

“I Have”, “I Am,” & “I Can”: Serving Students with Interrupted Formal Education

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Today's Experts

Brenda Custodio is a former ESL teacher and building administrator from Columbus, OH. She is a frequent presenter with Judy across the country on SIFE and newcomers.





Judith O'Loughlin is a former elementary ESL and special education teacher from New Jersey who now lives in California. Judy and Brenda together wrote a book on Students with Interrupted Formal Education.

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Agenda

- Look at two SIFE learners and discuss what types of additional services they might require
- Review challenges faced by refugee and Latino students with interrupted education
- List potential services that would support students with interrupted education
- Share classroom activities to help SIFE build resilience

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Objectives

1. Identify the causes of interrupted education
2. Comprehend the scope of the effects of interrupted education
3. Discuss the educational challenges that interrupted education may create for the SIFE learner
4. Provide recommendations for academic supports for the SIFE learner
5. Create a resource list of family and community connections for SIFE learners



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Definition of SIFE

David and Yvonne Freeman, well-known experts in the field of limited formal schooling, use this definition in:

Closing the Achievement Gap: How to Reach Limited-Formal-Schooling and Long-Term English Learners.


- Recent arrivals
- Interrupted or limited schooling in native country
- Limited native-language literacy
- Below grade level in math
- Leads to poor academic achievement

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Let's look at the story of two adolescent SIFE learners and consider what types of special services each might need



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Dja Wah's Story

- Dja Wah is a 17 year old girl recently arrived from Burma. She is a member of the Karen tribe, who lived in a refugee camp in Thailand for 5 years.
- Her family fled Burma because of the political upheaval in her country, which resulted in her entire village being destroyed.
- She was only able to attend school in the camp about 2 days a week because she was responsible for the care of her younger siblings.
- She wants a high school diploma but did not come with transcripts from her school in camp, so she was placed in ninth grade.
- She is extremely shy and afraid to speak to her teachers and school counselor about her issue with graduation.

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Ricardo's Story

- Ricardo is a 15-year-old boy from Honduras. He attended school for 4 years until he quit to help his mother work on their farm.
- His mother was killed when he was 12 and he moved in with an uncle.
- When he was 14 he was threatened by a local gang member and told that he would be shot if he did not join.
- Reluctantly his uncle paid a *coyote* to help Ricardo escape and make the dangerous journey across Central America and Mexico to be reunited with a father he had never met.

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Ricardo's Story (cont.)

- After 8 months, Ricardo crossed the border into Texas where he was apprehended. He spent 2 months in a detention center until he was sent to Wisconsin to be with his father.
- Dad had since married and had other children. The situation was uncomfortable and finally became untenable.
- He soon left Dad and moved in with a cousin and uncle in a nearby state.
- Ricardo is now enrolled in high school and struggling to fit in.

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Think about Dja Wah and Ricardo and the challenges they are facing.

What type of socialization issues might these students face in a new school?

What type of specialized academic program might be needed to bridge the gap caused by interrupted schooling?

What types of non-academic supports might these students and their families need?

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Chat box

What special services will these two students need to be successful in an academic setting? If you work with adults, what types of services are available for individuals with similar backgrounds?

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Here is a list of some of the supports that Dja Wah and Ricardo may need to succeed in their new schools

Academic Supports

- Sheltered content classes
- First language literacy class
- English as a second language class
- Tutoring to catch up, during or after school

Non-Academic Supports

- Counseling for trauma, grief, and/or adjustment
- Tapping into internal resources
- Family counseling
- Legal assistance for immigration issues

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Unfortunately, one of the issues in supporting SIFE learners is that schools may not realize who they are. Can you tell by looking who has interrupted schooling?



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Do you keep data on who are the SIFE students in your district?

Resource:
Students With Interrupted Formal Education: Bridging Where they Are What They Need

(Corwin, 2017, p. 7.)

Table 1.1	
Placement and Enrollment Information Form	
What is your child's home country?	_____
At what age did he or she leave the home country?	_____
What is your child's home language?	_____
Was this the language of instruction in his or her school?	_____
If not, what was the language used in school in the home country?	_____
Is your child literate in his or her first language? Yes/No	_____
At what age did your child begin attending school?	_____
How many years of education were completed in the home country?	_____
What was the last year of schooling for your child?	_____
Has your child studied English before arrival? Yes/No	_____
For how many years?	_____
Does your child have complete records from the home country? Yes/No	_____
Has your child attended school in another school in the United States? Yes/No	_____
Where and for how long?	_____
Did you bring the records? Yes/No	_____
Before coming to the United States, was your child separated from other family members? Yes/No	_____
For how long?	_____
Has your child ever lived in a refugee camp? Yes/No	_____
Notes for placement:	_____
Number of years behind peers in schooling (if applicable):	_____
Records/transcripts from home country: Yes/No	_____

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Here are some sample questions that you may want to include in a your initial school interview



- Can your child read and write in his/her native language?
- At what age did your child begin to attend school?
- What was the last grade that your child attended?
- Was there a time that your child was unable to attend school? For how long?

