

State Council for Educator Effectiveness

Development of Student Growth Measures

DRAFT – March 17, 2011

Discussions regarding how to measure student growth in subjects and grades not currently tested by statewide summative assessments (e.g. CSAP) have revealed a tension among competing uses. Depending on which uses are prioritized, different approaches to calculating student growth and incorporating the measures into teacher evaluations are more appropriate. Following are a set of considerations that could be used to inform which uses are appropriate to prioritize:

- Possible uses of the evaluation system:
 - Informing personnel decisions
 - Providing educators relevant and useful feedback which can be used to improve instruction.
- Urgency of improving student outcomes.
- Fairness of the system to individual educators.
- Need for a system to be simple enough to be implemented well in a wide variety of districts across the state, and to be flexible enough to account for differing district priorities.
- Opportunity to develop measures of student growth and achievement in all areas of Colorado Academic Standards (fairness to teachers in those areas, emphasize importance of these content areas, etc)
- Opportunity to develop new models of measuring student growth and achievement that can inform the assessment of currently tested subjects and grades.
- Enable district- and school-level choice regarding which measures of student growth are most appropriate to meet local needs and objectives.
- Need to ensure that all methods of measuring student growth satisfy some minimum level of technical rigor employed in making calculations and combining multiple measures.
- Any newly developed assessments should be “next generation”, high-quality tests, emphasizing the evaluation of higher order and critical thinking skills in addition to basic content knowledge.
- Need to focus the development of new measures on some academic content areas in order to facilitate the development of high-quality measures, rather than trying to develop assessments in all areas at once at the expense of quality.
- Highly varied and often limited local resources available to develop, administer and analyze measures of student growth.
- Impact of small class sizes in calculating student growth.
- Ensuring that determinations of an individual educator’s performance are based upon credible evidence that clearly supports the performance rating.

Recommendations regarding the development of new measures of student growth

Using a student growth objectives (SGOs) framework

The Council considers a significant purpose of the educator evaluation system to be to improve the instructional practice of educators. Having all educators set student growth objectives (“SGOs”) for their students (either individually or as a class) is consistent with this intention. Using SGOs as a way to frame student outcomes and growth for all teachers, across both tested and non-tested subjects and grades, has the following potential benefits:

- Providing a common framework for considering measures of student growth for all teachers that can incorporate student growth measures which include but can go beyond tests;
- Promoting performance against the Quality Standards for Effective Teaching as teachers go through the process of creating individual goals for students or for their classes based on an evaluation of their current level of standards-based mastery;
- Ensuring that all teachers have multiple measures of student growth included in their performance evaluations;
- Promoting a sense of fairness because all teachers in a school will have a common framework for the student growth measure to be included in their performance evaluation; and
- Incorporating measures of individual student growth against Colorado Academic Standards.

However, the use of SGOs is not new and past experiences with this approach indicate that the following negative outcomes are also possible:

- The SGO process becomes a bureaucratic exercise that wastes teacher time and district resources because the focus becomes about documentation of a process rather than about the development of goals in a way that this closely aligned to instructional practices.
- Implementing SGOs well takes a lot of time and effort at the district level, and efforts by individual districts to develop SGOs across all subjects and grades could be overwhelming, and detract from the ability to undertake SGOs in some areas well;
- The development of SGOs is highly subjective and dependent on local curricula therefore making it difficult to ensure any sort of comparability. The result can be to reward those who have set low expectations and punish those who have set more ambitious targets.

On balance, the Council feels it prudent to explore further the use of the SGO framework as a promising practice during the pilot period, using the time and feedback to determine whether or not the approach warrants inclusion as a mandated component of the final state evaluation framework.

Recommendation 1:

- 1) Select districts participating in the pilot of the state model system shall also pilot a Student Growth Objective-based approach to calculating an individual teacher’s student growth performance. Participating districts shall ensure that each teacher crafts at least one appropriate student growth objective (SGO) whether the teacher is in a tested or non-tested subject/grade. The development of the SGOs shall be consistent with the recommendations for SGOs in the teacher framework. CDE

shall assist in identifying and explicating the system elements needed to build and maintain an SGO approach, which include:

- a. Developing an internal and external “moderating” system to evaluate goals, measures, and determinations.
- b. Taking the lead in designing or adopting supporting materials for courses that are intended to be aligned to CO standards. These supporting materials could take the form of model goals, suggestions for how to use data to set appropriate goals, and guidelines for developing appropriate monitoring and evaluation measures.

