WIDA FOCUS ON

SLIFE: Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education

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Introduction

Consider Monica, who has enrolled in a suburban Chicago high school after she immigrated to the United States from rural Guatemala. Monica's local school in Guatemala only offered education for Kindergarten through Grade 2; the intermediate and secondary schools were located in a city that was over an hour away by bus. Therefore, like most other children in her community, she stayed home to help her family after she completed the second grade. The family immigrated to the United States when Monica was 14 years old, at which point she enrolled in the local school district as a freshman in high school.

Once she enrolled in high school, Monica's unique educational needs became apparent. While she did have basic literacy skills in her native language, her academic skills had never progressed much past the second grade level. It was the responsibility of her new school to help her acquire the language skills and content area knowledge necessary for success in an American high school, including becoming proficient in academic English.

This bulletin focuses on the needs of students like Monica, who have limited or interrupted formal education. Because the vast majority of students in this group are enrolled in Grades 6 through 12, we will focus on those grade levels. However, many of the tips and suggestions can be applied in lower grade levels as well. Throughout the bulletin we will explore academic and social-emotional factors that may affect this group of students, examine the benefits of building community partnerships, address how to assess student readiness levels, and offer a checklist of considerations for instructional planning.

Who Are Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education?

Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) is an umbrella term used to describe a diverse subset of the English language learner population who share several unifying characteristics. SLIFE usually are new to the U.S. school system and have had interrupted or limited schooling opportunities in their native country. They have limited backgrounds in reading and writing in their native language(s) and are below grade level in most academic skills (Freeman & Freeman, 2002). Students who have these characteristics could be refugees, migrant students, or any student who experienced limited or interrupted access to school for a variety of reasons, such as poverty, isolated geographic locales, limited transportation options, societal expectations for school attendance, a need to enter the workforce and contribute to the family income, natural disasters, war, or civil strife.

Additionally, the number of years of compulsory education varies from country to country (Short & Boyson, 2004). For example, students from Mexico may believe that they have completed their education upon finishing "la secundaria," the equivalent of ninth grade in the U.S. Upon immigrating to the U.S., these students may be unaware of the expectation to continue their education until the age of 18. The recent wave of unaccompanied minors coming to the U.S. from Central America also generally fit into the SLIFE category. The violence and poverty that many of these young people experienced in their native countries have led to limited and interrupted educational opportunities. It is also important to note that the perception of the age of majority can vary from culture to culture. While in the U.S., a 16-year-old is considered a minor, a child of this age would be considered an adult with adult responsibilities in many other countries.

Many schools across the U.S. serve English language learners with interrupted educational backgrounds, though current statistics are not readily available. In 2000, Ruiz de Velazco and Fix estimated that 20% of ELLs in high school and 12% of ELLs in middle school had missed two or more years of schooling. This under-schooled group of students is most at risk for academic failure (Short & Boyson, 2004). This group also has very high dropout rates. Gunderson reported that the disappearance rate of refugee students, one subgroup in the SLIFE population, is 75% or higher at the secondary level (Montero, Newmaster, & Ledger, 2014). It is important for educators to understand the unique language, literacy, academic, socio-emotional, and cultural needs of these students. These students need learning programs that

- Address their acculturation to the U.S. school system
- Attend to their socio-emotional needs (poverty, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), family separation or reunification, etc.)
- Provide focused initial literacy instruction appropriate for adolescents
- Provide focused academic skill instruction to bridge gaps in knowledge
- Provide integration of content and language instruction

Teaching the Whole Student

English language learners with interrupted educational backgrounds have often experienced difficult circumstances. Some students may require therapy or other treatment as a result of their past experiences. Waggoner found that newcomer students are also more likely to live in poverty than other groups of students (Short & Boyson, 2004).

FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE
"…the skills and knowledge that have been historically and culturally developed to enable an individual or household to function within a given culture." (Luis Moll, 1992)

Students with this background often need their emotional, psychological, and physiological needs to be met before they are able to engage fully in the educational setting (WIDA, 2013a). Guidance counselors need to be aware of students' histories and knowledgeable about the various services available to students and families in the community. Whenever possible, practitioners should provide services in the student's first language and in ways that demonstrate sensitivity to the student's culture. Schools and districts can accomplish this by forming partnerships with community organizations and/or offering support groups for students with similar backgrounds.

