



Poudre School District Student Learning Objectives Guide

A standardized process that supports customizable indicators of instructional effectiveness.

Version 4.0 (7/30/2024)



This guidebook is intended to support the development of high quality Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). **The SLO process is about student outcomes (i.e., the ends), not about documentation of the instruction process (i.e., the means).** Instructional strategies and pedagogy are evaluated within the Professional Practice half of the PSD evaluation cycle. Furthermore, the SLO process constitutes the 3rd stratum of a larger growth rating process. Stratum-1 and Stratum-2 of the growth rating process precede Stratum-3 and they are based on system-wide measures of student outcomes and hence support a norm-referenced approach to seeking evidence of effectiveness. Stratum-1 and Stratum-2 growth ratings are computed using a statistical process based on up to two years of past assessment data and controlling for the influence of several key student and classroom characteristics. Every year there will be effective teachers for whom evidence of their effectiveness will not emerge from Stratum-1 or Stratum-2 processes. There will be other teachers who cannot access Stratum-1 or Stratum-2 measures due to a lack of applicable assessments. Knowing that this will be the case, PSD created the SLO process that is described through the remainder of this document.

An SLO is developed using a standardized process that provides customizable criterion-referenced student-outcome indicators of instructional effectiveness that make sense for each individual teacher within PSD regardless of the uniqueness of their assignment. It is important that PSD educators recognize the differences between the norm-referenced student-outcome measures of Stratum-1 and Stratum-2 versus the criterion-referenced student-outcome measures of the 3rd Stratum. In the SLO process, we are not comparing teacher A outcomes to the outcomes of other teachers. Rather, within the SLO process, we are comparing the outcomes of teacher A's students to the performance targets agreed to a priori in consultation with the teacher's evaluator and based on measures that were determined to reflect students' mastery of key teaching/learning targets. SLOs document an agreement between an educator and their supervisor regarding four key questions that are useful in estimating instructional effectiveness:

- 1) What are the key learning targets students are expected to master during an instruction cycle? What should students know and be able to do as a result of instruction?
- 2) What measurement instrument(s) will be used to quantify/operationalize the students' levels of mastery regarding these instructional targets? How will we measure the level of student attainment?
- 3) What assessment score indicates student success regarding the learning targets? What is the student success criteria?
- 4) What percentage of students meeting the student success criteria will be considered as an indicator of instructional effectiveness? How many success stories are enough?

The SLO approach to obtaining evidence of instructional effectiveness is not norm-based because each teacher in PSD is able to select targets that indicate instructional effectiveness appropriate to their unique assignment, and then provide evidence of meeting these targets. Evidence of meeting targets is not related to other teachers' outcomes with different sets of students, learning targets, or measures. **The educator's individual attribution growth rating is based on the percentage of students meeting the success criteria defined in the SLO.**

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Introduction to SLO Process

This guidebook is intended to help teachers and principals understand and create Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). Individual teachers will be made aware of the need to engage in the SLO process as part of their annual evaluation by their principal during the first quarter of each school year in which a Growth Rating of 3 is not available from the first or second stratum of the Poudre School District (PSD) Growth Rating System. The use of the SLO process in PSD is the third level of a three-level system in which PSD is looking for evidence of instructional effectiveness in the form of student outcomes. While the first and second stratum of the PSD Growth Rating System rely on data from the past two school years, the SLO process will be based on data from the current school year.

PSD has provided several videos related to the different components of the Growth Rating System as well as some general overview information. Viewing these videos will help our educators understand how the SLO process fits into the overall evaluation process that is intended to improve outcomes for students by providing our educators with feedback and professional support. PSD educator effectiveness videos are available at the PSD staff website.

Question: What is an SLO?

Answer: A measurable instructional objective that provides evidence of effectiveness. SLOs provide “individual attribution” measures of student outcomes appropriate in meeting legislated requirements specified in Senate Bill 10-191. The ultimate goal is to support educators' professional growth and, in turn, improve student results.

Student Learning Objectives focus on students' progress towards mastery of grade-level content standards, meeting goals identified in IEPs and ALPs where appropriate, and making progress in the acquisition of the English language where appropriate. **SLOs can be built around performance targets and/or growth targets as long as the targets set reflect student learning over time.** Poudre School District defines “Student Growth” as “measurable student learning over time”.

SLOs document an agreement between an educator and their supervisor regarding four key questions that are useful in estimating instructional effectiveness:

- 1) What are the key learning targets students are expected to master during an instruction cycle? What should students know and be able to do as a result of instruction?
- 2) What measurement instrument(s) will be used to quantify/operationalize the students' levels of mastery regarding these instructional targets? How will we measure the level of student attainment?
- 3) What assessment score indicates student success regarding the learning targets? What is the student success criteria?
- 4) What percentage of students meeting the student success criteria will be considered as an indicator of instructional effectiveness? How many success stories are enough?

The SLO approach to obtaining evidence of instructional effectiveness is not norm-referenced because each teacher in PSD is able to select targets that indicate instructional effectiveness appropriate to their unique assignment, and then provide evidence of meeting these targets. Scoring the evidence of meeting targets that have been signed off on by the evaluator a priori is in no way related to other teachers' outcomes with different sets of students and different learning targets.

Question: Why would we engage in the creation and monitoring of SLOs?

Answer: Setting long-term student learning objectives allows teachers to plan backward from a vision of student success. This helps ensure that instruction time is used to move students towards higher levels of achievement. The intended outcome of such a process is to ensure a culture of learning for our staff as well as our students.

When done thoughtfully and collaboratively the SLO process will lead to the following:

- An increase in the quality of discussions surrounding student growth and learning
- Increased knowledge and focused use of the Colorado Academic Standards
- Deeper understanding of the academic strengths and weaknesses of students
- Clearer indications of when and how to adjust instruction to meet students' needs
- Defensible growth ratings (or student outcome ratings) that are fair and accurate

Student Learning Objectives will not require additional assessments given that teachers have already designed their instructional practices to incorporate some form of measurement of their students' attainment of learning targets. The assessments educators currently have in place to monitor their students' attainment of teaching targets and standards are appropriate for use in the creation of SLOs. As an example, a common practice is to use the final exam/assessment for Semester 1 as a measure of student success and hence can form the basis for a measure of teacher effectiveness (i.e., the SLO). There is tremendous flexibility in the type of assessments that can be integrated into the PSD approach to designing appropriate SLOs.

