of SLOs are part of the appraisal system. Aligning goal setting, professional development plans, and SLOs will lead to more successful strategies for gaining the support and feedback needed to meet the targets established in the SLO.

Collect data about students to identify current level of learning

The next task will be to collect data about your current students. It is important to remember that this should be current data – not data from previous years. The goal is to try to describe students' current skill level for the skill in question in the SLO. These data can come from both formal and informal sources.

For example, formal measures could include:

- Quizzes
- Unit assessments
- District formatives
- Student work product including writing samples and lab reports

Less formal measures include exit tickets where you ask students to summarize their understanding or ask questions about the content. Considerable data can be drawn from your interactions with students in class. What questions do they ask? Are they basic or more advanced questions? What kinds of errors or misconceptions do you see in homework responses?

A single source of data is not likely to be conclusive. Students have "bad" days when they do not exhibit their potential. They may respond better to certain kinds of questions than they do to others. Collecting multiple measures will reduce the chance that what you are measuring is just random effects (statisticians sometimes call that "noise").

It is also important to remember that this does not need to be a new measure that you create. New measures can be created, especially if current measures do not appropriately assess the skill in question (see the side bar for additional information). But, it is not essential. Effective instruction is, in and of itself, a data gathering process. Teachers are asking themselves: Are they getting it? Do I need to adjust what I am doing? That is data and it can be an invaluable resource for estimating students pre-existing level of skills and learning. If you can use these formal and informal data sources and feel confident about your

evaluations of students' skill level, do so, but if there are remaining questions, you may need to consider some sort of pre-measure.

<u>Map current students to the Initial Student Skill Profile</u>

In the previous section, you determined what data you would collect about students' current level of learning. In this section, you will focus on mapping students to the Initial Student Skill Profile to answer the question: Which description is the best fit for each student included in the SLO? Your task will be to review the current data you have on each student and find which level descriptor is the most appropriate.

There are a couple of things to note here. First, as you work through this process, it may become apparent that the descriptors in the profile are not clear. This would be a good time to think about revising for clarity, if that is the case. Second, this is estimating student performance. Use your best judgment. Your assessment of students' skill level at the beginning of the year are not likely to be based on measures that have been refined to be psychometrically perfect, so multiple measures are encouraged. Be prepared to explain to your appraiser how you reached decisions about placement in the Initial Skill Profile.

Below is an example of how a teacher might make decisions about assigning students to levels. This is a high school teacher of an introductory information technology course. The highest two levels of the Initial Skill Profile he created are listed below:

> *Well above typical: Students are able to use the following software programs with a moderate level of sophistication: Word processing, database, spreadsheet, and presentation.*

> *Above typical: Students are able to use 2 of the following software programs with a moderate level of sophistication.*

> *Suppose the teacher has two students: Frankie and Johnny. Frankie can create a presentation using graphics developed from the spreadsheet technology and provide a well-designed word-processed report. Johnny, on the other hand, can use the presentation software as well as word-processing, but does not use graphics at all because he does not know how to use the software. It should be clear that Johnny would fit that above typical description. But Frankie does not fit neatly in either location. Here is where we remind ourselves that this is estimation. Frankie has demonstrated most of the skills indicated in the Well Above Typical level; not all, but most. Frankie also showed more skills demonstrated than is expected in the above typical level. Therefore, the teacher decided to map Frankie to the well above typical level. That seems to describe her well.*

The example is a reminder that you are estimating skill level. The teacher should use sound judgment, backed by data, to make decisions about where to map students. There should be consistency in how decisions were made about mapping students. If two students have similar performance, they should be mapped to the same level. Teachers should be prepared to provide evidence supporting the assignments that were made.

An important part of this step is to record students' initial skill level on the <u>Student Growth Tracker</u> (Appendix B). This is an Excel spreadsheet that will be used to track growth (see below). Each student is listed separately and his or her level on the Initial Student Skill Profile is recorded. Note that the

electronic version of the form has drop-down menus to simplify your selection of level. Click on the down arrow to find the appropriate level for each student, then just click to select the appropriate descriptor.

> *Remember*: *You will need to save the growth tracker following a naming convention recommended by your school. We suggest that you name the file as follows: YOURLASTNAME.FIRSTINITIAL.SCHOOL.tracker. For example, it might be saved as: SMITH.J.CentralHS.tracker.*

Question 3: What are my expectations for these students?

The goal of this step will be to describe your expectations for students. These are the goals you have for each individual student based on the information you have about their starting point and other data that may impact their growth.

Develop the Targeted Skill Profile to describe expectations

This profile describes your expectations for students' growth in the foundational skill identified in the SLO. By definition, the descriptors will not match those in the Initial Skill Profile – because students would have grown and developed over the course of the SLO. Those Initial Profile phrases that would have described their performance at the beginning of the SLO should no longer fit. Their performance should be more refined at the end of the interval, the tasks they are asked to do would be more challenging, and your expectations for how they should perform will be higher.

You must consider two factors when you develop the Targeted Skill Profile. First, students' level on the Initial Profile will clearly determine expectations for growth. You must know the student's starting point to predict the ending point. How students as a whole were distributed will also affect how you design the whole profile (more on that in a moment).

Secondly, the SLO focus and TEKS or local curriculum identified will affect the profile. The TEKS expectations, for example, fundamentally define what we want students to achieve by the end of the course. But remember, neither of these factors can be considered in isolation. They are influenced by and influence each other.

Many of the questions that teachers have about the Targeted Profile is where to anchor the descriptors, or put another way, how to decide what description should fit in the "typical" box. If students were distributed evenly or in a bell-shaped curve on the Initial, think of the typical level on the Targeted Profile as your expectations for that middle group. Let's look at an example.

> Sally, a physical education teacher, developed her Initial Skill Profile and mapped her students to the levels. As a result she found that she had 2 students well above typical, 3 above typical, 10 typical, 4 below typical, and 3 well below typical. That is fairly close to a bell-shaped curve. Imagine this was her middle or typical level of the Initial Skill Profile:
> > *Students are able to complete the running course in 2 minutes and complete at least 5 repetitions of two of the other fitness skills assessed (sit-ups, pull-ups, push-ups, weight lifts) within the prescribed time limit*

> For the Targeted Skill Profile, the teacher's middle or typical level might look something like this:
> > *Students are able to complete two laps on the running course in 2 minutes, and complete at least 10 repetitions of each of the other fitness skills assessed (sit-ups, pull-ups, push-ups, weight lifts) within the prescribed time limit*

> The teacher would have used personal experience and expectations based on the TEKS to determine that this was what the typical student should be able to do by the end of the year, with ongoing practice and skills building.

