



# THE PROCESS FOR WRITING A STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVE

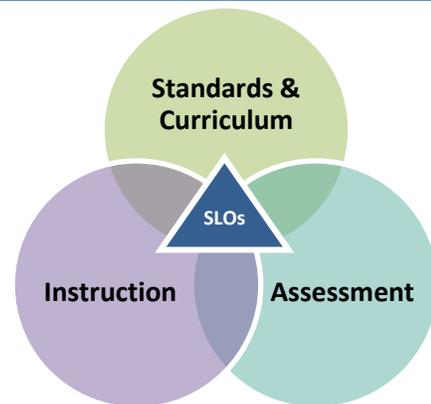
A GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS IN RHODE ISLAND

## INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

As a goal-setting process, SLOs incorporate the core elements of teaching:

- they are based on standards & curriculum
- their use and results help inform instruction
- they are monitored and measured using assessment

At the intersection of these core elements is strategic data use.



A key feature of Rhode Island's SLO model is that it encourages teachers, ideally in collaboration with their colleagues, to be actively involved in writing SLOs; teachers' participation is critical to the process being both meaningful and appropriate. On the one hand, teachers in Rhode Island have been setting goals for students for a long time, so the core elements of the SLO process feel fairly familiar. On the other hand, for various reasons, aspects of the process have felt less familiar for some educators. Although writing an SLO and determining targets for student learning might be somewhat challenging, it is also the case that assigning SLOs (or parts of SLOs) to teachers is not the solution. If teachers have to adopt SLOs that do not align with their standards, curriculum, or instruction then SLOs may no longer feel authentic to them and may become separate from their daily work. If the evidence sources are not integrated with the standards, curriculum, and instruction and are not ones that are important to the class or would not already be used but rather are added on simply for the sake of the SLO, then the SLO becomes detached from the learning and teaching of that classroom. Assigned targets often feel arbitrary and/or ill fitted; they can feel more like a number that was plucked from thin air than a meaningful guidepost for student learning.

The process outlined in this guide can be used by teachers to facilitate writing SLOs. It is recommended that groups of content or grade-level teachers come together to collaborate throughout the process, alongside administrators. Educators can also meet across grade-levels to vertically align expectations of student learning. While meeting, educators can use the following steps as they discuss the student learning that takes place in their classrooms and subsequently draft, revise, and submit SLOs. Please note that since educators have varying roles in schools, some may need to adjust the process to fit their context.

## BEFORE YOU WRITE:

1. Connect with Colleagues
2. Understand the SLO Process and High-Quality SLOs
3. Gather Necessary Resources
4. Review Prior Year's SLOs

### 1. CONNECT WITH COLLEAGUES

- ➔ Identify grade-level or content-alike colleagues to discuss ideas for SLOs. Writing collaboratively in teacher teams allows you to share your drafts with others for feedback. Taking time to consider multiple approaches and selecting precise language helps to create high-quality SLOs that foster good teaching and learning.

### 2. UNDERSTAND THE SLO PROCESS AND HIGH-QUALITY SLOs

#### Resources for Understanding the SLO Process and High-Quality SLOs

- Pages 13-29 in Guidebook
- SLO Video: Implementing SLOs in Rhode Island
- SLO Online Module:
  - Understanding SLOs
- SLO Samples
- Indicators of a Strong SLO
- SLO Quality Review Tool
- SLO FAQs

- ➔ If you haven't already, familiarize yourself with the resources to the left.
- ➔ A note about reviewing SLO samples: these samples are not intended to be exemplars, as SLOs are always context-specific. However they do illustrate characteristics of strong SLOs in their content-focus, quality of evidence, and rigor of targets. First, we recommend reviewing several samples within your content area, both at your grade level and others. Second, we also suggest reviewing a few samples from different disciplines as this may prompt thinking about ways to write objective statements, collect data/information, assess student learning, and tier targets. These samples are not meant to be adopted in their entirety. Rather, educators could use them as a template for their SLO, but tailor them to their specific curricula, assessments, and students.

