

# Misconceptions and Facts About Student Learning Objectives

Misconceptions	Facts
Student learning objectives (SLOs) interfere with real teaching and learning.	The SLO process is a formalization of existing best practices: identifying the most important standards, setting developmentally appropriate goals for students, monitoring student progress, and adjusting practices as needed so that all students demonstrate growth.
SLOs will result in overtesting of students.	In most subjects, teachers already use assessments that can easily be integrated into the SLO process. In some subjects in which rigorous assessments aligned to course content are not already in use, teachers may need to create or use new assessments. These assessments can take a variety of forms and are not limited to paper-and-pencil tests. Performance assessments, portfolios, or projects also are acceptable. Besides being used for SLOs, these assessments will be used for other purposes; for example, these new assessments will provide valuable information that teachers may use to plan and adjust instruction.
SLOs will take too much time. Who has time to write an SLO for every course?	Although teachers already use standards and knowledge of students to plan instruction and set student goals, the formal SLO process will be new to teachers. This process may require a learning curve during the first year, but it will get easier over time. In order to avoid overwhelming or overburdening teachers, the Maine Schools for Excellence (MFSE) SLO workgroup recommended a gradual implementation process. In 2013–14, teachers will write only one SLO for one of their courses. In 2014–15, teachers will write SLOs for two courses. Teachers do not need to write an SLO for each course that they teach.
SLOs are unfair because they are not the same for all teachers.	A strength of the SLO process is that it takes into account the differences of every. Teachers set SLOs on the basis of the needs of their students and the content being taught. The SLO process is a consistent goal-setting procedure that also engages teachers in deciding how to best measure the learning of their specific population of students.
SLOs force students to do things that are not developmentally appropriate.	Through the SLO process, teachers set differentiated, developmentally appropriate expectations for all students. These targets should be informed by students' baseline data and reflect students' varying levels of preparedness. All SLO growth targets should be rigorous and attainable, but all students should make academic gains regardless of where they start.
SLOs require teachers to work on their own when analyzing data and setting growth targets.	Whenever possible, teachers and administrators should work collaboratively to set growth targets. Teachers can work in grade-level or content-area teams to analyze baseline data, identify the most important course standards, and discuss the appropriateness of growth targets. Administrators should review the SLOs to ensure that student growth is measured using a high-quality assessment and that expectations are rigorous and aligned to content.
The SLO process sounds like the old MAP/LAD all over again.	Unlike the Local Assessment System (LAS), the SLO system is being built upon the current assessment system approved by the local district. Whenever possible, teachers should use assessment tools that they already use, provided that those tools are aligned to current standards and are appropriate for use with the teacher's student population. In some cases, teachers may need to create new assessments, but the SLO process does not require large-scale writing or rewriting of new assessments.