If you had a group which was clustered around above typical and well above typical, however, your expectations at the middle will have to be higher. One way to think of it is to consider that bulk of your students. That group, the largest group, should be targeted for the typical level of the Targeted Profile.

> For example, imagine our teacher had a different distribution: Ten students were well above typical, 8 were above typical, and 4 were typical on the Initial Skill Profile. If the teacher kept the description above for the typical group on the Targeted Skill Profile, that would not be expecting enough growth. Possibly, the typical level for this high performing group might look something like this:
> > *Students are able to complete three laps on the running course in 2 minutes, and complete at least 20 repetitions of each of the other fitness skills assessed (sit-ups, pull-ups, push-ups, weight lifts) within the prescribed time limit*

If most students fall below typical, you will use the same strategy to anchor the Targeted Skill Profile. Again, use the largest group to anchor the profile and ask yourself: How much do you want this group to grow? Maybe these students will not reach the same high level you had for your high performing group,

but all students are expected to grow. Perhaps there is a level that is challenging, close to grade level, but perhaps not as high as it would be for the average group. For example, this might be that typical level:

> *Students are able to complete one lap on the running course in 2 minutes, and complete at least 5 repetitions of each of the other fitness skills assessed (sit-ups, pull-ups, push-ups, weight lifts) within the prescribed time limit*

Notice that this level is actually higher than the typical level on the Initial Skill Profile because students are expected to demonstrate every fitness skill.

Below is a sample Targeted Skill Profile for the Grade 4 science teacher.

Well above typical	*Student selects and uses tools, materials, and questions, following scientific inquiry methods to investigate the natural world in the laboratory and in outdoor environments, analyzing, evaluating, and critiquing explanations by using logical reasoning or by conducting experimental or observational testing in all areas of science including the history 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.*
Above typical	*Student selects and uses tools, materials, and questions, following scientific inquiry methods to investigate the natural world in the laboratory and in outdoor environments, analyzing, evaluating, and critiquing explanations by using logical reasoning or by conducting experimental or observational testing in all areas of science including the history of science.*
Typical	*Student selects and uses tools, materials, and questions, following scientific inquiry methods to investigate the natural world in the laboratory and in outdoor environments, analyzing and providing explanations in some areas of science by using logical reasoning or by conducting experimental or observational testing.*
Below typical	*Student selects and uses tools, materials, and questions, following scientific inquiry methods to investigate the natural world in the laboratory and in outdoor environments, providing correct explanations of findings in some instances.*
Well below typical	*Student selects and uses tools, materials, and questions to investigate the natural world, following methods prescribed by the teacher and attempts to provide explanations for findings, but the responses are frequently inaccurate.*

Review supplemental data for each student covered in the SLO

To craft a solid Targeted Skill Profile, you will need to review supplemental data. For example, you will want to consider how much students have grown in the past. Is there trend data that could be reviewed to determine the amount of growth students have made in the past? This might be a simple as looking at the first and last assessment from the previous year to determine the amount of growth students achieved. It may be beneficial to look at more than one year's worth of student growth to determine a pattern, although this is not required. More data points may help you eliminate that possibility that you are seeing chance fluctuation that might not be seen again.

Another source of data to consider is information about the particular students in your class. This comes in several forms. First, what amount of growth have these students exhibited in the past in similar or even

dissimilar courses? Are these students, in general terms, quick learners and high performers? That should affect the targets that you set. Similarly, if your current students have a history of difficulty in learning, this should factor into your decisions about targets for these students.

Other data about current students to be considered are any challenges they currently may be facing. Attendance is a good example. Students who have chronically high levels of absenteeism will be challenged to master the material in any course due to the somewhat shortened time frame for instruction than that experienced by other students. Other considerations might include whether or not a disability or language acquisition has impacted the student's performance in the past. Personal or circumstantial issues can also affect student growth and may be considered. For example, students who have unstable home conditions may find it difficult to concentrate on school work. Note, this is not to say that students facing any of these challenges are not expected to grow. They are. Every student is expected to grow. These factors should just be considered when trying to determine the student's context and how that context has impacted his or her growth in the past. Consider the example below:

> *José has two students, Thelma and Louise, who have similar records of achievement on an earlier pre-assessment. Both were mapped to the typical level on the Initial Skill Profile. But José noted that Louise had 40 days of unexcused absences last year while Thelma only missed two days. And, upon further examination of the record, José found that Louise has failed several courses and was retained two years ago due to failures. The goal for Thelma is to reach the above typical level on the Targeted Skill Profile, but he decided that a challenging goal for Louise would be to reach the typical level on the Targeted Skill Profile, considering the context of her past performance.*

Note that this teacher had two students with similar records on pre-assessment results but marked differences in other measures of achievement (passing grades) and attendance. The teacher was able to justify differentiating targets based on knowledge of factors related to the students' histories and the impact on their education. Teachers should consider these factors but be prepared to explain choices made when reviewing the SLO with the appraiser.

> <u>*Hint:*</u> *It is important to note that this section, the one above it, and the subsequent section work hand-in-hand. If the supplemental data indicates that students are likely to be higher performers than might have been indicated on the Initial Skill Profile, the Targeted Skill Profile might need to be adjusted to reflect higher expectations. It may be best to think of these tasks as being completed simultaneously rather than sequentially – with reflection and adjustment as each task is addressed.*

<u>Establish a target for each student covered in the SLO</u>

Now, you will combine the supplemental data gathered above and determine a target for each student. It is important to remember that this is <u>not</u> a subtraction problem between the Initial and Targeted Skill Profiles. It is perfectly acceptable for a student to be described best by the typical level on the Initial Skill Profile and to have a goal of achieving the typical level on the Targeted Skill Profile. This is because the descriptors are different – there is a higher level of expectations described on the Targeted Skill Profile.

Imagine the case where the students were distributed mostly at well above typical on the Initial Skill Profile. As you recall, this meant that you would develop the description of the typical level on the Targeted Skill Profile to match your goal for this, the largest group of students. Therefore, it is even possible that you could have a student who is well above typical on the Initial Skill Profile with a goal of typical on the Targeted Skill Profile.