### 3. GATHER NECESSARY RESOURCES

- ➔ Guidebook (pages 13-29), a copy of the SLO Form, Indicators of a Strong SLO document, and SLO Quality Review Tool
- ➔ Applicable content standards (including state, national, etc.) and curricular documents
- ➔ Other pertinent documents including, but not limited to, historical student data, identified district priorities, and assessments

### 4. REVIEW PRIOR YEAR'S SLOs

- ➔ It may be helpful to review previous SLOs to understand students' actual performance against targets. Teams of teachers can discuss how targets were set and how students performed against those expectations. Ask: What can be learned from prior SLOs in terms of breadth and depth of content, rigor of target, and student readiness for the next level of instruction?

## STEPS FOR WRITING A STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

1. Write the Logistical Information
2. Identify What's Most Important: Priority of Content
3. Gather and Analyze Baseline Data and Information
  4. Determine Target(s) for Students
  5. Describe your Evidence Source(s)
6. Review the SLO
7. Use the SLO to Inform Teaching and Learning Throughout the Year

### 1. WRITE THE LOGISTICAL INFORMATION

- ➔ Write the logistical information (grade level, content area, interval of instruction, etc). If you do not have a roster yet to know how many students are included wait to fill this out. Remember that all students in the course (e.g. all Algebra I students) must be included and not only one or two sections.

### 2. IDENTIFY WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT: PRIORITY OF CONTENT

#### Resources for Identifying and Writing Priority of Content

- Pages 13-29 in Guidebook
- SLO Online Module:
  - Writing an Objective Statement

- ➔ Examine your **standards and curriculum**.
- ➔ **Write the Objective Statement** by answering the question: What are the most important **content** or **skills** that my students need to **know** or **be able to do** at the end of the interval of instruction?
- ➔ **Check the Scope, or Grain-Size** of the Objective Statement. Ask the question: Is the Objective Statement **broad** enough that it **captures the major content** of an extended instructional period, but **focused** enough that it **clearly pertains** to the course/subject/grade/students and **can be measured**?
- ➔ **Write a rationale** explaining the data-driven or curricular-based reasons for why this is such a crucial focus. Note: if Baseline Data and Information reveals that students are already advanced in this area, then the Objective Statement should be revised to focus on a different need.
- ➔ **List the standards** to which this objective is aligned.

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### 3. GATHER AND ANALYZE BASELINE DATA AND INFORMATION

#### Resources for Gathering and Analyzing Baseline Data and Information

- Pages 13-29 in Guidebook
- SLO Online Module:
  - Using Baseline Data and Information to Set SLO Targets
- Tool #2: Using Baseline Data and Information Guidance Document and worksheet

- ➔ Answer the question: **Where are my students now** (at the beginning of instruction) **with respect to the objective?** Identify what student baseline data or information (qualitative and quantitative) you already have and what you need to collect in the coming weeks as you continue to get to know your students as learners.
- ➔ **Analyze baseline data and information** so that you have a clear picture of where students are starting. If applicable, group students into tiers based on the necessary prerequisite knowledge or skills.

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### 4. DETERMINE TARGET(S) FOR STUDENTS

#### Resources for Determining Targets

- Pages 13-29 in Guidebook
- SLO Online Module:
  - Setting Targets for Student Learning
- Setting Targets in SLOs Guidance Document
- Standard Setting for Local Assessments
- SLO Samples
- SLO Quality Review Tool

- ➔ **Determine target(s) for students**, tiering if appropriate from their baseline data and information. Answer the question: Based on what I know about my students, **where do I expect them to be** by the end of the interval of instruction and **how will they demonstrate their knowledge and skills?** Note: if you need to collect additional baseline data you should wait to set targets, but could discuss general guidelines or potential approaches as a group.
- ➔ Once you write your target(s), **describe the rationale** for it. **Explain why the target(s) is appropriate (both rigorous and attainable)** for all students.
- ➔ **Set up a method for documenting student learning and tracking student progress** throughout the year. This can be a simple spreadsheet or another format but should include each student's baseline data or information and the target(s) you have set for them. This should be a system that is incorporated into day-to-day monitoring of student progress, not only for the sake of SLOs.

