ENGAGING, SUPPORTING, AND SCAFFOLDING INSTRUCTION FOR
STUDENTS WITH LIMITED OR INTERRUPTED FORMAL EDUCATION (SLIFE)

by

Frances Christensen

A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English as a Second Language

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Advisor: Laura Halldin
Content Reviewer: Linnea Hempel de Valdez
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**Project Overview**

This project was created to help fill a gap in teacher preparation for working with secondary English learners (ELs) who have had limited or interrupted schooling experiences. As I began my teaching career as a high school English as a second language teacher in U.S. public schools, I quickly discovered that neither I, nor a significant number of my teacher colleagues, had received training or preparation in how to work with ELs with limited or interrupted formal education. This led me to formulate my research question: *How can English learners with limited or interrupted formal education best be supported at the secondary level?* As I began to research the topic of best practices for this student population, commonly referred to as *students with interrupted or formal education* or SLIFE, I quickly discovered a common theme: many researchers of SLIFE have found that teachers need more training, tools, and appropriate curriculum for working with students with limited or interrupted formal education (DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2009; Freeman & Freeman, 2002; Hos, 2011; Montero, Newmaster, & Ledger, 2014). Research by DeCapua, Smathers, and Tang (2009) and Montero, Newmaster, and Ledger (2014) highlights that, while there are many best practices for working with English learners, these practices tend to assume that students are coming to school with a formal schooling background and literacy in their first language. Montero, Newmaster, and Ledger (2014) argue that most secondary teachers are not prepared to meet the literacy needs of adolescent SLIFE. According to DeCapua, Smathers, and Tang (2009), SLIFE are often placed with other ELs or in mainstream content classes according to the grade that corresponds with their age. This leads to a
situation where SLIFE are not receiving the specialized instruction they need, and their teachers lack the preparation needed for providing effective instruction (DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2009). This project is designed to help fill the gap in teacher preparation.

The audience for this project is middle and high school teachers, administrators, and staff who work in schools with students who fall into the SLIFE designation, including counselors, school nurses, school psychologists and classroom paraprofessionals. The goal of this project is to help secondary educators, administrators, and school staff learn the unique needs of SLIFE and how to best support these students both in and out of the classroom.

This project is designed as a two-session professional development series designed to be delivered to staff at the start of the school year or during professional development days during the school year. The first session is one hour long, and the second session is an hour and a half. Both sessions are PowerPoint presentations accompanied by activities, handouts, and resources that can be utilized by teachers and staff.

The first session is intended as an overview for all staff and focuses on general attributes, needs, and strengths of students with limited or interrupted formal education, both within the classroom and within the school. In addition, session one outlines a process for gathering information about new English learners to determine if they may be SLIFE, and provides a framework for considering the programming needs of SLIFE. The first session begins by introducing staff to the profiles of two very different students with limited or interrupted formal education, followed by a group examination of their
strengths and needs. The first session covers how to interview students and families in order to 1) determine if a student is SLIFE and 2) build a student portrait that allows teachers and staff to better understand a student’s academic, linguistic, and socio-emotional needs. Interview handouts for both student interviews and parent/guardian interviews are included. The first session also includes guidelines for considering the programming needs of SLIFE.

The second professional development session is intended for those who teach SLIFE within the classroom and those who supervise classroom teachers. Session two is designed to help classroom teachers and paraprofessionals consider the strengths and pragmatic knowledge that students with limited or interrupted formal education bring to the classroom, as well as strategies for building academic and language skills upon that foundation. Session two includes an introduction to and overview of the Mutually Adapted Learning Paradigm (MALP) developed by DeCapua and Marshall (2011a), which assists teachers in planning lessons that are appropriate for SLIFE. The MALP framework serves to help teachers create a bridge from the knowledge and background students bring with them to the academic expectations of U.S. classrooms. The overview of the MALP framework in session two is intended to assist teachers of SLIFE in understanding that conditions for learning should include a welcoming and supportive environment where students feel a sense of immediate relevance and interconnectedness; that there is a combined processes for learning that includes utilizing oral transmission and shared responsibility to create a bridge toward literacy and individual responsibility; and how to create activities for learning that include teaching SLIFE the expectations of school and academic assignments using familiar language and content before moving on
to introducing new language and content (DeCapua, 2016b). Session two also helps classroom teachers understand the importance of using oral language development as a bridge to literacy and introduces them to the RISA Oral Interaction protocol developed by Watson (2017). During session two, attendees will be provided with a list of resources for learning more about supporting and teaching SLIFE.

Due to the limited time that most districts provide for professional development for teachers and staff, this professional development series is limited in scope to providing general overviews, basic tools and strategies, and resources for staff who would like to further explore the topic of supporting students with limited or interrupted formal education.
Welcome everyone! Today we will be taking a look at serving English learners (ELs) with limited or interrupted formal education—EL students who come to us at the secondary level, but who may not have had the academic preparation or prior schooling experiences that one might expect from a student entering middle or high school in the United States. We’ll take a look at who these students are and what they need. This session will last one hour.
Today’s session is intended for the whole school staff. The goal of this session is to help all members of the school community understand the unique needs of this population of students.
By the end of today’s session, my hope is that you will be able to answer the following:

- **Who are SLIFE and what are some of their unique attributes?**
- **What are the strengths and needs of students who are SLIFE?**
- **How do I identify students who may be SLIFE?**

First we’ll start with a warm-up activity taking a look at some students who are SLIFE, then we will take a look at definitions and statistics. After that, we will talk about how to identify SLIFE and how to generally support these students in school. There will be a second session specifically for classroom teachers scheduled on another day. That session will specifically cover instructional approaches and strategies for teaching SLIFE.
WARM-UP: STUDENT PROFILES

1. READ the profile at your table.
2. THINK:
   • What would this student need when they come to our school?
   • What strengths do they bring with them?
3. WRITE your key ideas on the T-chart.
4. DISCUSS your thoughts with your tablemates.
5. SHARE: Elect a spokesperson to share with the whole group.