Fundamentally, you are focusing on the *descriptions* and not the labels. If you think of it that way, always ask yourself, does the target I have identified for my student describe significant growth for that student? If that answer is yes, then the target is reasonable. Focusing on the descriptors you created will help with that determination.

The goal here is to identify targets for each student that are rigorous but attainable. Targets should require reach and growth for every student. Targets do not have to be set the same for every student. If a student is having a period of significant growth, he or she may have a higher growth expectations than other students who were at the same level on the Initial Skill Profile. Consider that supplemental data you gathered when making these decisions.

Once the targets are set, these need to be recorded on the column indicated in the Student Growth Tracker (Appendix B), shown below.

Identify evidence sources to determine growth

At the end of the SLO interval, you will collect data to determine how much students have grown. At this point, you are being asked to identify what measures you will use. The measures you identify should be aligned with the focus of the SLO.

Begin by asking yourself if there are any existing measures that could be used for this purpose. Are there tasks or assessments that you typically give toward the end of the SLO interval that could work for this

purpose? Again, the key will be if these measures are aligned with the focus of the SLO. It could be that the measures cover more content than is included in your SLO, but it should be possible to evaluate students' performance on the subset of items or tasks related to the SLO. There also needs to be enough items or tasks to be confident that you are truly measuring the SLO focus. A common misstep here is to try to use a measure where there are too few items to determine the students' level of performance. Also recognize that if the specific tasks or items that are related to the SLO cannot be scored separately from the overall assessment score, it would not work for the purposes of evidence for the SLO.

If there are no available assessments that would work, you may need to develop a measure, preferably with a team or another teacher. If there is no other teacher with whom you can team within your school, see your principal to determine if there is someone else in the district who would be available to team up with you. As we are focusing on foundational skills, these measures are likely to include performance tasks (essays, reports, presentations, projects, etc.).

To ensure that your measures are aligned with the focus of the SLO, the use of an assessment blueprint is recommended. A simple blueprint would list the item or task and the TEKS or focus with which it is aligned. Another element that could be added would the level of cognitive demand in an item. This would help you double check that the items are representing an appropriate level of challenge for this class or grade. Are all items simply requiring recall, or do they ask students to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize, too?

Check with your appraiser to determine how any assessments created by teachers will be reviewed. It would be beneficial to attach these measures to the SLO to allow for a more complete review of the SLO as a whole.

Question 4: How will I guide these students toward growth?

The overall goal for this step is to describe how you will develop an instructional plan to address the needs of your students. The focus will be on *differentiation* and plans to monitor and adjust instruction.

Describe the plan for differentiation

Effective teachers use many strategies to differentiate instruction. For the purpose of the SLO, you will be asked to describe how you will differentiate for the highest and lowest performing students in the class. For the higher performing students, teachers might want to address more challenging content. Are there enrichment opportunities you could incorporate into class work? Are there applications of the learning that might be more challenging for students?

Similarly, you want to address the lowest performing students. How will you scaffold their learning? Do you have built in one-on-one time or extra practice to assist these students? Do you have additional resources devoted to helping the student who is more challenged with the content?

Finally, you will describe how these two differentiating approaches will coalesce in the classroom. How will you encourage both groups, as well as those in the middle, to continue to grow and learn, even

though their starting points and the pace of learning may not be the same? For example, an elementary school generalist may use a balanced literacy approach to teaching English Language Arts:

Every morning, we have read aloud and shared readings when we discuss readings, asking questions for comprehension. But during guided reading time, students are supported at an appropriate level for their reading through appropriate text selection and the individual support given.

Identify strategies to monitor progress

Next, you will discuss your plans to monitor progress. It is important to remember that SLOs are not created and then addressed only at the end of the interval. SLOs are living plans, and should be monitored along the way. Frequent assessment of progress and tracking of trajectory toward the goal is recommended. Less formal measures of assessment, such as questioning in class, homework assignments, and observations of students' work made over the shoulder during regular class time should regularly be included in monitoring students' progress toward goals.

Consider how often you will collect this formative data. Monthly progress check-ins are a reasonable expectation. Consider what form those formatives assessments will take in advance. For example, will there be specific tasks or assignments that will help monitor progress? Or, will there be interim assessments that could be used for this purpose?

Track the results of these assessments on the Student Growth Tracker (Appendix B). This will help with visualizing progress and determining if there are any students or student groups that are falling behind, or if there are some students who may need more rigorous work to remain engaged in the learning. This will also help anchor conversations with your appraiser about how, when, and in response to what practices students grew.

Just as important as collecting measures of student progress is the plan for reviewing that data and deciding how to adjust instruction. We recommend that the data review process be conducted in teacher teams so that colleagues can help think through potential issues. Someone else on your team may have been implementing key instructional strategies that are new to you. They may be able to recommend modifications and refinements to your practice. The review process will only be effective if it is scheduled regularly and the data are reviewed and discussed.

Plan for conferences with colleagues

Teachers should meet at least monthly to talk about progress. Include these discussions in regularly scheduled Professional Learning Community meetings or other standing meetings as much as possible. For those who do not have existing structures or an obvious team, consider other alternatives such as meeting with teachers of other grades and subjects or teachers on other campuses (whether virtual or face-to-face). Those who are in unique teaching positions in a school may need to reach to the district level for colleagues in similar roles. And, in very small school schools, the team may be the entire teaching staff. The point is, discussions with colleagues can elicit clarity and new ideas.

Part of preparing for this portion of the SLO will be identifying who can participate in these collegial meetings and exactly when you will meet. Committing to these meetings on the SLO form, itself, will help serve as a reminder that this is a key portion of SLO development that needs to stay on everyone's schedule.

Review SLO plan with appraiser for approval

SLOs are teacher-written and administrator-approved. Since SLOs are conceptualized as being part of the overall appraisal system, the administrator who approves the SLO should be the same person who would complete the appraisal. Getting feedback on your SLO from other teachers, team leaders, department chairs, content specialists, or instructional coaches, however, will help to refine the SLO prior to submission to your appraiser.

Plan your SLO development around the timelines specified by your school and district, with an understanding that SLOs may require revision. Plan backwards, allowing for the possibility that your appraiser may ask for revisions, and give yourself enough time to make those adjustments. In addition, find out how to submit your SLO for review. This could vary from district to district, and could involve paper or electronic submissions strategies.

