

**Understanding the student with
interrupted formal education (SIFE):
A study of SIFE skills, needs and achievement**

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Executive Summary

The last few years have seen an increase in the number of non-English speaking students entering the New York City public schools with interrupted or delayed education in their home countries. This unique population, aptly named SIFE (students with interrupted formal education), presents educators with many questions and challenges, particularly with regard to the instructional practices that need to be undertaken. To date, little research has been conducted amongst this group of school children and this study represents an initial attempt to provide a profile of SIFE. Who are they? What skill sets do they bring with them? How do they fare in our schools? And most importantly, what are their educational needs?

To begin to answer these questions, we conducted a year-long study with 12 SIFE who had recently entered the ninth grade in two different schools. We took a two-pronged approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. We developed an interview questionnaire that could capture the backgrounds, life and school experiences in the home country, and attitudes towards education and life in the US of the participants. We selected a set of skills assessments that could measure their language and literacy skills and the content knowledge they brought with them. And we observed them in their classes to gauge their level of comprehension of the lessons, their engagement and participation, and the type of instructional setting that they responded to best.

The results are presented in this study both as an initial characterization of SIFE as a group, and as individual profiles of each participant with a separate story.

The following summarizes the main findings:

1. Background

The interview questionnaire revealed that most of our participants came from rural areas and from families with little schooling. Leaving their home country behind more often than not meant leaving immediate family behind, and living with relatives in New York. Most moved here to improve their opportunities at finding success, some with specific future goals in mind, others just to seek a better life. Surprisingly, half of our participants did not report interrupted schooling, yet performed similarly to the others on the skills assessments. This suggests that we need to consider not only missing school years, but delayed or poor quality of prior schooling as a defining criterion.

2. Attitudes and Motivation

A striking characteristic found in all participants was the high level of hope and expectation that the educational experiences in the US would provide them with great opportunity for success. Everyone expected to graduate from high school, most expected to go to college, and many saw a professional career in the future. This optimism was accompanied by high levels of motivation to learn

English. Much enthusiasm was also expressed about the schools they attended, their teachers and their school mates.

3. Skills and Prior Knowledge

There is a substantial gap between the positive attitudes and high motivation for learning these SIFE hold and the reality of the skill sets and background content knowledge they bring with them. This is not surprising, given the uneven educational experiences they have had. What is important about the skills assessment results is that we now have a much better understanding of where SIFE are compared to what is expected of their peers in high school.

In the area of native language abilities, the assessment tests show a striking difference between their natural language skills, used in everyday communication, and the specialized skills needed to develop school literacy. In our report we refer to this as “normal language development” and “academic language.” Thus, on the natural language measure, the RISLUS Syntax Test, they show age-appropriate development. On the other, the Bateria III, they show grade equivalency (GE) scores well below ninth grade in academic language, pre-literacy and literacy skills. As a group, their average GE scores rarely reach fifth grade on most of these measures.

In the content areas, such as math, science, social science and humanities they score even lower, somewhere around third grade.

Together, this set of results confirms what has long been argued in the literature: there is a clear distinction between the linguistic abilities underlying everyday language use and specialized language, literacy and reasoning skills particular to the discourse of schools and the classroom. The former is acquired, without much effort, in everyday social interaction and communication. The latter is learned, consciously, over several years of schooling. The latter are also the skills that regular ELLs already possess in their native language when they come to this country and transfer easily, once they master the non-native language. SIFE, on the other hand, have not had the chance to develop these scholastic language skills in their native language and so require extra instructional support if they are to attain their goals.

We conclude that SIFE need instructional support in the following foundational areas:

1. the literacy skills needed for the study of all academic subjects
2. the background knowledge needed to take them to grade level in the content areas
3. mastery of English
4. application of academic literacy skills and background knowledge (1. and 2.) to the study of content area subjects taught in English.

We end the report with a set of recommendations on how this support can be provided to them. In particular, we recommend a two year transitional program for high-school age SIFE, before they are placed in regular or bilingual ninth grade classes. This should be a sheltered program where the main objective is to provide ample support in academic literacy skills in the native language. Intensive ESL instruction must also be included in this program from the beginning. We also give a list of best practices for the SIFE classroom.

While we acknowledge that this is an initial study of the SIFE population in New York, we are convinced that with this type of instructional support the attrition rate we see amongst this population will dramatically decrease from its current high levels, enabling SIFE to reach their educational goals and aspirations.

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**Understanding the student with interrupted formal education (SIFE),
Phase I:
A preliminary assessment of SIFE skills and needs
Research Institute for the Study of Language in Urban Society
The CUNY Graduate Center**

1. Introduction

1.1 *Rationale for the SIFE project, Phase I*

New York City, like school districts around the country, is struggling to understand and address the needs of students with interrupted formal education (SIFE). However, critically needed research among this unique and challenging population has only just begun. To date, very few researchers or practitioners have conducted in-depth investigations of SIFE to help identify and characterize their skills and needs. Such studies are needed to help develop research-based instructional programs for these students.

