

Q1: What is the best way to monitor student progress during the interval of instruction? Where is the time going to come from?

A1: It depends on the subject/grade. Monitoring can be done all the ways a teacher would normally monitor student growth—observation, rubrics, daily work, quizzes and tests, projects, group work, performance, presentations, demonstration, etc. You are not being asked to do anything you don't already do; just to commit a goal to writing and to track the accompanying growth using, in many cases, the same means and measures you have always used.

Q2: What is a minimum/maximum number of skills/standards to put in an SLO? Can you use any standards?

A2: The minimum is one standard. Remember, that the standards chosen should be broad, overarching standards that cover learning which takes place over the entirety of the course/year. If it is truly a broad, overarching standard, one should be enough. This is just a snapshot of your teaching and your students' learning. There is no maximum, but the more you include, the more you have to track and the more difficult you will make this process for yourself. There have been teachers who have included every standard in the subject area in their SLO.

Q3: What if I write an SLO at a summer training that isn't justified upon pre-test results? Do I start over?

A3: Not completely. Your test should measure several standards to help you determine where to focus. Your SLO may cover one standard, so test results may guide you to focus on a different standard, but that doesn't mean you have to abandon all the work you did at the summer training. The test should still be valid. Only the goal box on your SLO form may change.

Q4: What are the consequences if I don't reach my goal?

A4: Consult the [SLO Handbook](#) and [SD Teacher Effectiveness Handbook](#) for more on this. School districts are required by the federal waiver to report the number of teachers who fell into each of the performance categories. Remember that student growth is only 20-30% of your overall evaluation score, so missing the mark on the SLO scores by itself will not affect your job. One year of missing the mark might result in you and your administrator establishing your goal for the next year around ensuring success with the SLO. Multiple years of missing the mark on SLOs could result in a plan of assistance for a teacher.

Q5: What do I do with students who don't meet the goal?

A5: Students who do not achieve the growth goal set for them should be treated by the same standards your district uses for all students. If they met the requirements to move to the next grade, they move on. If they need extra help, credit recovery, interventions, have to repeat a class, etc., those things will be recommended. Your SLO is about using student achievement to measure teacher effectiveness, so the student's SLO growth will not have a bearing on what happens to the student, except to the extent that it should correlate to other triggers that could require intervention strategies.

Q6: How do you include attendance issues in your SLO?

A6: If you have a lot of transience issues in your district, you CAN AND SHOULD include a statement in the section of your SLO that describes the student population that further defines the group with a minimum attendance standard. (I.E. “Students who miss more than 20 days of instruction in this subject area will be excluded from the SLO population for determining teacher effectiveness.” Or, “Students whose attendance falls below 85% of class time in this subject area will not have their scores used in determining a teacher effectiveness rating.”

Keep in mind that you may have students who miss a lot of class time, but who are able to keep up with the work and who still test well. You might want them included in your teacher effectiveness rating calculation.

Q7: How do SLOs impact teacher evaluation?

A7: Consult [SD Teacher Effectiveness Handbook](#) pp. 19-20, 25-26. Remember that evaluation language is negotiable, so don’t forget to consult your locally negotiated master agreement and/or district policy on evaluation.

Q8: If some students master the pre-test or reach their goal immediately, what are some ideas to help them further grow but not taint test or data? Must I change the post-test?

A8: Early mastery should not taint your test or data. This merely tells you where this group of students is beginning the year and should be used to drive the targets you set for them. Differentiated goals in your SLO will allow for you to set a higher target for these students without unfairly raising the bar for all students.

If some do master early after the goal has been set, create a new goal for them. You aren’t required to alter the SLO because students reach the target, but it should guide future goals to make sure they realistically cover the interval of instruction.

You don’t have to change the post-test because of high scores. If your goal is differentiated the student who scored 100% may be challenged to maintain, or you may administer a different test to him/her just to check for additional growth.

Q9: How many/what artifact types are there and how many do I need? Does each component need artifacts?

A9: See p. 18 of the [SD Teacher Effectiveness Handbook](#) for a list of artifacts and how they can be used. Domains 2 and 3 are directly observable, so the components in those domains do NOT require artifacts. Your SLO IS an artifact and, depending upon which components of domains 1 and 4 your district has chosen, it may provide most of the documentation you need. There is nothing wrong with being efficient and making this SLO work to cover multiple obligations in the evaluation/growth process.

