

**IDENTIFICATION PROCESS OF STUDENTS WITH INTERRUPTED FORMAL
EDUCATION (SIFE)**

Introduction

Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) are a subgroup of English Learners (ELs). The scope and content of the formal education experiences of SIFEs are significantly different from most ELs, because of their limited or lack of exposure to both their native and English language school systems.

SIFEs are English learners who:

- Come from a home in which a language other than English is spoken;
- Entered a school in the United States after grade 2;
- Has had at least two years less schooling than their peers;
- May function at least two years below expected grade level in reading and mathematics;
- May be preliterate in their native language;
- May not have school records;
- Have little or no oral proficiency in English.

General Identification Process of English Learners (ELs)

Step 1	Administer a Home Language Survey to determine language(s) spoken in the student's home
Step 2	Administer the English proficiency test (WIDA) to determine English proficiency level
Step 3	Determine which language program will best address their academic needs (English as a Second Language (ESL) and/or bilingual)
Step 4	Notify parents for the reasons for the identification
Step 5	Identify the academic needs of students based on SIFE criteria and develop and instructional plan that meets their needs

In addition to the steps described above, schools should implement the following procedure to ensure that SIFEs students are correctly identified and receive supportive instructional services:

- Conduct an interview with parents to be familiar with student's:
 - cultural background
 - prior schooling experiences
- Review student's prior school records (if available)

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- Use other district diagnostic tests to determine SIFEs' level of language and literacy development in the home language.

Providing School and Classroom Support to SIFE

- Build supportive environments that respond to the immediate social, cultural, and linguistic needs of students.
- Increase sheltered instruction - English instruction that is modified so that subject matter is more comprehensible to students with limited vocabularies.
- Teach students learning strategies that they can use daily in all content areas (how to recognize cognates, looking for the heading of a chapter in pre-reading exercises, using a dictionary, or how to take effective notes, etc.).
- Recognize and encourage students' prior knowledge in the classroom.
- Use community resources to support immigrant students' acculturation process.
- Provide a print rich environment in both English and student's native language.
- Engage students in hands-on-learning, so students are physically involved.
- Be mindful of the new vocabulary ELs are exposed to in order not to overwhelm them.
- When assessing understanding, be open-minded. Provide multiple opportunities to demonstrate understanding (instead of writing: point, explain, act out, discuss, defend, draw, compare, predict, etc.).
- Allow students to work in cooperative groups in order to learn from each other.
- Keep high, but realistic, expectations throughout the year.

Reference

- www.wida.us/get.aspx?id=848
- <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/docs/NYSEDSIFEGuidelines.pdf>
- <http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/27483/>