Most SIFE enter schools with little or no native language literacy and low levels of English language proficiency and academic content knowledge. However, differences exist in individual SIFE backgrounds creating potentially wide variation in their linguistic and academic profiles, and the goals they hold for the future. Such variation would suggest that diverse instructional interventions might be warranted for sub-groups of the SIFE population. A special challenge also exists for older SIFE entering our high schools, as this group is particularly at risk, with little time to develop the skills and knowledge needed for graduation.

The first step in this research project, then, is to identify and characterize representative SIFE in New York City schools, through the selection and the development of appropriate assessment tools carefully tested out for use with this population. In Phase I of our study, we have focused on SIFE who have recently entered school in the ninth grade. In Phase II, we plan to track SIFE in a variety of instructional settings to determine which of these is more effective in helping SIFE to achieve their educational goals.

1.2 *Objectives of Phase I*

- i. Develop a questionnaire to capture the backgrounds, attitudes, life and educational experiences of SIFE entering our schools.
- ii. Select a set of assessment instruments to help identify and characterize SIFE language and literacy skills and knowledge base.
- iii. Provide an in-depth analysis of the native language (L1) and second language (L2) skills and knowledge that SIFE bring to school.

- iv. Categorize SIFE into potential sub-groups for educators to use in instructional planning.
- v. Compare SIFE skills and knowledge with those needed for success in school.
- vi. Make preliminary recommendations to the DOE.

1.3 Overview of the report

In section 2, we describe the methodology used in this research, including the participating schools, the participants, the procedures, and the instruments we developed or selected. In section 3, we describe the findings of our study, which serve to provide an initial characterization of ninth grade SIFE in two contrasting schools. In section 4, we provide an assessment of the needs of these SIFE, considering their present skills and the language and learning standards expected at the grade level entered. In section 5, we offer our conclusions and recommendations.

2. Methodology

2.1 Participating schools

After discussions with administrators in several schools, we selected two contrasting high schools: one is large with a low graduation rate and one is small with a high graduation rate; each has a large number of English Language Learners (ELLs) and a sufficient number of ninth grade SIFE who had just entered school in the US for the first time. The schools we selected are described in more detail below.

2.1.1 Overview of High School A

This high school is open to all New York City residents, but is in the zoned program so that priority is given to students from the surrounding geographical area. It is a four-year high school with two bilingual programs, one in Spanish and one in Chinese. The graduation rate is about 54% in four years (much lower for ELLs), but 79% for students who stay for seven years. It is a large and diverse school with a total student enrollment of about 3800. In school year 2005-2006, the high school is accommodating fewer than 15 students who have been pre-identified as SIFE, but school administrators report that there have been a total of 75-80 students enrolled in the SIFE program over the last four years.

Most SIFE in this school speak Spanish as a native language. School A has a sheltered SIFE program, where all SIFE from a given year travel from class to class as a unit with no academic interaction with non-SIFE. The content teachers, Spanish native language arts (NLA) and English as a Second

Language (ESL) teachers who have been assigned these students are reported to have all been sensitized to the needs of the SIFE population through professional development.

2.1.2 Overview of High School B

Prior to September of 2005, this institution was open to all New York City residents, serving students from the Bronx, Brooklyn and Manhattan. As of now, the school only accepts students from Manhattan, giving priority to Spanish-speaking ELLs from its region. In order to be accepted at this school, students must have arrived in the United States not more than one year before applying.

The school offers a four-year bilingual program in Spanish and accommodates about 400 students, with a graduation rate that has ranged from 80 to 90% during the course of the four commencement ceremonies that have been held so far.

Of the total population in year 2005-2006, 112 students have been identified by the school as SIFE. The graduation rate reported for SIFE in general ranges from approximately 1 to 2% over six years.

In School B, SIFE do not move as a group but instead are mostly integrated into the general population, which is part of the school's "no-tracking" policy. Eventually, after SIFE have passed four levels of ESL—usually after 2 years—they merge into Transitional Bilingual Education, where they take three ESL classes and two content-classes. These classes are taught mostly in English, although some explanations may be given in Spanish. SIFE also participate in the morning, afternoon, and evening tutoring sessions that the school offers.

Training for the faculty is increasing, including, for example, recent professional development in scaffolding for ELLs. While 90% of the faculty are Spanish-English bilinguals and have training and credentials in bilingual education, they possess no formal preparation to accommodate SIFE's needs.

2.2 Participants

2.2.1 Selection of SIFE participants

At each high school, we interviewed a large number of prospective participants within the designated ninth grade SIFE population at each school. Originally, selection was based on the following criteria:

- a) Students must have been in the US less than 6 months before entering the ninth grade in school here.
- b) Students must be Spanish speakers.
- c) Students must have had interrupted schooling in their native countries.

We encountered many difficulties in selecting students: There was wide variation in the interpretations of New York State and New York City criteria for designating a student as SIFE: The determining factor for most administrators was whether a student had low literacy skills in the native language. In High School B, for example, no student we interviewed reported any interruption in schooling, though the staff had designated these students as SIFE based on writing samples in the L1. We thus followed primarily the schools' recommendations.

2.3 Procedures

We undertook the following procedures in this project:

Literature review

We researched information and studies available on SIFE/newcomer programs, particularly investigating the assessment tools used nationally in the identification and characterization of these students.

