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Our Students, Our Union, Our Future

**Using Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) to Enhance
Teacher Professional Practice and Teacher Advocacy**

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Session addresses:

- **NEA Strategic Goal**
Strategic Goal 2: Empowered Educators for Successful Students
- **NEA Organizational Priority**
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

NEA Leadership Competency: Leading the Profession

- NEA Leadership Competency progression level(s):

Level 1- Foundational, Level 2- Mobilizing & Power Building, Level 3- Agenda Driving

- NEA Leadership Competency theme:
Leads public education reform (CT4)

Who is the Maryland State Education Association?

- 73,000 educators statewide
 - 23 of 24 school districts
 - 38 local associations
- Members include:
 - **Certificated employees:** teachers, administrators, reading and math specialists, school counselors, school psychologists, audiologists, speech-language pathologists, occupational and physical therapists
 - **Education support professionals:** secretaries, paraeducators, technology staff, bus drivers, custodial staff, food service workers, etc.
 - **Student educators**
 - **Retired members**

Session Objectives:

- Leading the profession on a member issue
- Securing resources to build capacity and member engagement
- Collaborating with NEA state Affiliates to garner and share best practices
- Working to build collaborative relationships (State Department)
- Sustaining efforts beyond the grant

Maryland Race to the Top Application

- Set expectations that 50% of teacher Principal evaluation (TPE) be professional practice and 50% student growth
- Student growth could be the state test, but not more than 35%
- Changing testing, lack of reliability of tests, the need to find growth measures that were not a high stakes test
- Maryland sought to learn and incorporate student learning objectives as an alternative



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So many questions, so few answers!

What are SLOs?

How will we as an association play a role in this initiative and with what resources?

How can they become valid growth measures?

How will educators learn how to create SLOs and not create more workload?

Can we get buy in from the State Department and local school districts to move forward?

How can the association position itself to lead the profession on this topic and build member engagement, membership, credibility, and power?





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A Path Forward

- MSEA leadership signed on to be part of a multi-state, multi-year NEA Consortium to secure grant money to move the SLO initiative forward.
- The GPS grant made it possible to secure the money in a first ever multi-state endeavor.
- The grant allowed for the Consortium to work as an entity and individual states to move forward on state specific initiatives simultaneously .



Work of the Consortium

States included:

New Hampshire

Vermont

South Dakota

Utah

Maryland

Wyoming

South Carolina

Idaho

Hawaii

North Dakota*

- Spring summits for state teams to receive training from outside vendors and/or NEA along with state to state sharing and goal setting.
- Three-four times a year state leaders connected via video conferencing to plan the spring summits, provide updates on state initiatives, share best practices and challenges, and complete timely grant reporting.

Maryland Specific Grant Goals

- Provide SLO training to two member leaders in each of 23 teacher locals creating an SLO Cadre to serve as SLO experts.
- SLO Cadre members checked in monthly via phone on work conducted in the local with members and stakeholder partners (PTA).
- SLO Cadre members provided MSEA feedback on progress and challenges facing members on the SLO process.
- Reach out to the State Department to share challenges and feedback to hopefully work collaboratively to build capacity throughout all schools with all educators.
- Develop common language and understanding of the SLO process from the state level to the district level and throughout each district.

Taking the first steps

- Secured outside consultants to conduct training of SLO Cadre members during summer leadership
- Met with State Superintendent and staff to discuss the goals of the grant and how we could collaborate
- Collaboration with State Department grew into an official SLO Memorandum of Understanding between multiple stakeholder groups to move the work forward

Progressing through the three year initiative

- The MOU allowed MSEA and MSDE to partner to provide joint trainings, during the school day throughout the three regions of the state three times a year.
- Teams participating included SLO cadre members, administrators, central office staff, etc.
- Teams were encouraged to meet throughout the year at the local level to coordinate SLO work.
- During the third year of the grant, the teams trained were solely made up of teachers with at least half of the participants selected by the association.
- The State Department contracted WestED to survey teachers and principals on SLO work and these surveys identified and validated the concerns of educators. The survey also showed where there was collaboration with educators the SLO process truly had an impact on student achievement.



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Lessons learned

- Having 23 local associations to work to build capacity is clearly easier than some state affiliates with 300-700 local associations.
- Members were craving effective, useful professional development on SLOs and viewed the state association as leading the profession on this topic.
- Members that didn't usually participate in the typical work of unions (bargaining, mobilizing, organizing) got involved in the work of the profession. New activists got engaged and stayed engaged.
- The State Department officials who worked in collaboration with the state association changed their views and demeanor towards the association and included us as true partners that expanded beyond the SLO work.

- Some districts held steadfast on what they believed the SLO process should look like and failed to cooperate with educators on the team.
- Workload- this was one of many new initiatives rolled out at the same time and teacher/administrator time and effort on each initiative was limited- Tsunami of Education Reform.
- Implementation with fidelity was very difficult and some local systems set up barriers to communicating the effective model beyond the meetings held with the state.

Continuing the work on SLOs

- SLOs are still a main portion of the teacher principal evaluation, however several local districts have lowered the student growth component from 50% to 30%/20%.
- In some districts SLOs are still quite onerous and have created more workload for teachers and principals.
- The State Department has stopped conducting annual surveys, yet the challenges still remain and hopefully there are more successes.
- SLO cadre members are still seen as the SLO experts in many of our local associations.
- MSEA continues to work on SLOs and other issues to lead the profession for our members.

Questions and Answers



Session Outcomes

The content from this session can be used in the following ways in your current position/role:

- States can take the lead on member professional development (PD)
- Building membership, member engagement and member leaders through PD
- Working on professional issues with coalition partners

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- Please complete the evaluation for this breakout session!
- Please visit the Leadership Development Resources website at www.nea.org/leadershipdevelopment