FORM PARTNERSHIPS

AREA HOSPITALS
Set up temporary or permanent clinics where families are located to provide families with vaccinations, physicals, well baby visits, and child services

DENTAL SCHOOL STUDENTS
Bring dental care to the school or community to provide dental health education and disease prevention

CONSULATE OFFICES
Get consultation or materials in order to gain greater understanding of the culture, language, and school system of your students' home countries

LION'S CLUB OR OTHER SIMILAR ORGANIZATIONS
Provide vision screenings and inexpensive glasses

AREA LANDLORDS
Set up homework centers within apartment complexes to offer on-site support for students

LOCAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Bring ESL, GED (in English and native language), and entry level college courses to the community

LOCAL PARK DISTRICT
Organize a dance troupe or a band that showcases parents'/students' folkloric culture.

ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS
Foster communication and collaboration with Saturday Schools or other academic/native language support services

Yasmin Hernandez, ELL Project Specialist of the New Jersey State Department of Education (former director of the Newark International Newcomer Student Center in Newark, New Jersey), shared an example of how a partnership was formed with a local hospital to support students on a weekly basis.

> *...We would identify a child who had come with severe issues [such as] some form of abuse, be it emotional or sexual. They would have sessions either with a guidance counselor or a social worker at the school. We also established partnerships with one of the local hospitals that had a counselor that would come in and work with the students as well, and provide that service for them on a weekly basis. It was basically one-on-one...It's key to make sure that the child can adjust properly because they come with things that are very traumatic, some of them things that even us as adults can't relate to... They need to have counseling and social services for those particular issues...*

English language learners with interrupted educational backgrounds have often experienced more at a young age than their more fortunate peers will experience in a lifetime. Their parents see the U.S. as a place where they can create a better future and encourage their children to take advantage of education. Because of their parents' high expectations, these students commonly enroll in American schools with an optimistic outlook, eager to improve their personal and family circumstances. They view their arrival in the United States as a step towards a more stable future; enrolling in the American school system to increase their educational level is one more step. These experiential resources can be tapped in the classroom to build knowledge and skills for these students.

A critical step in the educational process is building on the students' funds of knowledge (Moll, 1992). As part of this process, guidance counselors and teachers should become familiar with student experiential and cultural backgrounds, family histories, linguistic histories, and academic histories. By building instruction around the students' funds of knowledge, teachers and guidance counselors can begin to build language, content knowledge, and acculturation skills for this group of students.

For example, educators may want to consider whether specific practices are common or uncommon in the student's native country. For instance, group work: Is the student accustomed to working in that way, or does he come from a more traditional schooling background? If so, this student may need to be taught how to effectively work in a group to accomplish academic tasks.

Educators may also consider relating the historical events and phenomena being taught in social studies courses to real life student experiences, such as water scarcity. These students may be able to share their unique first-hand experiences, which can enhance everyone's learning. While acknowledging students' familiarity with concepts like these, educators need to consider that some curriculum (e.g., war and revolution) can generate painful memories and emotions for students. Care should be taken to know students' history when thinking about how to present topics that could potentially bring up traumatic memories.

BUILDING CULTURAL AWARENESS AND SENSITIVITY

"…Education in so many countries is so vastly different. Being able to understand what strategies the teachers used in their countries and how [they used them] can help connect that type of cognitive processing students did with the way we do it in the United States."
-Scott Beldon, ESL Teacher, Doss High School, Louisville, KY

"…Sometimes [with newcomers], it's hard to just jump in. You can't just set up four desks together and have them talk because they don't know how to do that yet. Some of them might, but there's some that might have a very traditional background and they're just not familiar with that…You always need to consider what students bring with them."
-Gwen Snow, Principal, ESL Newcomer Academy, Jefferson County Public Schools

"It's important to know what is culturally acceptable in those different countries for a teacher to be able to address those children properly…[you] have to be aware of what their cultural sensitivity is [towards something]"
-Yasmin Hernández, ELL Project Specialist of the New Jersey State Department of Education(former Newark Newcomer Center Director, NJ)

The following chart identifies factors that influence ELLs' performance in school (Hamayan, Marler, Sanchez-Lopez, Damico, 2007, 2013; WIDA 2013a) and provides tips for schools in connecting with students with limited or interrupted formal education.