You will have 5 minutes

Today, we’ll begin with a warm-up activity to help us start thinking as a group about this unique segment of our student population. Each table has a profile of either Adan or Beatriz. [Read directions from the slide to the group, and set a timer for 5 minutes.]
STUDENT PROFILE: Adan

Adan is a refugee originally from Somalia. When he was 5 years old, his family was settled by a refugee agency in Cairo, Egypt. Due to various barriers, both social and political, Adan did not attend a traditional public school in Cairo, but attended three years of Islamic school where he studied the Qur’an (Koran) in Arabic. Adan spent much of his youth working odd jobs until his family was resettled to the United States. He was enrolled in an American high school and placed in 9th grade based on his age. Adan speaks Somali and Arabic. He does not read or write in Somali. He can read and write simple words and phrases in Arabic. He speaks some English but does not read or write in English. His math skills are at the first grade level. He has a very outgoing personality and reports liking the social aspects of school. He also reports that he does not like reading or homework.

STUDENT PROFILE: Beatriz

Beatriz was born in the U.S. but grew up in a small, remote community in Mexico. She attended school continuously from Kindergarten through 6th grade, however, the school day and school year were shorter than in the U.S. and her school did not have the resources it needed, including a stable teaching staff. Beatriz’ community does not have a school that extends beyond 6th grade, and her family could not afford to send her to secondary school in another community in Mexico. Beatriz was sent to live with relatives in the U.S. in order to continue her education. Based on her age, she is enrolled in 6th grade. Diagnostic assessments show that Beatriz reads and writes in Spanish, but is well below grade level. Beatriz has basic math skills equivalent to the 2nd grade level in the U.S. Beatriz’ family is surprised to discover that her skills are below grade level, since she did not have any interruptions to her education. Beatriz does not speak English and is a beginning English learner. She reports liking school and liking to learn.
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<th>Strengths</th>
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First, let’s take a look at Adan’s profile. [Read profile aloud.] For those who had this profile, what are some strengths and needs you identified? [Record responses on the T-chart on the next slide, or on a whiteboard or easel paper.]

Limited Schooling Profile: Adan, 15-year old boy from Somalia

Adan is a refugee originally from Somalia. When he was 5 years old, his family was settled by a refugee agency in Cairo, Egypt. Due to various barriers, both social and political, Adan did not attend a traditional public school in Cairo, but attended three years of Islamic school where he studied the Qur’an (Koran) in Arabic. Adan spent much of his youth working odd jobs until his family was resettled in the United States. He was enrolled in an American high school and placed in 9th grade based on his age. Adan speaks Somali and Arabic. He does not read or write in Somali. He can read and write simple words and phrases in Arabic. He speaks some English but does not read or write in English. His math skills are at the first grade level. He has a very outgoing personality and reports liking the social aspects of school. He also reports that he does not like reading or homework.
Let’s take a look at Adan’s profile [Read profile aloud]. For those who had this profile, what are some strengths and needs you identified? [Record responses on the T-chart]
Limited Schooling Profile: Beatriz, 12-year old girl from Mexico

Beatriz was born in the U.S. but grew up in a small, remote community in Mexico. She attended school continuously from Kindergarten through 6th grade, however, the school day and school year were shorter than in the U.S. and her school did not have the resources it needed, including a stable teaching staff. Beatriz’ community does not have a school that extends beyond 6th grade, and her family could not afford to send her to secondary school in another community in Mexico. Beatriz was sent to live with relatives in the U.S in order to continue her education. Based on her age, she is enrolled in 6th grade. Diagnostic assessments show that Beatriz reads and writes in Spanish, but is well below grade level. Beatriz has basic math skills equivalent to the 2nd grade level in the U.S. Beatriz’ family is surprised to discover that her skills are below grade level, since she did not have any interruptions to her education. Beatriz does not speak English and is a beginning English learner. She reports liking school and liking to learn.

Next, let’s take a look at Beatriz’s profile. [Read profile aloud.] For those who had this profile, what are some strengths and needs you identified? [Record responses on the T-chart on the next slide, or on a whiteboard or easel paper.]
Let’s take a look at Beatriz’s profile. [Read profile aloud.] For those who had this profile, what are some strengths and needs you identified? [Record responses on the T-chart.]
Now that we have taken a look at two students with limited formal schooling, let’s look at a definition for students with limited or interrupted formal education. [Review slide.] Adan and Beatriz are two very different students with very different educational backgrounds. However, both are examples of students with limited or interrupted formal education. Adan’s education has been limited by access to school. Beatriz’ education had been limited by access to a robust academic curriculum with appropriate resources. One key difference, as we noted in our discussion, is that Beatriz has familiarity with the routines of school, while Adan may not.

