

# 2018 SCDE Expanded ADEPT Survey and Focus Groups Findings Report

August 2018

**Shannon Lasserre-Cortez, PhD, Kendall Holley, Pamela Bonsu,  
Bradley Salvato, Tammie Causey-Konaté, PhD, Deanna Hill, PhD,  
Doug Fireside, and Lisa Lachlan, EdD**

**SOUTHEAST**  
Comprehensive Center

at American Institutes for Research ■

440 Knox Abbott Drive, Suite 200  
Cayce, South Carolina 29033  
803-936-0750  
secc.sedl.org

This work was originally produced in whole or in part by the Southeast Comprehensive Center with funds from the U.S. Department of Education under cooperative agreement number S283B120009. The content does not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Department of Education, nor does mention or visual representation of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the federal government.

The Southeast Comprehensive Center provides technical assistance to the state education agencies in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina. This assistance is tailored to each state's individual needs and addresses the priorities of the U.S. Department of Education. The Southeast Comprehensive Center is one of the 15 regional comprehensive centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education, and its work is administered by American Institutes for Research.



www.air.org



# Contents

	<b>Page</b>
Executive Summary.....	6
Introduction .....	7
Data Collection Methods .....	8
Survey .....	8
Focus Groups .....	9
Analysis .....	10
SLO Training and Supports Received .....	17
Teacher Autonomy and Choice.....	23
Measuring SLO Goals .....	25
Potential SLO Rule Changes .....	27
Impact on Teacher Practice Related to Data-Driven Instruction, Focus on Growth, and Student-Centered Learning.....	29
Conclusion.....	33
Appendix A. Survey Results.....	A-1
Organization of Survey Results .....	A-2
Appendix B. Focus Group Themes .....	B-1

# Tables

	<b>Page</b>
Table 1. Focus Groups Conducted .....	10
Table 2. Respondent Job Positions .....	11
Table 3. Evaluation Activities Survey Respondents Participated in 2017-18 .....	16
Table 4. Utility of State and District Provided SLO Training (2018 Survey) .....	20
Table 5. Utility of State and District Provided SLO Training (2016 Survey) .....	20
Table 6. Perceived Impact on State- and District- Provided Training (2018 survey).....	21
Table 7. Perceived Impact on State- and District- Provided Training (2016 survey).....	21
Table 8. Teachers' Involvement in Selecting Assessments to Measure SLOs.....	26
Table 9. Level of Agreement on Possible Rule Changes (2018).....	27

Table 10. Level of Agreement on Possible Rule Changes (2016).....	28
Table 11. Teacher Participation in the SLO Process (2018) .....	29
Table 12. Teacher Participation in the SLO Process (2016) .....	30
Table 13. How the SLO Process Changed Conversations (2018) .....	31
Table 14. How the SLO Process Changed Conversations (2016) .....	31
Table 13. Perceptions About the SLO Process (2018 survey) .....	32

## Charts

	<b>Page</b>
Chart 1. Representation by School Type .....	12
Chart 2. Representation by Years of Experience .....	12
Chart 3. Summary District Representation .....	15
Chart 4. Most Common Forms of Training and Support Received by Teachers .....	17
Chart 5. Most Valuable Support Received by Teachers.....	18
Chart 6. SLO Components Teachers are able to Choose or Determine .....	24
Chart 7. Elements Included in Districts' SLO Process.....	24
Chart 8. SLO Assessment Measures.....	26



## Executive Summary

In February 2018, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) and the Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC) administered the 2018 SCDE Expanded Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Professional Teaching (Expanded ADEPT) Survey and conducted focus groups with educators to gather feedback on the implementation of the refined support and evaluation system and the roll-out of student learning objectives (SLOs), a measure of student growth, introduced into the professional growth system in the 2015-16 academic year.

The findings presented in this report are focused on the SLO implementation process, including how districts trained and supported teaching staff on SLOs, developed and monitored SLOs, and informed instructional teaching practice and student learning. The results of the survey and focus group data help provide feedback for these areas of interest identified by SCDE. The following key findings emerged:

- SCDE provided training resources to assist districts with SLO implementation. The survey findings revealed most teachers received SLO training and support from school administrators and instructional coaches and found both to be the most valuable form of support in writing their SLO goals.
- SCDE acknowledges the districts' choice in evaluating its teaching staff. Approved choice options include district-wide SLOs. Nevertheless, most (87%) administrators and classroom teachers reported having professional autonomy on determining aspects of their SLO process, with 67% identifying growth targets and 63% identifying assessments as the aspect over which they had the most autonomy.
- Test score measures, including district-wide and school-wide test score measures, are used in the SLO process. Survey respondents were asked how their SLOs were measured, and more than half (52%) reported the use of district-mandated assessments as their primary way to measure their SLO goals. Fifty-two percent also reported the use of teacher-centered (i.e., locally-developed formative tools created by individual teachers or teams of teachers to measure student learning and progress on SLO goals) assessments.
- The Expanded ADEPT was designed to improve professional practice. As a result, educators were asked how SLOs were incorporated into their practice. Ninety percent of teachers surveyed reported that the SLO process changed the conversations they had among their colleagues regarding student learning.

### Recommendations:

- Continue to support districts by collaborating and reviewing training and support documents.
- Continue to work with districts to refine and expand the training modules and resources to which teacher and administrators have access.
- Revisit business rules and/or policy on the need for increased teacher flexibility to write SLO goals and assess student progress and achievement.
- Continue to work with districts to identify refinements to the assessment selection process, or possibly offer a range of suggested options from which teachers could choose.
- Continue to work with teachers and districts to promote flexibility in decision-making so that teacher autonomy is maintained at high levels.
- Continue to work with districts to ensure that the pre- and post-conferences that are part of the ADEPT system include discussions around the development and implementation of SLOs.

## Introduction

The Office of Educator Effectiveness and Leadership Development at the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) implemented Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Professional Teaching (ADEPT), an educator evaluation and support system designed to improve teacher professional practice. Since its inception in 1998, and most recently in 2015, the system has undergone refinements linked to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) -- the reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). In 2015, states were granted flexibility waivers, allowing them to amend their approved plans under No Child Left Behind. South Carolina proposed in its waiver, an expansion of the ADEPT system to include the use of student growth measures. One component of the Expanded ADEPT system designed as a tool to aid in measuring student growth in the state evaluation system is student learning objectives (SLOs). Approved in 2016, Expanded ADEPT is set for statewide implementation in 2018-19 academic year.

One of the efforts integral to the redesign of Expanded ADEPT involves feedback from educators on changes to the system. SCDE partnered with the Southeast Comprehensive Center<sup>1</sup> (SECC) to administer a state-wide survey and facilitate focus groups, both of which were conducted during the 2015 – 16 academic year. The focus for the 2017-18 academic year was specifically on the addition of SLOs as a tool to measure student growth. SCDE was interested in understanding educators' experiences with implementing the Expanded ADEPT and in learning if additional changes needed to be made to the expanded system or in support of educators implementing the system.

## OVERALL KEY FINDINGS

- Most teachers received SLO training and support from school administrators and instructional coaches and found both to be the most valuable form of support in writing their SLO goals.
- Most administrators and classroom teachers report that they have professional independence on most aspects of the SLO process.
- Most classroom teachers want greater flexibility in the SLO writing process.
- Most classroom teachers and administrators are receptive to the use of student data within the SLO process and recognize its impact on teacher practice.

---

<sup>1</sup> SECC is one of 15 regional comprehensive centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education and works as part of a technical assistance network with both content and regional centers to provide training and technical assistance to state education agencies (SEAs).

In spring 2018, a team of researchers and technical assistance consultants from SECC gathered feedback on implementation of the Expanded ADEPT system and the SLO process. SECC administered a statewide survey and conducted focus groups on the teacher evaluation system.

In 2016 and again in 2018, SCDE sought out to answer the following questions:

- What were teacher and principal experiences with training and support for the Expanded ADEPT?
- What were teacher and principal perspectives on the utility and value of the components of the Expanded ADEPT?
- What recommendations do teachers and principals have that might improve the utility and value of the Expanded ADEPT?

SCDE staff also mentioned special interest in the following topics:

1. Whether SLOs are used for progress monitoring in data team meeting discussions, team planning meetings, pre- and post- observation conferences, and for individual follow-up support
2. How much autonomy teachers have when writing SLO goals (e.g. Do teachers choose from pre-written goals or are goals based on the subject/content taught?)
3. What type of assessments teachers use to track progress toward SLO goals or growth targets

While the 2016 research explored the Expanded Program for Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Principal Performance (PADEPP) as well as the insights of personnel from institutions of higher education (IHEs), the 2018 study focused on ADEPT only.

