



Deputy Commissioner
Office of Instructional Support
89 Washington Avenue – Room 875 EBA
Albany, New York 12234

Tel: (518)474-5915
Fax: (518)486-2233

September 27, 2016

TO: District Superintendents
Superintendents of Schools
Public School Administrators
Coordinators of ELL Programs
Directors of ELL Programs

FROM: Angélica Infante-Green, Deputy Commissioner of the Office of Instructional Support
Angélica Infante-Green
Lissette Colón-Collins, Assistant Commissioner, Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages
Lissette Colón-Collins

SUBJECT: Resources for English Language Learners (ELLs) who are Students with Inconsistent/Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE)

The NYSED Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL) is pleased to announce the release of a set of resources to support districts and schools in the education of English Language Learners (ELLs) who are also Students with Inconsistent/Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE). Districts and Schools are strongly encouraged to use these resources. In New York State, there are several ELL subgroups: Newcomers; Developing ELLs; Long-Term ELLs, ELLs with Disabilities; and SIFE. The SIFE subgroup currently consists of 21,037 students or 8.7% of the total ELL population.

In the fall of 2014, the New York State Education Department's (NYSED) Board of Regents adopted amendments to Part 154 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education (CR Part 154), which establishes the legal requirements for the education of English Language Learners/Multilingual Learners (ELLs/MLLs) in New York State. Among the approved amendments were the new regulations and requirements pertaining to the identification and provision of services to SIFE. New York State is one of the first in the nation to propose the use of a set of assessment tools that provide a framework for the appropriate instructional support needed by this student population.

NYSED defines SIFE as English Language Learners who have attended schools in the United States, i.e., the 50 States and the District of Columbia, for less than twelve months and who, upon initial enrollment in schools are found to have two or more years below grade level in literacy in their home language and/or two or more years below grade level in math, due to inconsistent or interrupted schooling prior to their arrival to the United States.

Currently, schools and districts across New York State are utilizing a variety of methods for SIFE identification and placement. In order to develop a cohesive statewide SIFE protocol, and to support schools and districts in serving SIFE, NYSED has established a SIFE Workgroup. This workgroup is composed of teachers of ELLs, administrators, researchers, and other stakeholders to design additional identification, placement, and instructional services for this population of ELLs beyond the identification process already in place through the CR Part 154.

As one of the most vulnerable at-risk subgroups of ELLs, this population requires a commitment from all stakeholders to develop innovative approaches in order to appropriately serve them. Meeting the needs of SIFE is a considerable challenge, but it is one that must be met in order to provide real opportunities to the students. Briefly, the descriptions of the components of the aforementioned NYSED SIFE Resources are:

- **The SIFE Oral Interview Questionnaire and Guidance Document.** This document is to be used in school districts during the individual interview to support instruction by collecting information about a student's family and home background, educational history, and literacy practices. The **Questionnaire** collects critical information about each student, including variables such as age upon arrival, mobility, and years of schooling at the time of identification into a US English language school system.
- **The Multilingual Literacy SIFE Screener (MLS).** A statewide online diagnostic screener that reflects current literature-based curricula and didactic principles from students' home countries for grades 3 – 9; schools will use the MLS to determine the literacy levels of SIFE in their home language in order to provide or to design appropriate placement and instruction for these students.
- **The Writing Screener.** This document will identify students' basic writing skills to assist with the screening of potential SIFE.
- **The SIFE English as a New Language (ENL) and Foundational Low Literacy Curriculum.** This curriculum will help educators attend to the needs of SIFE who are at a 3rd grade level or below in home language literacy, but are currently placed in secondary (middle and high) schools where the instructional gap becomes greater; this curriculum is one of several possible models. We encourage districts with a SIFE population to implement the SIFE ENL and Foundational Low Literacy Curriculum because it offers a rigorous and accelerated framework aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and provide students with the content, language, and literacy necessary for achieving academic progress and success.

These resources are available in English (for teachers' reference only) and in the top nine languages found to be spoken by the SIFE in New York State: Bengali, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Spanish, Arabic, Urdu, S'gaw Karen, and Maay-Maay.

All four SIFE documents mentioned above can be accessed through the following link:
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/bilinged/SIFE.html>

If you have any questions, please contact Juan D. Vargas at the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL) at 718-722-2445 or juan.vargas@nysed.gov, or write to us at obewl@nysed.gov

For additional technical assistance and professional development, you can contact your Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN) which can be found at:
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/bilinged/betac.html>

A webinar addressing SIFE identification and the use of the MLS will be held on Wednesday, October 5th from 2:00 to 3:15. Information on how to participate in this webinar will be posted on our website by September 30th: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/bilinged/SIFE.html>