Factors that Influence ELLs' Performance in School	Tips for Connecting with Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education
Learning Environment	• Ensure a welcoming environment for both students and their families/guardians • Develop a school climate that values multilingualism • Train school staff in cultural competency and methodology for teaching linguistically diverse students • Provide native language materials and support whenever possible
Academic Achievement and Instruction	• Share school and program goals for language and academic learning in both English and the native language • Encourage ESL/Bilingual and General Education staff to collaborate around supporting both language acquisition and academic achievement • Ensure that assessment practices measure content area skills independently of language proficiency
Oral Language and Literacy	• Teach literacy in context, for example through thematic units • Access student and family funds of knowledge to create meaningful contexts for literacy development • Teach oral language skills in connection with literacy • Collaborate with the community public library to ensure that all families have a library card and have access to books in English and the native language • Encourage parents to explore concepts in the native language with their children • Connect units of study to funds of knowledge of the student, family, and community
Personal and Family	• Assure that students are aware of the school district subsidized lunch program • Be flexible with homework assignments for students who work after school and at night to contribute to the family income • Consider offering transportation to school events or make sure families know how to use the public transportation system • Provide access to interpreters or translators when needed for native language interpretation • Send correspondence in the native language whenever possible • Incorporate student experiential backgrounds and interests into lessons to promote engagement and cultural responsiveness
Physical and Psychological Well-Being	• Create partnerships with community agencies or local universities that provide therapy in the native language or creative therapy groups such as art/music/dance • Connect students and families with local community agencies that provide assistance to those in poverty • Create support groups for students/families in similar situations of reunification, separation, etc. • Find out the living situation of the student, such as reunited with estranged family members, family members separated during immigration, living with extended family or friends, refugee placed with host family, or overcrowded living conditions

Factors that Influence ELLs' Performance in School	Tips for Connecting with Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education
Previous Schooling	• Gather information on the previous schooling experiences of the student during intake • Conduct informal, confidential interviews with students and family members regarding prior schooling experiences, identifying inconsistent programming as well as periods of interrupted education
Cross-Cultural	• Offer orientation that explains the U.S. grading system and expectations for homework completion, student attendance and reporting of absences, and provides an opportunity for them to ask about the school and/or community • Make a personal phone call to invite parents/guardians to parent-teacher conferences and explain what to expect when they come • Form a bilingual parent committee that can assist families and guardians in the acculturation process in the native language

Adapted from Hamayan, Marler, Sanchez-Lopez, Damico. (2007, 2013). *Special education considerations for English language learners: Delivering a continuum of services.* Philadelphia, PA: Caslon, Inc.

Establish the Starting Line

Students with limited or interrupted formal education must learn both academic English and grade-level academic content skills simultaneously. Once their socio-emotional, physiological, and acculturation needs have been met, students will be able to engage in the challenging process of language acquisition and content area learning.

It is important for teachers who facilitate this learning to have a clear picture of where the student is starting. This means that teachers and schools need to build complete portraits of English language learners with interrupted education. A portrait can include the student's academic history, linguistic history, and also family and cultural history. This information can inform decisions in regards to programming, course selection, and instructional needs of the student. Later, subsequent assessment data can be used to demonstrate growth in language and content learning when compared to the information that was gathered in the student portrait upon the student's entry into the school or district.

Upon intake, a teacher or guidance counselor can interview the student and parents or guardians to find out more about the student's educational history, including periods of attendance and nonattendance, grades in the native country, and what the academic calendar looks like in the native country. Academic school year calendars in some countries are much shorter than those in the United States, and as a consequence, some students who appear to have interrupted education were in fact continuously enrolled in school (WIDA, 2013a). Even if no transcripts from the native country are available to prove attendance and grades, students' and families' self-reported reflections on whether school was easy or difficult, and what content areas the student enjoyed or disliked can provide valuable information on student academic strengths and areas in which they would benefit from support. Part of this interview should also be spent exploring the student's life experiences. While some students may not have had access to school, they may have acquired valuable skills in other ways, such as through working in the family business selling clothing at a market. All of this information can inform the decisions on what courses, including electives, may be best suited for this particular student.