In the SLO process, students' learning "goals" are operationalized as well-defined success criteria relative to specified assessments. **The "objective" in SLO stands for an educator's objective which is defined as the percentage of students meeting the student success criteria.** It is important to distinguish between the students' learning goals and the educator's objective. It is the **educator's objective** (defined in terms of a percentage of students meeting measurable success criteria) that is being used as an indicator of instructional effectiveness.

Finally, it is important to note that PSD educators (principals, teachers, and support staff) have contributed to the development of this SLO Guide. Much of the initial thinking regarding development of this Guide has been influenced by numerous other states and districts that have published various materials related to SLOs.

Timeline

The traditional education calendar has been built around 9-week blocks of time called quarters. Centennial High School is an exception in that they currently run courses on a 6-week cycle referred to as hexters. Whether quarters or hexters define the natural instructional cycles at your school, taking this structure into account when writing SLOs will have several benefits. All PSD schools operate within the timeframe of semesters (two quarters or three hexters).

Required:

- 1st Semester SLO process completed by last day of semester 1.
- 2nd semester SLO process must be completed by last day of quarter 3 or hexter 5.
- Each SLO must encompass a minimum of 6 weeks of instruction time.

Teachers often plan units of instruction that fall within the start and end dates of the quarter/hexter schedule. Measures of students' gains in content standard mastery and/or academic growth within hexter, quarter, or whole semester intervals can serve as indicators of students making a year's growth in a year's time and provide the evidence of effectiveness that PSD seeks. Framing the SLO process to coincide with these pre-existing cycles of instruction also provides teachers with multiple opportunities to demonstrate acceptable levels of student growth during the course of a single academic year. **If a teacher attains a growth rating of 3 from the 1st semester SLO process, then that rating will serve as the final growth rating.** If a teacher does not receive a growth rating of 3, then that teacher will be required to participate in the 2nd semester SLO process as a final opportunity to earn a growth rating of 3.

Table 1: SLO Timeline

Quarter	Process	Deliverable
1 st Quarter/ Hexter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish learning routines/expectations • Collect baseline information on students' knowledge & skills • Document 1st semester SLO process on form and get signature • Score SLO if it is completed prior to the end of the first quarter 	Complete 1st Semester SLO Form
2 nd Quarter/ Hexter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct SLO process if not already scored in quarter 1 • Discuss with evaluator as needed 	SLO Growth Rating #1
3 rd Quarter/ Hexter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct 2nd semester SLO process if needed • Receive constructive feedback on process & outcomes 	SLO Growth Rating #2
Final Quarter/ Hexter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluator ensures that the final SLO rating is entered into the PSD evaluation data collection system • Receive constructive feedback on process & outcomes during summative evaluation meeting 	Final SLO Growth Rating to HR

Principals will generally wait until after the first two weeks of school before sharing growth ratings and planning meetings to support SLO processes. **This pause allows teachers the time they need during the first quarter/hexter to establish important routines with their students, build relationships, and accurately determine students starting points prior to engaging in the SLO process.** Staff members will also have the time needed to select appropriate outcome targets, measures, and success criteria for the 1st semester SLO process.

Each teacher will have two distinct opportunities in a given school year to provide evidence of effective instruction through measurable student outcomes. The second round SLO process is only needed when adequate evidence of effectiveness was not identified via the first round of the SLO process. Principals will work with teachers in an attempt to support their success during the second round of the SLO process. **The spirit of the law, as interpreted by PSD, is one of professional support and continuous improvement of instructional effectiveness.** A two-phase (Fall and Spring) student learning objective process is one way in which PSD is promoting a vision of professional support through Educator Effectiveness implementation.

The first round of the SLO process must be completed by the last day of Semester 1. SLOs must encompass at least 6 weeks of instruction time, and can be initiated anytime during the first semester. This flexibility regarding start date is intended to help teachers align the initiation of the SLO process with natural instruction cycles. The alignment of the SLO process to natural cycles of instruction makes the process more authentic and more likely to support our educators' development toward higher levels of instructional effectiveness. Increased instructional effectiveness will benefit PSD's students.

Second semester SLO processes must also reflect a minimum of 6-weeks of instruction and must be completed by the last day of the 3rd quarter/5th hexter. This compressed time frame in the second semester is needed to allow for contingent Human Resource processes to be carried out in a timely fashion. **Only educators for whom participation in the Fall semester SLO process did not result in a Growth Rating of 3 must participate in the 3rd quarter/5th hexter SLO process.** The 3rd quarter/5th hexter SLO process is the final opportunity for Poudre School District to identify evidence of instructional effectiveness based on student outcome data in a given academic year.

Types and Number of Student Learning Objectives

This section of the guidebook provides information to help teachers and principals make decisions regarding the type and number of SLOs that are appropriate for an individual teaching assignment. In creating an SLO(s), a teacher populates the SLO form, consults with a principal/evaluator, and follows the guidance that PSD provides.

Required:

- Participating teachers must set at least one SLO.
- A teacher develops SLO(s) in consultation with his or her principal,
- Principals approve the number, type, and appropriateness of SLOs for their purpose.

There are different types of SLOs and the following information is included to assist teachers and principals in selecting the most appropriate SLOs for a given assignment. **General SLOs** apply to all, or most of your students. They can include a large proportion of the curriculum or target specific content/skills. **Specific Group SLOs** focus on a particular subgroup of students. **Individual Goals SLOs** are appropriate for teaching assignments that are focused on helping a small number of students make progress toward goals documented in customized education plans.

Table 2: Types of SLOs

Type of SLO	Definition	Example
General	Focused on the teacher’s entire student population for a given course. Includes current quarter content standards. Can isolate specific skills or content that all students must master.	Includes all students in a teacher’s science classes. Can isolate content standards and teaching targets related to experimental design.
Specific Group	Focused on a subgroup of students that needs specific support. Useful for interventionist, small group instruction, and settings where subgroup performance and growth are related to school-wide improvement plan goals.	Includes students in the group that scored below 45% on the pre-test.
Individual Goals	Focused on individual needs of students such as those documented in an IEP or ALP. Useful for Integrated Services and GT staff.	Includes the attainment of student-specific goals for each student on a teacher’s caseload.

General Student Learning Objectives

General SLOs include as many of your students as practical and focuses on the course material that you teach during the current quarter/semester. What this means for you individually, will depend on your teaching assignment.

Example 1: A 3rd-grade teacher selects a general SLO that includes all 18 of her students, and incorporates reading measures that she will gather during the first semester. The goal for all students will be to read at or above grade level. The SLO will operationalize this **student goal** by identifying the specific assessment(s) to be used and the score that indicates student success on the selected assessment(s). The **teacher's objective** is operationalized by naming the percentage of students needing to reach this measure of success to indicate instructional effectiveness. More detail on the process of defining an SLO is provided in the section of this guide titled "SLO Step 3: Set Learning Objectives".