In a moment, we’ll take a look at general strengths and needs that many SLIFE have in common. But, first, let’s take a look at some statistics and causes for students having limited access to education. As we work through the material today, continue to add to your notes about Adan and Beatriz.

Sources: Custodio and O’Loughlin (2017); DeCapua, Smathers, and Tang (2009); Focus on SLIFE (2015); Freeman and Freeman (2002)
Here are a couple of key statistics about SLIFE. To begin, research indicates that 10-20% of English learners have interrupted schooling (Custodio & O’Loughlin, 2017). According to Fry (2005), the drop out rate for recent immigrants with interrupted schooling is 70%. Given this staggering statistic for students with limited or interrupted formal education, it is essential that 100% of SLIFE receive programming and curricula appropriate for their needs. The needs of SLIFE can differ considerably from the needs of other English learners. We will talk about those needs and how to meet them, today. (Custodio & O’Loughlin, 2017; DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2009).
You may be wondering how students end up with no access to education or significant gaps in their education. Causes of limited or interrupted formal education are varied. Let’s take a look at some of the reasons students may have experienced limited schooling (Custodio & O’Loughlin, 2017; DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2009; Focus on SLIFE, 2015; Freeman & Freeman, 2002). Now that we have considered some of the causes of limited or interrupted formal education, let’s take another look at strengths and needs.
Here are some general patterns of strengths and needs for students with limited or interrupted formal education. First, let’s take a look at strengths. Students with limited or interrupted formal education come to school with many strengths. They have demonstrated resilience and perseverance to overcome extreme challenges in their lives, often have strong bonds with their families and communities, are often able to communicate in more than one language, and have practical skills that have gotten them through to where they are now. All of these together can be referred to as “funds of knowledge,” a term coined by Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992). [Go to next slide.]

Sources: Custodio and O’Loughlin (2017); DeCapua, Smathers, and Tang (2009); Focus on SLIFE (2015); Freeman and Freeman (2002); Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992)
“Funds of knowledge” is a term created by Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992), which recognizes that there are ways of knowing and pragmatic knowledge that students bring with them, even if they have not previously attended school. While it is critical to attend to what students need, it is also important to recognize and utilize the knowledge that students already possess. Students with limited formal schooling have still learned much in their lives, but this knowledge tends to be practical and immediately relevant. The ways in which SLIFE have gained knowledge may come into sharp contrast with Western-style education which focuses on abstract, academic knowledge primarily gained through reading and writing (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011a). It is important to not only recognize students’ “funds of knowledge” but also to use those funds as a foundation to build upon (Focus on SLIFE, 2015).
There are many sources of knowledge that SLIFE may have (Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez, 1992, p.133). Let’s discuss a few examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farming and Ranching</th>
<th>Household Management</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animal husbandry</td>
<td>Cooking and cleaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crops, soils and irrigation</td>
<td>Budgeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equipment operation and repair</td>
<td>Childcare and eldercare</td>
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<th>Business &amp; Economics</th>
<th>Medicine</th>
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<tr>
<td>Buying and selling</td>
<td>First aid procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting and inventory</td>
<td>Midwifery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer service</td>
<td>Knowledge of herbs and anatomy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What are some other examples of funds of knowledge you can think of? Turn and talk with one or more of your tablemates.
(Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez, 1992, p.133)
Now, let’s take a look at “needs.” Students with limited and interrupted formal education do have intense needs. Whether it is a student fleeing violence in Central America and risking their life to migrate to the United States, or a student who has fled war and lived in a refugee camp for years, SLIFE often have very intense socio-emotional needs and may need access to resources to help them cope. Students need an orientation to how U.S. schools and grading work. Students need focused literacy instruction and academic skill development. Students need to build background knowledge. Finally, integration of language and content in both the ESL classroom and the general education classroom is critical.

Sources: Custodio and O’Loughlin (2017); DeCapua, Smathers, and Tang (2009); Focus on SLIFE (2015); Freeman and Freeman (2002); Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992).
How can we begin to find out what the specific needs of each student are? Family and student interviews are a great way to begin building a portrait of a student. [Hand out family and student interview handouts.] Family and student interviews help us to gather the information we need to 1) determine if a student is SLIFE and 2) gain insight into the specific needs of a student. (Custodio & O’Loughlin, 2017; DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2009)
Parent/Guardian Interview Tool – Student Education History
(Interview to be conducted in home language by school personnel and interpreter. School Personnel takes notes.)

Name of Student ________________________________  Age of Student ________________

Name of parent/guardian _____________________________________________________________

Relationship to the student ___________________________ Date completed ______________

What is your child’s home country?

At what age did the child leave the home country?

What countries has your child lived in before coming to the United States?

Has your child been in a refugee camp?

Has your child been separated from family members? For how long?

**LANGUAGE BACKGROUND**

What language or languages are spoken in the home?

What language does your child use most frequently at home?

Which language did your child speak first?

Does your child read or write in any language? Which languages?
SCHOOLING BACKGROUND

At what age did your child begin school?

Where and when did your child attend school?

Was the school located in a rural or urban area?

What was the school schedule? (Days per week; school start and end times)

How many days a week and hours per day did your child attend school?

What language did the teachers provide instruction in?

Which subjects did your child study? How many days/hours per week for each subject?

Were textbooks used? Did your child have a copy of the textbook?

How many years of school has your child completed?

What was the last year of schooling for your child?

Has your child studied English? For how long? Where?

Do you have educational records from your child’s previous schools?
Has your child attended other schools in the United States?

