



Supporting SLIFE

Students with Limited and/or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE)

Who Are SLIFE?

SLIFE are newcomer students who have experienced educational gaps due to war, displacement, poverty, or limited access to schooling. They may arrive with minimal literacy in any language and little experience in formal academic settings.

What Do SLIFE Need?

SLIFE benefit from targeted support that accelerates learning, builds foundational skills, and affirms their identities. Effective approaches address their academic, linguistic, and social-emotional needs holistically:

- Orientation to school systems, including routines, policies, expectations
- Literacy and numeracy skill-building opportunities
- Safe, respectful learning environments
- Flexibility paired with high expectations
- Collaboration between content and language teachers

How Can SLIFE Be Identified?

- Review intake interviews and educational history
- Look for signs like limited literacy, schooling gaps, or unfamiliarity with routines
- Work collaboratively with English Learner (EL) specialists or counselors to confirm SLIFE status

SLIFE are capable, resilient learners. With the right supports, they can thrive in school & beyond.

Effective Classroom Practices

Build Trust & Create Safety

- Greet students by name and learn their stories and strengths
- Use daily check-ins, partner activities, and peer buddies to foster connection
- Establish consistent routines and visuals to reduce anxiety and build security

Provide Access While Maintaining High Expectations

- Use visuals, gestures, bilingual materials, and real-life examples
- Break tasks into small, manageable steps and celebrate each success
- Provide sentence frames, word banks, and clear models for tasks

Explicitly Teach Foundational Skills

- Embed reading, writing, and numeracy in daily instruction
- Provide targeted small-group support
- Incorporate home language resources when possible

Connect Instruction to Students' Lived Experiences

- Link lessons to students' cultures, goals, and real-world needs
- Design tasks that feel purposeful, like writing letters or sharing family traditions
- Allow varied ways to show understanding such as speaking, drawing, or acting

Support Well-Being & Belonging

- Talk openly about different educational paths and celebrate resilience
- Work with counselors, family liaisons, and EL specialists to wrap support around the student
- Recognize all forms of growth: social, emotional, linguistic, and academic