

# Supporting Students With Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) Screener Development Support

ED# 2022-R1-I-0001



## High-Leverage Problem

The students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) Screener Development Support Project was designed to work closely with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), to deeply understand their needs and the districts they serve. What began as an examination of assessment tools evolved into a broader review of policies and procedures. Our review of the literature and analysis of the data we collected illustrated a need to review the entire intake process, not just the assessment tools used for placement. Therefore, our approach came to prioritize the entire intake process for SLIFE in Massachusetts.

Over the past decade, Massachusetts schools have enrolled an increasingly diverse number of English learners (ELs), with the percentage of ELs growing from 7.7% in the 2011-12 school year to 11.0% in 2021-22. It is estimated that 2% of all ELs in Massachusetts are further identified as SLIFE. SLIFE students often possess a variety of school readiness skills, sociolinguistic proficiencies, content knowledge, and academic ways of thinking that are different from students who have consistently attended Massachusetts schools. As a result, SLIFE identification is a complex, nuanced process for which there are no agreed-upon best practices within the field.



## R1CC Approach

This project was designed to share foundational SLIFE information with DESE, including district needs related to SLIFE identification and support, a review of current national SLIFE practices, and emerging/promising SLIFE practices observed by national experts. Project activities included:

- National scan including a review of SLIFE policies in all 50 U.S. states and interviews with state and local leaders implementing innovative SLIFE assessment policies, guidance, or supports.
- Interviews with Massachusetts practitioners on their SLIFE assessment successes, challenges, and needs.
- Creation and convening of an expert panel of leading SLIFE researchers, SLIFE assessment developers, and SLIFE content experts.

## Key Milestones

1. Conducted national scan of state SLIFE policies.
2. Developed interview protocols for state/local leader and Massachusetts practitioner interviews.
3. Conducted interviews with state/ local leaders and Massachusetts practitioners.
4. Recruited and convened SLIFE expert panel.
5. Synthesized interview findings and SLIFE panel recommendations into a presentation for DESE.

## Outputs

1. National scan of state SLIFE policies.
2. Interview protocols for state/local leader and Massachusetts practitioner interviews.
3. SLIFE expert panel recruitment and meeting materials.
4. PowerPoint presentation of interview findings and SLIFE panel recommendations.

## Outcomes

- DESE increased its understanding of local SLIFE practices and challenges related to the SLIFE intake process, such as the complex process of reviewing transcripts from other countries and reconciling students' past studies against Massachusetts' standards.
- DESE improved its resource capacity by updating the SLIFE intake process.
- DESE increased its organizational and resource capacities in the SLIFE intake process, which was updated by the Region 1 Comprehensive Center.
- DESE increased organizational capacity by coordinating this SLIFE project with two other SLIFE projects currently underway outside of R1CC.
- DESE also expanded its organizational capacities by considering the intake processes in relation to students' progression through Massachusetts school through to graduation.

*“One of the great things about this project is this is something that will be great for Massachusetts, but we’re also realizing there are a lot of practitioners in the country who are looking for this too. And it’s very exciting to be in that situation and working with such a high-caliber group of people.”*