English language learners with interrupted educational backgrounds may or may not have literacy in reading and writing in their native languages. Because the level of native language literacy can play a large role in English acquisition, it is important for teachers and schools to find out the student's level of language and literacy development in the home language. Some of this information can come from the interview process, but if someone in the school community speaks the same native language as the student, that person can help gather further information. Students can respond to classroom prompts both orally and in writing in the native language. These classroom language samples can then be analyzed for level of use of social and academic vocabulary, language structures, and discourse. General reading comprehension in the native language can, for example, be

assessed by asking students to read and retell what they understood from a reading selection.

The student's English language proficiency level should be assessed as well. This can happen when the student first enrolls in the district through the use of an English language proficiency screener. Some students with interrupted education may have acquired some English through interaction with community members, co-workers in the workplace, or ESL classes offered through a local community organization. These students may already have some proficiency in social English and even some academic English skills. It cannot be assumed that these students are starting at "zero" simply because they have interrupted educational histories.

As a final piece of the student portrait, the school needs to assess student content knowledge. Again, even if it has been established that a student never attended school prior to immigrating to the United States, it cannot be assumed that he or she has no knowledge or skills that are relevant to academic content. Many students learn content-related skills through life experiences. Some English language learners with interrupted education have experienced revolution, civil unrest, or political change, all concepts taught in social studies courses in the United States. In the content area of science and environmental studies, these students may have a more concrete understanding of the water cycle, scarcity, seasonal shifts, or natural disasters than many of their peers. A student who assisted in the family business of selling clothing in a market most likely developed skills in the areas of economics and mathematics. These life experiences cannot be discounted simply because they did not occur in a classroom.

Student content knowledge and skills should be assessed in the native language to the extent possible. Care must be taken to assess content knowledge and skills separately from language proficiency (WIDA, 2013a). Until a student reaches a high level of proficiency in academic English, tests of content knowledge can be skewed by a student's developing linguistic ability to process and express academic concepts in English. Students will only be able to relate as much of what they know as their English proficiency allows them to (Hamayan, Marler, Sanchez-Lopez, Damico, 2007, 2013). Authentic assessments will best allow English language learners at a variety of proficiency levels to demonstrate what they know in the content areas (WIDA, 2013a).

Instruction that Works Within the Zone of Proximal Development

Once a student portrait has been developed, teachers can use the information gathered to plan instruction within the zone of proximal development of the student (Vygotsky, 1978). Teachers should start from where the students are and build skills and knowledge from that point, using age-appropriate materials and supporting instruction through the native language when possible (Short & Boyson, 2004). Instruction should integrate content and language development (Short & Boyson, 2004). Planning instruction through the use of curricular thematic units is one way to accomplish integration of content and language instruction (Freeman & Freeman, 2002).

ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT (ZPD)

"The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978)

For many students with interrupted education, their prior learning experiences have been based in oral language. Part of the transition to school in the United States is the need to transition to text-based learning (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011). This means that instructional strategies that capitalize on oral language development, such as total physical response (TPR) and language experience approach (LEA), can form a bridge to literacy instruction for these students. Using TPR, for example, the teacher gives commands which the student follows. The student demonstrates comprehension by following the command, and eventually transitions to producing the commands him/herself. The teacher could strategically plan commands that coincide with planned literacy experiences in order to build oral language before engaging the students in printed text. In LEA, the teacher and students share an experience, for example a field trip, a community event, or a science experiment. The students then retell the event, dictating to the teacher who scribes the students' words. Students then practice reading the passage, which was produced from their own oral language vocabularies. (See Additional Resources on page 13 for links to more information on TPR and LEA.)

Standard English as a Second Language methodology at the secondary level generally assumes student literacy in the home language. Students without native language literacy will not respond to ESL instruction alone and may require focused literacy instruction. Teachers who work with students from this background need to understand basic literacy principles in order for these students to learn literacy skills in English and/or the native language (Menken, 2013; Montero, Newmaster & Ledger, 2014). These include understanding phonemic awareness, phonics, and reading comprehension. Literacy instruction for these students should always be couched within a meaningful context, starting with connecting to background experiences, building schema, then developing oral language in the native language

and in English, and finally moving into print literacy experiences (WIDA, 2013a). Secondary teachers may want to adapt some elementary literacy instruction models, such as guided reading and running records, for use with older students (Montero, Newmaster, & Ledger, 2014). The texts used for guided reading groups can be selected based on curricular themes, reinforcing the content and language learning that is happening in planned thematic units.