## Data Collection Methods

### Survey

In January 2018, SECC together with SCDE reviewed the 2016 Expanded ADEPT Survey and discussed changes for its refinement in 2018. Revisions to the survey included the removal of questions on the Program for Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Principal Performance (PADEPP) and removal of questions for IHEs. Additionally, SECC and SCDE included more survey items on the SLO process, including goal development, teacher autonomy during SLO goal writing, and the selection of assessments for measuring SLO goals. After finalizing the items for the 2018 survey, SECC programmed and oversaw the administration of the survey on



SurveyGizmo, a web-based survey platform. The survey went live on February 27 and closed on April 6. SCDE invited teachers, school administrators, and central office staff to participate in the online survey through a weblink provided to district offices. As designed in 2016, the survey link was open to all users and to protect participant confidentiality, did not link responses to any personally identifiable information. While there are drawbacks to an open survey link (i.e., the possibility of duplicate responses), it allowed for greater reach across the state and anonymity of participants.

According to estimates from SCDE, 56,200 certified educators (e.g., classroom teachers, instructional coaches, administrators, and central office staff) are working in public schools. At the end of the survey administration period, there were 7,944 respondents (including partial and completed survey submissions), yielding a projected response rate of 14.1%. In 2016, a total of 11,664 survey responses were recorded. The estimated response rate in 2016 was about 20% of teachers and between 20%-50% of administrators (Fireside, Jacques, Doggett, Howard-Brown, Causey-Konaté. & Times, 2016). Question-level survey results are presented in appendix A.

## **Focus Groups**

SCDE and SECC reviewed and revised the 2016 focus group protocol used as a part of the first state-wide data collection process for use in the 2018 study. Differences from the 2016 focus group protocol included the addition of items related to SLO goal development and implementation, training and support, and the impact of SLO on teacher practice. SECC staff conducted focus groups in-person and virtually through GoToMeeting, a web-based meeting platform with video conferencing. A total of thirty-five participants attended one of the seven focus groups held between April 30 and May 4, as shown in Table 1. In each focus group, facilitators asked participants to describe their experiences with the ADEPT evaluation system, their perceptions of support and training provided, the ADEPT evaluation system's utility, and their recommendations for improving or refining the system. Each focus group was audio recorded and transcribed. As with the 2016 study, audio recordings and transcriptions will not be shared with SCDE.

**Table 1. Focus Groups Conducted**

Date	Focus Group Protocol	Focus Group Format	No. of Participants
4/30/2018	Administrators	In-person	7
4/30/2018	Teachers and Instructional Coaches	In-person	6
5/02/2018	Teachers and Instructional Coaches	Virtual	5
5/03/2018	Teachers and Instructional Coaches	Virtual	4
5/03/2018	Teachers and Instructional Coaches	Virtual	5
5/04/2018	Administrators	Virtual	7
5/04/2018	Teachers and Instructional Coaches	Virtual	1

## Analysis

Survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and counts for closed-ended items and qualitative data methods for open-ended questions. The open-ended survey data and focus group data were imported into NVivo 11, a qualitative data analysis software. A SECC staff member conducted qualitative analysis, reviewing the responses and developing a list of categories and codes based on emerging themes from the comments shared. All themes were categorized, including those that emerged most frequently and those that were reported less frequently. Analyses and recommendations were also supplemented by the contextual experiences of AIR staff, who have been working with SCDE on the Expanded-ADEPT program for several years. Due to differences in focus group participants and topics of discussion, 2018 responses were not compared with 2016 focus group data.

It should be noted that survey respondents from both 2016 and 2018 do not constitute a true representative sample of South Carolina’s population of educators. As shown in the next section, Demographics, respondents from 19 school districts made up 76.2% (n =5,158) of all 2018 respondents, with nearly half (48.2%, n = 3, 387) of all survey respondents being elementary school teachers. The survey was offered to the population of public school teachers in South Carolina, and teachers could self-select whether to participate or not. Since the 2016 survey was administered without collecting any identifiable data, researchers were not able to contact 2016 participants to follow up with the 2018 survey. As a result, two different samples participated in both years. Although, matched comparisons of the samples are not available for the two studies, there is compelling evidence that the data from the 2016 study and certain elements of the current study are likely to inform decision makers regarding implementation of the Expanded Adept and related recommendations. Finally, it should be noted that the focus group respondents are not representative of the general teaching population. Due to the small number of participants in the focus groups, the comments selected for this report are only used

to contextualize the survey findings presented and to disclose the more direct feedback provided during these sessions. To review the themes from the focus groups, see Appendix B.

### Demographics

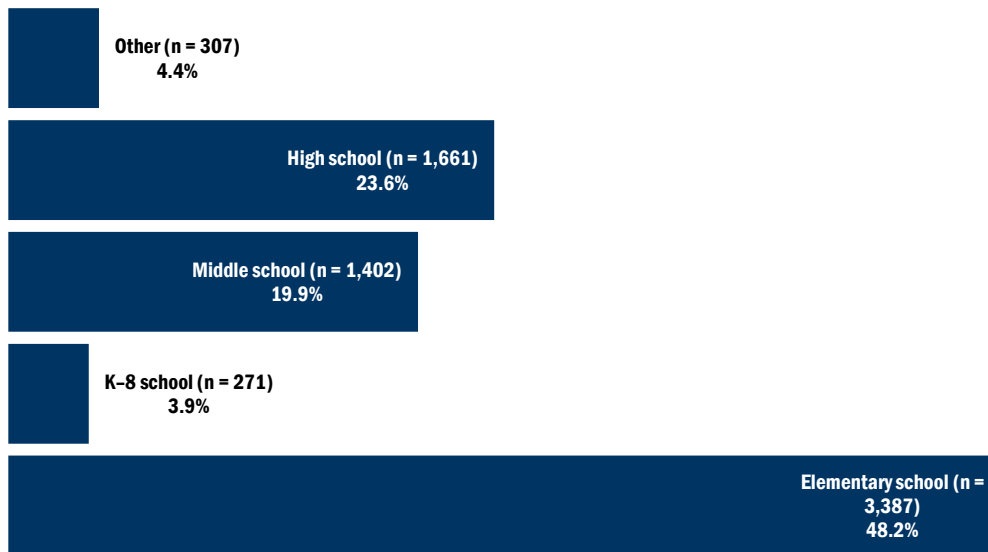
**Survey Participants.** In February 2018, SCDE invited educators to participate in the SCDE Expanded ADEPT Survey online via SurveyGizmo. Respondents primarily consisted of classroom teachers and instructional coaches or mentors with classroom responsibilities. Both groups combined make up 81.9% (n = 6,501) of all survey respondents. Other job positions included administrators (6.4%, n = 505), instructional coaches (fully-released from classroom responsibility) (2.0%, n = 158), and central office staff (1.7%, n = 132), see Table 2. Respondents were more likely to be elementary school teachers (48.2%, n = 3,387) and have ten years or more of experience in South Carolina (60.7%, n = 4,157). See Charts 1 and 2.

**Finding.** *Survey respondents were more likely to be elementary school teachers and have ten or more years of experience in education, in South Carolina.*

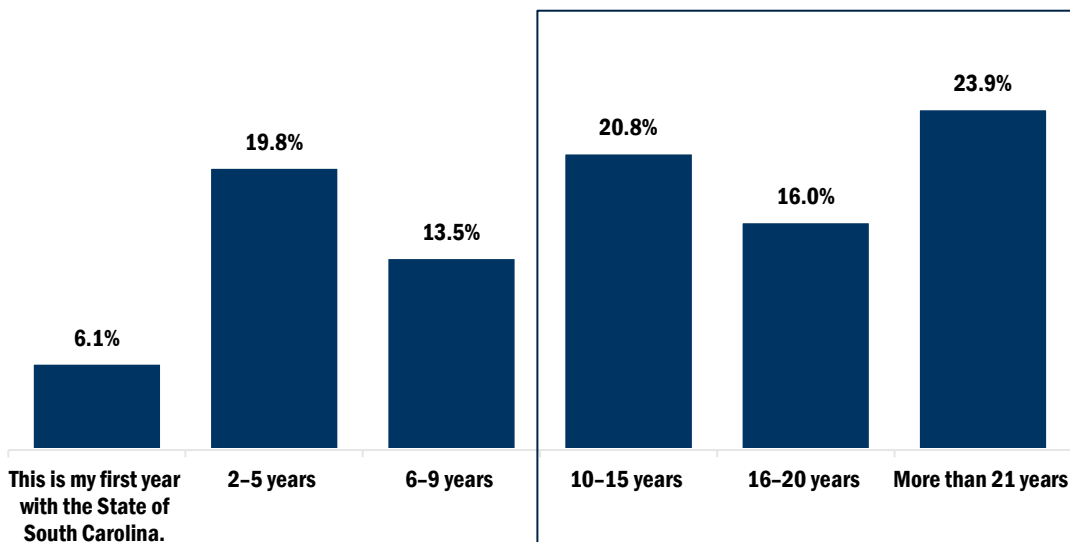
**Table 2. Respondent Job Positions**

Position	%	n
Classroom teacher	80.5%	6,393
Coach or mentor (in classroom)	1.4%	108
Administrator (i.e., principal or vice principal)	6.4%	505
Coach or mentor (full-release)	2.0%	158
Central office staff	1.7%	132
Other	8.2%	648
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>7,944</b>