Development of the oral interview questionnaire

Based on the literature (e.g Chamot et al. 2000, Sudman & Bradburn 1982; Oppenheim 1992) we developed a background and attitudes questionnaire. We pilot-tested and revised this questionnaire several times before administering it at schools A and B. For a detailed description, see section 2.4.1.

Selection of the skills assessment tools

Standardized tests:

We began this process by reviewing the many tests described in an extensive report by Boyson and colleagues (Boyson et al. 2002, 2003), which describes model "newcomer" programs in the US (hereafter known as the "CAL Report"). In addition we consulted staff at SIFE placement centers across the country for recommendations of appropriate assessment tools. From this information, we selected an initial series of tests and secured test samples. Our preliminary selection was based on several criteria, including equivalency in English and Spanish, ease of administration, and cumulative grading of skills beginning with pre-literacy and oral skills and increasing to higher level reading and writing.

None of the centers mentioned in the CAL Report assessed either the students' pre-literacy skills or their knowledge of academic content, both of which we believe are key in determining the placement of SIFE in American schools. Therefore, we selected tests that included the pre-literacy tests regularly administered to young children learning to read, as well as tests that included measures of content knowledge such as Math, Science and Social Science.

RISLUS Syntax test of complex sentence comprehension:

We also included in our battery a test developed by the Research Institute of Language in Urban Society (RISLUS) at the CUNY Graduate Center, administered in both Spanish and English. This test taps basic comprehension of complex sentence structure and serves as a measure of normal development in the native language, separate from academic language and literacy skills.

Development of a classroom observation checklist

Since development of SIFE profiles includes observing the students in their classes, we developed an observation checklist to be used by researchers/observers. The checklist focuses on the student's engagement in the classroom as well as the teacher's practices and the class environment.

Pilot testing of all instruments and development of SIFE profiles

All instruments were pilot tested prior to administration to the 12 SIFE selected for this study.

Needs Assessment

Prior skills and knowledge SIFE bring with them, as determined by our analysis, were compared to the ESL and ELA learning standards expected in NYC high schools in the ninth grade.

2.4 Description of Instruments

In this section we describe in detail the oral interview questionnaire, the skills assessments and the observation checklist used in this study. The full reference for each instrument, along with authors and publishers, appears in Appendix A.

2.4.1 Oral Interview Questionnaire

The main purpose of the interview questionnaire was to discern patterns that identify the SIFE population in terms of their personal, educational and social background, as well as their attitudes and motivation toward education in their home countries and in the US.

The content of the questionnaire is subdivided into the following sections:

1. Personal and Language Information
2. Family, Home and Work Background
3. Attitudes Towards Home Country and Language
4. Education and Immigration History
5. Attitudes and Motivation Towards Education and Literacy
6. Language and Literacy Practices
7. Attitudes Towards Living in the United States
8. Other Questions – (including their first impressions of school in the US)

Personal and Language Information: This section asks about the student's age and place of birth. It also asks in which languages the student is comfortable speaking, listening, reading and writing, to get an initial sense of his/her language and literacy background.

Family, Home and Work Background: This section investigates the student's home life. It asks which family members, if any, the student is living with, along with information regarding family members' level of education, employment background and language preferences. Questions include whether the student is currently working or has worked in the past to help determine any factors that might have interfered with the student's education in the past.

Attitudes Towards Home Country and Language, Attitudes Towards Living in the United States and Attitudes and Motivation Towards Education and Literacy: All of the items in these sections are presented as statements that the student is instructed to agree with to varying degrees. Some items are based on Chamot et al. (2000) including: how the student feels about leaving his/her home country, how s/he feels about moving to the US, and general feelings of self-efficacy. Other items relevant to the student's experiences, attitudes, motivation and future goals are also included.

Education and Immigration History: This vital section of the questionnaire outlines potential gaps in the student's educational experiences, along with the year the student arrived in the US. It includes specific questions about every year the child went to school, providing the opportunity to capture any year(s) when school was missed since s/he was of school age. Other questions include where the participant went to school, how often, and what languages were taught or spoken there, and what s/he liked or disliked about past school experiences. For any year(s) the participant reports not attending school, the interviewer tries to ascertain the reason for this gap.

Language and Literacy Practices: Since language and literacy practices in the native language outside of school help form the basis for further language, literacy and academic development and achievement in English, this section includes very specific questions in this area. Participants are asked about literacy practices such as reading magazines or books, keeping a diary, or writing letters to friends and whether and where the student practices English.

Other Questions: This last section allows the student to provide any information that may have been missed in prior sections of the interview. Direct questions are asked about how the student feels about the transition into the US, and what his/her first impressions are about living in New York, attending school and classes here. This section also provides an opportunity for the student to speak about any other concerns s/he might want to discuss.

Administration of the questionnaire: The questionnaire was administered orally in Spanish by a native Spanish speaker of the research team, who had met the participant several times earlier and established a relationship with him/her. The interviewer conversed with the participant for several minutes before questioning began, and a relaxed atmosphere was established. The participant was asked several times during questioning whether s/he needed a break, a drink, etc., and this continued until the interview was over. Sessions were conducted privately, one-on-one, and audio-taped for later transcription, although the interviewer also recorded the student's answers directly on the questionnaire form. The interview took about 50 minutes to an hour.

