**HOW DO YOU DETERMINE TARGETS THAT ARE RIG OROUS YET ATTAINABLE?**

While setting targets, educators and evaluators are encouraged to consider what is rigorous yet attainable for students. But, educators often ask, “How do you determine what is rigorous and attainable?” Setting targets that are too rigorous so that they are unrealistic hurts students and teachers alike. Conversely, setting targets that are not adequately rigorous can hurt students by lowering the expectations adults have for them and decreasing necessary urgency for significant progress. Finding a middle ground by trying to answer this question directly is rarely fruitful.

Alternatively, educators and evaluators should use the following three questions to guide them as they write, review, and approve SLO targets for students in the educator’s class or course:

## What does mastery or proficiency of the relevant course or grade-level standards or curriculum look like?

1. **What amount of progress toward that mastery or proficiency represents a year’s worth of**

**learning?**

1. **What are the implications if students make a year’s worth of learning?**

Answering the three questions above can be challenging, but it’s a vital task for educators to engage in. Ultimately, it will help educators and districts as they simultaneously write SLOs, develop their comprehensive assessment systems, and work toward larger educational goals. As educators answer these questions they can utilize data from prior SLOs to better evaluate the breadth and depth of content, rigor of target, and student readiness for the next level of instruction.

For additional guidance on answering the three core questions that educators and evaluators should use to help them write, review, and approve SLO targets, see below:

# WHAT DOES MASTERY OR PROFICIENCY OF THE RELEVANT COUR SE OR GRADE-LEVEL STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM LOOK LIKE?

Once the content focus of an SLO has been set, the teacher should think about or, if possible, discuss with colleagues what it would look like for students to demonstrate that learning.

* + What would students know and be able to do by the end of the interval of instruction?
  + How can students demonstrate what they know and are able to do?

Does the evidence source selected for the SLO allow for them to demonstrate that knowledge and understanding? If so, the next step is to determine the level of performance on that assessment that would indicate basic proficiency by asking, “At what point would the teacher feel adequately confident that the student has progressed or learned enough to be positioned for success in the next course or grade level?

# WHAT AMOUNT OF PROGR ESS TOWARD MASTERY OR PR OFICIENCY REPRESENTS A YEAR’S WORTH OF LEAR NING?

A rough metric that can be helpful for teachers to keep in mind when setting preliminary targets is the “year’s worth of learning.” Courses and curricula are aligned to standards that represent what is expected to be learned over the period of instruction. Teachers should first look to their standards and curriculum to determine the skills and content knowledge students should have by the end of the interval of instruction.

While the default target for any SLO should reflect mastery of the relevant course or grade-level standards, the reality is that not all students begin with the same level of preparedness. Educators need to determine what a year’s worth of learning would look like for students who enter significantly below or significantly above grade-level expectations and targets may be tiered to reflect differentiated expectations for learning. In all cases, educators should use their standards as a guide for understanding what students should be mastering year to year.

# While the default target for any SLO should reflect mastery of the relevant course or grade-level standards, the reality is that not all students begin with the same level of preparedness.

1. **WHAT ARE THE IMPLICA TIONS IF STUDENTS MAKE A YEAR’S WORTH OF LEARNING?**

If educators set targets that reflect a year’s worth of learning, as defined above, they should consider what the implications would be if students met those targets. Ultimately, if educators cannot say that targets support students in being prepared for the next level of instruction, narrowing or closing achievement gaps, or deepening their skills and content knowledge to a new and advanced level, then they are not rigorous enough.

For simplicity the following guidance is framed for educators whose interval of instruction is a full school year. However the guidance is equally applicable to educators who teach for an interval of instruction less than a year. Educators and evaluators should consider the following while reflecting on their targets for students:

**For students meeting grade-level expectations, will they make enough progress so that they are ready for the next level of instruction (e.g., the next course or grade level)?** Students who enter a course with the necessary prerequisite knowledge or skills should be expected to master the relevant course or grade-level standards. If they do not, they will fall behind grade-level expectations and an achievement gap will have been created.

**For those students coming in behind grade-level expectations, does this amount of progress help each student narrow or close, maintain, or widen an achievement gap?** While students in lower tiers may have a lower absolute target, reaching it may require them to make *more progress* than students with higher targets, resulting in a closing or narrowing of the achievement gap(s). At some point, these students

who begin the course behind will need to make more than “a year’s worth of learning” otherwise they will never catch up. Targets can be tiered, but they should not calcify achievement gaps. The need for fairness and appropriateness should be balanced by the need to challenge lower-achieving students and intensify their services and interventions to

**Since targets can be tiered, they should not calcify achievement gaps.**

catch up to their peers. Obviously, this is a challenge that cannot be addressed solely by an individual teacher setting a target on an SLO. The school and district must identify resources needed to help students who have fallen behind catch up and close the achievement gap.

**For students who are coming in ahead of grade-level expectations, does this amount of progress ensure that each student deepens their skills and content knowledge and continues to be challenged to a new and advanced level?** Students who enter the course with prerequisite knowledge or skills that exceed what is expected or required should deepen their learning or advance to the next set of grade-level skills. If students do not make this amount of progress then they have lost their advanced development.

Targets for students who are English Language Learners or for those who have a disability require additional consideration. In some cases, evidence may need to be differentiated for English Language Learners to account for how they currently demonstrate content skills and knowledge. All teachers should ensure their content targets for English Language Learners are informed by students’ language comprehension and communication skills. Educators of students with IEPs should collaborate with other teachers and staff members to review present levels of academic and functional performance and historical data to set appropriate targets that narrow and ultimately close achievement gaps.