As indicated earlier, SGOs can only be as good as the quality and rigor of the goals set for each student, their impact on instruction, and by the quality of the measures used to evaluate the goals. Therefore, significant professional learning opportunities will be required in order to ensure that the performance goals set are attainable yet rigorous and that the district develops or assists in the development of appropriate measures of student outcomes.

New measures of student growth

With respect to the development of new measures of student growth for both tested and non-tested subjects, there are two potential approaches:

- a. Develop new summative state assessments (or use commercially-developed assessments) in currently non-tested subjects and grades;
- b. Support the development or adoption of new measures of student performance and growth at the district level as part of the Student Growth Objectives framework being explored during the pilot period.

The amount of time and resources needed for each of these approaches is substantial; and it is not clear that taking one path or the other wholesale would necessarily be in the best interest of students. The Council recommends the following approach to the development of new student growth measures:

Recommendation 2

- 1) The State should take responsibility for developing high-quality state summative assessments in some content areas, or supporting a consortium of schools and districts to develop high-quality assessments in these areas.
- 2) Areas in which the state should consider expanding high-quality state summative assessments for the Colorado Academic Standards in Science, and developing state summative assessments for the Colorado Academic Standards in Social Studies.
- 3) The State should facilitate a consortium of districts to explore the best approach to supporting and documenting outcomes in the early grades (ECE-grade 2).
- 4) For all other subjects, the state should support districts or district consortia in the development of new “measures” of student growth based on ordered instructional tasks that represent expected growth to proficiency in each grade and subject. Suggested areas for starting include literacy and numeracy, but should also encompass currently non-tested subjects such as art.

- 5) In order to minimize the risks associated with the use of SGOs and the development of low-quality student performance measures, the Council recommends the following framework be further explicated by CDE to provide guidance to districts wishing to be involved in this process of developing or adopting instructionally-based measures during the pilot and implementation period (2011-2015). These may be pilot districts or other districts wishing to participate in the process of exploring SGOs:
- a. Districts shall go through a process of developing a shared understanding among teachers within a subject area or grade progression, of an ordered progression of student outcomes, which is aligned with the district's scope and sequence in that area. The process is intended to result in a common understanding of curriculum among all educators teaching within that area. The development of SGOs by teachers will use the end of the quality sequence as the goal for students.
 - b. Districts shall engage teachers in the process of identifying a set of a set of ordered instructional tasks or performance opportunities with anchors (e.g., essays scored along a continuum, progression from one level to another, portfolio entries, chapter tests, etc.) which will serve as measures for major segments of the curriculum (elementary science K-5, middle school science teachers, high school science teachers). Performance opportunities should be broad enough to capture the breadth of what teachers teach.
 - c. CDE shall assist districts by developing parameters and guidelines for the development of appropriate measures to ensure that:
 - a. Progress toward and attainment of goals shall be determined by measures that are aligned with the learning targets and technically appropriate to determine whether students have actually met the goals.
 - b. The assessments used to measure the goals shall be reviewed by a committee of peers and administrators to judge their adequacy for evaluating student progress towards the goals.
 - d. CDE shall facilitate the convening of educators wishing to collaborate in the development of appropriate measures.

Between 2011 and 2015, CDE shall collect data and feedback from districts about their experience with SGOs and the development of new measures of student growth. CDE and an on-going advisory group from the State Council will also keep abreast of new developments in this area at the state and national level, and examine the success that different states have with their respective approaches to development of new student growth measures.

In 2015, CDE, in consultation with an on-going advisory group from the State Council, and with the assistance of technical advisors in the field of student growth and assessment, shall revisit the dialogue about using an SGO approach as part of the statewide evaluation system, and these recommendations around a shared responsibility between the state and districts for developing student growth measures. This group shall evaluate the data, feedback and research compiled during the 2011-2015 window in order to inform this decision.