Questions such as these will help your school discover who may have interrupted education and need special assistance.

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Total number of refugees worldwide: 17 million

Countries with highest numbers	Number
Syria	5.2 million
South Sudan	1.9 million
Afghanistan	1.4 million
Somalia	0.7 million
Sudan	0.6 million

So far in Fiscal Year 2018, the U.S. has resettled 12,932 as of May 14.

Sources: UNHCR & Refugee Council USA

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Challenges Refugees Face Which Lead to Interrupted Education

- Time spent without an education in home country before flight
- Time spent fleeing and reaching the relative stability of a refugee camp
- Trauma associated with flight and relocation
- Limited opportunities for education in the camps
- Poor, overcrowded facilities with outdated curriculum when schooling is available
- Most teachers untrained and often limited textbooks

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Two refugee camp schools



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Additional Considerations

- Many Latin American countries only require 8–9 years of schooling and fees for books, uniforms, and tests, as well as gang violence, often prevent many children from attending.
- Common for one person from each family to come to the US and send money back home. Many teens, especially males, see the end of grade 9 as 'la edad para ir al norte' or "the time to go north."
- Upon arrival they discover that they are expected to attend school until they are 18 or complete grade 12; some become frustrated and angry and may not bother to enroll (studies show from 40% to 85%), or enroll and drop out.
- If they enroll, they may have to repeat some classes because requirements are different here or they may not have come with a transcript.



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What issues have we found that may be unique to SIFE?

- Frequently suffering from stress-related issues
- Have special literacy and academic requirements due to missing years of school
- May experience frequent and strong bouts of frustration with their inability to match peers performance
- Much higher risk of dropping out



BRYCS Photo/Courtesy of Catholic Charities of Atlanta

From Kristina Robertson,
www.colorincolorado.org

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Extremely High Dropout Rates

We believe that "the programming designed for ELs with academic skills and first language literacy, as well as for the students who have been in Western schools for most if not all of their education, is not sufficient for most students with interrupted schooling.

"The gap between what students are expected to be able to do and the skill set that students have at their disposal is often too great, and students frequently give up." (Custodio and O'Loughlin, 2017)

One study conducted by the Pew Research Center found that: "The dropout rate for teens with school problems before migration is in excess of 70 percent, in comparison with 8 percent for other foreign-born youths." (Fry, 2005)

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Time is the Critical factor



Cummins (2006) and Collier (1989) state that students with significant gaps in their formal schooling **may need 10 years** or more to acquire the academic language proficiency that will enable them to understand and express concepts and ideas that are relevant to long-term success in school—**almost double the catch-up period predicted for students who have literacy skills in their first language.**

(English Literacy Development, 2014)

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What special academic services and support do these students need?



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District Level Supports

- **Training** for personnel who work with SIFE
- Developing an **atmosphere of acceptance** -diversity in our school as an asset.
- Programming options that support literacy development and **"fill in" content gaps**
- **Expanded learning opportunities** such as after school and Saturday classes, summer school or one-to-one tutoring



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School Level Supports

- An atmosphere of acceptance: we are a **"community of learners"** within the school and classroom
- Knowledgeable and caring staff
- Courses that assist students make the transition from what they know to what they are expected to be able to do (especially important in math)
- Scheduling options that may accommodate students who work

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Classroom Level Supports

- Activate prior knowledge and build background at the start of each lesson
- Choose support materials that are grade appropriate yet is visually appealing
- Limit the amount of new information
- Provide visuals when possible
- Adapt assessments and grading as needed

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Classroom Level Supports

- Utilize hands-on and group work
- Use frequent, informal comprehension checks



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Non-Academic Supports

- Ensuring an atmosphere of acceptance and support throughout the school
- Schedules that accommodate students who work
- Connections to social services that work with undocumented for counseling, housing, and food
- Health supports for students with no insurance
 - Dental, vision, hearing, follow-up to emergency care
- *Non-physical supports – belonging, resilience, adjustment*

