

# Measuring Student Growth in World Languages

The new Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) requires 50 percent of teachers' evaluations to be based on their students making adequate growth. This document was created to provide guidance around the determination of student growth in the K-12 world languages content area. Specifically, it will answer some frequently asked questions about the development of Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) and the selection of Student Growth Measures (SGMs), based on best practices and existing tools in this discipline.

Please take some time to read and reflect on these points of guidance. Because the measurement of student growth is ultimately a local decision, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) walks a fine line between giving enough guidance to ensure good decision-making based on Ohio's new world language standards and best practices in this discipline and overstepping the limitations imposed by the local decision-making process.

## What is a Student Learning Objective (SLO)?

- A Student Learning Objective (SLO) is a measurable, long-term academic goal informed by available data that a teacher or teacher team sets at the beginning of a course for all students or for subgroups of students. A SLO seeks to measure a teacher's impact on student learning within a given interval of instruction. The teacher and the students work toward the SLO growth targets throughout the designated interval and use multiple measures (e.g., portfolios, integrated performance assessments) to assess progress toward the goal. At the end of the designated interval, the teacher (or teacher team) meets with the principal or building team to assess progress toward the SLO goal and determine the teacher's impact on student learning.

## Exactly what should we be measuring with regard to world languages?

- **The change in students' overall language proficiency across the modes of communication** (i.e., interpretive listening, interpretive reading, interpersonal speaking, presentational writing and presentational speaking – deemphasizing interpersonal speaking in the classical languages) should be measured. The measurement of overall language proficiency growth should extend from the beginning to the end of a course.
- **IMPORTANT: *Measurements of grammar ability, vocabulary knowledge, cultural understanding and other discrete aspects of language are NOT acceptable.*** Since the standards are communicative and proficiency-based in nature with culture embedded throughout, so should be the measures that are used to determine students' overall language proficiency growth.

### **What link, if any, should exist between the SLOs and Ohio’s New Learning Standards for K-12 World Languages?**

- All SLOs should be aligned with Ohio’s New Learning Standards for K-12 World Languages and written in a global manner to represent a performance-based goal. They should take into account proficiency across the three modes of communication (interpretive, interpersonal and presentational) and different skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing).
- SLOs should not focus on just one skill or mode of communication. Nor should they focus on a single competency or on a select set of process and content statements from the world language learning standards document. This is entirely too limiting. Language programs should not base SLOs on just one competency (e.g., Presentational Communication Competency #1) or one grouping of process and content statements (e.g., Culture Competency #1, e-h). An initial tendency for some is to focus on one aspect of language, like writing, culture or grammar because these are considered to be easy things to assess/measure. However, such limited SLOs, which focus on discrete aspects of language and/or the standards, are invalid because they render no useful information about students’ **overall** language proficiency growth across ALL of the language skills and modes of communication.

### **Is there any guidance available to help me with creating SLOs that are sufficiently global?**

- ODE has produced a very clear, step-by-step process for writing a global SLO titled “[A Guide to Using Student Learning Objectives as a Locally-Determined Measure of Student Growth.](#)” SLO writers are STRONGLY encouraged to use the new publication. Scroll down the page and click on the *Student Learning Objectives Guidebook* link.

### **Why is ODE promoting the NCSSFL’s LinguaFolio tool so strongly as a primary measure of students’ overall language proficiency growth?**

- LinguaFolio is a nearly perfect tool for measuring students’ language proficiency growth. The tool’s *Biography* section contains student self-assessment checklists written in “kid-friendly” language across all levels of language proficiency as described by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL): Novice Low/Mid/High, Intermediate Low/Mid/High, Advanced Low/Mid/High, and Superior. The LinguaFolio “Can Do” statements also are aligned with both the ACTFL *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* and with *Ohio’s New Learning Standards for K-12 World Languages*.
- Teachers should target the “Can Do” statements at the appropriate proficiency level in each of the five skill/mode categories (i.e., interpretive listening, interpretive reading, interpersonal speaking, presentational writing and presentational speaking) that align with the course they are teaching and the global, communicative goals for the year that they have developed in their SLOs. If these targeted “Can Do” statements are visited at the beginning, middle and end of the course and integrated performance assessments are given periodically – all under the umbrella of a globally-written SLO, teachers should have

no difficulty quantifying their students' overall language proficiency growth in measurable terms.