When your child was not in school, how did they spend their time?

HOME LITERACY

Which family members living with the student read and write? In which languages do they read and write?

Are there reading materials in the home? What type? (Newspaper, books, magazines) In which language are the reading materials?

EDUCATION EXPECTATIONS

What are your expectations for the education of your child?

What would you like the school and teachers to know about your child?
Adapted from the following resources:

*Sample Questions for Parents/Guardians for Initial Assessment of Prior Educational Experiences*,

DeCapua, A., Smathers, W., & Tang, L. F. (2009), page 12.

Student Interview Questions – Background & Education History
(Interview of student to be conducted in home language by school personnel and interpreter)

Student Name ___________________________________________________________  Age ______________________

Date of interview _______________

What is your home country?

At what age did you leave your home country?

What countries have you lived in before coming to the United States?

**LANGUAGE BACKGROUND**

What languages do you speak?

Which language did you learn to speak first?

What language do you use most frequently at home right now?

Do you read or write in any language? Which languages?

**SCHOOLING BACKGROUND**

At what age did you begin school?

Where and when did you go school?

Was the school located in a rural or urban area?
What was the school schedule? (Days per week; school start and end times)

How many days a week and hours per day did you attend school?

What were you doing when not in school?

What language did the teachers provide instruction in?

Which subjects did you study? How many days/hours per week for each subject?

Were textbooks used? Did you have a copy of the textbook?

How many years of school have you completed?

What was the last year that you attended school?

Have you attended other schools in the United States?

Have you ever studied English? When? Where? For how long?

FAMILY BACKGROUND/ HOME LITERACY

Who do you live with?

Which family members that you live with read and write? In which languages do they read and write?
Are there reading materials at home? What type? (Newspaper, books, magazines) In which language are the reading materials?

Have you been separated from any family members? Who? For how long?

Have you ever been in a refugee camp?

**EDUCATION EXPECTATIONS**

What are your expectations for your own education?

What would you like the school and teachers to know about you?

What are two things you are really good at?
Adapted from the following resources:


Who conducts the family and student interviews? It depends. Interviews should be conducted early on to ensure students receive the support and programming that they need. Ideally, the interviews would take place when a student is enrolled. If not, a teacher or other school staff member can interview students and family at any time. Interviews should be conducted in the home language of the family.

Sources: Custodio and O’Loughlin (2017); DeCapua, Smathers, and Tang (2009); Focus on SLIFE (2015); Freeman and Freeman (2002)
Students who are SLIFE are typically squeezed into pre-existing programming that is not designed for their needs (DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2009). Let’s take a look at programming adjustments that can help support SLIFE. [Review list.]

Sources: Custodio and O’Loughlin (2017); DeCapua, Smathers, and Tang (2009); Focus on SLIFE (2015); Freeman and Freeman (2002)
Extended Learning Opportunities

Additional time and support to fill in gaps in knowledge is essential:

- Extended school year or summer program
- Saturday programming
- Extended school day:
  - homework help
  - after-school tutoring
  - additional intervention time

Having extended time for learning is essential. SLIFE typically have large gaps in both content knowledge and literacy and will need extra instructional time to help them catch up.

Sources: Custodio and O’Loughlin (2017); DeCapua, Smathers, and Tang (2009); Focus on SLIFE (2015); Freeman and Freeman (2002)
Cultural awareness and sensitivity when teaching SLIFE is highly important. Sensitive topics such as war, immigration, or natural disasters could bring up traumatic memories. SLIFE will also need to be explicitly taught the routines of school. It’s important not to assume they know what’s expected in a U.S. school setting. It’s also important to consider what might be culturally appropriate for SLIFE. In some cultures, making eye contact with figures of authority is considered rude or insubordinate.

Sources: Custodio and O’Loughlin (2017); DeCapua, Smathers, and Tang (2009); Focus on SLIFE (2015); Freeman and Freeman (2002)
As with any secondary students, it is essential to get to know your students. It is doubly important for SLIFE. While you never want to pressure students to talk about anything that makes them uncomfortable, it is important to build positive relationships with students so that they feel welcomed, safe, and supported (DeCapua, 2016b; Focus on SLIFE, 2015).

Consider the Whole Child

- What difficult circumstances has the student experienced?
- What are their needs?
  - emotional
  - psychological
  - physical
Secondary SLIFE and their families need support in making the transition to the expectations of Western-style education. Students and families will need support in learning about all aspects of school, including arrival and departure expectations, attendance expectations and procedures, grading and homework, norms for communication between school and home, and extracurricular activities. It is important to inform students and families about after-school programs and extracurricular activities, which can serve as a great way for SLIFE to meet native English speaking classmates and access additional resources such as homework help. Extracurricular activities are also important “resume builders” for secondary students.

Sources: Focus on SLIFE (2015)
Welcoming and including families is highly important for SLIFE. It fosters a school culture of inclusion, and it helps to increase engagement of students (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011a). When students feel that their culture is accepted and validated by the school, they will be much more engaged. Inviting families into the classroom or to be involved in school events is another important inclusive practice that promotes student engagement. According to DeCapua, Smathers, and Tang (2009), some families may at first feel uncomfortable coming to school, because they may see school as solely the domain of teachers. Additionally, family members may lack transportation or work long hours. Recommendations for drawing families in include repeated personal invitations and providing food, transportation, and childcare (DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2009).

