AchieveNJ: Student Growth Objectives in 2014-15

What Are Student Growth Objectives (SGOs)?

SGOs are measures of student learning included in the evaluations of all teachers, principals, and assistant/vice principals in New Jersey. Well-designed SGOs provide the following benefits:

- **For Students**: SGOs promote reflective and collaborative teaching practices, alignment among standards, instruction, and assessment, and improvements in student learning.
- **For Teachers** : SGOs provide a method by which teachers can improve their practice while clearly demonstrating their effectiveness through student progress.
- **For Principals/APs/VPs** : Administrators share in the SGO results of their teachers and can use the SGO process to help ensure each student receives the best possible education within their school environment.

SGO Requirements

SGOs must be:

- Specific and measurable academic goals that are aligned to state academic standards;
- Based on student growth and/or achievement using available student learning data;
- Developed by a teacher in consultation with his or her supervisor; and
- Approved and scored by a teacher's supervisor.

The number of required SGOs varies depending upon the grade(s) and subject area(s) taught:

- Teachers who receive a median Student Growth Percentile (mSGP) score must create **one or two** SGOs, as determined by the district superintendent. *Note: The Department recommends that teachers of 4th-8th grade Language Arts/Math set 2 SGOs if they have 25 students or fewer (30 or fewer in districts where student mobility is high).*
- Teachers who do not receive an mSGP score must create **two** SGOs.

SGOs account for 20% of a teacher's summative rating. Percentages may change in future years as the system evolves and educators share feedback.

Teachers without an mSGP set two SGOs

- Teacher Practice
- Student Growth Objectives

Teachers with an mSGP set one or two SGOs

- Teacher Practice
- Student Growth Objectives
- Median Student Growth Percentile
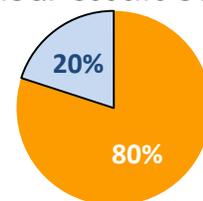
Key Steps and Timeline for the SGO Process

In setting SGOs, teachers should take the following steps:

1. **Prior to School Year – September**: Choose or develop a quality assessment aligned to applicable standards (see section below on Accurately Assessing Student Learning).
2. **September – October**: Determine students' starting points using multiple measures.
3. **By October 31**: With supervisor input and approval, set ambitious yet achievable student learning goals.
4. **October - End of School Year**: Track progress and refine instruction accordingly.
5. **By February 15**: Make adjustments to SGOs with superintendent's approval.
6. **By End of School Year**: Review results and SGO scores and discuss them with your supervisor.
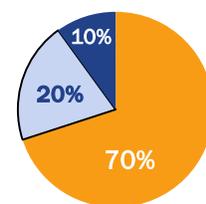
Important Points for SGO Development in 2014-15

The Department has worked closely with practitioners and reviewed thousands of SGOs to learn about the challenges and successes of SGO development in districts to date. The following table synthesizes key lessons and actions that educators should consider when developing SGOs in 2014-15.

Understand	Take Action
1. SGOs are **learning goals for key concepts and skills** that students can be expected to master in a course based on an **approximate sense** of where they start.	• Base learning goals on what you want students to know and do by the end of the SGO period. • Get a rough sense of where students begin by using **multiple measures** of student prior learning. • Use pre-assessments only when appropriate (see section below on Using Multiple Measures).
2. SGO quality is critically dependent on summative **assessment* quality.**	• **Increase the quality** of the SGO summative assessments and develop common assessments where possible. (see section on Accurately Assessing Student Learning)
3. SGOs should be a **true reflection** of the daily practice of effective teachers and of the curriculum and students an educator teaches. ([2013-14: Lessons from Educators, section 6](#))	• **Align** critical standards, effective instruction, and high quality assessment in SGOs. • Incorporate a **significant number** of students and portion of curriculum within the SGO(s) (see [SGO Quality Rating Rubric](#)). • Set **differentiated learning goals** for students based on their starting points (Tiered SGOs).
4. SGOs should be **collaborative**; teacher-driven, administrator-supported, and student-centered (as stated in code [6A:10-4.2 (e)3](#)).	• Even though administrators are responsible for approving and scoring SGOs, they should encourage **teachers to take ownership** of the SGO process as a powerful way to **improve teacher practice and student achievement**.

*Such assessments include portfolios, performance assessments, benchmark assessments, finals (modified as needed), program-based assessments, standardized tests (e.g. AP), and others.

Using Multiple Measures to Determine Student Starting Points

Using multiple measures of a student's starting point not only allows better targets to be set but provides useful information to help drive instruction. Information that a teacher typically gathers from students at the beginning of the year should be used to get a rough sense of their starting points.[1] This includes but is not limited to current grades and test scores, prior year grades and test scores, and markers of future success such as homework completion, class participation, and academic independence, etc. (see [example](#)). Pre-assessments,when utilized, provide maximum benefit to teachers and students when they are used **in conjunction with other measures** and in situations where they:

- Are used to evaluate a **set of skills**;
- Are **high quality** and **vertically aligned;** and
- Are **normally used** by the teacher for instructional purposes.

Accurately Assessing Student Learning

Assessments used to track progress on SGOs can be drawn from a wide range of options, including those developed locally by educators. In order to provide an accurate measure of what students have learned, all assessment tools, including portfolios and rubrics, should follow the guidelines for sound assessment design. In brief, assessments should:

- **Align with standards** taught during the SGO instructional period;
- **Align with the rigor** of the standards, content, and instruction of the course;
- **Be equally accessible** to all students regardless of extra-curricular background knowledge, cultural knowledge, and personal characteristics; and
- Be **administered** and **scored accurately** and **consistently**.

More information about these guidelines can be found in the [SGO 2.0 Workshop Presentation](#).

For More Information

- AchieveNJ SGO Web Page: http://www.state.nj.us/education/AchieveNJ/teacher/objectives.shtml
- [Lessons From Educators 2013-14, section 6](#)
- Email: educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us
- Helpline: 609-777-3788

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[1] Marion et al., Center for Assessment, 2012.
http://www.nciea.org/publication_PDFs/Measurement%20Considerations%20for%20NTSG_052212.pdf