

Student Learning Data Frequently Asked Questions

What is student learning data?

Student learning data is defined as an objective, empirical, valid measurement of a student's growth in knowledge, understanding, or skill in a subject area. The growth must have occurred during the time the student was taught the subject by a teacher.

The measurement or assessment must be:

- Based on verifiable data or information that has been recorded or preserved;
- Able to be repeated with the same expected results, and;
- Independent of the point of view or interpretation of the person giving the assessment

Which educators are required to have a portion of their evaluation include student learning data?

All certified teacher and administrator evaluations must include student learning data.

What general types of measures or assessments can be used to satisfy the student data requirement?

The type of data used for collaborative decision making about student learning (e.g. Professional Learning Community, Response to Intervention, etc.) could be used to determine teachers' and administrators' contributions to student learning.

Examples of student learning data include scores from curriculum-based measures, universal screeners, standardized assessments, portfolios of student work, student projects, performances, and career and technical certifications.

What are some specific examples of measures or assessments that can be used to satisfy the student learning data requirement?

There are a number of measures that are being used in districts across Alaska that could satisfy the student learning data requirement; for example, NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), pre- and post- curriculum-based tests, and teacher-created school/district common assessments. Teacher-created school/district common rubrics designed to measure specific skills that describe varying acquisition levels also could be used as a tool to assess student growth demonstrated through portfolios, projects, products, and performances.

Who will determine the measures or assessments that will be used for the student learning component of teachers' and administrators' evaluations?

Districts select the student learning measures used to determine the performance level of teachers and administrators, with careful consideration being given to the direct input provided by the teachers and administrators being evaluated. The measures identified must satisfy the definition of student learning data provided in the regulation.

*Toward preparing
students to be
college, career, and
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How will a district ensure that the measures or assessments selected satisfy the requirements set out in regulations?

Prior to the selection of measures, districts should establish guidelines for high quality assessments. The guidelines should include expectations concerning the measures alignment, stretch, and validity. (See the Assessment Quality Assurance Checklist developed by EED)

Additionally, districts should establish a process that will compare results from the selected measure with other measures of student and teacher performance, looking for patterns of alignment that predict improved student results. Using this information, districts will periodically make adjustments to the list of measures selected for the purposes of educator evaluation.

Will teachers and administrators be evaluated on one standardized test that is only a snapshot in time?

No. The new regulation requires that two to four measures of student growth be used when determining a teacher's or administrator's performance level in student learning. For areas in which an appropriate statewide standardized assessment is available, the assessment will be used only as one of at least two sources of evidence. The weight of the statewide assessment data will be at least as high a proportion as any other measure of student growth used by the district.

Will Alaska's current statewide assessment, the SBAs, be used?

No. Our current statewide assessment is not vertically aligned from grade to grade and is not able to adequately measure growth from year to year. New assessments that are being considered for our new college and career ready English/Language Arts & Mathematics Standards will be vertically aligned and will have intermediate tools to use during the school year. If, at the completion of their design, the new assessments are determined to be valid measures, the commissioner of education can identify them as one of the tools to be used in grades and subjects for which they are designed.

Are all teachers and administrators required to use the state assessments in their evaluations?

No, only teachers and administrators whose job duties are directly related to the content areas of the state assessments are required to use the state assessments in their evaluations.

Which teachers and administrators have job duties that are directly related to the content areas of the state assessments?

Districts will need to collaborate with teachers and administrators to make this determination.

How will teachers and administrators be evaluated in "non-tested" or "non-assessed" subjects?

Districts, administrators, and teachers will identify existing measures or develop new measures for "non-tested" or "non-assessed" subjects. All courses being offered should have goals of achievement for students to attain. Districts must work with educators to set growth targets for students in all subjects, including "non-tested" or "non-assessed" areas.

What student learning data will be used in special education teachers' evaluation?

Students with disabilities have goals for academic achievement just as their peers do. Districts are required to work with special education teachers and administrators to identify appropriate measures and goals for student academic growth. Working with all teachers and administrators, districts will have the ability to recognize unique situations and to determine appropriate measures and goals for all students, including students with disabilities.

Will teachers and administrators be held accountable for students who are frequently absent or enroll halfway through the school year?

The new regulations require districts to develop procedures to ensure that the student data used to measure teacher and administrator performance in the area of student learning accurately reflect student growth based on the educator's performance. This provision requires districts to establish objective and measurable criteria to determine what student learning data will be included or excluded from a teacher's or administrator's evaluation. Rules surrounding factors that are considered outside of the teacher's and administrator's control, like attendance, can be established through this provision.

How will districts organize a teacher or an administrator's student learning data for the purpose of evaluation?

Districts are encouraged to organize a teacher or an administrator's student learning data using Student Learning Objectives (SLOs).

What is a Student Learning Objective (SLO)?

A student learning objective is a measurable, long-term, academic goal informed by available data that a teacher or teacher team sets at the beginning of the school year or instructional period for all students or for subgroups of students.

Why should a district use a Student Learning Objective (SLO)?

Including measurements of student growth in teacher and administrator performance helps cover one more aspect of the complex job of teachers and administrators. SLOs are a way to do this that takes advantage of the work teachers and administrators already do and give teachers and administrators a say in the way they are evaluated. The SLO process can help identify the leadership roles teachers and administrators may be interested in playing and provide the support teachers and administrators may need to perform at their best.

Student Learning Objectives provide a means to include student data in the evaluation of all teachers and administrators, not just those in the tested subjects. SLOs allow teachers and administrators to set goals based on student individual needs and give teachers and administrators credit for increasing student learning regardless of their students' starting levels.

How does a Student Learning Objective fit into the evaluation system?

