



Introduction to the SLIFE District Self-Assessment

June 2025

Purpose of the Tool

The SLIFE District Self-Assessment is designed to support Massachusetts school districts in evaluating and enhancing their services for students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE). Developed in alignment with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) [Guidance for SLIFE Identification, Services, and Support](#), the tool provides a structured framework for districts to use to reflect on their current practices, identify areas for growth, and develop actionable plans to better meet the academic, linguistic, and social-emotional needs of SLIFE. The ultimate goal is to ensure that SLIFE receive equitable, responsive, and high-quality educational experiences that recognize their unique backgrounds and potential.

How the Tool Can Be Used

The tool is designed to be flexible. Teams may choose to complete the assessment collaboratively or to have members score themselves individually before coming together to reach consensus. The interactive spreadsheet version automatically calculates scores and aggregates results to support data-driven decision-making.

The process includes the following:

1. **Assembling a SLIFE Planning Team.** Districts should form a team of stakeholders with practical knowledge of SLIFE processes and the authority to enact change. This may include administrators, English as a Second Language and content teachers, counselors, family liaisons, and students and caregivers.
2. **Scoring Indicators.** Teams assess their implementation of SLIFE-related practices using a 4-point scale (on a continuum from “Not in Place” to “Fully in Place”) across each step of the DESE SLIFE guidance. Each indicator includes space for evidence and notes to support scoring decisions.
3. **Student and Family Data Collection.** Use the student and family data collection form to gather input from SLIFE and their family members on the impact of systems and supports for SLIFE.
4. **Self-Check and Reflection.** After scoring, teams reflect on their results to identify strengths and areas for development. At this time, teams also consider what they have learned from students and family members and how this information should be considered alongside the district's own perceptions of its systems and supports to provide a fuller picture. This reflection guides the selection of priority areas for improvement.
5. **Action Planning.** Teams develop a measurable action plan that outlines immediate, near-term, and long-term steps to address identified needs.

Resources

1. **SLIFE District Self-Assessment:** A self-assessment tool offered in a Word or PDF format or as an interactive spreadsheet.
2. **Student and family data collection form:** Guidance and sample questions to gather input from students and family members about their experiences and insights.
3. **Orientation webinar:** Slides, notes, and a recording of an introduction webinar that outlines the purpose and use of the self-assessment tool. The webinar can be viewed individually or as a group as an introduction to the tool's technical aspects and key content.

Using the Tool Across Diverse District Contexts

Districts across Massachusetts vary widely in size, resources, and SLIFE populations. The tool was intentionally designed to be adaptable to accommodate these differences. For example:

- **Low-Enrollment SLIFE Districts:** In districts with no or few SLIFE, the tool can help establish foundational practices and ensure readiness to support SLIFE as enrollment patterns shift. Even if formal identification systems and programming are minimal, the tool encourages proactive planning and staff training aligned with SLIFE guidance.
- **Districts with Established SLIFE Programs:** For districts with existing SLIFE services, the tool offers a structured opportunity to evaluate programming and services, identify gaps, and refine practices. It supports continuous improvement and alignment with updated SLIFE guidance.
- **Districts in Transition:** Districts experiencing demographic changes or programmatic shifts can use the tool to guide strategic planning, build staff capacity, and ensure that new or evolving services are responsive to student needs.

Regardless of context, the tool promotes a strengths-based, culturally responsive approach to serving SLIFE. It encourages districts to honor students' backgrounds, engage families and communities, and foster inclusive environments that support academic and personal growth.