Sources: Custodio and O’Loughlin (2017); DeCapua, Smathers, and Tang (2009); Focus on SLIFE (2015); Freeman and Freeman (2002)
Inform and Involve Families

- Inform families of school routines and homework expectations
- Discuss developing routines at home:
  ✓ Does the student have a consistent bed time and wake time?
  ✓ Does the student have a consistent homework routine?
  ✓ Are there limits on screen time and devices?
- Encourage families to ask questions

I have had many parents of ELs and SLIFE share with me that they feel like they cannot help their children at home for reasons such as not knowing English or not having a strong education background themselves. It is empowering for parents to learn that they can support their students in many ways, even if they are unable to help them understand a text or solve a math problem. One strategy that has worked well for some families I have worked with is creating consistent sleep and wake times, creating a consistent homework routine and limiting screen time. Parents and guardians can also be encouraged to ask their students questions about their school day and ask them to share what they are learning.
Foster Partnerships

- Hospitals/Clinics: connect students/families with medical/dental care
- Lion’s Club: vision screening and glasses
- Library/Parks & Rec: homework help, enrichment activities
- Cultural or religious community leader
  - ✓ community connections
  - ✓ build cultural competency

Fostering partnerships with the community and community organizations is an important strategy for supporting the many needs of SLIFE. Source: Focus on SLIFE (2015)
Grading secondary SLIFE can be challenging in the face of state standards and grade level content. As SLIFE work to build literacy and language skills, as well as content knowledge, using growth portfolios are a great option for their first year. Source: Focus on SLIFE (2015)
Key Ideas – Session 1

- Conduct interviews
- Appropriate Programming
- Recognize Funds of Knowledge
- Teach the Whole Child
- Family Communication & Involvement
- Form Partnerships

Sources: Custodio and O’Loughlin (2017); DeCapua, Smathers, and Tang (2009); Focus on SLIFE (2015); Freeman and Freeman (2002)
Turn & Talk: Next Step

What is one concept related to SLIFE that you can incorporate into your practice starting now?
Reflection Form

How have your ideas about SLIFE changed from the start of the training?

[End of Session 1]

Please take a moment to complete the reflection form on your table and turn in at the front of the room. Thank you!
<table>
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<th>Session One Reflection</th>
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<td>How have your ideas about SLIFE changed from the start of the training?</td>
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SLIFE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSION TWO (Duration 1.5 hours):
Welcome everyone! Today we will be taking a look at serving English learners with limited or interrupted formal education—EL students who come to us at the secondary level, but who may not have had the academic preparation or prior schooling experiences that one might expect from a student entering middle or high school in the United States. Today, we’ll be taking a closer look at some common characteristics often shared by SLIFE, and some approaches for supporting these students in the classroom. Today’s session will be an hour and a half long.
The previous session was an introduction to students with limited or interrupted formal education, referred to as SLIFE, and was designed to provide an overview to all school staff. In this second session, we will focus on strategies for serving students within the classroom.
By the end of today’s session, I hope you will:

- Have a deeper understanding of the academic, literacy, and language needs of SLIFE
- Learn strategies and approaches for scaffolding instruction and supporting students
- Understand the importance of oral language development
- Understand differences in learning paradigms between SLIFE and U.S. public schools.
To begin, let’s think back to the student profiles from last session—Adan and Beatriz. They both came from very different circumstances but shared some similar needs. The academic demands on secondary English learners who are SLIFE are huge. English learners with a strong academic background and strong literacy skills can apply those skills and knowledge when learning English. For SLIFE, however, they have the added burden of filling gaps in literacy, numeracy, and content knowledge. And, they may be unaccustomed to some academic ways of thinking, for example synthesizing and evaluating. This all means that SLIFE need instruction targeted to their specific needs.

Sources: Custodio and O’Loughlin (2017); DeCapua, Smathers, and Tang (2009); Focus on SLIFE (2015); Freeman and Freeman (2002)
The first step is to meet students where they are. SLIFE have a long road and will need support filling gaps and building literacy and numeracy and well as building academic language and content knowledge (DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2009).
According to Meyer (2000), there are four primary barriers to meaningful instruction that teachers of English learners must be skilled at addressing and lowering: “cognitive load, culture load, language load, and learning load” (p. 1). For students whose knowledge on a topic is limited, the cognitive load will be the highest. Meyer defines cognitive load as “the number of new concepts embedded in a lesson or text” (Meyer, 2000, p.1). For students whose language proficiency is lower, the language load will be higher (Meyer, 2000). Newcomer students who lack consistent formal schooling face the greatest learning load of all as they face both heavy cognitive and language loads. This is compounded at the secondary level. Establishing routines can help reduce some of the load, as learners come to know what to expect over the course of a class period, day or week. Examples of routines include, daily warm-ups, weekly circles, and classroom protocols for submitting homework, or going to the restroom. Taken a step further, routine can be a very powerful scaffold when teachers create a daily and weekly schedule that is followed with fidelity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive Load</th>
<th>Language Load</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How many new concepts are</td>
<td>What is the complexity of the language used?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>embedded in a lesson or text?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What vocabulary does a student need to know to understand?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture Load</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What cultural assumptions are</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>embedded in the lesson or text?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What background knowledge is</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>needed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Load</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much are you asking students to master/complete at a given time?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will students have multiple chances to practice?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examine an Excerpt

1. Read the excerpt from *The Great Kapok Tree* on your table.

2. Think: What is...
   - a) the cognitive load of the excerpt?
   - b) the cultural load?
   - c) the linguistic load?

3. How would you approach reducing each of these loads?

4. Discuss your ideas with someone at another table.

Let’s take a look at an excerpt from a book that can be used with students with limited and interrupted formal education, “The Great Kapok Tree.” Read the excerpt and think about what the cognitive, cultural and linguistic loads embedded in this text might be for a new-to-country beginning level English learner with a limited schooling background. How would you approach reducing some of the loads? I will set a timer. When the timer is up, find a person at another table with whom to share your thoughts.