In some cases, perhaps because you have multiple levels or types of classes, setting one General SLO for all students will be impractical. You may choose to develop two General SLOs. Information on combining several SLOs to arrive at a final score to be used as an "individual attribution" growth rating can be found in the section of this guide titled "SLO Step 5 – Review Results and Score the SLO". **Please keep in mind that a teacher does not need to have an SLO related to all material taught or all students interacted with. The SLO represents a sampling of instructional outcomes from which valid inferences regarding educator effectiveness can be drawn.**

Example 2: An 11th-grade life science teacher teaches three sections of biology and two of anatomy and physiology. She sets one General SLO for all of her biology students and one General SLO for all of her anatomy and physiology students.

Example 3: A music teacher teaches two sections of orchestra, two sections of guitar, and one of strings. He sets one General SLO for orchestra, and one General SLO for guitar, thereby including the majority of his students.

If you teach a lower elementary grade, you may decide a portfolio approach is the best way to proceed, as in the next example.

Example 4: A kindergarten teacher has 14 students and uses a locally-developed portfolio to assess her students. She sets a General SLO for all of her students based on their growth as measured by the portfolio. A rubric will be used to help standardize the meaning of scores.

Example 5: A 10th-grade social studies teacher finds through the pre-assessment that his students are particularly weak in their understanding of government. He sets an SLO that deals with this particular content area. This is a general SLO since it applies to all of his students.

In the next example, the US history teacher focuses his SLO on a skill rather than a content area.

Example 6: A 10th-grade social studies teacher finds on the free response portion of the pre-assessment, many students were unable to clearly use evidence to support their points of view. He sets an SLO that deals with this particular skill. He consults the Colorado Academic Standards in social studies to assist in developing appropriate activities and assessment questions. This is a general SLO since it applies to all of his students.

When students have demonstrated substantial differences in their pre-requisite or pre-existing levels of knowledge and these measured differences are likely to impact performance on the summative assessments being used to set SLO targets, setting goals in terms of gain scores may be helpful and appropriate.

Example 7: An 8th-grade math teacher sets a General SLO for all of her students based on the difference scores between pre-assessment results and her end of quarter assessment. These difference scores are believed to estimate student learning that took place during the current quarter. Growth expectations will be consistent, although end of quarter performance results will vary across students. It is the growth scores (or difference scores) that will form the basis of the SLO student success criteria.

Alternatively, you and your evaluator may decide that a Specific Group SLO is more appropriate for your situation, as outlined in the next section.

Specific Group Learning Objectives

A **Specific Group SLO** allows you to focus on a particular group of students identified as needing additional support. There may be a particular subpopulation of your students that would benefit from a Specific SLO - your struggling writers or your English language learners. Other examples include GT students or students that are participating in support experiences such as Read 180. The focus on a specific group of learners may support alignment with broader school improvement goals as documented in the school's Unified Improvement Plan.

Example 8: A 4th grade teacher writes a Specific group SLO that addresses the math growth needs of his students that began the school year below their grade level peers as identified in the Student Insight - Levels of Support data display. The Specific Group SLO applies to the academic area of math. Targets can be set based on measurable academic gains toward grade level standards covered in the current quarter and based on a classroom exam. Alternatively, targets can be set in terms of improving the relative standing or percentile ranks associated with this specific group of students on their MAP math results.

Example 9: A 7th grade Algebra teacher decides to write an SLO based on the growth of her advanced students as a measure of teacher effectiveness. She focuses on the measurable gains in note taking skills, process journaling, and assessment scores.

Individual Goals Learning Objectives

An **Individual Goals SLO** is appropriate to use when no two students in a very small group, often with special needs, have identical learning targets, common measures of learning targets, or identical success criteria even if learning targets and measures are similar. Although the Individual Goals SLO provides focus on individual needs of students such as those documented in an IEP or ALP, its use is not necessarily limited to Integrated Services and GT staff. **Please keep in mind that it is not appropriate to write an Individual Goals SLO based on outcomes for an individual student. Ideally, an Individual Goals SLO is written to reflect the instructional outcomes for 5 or more individual students.** To be clear on this point, it is worth reiterating that an Individual Goals SLO is not written on outcomes of a single student, but rather the outcomes for 5 or more students, each of whom has individualized/different success criteria. The educator's SLO level of attainment can still be scored in terms of the percentage of students that met their individual success criteria. The educator is allowing the student success criteria to vary from student-to-student so there is an authentic representation of student learning outcomes being rolled up to represent success stories where no two students goals are the same.

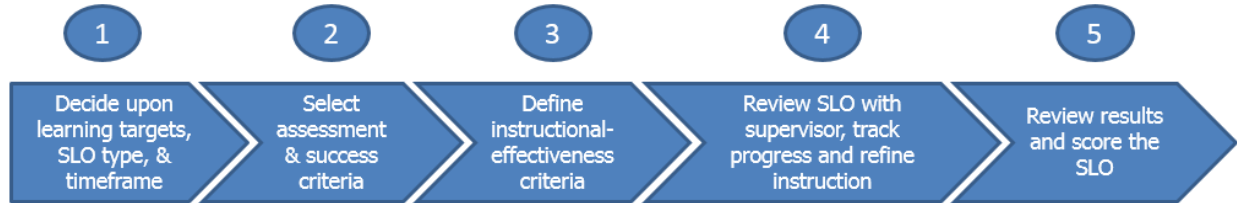
Example 10: An Integrated Services teacher writes an Individual Goals SLO that addresses the growth needs of his students based on the functional and academic goals identified in respective IEPs. Targets are set based on measurable gains toward goal attainment.

Example 11: A Career Ed work experience liaison who is responsible for monitoring and assisting students in their development of positive workplace habits writes an Individual Goals SLO based on student attainment of measurable objectives.

The Student Learning Objective Process

The following section of the guidebook provides step-by-step instructions that you might find helpful when setting up your SLO(s). There are five suggested steps for completing an SLO.

Student Learning Objective Process: 5-Step Overview



Step 1: Indicate learning targets, SLO type, & timeframe

Learning targets should be written in language that reflects specific academic standards. Teachers should use various sources of information to judge their students' starting points relative to the specific standards that will form the basis of the learning targets. The SLO type (described in Table 2 above) is largely dictated by the group size for which uniform learning targets and related success criteria can be applied in a sensible fashion. The timeframe can be as short as six weeks, and should be driven by the natural teaching cycles that best serve instruction. Don't allow the design of an SLO to alter the time spent on specific learning targets.