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Community Level Supports

Academic Supports

- Tutoring
- Translations for parent conferences
- Transportation for parents to school events
- Help with planning for post-secondary world, including college applications

Non-academic Supports

- Donations of clothing or school supplies
- Transportation to job interview, driver's license tests, extra-curriculars
- Mentoring
- Health services support, both physical and emotional/mental

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Examples of Community Supports

In-school store

- Start-up funded by a United Way grant
- Donations of new or used clothing, personal hygiene products and school supplies
- Volunteers sort the clothes and work with students to run the store

Mentors to help build reading skills

- Two programs discussed in the book:
- Saturday Newcomer Academy in Oregon
- Global Village Project in Georgia

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Resilience



<http://www.4learning.com/4learning/flash/resilience.swf>

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Factors that Impact Need for Resilience

- Environmental Factors
 - Poverty
 - Societal violence
 - Domestic violence
 - Drugs
 - Immigration status
 - Bullying
 - Homelessness
 - Self-esteem
- Educational Factors
 - Peer pressure
 - Academic rigor
 - Language barrier
 - Grades
 - Test scores
 - Graduation requirements
 - Motivation

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Three Strategies to Help SIFE Learners Build Resilience

What Teachers Can Do

- Strategy One: Build strong relationships with newcomers and their families. (I HAVE)
- Strategy Two: The power of the narrative. (I AM)
- Strategy Three: Use problem-based models of instruction (I CAN)

What Learners Can Do

- I Have* – Resources and people available to offer support.
- I Am* – Positive characteristics the newcomer sees in himself.
- I Can* – Learned skills the newcomer possesses to deal with social interactions, such as solving problems.

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Strategy One: I Have



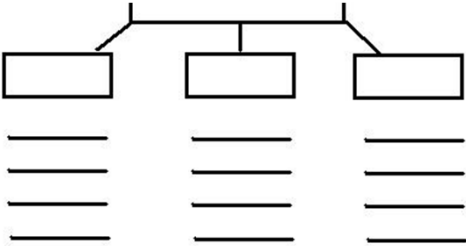
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- Focus on the strengths of the students, what they bring with them through their experiences and abilities.
- Provide students with opportunities to share what they already know and can do.
- Make connections to family, ethnic community, religious beliefs, and skills that are positive influences.

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A graphic organizer such as this one can help students list people or groups that have helped them and tell how they helped



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Strategy One: I Am

- Another way to help students of any age to think about and recognize the value of others to their well-being is to read stories of other people who have overcome difficulties and how they did it.
- Reading about other immigrants through autobiographies, biographies, or fictionalized accounts of migration can be very beneficial.



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Migration Narratives come in books, short stories, and articles appropriate for any age or reading level. They have the added benefit of providing reading practice and can lead to the writing of personal narratives.



BRYCS PHOTO: YOUR AGE & VOICES

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Stewart, (2015) "My Journey of Hope and Peace," in *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*

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Strategy Three: I Can

- In this resiliency exercise, students of any age think about what they already can do and what they want to be able to do in the future.
- Students can list both short-term and long-term goals and then list how they can reach these goals in realistic and measurable ways; such as "I want a job that pays more money, so I will _____."
- This is a perfect time to talk about how employment, education, etc. operate in their new country.



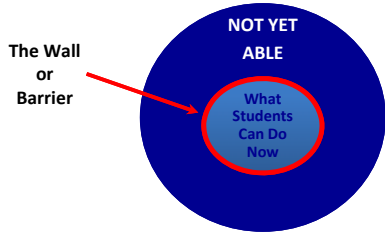
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Helping students break through this barrier is critical to resilience



Sarah Quintenz

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School Resiliency Checklist

- My school is viewed as a safe place by students and families.
- The school is visually welcoming to all cultures.
- Students and their families are viewed as assets to the community.
- The school provides outreach and connections to community services.



BRYCS Photo / Courtesy of CSS Archdiocese

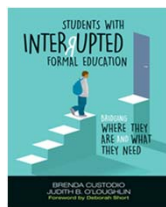
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Students with Interrupted Formal Education: Bridging Where They Are and What They Need

- Introduction to SIFE
- Latinos with Interrupted Education
- Unique Issues of Refugee Children
- Providing Social and Emotional Support: Developing Resilient Students
- Providing Academic Support: Programming and Curriculum for SIFE




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Questions?

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*Models are used for illustrative purposes

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