- Please note that target proficiency charts will be posted soon, along with the new world language learning standards to assist language programs in targeting appropriate levels of student proficiency that are supported by research by course level. The new learning standards and all supporting information are posted [here](#).
- Information about the LinguaFolio, including the link to the tool's resources, can be accessed at <http://www.ncssf.org>.

### **So, can I use the LinguaFolio “Can Do” statements as my SLOs?**

- The LinguaFolio “Can Do” statements should NOT to be confused with SLOs. A Student Learning Objective (SLO) is a measurable, long-term academic goal informed by available data that a teacher or teacher team sets at the beginning of a course for all students or for subgroups of students. The use of the LinguaFolio “Can Do” statements, which are found in the tool's *Biography* section, is one of multiple student growth measures recommended by ODE that can be used to quantify students' overall language proficiency growth, which in turn reveals to what extent the goal described in the SLO has been accomplished.

### **I heard that the typical achievement-based assessments traditionally used in many language classes aren't good measures of student growth. Is this true?**

- This is very true. The typical classroom assessments that are used to evaluate students (e.g., quizzes, end-of-chapter tests, semester and final exams) measure student *achievement* – what students know and can do on a specific topic (or set of topics) at a specific point in time (e.g., end of a chapter, end of a semester). Student achievement should not be confused with the relatively new concept of student *growth*. **These traditional assessments give no indication of what students knew or didn't know prior to learning taking place; they simply tell you what students know at the moment an assessment is given.** The crux of measuring student growth is knowing exactly what students know and are able to do prior to the start of learning (i.e., beginning of a course, beginning of a new unit of study), revealing what they know and can do at the end of learning *and quantifying the difference in very specific terms* (growth). To measure student growth, teachers MUST use a combination of measures specified in the SLO that together show proficiency growth from the beginning to the end of the course. For example, as one measurement of growth, teachers and students might utilize the LinguaFolio “Can Do” statements in the *Biography* section at the beginning, middle and end of the course. Students substantiate the proficiency gains documented in the “Can Do” statements they achieve by capturing corresponding language performances digitally and placing them in the tool's *Dossier* section. As a second growth measure, students can be given periodic integrated performance assessments which assess students' global language proficiency around specific content. Both of these are ideal measures because

they render useful information about the growth of students' overall language proficiency across all three modes of communication.

**What oversight will there be of my students' progress toward the overarching communicative goals I've included in my SLO?**

- At the local level, teachers and administrators will monitor student progress toward SLO goals through formal and informal formative assessments. These assessments should be part of daily teaching and learning and should guide instructional decisions. Common assessments may be used across classes to monitor progress toward SLO goals on the school or district level.
- At the end of the year, the teacher (or teacher team) meets with the principal or building team to assess progress toward the SLO goal and determine the teacher's impact on student learning.
- Schools will be required to submit evidence of their student growth measurements online to ODE. Avoid potential pitfalls by carefully following the process described here to ensure adherence to best practices in the world language content area.

**Who can I contact with general questions that I have about developing local measures, including student learning objectives?**

- Contact Carolyn Everidge-Frey at [Carolyn.Everidge-Frey@education.ohio.gov](mailto:Carolyn.Everidge-Frey@education.ohio.gov).

**Who can I contact with specific questions that I have about Ohio's New Learning Standards for K-12 World Languages, the LinguaFolio tool and best practices in the world language teaching field related to communicative language learning?**

- Contact ODE World Language Consultant Ryan Wertz at [Ryan.Wertz@education.ohio.gov](mailto:Ryan.Wertz@education.ohio.gov) or Paula Sondej at [Paula.Sondej@education.ohio.gov](mailto:Paula.Sondej@education.ohio.gov).