Step 2: Select measures of learning and student success criteria

Choose a quality assessment(s) aligned to content standards and learning targets. Determine what assessments you have in place for your students now. Are student scores likely to be instructionally-sensitive? Check assessments for rigor, depth of knowledge, and standards alignment. Develop insight regarding your students' starting points relative to the learning targets. Based on what you know about your students, define the student success criteria as a score(s) on the specific assessment(s) you have selected. Each student that meets or exceeds the defined student success criteria at the end of the instructional cycle will increase the body of evidence regarding your instructional effectiveness.

Step 3: Define the instructional effectiveness criteria

Using information collected in steps 1 and 2, set up the objective attainment levels for your SLO in terms of the percentages of students that meet the specified student success criteria. Focus attention on the attainment criteria for a rating of Expected (3). Complete the sections of the SLO form up to the point of getting your supervisors signature. **Steps 1-3 comprise the creation of a proposed SLO.**

Step 4: Review SLO with supervisor, track progress and refine instruction

Consult with your evaluator to verify that your proposed SLO is appropriate for your teaching assignment and have your evaluator approve it. Your principal may determine that multiple SLOs are needed to adequately capture indicators of your instructional effectiveness.

Frequently monitor your student’s progress towards the goals you have set for them. Modify your instruction as needed.

Step 5: Review results and score the SLO

At the end of the instruction cycle, the teacher scores the assessment(s) used for the SLO and determines the associated SLO rating based on the percentage of students that met or exceeded the student success criteria. These results are then shared with the evaluator.

SLO Step 1: Indicate learning targets, SLO type, & timeframe



Promoting growth in students is what effective teachers go to work to do every day. Even though students may walk through the door on the first day of school at very different points of preparedness, all learners are capable of growing. Two keys to promoting student growth are to have clearly defined learning targets at the beginning of each instructional cycle and having an accurate picture of where students are relative to these learning targets at the outset of the learning process. An important component of the SLO process, therefore, is to develop an understanding of what students already know and understand, and the types of skills they already possess. You can then use this information to set meaningful instructional goals embedded within the most appropriate type of SLO for your teaching assignment.

Building Your Understanding of Students’ Starting Points

In order to determine your students’ starting points, you should utilize as much information as possible. Common sources of evidence that you might use to determine starting points are shown in Table 4 below. **It is unlikely that a teacher would need to create or give “new assessments”.**

Table 4

Source of Performance Data to Determine Students’ Starting Points	Examples and Notes
Results from beginning-of-course diagnostic tests or performance tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills or Diagnostic Tests • Early course content
Results from same-subject prior-year assessments (Pre-requisite knowledge and skills)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DIBELS Next • MAP • PARCC, CMAS • Common Summative Exams
Results from tests in other subjects (Pre- requisite knowledge and skills)	AP Biology teacher uses prior or concurrent math assessments
Students’ grades in previous classes	Same subject or related subject area

Using Student Data from Prior Assessments

Using prior measures of student learning is one way to gauge the learning needs of the class. If you are an elementary school reading teacher, you could use students' scores on DIBELS Next from the previous year, or the fall test window, to inform a student goal related to reading gains in the current year. There are clearly other factors to take into account when setting such a student goal, such as possible summer learning losses (or gains), or significant reading deficiencies. Therefore, you might reinforce the prior data with another measure, such as a classroom pre-assessment, to build a clearer picture of your students' starting points. Using a body of evidence can be very helpful in accurately ascertaining students' starting points. It is worth pointing out that the Colorado Growth Model quantifies student growth by looking at up to four prior-year test occasions and identifying academic peer groups that can be used to inform a normative understanding of current year growth. Although setting a teacher's SLO will not be as sophisticated a process as the calculation of Student Growth Percentiles, the underlying idea of setting end-of-instruction performance expectations based on knowledge of prior-test performance levels is very similar and likely to produce a more fair evaluation metric.

Using Pre-Assessments to Quantify Starting Points for a SLO

Pre-Assessments, in conjunction with evidence of student learning from prior years, will likely provide a more detailed picture of students' starting points. For some subjects, a pre-assessment may provide the clearest indicator of where students are starting out. Comparing results on this assessment to those of the post-assessment will allow you to estimate how much students have grown over the period of instruction. **If you choose to use a pre-assessment that is similar to the post-assessment, consider how alike the assessments need to be in order to draw valid inferences of growth while not subjecting your students to an inappropriately lengthy test of skills and knowledge they have not been exposed to.**

Differentiating Students by Preparedness Level to Support Specific Group SLOs

Teachers often have students with a wide range of preparedness and ability in a course or class. One General SLO that applies to all, or most, students might set success criteria too low for some students and too high for others. By breaking down one General SLO into one or more Specific Group SLOs based on different levels of student preparation, your SLO is likely to be ambitious and feasible for each group of students. This could be done in a number of ways, one of which would be to divide students into three groups:

- Low level of preparedness: Students who have yet to master pre-requisite knowledge or skills needed for this course
- Medium level of preparedness: Students who are moderately prepared to meet the demands of the course
- High level of preparedness: Students who start the course having already mastered key background knowledge or skills and even being familiar with intended learning targets.

In Example 10 below, a freshman English teacher uses two sources of data to develop groupings of students.

Example 10: A 9th-grade Language Arts teacher has two sets of data readily available: a department-wide pre-assessment that is based on the content and structure of the quarter’s final assessment and scores on a portfolio that students completed the previous quarter. He, possibly in collaboration with the other teachers in his department, determines the appropriate weight that should be placed on each piece of evidence and then makes a judgment regarding how individual students should be placed based on the weighted average outcomes. A straight average can be used (i.e., equal weight on each indicator). Selecting cut-points to convert average scores into Preparedness Groups is a very situational and subjective process that benefits from a quick look at the distribution of average scores for your group of students. Table 5 shows how this might look for four students.

Table 5

Student	Portfolio Score Prior-Quarter	Pre-Assessment	Average Score	Preparedness Group
1	89	76	82.5	High
2	68	43	55.5	Low
3	78	54	66	Medium
4	86	66	76	High

The following list of questions and actions may be helpful in determining students’ starting points relative to specific learning targets.

- What sources of student data are available to you?
- Is a pre-assessment something you have access to?
- Choose 1-3 sources of data to determine starting points.
- Gather achievement data on all of your students.
- Determine whether you should subdivide your students for the purposes of writing one or more Specific Group SLOs according to the prior-achievement data.
- Are the students’ success criteria to be based on performance or growth (gain scores)?