Data Analysis: Analysis of the questionnaire data was both quantitative and qualitative, depending on the responses required by a given section. Qualitative data were coded by topic and analyzed by patterns shown in each school, and then across schools. The quantitative data were coded and put into an Excel spreadsheet for analysis and interpretation.

See Appendix B for sample items in the questionnaire.

2.4.2 Skills Assessments

In this section we describe the assessment instruments we used to measure language, literacy skills and content area knowledge. Three sets of test batteries were used:

- The IPT-I Oral English test*, to assess L2 English language skills;
- The RISLUS Syntax test*, to test natural or non-academic language development in the L1 Spanish and the L2 English;
- The Bateria III Woodcock-Munoz* to test academic language and literacy skills and content area knowledge in Spanish.

IPT I-Oral English Test

The IPT assesses four basic areas of English oral language proficiency: vocabulary (receptive and expressive knowledge of words depicted in the test), comprehension (ability to understand commands, concepts, story mood, and basic facts), syntax (use of correct syntax and basic grammar), and verbal expression (different aspects of oral language, both receptive and expressive). This incremental test assesses six levels of difficulty: A through F.

Commonly used at intake centers mentioned in the CAL report because it is incremental and takes a short time to administer (from two to twenty minutes, depending on a student's English proficiency level), this test was used to quickly assess a student's oral English proficiency.

Data Analysis:

The IPT was scored during administration. Once the student missed a certain number of items, as indicated by the scoring instructions, the testing stopped. Based on their raw scores, students are labeled as either Non-English speaking, Limited English speaking or Fluent English speaking.

RISLUS Syntax Test (Spanish and English)

This test, developed by RISLUS, is designed to evaluate the development of sentence structure, independently of the development of vocabulary. Previous tests of bilingual Spanish/English children have established that the structures targeted in this test are mastered by age 10.

In the present study we used the Syntax Test as a measure of normal development relevant to the non-academic functions of language, in contrast to the language skills tested in the Bateria III which are specifically relevant to the development of academic language.

The test targets particular sentence structures, known to be benchmarks in first language development. These are coordination, relative (or adjective) clauses, temporal adverbial clauses and subjectless subordinate clauses (see below for examples). Besides being indicators of normal language development, these structures also occur frequently in scholastic texts. We therefore thought it important to assess participants on their comprehension of such structures.

The test combines listening comprehension and picture pointing in an engaging task and can be administered both individually and in groups. The student hears a sentence twice and looks at 3 pictures. S/he is then asked to choose the picture that corresponds to the sentence.

Samples of items included in the test are given below. For a more comprehensive sample, see Appendix C.

- a) Subject coordination: The bear and the dog chase the cat.
- b) Relative clause: The bear who touches the dog dances.
- c) Temporal adverbial clauses: After jumping, the dog kicks the cat.
- d) Subjectless subordinate clauses: The cat tells the bear to jump.

Data Analysis: Each correct answer received a score of 1, each incorrect answer a score of 0. Percent correct for each student was computed as well as group means for each school and both schools combined.

Batería III Woodcock-Munoz Tests of Achievement (Spanish)

This test was used to evaluate academic language and literacy skills and content knowledge. It assesses achievement levels of Spanish-speaking individuals between the ages of 2 to 90+. It measures performance levels, determines educational progress, identifies individual strengths and weaknesses, and establishes the student's school grade level for each of the skills tested. It contains sections on pre-literacy skills (phonological awareness, print awareness, oral language), literacy skills (reading, writing, reasoning), oral language skills relevant to academic literacy, and academic content knowledge (math, science, social science, humanities). It includes an easy-to-use and easy-to-interpret computer scoring and reporting program.

From the standard and extended batteries, we selected 18 sub-tests that were administered in 4 sessions of 40 to 60 minutes each, depending on the performance level of the individual. The administration of the 18 tests may take between 150 to 240 minutes in total. We consider 12 of the 18 sub-tests to be critical in the evaluation of SIFE skills, and in case of time constraints, this subset could be administered, taking between 90 to 150 minutes in total. The tests that require listening comprehension or active speaking can be administered by using an audio recording or can be read by a fluent Spanish-speaking examiner.

A description of all sub-tests can be found in Appendix D:

Analysis by Skill Clusters:

The Batería III prepares a report for each test-taker by grouping selected sub-tests into clusters of skills and then provides the school grade level of the individual for each of the clusters. The clusters we included in our test are:

- Reading
- Oral language
- Written language
- Math
- Academic Knowledge

Below we describe the abilities measured by the clusters that we analyzed¹. Results in Section 3.2 are also reported in terms of these clusters.

Reading Clusters

- The Basic Reading Skills cluster is a combination of letter-word identification and word attack. It is an aggregate measure of sight vocabulary, phonics and structural analysis of words.

¹ Note that there are other subtests and clusters that can be measured in the Batería III which we did not include in our test, but which can be included at the discretion of each school.

- The Broad Reading cluster provides a measure of reading achievement including decoding and speed, and the ability to comprehend connected discourse while reading.
- The Reading Comprehension cluster is a combination of passage comprehension and reading vocabulary. It is an aggregate measure of comprehension, vocabulary, and reasoning.