DeCapua, Smathers, and Tang (2009); Meyer (2000)
Excerpt from *The Great Kapok Tree* by Lynn Cherry:

Boa: Señor, this tree is a tree of miracles. It is my home, where generations of my ancestors have lived. Do not chop it down.

Narrator: A butterfly flew near the sleeping man’s ear.

Butterflies: Señor, our home is in this Kapok tree, and we fly from tree to tree and flower to flower collecting pollen. In this way we pollinate the trees and flowers throughout the rain forest. You see, all living things depend on one another.

Narrator: A troupe of monkeys scampered down from the canopy of the Kapok tree. They chattered to the sleeping man.

Monkey: Señor, we have seen the ways of man. You chop down one tree, then come back for another and another. The roots of these great trees will wither and die, and there will be nothing left to hold the earth in place. When the heavy rains come, the soil will be washed away and the forest will become a desert.

Narrator: A toucan flew down from the canopy.

Toucan: Señor! You must not cut down this tree. We have flown over the rain forest and seen what happens once you begin to chop down the trees. Many people settle on the land. They set fire to clear the underbrush, and soon the forest disappears. Where once there was life and beauty only black and smoldering ruins remain.

As you can see, when we take a closer look at the learning load embedded within lessons or texts, there is more than meets the eye. Another way to reduce the cognitive load for students is to establish and maintain consistent routines in the classroom. Research shows that having clear routines in place reduces the stress and cognitive load for students, especially when implemented and followed with fidelity (Meyer, 2000; Saroub, Parnicek, & Sweeney, 2007; Zimmerman-Orozco, 2015). Routines can range from logistics, such as what students should do at the start and end of each class or going to the bathroom, to routines that relate to content, such as keeping a reader’s notebook or personal dictionary.
Establishing Routines

- **Consistent** daily and weekly routines (e.g., daily warm-up routine)
- Explicitly teach routines of school and classroom:
  - ✓ starting/ending class routines
  - ✓ turning in homework routine
  - ✓ group work routines
- Model routines
- Provide repeated opportunities to practice routines

Keys features of effective routines include consistency, teaching the routines to students, and allowing many opportunities for students to practice (Meyer, 2000; Saroub, Parnicek, & Sweeney, 2007; Zimmerman-Orozco, 2015).

What are some routines you already have in place? How did you teach them to students?
### Idea Wall: Routines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are some routines you already have in your classroom?</th>
<th>What are some routines you would like to establish?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Write your routine ideas on post-it notes and add to the chart paper.

What are some routines that you already use in your classroom? What are some routines you would like to establish? Write each routine idea on a post-it note and add to the chart paper on the wall in the appropriate column. If you see another person has written the same routine, add your post-it note next to or on top of theirs.

[After everyone has finished] Now, let’s take a look at the general trends. [Discuss routine trends and ideas].

For those of you who shared routines that you are already using, how did you teach those routines to students?
Understandably, secondary teachers often assume that a student will come to them with a base of literacy skills. That is often not the case with SLIFE. What’s more, curricula for ELs are typically written assuming that students have a certain level of literacy. Next, we’ll talk about the literacy needs of SLIFE and the connection of oral language development to literacy (DeCapua, 2016b; DeCapua & Marshall, 2010; Freeman & Freeman, 2002).

Slide template credit: “Kent” PowerPoint slides template created by SlidesCarnival at www.slidescarnival.com
Due to interruptions and/or limitations in their formal education, SLIFE arrive to U.S. middle and high schools with varying levels of literacy. DeCapua, Smathers, and Tang (2009) break SLIFE literacy levels into the following categories. [Go over categories.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-literate</th>
<th>Semi-literate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students that speak a language that does not have a written form</td>
<td>Students who read at a low level in their home language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-literate</td>
<td>Non-alphabet literate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students whose language is written but they have yet to learn to read it</td>
<td>Students whose home language does not use the Roman Alphabet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2009, p. 21)

These four categories show the broad range of literacy needs that SLIFE students may have. Providing secondary SLIFE with literacy interventions is crucial.
Secondary SLIFE Need Literacy Interventions

- **Phonological awareness**: Learning to associate letters with particular sounds. Learning how syllables, words, and phrases are represented in print.

- **Phonemic awareness**: Understanding that words are made up of individual sounds that can be combined to make words.