Students need exposure to grade-level curriculum and skill instruction, regardless of educational background or English language proficiency level (Short, & Boyson, 2004). Educators can teach grade-level skill development through the use of visuals while students are still developing literacy skills in English. It will be easier for students to "read" a historical painting, drawing, or photograph, before they can read an account of a historical event in a grade-level text. For example, students can analyze the two historical photographs below and use evidence from the photographs to make inferences about quality of life for the inhabitants of the two different homes. To further the discussion, students could then analyze charts of statistics on living and working conditions from the industrialist era of the United States. This could prompt discussions of the vast economic inequalities that resulted from the growth of industry. To deepen understanding of the depth of the issue, additional historical photographs of factories and sweatshops could be examined, as well as political cartoons and newspaper headlines from the era. After working with the subject matter in multiple modes and practicing the grade-level skills that they are learning, such as using evidence from a text to support an argument, students would then be more prepared to use the same skills in reading print text scaffolded at multiple readability levels. This approach will support both content skill and language development.



Mydans, Carl. (1935) Tenement Bedroom and Kitchen, Hamilton Co., Ohio. Retrieved from Library of Congress: http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa1997000789/pp/



(c1909) Music Hall with Organ in house of John D. Rockefeller. Retrieved from Library of Congress: http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/96524640/

Students who receive explicit skill instruction are more prepared to apply those skills in different contexts and content areas. Skills that can be explicitly taught include

- Reading strategies
- Independent learning strategies
- Study skills and strategies
- Note-taking skills and strategies
- Technology skills
- Collaboration and group-work skills

Q & A with Dr. Deborah Short



Deborah J. Short, Ph.D. conducts research and provides professional development on content-based ESL, sheltered instruction, and academic literacy. She co-developed the SIOP Model and directed research on English language learners and newcomer programs for the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Education. She is a former ESL/EFL teacher and is on TESOL's Board of Directors.

Q: If you could choose 3-5 things to improve instruction for students with limited or interrupted formal education, what would they be? Why?

A: The first thing would be using appropriate curriculum. Specially designed curriculum can help fill in gaps in knowledge, particularly at the secondary level. Curriculum should integrate content and language instruction from the start, and also integrate academic and social language. Some of the most successful programs I've seen are also doing thematic or interdisciplinary lessons.
The second piece is ensuring that students' literacy development is appropriate to their age, not necessarily to their academic levels. This applies both to what teachers choose to have students read and write as well as the look of the materials. I'm disappointed when I see high school newcomers/SLIFE reading elementary school picture books in class.

I also believe that more teachers could be trained in how to make use of the student's home language. This doesn't just mean bilingual education, but simple things like if you have students create vocabulary notebooks, they should not only draw pictures and write sentences to go with words, they should annotate the word in the native language. If we are trying to teach content as well as language, we need to give them the chance to process the content, and sometimes that processing comes best in the native language, especially in the early months at school.

Another thing is programming for these students. In middle school and high school you can have separate classes. I firmly believe that a separate class or two in their first year [in an American school] to provide very targeted interventions is valuable. A high school might even plan for students to be there for five years and design a program pathway that will have first-year students working on filling in gaps will have first-year students working on filling in gaps in content areas and developing English skills.

Q: What would you suggest for districts who have small numbers of this student population and don't have the ability to provide totally separate programming for them?

A: These students need extended time and the time to catch up. That extended time could come during summer vacation or holiday vacations, having the students come back into school to do something in a way that promotes more practice and more learning. This also includes afterschool programs and Saturday programs during the school year. I think that the way to help these students once they are in middle school and above is to have more than 180 days of learning.

I've also seen situations where, depending on the grade level, students might have a separate course for a quarter, just to get them as much information as they can; for example to teach them what science equipment looks like and how to use it safely. So much of this depends on where their gaps are. Some schools have made very interesting use of an honors society or a foreign language club where they will pair up those student for afterschool activities that are partially social and partially academic.

Q: What should be in place in public schools to address the needs of students with limited or interrupted formal education?