Keep in mind that low initial performance is often related to lower levels of post-performance. As an educator setting targets for your students’ outcomes, you can account for this variability in a fair and honest manner by one of three strategies:

- 1) Set whole-group targets based on growth measures, not performance;
- 2) Set targets based on performance, but do so with use of Specific Group SLOs, or;
- 3) Set whole-group targets based on performance, but be honest in assessing the percent of students you anticipate meeting the uniform success criteria under an assumption of high quality current-period instruction.

SLO Step 2: Select measures of learning and student success criteria



Assessments used in SLOs must be aligned to standards and measure student achievement and/or growth. Whenever available, using results of common assessments shared by multiple teachers is strongly encouraged. Principals will be able to provide more consistent guidance regarding appropriateness of target setting and there will be enhanced opportunities for a Professional Learning Community (PLC) approach to supporting student growth.

You may use a version of the SLO assessment, or a past exam of related material, as a pre-test to help indicate the starting point of each student. This important prior-performance information can also be helpful in estimating academic growth. Gain scores (or difference scores) are the simplest form of a growth metric.

Figure 1 presents a succinct description of the ideal properties of an assessment being considered for inclusion in the SLO process. Many available assessments will not have all of these properties, yet it is informative to be aware of the ideal properties as you select assessments.

Figure 1

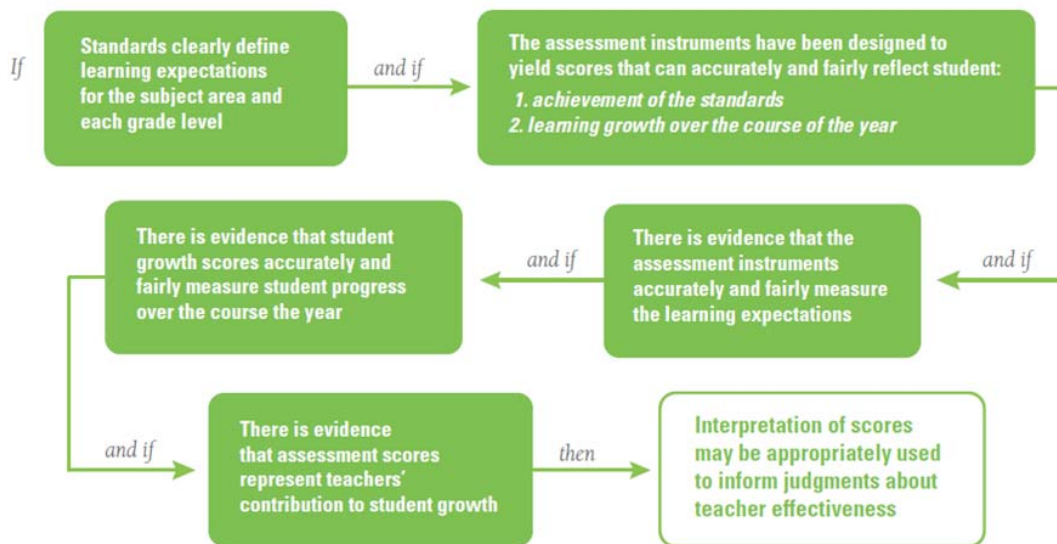


Figure 1 is used with permission from the Regents of the University of California, supported by WestEd, grant number 4956 s05-093, as administered by the U.S. Department of Education. See Herman, J. L., Heritage, M., & Goldschmidt, P. (2011). Developing and selecting assessments of student growth for use in teacher evaluation systems. Los Angeles, CA: University of California, National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST).

As a minimum standard for inclusion, you and your evaluator must be confident that the assessments you use are aligned to appropriate course content standards. You must also be sure that assessments are appropriately rigorous for the grade-level and course.

There are many types of assessments to choose from depending on the subject and grade level taught. You may choose to use available standardized tests that provide assurances regarding levels of rigor and reliability (e.g., MAP). In this case you must make sure the results are available prior to the end of the SLO period. District-wide, school-wide, departmental, or your personal exams may be available and appropriate. Alternatively, you may select portfolio assessments or performance assessments. Examples of assessments that might be used for SLO purposes are shown below in Table 3. Social-emotional scales and personality inventories may be appropriate measures to consider in some alternative settings. **It is unlikely that “new assessments” are needed solely for the purpose of writing a well-defined SLO.**

Table 3

Traditional Assessments	Portfolio and Performance Assessments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MAP • DIBELS 8 • AIMS Web • District Resources • Teacher Developed • Etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lab Notebooks • Project Based Artifacts • Art Portfolios • Music Recordings • Competition Score Sheets • Etc.

Whatever assessments are selected for use in a particular SLO, **a key property is that the assessment scores are sensitive to instruction.** This property is central to the inferences we are attempting to support. For example, the use of an SAT score in an SLO is almost assuredly not the most instructionally sensitive measure that an educator could select for their SLO. The reason is that a student’s performance on an SAT test will reflect the cumulative learning that has occurred over many years and with the help of many educators. This is not what an educator seeks when writing an SLO. The timing of the SAT results is also a problem if considered for an SLO, but it is the issue of sensitivity to instruction being illustrated here.

The assessments selected for inclusion in an SLO should have the property that increased scores reflect increased learning of the current material being experienced by the students as a direct result of their interactions with the teacher being evaluated. For this reason, **local assessments tied directly to the material covered in the current instruction cycle are likely to support the most valid inferences of educator effectiveness given that the scores being produced are reliable measures of student learning.** Portfolio assessments and performance assessments should be scored with the use of rubrics. The use of rubrics standardizes the meaning of the scores to some extent and may increase reliability of scores.

SLO Step 3: Define instructional effectiveness criteria



After you have identified an assessment(s) to use in your SLO(s) and have explored the starting points of the students to be included, the next step is to combine this information and define SLOs that are ambitious, but achievable. Developing a quality goal is highly dependent on your expert knowledge of your students and assessments.

Required

- SLOs must be specific and measurable and be based on student growth and/or achievement. (Measures are not based on adult behavior, but rather student outcomes.)

As described earlier in this guide, SLOs can be one of three types: General, Specific Group, or Individual Goals. Table 2 summarizes your options. Which type(s) of SLO you select is dependent on your teaching assignment and your instructional goals. As mentioned earlier in this document, it is appropriate to consider the broader school improvement goals identified in your Unified School Improvement Plan (UIP) when setting SLOs. **For example, if the school's UIP includes a Major Improvement Strategy targeted toward "Students Needing to Catch-Up", then you can support the school's goal by writing a Specific Group SLO focused on this same group of students within your class.** Done well, this connection between the SLO process and the Unified Improvement Plan will help align the different levels of an overall accountability system designed to address the specific growth opportunities of individual schools.