**Chart 1. Representation by School Type**

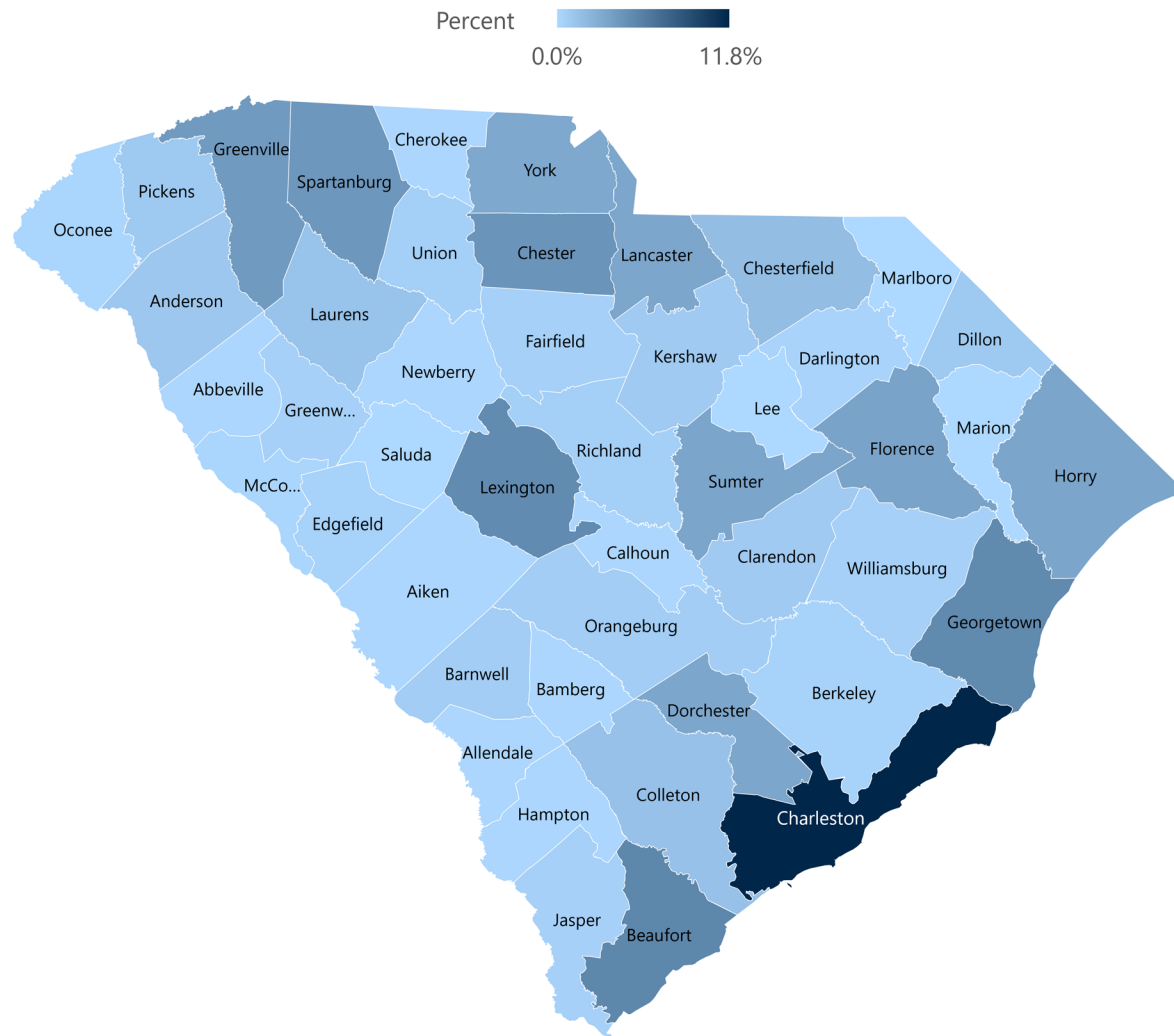


**Chart 2. Representation by Years of Experience**



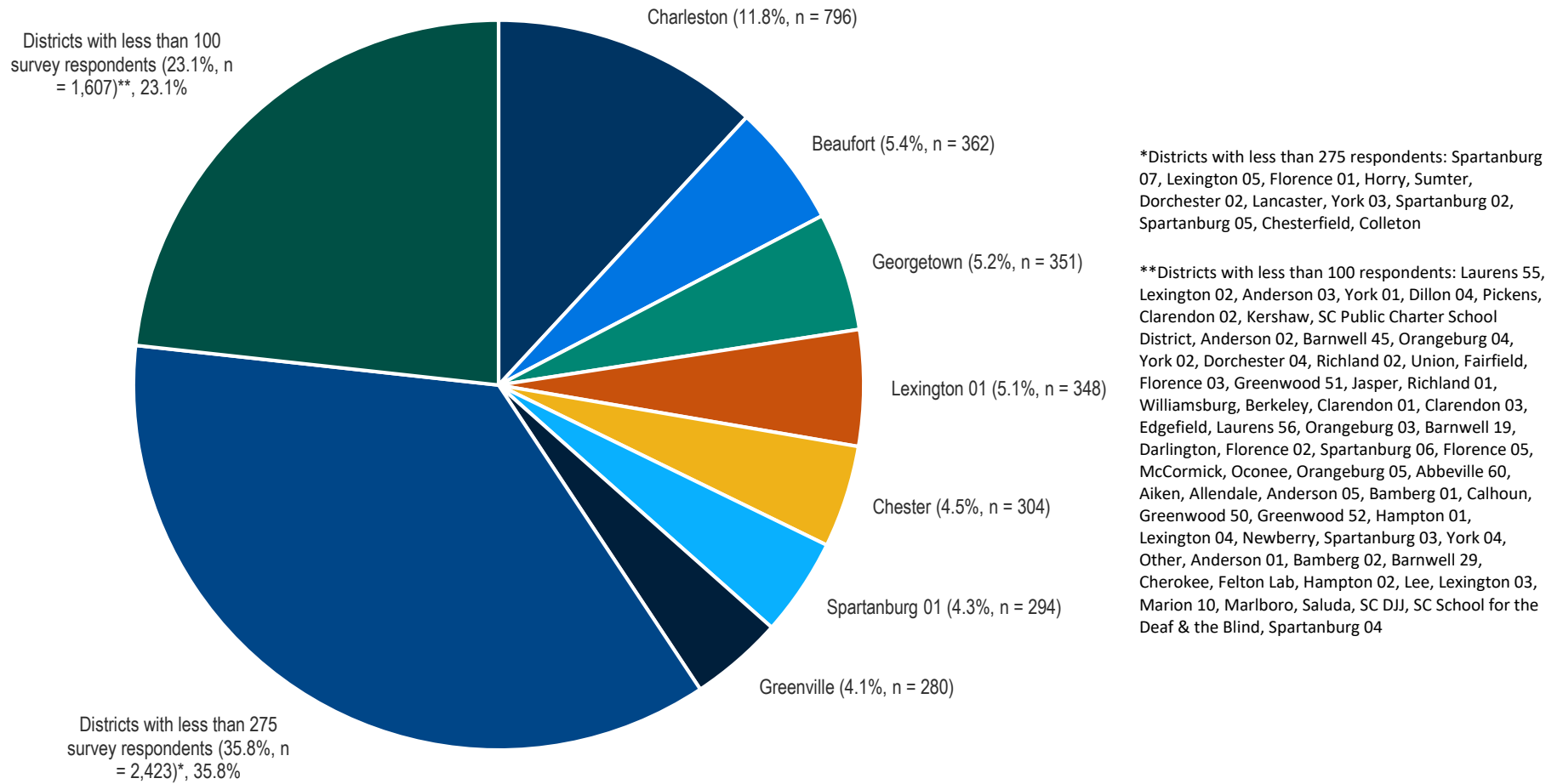
**Survey Respondent Locale.** Survey respondents reflected various regions across the state, with the largest representation from regions including Trident, (i.e., Charleston County), Lowcountry (i.e., Beaufort County), Waccamaw (i.e., Georgetown County), Midlands (i.e. Lexington County), and Catawba (i.e. Chester County), as shown in Exhibit 1. The largest school districts represented included Charleston County School District at 11.8% (n = 796), followed by Beaufort County School District (5.4%, n = 362) and Georgetown County School District (5.2%, n = 351), see Exhibit 1 and Chart 3. Due to the number of participating school districts, school districts with less than 100 survey respondents were collapsed into the category “Districts with less than 100 survey respondents.”