A: I think that social services and counseling are very important. Some of these students have experienced trauma and they need to talk to professionals about that. I've been in a number of places where students are dealing with family reunification issues; they may not have lived with their parents for 12 years and they could use some type of support group or discussion group. Sometimes the families need some basic social service connections. Schools can have a social worker or a parent liaison who can put them in touch with community organizations that might help out, whether for job referrals, or housing, or health issues.

Schools also need to keep these students in mind in their master schedule and perhaps schedule them early in the process to make sure that they have the right teachers and the right courses. Whoever is involved in the master schedule, usually an administrator or head of guidance, needs to be cognizant of the appropriate program pathways for these students and what options they might have, even down to which are better electives for their first year.

Schools need to find out about the students' own native language and literacy. Some of these students come in with major educational gaps, but that doesn't mean that they haven't learned some things on their own. They may not have been at a school, but maybe they worked in a market and learned a lot about mathematics and supply and demand. We need to find those things out.

The school's atmosphere should welcome families. That is a little intangible, but examples include having a bilingual person in the front office, or having a telephone program like Language Links on speed dial if someone comes in that doesn't speak the language and the office can get an interpreter over the phone. Schools can have visuals, whether they are bulletin boards or flags, in the hallways that show that they care about being a multicultural environment.

Q: What are some basic suggestions for working efficiently with students with limited or interrupted formal education?

A: Students need access to books in the classroom library and in the school library. These students have to catch up, and literacy is a big part of the catch-up process, so having more and more materials that they can look at or listen to on their own is extremely important. Whether it's during down time or silent reading time in the classroom, or taking things home on the weekend and at night, we need to have that kind of material available or bookmarked on school computers.

Q: Teachers sometimes struggle with how to grade these students on the work that they are doing. Do you have any suggestions in that area?

A: If district policies allow it, let the students have pass/fail for a year. I know that people go crazy with GPA's, but that is one possibility. Another possibility is to have students create portfolios of their work, and after two or three years look at the growth over time. This is hard to do if you have large numbers of these students, but it is something that can be done if you are in a site with small numbers. Students can be measured on their growth rather than how they did on tests when they didn't know any English.

Another option is to give a separate ESL report card that looks at things like language growth. This also means that you have to set some benchmarks. If you have a student who comes in with a level zero, where should that student be after first quarter and after second quarter, for example.

I want to stress that there is still a role for ESL. As much as I talk about integrating language and content and teaching the academic content, I also think it is important that in some way these students get the scope and sequence of an ESL program. Students who are put into content classes without any ESL support end up with a swiss cheese knowledge of English. That is what I would like to avoid.

Programming Options and Approaches to Meet the Needs of Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education

	Description	Rationale
Native Language Instruction	The practice of allowing students to use their native tongue for or during classroom instruction. (For high incidence languages a certified teacher who speaks the same language. For low incidence languages an aid, community volunteer, peers could offer support.)	• Helps students process and make meaning • Allows learners to read words they know and sentences they understand, to use context effectively, and to self-correct efficiently (Snow, Burns, and Griffin, 1998)
Sheltered Instruction	Sheltered Instruction is an approach for teaching content to English language learners (ELLs) in strategic ways that make the subject matter concepts comprehensible while promoting the students' English language development (Echevarria, J., Vogt M.-E., & Short, D., 2012).	Students don't miss out on grade-level curriculum

	Description	Rationale
After-School Programming	An organized program which invites youth to participate outside of the traditional school day.	Provides "a place and time for homework, extra academic support, and enrichment activities." (Cloud Lakin, Leininger, & Maxwell, 2010)
Newcomer Program	Separate, relatively self-contained educational instruction designed to meet the academic and transitional needs of newly arrived immigrants. Typically, students attend these programs before they enter more traditional interventions (e.g., English language development programs or mainstream classrooms with supplemental ESL instruction). (Newcomer Program, n.d.)	Acclimates students to the U.S. education system as well as the social environment. (Friedlander, 1991)
Peer Mentoring/ Peer Tutoring	Students assist or teach fellow students: learners help each other learn social norms and/or academic skills.	"[helps students] become more integrated into the peer group" (Birman, 2007)
University/ Community Organization Partnerships	Provide support to families beyond the academics, such as ESL programs for students and/or parents, or social/family services.	• Offers students and parents opportunities to further develop their language skills • Addresses the whole child

PLANNING FOR THE NEEDS OF YOUR STUDENTS:

It is clear that there are academic, social and emotional factors that have a direct impact on the learning processes of students with limited or interrupted formal education. Students like Monica, who bring with them resilience and a relentless hope for the future, will greatly benefit from the combined efforts of communities, educators, and school systems that are willing and able to create safe and supportive learning environments.