As you complete the SLO form, please notice that there is a spell checker built into the form. Review the form for any errors before you submit it. When you are satisfied that the SLO is ready for review, send the SLO form, the Student Growth Tracker, and any other supporting materials that you feel might clarify the SLO to your appraiser. Supporting materials could include any assessments, rubrics, or performance tasks that you might ask students to complete as evidence of growth. Appraisers may also want to see how students were assigned to the Initial Skill Profile and may request any measures that were used as well as samples of student work.

Teachers and their appraisers will meet to discuss the SLO. Think of yourself as the guide for your appraiser. Your task will be to explain your thinking and the decisions that you made in crafting the SLO. You should use this time to request support

that might be needed to succeed with this SLO. Consider whether there are any professional development opportunities that might be beneficial or if there are resources that would enhance the learning experience for students.

It is permissible for appraisers to meet with a group of teachers who share a common SLO rather than individually. This will broaden the conversation and may assist in reflection on any changes that may be appropriate. If technology is readily available, it may be appropriate to use this meeting to make immediate adjustments to the SLO that may be required. At the end of the conference, appraisers will document their approval on the SLO form itself.

Phase 2: Monitoring Progress to Drive Instruction

## Question 5: Are my students progressing toward targets?

During Phase 2 of the SLO process, teachers will be answering this question: Are my students progressing toward their targets? This phase 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)." Teachers continuously engage in a continuous cycle that includes planning, instruction, evidence collection, analysis, reflection, and then back to planning in order to further student learning.

PHASE 3 · Evaluating Success and Reflecting · Creating an SLO · PHASE 1

Monitoring Progress to Drive Instruction

PHASE 2

Monitor Progress

As the SLO was written, teachers identified a plan for monitoring instruction with progress checks and formative assessments. To ensure follow through with those plans, teachers should note proposed dates of formative assessments on their planning calendar.

Progress monitoring will be advantageous to both teachers and their students. Recall that measures collected do not have to take the form of formal assessments. Collect data regularly, informally as well as formally. Record your estimation of student progress on the growth tracker. Currently, the form has columns for three check-ins. You are not restricted to just the three check-ins, however, and three check-ins might be insufficient. To add more columns, right click at the top of that third check-in column to insert additional columns. You can add any number of columns that you need to record your findings. If you add more columns, you may wish to click on page layout at the top of the page and change the orientation to landscape.

There are no restrictions in what content you can enter into the check-in columns. If you want to use words to describe progress, you can do so. Record whatever will help you understand students' progress
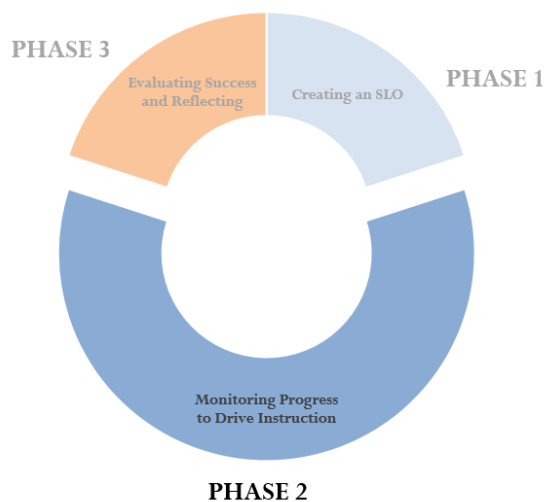
and whether they are on track to reach targets. To aid in this process, print the Targeted Skill Profile. Using the growth tracker and Targeted Skill Profile hand-in-hand will help clarify current status.

<u>Meet with colleagues to plan instruction</u>

Teachers should plan regular reflection and discussions with their colleagues regarding student progress towards their SLO, preferably at least once a month. Progress discussions provide teachers a chance to discuss progress towards goals with their colleagues and plan for future instruction. Ideally, discussions include teachers who teach the same grade and/or subject, although this may include teachers across grades and subjects, instructional coaches, or district content specialists.

These check-ins should be planned around *existing* team meetings, one-on-ones, and other pre-scheduled meetings, whenever possible. Teachers should schedule discussions when they feel it would be most beneficial. It is suggested that there be several progress discussion prior to the appraiser midpoint discussion and, when possible, before the appraiser end-of-year discussion.

Prior to progress discussions, teachers will assess student progress on the Targeted Skill Profile. Teachers will examine any evidence of student work that indicates growth on the particular skills assessed in the SLO. Similar to the beginning of the year, multiple sources of evidence should be included to triangulate student progress. Before the check-ins, teachers should assess individual student progress and record findings on the Student Growth Tracker. These data will allow for more meaningful discussion grounded in the data.

In addition, teachers should consider the following self-reflection questions prior to the check-ins:
- What instructional strategies have been particularly successful in helping students progress on this skill?

- Which particular students (or groups of students) have made the most progress? Which have made the least? Why might this be the case?

- Where could I use additional support or ideas from my colleagues?

During progress discussions, teachers will spend time discussing their progress towards SLOs, sharing successful instructional strategies, and helping each other plan for the future. Teachers may use the optional Progress Discussion Notes form (see Appendix E) to keep track of discussions and meeting notes.

Colleagues should be prepared to engage in the dialogue and provide insights and feedback. The following guiding questions may provide a frame for those discussions:
- What progress has been made?

- How do you know? (What are your sources of evidence?)

- What strategies have you been implementing that are working?

- What strategies are not working?

- What are your biggest obstacles/challenges?

- What changes (if any) will you make moving forward? How will you know if they have been successful?

Adjust instruction to meet the needs of students

The goal for the conversations with colleagues is to determine if the instructional plan is meeting the needs of students. If that is not the case, the teacher should consider alternative approaches and strategies. The teacher should ask him or herself:

1. If some, but not all, students are progressing, are there more tailored strategies that might work with those who are behind?
2. Do those who are not growing require additional one-on-one time? Are there other strategies that may be beneficial for them?
3. Was one teacher in the team more successful than others? Did that teacher use any unique strategies that the others did not? Would it be possible to observe the strategy in action in the classroom? Could this approach be adopted by the remaining team members?
4. Is this an opportunity to explore professional development offerings? Are there trainings, webinars, or readings that the team can share to refine practice?

