Additional SIFE Assessment Guidance
for Bridges to Academic Success

LINGUISTIC COMPLEXITY AND FINDING THE RIGHT ASSESSMENT

For low-incidence languages not represented in commonly-used home language literacy assessments, we recommend any of the following:
- Do what you can based on what resources you have available in your context to collect information on home language reading and writing skills.
- The Bridges intake and assessment tools, which include a reading comprehension and writing screener, are available in a handful of languages not in the MLS. These can be found here: http://bridges-sifeproject.com/intake-and-assessment/
  - These assessments will only provide a snapshot of a student's literacy, rather than a grade level equivalent. However, if a student can read and show strong comprehension of the text utilized in the Bridges assessment (which is written at the 4th grade level), they are not considered LL SIFE. You should confirm this assessment with other evidence.
- Make use of an adult in your school or community who speaks the student's home language to help with translation or to assess the student. If possible, this person can also assess the reading and writing by translating what a student writes in a writing prompt and provide you information about the student's literacy and writing skills and behaviors.
- If necessary, call a Translation Hotline or unit in your district that can provide translation over the phone when you are using an assessment tool or conducting the SIFE Oral Interview Questionnaire.

Assessing A Student's Whole Linguistic Repertoire

Keep in mind that LL SIFE often speak several languages because they may come from countries with complex multilingual environments with various ethnic groups and strong oral traditions. LL SIFE may speak a home language, but also have exposure (not necessarily proficiency) in other languages. It is important to gather information on a student's oral language proficiency and as comprehensive a linguistic profile of the student as possible.

Students who are not SIFE typically utilize their home language, but may also be proficient in another language, often a country's colonial language, and the language utilized in formal school settings. For example, students from Guinea with strong educational backgrounds are literate in French, but speak Fulani or other languages at home. LL SIFE typically have not developed high literacy in a colonial language, but what assets they do bring should be tapped through writing and reading tasks in those languages, in addition to their home language.

It is critical to find out if LL SIFE can understand and speak a colonial language, in addition to their home language, even if s/he cannot read and write in it. Some oral language proficiency in a colonial language provides opportunities for LL SIFE to utilize a common language with students with different home languages, or with other teachers or adults. For example, teachers are more likely to speak and understand French but not Fulani. Teachers might falsely assume a student speaks a colonial language because of their country of origin. This is also true for many LL SIFE from indigenous communities in Mexico and Central America, who may not be orally proficient or literate in Spanish.

If a student's home language is typically not utilized in printed form, it is unlikely s/he can read and write in that language. This should be confirmed with additional evidence. Teachers in your context should make every effort to find out what the student can or cannot do in the languages in their linguistic repertoire.

Foundational Literacy Behaviors to Observe in Home Language

When formal assessments and interviews are still insufficient to help you determine if a student is LL SIFE, or when the assessment tool you need is not available in the language you need, there are literacy behaviors to observe or questions to consider to help you get to know a student's literacy profile and to make an informed decision possible for programming and placement of LL SIFE. The behaviors and skills below are best observed one-on-one, and by a speaker/reader of the home language. If you can answer *yes* to most of the following questions for a given student, s/he is most likely not LL SIFE and thus not appropriately placed in Bridges:

Reading in Home Language (with a text at approximately 4th grade level)

Does the student:
- ❏ use textual and visual cues to help him/her read text?
- ❏ easily decipher words, either by instant recognition or sounding out (of more challenging or new words)?
- ❏ read fluently, with appropriate speed and intonation, with attention to punctuation and in chunks, rather than word-by-word?
- ❏ self-correct when reading a text aloud?
- ❏ appear to be struggling with most vocabulary in the text?

Writing in Home Language

Does the student:
- ❏ express ideas that are clear and in response to the prompt?
- ❏ organize ideas for the reader?
- ❏ use topic appropriate vocabulary?
- ❏ write fluently, not laboring with sentence formation?
- ❏ write legibly as evidence of someone who has been writing for several years?
- ❏ appropriately space between letters and words?

Ultimately, intake and assessment procedures are used for the purpose of learning about students. Information from different assessments should be triangulated and utilized together to form a holistic assessment of a student. Formal assessment data should always be balanced with close observations that teachers make through actual interactions with students. Anecdotal information and classroom behaviors can also provide a lot of information that can be used to determine if a student is LL SIFE.

Identifying New-to-Print LL SIFE

Identifying new-to-print LL SIFE is fairly straightforward. Students for whom you can check most of the following should be programmed for a daily Foundational Language and Literacy (FLL) class in addition to ELA Part 1 and Part 2. [1]

Reading in Home Language
Does the student:
- ❏ struggle to decipher words (might know some letters/sounds in home language)?
- ❏ focus on words, but might ignore pictures or other information sources?
- ❏ read laboriously, word-by-word, without fluency?
- ❏ struggle to retell with basic comprehension?