**Exhibit 1. Survey Representation by School District and County (Percent)**



Powered by Bing  
© GeoNames, Navteq

**Chart 3. Summary District Representation**



**Focus Group Participants.** Teachers who participated in focus groups were largely veteran teachers, with only one reporting less than 5 years’ experience. Participants varied by grade level taught (elementary, middle and high) and core subject (math, ELA, science, social studies, and self-contained.). To ensure confidentiality, the districts in which focus group participants work are not identified. Due to the small number of focus group participants, and the confidentiality assertions made in the collection of focus group data, further detailed demographic data regarding focus group participants was not collected.

**Evaluation Activities Experienced.** Participants who completed the survey overwhelmingly participated in the Expanded ADEPT process. For example, 94.4% of respondents wrote an SLO during the 2017-18 academic year. Four out of five had been informally observed by an administrator, and three out of four were formally observed by an administrator. See Table 3.

**Table 3. Evaluation Activities Survey Respondents Participated in 2017-18**

	%	n
I have written a SLO.	94.4%	5,945
I have been informally observed by an administrator (e.g., walk-through observations).	82.7%	5,209
I have been formally or informally observed by an administrator.	76.1%	4,797
I have received feedback on my observation(s) from an administrator.	74.6%	4,701
I have been observed by a peer.	40.5%	2,552
I had a postobservation conference.	37.2%	2,346
I had a preobservation conference.	25.4%	1,600
None of these.	1.3%	79



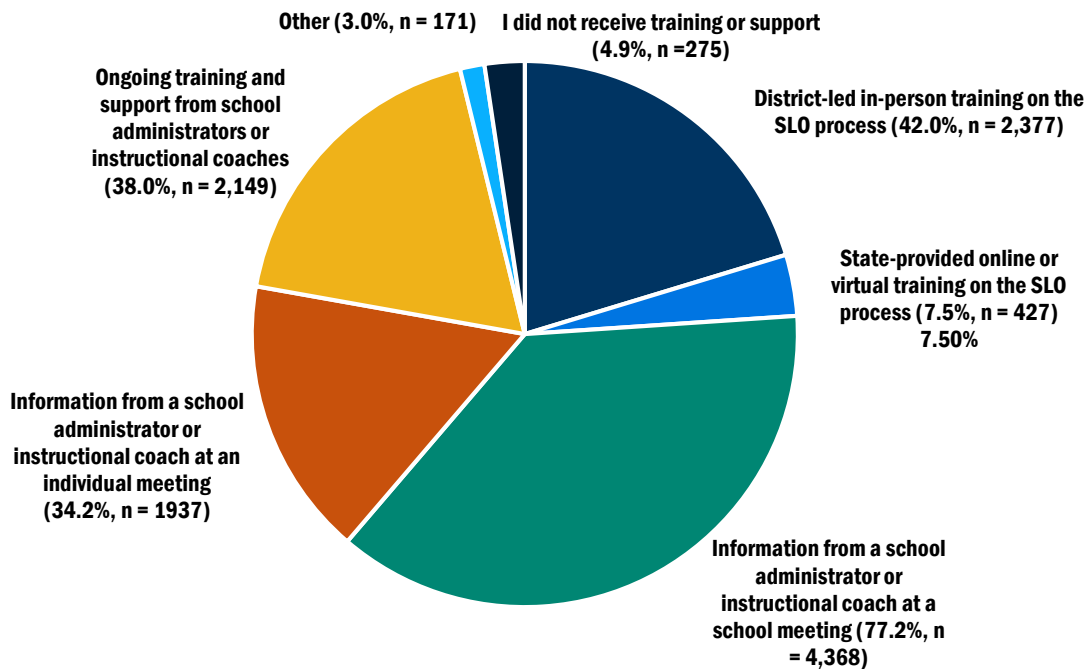
# SLO Training and Supports Received

**Key Finding: Most teachers received SLO training and support from school administrators and instructional coaches, whom they found to be the most valuable source of support in writing their SLO goals.**

Administrators and classroom teachers were asked about the types of training received, and from whom. Most administrators and central office staff reported that they, another school administrator, or instructional coach delivered information to teachers in a school meeting (69.4%, n = 541). In other words, training on the SLO process was more likely to be received internally from school leadership than through a state-led online or virtual training (10.6%, n = 83) or a district-led training (39.9%, n = 311). For the complete results of administrators and central office staff, see Appendix A. A similar question posed to classroom teachers also revealed that most classroom teachers received training and support from a school administrator or instructional coach (77.2%, n = 4,368), as shown in Chart 4.

*Project Question: What were educators' experiences with training and support for the SLO process?*

**Chart 4. Most Common Forms of Training and Support Received by Teachers**

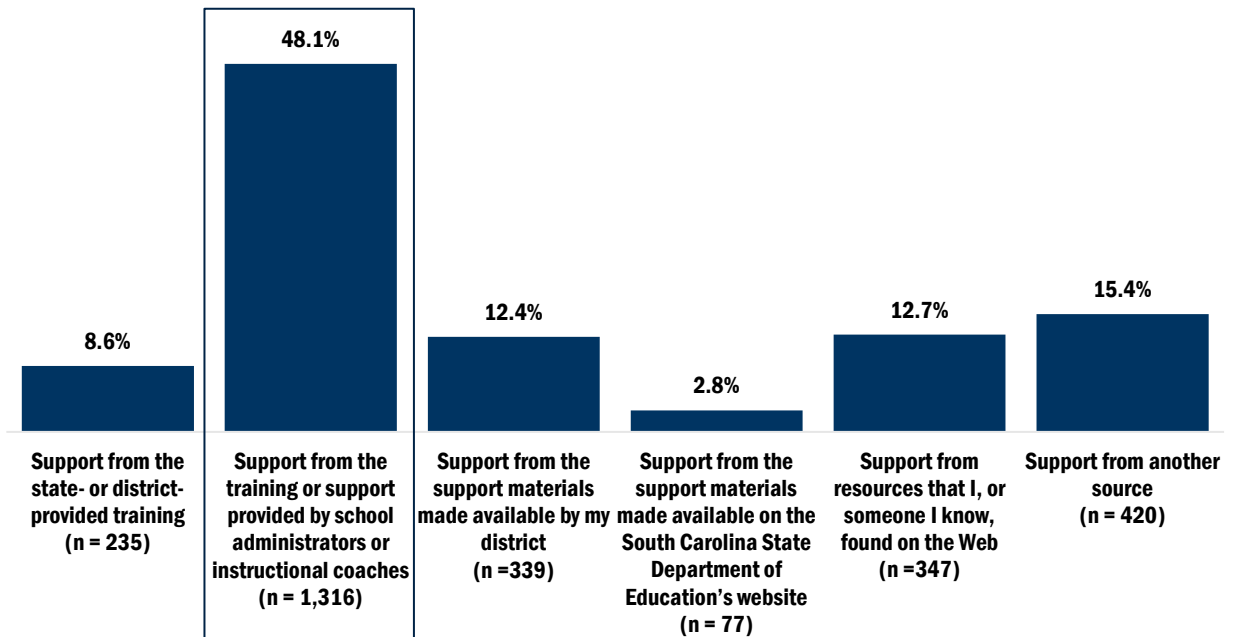


When classroom teachers were asked about the most valuable sources of support, school administrators and instructional coaches were identified most frequently (see Chart 5). In both

survey years, the proportion of teachers responding that they identified materials from the State as the most valuable remained basically unchanged (2.8% in 2018 vs. 3.3% in 2016). A similar percentage of teachers in each survey responded that they valued the materials from their district on the 2018 survey (12.4% in 2018 vs. 10.9% in 2016).