The following checklist is a tool that can be used by educators working with students with limited or interrupted formal education as a way to help gather information about their academic and language learning goals, background, and learning preferences.

Planning and Instructional Considerations for Supporting SLIFE

❑ Have I activated prior knowledge and tapped into students' funds of knowledge?

What culturally relevant resources could I incorporate? What do I know about my students' country, culture, education system?
What kind of music, art, or other cultural activities might interest my students?

❑ Have I provided an environment that enables students to access print?

What kinds of visuals that make textbooks comprehensible do I have posted around the room?
Do I have a variety of age-appropriate, high interest, low readability texts available that relate to the content?

❑ Have I given students opportunities to be actively engaged in their learning in physical or concrete ways?

How can I incorporate the use of manipulatives, drama, or technology?
Have I allowed students to be the "experts" and teach their peers?

❑ Have I thought about the way I communicate the content?

Do I limit the amount of new words? Have I thought about ways to simplify my explanations?
During instruction, do I clarify by rephrasing or using visuals?
Do I remember to use shorter sentences and pause to emphasize important information?

❑ Have I considered stopping points in my instruction to check for comprehension?

Are there visuals or word banks that they can reference when sharing their ideas?
Do I allow students to repeat/explain what was understood? How can they summarize a particular idea?

❑ Have I prepared assessments that will measure student learning at different language proficiency levels?

Do I allow students to demonstrate their understanding in a variety of ways?
Do I provide opportunities other than paper/pencil tasks for students to show what they know?
Did I differentiate my assessment for the language development needs of my students?
Does the language of my assessment match the language of instruction?

❑ Have I allowed students to work in collaborative groups?

What is the seating arrangement in my classroom (e.g., rows vs. tables of 4)?
What social skills can be taught in this context?

❑ Have I used strategies that integrate language and content throughout my lessons?

How can I teach the concept in a concrete way and scaffold to the abstract?
What language will students need to communicate the content?
Are there sentence frames that students could use for speaking or writing?

❑ Have I kept my expectations realistic?

Do I teach to the zone of proximal development? Have I identified what my students can do independently?
Do I model, give hints, and prompts initially?
Do I gradually release supports as I see students gaining independence?

❑ Have I taken use of native language into account?

If I speak the native language, how can I tap into L1 (native language of the student) to build language and content? Can I preview concepts in L1? Do I use L1 to clarify?
If I don't speak the native language, how do I use visuals, graphic organizers, and peer support to make language more comprehensible?
Are there native language materials and/or bilingual dictionaries available for student use?

Checklist created by Lucía Morales in 2015 based on *Ten Ideas for Teaching Students with Interrupted Formal Education in the Classroom* from www.colorincolorado.org/article/27483/

WIDA Connections

WIDA wishes to acknowledge the significant contributions of consortium members who suggested the topic and guided the development of this bulletin. Carol Johnson, formally of the Georgia Department of Education, was the first to ask WIDA for support in helping her state's educators who are responding to thousands of unaccompanied minors new to their classrooms and schools over the past two years. Laura Hook from the Maryland Department of Education also added to the initial brainstorm, which resulted in 20 state department representatives participating in a virtual discussion of SLIFE and unaccompanied minors in December of 2014. This group offered valuable insight regarding how to approach the topic and feedback on the content, along with embodying the true spirit of consortium collegiality by sharing resources they have found to be helpful. This group also put us in contact with educators who were interviewed to inform the authors' perspectives on this topic, some of whom are quoted in the final document.