## 5. DESCRIBE YOUR EVIDENCE SOURCE(S)

### Resources for Selecting or Creating High-Quality Assessments

- Pages 13-29 in Guidebook
- SLO Online Modules:
  - Deepening Assessment Literacy
  - The Assessment Toolkit
- Tool #1: Quality Assessment Guidance
- Tool #3: Assessment Review Tool
- Tool #4: Protocols for Analyzing and Scoring Student Work
- SLO Samples
- SLO Quality Review Tool

- ➔ Educators should **select or create high-quality assessments** to measure student learning, as they do normally throughout the year as part of instruction. Selecting the right evidence source(s) is about finding the best assessment(s) for the purpose. Keep in mind that assessments are broadly defined and can include research papers, science investigations, portfolios of work, and performances, in addition to more traditional pen and paper tests. An assessment may be of high-quality for a particular purpose, but if it is not aligned to the essential content of the course as defined in the objective, it is not the best choice. The assessment(s) should provide the evidence needed to evaluate whether students have met the identified target(s) for deepening their content knowledge or skills. In some cases, a single assessment cannot accomplish this, and so multiple assessments will be used in conjunction to illustrate the range of students' skills and depth of knowledge. The online modules and Assessment Toolkit resources to the right can support educators through this process.
- ➔ In the SLO, **describe how student learning will be measured** and **why the assessment(s) is appropriate** for measuring the Objective.
- ➔ Describe **how the assessment(s) will be administered** (e.g., once or multiple times; during class or during a designated testing window; by the classroom teacher or by someone else, etc.).
- ➔ Describe **how the evidence will be collected and scored** (e.g., scored by the classroom teacher individually or by a team or teachers; scored once or a percentage double-scored, etc.).
- ➔ If you are utilizing multiple evidence sources **articulate how these assessments will work together** to demonstrate student learning and **how they will impact the scoring of the SLO** at the end of the interval of instruction. For example, if two evidence sources are being used, how will they be weighted and scored?

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## 6. REVIEW THE SLO

### Resources for Reviewing SLOs

- SLO Quality Review Tool
- Evolving SLO Samples

➔ Answer the following questions:

- ✓ Does this illustrate some of the most **critical work** I do with students and **authentically represent central goals** of this course?
- ✓ If students achieve their targets **will this result in students being prepared for success** in the next grade, level of instruction, or will they have **narrowed a critical learning gap**?

If the answer is no, it indicates that one or more of the three criteria (Priority of Content, Rigor of Target, or Quality of Evidence) need to be revisited.

- ➔ Use the **SLO Quality Review Tool** to check your SLO using the same set of questions your evaluator will use as they approve it. Your evaluator may provide you with feedback in order to revise the SLO before approving it. **Evolving samples** that illustrate a teacher's original SLO submission, his/her evaluator's feedback, and the revised and approved SLO could be helpful to review.

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## 7. USE THE SLO TO INFORM TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

### Questions about SLOs?

- SLO FAQs
- Email us at:  
[edeval@ride.ri.gov](mailto:edeval@ride.ri.gov)

- ➔ If your SLO is focused on the most important work you do with students, then you will be constantly supporting students' progress toward their targets through the every-day teaching and learning that takes place in your classroom. As part of effective teaching practice, monitor and document students' progress, adjust instruction along the way, collaborate with colleagues around successes and struggles, and communicate with your evaluator.
- ➔ If you have questions or feedback please feel free to email the Educator Evaluation Team at [edeval@ride.ri.gov](mailto:edeval@ride.ri.gov).