**Recommendation.** *As teachers continue to turn to their administrators and districts for support with the SLO process, SCDE should continue to support districts by collaborating and reviewing training and support documents.*

**Chart 5. Most Valuable Support Received by Teachers**



The perceptions of the utility of the training were also positive. Many administrators (74.8%, n = 373) and classroom teachers (83.5%, n = 4,271) reported that the SLO training helped them better understand the expectations associated with their role and impact on student learning. Approximately four out of five administrators (80.4%, n = 403) and nearly 9 out of 10 teachers (88.2%, n = 4,540) found the training and support provided detailed information that educators needed to engage in the evaluation process; see Table 3<sup>2</sup>.

Classroom teachers who received training and support through state- or district- provided training also found the training as helpful; 90.9% (n = 2,173) of classroom teachers who responded agreed that they could set growth targets that were both realistic and rigorous.

***Finding.*** *Most classroom teachers, regardless of who delivered the training, found the training and support helpful to their practice.*

The vast majority of classroom teachers (90.4%, n = 2,156) also agreed that after the training, they had a clear understanding of what contextual information to include about their students in their SLOs, as shown in Table 4<sup>3</sup>. The high level of agreement, on training effectiveness, from administrators and classroom teachers is consistent with the findings in 2016. At the time, most administrators and classroom teachers agreed that the training had a positive impact on teacher knowledge. Despite the challenges of implementing SLOs, it appears that SCDE has increased teacher understanding and preparation for the SLO process over time. Further, and more importantly, teachers report receiving helpful feedback from administrators and coaches through the SLO process, which is what the system was revised to support and is now designed to do -promote professional growth.

***Recommendation.*** *SCDE should continue to work with districts to refine and expand the training modules and resources to which teachers and administrators have access.*

---

<sup>2</sup> Following Table 4, Table 5 reflects the survey item results from the 2016 SCDE Expanded ADEPT Survey.

<sup>3</sup> Following Table 6, Table 7 reflects the survey item results from the 2016 SCDE Expanded ADEPT Survey.

**Table 4. Utility of State and District Provided SLO Training (2018 Survey)**

	Classroom Teachers					Administrators & Central Office Staff				
	S.A.	Sw.A.	Sw.D.	S.D.	N	S.A.	Sw.A.	Sw.D.	S.D.	N
Included detailed information that I needed to engage in the evaluation process.	44.1%	44.1%	8.6%	3.1%	5,146	28.5%	51.9%	13.8%	5.8%	501
Included examples and models to use in the evaluation process.	39.7%	40.1%	14.2%	6.0%	5,121	28.5%	47.3%	16.8%	7.4%	499
Helped me better understand the expectations for my role and impact on student learning.	41.2%	42.3%	11.9%	4.6%	5,116	26.3%	48.5%	16.2%	9.0%	499
Helped me better engage in conversations with my principal or other administrators, or instructional coaches about my practice or impact on student learning.	38.5%	41.9%	13.7%	5.9%	5,120	23.5%	46.6%	17.5%	12.4%	498

Abbreviations: Strongly Agree (S.A.), Somewhat Agree (Sw.A.), Somewhat Disagree (Sw.D.) and Strongly Disagree (S.D.)

**Table 5. Utility of State and District Provided SLO Training (2016 Survey)**

	Classroom Teachers					Administrators & Central Office Staff				
	S.A.	Sw.A.	Sw.D.	S.D.	N	S.A.	Sw.A.	Sw.D.	S.D.	N
Included detailed information that I needed to engage in the evaluation process.	49.2%	40.3%	6.4%	3.9%	360	24.3%	54.1%	13.5%	8.1%	37
Included examples and models to use in the evaluation process.	47.2%	38.3%	8.9%	5.6%	360	21.6%	48.6%	13.5%	16.2%	37
Helped me better understand the expectations for my role and impact on student learning.	39.4%	45.6%	9.2%	5.3%	360	21.6%	45.9%	18.9%	10.8%	37
Helped me better engage in conversations with my principal or other administrators, or instructional coaches about my practice or impact on student learning.	43.5%	43.2%	7.5%	5.0%	361	17.1%	54.3%	14.3%	11.4%	35

**Table 6. Perceived Impact on State- and District- Provided Training (2018 survey)**

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	n
I felt prepared to write my SLO.	43.1%	44.4%	9.5%	3.1%	2,401
I clearly understood the SLO process.	43.0%	42.9%	11.1%	3.0%	2,384
I had a clear understanding of the assessment used for measuring growth in my SLO.	52.5%	36.3%	8.6%	2.5%	2,394
I had a clear understanding of what contextual information to include about my students in their SLO.	49.3%	41.1%	7.6%	2.0%	2,386
I had a clear understanding of how or why my SLO was based on specific standards.	53.5%	35.7%	8.0%	2.8%	2,393
I had, or set, growth targets that were both realistic and rigorous.	56.0%	34.8%	6.4%	2.8%	2,391
I received helpful feedback from a school administrator or an instructional coach on my SLO.	55.0%	34.7%	6.7%	3.6%	2,390

**Table 7. Perceived Impact on State- and District- Provided Training (2016 survey)**

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	n
I felt prepared to write my SLO.	24.4%	45.6%	20.4%	9.7%	4,176
I clearly understood the SLO process.	23.4%	43.4%	23.7%	9.6%	4,173
I had a clear understanding of the assessment used for measuring growth in my SLO.	36.8%	40.7%	14.8%	7.7%	4,176
I had a clear understanding of what contextual information to include about my students in their SLO.	32.2%	44.8%	16.1%	6.9%	4,175
I had a clear understanding of how or why my SLO was based on specific standards.	36.8%	42.9%	13.5%	6.7%	4,174
I had, or set, growth targets that were both realistic and rigorous.	44.8%	40.8%	9.3%	5.0%	4,172
I received helpful feedback from a school administrator or an instructional coach on my SLO.	44.3%	37.0%	11.9%	6.9%	4,173

### ***Focus Group Reflections: Training and Support***

Administrators, classroom teachers, and instructional coaches were invited to discuss the training and support they received on the SLO process. At times, the insights from the focus groups reveal nuances regarding that SLO process that, at first, may appear to be in contrast with the survey results. Given the small size of the focus groups, the reflections shared do not represent the overall SLO experience of teachers and staff but should still inform areas where SCDE can provide greater support to local education agencies. As revealed in the survey results, classroom teachers were more likely to receive training and support from staff in the district. During the focus groups, classroom teachers (n = 3) indicated that their training experience was cursory. One teacher shared:

We've had district personnel trained by the state department come out to the schools. But the training was more of here's the process...it wasn't, this is what SLOs look like...So teachers had lots of misunderstanding about what exactly SLOs were. A lot of [teachers] were getting together, doing [their] own research and trying to figure things out.

In focus groups, some educators (n =8) commented that their training and support was reinforced by time and practical experience with SLOs. A classroom teacher and evaluator shared:

“I am far more prepared this year than in years past. This is year three of the SLO process in our district. Everybody was far more comfortable with the process, had a much better understanding of what was expected, and what they needed to have in terms of data and evidence at the end of the process.”

Regarding practical experience, participants expressed that their preparedness was enhanced when they had an opportunity to go through the process, using an established teacher leader framework like the TAP System (a comprehensive school reform system for teacher and student advancement created by the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching). Focus group participants were favorable to using structured but diverse frameworks to enhance preparedness. An administrator commented:

“I was in a TAP school before, and we worked very hard on helping our teachers get through the SLO process, ensuring that each teacher understood and had the ability to set goals based on data and the evidence that supported their goal setting, and could set targets for individual students as opposed to just bands of students. Each teacher set their own goals based on the needs in their classrooms and their students, as opposed to a cookie cutter method of all teachers using the same goals.”

The survey results revealed that training was positively received, and the focus groups suggest that while the emphasis on the SLO process is predominant in the training, educators would likely benefit from trainings with a stronger focus on SLO content. The focus groups also highlighted that the SLO process may not be a newly learned concept for teachers with a decade or more teaching experience.

**Finding.** Focus group findings suggest that administrators and classroom teachers benefit from time and prior experience developing and implementing SLOs.