Oral Language Clusters

- The Oral Language-Extended cluster is a measure of story recall, understanding directions, picture vocabulary and oral Comprehension.
- The Listening Comprehension cluster is a measure of listening ability and verbal comprehension.
- The Oral Expression cluster is a measure of linguistic competency and expressive vocabulary.

Written Language Clusters

- The *Broad Written Language* cluster provides a measure of written language achievement including spelling of single-word responses, fluency of production, and quality of expression.
- The *Written Expression* cluster is a measure of meaningful written expression and fluency providing a measure of written expression skills.

Math Clusters

- The Math Reasoning cluster provides a measure of mathematical knowledge and reasoning. It is a measure of problem solving, analysis, reasoning, and vocabulary.

Academic Knowledge Clusters

- The Academic Knowledge cluster is a sample of the individual's range of scientific knowledge, social studies knowledge, and cultural knowledge.

2.4.3 Classroom Observation Checklist

Researchers observed each participant one time in each of three academic classes: ESL, Math and Science. The same procedure was used for both High School A and High School B.

The observation checklist was developed as a means of assessing each student's classroom experience and performance. Every observation was conducted by two researchers, each of whom filled out the checklist by assigning values to particular measures of SIFE performance and engagement in classroom activities.

In addition to evaluating SIFE performance and engagement, an important objective of classroom observations was to determine whether the level of input from the teachers is comprehensible for SIFE, with particular attention on those

activities geared toward literacy development. Finally the observation checklist would be used to compare skills that SIFE show on assessment tests with performance in their classes.

Observers assigned values on a 1-3 rating scale where 1 = Disagree and 3 = Completely Agree to a variety of observational statements regarding the participant in the classroom setting (for details, see Observation Checklist in Appendix E). There is also room given at the end of each section for the observer to make comments and justifications on why a particular value was assigned. All language use in the classroom, native language and English, was noted. The checklist has been divided into the following 5 sections:

1. Literacy Practices
2. Lesson Overview
3. Student Oral Language
4. Student Written Language
5. Teacher Language Practices (Optional)

Literacy Practices

This section asks direct questions regarding specific activities on literacy development, including both those aimed at low-level skills like decoding and literal questions as well as those intended for higher-level skills such as making inferences and predictions. It also looks at the level of scaffolding provided by the teacher, explicit vocabulary instruction and practice, and whether or not the language of written materials matches that of the oral language used.

Lesson Overview

This section focuses on the content and language aims of the classroom and whether or not they are aligned with and made comprehensible to the SIFE being observed. Level of SIFE engagement and overall organization and clarity of the lesson are also assessed.

Student Oral & Written Performance

The oral section assesses the student's comprehension of teacher's oral instructions and directions and the student's level of participation in all oral activities in the classroom. Participation is also reflected by how much s/he answers questions posed to the class or directed at him or her and by the extent to which s/he seeks help when necessary. The student's written language section mirrors that of the oral language section, but focuses on the comprehension of written directions and participation in those activities involving writing practices.

Teacher Language Practices

This section was developed as an optional component that seeks information regarding comprehensibility, accuracy and clarity of the teacher's oral and written

language use. It also provides a means for comparing time spent using native language and/or English in the classroom.

Data Analysis

Means were calculated for each item in both English and Spanish for all students from each of the two schools. Means were also calculated for every student for the sections of Oral Language and Written Language to determine Overall Oral Language Performance and Overall Written Language Performance. The results from the two schools were then compared to find patterns of similarities and/or differences between them.

3. Results and Discussion: Characteristics of SIFE Participants

In this section, we combine the data from case studies of each participant, providing the results of the oral interview questionnaires, the skills assessment tests, and the classroom observations for Schools A and B combined. Individual and group data for all 12 SIFE participants are reported here;² for summaries of individual case studies, see Appendix F. We also select and analyze two sub-groups of SIFE, for instructional purposes later discussed in our conclusions.

3.1 Findings from the Oral Interview Questionnaires

Their oral interviews suggest that the SIFE at School A and School B have similar backgrounds, with only slight differences in school experiences, attitudes and motivation, and goals. In School A, SIFE range in age from 14-18 and come from the Dominican Republic, Ecuador or Mexico. In School B they are 15 or 16 years of age and all come from the Dominican Republic. Across both schools, most (though not all) SIFE report having lived and gone to school in rural areas. Their families have had little schooling in the native country, with the education level of SIFE families at School B slightly higher than that of School A. The SIFE in School A report gaps in their schooling from 2 to 7 years, while those at School B do not report any interruption in their schooling. All the SIFE in our study now live with relatives in New York, although most have left a parent behind in their native countries. This separation of families could be a potential source of anxiety for these students, although this was not explicitly reported in the SIFE interviews.

Family, Home and Work Background: Spanish is the language spoken at home for all of these students, although some report that a few (generally younger) members of their families know “some English.” The highest level of education reached amongst the family members in NYC is generally high school, although one SIFE at School B reports that his father has a college education. About half report their family members to be literate in Spanish and most report

² In order to protect the identity of the participants in this study, we have provided them with pseudonyms.

that family members are employed in NYC, many in construction. None of the SIFE in School A reports working here, while two at School B say that they have jobs here; none expect to miss school in the future because of work. While some English is spoken in the neighborhoods where they live, the predominant language used is Spanish.