Writing in Home Language
Does the student:
- ❏ write very little (a few words or sentences) or not at all?
- ❏ struggle to form letters?
- ❏ not appropriately space between words and sentences?
- ❏ make many errors in spelling?
- ❏ not use punctuation?
- ❏ use only the most basic vocabulary?
- ❏ use only the most basic sentence structure?

GUIDANCE ON LL SIFE IDENTIFICATION FOR BRIDGES TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Based on assessment and identification data collected, determine how to best support SIFE given their home language literacy assessments and home country educational histories. Use the following guiding questions to help identify students for the Bridges program or ELA LL SIFE curriculum.

- Is the student's home language literacy **at or below 3rd grade**? Students with home language literacy at or below 3rd grade level will need literacy and academic intervention beyond what is provided in the core instructional program at your school. Early literacy home language assessments will provide insight into specific foundational literacy skills that may need to be explicitly taught to students who are low-literacy SIFE.
    - o These students are candidates for the Bridges program or ELA LL SIFE Curriculum.

- Based on the home language assessments, is the student "**new-to-print**" or 1st grade or below in their home language literacy? Students in this situation need strategic intervention and instruction in early reading skills because they have not developed these skills to transfer from their home language.
    - o These students should be programmed for the Bridges FLL course (Foundational Language and Literacy), **in addition to and not instead of,** the Bridges ELA LL SIFE curriculum. Students programmed for FLL alone will **not be sufficiently** supported in developing literacy,

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[1] Ideally students learn these foundational skills in home language. Schools should make every attempt to provide this instruction in home language, especially with a bilingual new-to-print population. When this is not possible, these skills can be developed in English in the FLL class. This is more challenging for new readers and writers, as they are learning to read and write for the first time in a new language.

conceptual understandings, and academic ways of thinking.

- Is the student's home language literacy **above** 3rd grade? Students who can already read independently in their home language will have skills they can transfer to learning to reading in English. They will not need instruction in foundational literacy per se, but may need continued literacy instruction in fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Use home language assessments to determine what kind of support they will need in the heterogeneous mainstream classroom in your school. Also, determine what type of literacy support the student may need if literacy intervention or extended instructional time is provided.
    - o In this case, although students may benefit from some of the instructional strategies utilized in the Bridges program, these students should **not** be placed in any Bridges classes.

- Is it possible to provide home language foundational literacy instruction for students who are below 3rd grade level in home language literacy? Where possible, students develop foundational literacy skills best when taught in a language they are familiar with. Providing instruction in foundational literacy in the home language will support transfer of literacy skills to learning to read in English.
    - o Bridges does not provide home language literacy support explicitly, so if a school has resources to do so, that instructional approach should be leveraged to support LL SIFE in reading development and academic support, in addition to the Bridges program or ELA/SIFE curriculum.

COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY AND PROGRESS MONITORING

In addition to appropriate administration of early year intake and assessment processes, we encourage and support schools that plan how they will share the data with one another, triangulate the data to avoid placement errors, and use the data strategically throughout the year to progress monitor students.

- Are there any indications that the student may have more assets to bring than is measured by the assessments utilized? (e.g., work or farming experience, love of poetry in their home language, etc.)
- Are there follow-up or informal assessments that need to be conducted to find out additional information not surfaced through formal assessments? (e.g., classroom observations, anecdotes, and formative assessments)
- If programmed for the Bridges program or ELA LL SIFE curriculum, would the course be too remedial for this particular student (and to their detriment, as a result)? If the course is too easy for a student, they should not be placed in Bridges.
- What are the systems of progress monitoring that will enable your school to continually assess their literacy levels and academic development? Although, there are explicit tools provided in the ELA LL SIFE curriculum to do so; teacher teams and schools must have systems in place to ensure they can surface new developments in student progress.

Strategic Assessment Plan for LL SIFE and SIFE

Use the strategic assessment planning tool below to:
1) plan your school's assessment administration timeline to coordinate systems for data collection
2) plan your school's structure for sharing and triangulating the data with colleagues in order to build practitioners' knowledge of students' educational backgrounds

Question #1: What additional data sources will you rely on and what information will they give you?

Data Source and Purpose	District/School/ Classroom Collection	When To Use To Assess Students	Follow-up
Example: *MLS Screener: Reading comprehension and early literacy*	*District collects centrally*	*In summer and ongoing*	*Use results in team meeting to log student scores and discuss implications*
1			
2			
3			
4			

Question #2: Based on the types of data identified, what are your next steps for creating an assessment timeline in your classroom/school/district? Create a timeline or flowchart to share around the different categories of data either here or on chart paper.

Question #3: What are ways that you may build student profiles from this kind of assessment data and use strategically either...

	Responses
independently?	
with a co-teacher?	
with an interdisciplinary team?	
school wide?	