## Teacher Autonomy and Choice

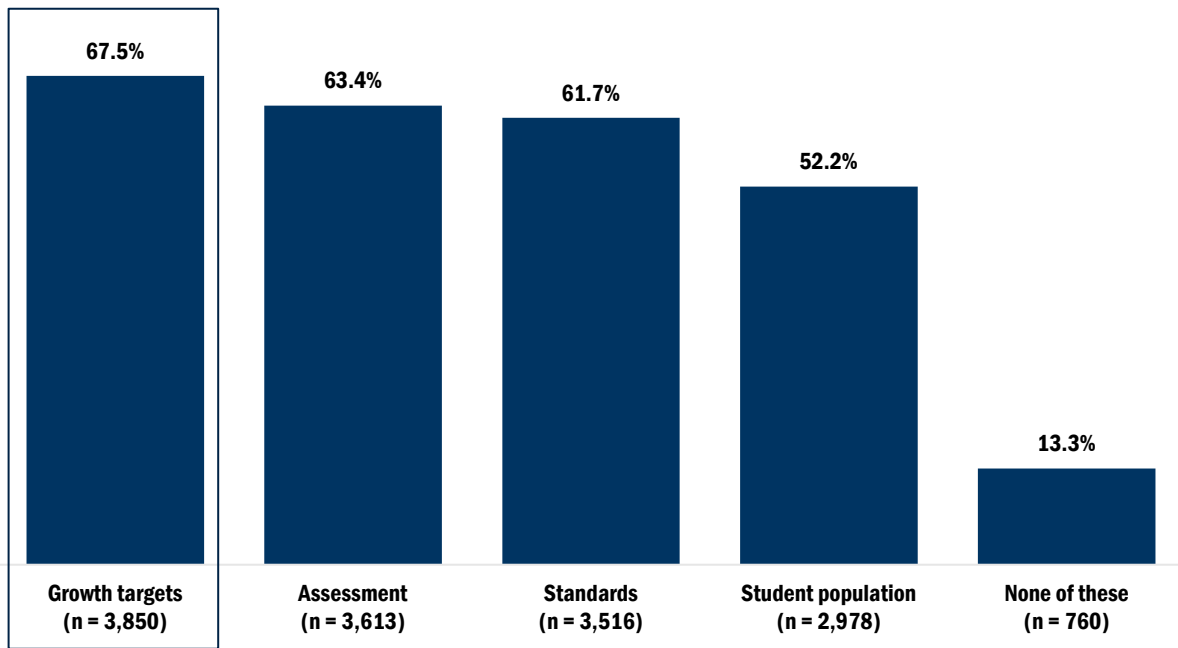
**Key Finding:** Most administrators and classroom teachers report that they have considerable professional independence on various aspects of the SLO process.

**Project Question:** How much autonomy do teachers have when writing SLO goals?

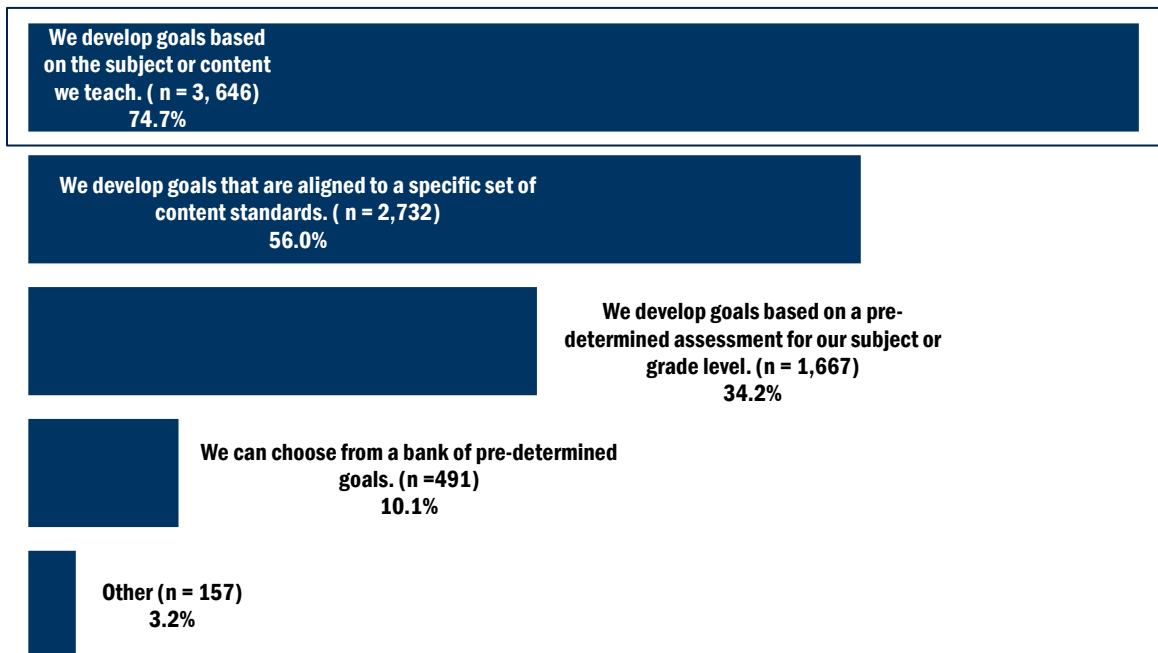
More than two-thirds of administrators (67.3%, n = 529) and classroom teachers (67.5%, n = 3,850) identified growth targets as a SLO component that teachers could choose or determine, followed by assessments at 63.1% (n = 496) and 63.4% (n = 3,613), respectively. See Chart 6 for the individual SLO components teachers were able to choose. Both SLO components (i.e., growth targets and assessments) were also highly rated for teacher autonomy by administrators and classroom teachers in 2016. In 2018, nearly three-fourths of classroom teachers (74.7%, n = 3,648) developed SLO goals on the subject or content area taught, as show in Chart 7. In one focus group, all participants came from districts where SLO goals were written based on subject or content area taught. A classroom teacher commented, “As part of our SLO template, we require teachers to weave the content standards in. They [teachers] are required to identify the standards that are aligned to the areas of student growth that they are trying to measure.” Another shared, “All of the goals our teachers develop are aligned to the subject and content area that they teach. I think one of the most beneficial parts of the process is that it's very much tied to classroom practice.”

**Recommendation.** Since teacher agency continues to be an important feature of South Carolina’s SLO process, SCDE should revisit business rules and/or policy on the need for increased teacher flexibility to write SLO goals and assess student progress and achievement.

**Chart 6. SLO Components Teachers are able to Choose or Determine**



**Chart 7. Elements Included in Districts' SLO Process**





### **Focus Group Reflections: Teacher Autonomy and Choice**

In focus groups, participants were asked about the extent to which teacher autonomy was present in the SLO process. According to respondents, parameters around growth were provided as guidance to teachers from their principals or their districts. In two cases, classroom teachers commented that their growth targets were established by the district, limiting their autonomy.

“I wanted to do [my growth targets] based on content a few years ago ... but my principal said it had to be skill based. I teach U.S. history...I created my own goal using stimulus-based multiple-choice questions...The principal wanted to see 20% growth for each student, so I had to figure out what it was for each student.”

Another classroom teacher shared, “Our district gave us the number to look for, 20%. They let us know exactly how, what grade level, what letter grade students should make. It helped me, at that point. I knew what to look for, but it was kind of a ‘just do it’ type thing.”

Other participants revealed that classroom teachers developed goals in teams (n =8), while others developed their goals on their own (n =11). In cases where teachers wrote their own SLO goals, they were often in non-tested grades or subjects. For example, one classroom teacher shared, “I am a family consumer science teacher. I wrote my own goal because I'm the only one at my school that teaches child development.”

