

# SLIFE District Self-Assessment: Student and Family Data Collection Form

June 2025

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## SLIFE Planning Team

As recommended in the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s [Guidance for SLIFE Identification, Services, and Support](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/slife/guidance.pdf), districts should convene a SLIFE Planning Team and begin with a self-assessment. See below (and page 10 of the guidance document) for considerations for forming a SLIFE Planning Team. As part of the planning, districts should consider providing opportunities to include student and family voices to ensure that program development and district policies reflect student experiences and perspectives. By eliciting and responding to student perspectives in SLIFE program decision-making, schools and districts can fully engage students in a program and plan that reflects their needs and experiences.

**Form a SLIFE Planning Team**

Several overlapping teams are responsible for planning and implementing programming for students identified as SLIFE, along with the follow-up support necessary for students to transition out of such programming. These plans are best executed when there is communication, coordination, buy-in, and shared responsibility among these teams.

**Suggestions for Team Composition**

Team composition may vary according to district size, staffing roles, and other characteristics. At the very least, the team should include staff with SLIFE expertise (or identify members who will develop new SLIFE expertise) as well as administrators who can secure resources to implement changes to systems to meet the needs of SLIFE (e.g., placement, services, support, and programming).

**Who Should Be Part of the SLIFE Team?**

Team composition may include key leads and various stakeholders—for example, central and building administrators, coaches, content and language teachers at different grade levels, special educators, specialists serving SLIFE, guidance and adjustment counselors, nurses, family liaisons, registration staff, intake personnel, families, and students.

### Considerations for Engaging With Students and Families

When engaging with students and families to gather input as part of the Self-Assessment, it is important to consider key learnings from [Learning With the Field: Understanding “Promising Practices” for Students With Limited or Interrupted Formal Education in Massachusetts Schools](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/slife/learning-with-the-field.pdf).. These learnings include the following:

1. **When possible, use dedicated staff members focused on family engagement.** Building strong relationships with families is crucial, as they often feel unwelcome or intimidated. Create an open-door policy and communicate honestly about student progress and interventions. Dedicated staff members play a key role in facilitating these relationships.
2. **Leverage technology to improve family connections.** Use technology to offer varied forms of communication and translation or interpretation assistance.
3. **Acknowledge the varied family situations of SLIFE,** which present significant challenges to family engagement, including family circumstances, work-related barriers, and structural barriers.
4. **Use warm, supportive, and culturally and linguistically responsive approaches.** Any engagement with students or their caregivers should be conducted with a warm and welcoming demeanor and in culturally and linguistically responsive ways.

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| Key idea: Partner with cultural brokers inside or outside the district.  Interpreters and cultural brokers from students’ own communities may be helpful to understanding students’ experiences before, during, and after migration, and supporting them as they enter a new school.  As students enter school after migration, they may be dealing with cultural differences, transient housing, frequent school mobility, and stress (not only from migration but also from learning new content, a new language, and a new culture). Below are examples that members of the SLIFE community of practice (CoP) have shared about how they have partnered with cultural brokers:   * One SLIFE CoP member shared that as families with SLIFE were housed in a nearby emergency shelter, the school coordinated with the shelter and local community organizations to complete school registration and screening at the shelter. * Another CoP member shared that as they enrolled and screened students, the district hosted weekly joint educational orientations with local refugee resettlement agencies for families and children. * A third CoP member discussed coordinating with local resettlement agencies to orient and provide counseling, social work services, and housing to newly arrived Afghan families. * A fourth described coordinating with community agencies to connect families with housing, health, legal, and social-emotional supports. |

### Sample Interview Questions

The sample questions that follow are tailored for both students and parents to gather their input on the school or district SLIFE program and services. These questions are designed to help districts gather meaningful input from SLIFE and their families to inform the SLIFE District Self-Assessment. The questions can be used across a variety of district contexts. The initial questions are broad and can be used in districts that are new to starting a SLIFE program or services. The initial questions are followed by additional potential questions for districts that have existing SLIFE programs or services. These questions are intended to begin conversations, elicit input, and complement the overall self-assessment process. The responses may not align exactly with individual indicators in the self-assessment but should provide additional information for planning teams to consider during the self-check and to inform action steps and planning.

Also, note that these questions are intended for an initial self-assessment. As your SLIFE team continues to implement plans and develop your SLIFE program, continue to engage with and consult students and families and caregivers to ensure that plans resonate with and are responsive to their needs and experiences.