General Student Learning Objectives

Setting a General SLO target is based on determining how many of the total students being included in the SLO are expected to meet a single outcome target (a.k.a., success criterion). Educators must predict what percentage of students would attain a particular level of performance (or growth) based on the post assessment under the assumption of high quality instruction. **This percentage operationalizes the educator's objective. Meeting or exceeding this percentage is an indicator of instructional effectiveness and earns a score of "3" for the individual attribution growth rating.**

There are only two levels of attainment of an SLO and these two levels coincide with the growth rating categories available via the 1st and 2nd stratum of the PSD Growth Rating Process. Table 6 contains the two levels of SLO attainment and describes what each level means. Teachers are asked to reflect on the knowledge gained through steps 1 and 2 of this SLO process and determine the number of students likely to meet the success criteria described in the SLO. Once a specific number of current students is identified as likely to meet the success criteria **given**

high quality current instruction, then these “counts” or “frequencies” are translated into percentages to arrive at cut points that can be applied to end-of-cycle student n-counts that may have changed over the course of instruction. **Percentage-based cut-points will be applied to students that remain in the class at the conclusion of the current instruction cycle when determining the extent to which an educator met their SLO target.**

Table 6

Attainment of Student Learning Objective	
Insufficient Evidence of Effectiveness (2)	Sufficient Evidence of Effectiveness (3)
Teacher has demonstrated some impact on learning but did not meet the objective.	Teacher has demonstrated a considerable impact on learning by meeting the objective.

Setting the Standard for the “Sufficient Evidence of Effectiveness (3)” rating

In order to develop a scoring guide based on how well you meet your SLO, determine the following:

- Performance target or growth score that indicates considerable student learning (i.e., the student success criteria)
- Number of students that can reasonably meet this mark assuming high quality instruction
- Percentage of students in the course that this number represents

For example, you and your evaluator may decide that 80% on a challenging assessment indicates considerable mastery of learning targets. Your evaluator agrees that if 50 or more of your 65 students meet or exceed this score at the end of the instruction cycle, evidence of effective instruction will be evident. This represents 77 percent of the students you are currently teaching. You may decide to subtract a 10% margin of error and make 67% or more the criteria for evidence of effectiveness. This means that if 67% of the students in your class at the time of the assessment score at least 80% on the final assessment; you would have met the objective and receive the “Sufficient Evidence of Effectiveness” rating of 3. Please keep in mind that qualifying statements regarding which students are to be included in the calculation of results can be made within the SLO. A common conditional statement would state that only students who attended class 95% or more of the SLO instructional days are included in the final calculation of results.

Setting the Other Standard of Attainment

Once a range is established for Sufficient Evidence of Effectiveness” rating of 3, any number below this cut score is the “Insufficient Evidence of Effectiveness (2)” category.

Table 7

Target Score: 80% or Higher on Final Assessment	Insufficient Evidence of Effectiveness	Sufficient Evidence of Effectiveness
Percent of Students Meeting Target	0%-66% of Students	67%-100% of Students
Number of Students Meeting the Target (Assuming 65 students remain in the class.)	0-43 Students	44-65 Students

Using Changes in Proficiency Level or Gains (General SLO)

You may use an assessment method in which the same target score is not appropriate for everyone in the class, but a common gain or change is appropriate. As an example, for a 3rd-grade teacher, a student learning goal may be operationalized as a 60-unit increase from the Beginning of Year DIBELS Composite Score (DCS) to the Middle of Year DCS. However, even if this is the case, you would still go about setting attainment levels in the same way as described above. For instance, a rating of “Sufficient Evidence of Effectiveness” might be earned if 85 percent of students meet this student success criterion (60-unit gain). Table 8 illustrates the use of a 10 percent margin of error to set the expectation range. Note that the student success criterion is consistent for all students, and is sensible, even though students begin the year with differences in their initial reading levels. The 60-unit gain was selected as the measure of student success by referring to the DIBELS Next National Norms 2012-13 Report (available at the DIBELS Next website).

Table 8

Target Score: Students increase 60 units Beginning of Year to Middle of Year on DIBELS Next Composite Score	Insufficient Evidence of Effectiveness	Sufficient Evidence of Effectiveness
Percent of Students Meeting Target	<75% of Students	75%-100% of Students

A second example of student success criteria based on academic growth (as opposed to performance) can be developed using MAP data. Fifth grade math gain scores (Fall to Winter) meeting or exceeding 5 RIT units can be set as an indicator of student success. The 5-unit gain was selected as the measure of student success by referring to the NWEA 2015 RIT Scale Norms Report (available at the NWEA website). The most widely available and defensible documents should be utilized in the process of setting growth expectations. A rigorous, but fair, target for the percentage of students expected to gain 5 RIT units or more needs to be agreed upon by the teacher and principal. The percentage selected, if attained, should indicate expected instructional effectiveness. The educator in this example may claim that getting 50% or more of their students to a RIT gain of 5 units or higher is a fair measure of instructional effectiveness. Using the same process as described above, the “Expected” range may be designated to include 40%-60% of students making at least a 5-unit gain from Fall to Winter test occasions.

When there are no national, state, or local norms available to guide you regarding expected levels of growth for a given assessment, it will be safest to use performance criteria as explained above rather than criteria based on student growth. Visible Learning for Teachers (2012, pages 271-273) by John Hattie describes the calculation and use of an effect size metric that does not include the use of a control group. Hattie advocates the use of 0.40 as a general indicator of expected growth based on the effect size he describes. Note that there are conditions associated with the utility and appropriateness of this procedure.

Completing a Student Learning Objective Form

Once the components needed for SLO creation have been determined, educators will complete the PSD SLO form to record this information. The PSD form includes information about the standards that the objective captures, the assessment method, a description of the baseline data used to determine students' starting points, and specific information on how outcomes will be scored. Figure 2 is an example of the SLO form that was filled out by Mr. Newton, a high school freshman Pre AP Biology teacher, during the current school year. A blank copy of the current PSD SLO form can be found in Appendix A. Although the specific look of this form may change over time within PSD and the delivery and collection methods used to document the SLO process will likely evolve to utilize multiple technologies, the contents of the form are likely to remain largely intact over time. Please try to look beyond the specific "package" of the information being documented and concentrate on the purpose and importance of gathering the content in a manner that supports a shared understanding of our expectations of student learning.