- **Phonics**: Learn basic phonics patterns

As emergent readers, secondary SLIFE will typically need support in developing literacy skills similar to primary level emergent readers. Literacy skills that SLIFE need to develop include phonological awareness (learning to associate letters with sounds and how sounds are represented in print) and phonemic awareness (the idea that words are made up of individual sounds). SLIFE can also benefit greatly from phonics instruction (DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang 2009).
Building vocabulary is another key for literacy development for secondary SLIFE. They will need support in building their knowledge of everything from sight words to grade level content vocabulary (DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2009). Explicit instruction of vocabulary is key for all ELs, especially SLIFE. Providing visuals and repeated opportunities for authentic use of new vocabulary is essential.
According to research, second language (L2) oral language development is a significant component of developing second language literacy. (August 2006; Pollard-Durodola, Mathes, & Vaughn, 2006; Snow 1998; Snow & Strucker, 1999). For SLIFE, who typically come from cultures with strong oral traditions, it is doubly important because it builds on the strengths of their orality (Watson, 2017).
Here are some scaffolds that help support second language oral language development for SLIFE (DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2009). According to Constantino (1993), it is important to provide regular opportunities for authentic language use. According to Watson (2017), students need repeated exposure to vocabulary and academic language. Teachers should model how to use academic language and vocabulary.
Here are several activities for creating opportunities for authentic oral language. [review list]. During these activities, it is key to provide students with the academic language structures and academic vocabulary associated with each task. Teachers should also model the use of those language structures and vocabulary. Sources: DeCapua and Marshall (2011a); DeCapua, Smathers, and Tang (2009); Marshall and DeCapua (2013); Watson (2017).
Small group and cooperative learning are excellent methods to use with SLIFE. SLIFE typically come from collectivist cultural backgrounds where cooperation and the good of the group are emphasized over the actions or identity of the individual (Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988). This may come into conflict with the individualistic expectations of U.S. classrooms, where students are expected to complete their own work and where individual accountability is highly valued. In order to engage SLIFE effectively, classroom strategies should build upon the strengths of collectivism while introducing and scaffolding concepts of individual accountability. Through cooperative learning, there is an opportunity for shared responsibility AND individual accountability, bridging SLIFE and North American learning paradigms (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011a). Teachers should provide a clear structure for group work by assigning roles and explicitly teaching those roles through modeling. Students will need repeated opportunities to practice their roles in small group work.
Planning Groups Tasks

- 4 students is ideal (no more than 6)
- Clear structure for activity
- Assigned roles with clear responsibilities
- Step by step instructions with modeling and time to practice
- Scaffolds: graphic organizers, word banks, sentence stems, differentiated roles

Careful planning of group tasks will yield the greatest results. It is important to establish routines for group tasks and allow students many opportunities to practice routines and tasks (Fenner & Snyder, 2017).
An example of a robust approach for planning cooperative group tasks for oral language development is Dr. Jill Watson’s RISA Oral Interaction protocol. [Review slide.] Three of the key concepts in this approach are 1) integrating academic language and content 2) using content and vocabulary that students have already been introduced to and 3) providing multiple exposures and repeated opportunities for authentic practice.

5 minute break!

Questions? Write them on a post-it and place them on the Question Wall.

Slide template credit: “Kent” PowerPoint slides template created by SlidesCarnival at www.slidescarnival.com
In this last segment of the training, we’ll be examining two different learning paradigms—that which is typical of many SLIFE and that of Western-style schools.

Slide template credit: “Kent” PowerPoint slides template created by SlidesCarnival at www.slidescarnival.com
“Developing an understanding of the beliefs, values, norms, and ways of thinking and learning of students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) is central to effective instruction for this population... Teachers must develop the ability to suspend judgment by building deep cultural knowledge of SLIFE. This can then inform curriculum and pedagogical practices that best support SLIFE in their transition and adaption to formal education.”

Andrea DeCapua (2016a, p. 1)

I’d like to start by sharing this quote. [Read quote aloud] Take a moment to reflect on what DeCapua is saying. [Wait 30 seconds to 1 minute]. What stands out to you in this quote? [Call on folks who volunteer to share. Discuss.]

“Developing an understanding of the beliefs, values, norms, and ways of thinking and learning of students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) is central to effective instruction for this population...Teachers must develop the ability to suspend judgment by building deep cultural knowledge of SLIFE. This can then inform curriculum and pedagogical practices that best support SLIFE in their transition and adaption to formal education.”

Andrea DeCapua (2016a, p. 1)

Here are some of the segments that stood out to me, which I heard a lot of you share, as well.

Before we dive into looking at differing learning paradigms, let’s think a bit about assumptions in education.

As educators of SLIFE, it is important to consider the unconscious assumptions that we make about teaching and learning. [Review quotes.] Let’s imagine for a moment... [Read visualization]. How would you feel? Would it be uncomfortable? Disorienting?

Let’s consider some additional assumptions. There are many assumptions we make about what students know or should be able to do when they get to middle school or high school. Because SLIFE are typically placed in grades that correspond with their age alongside students with traditional formal education backgrounds, it’s important to think about what we are assuming students already know. What are some assumptions that you make?

Culturally Responsive Teaching

- is assets-based
- places the student at the center and meets them where they are
- values students’ languages, cultures and backgrounds
- challenges and supports students, simultaneously

The practice of Culturally Responsive Teaching can help educators reduce the number of assumptions made. Culturally Responsive Teaching can aid teachers in deepening their knowledge of students. Good teaching in and of itself does not lead to academic success (Hos, 2016). As teachers, we must connect to students’ lives and interests and explicitly connect content with students’ cultural backgrounds and lived experiences. Culturally Responsive Teaching is essential for working with SLIFE, whose educational, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds may differ significantly from that of their teachers (DeCapua, A. (2016a).