WIDA's mission advocates for strong support of language development and academic achievement for linguistically and culturally diverse students. One key step for educators who share in this mission is to form a full picture of the strengths and unique story that each student brings to school. WIDA's new eLearning module, Engaging English Language Learners: Teaching to Student Strengths, guides individual educators and/or professional learning communities through tutorials, practice activities, reflection, and video examples, culminating in the opportunity to create ELL student portraits. The student portrait is particularly relevant for educators who work with SLIFE students, for the reasons outlined in this bulletin. Consortium members can access the module for free at www.wida.us/modules (login required).

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Additional Resources

RESOURCES FOR HEARING STUDENT STORIES

Listen to the educational experiences, hopes, and dreams of students with limited and interrupted formal education. These resources provide a window into these students' worlds and a means for educators to hear their stories:

Teaching Tolerance—this website is dedicated to reducing prejudice, improving intergroup relations and supporting equitable school experiences for our nation's children. In their article *Voices Are Clear. Listen.,* the author includes a link to a special screening of *I Learn America,* a documentary film that follows five immigrant teenagers through one school year at a New York City high school. http://www.tolerance.org/blog/student-voices-are-clear-listen

School Newcomer Program Named Model for NJ—This news story shows how Atlantic City High School offers students instruction in their native language as a way to help them learn English and subject matters. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-fyURyBKw8

RESOURCES FOR BUILDING CULTURAL AWARENESS

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees—This organization's purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. The homepage provides a search box where one can browse by countries in order to gain insights about students' home countries.http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home The following simulation game on their website can be used to lead educators in experiencing the plight of refugees: http://www.unhcr.org/473dc1772.html

Migrant Students: What We Need to Know to Help Them Succeed—This article highlights four lessons we can learn about migrant families and builds awareness of the challenges they encounter as well as strategies to help them overcome those challenges. http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/36286/

WIDA CONSORTIUM

Wisconsin Center for Education Research
University of Wisconsin–Madison
1025 West Johnson St., MD #23
Madison, WI 53706
Client Services Center toll free: 866.276.7735
help@wida.us | www.wida.us

Guest Contributors
Lauren Keppler
Paridad Education Consulting

Lucia Morales
Paridad Education Consulting

Contributing Staff
Julia Cortada
Educator Resource Developer

Maria Austin
Educator Resource Developer

Editors
Guest Editor: Barbara Marler
Paridad Education Consulting

Andrea Cammilleri
Assistant Director of Teaching & Learning

Rebecca Holmes
Editor & Technical Writer

Design
Janet Trembley
Wisconsin Center for Education Research

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ELL Program Specialist
New Jersey Department of Education

Dr. Deborah Short
Director, Academic Language Research & Training

RESOURCES FOR SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM

How to Support ELL Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFEs)—This article provides tips to educators on best practices at the school-wide level as well as the classroom level. http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/27483/

12 Ways to Support An ESL student in a Mainstream Classroom—This web page offers simple strategies that are not very time consuming but can help all learners.
http://www.cultofpedagogy.com/supporting-esl-students-mainstream-classroom/

Language Experience Approach—This CAELA web page describes an approach to reading and writing through the use of experiences and building oral language. Steps to follow are clearly described.
http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/LEA.html

Oral Language Development for Beginners—This article from Colorin Colorado provides an overview of Total Physical Response.
http://www.colorincolorado.org/educators/content/oral/

Running Records and Miscue Analysis—This short entry from the WIDA blog gives tips on how to best use running records with ELLs.
http://www.widaatwcer.blogspot.com/2013/03/running-records-and-ells-miscue-analysis.html

RESOURCES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

English Language Learner Instruction in Middle and High School—This webcast features Dr. Deborah Short discussing effective instructional strategies for teaching English language learner students in middle and high school. http://www.colorincolorado.org/webcasts/middle/

Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services (BRYCS) Annotated Bibliography— List of professional literature on the topic of students with interrupted formal education from the Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services Clearing House.
http://www.brycs.org/clearinghouse/Newcomer-Programs-and-Students-with-Interrupted-Formal-Education.cfm

Bilingual/ESL Education Resources—This website, created by the State of New Jersey Department of Education, provides links to a variety of resources for ESL/Bilingual programs and specific ELL population, including SLIFE, refugees, and newcomers.
http://newjersey.gov/education/bilingual/resources/

Center for Applied Linguistics Resources on Newcomer Programs—An online, searchable database to find schools with existing newcomer programs, many which serve SLIFE.
http://webapp.cal.org/Newcomer/