Figure 2

Ambitious and Feasible Student Learning Objective				
Employee ID: 45367		Educator's Name: Mr. Newton		School: Poudre Pride
Grade:	Subject:	Number of Students:	Interval of Instruction:	Required/Optional:
9	Pre AP Biology	65	Quarter 2	Required SLO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Optional SLO <input type="checkbox"/>
Name and Description of Assessment:	Department-developed Pre AP Biology 2nd Quarter Summative Assessment		SLO Type:	General <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Specific Group <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Goals <input type="checkbox"/>
Rationale for Student Growth Objective: Please include content standards covered and briefly describe why assessment method is appropriate.				
This SLO covers all of my students and all of the state standards to be covered in Quarter 2 of Pre AP Biology. The written exam consist of 60 multiple choice questions and 5 free response questions. The performance assessment portion of this exam requires students to design a simple apparatus, take measurements, analyze data, and draw supported conclusions. All students scheduled into Pre AP Biology are believed to be capable of passing this exam with a 75% or better given high quality instruction and full student engagement.				
Baseline Data: Please include what you know about your students' performance/skills/achievement levels at the beginning of the quarter/Hexter, as well as any additional student data or background information used in setting your objective. Feel free to attach any additional sheets needed, if any.				
All 9th grade students in Pre AP Biology have passed Algebra 1 with a B or better. All 9th grade Pre AP Biology students are currently at or beyond grade level expectations in reading, writing, and math as indicated by my students data as evidenced in the Student Insight - Levels of Support dashboard. The average score on the short Pre AP Biology Quarter 2 pre-test for these 65 students was 52%. (please see attached document)				
Student Learning Objective: Write a specific, measurable, ambitious, achievable and time-related objective. Clearly indicate the assessment to be used, the student success criteria based on that assessment, and the percentage of students reaching the success criteria that will result in a rating of Expected (3). Specify student inclusion/exclusion criteria, if any. (e.g. Student Attendance)				
75% or more of my 9th grade Pre AP Biology students who attend at least 90% of the associated instructional days will earn a score of 80% or better on the quarter final assessment.				
Objective Attainment Level Based on Percentage of Students Meeting Success Criteria				
Insufficient Evidence of Effectiveness (2) (< X%)		Evidence of Effectiveness (3) [x% to 100%]		
<75%		75% or more		
Approval of Student Learning Objective (Filled out prior to instruction cycle.)				
Date Approved:		Teacher Signature:		
		Principal Signature:		
Results of Student Learning Objective (Filled out after instruction cycle completed.)				
Final Student Count:		Date Completed and Scored:		
Count Meeting Objective:		Teacher Signature:		
Percent/Rating:		Principal Signature:		

Notes on Completing SLO Form

Rationale for SLO: The information this teacher provides is specific to the standards he is testing and the way he is testing them. This specificity is important so that he can clearly communicate the foundation of his SLO.

Baseline Data: There is not much room on the form for details here. A summary is appropriate.

SLO: Mr. Newton has written a specific, measurable, ambitious, achievable and time-related goal, clearly indicating what he aims to accomplish in terms of measurable student outcomes.

Setting Specific Group Objectives

As discussed in the introduction, a Specific Group SLO allows you to set a goal for a subset of students. For example, a 10th-grade Algebra 1 teacher might choose to focus an SLO on a group of students who have performed in the lowest 33 percent on a preparedness assessment. Apart from the focus on a particular group, you can follow the same process for setting a Specific SLO as for a General SLO, and can use the same SLO form.

Setting Individual Goals

Writing an Individual Goals SLOs requires careful attention to the "Rationale", "Baseline Data", and Student Learning Objective portions of the SLO form. In each of these sections there will be a limited number of specific students being referred to. A fake ID scheme should be utilized to protect the individual student's identity and provide a logical connection for the reader between these sections of the form. In the end, the scoring of an Individual Goals SLO is the same as for the General SLO in that a predetermined number and percentage of students meeting the success criteria will be associated with different levels of the SLO outcome range.

SLO Step 4: Review SLO with supervisor, track progress and refine instruction



The value of goal-setting becomes apparent during the conversations engaged in while obtaining your supervisors signature/approval, when educators track student progress toward student learning goals, and when making instructional adjustments to stay on track while still in the instruction cycle. In the classroom, tracking student progress means monitoring student performance through some sort of formative assessment process. The assessments used could be benchmark assessments that are already in place, they can be quick understanding checks that occur during instruction, and they can be the components of a portfolio that is in-progress, just to name a few. The specific types of assessments being used to monitor progress is less important than the intentional practice of adjusting instruction in response to what you discover regarding student learning.

Although there are no deliverables (i.e., documents) related to tracking progress within the context of SLOs, the Professional Practice portion of an educator’s evaluation does reflect information on this important instructional strategy. It makes sense to include Step-4 within the SLO process as a way of formally drawing a connection between the two halves of the overall evaluation process and pointing out an alignment opportunity.

During the middle of the instructional cycle for which the SLO has been designed, a teacher and their principal can check-in to evaluate the progress students are making towards the targets that have set for them. To facilitate productive discussions, please reflect on the following questions:

- How are your students progressing toward your SLO(s)?
- How do you know?
- Which students are struggling/exceeding expectations?
- What are you doing to support them?
- What additional resources do you need to support you as you work to achieve your SLO(s)?

During this check-in, teachers can share evidence of learning that supports answers to these questions and discuss adjustments to teaching strategies that have taken place. This is an excellent opportunity for a teacher to demonstrate responsiveness to student needs and for principals to provide guidance and support as necessary.

SLO Step 5: Review results and score the SLO



At the end of the instruction cycle, the teacher scores the assessment(s) used for the SLO and determines the associated SLO rating based on the percentage of students that met or exceeded the student success criteria. If the SLO was clearly articulated in the approved SLO document, this final step in the SLO process should be very straight-forward. A teacher should know what the students measurable results mean in terms of an SLO rating prior to meeting with their principal. A conversation between the teacher and principal regarding the outcome of the SLO process is appropriate regardless of the resulting rating. This meeting is an opportunity for collegial conversation regarding the attainment of measurable student outcomes. Principals and teachers should be mindful of the teacher's work-day schedule when setting such meetings. Adequate time to process the outcomes and implications should be considered.

Required

- 1st Semester SLO ratings that result in a Growth Rating of a 3, will be used to determine an educator's final overall performance rating for the current school year.
- 1st Semester SLO ratings that result in a Growth Rating of a 2, will not be used to determine an educator's final overall performance rating for the current school year if the educator participates in the 2nd Semester SLO Process that results in a higher growth rating.
- The 2nd Semester SLO Process is the final opportunity for PSD to identify evidence of effectiveness based on student outcome data in a given year.