Ties to the native country and native language: All report that “Spanish is very important to me,” although not all “speak Spanish as much as possible” (more in School A than in School B). To some degree all those at School A “want to return to live in my country” but only one is definitely planning “to move back,” while at School B there is more ambivalence about moving back: No one definitely wants “to return to my home country to live.”

Reasons for immigration and attitudes about living here: Across both schools, they have varied reasons for having come to the US: Some came at the request of a family member who was living here; others came to work; most came because there was “more opportunity here,” it was “easier to live,” or they came “for my future.” Most were happy about moving here, while a small number were sad because of family left behind; only one reports being “homesick.” Almost all report that they “like living in New York,” most think that “Americans are friendly,” but fewer than half would like to socialize (i.e. “go to parties”) with Americans.

Attitude toward learning English: A striking similarity across the SIFE at both schools is their very strong motivation to learn English and acquire high levels of literacy in the language. They all strongly agreed that “it is important to read and write well in English.” All selected these reasons for learning English: “To speak more with others”; “to earn more money and get a job”; “because my family wants me to”; and “because English is an important language in the world.” Fewer want to learn English “to translate for my family,” “because I feel ashamed not knowing English,” or “so others won’t make fun of me.”

Attitude and motivation toward education: All except one SIFE report liking school in their home countries, and most agree that school here is “different from school in my country.” At School A, those differences are all positive: Here there is “free food” and “help for those without money,” a variety of classes and “changing schedules;” they especially liked the emphasis on learning English. At School B, most felt the differences were also positive, with a few minor complaints. In a strong tribute to both schools, they all “like their school in New York,” mainly because of their classes, teachers and friends. Some at School B expressed a desire for more computers and half of the SIFE at that school want to “learn more English.” Asked whether their families think they should have classes in Spanish while they are learning English, there was some difference between the two schools: At School A, where most of their classes are in

English, every SIFE answered “yes,” while at School B, where all their classes are in Spanish (except ESL), only half responded “yes.”

Language and Literacy Practices: All the SIFE in this study report reading in Spanish in their spare time: This includes comic books, newspapers, magazines, and religious material (in School B only). Most report writing letters, postcards or emails to friends and family in Spanish. Many report writing in journals and using the internet or computers (but it is not clear whether this is reserved for school). Most of them report using English to some extent, mostly to watch TV, or listen to music on CDs or the radio.

Expectations and goals: Most striking of all is their optimism and high expectations to complete their education and achieve success in the US. All say that they and their families think that “graduating from high school is important” and most of these students and their families believe that they will definitely “graduate from high school” and that “going to college is important.” In fact, most believe they will graduate from college, and almost all agree that “it will be easy for me to be successful in the United States.” At School A, their future plans are non-specific (they want to “study” or “finish school” or “get a job”), except for one SIFE who hopes to “be a doctor.” At School B, most are aiming for professions that require a post-graduate degree (e.g. a journalist, an engineer and two lawyers); one student, whose father was an accountant in the Dominican Republic, has the aspirations of many advantaged American students: He wants to “graduate and travel the world.”

3.2 Findings from the Skills Assessment Tests

IPT English:

All students from School A and School B were labeled *Non-English Speaking* based on the results of the IPT English assessment of oral production skills. Out of a possible 85, the correct scores ranged from 2-10 and 4-15, at Schools A and B respectively.

RISLUS Syntax Test:

The syntax test was given to all students in both Spanish and English to assess normal language development. In Spanish, the mean score for School A is 82% and for School B 77%, indicating normal development of non-academic, “natural” language. One student had a low score, relative to the others in the group, i.e. 56%. However, since chance level in this test is 33%, this score actually indicates moderate mastery of the targeted structures, rather than guessing. In general, then, the SIFE at both schools exhibit normal language comprehension in their L1, as applied to the non-academic communicative function.

In English, the mean scores are 62% and 46% at Schools A and B, respectively, both of which are well above chance (33%). This indicates that these participants have some limited comprehension of basic English. However, as

noted above, all our participants were classified as non-English speakers by the IPT test.

Batería III:

The Bateria was administered to all students in our study in order to assess sets of skills relevant to academic language and content knowledge in Spanish. On this test battery, these skills are assessed according to grade level equivalents normed for Spanish-speaking students at grade levels in schools across the US.

The Bateria III, though normed nationwide, has obviously not been measured specifically against a student population with interrupted or delayed schooling, like the one we are testing. The results, then, provide an *approximation* of SIFE skills and should be viewed with caution until comparable groups have been similarly tested in our schools.

The results to follow represent scores across both schools, as no wide differences were seen from one school to the other. Table 1 shows the mean grade equivalency (GE) for test clusters within the Bateria for all SIFE as a group (for individual scores see Appendix G).

