Effectively Reaching Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE)

Challenge #1: One of the greatest barriers for districts in meeting the needs of SLIFE is that there may not be a system in place for identifying which ELs are SLIFE or for collecting sufficient information about their educational background and skills.

Tip #1: Develop a clear process for identifying SLIFE and gathering and sharing information about their skills and background.
- Incorporate SLIFE identification into the process used to identify and place all ELs.
- In the identification process, include an oral interview in the home language to determine students' educational background and experiences, current living situation, and goals.and Offer literacy and math assessments in the home language whenever possible.
- Share essential information about a student's academic background and possible socio-emotional needs with the team of educators working with the student.

Challenge #2: SLIFE may have socio-emotional needs that can impact learning and may extend beyond the resources available in school.

Tip #2: Collaborate with students, families, other educators, and community organizations to meet the socio-emotional needs of SLIFE.
- Collaborate with colleagues to to provide continuity in classroom expectations, routines, and transitions for SLIFE.
- Engage with school counselors, school psychologists, school and family liaisons, and SLIFE students and families to identify possible socio-emotional needs and supports and to respond to possible trauma.
- Seek out potential resources in the community for supporting SLIFE (e.g., community services organizations, free or low cost healthcare and legal services, bilingual trauma support groups).

Challenge #3: Many SLIFE bring with them an oral culture rooted not in literacy practices but in oral transmission of knowledge. While these oral practices can provide a strong foundation for instruction, SLIFE may need help transitioning from a world based on oral transmission to one based on print.

Tip #3: Use oral language activities to build academic knowledge and skills.
- Begin lessons with oral language activities to allow opportunities for SLIFE to build content knowledge and foster academic ways of thinking before having students move on to reading and writing within the same lesson.
- Model oral language activities and expectations for student participation, and provide scaffolds (e.g., sentence stems, visuals, word banks) to support SLIFE engagement in the activities.
- Structure pair and small group work in such a way that SLIFE are given opportunities to both work collaboratively as well as foster independent responsibility for learning tasks.