### **Measuring SLO Goals**

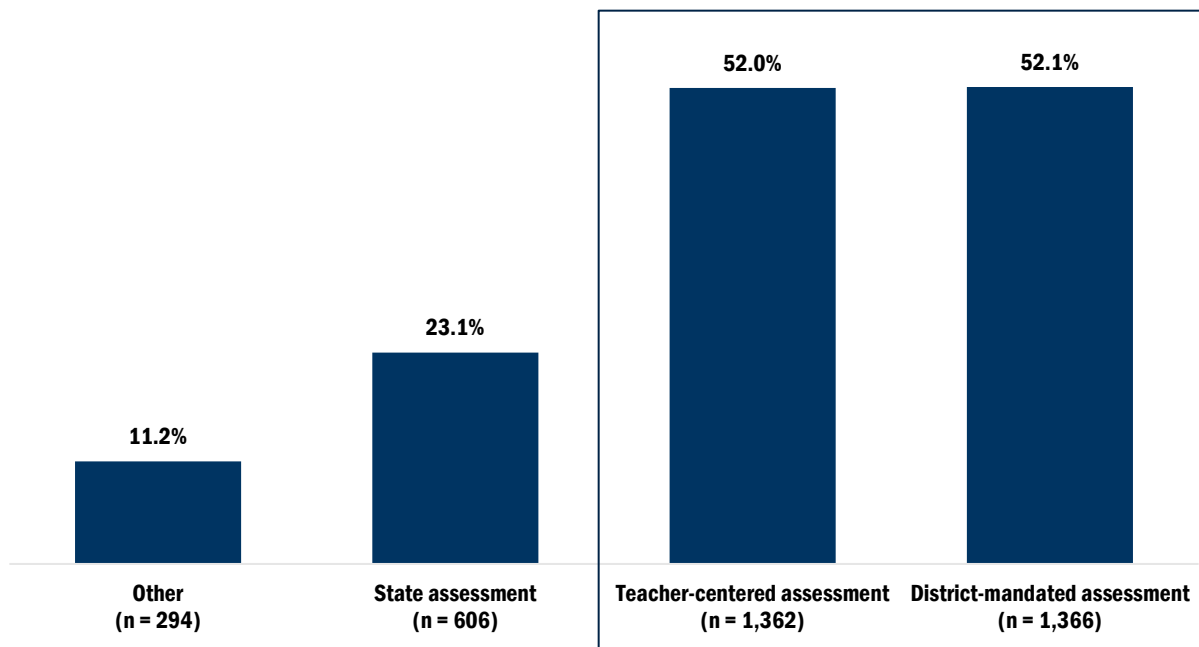
A slight majority of classroom teachers reported the use of district-mandated assessments (52.1%, n = 1,366) and teacher-centered assessment (52.0%, n = 1,362) to measure their SLO goals, as shown in Chart 8. A teacher-centered assessment refers to a locally-developed formative tool created by individual teachers or teams of teachers to measure student learning and progress on SLO goals. When asked the extent to which they were involved in selecting their assessments, fewer than half (48.5%, n = 1,269) reported that they were “to a great extent”; 22% reported having no involvement at all (Table 8). One classroom teacher remarked, “All of the teachers in the district got together for a specific subject area, and we created an assessment...” Focus groups also revealed that both formative and benchmark assessments and other measures are used to assess SLO goals. Benchmark and formative assessments aid teachers in seeing how far along their students are toward reaching their SLO goals before students complete a summative assessment. In focus groups, 12 comments cited teacher-centered assessments and five

**Finding.** *Most classroom teachers report that district-mandated and teacher-centered assessments are used to measure SLO goals.*

comments cited district-mandated assessments as the main measure of SLO goal progress. Another classroom teacher shared, “We were urged by the administration to use the same test for pre- and post. And I think it helps not only me see growth, but it helped [students] to see their growth, too. They could see where they started from after so many months, and where they got to.”

**Recommendation.** SCDE should continue to work with teachers and districts to identify refinements to the assessment selection process, or possibly offer a range of suggested options from which teachers could choose.

**Chart 8. SLO Assessment Measures**



**Table 8. Teachers' Involvement in Selecting Assessments to Measure SLOs**

	%	n
To a great extent	48.5%	1,269
Not at all	22.0%	574
To some extent	19.5%	511
A little	9.9%	260

## Potential SLO Rule Changes

**Key Finding. Most classroom teachers want greater flexibility in the SLO writing process.**

The survey results indicate that administrators and classroom teachers see utility and value in Expanded ADEPT implementation of SLOs; however, they have identified areas for improvement in the process.

Classroom teachers, who had written SLO goals, were asked to consider possible rule changes to the SLO process. In the survey, teacher responses identified wanting more overall flexibility for teachers and the districts. Teachers overwhelmingly agreed that rule changes they would like to see include,

- Teachers setting their own growth targets (88.6%, n = 2,168).
- Districts defining their own criteria for SLO performance levels (88.8%, n = 2,173). See Table 9<sup>4</sup>.

**Project Question:** *What recommendations do educators have to improve the utility and value of the Expanded ADEPT?*

**Table 9. Level of Agreement on Possible Rule Changes (2018)**

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	n
SCDE should use the same standards and assessments in SLOs for teachers in the same grades and subject areas.	23.8%	38.1%	18.9%	19.2%	2,436
SCDE should have all teachers set their own growth targets.	50.1%	38.5%	8.1%	3.3%	2,447
SLOs should be used as an artifact or evidence of professional practice.	18.5%	48.3%	20.7%	12.5%	2,407
SCDE should use a consistent SLO scoring methodology throughout the state.	30.1%	41.0%	18.7%	10.3%	2,434
SCDE should continue to allow districts to define the criteria for each of the SLO performance levels so that districts have flexibility.	49.9%	38.9%	7.0%	4.2%	2,447

<sup>4</sup> Following Table 9, Table 10 reflects the survey item results from the 2016 SCDE Expanded ADEPT Survey.

**Table 10. Level of Agreement on Possible Rule Changes (2016)**

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	n
SCDE should use the same standards and assessments in SLOs for teachers in the same grades and subject areas.	21.6%	37.1%	22.3%	19.0%	3,934
SCDE should have all teachers set their own growth targets.	49.1%	39.3%	8.3%	3.4%	3,935
SLOs should be used as an artifact or evidence of professional practice.	15.4%	46.9%	22.8%	15.0%	3,928
SCDE should use a consistent SLO scoring methodology throughout the state.	28.5%	40.1%	20.1%	11.3%	3,930
SCDE should continue to allow districts to define the criteria for each of the SLO performance levels so that districts have flexibility.	48.7%	38.0%	7.5%	5.8%	3,932

### ***Focus Group Reflections: Teacher Recommendations***

In the focus groups, classroom teachers identified student learning differences as a challenge when measuring growth at set data collection increments (e.g., daily, weekly, and monthly). As shared by one participant:

“What student A might give me on Monday is different what he or she will give me on Friday. I feel like just that one particular day is not an accurate picture, but I am going to put that score on still, because I'm supposed to, you know? I guess, it feels like we are just kind of doing it because we have to, not because it is what makes the most sense.”

Another classroom teacher in the same focus group shared, “The one-size-fits-all model really kind of does [students] a disservice.” Given classroom teachers’ knowledge about how their students perform and how that performance can vary day to day, comments like these suggest that teachers may have ideas for measuring student growth that do not conform to how the district is measuring student growth for the purposes of the SLO. Further, teachers indicated that setting their own growth targets based on their knowledge of their students may be preferable to having district set growth targets. Other factors such as standardizing assessments across grade and subjects (38.1%, n = 929) or using SLOs as evidence of professional practice or measures of teacher effectiveness (33.2%, n = 799) were slightly more split, showing there was less consensus amongst teachers for such a change.

*Recommendation. SCDE should continue to ensure that teachers have flexibility in decision-making so that teacher autonomy is maintained at high levels.*

## Impact on Teacher Practice Related to Data-Driven Instruction, Focus on Growth, and Student-Centered Learning

**Key Finding:** *Most classroom teachers and administrators are receptive to the SLO process and recognize its impact on teacher practice.*

Nearly all the teachers who participated in the survey had written an SLO goal. Most also received informal and formal feedback, see Table 3. With most respondents reporting experience with Expanded ADEPT, the survey gauges the extent to which the SLO process has impacted their practice and student learning. The majority of survey respondents held positive perceptions of their participation in the SLO process (see Table 11)<sup>5</sup>. For example, classroom teachers, who had written an SLO goal, were able to use an assessment that was aligned to their standards to measure their SLO goals (89.9%, n =2,350) and monitor student growth toward their SLO targets (86.7%, n = 2,263).