In Alaska, teacher and administrator evaluations are composed of professional performance standards and a student learning standard. The performance of a teacher or administrator on the standard for student learning must be based on two to four measurements of student growth. An SLO is a way for a district to organize student learning data to document student academic growth and establish a standard for performance that can be used with all teachers and administrators.

Who creates student learning objectives?

Student learning objectives reflect the work teachers and administrators are already doing. Teachers and administrators are encouraged to participate actively in the creation of those tools used to evaluate and support them.

Student learning objectives can be created by a district in collaboration with the teachers and administrators who are included in the district's evaluation system. If an SLO is developed by a team of teachers and/or school administrators, the district should approve the SLO through an established district process. When writing student learning objectives, EED encourages the use of common assessments and growth targets by teachers of like content and/or grade level.

Which students must be considered in a teacher or administrator's SLOs?

Student learning objectives are expected to include as many students as possible so that teachers' and administrators' scores are based on a large number of students. This approach makes teachers and administrators less susceptible to one student having an atypical poor performance.

EED recommends that at least 60% of students that are the responsibility of a teacher or an administrator are represented in the teacher or administrator's SLOs.

When can a student's data be excluded from a teacher or administrator's SLO?

Teachers and administrators educate very different groups of students. To be fair, it may be necessary to not hold teachers and administrators accountable for the growth of all their students. The student learning data used to measure teacher and administrator performance must accurately reflect teacher and administrator contribution to a student's growth.

A student's data can be excluded from a teacher or administrator's student learning data if a district has established procedures based on objective and measurable criteria to do so. Adequate documentation must exist to ensure the student meets the established criteria for exclusion. 4 AAC 04.205 (e)(5)

An example of an objective and measurable criteria is attendance, including extended absence of the teacher and administrator. Districts are encouraged to develop procedures to address roster verification, level of attendance thresholds, and other relevant information.

How many SLOs does a teacher and administrator or team of teachers and administrators create?

Each teacher and administrator must be evaluated on student learning using at least two but no more than four measures of student growth. 4 AAC 04.205 (e)(2) If the state assessment data are for subjects and grade level directly related to the job duties of the teacher and administrator, the state assessment must serve as the assessment in at least one of the required two to four measures. One SLO counts as one measure.

How many assessments can be used in each SLO?

To keep things simple and easy to track, EED recommends the use of one assessment per SLO during the first few years of implementation.

What assessments are used in the SLOs?

If an approved state assessment that directly relates to the job duties of a teacher or an administrator is available, the approved state assessment must be used in one of their SLOs. 4 AAC 04.205(e)(3)(C).

When selecting other assessments to be used in SLOs, a district must confer with the teachers and administrators who teach the subject matter and grade levels or groups of teachers and administrators whose subject matter and grade levels are related. 4 AAC 19.030(d)

EED encourages districts, teachers and administrators to initially use assessments that they are familiar and for which historical student data exists. EED encourages districts to use the checklist, *Guidance for Selecting Appropriate Assessments*, to support districts, teachers, and administrators in selecting appropriate assessments. EED recommends the use of teacher created assessments only when national, state, or district assessments are not available.

If teachers and administrators who have job duties directly related to both English Language Arts and Mathematics state assessments, do they have to use the results from both sections of the state assessment?

No, the teachers and administrators do not need to use the state assessments for both content areas. For teachers and administrators who have job duties directly related to both English Language Arts and Mathematics, districts may choose to focus on the data from either the ELA or Mathematics portion of the approved state assessment to construct one SLO. The second SLO must be based on a different assessment for either ELA or mathematics.

As another option, districts may choose to use the data from both the ELA and Mathematics portions of the approved state assessment to construct two SLOs, one based on the English Language Arts portion and one based on the Mathematics portions. A third SLO, based on a different assessment for either ELA or mathematics, is required. A third SLO based on a different assessment is necessary to meet the requirement of at least two measures per teacher and administrator.

Who determines the student growth targets for the SLOs?

When adopting the target student growth, a district must confer with teachers and administrators who are included in the districts evaluation system. 4 AAC 04.205(e)(1)

What process will be used to determine the student growth targets?

EED recommends the use of assessments that have historical student data. In collaboration with teachers and administrators who are included in the districts evaluation system, the district should analyze the historical data to inform the growth targets. The historical data should provide the district with the necessary information to define an expected year of growth.

How are SLOs scored?

Districts are required to adopt performance standards for student learning. EED recommends the use of benchmark scoring for student learning objectives. Using a benchmark approach, a SLO’s final score represents the percentage of students that met or exceeded their growth targets. The percentage of students that met or exceeded the growth target then falls within a range that corresponds to one of the four required performance ratings.

To do this, EED recommends that districts construct an SLO rating scale like the example below:

SLO Rating Scale

Percentage of the total number of Students That Met or Exceeded Growth Targets set out in a teacher and an administrator’s SLOs	Descriptive Rating
More than 85%*	Exemplary
Between 65% and 85%*	Proficient
Between 40% and 64%*	Basic
Fewer than 40%*	Unsatisfactory

...* When adopting the standard (the percentage of students that must meet or exceed their growth target) for each performance level, a district must confer with teachers and administrators who are subject to the district’s evaluation system. 4 AAC 04.205(e)(1)

How will the data from two to four measures of student learning be combined into one rating for the purpose of determining the level of support provided to an educator and the educator’s overall rating?

When combining the student learning data, the data determined by using the state assessment must receive at least as much weight as any other measurement of student growth. 4 AAC 04.205(e)(4) Beyond that requirement, the districts will determine the method to be used to combine the data from the two to four measures to create a single rating for the student learning data component.