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| **Virginia Board of Education Agenda Item** | **Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia** |

# Agenda Item: P

## Date: April 22, 2021

### Title: Report on Defining Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education

#### Presenter: Dr. Jessica Costa, English Learner Instructional Specialist, Virginia Department of Education

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## Purpose of Presentation:

Action required by state or federal law or regulation.

**Executive Summary:**

Pursuant to [Senate Bill 933](https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?201+sum+SB933) from the 2020 General Assembly, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) was charged to:

* develop and adopt a common statewide definition for the term "students with limited or interrupted formal education" (SLIFE); and
* require local school divisions to report on the number of students who fall under such definition as part of the required data collection and reporting on average daily membership for the purposes of documenting any changes in such numbers over time.

Likewise, the Virginia Board of Education (VBOE) is mandated to:

* evaluate the supports and programs available to "students with limited or interrupted formal education" in local school divisions; and
* determine whether the calculations for the school quality indicators within the Board's Regulations Establishing the Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia are appropriate or whether changes in methodology could be made to more comprehensively measure the academic and nonacademic achievement of such student population.

In response to [SB933](https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?201+sum+SB933), the VDOE convened stakeholders from a number of school divisions, representing varied job roles and geographic areas. An initial workgroup meeting was held to respond to a draft definition compiled using other states’ definitions and other literature in the field pertaining to SLIFE. Following the workgroup, the VDOE contacted the initial stakeholder group plus additional stakeholders for several rounds of review of the draft definition and to provide additional perspectives and input through calls or working documents.

The VDOE presented [Defining and Supporting Students with Limited and/or Interrupted Formal Education](https://doe.virginia.gov/boe/committees_standing/soa/2021/01-jan/sife-slife-presentation.pptx), which included the proposed definition, to the BOE’s Special Committee to Review the Standards of Accreditation on January 27, 2021.

The creation of a statewide definition of SLIFE enables VDOE and divisions to collaborate to identify these students through some standardized and systematic data-collection processes. Disaggregation of data specific to SLIFE trends will allow both the state and divisions to evaluate equity in the quality instruction provided.

The VDOE has developed the following proposed definition for SLIFE as —

A Student with Limited and/or Interrupted Formal Education is an English Learner who

* enters or re-enters any school in the United States at or after the age of 8; AND
* is identified at English Language Proficiency (ELP) Level 1 or 2; AND
* has at least 2 years less schooling than their similar-age peers.

The proposed definition has been posted on the [Virginia Regulatory Town Hall](https://townhall.virginia.gov/) for a 30-day public comment which will be published on April 26, 2021.

## The VDOE has drafted a technical support document for school divisions including: *SLIFE Definition Companion Document* (Attachment A) which includes additional information about the components of the definition; sample tools for local data collection processes; and multiple programmatic and instructional resources including:

* *Leading for Equity: Programs for Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE),* which includes tips for division and school leaders organized by guiding principles and practices;
* *Virginia Division Practices and Graduation Pathways for Students with Limited or interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE),*which includes lists of practices divisions use as they work to create equitable programs for SLIFE; and
* *ABCs of Supporting Students with Limited or interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE),* which spotlights research-based instructional practices and strategies.

This document is currently undergoing a redesign and should be available in final format to include in a Superintendent’s Memo scheduled for posting on April 23, 2021. Additional, on-going technical assistance and professional development will be provided by the VDOE.

Beginning in the fall of 2021, the VDOE will require local school divisions to report on the number of SLIFE as part of the required data collection and report on their average daily membership. In addition, the VDOE will gather data on supports and programs made available to SLIFE students and analyze data and make recommendations to the VBOE for consideration of changes in methodology to more comprehensively measure the academic and nonacademic achievement of SLIFE, as necessary.

**Action Requested:**

No action requested.

## Superintendent’s Recommendation:

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends the Board of Education receive the Report on Defining Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education.

## Previous Review or Action:

**Action:** Presentation to the Special Committee to Review the Standards of Accreditation

**Date:** January 27, 2021

**Background Information and Statutory Authority:**

[Senate Bill 933](https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?201+sum+SB933) was passed by the 2020 General Assembly, and signed by the Governor on April 6, 2020.

SLIFE are a subset of English Learners (ELs), who are a highly diverse group; each student has a unique educational background and circumstance. Variables in their experiences include compulsory educational requirements in other countries, unavailability of schooling, civil unrest, migration trends, refugee experiences, family constraints, gender restrictions, as well as economic and environmental considerations, among other academic and social-emotional considerations. Because of limited and/or interrupted exposure to formal education and the associated socio-academic implications, SLIFE often face more complex and variant challenges than those typically encountered by other ELs. An estimated 20% of ELs in high school and 12% of ELs in middle school had missed two or more years of schooling[[1]](#footnote-1). This under-schooled group of students is most at risk for academic failure. The dropout rate for teens with school problems before migration is in excess of 70%, as compared with 8% for other foreign-born youths[[2]](#footnote-2).

**Timetable for Further Review/Action:**

Following the thirty-day public comment period, VDOE staff will review comments for potential edits and post publicly on the VDOE website. Should substantive changes be necessary, the Board of Education will be notified.

## Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources:

The agency’s existing resources can absorb the responsibility for supporting the work associated with the implementation of SB933. It is anticipated that there may be an impact on local school division resources including data-management system updates, internal document revisions, training on new data-collection protocols, and resources associated with new registration and intake processes.

1. Ruiz de Velasco, J. & Fix, M. (2000). Overlooked and underserved: Immigrant students in US secondary schools. The Urban Institute Report. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Fry, R. (2005). The higher drop-out rate of foreign-born teens: The role of schooling abroad. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center. Gay, G. (2000). Culturally responsive teaching. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)