Keep in mind that when teachers meet with their appraisers at the mid-point (preferably during a post-conference for the sake of efficiency), they will be asked to describe how instruction has been adjusted. Teachers may want to keep a few notes to remind themselves of their progress finding the right strategies to meet the needs of students.

## Conference with the appraiser at the mid-point

The required midpoint discussion provides teachers with the opportunity to review the progress students have made with their appraiser and receive feedback and support prior to the end of the year discussion. These meetings should be designed to coincide with other planned one-on-one conversations, post-observation conferences, or other informal discussions. Where teacher teams have similar or the same SLO, appraisers may consider joining existing team meetings to discuss progress with the full group, rather than holding individual discussions.

Teachers should prepare for this discussion in the same way they prepare for discussions with their colleagues – by gathering evidence of student progress, assessing progress on the Targeted Skill Profile, and recording progress on the Student Growth Tracker. Similar self-reflection questions may be helpful in preparing for the discussion. It is the teacher's responsibility to have evidence of progress of students available for these conferences, including samples of student work.

This conference will be an ideal time for appraisers to facilitate teacher reflection and self-assessment, share insights, and provide support for improved effectiveness. Where teachers are struggling to see student progress, the appraiser may provide any number of follow-up supports to help the teacher (e.g., brainstorming additional instructional strategies, creating time/opportunities for teachers to shadow or mentor one another, providing targeted coaching, finding applicable professional development opportunities, etc.). Teachers may use the optional Progress Discussion Notes, (see Appendix E), to keep track of the discussion and meeting notes.

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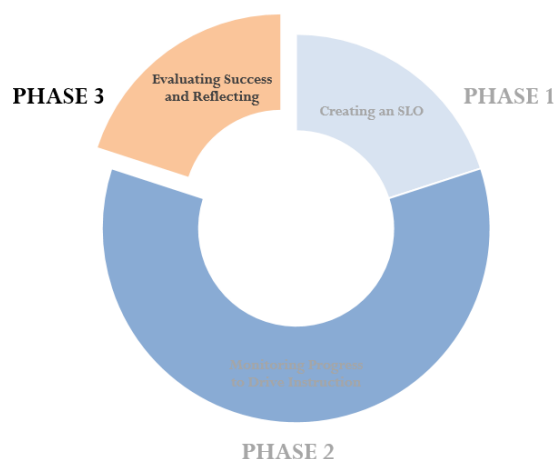
In Phase 3 (near the end of the course), the appraiser and teacher will meet to discuss progress throughout the year, the quality of the SLO, expectations for student growth, monitoring and adjustments, and overall student growth, using the Targeted Skill Profile, Student Growth Tracker, and the SLO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

Collect evidence of student growth

Teachers will collect evidence of student growth using those measures identified in the SLO. Remember that where possible, multiple measures are recommended. This will allow the teacher to triangulate learning and offer students more opportunities to demonstrate their skills.

Give consideration to the timing of these measures. Your school or district may have provided guidelines for appropriate timing to avoid state or district assessment and other events with the school. Also, recall that SLOs are closed out, with measures collected and final data reported, in time to hold an end-of-year conference that falls within the timeline for completion of teacher appraisal. For many of the T-TESS districts, this will mean that the measures for SLOs will need to be collected no later than mid-April for most teachers.

Give consideration to strategies for scoring measures. If you have shared a common assessment with your team, you should work together to ensure that the entire team is scoring work similarly. In the case of rubrics, consider calibrating. Select a representative piece of student work and have each team member assess it with the rubric. If inconsistencies exist, talk through the student work and the rubric together to determine if there are differences in opinion about the meaning of terms. Continue to work through samples until you find that there is considerable agreement in ratings.

Sharing expectations of student work with your colleagues will help clarify whether what you see as "good" is what another sees as "good". Think of the learning that would occur if it becomes clear that our perceptions do not match. Is someone too high or too low in terms of expectations? Does that mean that there are different expectations across the school? This is a perfect time to align these expectations.

Record student outcomes on the growth tracker

Now that measures have been collected, the data gathered should be used to map students to the appropriate level of the Targeted Skill Profile. Just as with the Initial Skill Profile, this is not an exact science. You are looking at the preponderance of data from our multiple measures. Taken together, what can you conclude about student performance? Map each student to the Targeted Skill Profile level that most accurately describes their performance.

Next go to the Student Growth Tracker and the column with the heading, "EOY Targeted Student Skill Profile level". Use the drop-down menu to select a level for each student. Compare the actual EOY level with the target you specified for the student in Targeted Student Skill Profile Goal (column E). If the level at the EOY us equal to or higher than the goal specified, use the drop-down menu to select "Yes" in the last column, indicating that students met their goal.

Review student growth and consider areas to refine practice

Now that the data has been collected and students assigned to levels on the Targeted Skill Profile, teachers will pause to reflect on the process, how much students grew, and what they learned about their own practice. Teachers may elect to use the Teacher Reflection Guide (see Appendix F) to guide this process.
Teachers will reflect on student growth and progress, considering the following questions:
- Who grew the most? Why do you think they were so successful?
- Who grew the least? Can you identify where their problems in learning occurred?
- Were there any common characteristics among those who did not achieve the expected growth?

Similarly, teachers will reflect on their own pedagogy, considering questions such as:
- How did you adjust instruction during the year? Did the changes you made help improve student learning?
- What did you learn about your own pedagogy (assumptions, sequencing, grouping, etc.)?
- Were students engaged in the learning?
- Were the assignments, class work, and measures appropriate for this course?
- What would you differently the next time? Would you change the focus, the instructional strategies or the goals set for students? Why?

Considering these questions may highlight areas of personal growth for the teacher in the coming year. Perhaps the strategies used are highly effective with certain groups of students, but do not help others. Teachers may discover that students grew much more than anticipated and will want to challenge students more in the future.

The lessons learned from this SLO should inform SLOs in the subsequent years as well as practice across all classes taught. Many teachers view SLOs as "action research" where they systematically address a specific issue and learn whether the approach taken results in greater success for students. Where teachers pinpoint particular areas for pedagogical development, those refinement goals should be considered in mapping out the subsequent year's goal setting and professional development plan.