Q10: How many students should be covered in an SLO?

A10: How many students are in the class/subject around which your SLO is written? The SLO should cover the entire group FOR WHOM YOU ASSIGN GRADES. If you have a multi-age/grade classroom or work with just a few students, it is acceptable to have a small population; however, it is also acceptable to broaden the SLO to cover students in the other grades/age levels. It is also acceptable to write a shared goal with another teacher who may teach the same subject/grade to get a bigger population. Do what works best for you!

Q11: What changes can be made to the SLO and when?

A11: You can make changes to your instructional methods at any time. You can also adjust your SLO if there are circumstances beyond your control that will impact the growth goal, such as attendance issues. If circumstances truly dictate a modification needs to be made mid-SLO, you should make a change. You can modify the growth goal, or assessments used. There isn't much else you can legitimately change. Your district does NOT need to report a modification if your students reach the goal early and you create a second goal for them. That isn't a modification, but it is, essentially, a second SLO.

Q12: Level 4 in the scoring of most Danielson components refers to students leading rather than teachers. How would it look for students to pick their own SLO goal in K-3?

A12: The reference to students leading learning in level 4 of the Danielson model is referring to student autonomy over their own learning. The choices students have must be appropriate to their age and adolescent development. These choices can range from having students be responsible for turning their work into a tray, to choosing which novel or non-fiction book to read, to choosing how to demonstrate their learning to you. It generally does not include what the standards or outcomes for a class should be.

Your SLO is something YOU are setting to measure YOUR level of effectiveness in helping your students to grow. It is not appropriate to have students picking their own goals for purposes of the SLO. This is a measure of YOUR teacher effectiveness. There is considerable teacher autonomy in this process. Don't give that autonomy away to others.

Q13: If I teach Spanish, Algebra, and ESL, how do I pick which area to use for an SLO? Do I do them all?

A13: If you teach in a tested subject area or grade (Math, ELA/Reading grades 3-8 and 11; Science grades 5, 8, 11), your SLO must be in that subject/grade. If you don't have that constraint, it is a decision between you and your principal. Remember, this is not a measure of ALL teaching, but just a snapshot. If you teach in multiple tested grades and subjects you should write an SLO on only one of these subjects. You can write multiple SLOs but for the purpose of the evaluation you must choose only one.

Q14: How do you determine the various levels of growth in a differentiated SLO?

A14: If you are using a purchased assessment, it will likely give you predictions for student achievement. If it does, you should use them rather than set your own goals because they are based on valid, reliable statistical measurements.

You may base projections on your years of experience with a subject area when you use a teacher-created assessment. Consult with teachers in the grade above you to see where students need to be at the start of the next year and set your goal accordingly. Consult with teachers in the grade below you to determine past levels of student growth for each student. Consult with colleagues who teach what you teach to see what growth levels they are setting.

Q15: What makes a quality assessment? How do we ensure quality in teacher-made assessments?

A15: There are entire semester college courses and degrees devoted to assessments, so don't obsess too much over honing this to an exact science unless you want to pursue a graduate degree in assessment. You can, however, use assessment blueprints, the [Assessment Planning Guide](#) and the [Assessment Quality Checklist](#) as a starting place. You can also encourage your district or local association to bring in additional training specifically on assessment blueprints, writing quality assessment items, creating/testing rubrics, etc. Training is available through the education service agencies in SD using training days provided by the state to bring them. Training is also available for free from [SDEA](#).

Q16: How do you write SLOs for non-tested and specialty subject areas?

A16: There should still be standards to consult for any subject area. If there aren't specific state standards, check with your content area national professional organization to see if they have a set of recommended standards. Start with the standards and then determine your priority content, the assessment you want to use, etc. The flexibility you have in a specialty area is, in many ways, a gift because it allows you to be creative as a teacher; to not have to contend with standardized tests, etc. Use the tools we've provided to write your SLO and assessment and to check for quality.

Q17: How do you write SLOs for EBD and very low cognitive students?