Calculating a Total Student Learning Objective Score

The simplest way to generate a score based on outcomes from multiple SLOs for a single educator in a single semester is to average the outcomes from each SLO using the normal rounding rules to arrive at a final integer rating. However, this approach does not take into account that the number of students included in each individual SLO may significantly differ or allow for weighting by perceived relative importance of the SLOs. Therefore, a slightly more complex approach that can be used, assuming the educator and supervisor have agreed to the relative weights a priori, is a weighted average.

Using weights provides a more nuanced calculation. Using this method may not always result in a higher score; however, it may provide a fairer representation of your performance on multiple SLOs in some cases. A teacher with three SLOs can do a simple calculation to compute the final combined SLO score regardless of type of SLOs being combined or how the scores were calculated for each separate SLO. Table 9 demonstrates the calculation used if placing

unequal weights on separate SLOs. A teacher and their principal may agree to use different weightings for each SLO. The final score based on the example captured in Table 9 would be a 3 based on the normal rounding rules (≥ 0.5 implies round up to next integer). The weighted-average SLO score of 2.75 is then translated into a Growth Rating of a 3 or “Evidence of Effectiveness”. Recall that a final growth rating is then averaged with the final Professional Practice rating to arrive at the final evaluation rating.

Table 9

SLO	Score	Weighting	Weighted Score
General	3	.25	$3*0.25=0.75$
General	2	.25	$2*0.25=0.5$
Specific Group	3	.5	$3*0.5=1.5$
Growth Rating: 3		Total	$.75+0.5+1.5=2.75$

Using Student Growth Objectives to Improve Practice and Student Learning

When the SLO process is carried out diligently, the information that SLOs provide will be valuable to teachers who are seeking to improve their practice. Not only can this information be used during the year to make course corrections in instruction, it can be used to develop a well thought out instructional plan for the following year. You might use the results from your SLO(s) to inform your professional development plan, choosing to focus on areas of challenge through which you or your students struggled. Conversely, while planning for the next school year, it may be clear from your SLO results that you should keep or expand particularly successful strategies or materials.

For some teachers and principals, SLOs will require a shift in thinking about assessment, goal setting, and instruction. In many cases, Poudre School District teachers will see the SLO process as a natural extension of the way they already use assessments and target setting to inform their instruction and ensure every student is making progress every day. There is a very natural connection between Understanding by Design (UBD) and the SLO process. Many teachers and principals in PSD are familiar with the instructional practices promoted by UBD and will benefit from this natural connection between UBD and SLOs. When created and used thoughtfully, SLOs offer a powerful tool that will not only help improve instructional practice, but ultimately, and most importantly, student learning.

For questions, comments, or assistance with either the SLO Guide or the SLO process as implemented in Poudre School District, please contact Dwayne Schmitz, Chief Institutional Effectiveness Officer at 970-490-3693 or dschmitz@psdschools.org.

Appendix A: Student Learning Objective Form (paper version)

Ambitious and Feasible Student Learning Objective				
Employee ID:		Educator's Name:		School:
Grade:	Subject:	Number of Students:	Interval of Instruction:	Required/Optional: Required SLO <input type="checkbox"/>
				Optional SLO <input type="checkbox"/>
Name and Description of Assessment:			SLO Type:	General <input type="checkbox"/>
				Specific Group <input type="checkbox"/>
				Individual Goals <input type="checkbox"/>
Rationale for Student Growth Objective: Please include content standards covered and briefly describe why assessment method is appropriate.				
Baseline Data: Please include what you know about your students' performance/skills/achievement levels at the beginning of the quarter/Hexter, as well as any additional student data or background information used in setting your objective. Feel free to attach any additional sheets needed, if any.				
Student Learning Objective: Write a specific, measurable, ambitious, achievable and time-related objective. Clearly indicate the assessment to be used, the student success criteria based on that assessment, and the percentage of students reaching the success criteria that will result in a rating of Expected (3). Specify student inclusion/exclusion criteria, if any. (e.g. Student Attendance)				
Objective Attainment Level Based on Percentage of Students Meeting Success Criteria				
Insufficient Evidence of Effectiveness (2) (< X%)		Evidence of Effectiveness (3) [x% to 100%]		
Approval of Student Learning Objective (Filled out prior to instruction cycle.)				
Date Approved:	Teacher Signature:			
	Principal Signature:			
Results of Student Learning Objective (Filled out after instruction cycle completed.)				
Final Student Count:	Date Completed and Scored:			
Count Meeting Objective:	Teacher Signature:			
Percent/Rating:	Principal Signature:			

Appendix B: Glossary

1st Stratum or Stratum-1	The use of district-wide assessments that have been scored externally within a statistical process that yields teacher-effect estimates useful in determining Growth Ratings related to SB-191.
2nd Stratum or Stratum-1	The use of district-wide assessments that have been scored internally within a statistical process that yields teacher-effect estimates useful in determining Growth Ratings related to SB-191.
3rd Stratum	The system by which PSD seeks evidence of effectiveness in the form of student outcomes when a Growth Rating of a 3 is not available via the 1st or 2nd Strata processes. The SLO process is utilized.
Advanced Learning Plan (ALP)	Written for every student who meets the district criteria for gifted identification and intended to support student development.
Criterion Referenced	A criterion-referenced teacher effectiveness measure indicates whether the teacher's student-outcomes are higher or lower than some criteria that are not dependent on other teachers' student-outcomes.
Growth Rating Process	The process by which PSD will determine individual educator's Growth Ratings as required by SB-191
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	Defines the individualized objectives of a child who has been found with a disability, as defined by federal regulations. The IEP is intended to help children reach educational goals more easily than they otherwise would.
Norm Referenced	A norm-referenced teacher effectiveness measure indicates whether the teacher's student outcomes are higher or lower than other teachers who were able to be included in the norming group.
Operationalize	Defining a construct such that it can be measured objectively
SB-191	Colorado Senate Bill 191, otherwise known as Educator Effectiveness
Student Learning Objective (SLO)	A participatory method of setting measurable goals, or objectives for a specific assignment or class, in a manner aligned with the subject matter taught, and in a manner that allows for the evaluation of the baseline performance of students and the measurable gains in student performance during the course of instruction.
Student Growth	Measurable student learning over time
Success Criteria	The minimum score on a summative assessment that indicates student proficiency regarding the standards being assessed
Teacher's Objective	An individualized performance target that earns the Growth Rating of "Expected" and is based on the percentage of students meeting the student success criteria defined explicitly in the SLO form
Unified Improvement Plan (UIP)	The official improvement plan required of every school in Colorado and posted on SchoolView for public review