Meet with appraiser to discuss student growth and teacher insight

Teachers and appraisers will meet to review the SLO outcome and overall SLO process near the end of the year. The timing of this conference will coincide with the completion of appraisal meetings and should be held at the same time whenever possible.

Prior to the meeting, teachers should gather the following documentation and submit it to the appraiser:
- The completed Student Growth Tracker
- Copies of the measures used to determine level of the Targeted Student Profile
- Evidence of progress meetings with colleagues and/or adjustments to instruction

The appraiser will review these materials and may ask the teacher to additionally submit samples of certain students' work to review prior to the conference.

During the conference, the teacher will guide the appraiser through decisions that were made about students' levels on the Targeted Skill Profile and explain how the measures gathered weighed into those decisions. During the conference, the appraiser will ask teachers to share his or her reflections on what was revealed through the SLO process (see reflection questions above).

After the conference concludes, the appraiser will use the SLO rating rubric (see Appendix C) along with the evidence of student growth, instructional adjustments made, conversations and discussions throughout the year, and the information the teacher shared during the end-of-year conference to determine final rating. Ratings will be determined by the appraiser based on the quality of the SLO, teachers' expectations for student growth, progress monitoring and adjustment to instructional strategies, and student growth. Appraisers will record their rating on the SLO Rating Rubric.

It is important to note that this time of reflection will provide invaluable guidance for subsequent years.
- Teachers and their appraisers should consider what worked well and what did not work well in their SLOs. This information will provide suggestions for SLO improvement.

- In addition, a careful reflection on student performance may uncover instructional strategies that were not effective for some subset of a class. This reflection could have implications for needed

A word about not meeting targets…

Not meeting a target may sound like a bad thing, but really it is not. Students do not learn and grow for a variety of reasons. This is an opportunity to investigate why it might have occurred. You will ask yourself, "Why didn't they grow? Was there something about my practice that could be improved? Or, do the exercises we do in class simply not prepare them for ultimate expectations? Use this time to explore possible reasons and resolve to adjust in the future.

Remember that when SLOs become part of appraisal, you are not being judged solely on your ability to move students to their targets. The SLO rating rubric also evaluates the quality of your SLO, how high your expectations for student growth were, and how well you monitored and adjusted instruction. These are all things that you can address directly this year as well as in preparation for the next.

interventions for students as well as professional development for teachers.

- As SLOs are reviewed, teachers and their appraisers can also reflect on how the SLOs may have revealed teachers' strengths and areas for refinement. Again, this may suggest professional development opportunities that would be of particular benefit to a group of teachers.

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 and provide feedback on teachers' instructional choices 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.

Student Learning Objective Form 2016-2017

Teacher Name		Date	
School		Appraiser Name	
Grade		Subject Area	

Step 1: What is the focus for my SLO?

a. Identify the content area or subject area for focus in the SLO.

b. What is/are the most important skill(s) that my students need to be able to do when they finish this course?

c. If you have identified multiple skills as equally important, what historical data did you review to identify one or two skills for focus? What did that data indicate?

d. What TEKS for the content area or subject correspond to these most important skills? You may provide an enumerated list of TEKS, but be prepared to share the verbiage of the TEKS with your appraiser.

Step 2: What do I think my students will be able to do?

Use your knowledge of prior students' performance and end-of-year expectations for students in previous, vertically aligned courses to describe typical students in the class. You may wish to describe the average student (middle level or "typical") first, then, the highest performing student ("well above typical"), and the lowest performing student ("well below typical") and finally, complete the in-between levels ("above" and "below typical").

	Initial Student Skill Profile	
Level	Descriptors	Number of Students in this level
Well above typical		
Above typical		
Typical		
Below typical		
Well below typical		

a. Who will be included in your SLO? *Elementary classroom teachers: Select your entire class. Elementary departmentalized teachers or secondary teachers: identify the targeted class or classes (class, grade and subject). When choosing your class or classes, gather informal data about your students to determine which class or classes is/are most representative of the cross-section of students that you teach.*

b. Match your current students to the descriptions in the Initial Student Skill profile.

    i. List the total number of students at each level in the right hand column above, and

    ii. Record the level for each individual student on the Student Growth Tracker.

    iii. Check here when both tasks are complete: ☐

c. What student work did you use to map students to the Initial Student Skill Profile?

Step 3: What are my expectations for these students?

a. Use information about how students mapped to the Initial Student Skill Profile to describe how, as a whole, students are expected to progress. In other words, what are your expectations for what high, average, and low performers will be able to do at the end of the course? Complete the Targeted Student Skill Profile below.

The profile should describe your expectations for students' performance at the end of the interval. For example, the description at the middle level describes what you expect of the typical student at the end of the interval.

Targeted Student Skill Profile	
Well above typical	
Above typical	
Typical	
Below typical	
Well below typical	

b. Use available data on your current students (e.g., attendance, grades in relevant courses, early student work, prior testing data, etc.) along with each student's description on the Initial Student Skill Profile to establish a target for each individual student covered in the SLO. Record these targets on the Student Growth Tracker.

Check here when complete: ☐

c. What evidence will you use to establish students' skill levels at the end of the interval? Describe the measures to be used and how they are aligned with the skills identified in the SLO.

Step 4: How will I guide these students toward growth?

a. How will you differentiate instruction for those students who are in the highest performing group as well as those who are in the lowest performing group?

b. What strategies will you use to monitor progress? If the district has a standard process in place, simply note that is the case.

c. Describe your plan for conferencing with your colleagues about student progress. Who will be members of your team and how often will you meet?

Student Learning Objective Review & Approval

By signing below you acknowledge that you have discussed and agreed upon the Student Learning Objective Plan, above.