Culturally Responsive Teaching source: Fenner and Snyder (2017)
Let’s look at a very effective framework for planning instruction for SLIFE that is grounded in principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching: the Mutually Adapted Learning Paradigm, called MALP for short. [Review slide.]
Sources: DeCapua and Marshall (2011a); Marshal and DeCapua (2013)
According to DeCapua and Marshall (2011), the MALP instructional model places equal weight on language, content and culture.
Through the course of their work with SLIFE, Marshall and DeCapua (2013) have developed and presented the idea of differing learning paradigms between SLIFE and Western-style schools. Let’s take a look. [Review slide.]


While it’s easy to think of the two paradigms as a dichotomy, Marshall and DeCapua (2013) argue that it is more appropriate to think of the differences as falling on a continuum. [Review slide.]

Let’s take a deeper look at “components of learning” found in the two paradigms, as conceived by Marshall and DeCapua (2013). [Review slide and discuss differences in paradigms.]

Based on their research and direct teaching experience with students who are SLIFE, DeCapua and Marshall have created the Mutually Adapted Learning Paradigm which serves to help teachers bridge the divide between the SLIFE learning paradigm and North American formal education. [Review elements on slide.]

DeCapua and Marshall (2011a) have created a teacher planning checklist that helps teachers reflect on how they’ve planned their lessons to help ensure that they are accessible to SLIFE. In the next several slides, we’ll take a look at the components of this checklist.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm® – MALP® Teacher Planning Checklist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Accept Conditions for Learning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1. I am making this lesson/project immediately relevant to my students. Explain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2. I am helping students develop and maintain interconnectedness. Explain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B. Combine Processes for Learning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1. I am incorporating both shared responsibility and individual accountability. Explain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2. I am scaffolding the written word through oral interaction. Explain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C. Focus on New Activities for Learning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1. I am focusing on tasks requiring academic ways of thinking. Explain.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The MALP checklist can be downloaded from malpeducation.com
A. Accept Student Conditions For Learning  

(DeCapua & Marshall, 2011a, p. 68)

1. Ensure immediate relevance
2. Ensure interconnectedness

According to DeCapua and Marshall (2011a), successful teachers of SLIFE will accept students’ conditions for learning by creating a welcoming and supportive environment where students feel a sense of immediate relevance and interconnectedness. Lessons should be relevant to students’ lives and teachers should connect with students by actively getting to know them, building relationships, and building community in the classroom.

Examples:
Bridging Immediate and Future Relevance

- Draw material from students’ lives and apply it to subject areas
- Explicitly connect students’ lived experiences with content

Example 1: Have students bring in folktales they grew up with instead of teacher selecting one. Design lesson using the student-contributed folktale.

Example 2: Have students draw and label a map of their own or a family member’s migration journey. Then have students write descriptive sentences about the map and the journey.

Here are some examples of making lessons relevant to students while also bridging learning paradigms.

B. Combine Learner Processes

(DeCapua & Marshall, 2011a, p. 68)

1. Combine shared responsibility and individual accountability.
   Incorporate both to create a bridge across paradigms.

2. Combine oral transmission and the written word.
   Use oral interaction to scaffold text.

Combing learner processes involves combining components from both the SLIFE learning paradigm and Western-style education paradigm, for example, utilizing the strengths of shared responsibility from the SLIFE paradigm and incorporating individual accountability. Another example is using oral interaction to scaffold text, which bridges the oral and written paradigms.

The final step on the MALP checklist is creating activities for learning that focus on academic tasks and ways of thinking that SLIFE must master, but doing so using language and content that SLIFE are already familiar with. One example is teaching SLIFE the expectations of an academic assignment using familiar language and content before moving on to introducing new language and content. DeCapua, A., & Marshall, H. W. (2011a). *Breaking new ground: Teaching students with limited or interrupted formal education in secondary schools*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
Discuss with someone at your table how you might be able to incorporate some of what you know or what you've learned into the MALP framework.
This teacher checklist can be downloaded for free from the MALP Education website.

Key Ideas – Session 2

- Reduce cognitive, cultural, and language loads
- Establish consistent routines
- Provide literacy interventions
- Provide regular opportunities for oral language use
- Link academic language and content
- Build relationships and make it relevant
Reflection Form

How have your ideas about SLIFE changed from the start of the training?

What are two ideas from session two that you find most applicable to your teaching context?

Please take a moment to complete the reflection form on your table and turn it in at the front of the room.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Two Reflection – Teaching SLIFE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How have your ideas about teaching SLIFE changed from the start of the training?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| What are two key ideas from session two that you find most applicable to your teaching context? |

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| What are two key ideas from session two that you find most applicable to your teaching context? |
Thank you!

Slide template credit: “Kent” PowerPoint slides template created by SlidesCarnival at www.slidescarnival.com
Resource List for Further Reading on SLIFE

Online Resources

WIDA Focus Bulletin: Focus on SLIFE (May 2015)
https://www.wida.us/professionaldev/educatorresources/focus.aspx

Mutually Adapted Learning Paradigm® (MALP®) Teacher Planning Checklists for Teachers of SLIFE
http://malpeducation.com/resources/

U.S. Department of Education Newcomer Toolkit
https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/newcomers-toolkit/index.html

How to Support ELL Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFEs)
http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/how-support-ell-students-interrupted-formal-education-sifes

How to Support Refugee Students in the ELL Classroom
http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/how-support-refugee-students-ell-classroom

Books


REFERENCES


