



Student Learning Objectives

Guide for Educators: Writing Student Learning Objectives

This document represents RIDE's current thinking on best practices for writing and revising Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). This document has been informed by Rhode Island educators who have shared their experience with SLOs in the 2011-2012 year of gradual implementation. We anticipate improving this document during 2012-2013 as we continue to incorporate Rhode Island educator insight and expertise.

Steps to Writing an SLO

1. Gather Necessary Resources

The first step in writing or revising an SLO is to gather the necessary resources including:

- a. *Indicators of a Strong SLO* document
- b. Applicable content standards (including state, national, etc.)
- c. Other pertinent documents including, but not limited to, historical data, identified district priorities, and/or curricular materials

2. Connect with SLO Collaborators

Meet with 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.

3. Identify What's Most Important

When creating an Objective Statement ask:

- a. What are the most important **content** or **skills** that my students need to **know** or **be able to do** at the end of the course?
- b. Is the scope or grain-size¹ of my objective statement appropriate?
 - i. Is the objective statement too broad? If so, it is not a targeted objective that is measurable and should not be used.
 - ii. Is the objective statement too narrow? If so, you may be able to teach it in a unit, but it will not be a central focus for you and your students throughout the interval of instruction.

Consider instructional coherence and alignment to standards and district priorities.

4. Ensure the SLO's Anatomy Fits Together

Use your *Indicators of a Strong SLO* document to guide your thinking as you complete an SLO draft.

Check for the following:

- a. Do all the pieces fit together and relate?
- b. Is each description in the appropriate section? It is easy to write an Objective Statement that is actually a Target or a Rationale for Target that is actually an explanation of an Evidence Source. All of the pieces should be highly connected, but it is important to clearly distinguish and explain each.

¹ Grain-size: when we refer to grain-size, or scope, we are referring to how broad or narrow the Objective Statement is. A finer grain-size equates to a narrower focus regarding content or skills. A larger grain-size equates to a broader focus.

5. Ask the Questions an Evaluator Might Ask

Use the same questions that your evaluator might ask to double check your thinking.

Priority of Content

- Is the objective statement focused on the right content and skills?
- Is the objective statement the appropriate scope/grain-size?
- Is the objective statement aligned to state and/or national standards?
- Is this objective statement aligned to school and/or district level priorities (where applicable)?

Quality of Evidence

- Does the assessment measure the identified content/skills of the objective?
- Does the assessment provide the specific data needed to determine if the objective was met?
- Can the assessment be compared across classrooms and schools?

Rigor of Target

- Is the target(s) aligned with expectations for academic growth or mastery within the interval of instruction?
- What data source(s) informed the target that was set?
- Is the target(s) rigorous, yet attainable for all students?
- Will students be “on track” and/or reduce gaps in achievement if they reach the target(s)?

SLO Best Practices

1. Embrace the Revision Process as you Construct your Set

Writing an SLO may be more of a cyclical process than a linear one. A teacher might craft an SLO, administer a baseline assessment, and then need to adjust the focus of the Objective Statement based on the data. SLOs may require multiple drafts throughout the first quarter before they are submitted, approved, and set for the year.

2. Carefully Consider Evidence Sources

Data comes in many forms; different content areas and grade-spans use varieties of evidence to illustrate student learning. It is vital to ensure that assessments truly measure the Objective Statement’s focus. Many times it is necessary to include multiple sources of evidence in an SLO to capture a student’s progress. There are resources related to data and assessment on the Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum’s website at: <http://www.ride.ri.gov/assessment/CAS.aspx>.

3. Approach SLOs as a Process, Not a Product

SLOs are an opportunity for educators to craft clear goals for student learning and document students’ progress toward those goals. They should serve as an ongoing reference point throughout the year. Therefore, the purpose is not to craft a document, but to engage in the thinking, monitoring, and adjusting necessary to support student progress.

4. Look at the Complete Set of SLOs

In most cases, individual SLOs within a set will relate to one another—either because they apply to the same students or because they are focused on different aspects of the same content-area. Often the grain-size of an individual SLO is inversely related to the total number of SLOs being set. While you will not formally write a rationale for your set, it is important to think about how each SLO fits into the larger set.