Test Cluster	Grade Equivalency
Oral Language (Extended)	2.4
Oral Expression	2.0
Listening Comprehension	3.0
Spelling of Sounds	5.7
Sound Awareness	2.5
Basic Reading	9.4
Broad Reading	4.8
Reading Comprehension	3.0
Broad Written Language	3.4
Written Expression	3.1
Mathematical Reasoning	3.7
Academic Knowledge	1.4

Table 1. Mean GE Scores on Bateria Test Clusters (n=12)

As is to be expected of students with as uneven an educational history as the SIFE in this study, the results of these tests indicate that as a group, students from Schools A and B score well below ninth grade level on most test clusters. The highest mean is in the basic reading cluster, which measures sight vocabulary, phonics and word-structure analysis. However, on other sub-tests measuring pre-literacy skills and decoding ability, the group mean was below grade level: In spelling of sounds (which measures phonological and orthographic coding skills), scores do not quite reach sixth grade level and on sound awareness (which measures rhyming, deletion, substitution and reversal

of sounds), they scored well below that. All other group means are far below grade level, including broad reading, writing and oral language measures, mathematical reasoning and academic knowledge.

The individual GE scores for all the Bateria tests are presented in Figure 1, with a line indicating the mean for each test cluster across the twelve students.

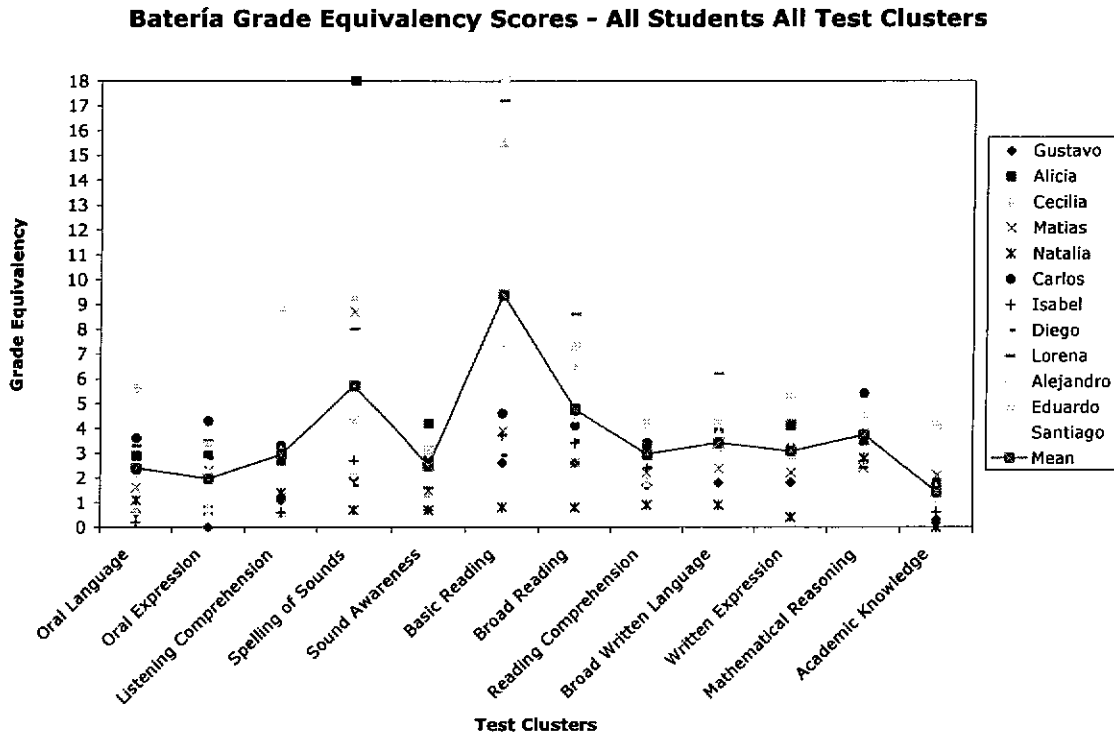


Figure 1

Figure 1 shows, broadly, that almost everyone scored well below grade level (except for basic reading, which is discussed below), with the lowest scores for all students shown for academic knowledge.