Teacher Signature		Date of Submission	
Appraiser Review		Decision	Date
		☐ Revise and resubmit	
		☐ Approved	
Resubmission Date		Appraiser Signature	
Additional Comments		Final Decision	☐ Approved

Appendix B: Student Growth Tracker

Student Growth Tracker							
Teacher:							
Course:							
Student Name	Initial Student Skill Profile Level	Targeted Student Skill Profile Growth Goal	Progress Check-in #1	Progress Check-in #2	Progress Check-in #3	EOY Targeted Student Skill Profile Level	Does the EOY Targeted Student Skill Profile Level represent expected growth?
1	---	---				---	---
2	---	---				---	---
3	---	---				---	---
4	---	---				---	---
5	---	---				---	---
6	---	---				---	---
7	---	---				---	---
8	---	---				---	---
9	---	---				---	---
10	---	---				---	---
11	---	---				---	---
12	---	---				---	---
13	---	---				---	---
14	---	---				---	---
15	---	---				---	---
16	---	---				---	---
17	---	---				---	---
18	---	---				---	---
19	---	---				---	---
20	---	---				---	---
21	---	---				---	---
22	---	---				---	---
23	---	---				---	---
24	---	---				---	---
25	---	---				---	---
26	---	---				---	---
27	---	---				---	---
28	---	---				---	---
29	---	---				---	---
30	---	---				---	---

Appendix C: SLO Rating Rubrics

Option 1 (to be used by appraisers to evaluate teacher performance)

Distinguished (5)	All or most of the following have been accomplished: • 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 (4)	All or most of the following have been accomplished: • 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 (3)	All or most of the following have been accomplished: • 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 (2)	All or most of the following have been accomplished: • 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 (1)	Few or none of the following have been accomplished: • 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

Appraiser Comments:

Appraiser Signature: _____   *Date:* _____

Teacher Signature _____   *Date:* _____

The table below provides guidance for locating evidence to support evaluation of teachers' effectiveness on the criteria included in the rubric.

Rubric Criteria	Supporting evidence location
Quality of an SLO	Review of the SLO using the SLO Quality Tool
Expectations for students	Steps 4 and 5 on the template and the Student Growth Tracker
Students meeting targeted growth	Completed Student Growth Tracker at the end of the SLO interval

Option 2 (to be used by appraisers to evaluate teacher performance)

Distinguished (5)	All of the following have been accomplished: ☐ 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 monitored student progress, collected data, reflected on his or her pedagogy, and made successful adjustments to strategies, as needed ☐ All or almost all of students demonstrated targeted growth ☐ Most students exceeded targeted growth
Accomplished (4)	Four of the following have been accomplished: ☐ 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 monitored student progress, collected data, reflected on his or her pedagogy, and made successful adjustments to strategies, as needed ☐ All or almost all of students demonstrated targeted growth ☐ Most students exceeded targeted growth
Proficient (3)	Three of the following have been accomplished: ☐ 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 monitored student progress, collected data, reflected on his or her pedagogy, and made successful adjustments to strategies, as needed ☐ All or almost all of students demonstrated targeted growth ☐ Most students exceeded targeted growth
Developing (2)	Two of the following have been accomplished: ☐ 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 monitored student progress, collected data, reflected on his or her pedagogy, and made successful adjustments to strategies, as needed ☐ All or almost all of students demonstrated targeted growth ☐ Most students exceeded targeted growth
Improvement Needed (1)	One or none of the following have been accomplished: ☐ 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 monitored student progress, collected data, reflected on his or her pedagogy, and made successful adjustments to strategies, as needed ☐ All or almost all of students demonstrated targeted growth ☐ Most students exceeded targeted growth

Appraiser Comments:

Appraiser Signature: _____   *Date:* _____

Teacher Signature _____   *Date:* _____

The table below provides guidance for locating evidence to support evaluation of teachers' effectiveness on the criteria included in the rubric.

Rubric Criteria	Supporting evidence location
Quality of an SLO	Review of the SLO using the SLO Quality Tool
Expectations for students	Steps 4 and 5 on the template and the Student Growth Tracker
Students meeting targeted growth	Completed Student Growth Tracker at the end of the SLO interval

Appendix D: SLO Quality Tool

This tool is designed to be used by appraisers as they review SLOs for approval. Ideally, SLOs will meet the level of quality identified in the middle column. Appraisers can use this tool to coach teachers for improvement of the SLO. In addition, teachers are encouraged to use this tool as a guide to improve the quality of their SLOs as they are crafting them.

Higher Quality				Lower Quality	Ask yourself the following:
Step 1: Focus					
• Selects a focus that reflects the most important content for the course, representing fundamental skills addressed in the course • Identifies a coherent set of standards that are well-aligned to the focus statement	• Selects a focus that reflects the most important content for the course • Identifies a set of standards that are aligned to the focus statement.	• Selects a focus that reflects important content in the course but selection is either too broad or too narrow • Identifies a set of standards that are partially aligned to the focus statement		• Selects a focus that does not reflect important content in the class • Identifies a set of standards that are not aligned with the focus statement	• Does the content selected represent fundamental skills students must master in this class? • Do the standards selected align with the focus statement?
Step 2: Selection and Description of Students Included					
• Identifies more than two well-aligned data sources used to determine initial level of student learning and explains why they were selected • Includes descriptions of students in the Initial Student Skill Profile that are sufficiently distinct to allow for evidence-based mapping of students to levels	• Identifies more than two relevant data sources used to determine initial level of student learning and explains why they were selected • Includes descriptions in the Initial Student Skill Profile that are sufficiently distinct to allow mapping of students to levels	• Identifies at least two relevant data sources used to determine initial level of student learning • Includes descriptions in the Initial Student Skill Profile that are sufficiently distinct to allow mapping of students to levels with limited subjectivity	• A single data source is used to determine initial level of student learning • Includes descriptions in the Initial Student Skill Profile that may be somewhat unclear, allowing for subjectivity in mapping students to levels	• Either no data source is identified or one source is identified but is not relevant to the learning content of the SLO • Includes descriptions in the Initial Student Skill Profile that are vague and would not allow consistent mapping of students to levels	• How many data sources were consulted to map students to levels on the Initial Student Skill Profile? • What is the alignment between the data sources used to map students to the Initial Skill Profile and the area of focus? • Are the descriptions at each level sufficiently differentiated to allow placement of students?