#### Student Input Questions

These questions can be adapted for different age groups or administered with interpreter support. Before starting the conversation, clarify with the student what you mean when referring to English learners (ELs) or students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) because students may have varying levels of understanding and use of these terms. Students may be more comfortable sharing ideas in a focus group with other students. It may also be helpful to gather example artifacts (e.g., interviews, screeners, etc.) to refer to as you ask the questions. These visual reminders may help remind interviewees and spark their thinking.

##### Pre-Screener/Interview/Academic Screeners (Steps 1–3)

* Can you tell me about your first interaction when you registered for school? Did you feel welcomed and comfortable? Were there any challenges?
* Did you participate in a discussion with school staff about your prior educational experiences? Can you tell me more about that? Did you understand why this was taking place?
* Did you take an assessment/test (reading, writing, math, etc.) when you first registered? Did you understand why you were doing that?

##### Individualized Plan and Supports (Step 4)

* What supports do you receive to help you with your English language and academic learning? Is there anything you would change about these supports or services to help your learning?
* What are your learning goals? Have you discussed these with your teachers? How are you being supported in reaching your learning goals?

Additional questions for districts that currently identify and serve SLIFE:

* Do you understand what it means to be identified as SLIFE?
* Is there anything you would change about the SLIFE program or services you are receiving?

##### Student Supports (Academic and Linguistic support; Social-Emotional Support; Family/Caregiver and Community Connections; Progress Monitoring and Exiting SLIFE Status)

* What classes or courses are you currently taking? What challenges do you face? What supports do you have to ensure you are learning in class?
* Who do you usually have classes with? Do you have opportunities to interact with both ELs and non-ELs? Is there anything that you would change about your schedule and who you spend time with?
* Do you feel supported when school is hard or when you feel stressed?
* Are there programs or people at school who help you with your feelings or problems at school?
* How often does your family or caregiver communicate with someone at school? Who do they communicate with? About what? Are there any barriers to their communicating or interacting with school staff?
* Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experience at this school?

Additional questions for districts that currently have a process to identify and serve SLIFE:

* Has anyone ever explained to you what it means to exit from SLIFE status? Do you have any questions or concerns about exiting from SLIFE status?

#### Family/Caregiver Input Questions

These questions are designed to be used in surveys, interviews, or focus groups with families of SLIFE. If you have an active parent group or committee, such as an English Learner Parent Advisory Council (ELPAC), this is an opportunity to engage them in providing authentic input about district services. Before starting the conversation, clarify with the family member or caregiver what you mean when referring to English learners (ELs) or students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) because families may have varying levels of understanding and use of these terms. It may also be helpful to gather example artifacts (e.g., interviews, screeners, etc.) to refer to as you ask the questions. These visual reminders may help remind interviewees of the process and spark their thinking.

##### Pre-Screener/Academic Background/Interview Screener (Steps 1–3)

* Does the school communicate with you in your preferred language?
* When you first came to register for school, did you feel welcomed and respected by school staff?
* When you first came to register your child for school, did you participate in a discussion about your child’s education history? Did you understand the purpose of this discussion?
* What questions or challenges did you have when you first registered your child for school? Is there anything that would have helped you in this process?

##### Individualized Plan and Supports (Step 4)

* What services does your child receive to support their English language and academic learning? Is there anything you would change about these supports or services?

Additional questions for districts that currently identify and serve SLIFE:

* Has the school explained what it means for your child to be identified as SLIFE?
* Do you understand the services your child is receiving since being identified as SLIFE?

##### Student Supports (Academic and Linguistic Support; Social-Emotional Support; Family/Caregiver and Community Connections; Progress Monitoring and Exiting SLIFE Status)

* Is your child making progress in learning English?
* Is your child receiving help with content area learning? Do you feel that the school is helping your child catch up academically?
* Are there programs or people at school who help your child adjust to life in the United States?
* Are there people at school who you feel like you can go to when you have questions or need support? Can you tell me more about a time when you did that? Were you able to get the help that you needed?
* Is there anything else you would like to share about your child’s experience at this school?

Additional questions for districts that currently identify and serve SLIFE:

* Did anyone ever explain to you what it means for your child to exit out of SLIFE? Do you have any questions or concerns about exiting from SLIFE?