**Project Question:** *What were educators' perspectives on the utility and value of the components, especially SLOs, of Expanded ADEPT?*

**Table 11. Teacher Participation in the SLO Process (2018)**

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	n
I was able to quickly gather the baseline and trend data for my SLO.	35.2%	45.6%	11.3%	7.2%	0.7%	2,624
Reviewing the baseline and trend data helped me understand my students and their academic needs.	36.9%	46.5%	10.2%	5.7%	0.7%	2,614
The assessment used in the SLO is aligned with the standards used in my course(s) or class(es).	56.4%	33.5%	6.1%	3.2%	0.7%	2,612
The growth targets for my students accurately reflected my students' learning this year.	34.3%	44.6%	11.8%	7.3%	2.0%	2,611
The growth targets for my students accurately reflected the gains my students were able to make this year.	35.0%	43.8%	11.6%	7.0%	2.6%	2,615
Setting growth targets for my students had a positive impact on my practice.	33.6%	41.7%	14.3%	8.4%	2.0%	2,602
I am clear on how to monitor the growth my students are making toward my SLO targets.	44.2%	42.5%	8.9%	3.8%	0.5%	2,610

<sup>5</sup> Following Table 11, Table 12 reflects the survey item results from the 2016 SCDE Expanded ADEPT Survey.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	n
I am clear on the connection between the SLO process and the South Carolina Teaching Standards or expectations in the district professional rubric.	36.0%	40.2%	13.6%	8.1%	2.1%	2,606

**Table 12. Teacher Participation in the SLO Process (2016)**

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	n
I was able to quickly gather the baseline and trend data for my SLO.	26.1%	47.6%	16.3%	9.2%	0.8%	4,083
Reviewing the baseline and trend data helped me understand my students and their academic needs.	29.0%	48.0%	13.6%	8.6%	0.8%	4,074
The assessment used in the SLO is aligned with the standards used in my course(s) or class(es).	50.1%	36.9%	7.5%	4.8%	0.8%	4,070
The growth targets for my students accurately reflected my students' learning this year.	29.1%	44.2%	15.6%	9.2%	1.9%	4,072
The growth targets for my students accurately reflected the gains my students were able to make this year.	27.9%	45.0%	16.7%	8.4%	2.0%	4,066
Setting growth targets for my students had a positive impact on my practice.	24.9%	41.9%	18.3%	12.1%	2.8%	4,063
I am clear on how to monitor the growth my students are making toward my SLO targets.	32.2%	45.1%	15.1%	6.2%	1.5%	4,060
I am clear on the connection between the SLO process and the South Carolina Teaching Standards or expectations in the district professional rubric.	24.3%	41.8%	18.9%	12.6%	2.4%	4,065

The majority of administrators reported that the use of student data relating to the SLO process has made conversations about student learning more data-driven (62.5%, n = 403), increased the focus on growth and impact on learning (59.1%, n = 381), and made conversations more student-centered (54.1%, n = 349), as shown in Table 8. Classroom teachers also reported the SLO process increased the focus on growth and impact on learning (51.3%, n = 1,266) and made conversations more data-driven (47.0%, n = 1,161). About one in four classroom teachers (26.1%, n = 644) and one in five administrators (20.0%, n = 129) reported that the SLO process had not made an impact on professional conversations, also shown in Table 13<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Following Table 13, Table 14 reflects the survey item results from the 2016 SCDE Expanded ADEPT Survey.

**Table 13. How the SLO Process Changed Conversations (2018)**

	Classroom Teachers		Administrators & Central Office Staff	
	%	n	%	n
It has increased the focus on growth and impact on learning.	51.3%	1,266	59.1%	381
It has made conversations more data-driven.	47.0%	1,161	62.5%	403
It has made conversations more student-centered.	44.4%	1,097	54.1%	349
It has increased the focus on formative assessment and progress monitoring.	37.0%	913	40.8%	263
It has not had an impact on professional conversations.	26.1%	644	20.0%	129
In some other way	2.6%	63	3.6%	23

**Table 14. How the SLO Process Changed Conversations (2016)**

	Classroom Teachers		Administrators & Central Office Staff	
	%	n	%	n
It has increased the focus on growth and impact on learning.	40.6%	1,584	64.3%	238
It has made conversations more data-driven.	46.0%	1,795	64.1%	237
It has made conversations more student-centered.	33.0%	1,290	59.5%	220
It has increased the focus on formative assessment and progress monitoring.	31.4%	1,228	47.6%	176
It has not had an impact on professional conversations.	31.2%	1,218	17.3%	64
In some other way	5.0%	195	4.3%	16

During focus groups, classroom teachers were asked whether the SLO process had made an impact on their practice. Data use emerged for a small number (n =2) as a way in which the SLO process has positively impacted their practice. One classroom teacher shared, “the data review is a part of the SLO process that has helped me identify some areas where students are really struggling within an assessment, so I have changed to mastery-based learning multiple times because of that reflection.” Another teacher commented that the SLO process has “impacted me by (having me look) at data more and interpreting data more and how I can put that (to work) in my classroom.”

**Recommendation.** SCDE should continue to work with districts to ensure that the pre- and post-conferences that are part of the ADEPT system include discussions around the development and implementation of SLOs.

Teachers also reported favorable overall perceptions of the SLO process, as shown in Table 10. Most teachers indicated SLOs help them to learn about students’ strengths and challenges (77.0%, n = 1,901). Teachers also felt the process both helped them to reflect on (79.4%, n = 1,964) and improve their teaching practice (74.3%, n = 1,838)

**Table 15. Perceptions About the SLO Process (2018 survey)**

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	n
Uses measures that are fair reflections of my work and the work of my students.	24.5%	45.4%	19.4%	10.7%	2,479
Helps me and my administrator(s) identify strengths and challenges in my practice.	24.4%	45.0%	19.8%	10.9%	2,478
Allows my evaluator to provide useful feedback to me about my practice.	25.7%	43.8%	20.0%	10.5%	2,474
Allows me to reflect on my practice.	32.9%	46.5%	12.6%	8.0%	2,472
Helps me to improve my practice.	30.2%	44.1%	16.3%	9.3%	2,473
Helps me learn more about my students’ academic strengths and challenges.	31.1%	45.9%	14.1%	9.0%	2,469

**Table 14. Perceptions About the SLO Process (2016 survey)**

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	n
Uses measures that are fair reflections of my work and the work of my students.	15.2%	42.1%	26.6%	16.1%	3,946
Helps me and my administrator(s) identify strengths and challenges in my practice.	16.9%	43.7%	24.8%	14.6%	3,944
Allows my evaluator to provide useful feedback to me about my practice.	17.7%	41.9%	25.5%	15.0%	3,943
Allows me to reflect on my practice.	25.9%	48.2%	16.0%	9.9%	3,945
Helps me to improve my practice.	22.8%	44.9%	20.1%	12.2%	3,941
Helps me learn more about my students’ academic strengths and challenges.	23.6%	46.8%	18.7%	10.8%	3,930



## OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to support districts by collaborating and reviewing training and support documents.
- Continue to work with districts to refine and expand the training modules and resources to which teachers and administrators have access.
- Revisit business rules and/or policy on the need for increased teacher flexibility to write SLO goals and assess student progress and achievement.
- Continue to work with districts to identify refinements to the assessment selection process, or possibly offer a range of suggested options from which teachers could choose.
- Continue to work with teachers and districts to promote flexibility in decision-making so that teacher autonomy is maintained at high levels.
- Continue to work with districts to ensure that the pre- and post-conferences that are part of the ADEPT system include discussions around the development and implementation of SLOs.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, most teachers found the support by their districts to be a valuable source of support in writing their SLO goals. Three out of four classroom teachers (77.2%, n = 4,368) and two out of three administrators (69.4%, n = 541) supported this finding. There is still room for refining the implementation process, and room for growth in the SLO training, especially the area of growth target setting and teacher-led flexibility. While two-thirds of classroom teachers (67.5%, n = 3,850) report that they can identify their own growth targets, 88.6% (n = 2,168) of classroom teachers, who have written an SLO goal, also report that *SCDE should have all teachers set their own growth targets, as a possible rule change*. Most teachers have utilized the refined Expanded ADEPT system effectively in their classroom. With an increased focus on the use of data and the impact on student learning, more than half of classroom teachers surveyed found the SLO process has changed conversations, noting it has increased the focus on growth and impact on learning. The enhanced system has shown value in the current classroom structure of South Carolina schools. This report provided insight on SCDE's key questions of interest and should be useful for understanding how classroom teachers and principals experience the Expanded ADEPT system, especially in regard to SLOs.

## **Appendix A. Survey Results**

A.1. Overall Teacher Survey Results

A.2. Overall Central Office Staff Survey Results

A.3. Teacher Survey Results by District: Charleston

A.4. Teacher Survey Results by District: Beaufort

A.5. Teacher Survey Results by District: Georgetown

A.6. Teacher Survey Results by District: Lexington 01

A.7. Teacher Survey Results by District: Chester

draft

## **Organization of Survey Results**

The complete survey results from the 2018 SCDE Expanded ADEPT Survey are provided for teachers and administrators. In addition, the teacher survey results for five districts with the largest survey representation are also provided. The results include charts and tables of the survey items including demographics, training and support received, the SLO implementation process, and its impact on teachers' instructional practice.

draft

## **Appendix B. Focus Group Themes**

B.1. Focus Group Themes: Teachers and Instructional Coaches

B.2. Focus Group Themes: School Administrators

draft