A17: Keep in mind it is a violation of federal law to have SLOs mirror IEPs. Also keep in mind that if you are responsible for giving grades to any students in a tested area (ELA or Math or Science) you MUST write your SLO around standards in that subject area. If you teach in a tested grade (3-8, 11 for ELA/Reading and Math, 5, 8, and 11 for Science), you must write the SLO for that grade of students at a minimum. Using differentiated goals should lend itself to this process extremely well because you are setting individual targets for students even if they are all in the same subject and overarching goal.

IF your primary responsibility as a teacher is to help your students manage behaviors and you are not primarily responsible for giving grades in a tested subject area, then you can create an SLO around behavioral issues or skills appropriate for low cognitive students, provided your administrator approves it.

Q18: Will there be subject-specific training for teachers?

A18: Nothing is planned, but schools have training days given to them each year from the state to bring in trainers from the Education Service Agencies. Have your administrator contact one of them to work with your school to set up specific training like this. There are also other resources available like the [SDEA SLO Repository](#) to address specific subject area concerns.

Q19: Does your SLO have to go all year? What is the minimum amount of time SLOs can span?

A19: No. Your SLO should cover the time span you have your defined student population in the subject area your SLO covers. This could be a year in elementary grades, or a semester, trimester, or quarter in upper grades. If you have a transient population, or work with students who are in and out of your classroom/program in a few weeks/months, you write your SLO to cover that time span.

Q20: What should be the timeline for an SLO?

A20: That is a local/building level decision. However, your local association can bargain terms and conditions of employment. Ask to bargain the timeline or otherwise work with your district to establish approval deadlines, testing deadlines, number of components, etc. so that you know from the start what is expected and by what date.

Q21: Can we write an SLO for one section or must it be for all sections of the same course?

A21: The SLO is supposed to address all students in the defined group. If you are writing a differentiated goal, there is no reason why you could not include all students in all sections of the same subject, even if they were ability grouped. If your principal agrees to let you focus on one section, there is not any requirement prohibiting that at the state level—just recommendations that you not do that.

Q22: Can we see quality SLO examples that fit the criteria?

A22: Yes. Visit South Dakota Education Association's [SLO Repository](#). Most of the exemplars there were created using differentiated goals.

Q23: How does someone create an SLO as a specialist or if s/he is not teaching a specific class?

A23: State regulations require that anyone who is assigning grades to students will write an SLO and the district will report how many teachers fall into each category (low growth, expected growth, high growth). This includes SPED teachers even if they are not teachers of record. In addition to the state requirement that all certificated teachers (including special education teachers) write an SLO, your district may decide to have other educators (education specialists) write SLOs as well, even if they don't fit the state's definition. That is a matter for local board or school policy, or for local negotiations. At any rate, you will need to come up with local criteria for how to write an SLO and measure success for those who don't fit into the state definition.



Student Learning Objectives Q & A



Q24: How are administrators going to be able to genuinely assess the results of the SLO?

A24: This will depend on the administrator's familiarity with the process, and his/her willingness to devote time and effort to working with teachers on this process. The same is true of teachers regarding the success of this process. In both cases, it will take time and should get better with each successive year.

Q25: Do my SLO goals need to change every year? Can/should I use the same SLO for more than 1 year (to establish a baseline)?

A25: This is a district decision. Some districts are allowing teachers to choose their area of focus, where other districts are choosing the area/standard where all teachers are writing an SLO. The baseline data will be useful, but the decision about which SLO goal to write should be driven by the needs of the students you have each year. If you are writing differentiated goals, even if you write your SLO over the same standard(s) each year, you will be setting new goals based on individual student assessment data.

Q26: Will the state require an SLO for each class/subject we teach?

A26: No! SD DOE has no desire or intent to require more than what is required by the ESEA waiver with US E.D. Adding more SLOs will be a local control issue. There is no plan to expand the scope of SLOs.

Q27: Are college students learning SLO process in their education coursework?

A27: For the most part, yes; however, it depends upon the school of education. They are all at various stages of incorporating the Danielson model and/or SLOs. Graduate schools are working to add training on the new SD Teacher Effectiveness Model to their administrative coursework as well.