Higher Quality				Lower Quality	Ask yourself the following:
Step 3: Expectations for Student Growth					
• Descriptions of student performance at every level reflect high levels of growth for students • Descriptions clearly indicate specific skill sets and how they would be demonstrated by students at each level with clear expectations for students to apply those skills to novel situations • Describes evidence measure(s) that is/are aligned to learning content, require higher order thinking skills, and includes authentic performance measures[1]	• Descriptions of student performance at the midpoint and above reflect high levels of growth for students • Descriptions clearly indicate specific skills sets and how they would be demonstrated by students at each level • Describes evidence measure(s) that is/are aligned to learning content and require higher order thinking skills	• Descriptions of student performance at the midpoint and above are reflective of reasonable growth for students. • Descriptions clearly indicate specific skill sets demonstrated by students at each level • Describes evidence measure(s) that is/are aligned to the learning content	• Descriptions of student performance at the midpoint reflect low expectations for students • Descriptions of skills sets demonstrated at each level are not fully developed and may overlap • Describes evidence measure(s) that is/are not completely aligned with learning content	• Descriptions of student performance at the midpoint are well below expectations for students • Descriptions of skill sets demonstrated at each level are unclear and/or would be difficult to judge • Either does not describe evidence measures or describes measure(s) that is/are not aligned with learning content	• Are the targets for students rigorous but attainable? • Are the descriptions at each level clearly differentiated to allow placement of students? • Is/are the measure(s) identified aligned with the learning content?
Step 4: Instructional Planning					
• Includes a clear plan to differentiate instruction, citing specific strategies for targeted groups • Indicates that a formative assessment plan is in place and explains how results impact instruction • Describes a plan to conference with colleagues, including a description of how data will be reviewed and instruction adjusted based on those discussions	• Includes a clear plan to differentiate instruction, citing specific strategies for targeted groups • Indicates that a formative assessment plan is in place and explains how results impact instruction • Describes a plan to conference with colleagues including a description of how data will be reviewed in those meetings	• Includes a clear plan to differentiate instruction • Indicates that a formative assessment plan is in place • Describes a plan to conference with colleagues that is appropriate to allow for adjustment of instruction.	• Includes a plan to differentiate instruction but the details are unclear • Indicates that a formative assessment plan is in place • Describes a plan to conference with colleagues but it is unclear that these meetings will occur with sufficient frequency to allow for timely adjustment of instruction	• Plan to differentiate instruction is not clear or is missing • The use of formative assessments is not addressed • Does not describe a plan to meet with colleagues or provides only the names of those on the team	• Is there a plan to differentiate instruction that clarifies adjustment of strategies depending upon student level of learning? • Is there a clear plan in place to know how students are doing in learning the content? • Is there a plan to meet with colleagues to help monitor and adjust instruction?

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[1] Authentic measures assess students' ability to demonstrate the skills of focus in "real world" settings. For example, students might complete a science experiment, write a paper synthesizing research, or compute the angles needed to create an octagonal box.

Appendix E: Progress Discussion Notes (Optional)

Progress Discussion #_____

Meeting Name	Date

Colleagues/Team Members
• *Who is on my support team?*

Reflection Notes
• *What instructional strategies have been particularly successful in helping students progress on this skill?*   • *Which particular students (or groups of students) have made the most progress? Which have made the least? Why might this be the case?*   • *Where could I use additional support or ideas from my colleagues?*

Discussion Notes

Focus Area
• *What additional strategies or adjustments do you think you will use to drive student growth?*   • *How will you know if these new strategies are working?*

Appendix F: End-of-Year Reflection

General Information

Teacher Name	Date
School	
Appraiser Name	

Self-reflection Notes on Student Progress:
• *Who grew the most? Why do you think they were so successful?* • *Who grew the least? Can you identify where their problems in learning occurred?* • *Were there any common characteristics among those who did not achieve the expected growth?*

Self-reflection Notes on Instruction:
• *How did you adjust instruction during the year? Did the changes you made help improve student learning?* • *What did you learn about your own pedagogy (assumptions, sequencing, grouping, etc.)?* • *Were students engaged in the learning?* • *Were the assignments, class work, and measures appropriate for this course?* • *What would you differently the next time? Would you change the focus, the instructional strategies or the goals set for students? Why?*

Appendix G: Definitions for the SLO Process

Appraiser
"Appraiser" refers to the principal or designated individuals certified to appraise teachers using the T-TESS evaluation system.

Colleagues or Teams
In order to maximize the effectiveness of this handbook, it is recommended that teachers meet with their colleagues throughout the year to share their learning and experiences. Throughout this handbook, we refer to "colleagues" or "teams". These are general terms to signify any and all individuals or groups who can collaborate throughout a semester or year to support each other with instruction. These teams should collaborate through channels and networks that likely already exist within schools. In some schools, teams will be grade-level or content-area groups. In other cases, the team may be the whole school working together on SLOs.

Course
Throughout the handbook, a "course" refers to a specific grade/subject combination. For example, 4th grade Science, 8th grade Math or High School Physics.

Initial Student Skill Profile
Teachers develop the Initial Student Skill Profile to describe student performance levels on the first day of a course. The Initial Student Skill Profile is based on typical student performance as seen in the past. The goal of this profile is to learn the distribution of student skill levels present early in a course. This will provide the baseline from which the Targeted Student Skill Profile and student growth targets will be set.

SLO Quality Tool
It is recommended that this tool be used by both teachers and appraisers. This tool is in rubric format, indicating characteristics of quality SLOs in 5 categories. Teachers can use the tool as they are crafting SLOs to see what they could do to enhance the quality of their SLOs. Appraisers can use the tool to determine whether an SLO is appropriate for approval. The tool includes questions that appraisers can ask themselves to help with these judgments.

SLO Scoring Rubric (developed by TEA to describe teacher performance)
Appraisers will meet with teachers at the end of the year to discuss how they monitored student progress, adjustments made during instruction, SLO quality, and student growth, reflecting on the overall SLO process. Based on the conversation, review of evidence, and their professional judgment, the appraiser determines a rubric score based on all of these factors, using the SLO Scoring Rubric selected by the district.

Targeted Student Skill Profiles (developed by teachers to describe student performance)
Teachers will develop the Targeted Student Skill Profile to answer the question of what students should be able to do at various levels leading up to and exceeding mastery of the particular skill(s). The teacher describes the skills that would be exhibited by students who meet each level of performance from "no familiarity" to "exceeds expectations". Where possible, it is recommended that these profiles be developed by teacher teams. They will be based on the initial levels of student learning and TEKS or other curriculum expectations.

Student Growth Tracker
The Student Growth Tracker is an excel format spreadsheet that teachers will use to document students starting and end-of-year levels on the SLO Skill Profile. In addition, any progress check-in scores can be entered into the form to help monitor progress trajectory.

Teacher
Teacher roles may look different across districts. For the purposes of T-TESS, "teacher" means anyone who is appraised on the T-TESS evaluation system.