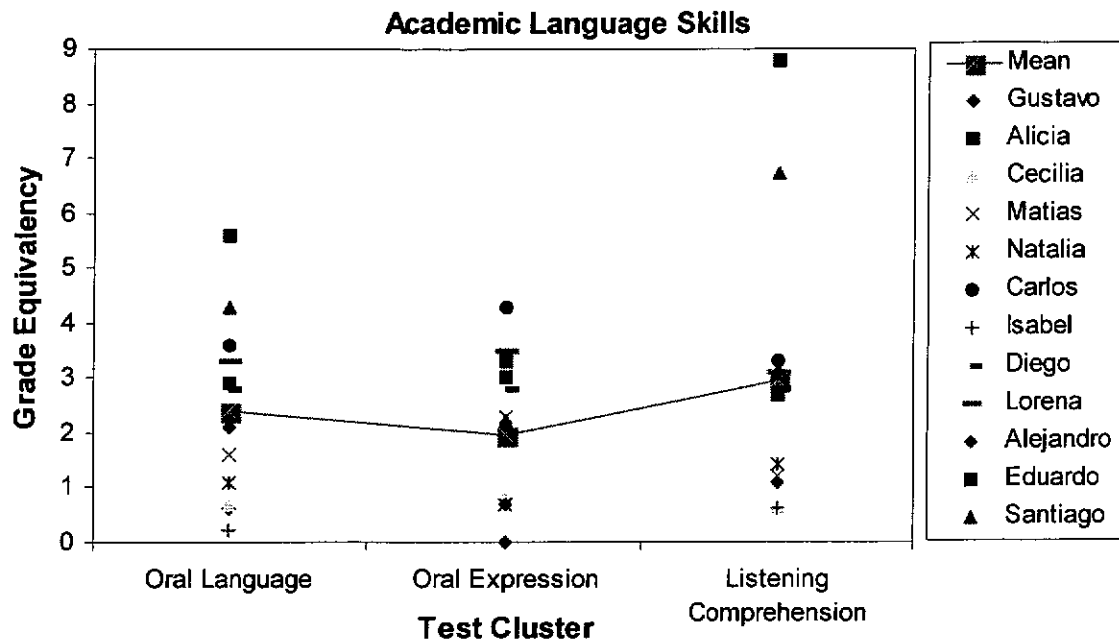


Figure 2

Figure 2 shows individual scores for academic language skills in Spanish, providing measures of academic literacy (e.g. recognition and manipulation of Spanish language sounds, story recall and memory, understanding directions, listening ability and comprehension, receptive and expressive content vocabulary and reasoning skills). Our findings indicate that the twelve SIFE in our study exhibit mean scores between the second and third grade levels on these academic language tests.

In summary, we note that while all the students in our study exhibited normal development of natural language skills (see RISLUS Syntax Test results above), our assessment of their *academic* language in Spanish suggests wide gaps in foundational knowledge and skills needed for grade level equivalency.

In Figure 3, we separately show scores on tests relevant to reading and writing in Spanish.

Mean Grade Equivalency for Reading and Writing

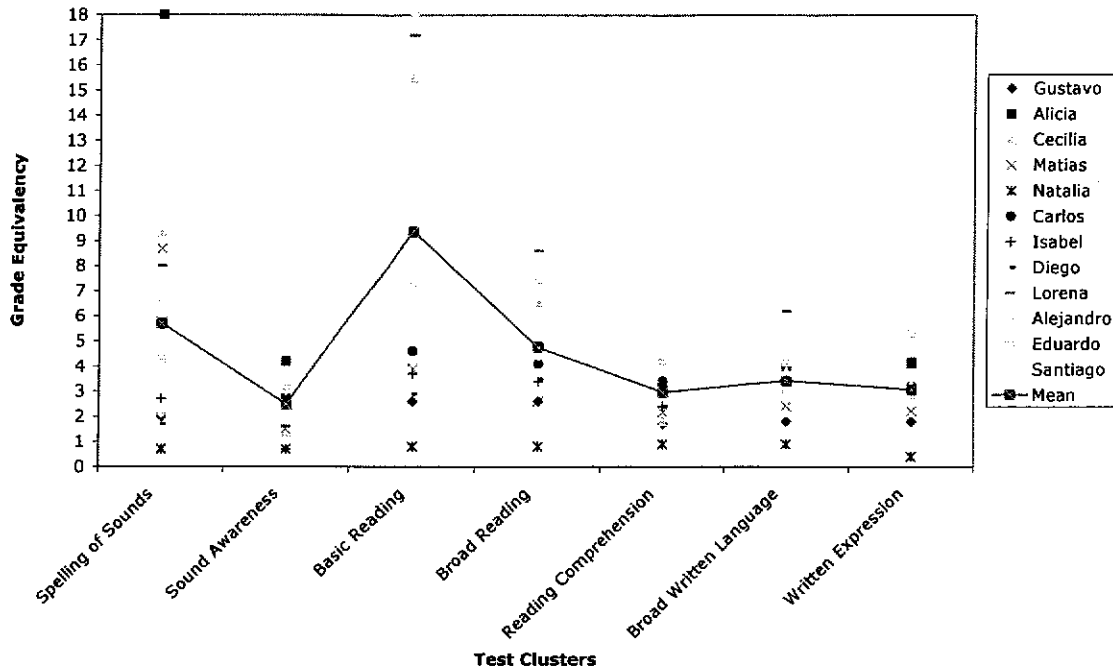


Figure 3

Figure 3 shows that five students have unusually high basic reading scores, indicating, amongst other things, excellent decoding skills. These high basic readers have skewed the results upwards on mean scores for basic reading, as the majority of SIFE score below grade level on this measure. Broad reading scores (measuring speed and comprehension of connected discourse, as well as decoding ability) are much lower than those for basic reading, with all students scoring below grade level. The lowest scores are found for reading comprehension which is a measure of comprehension, reading vocabulary and reasoning.

In the writing clusters, all students score below grade level. Broad Written Language, which measures spelling, fluency and quality of expression, shows a mean of fourth grade. Written Expression, which measures meaningful writing shows a slightly lower mean.

Our results suggest two sub-groups within the SIFE population – weak and strong basic readers. We therefore separated participants into 2 groups based on this measure. Figure 4 now shows mean grade equivalencies for all other skills for these two groups separately.

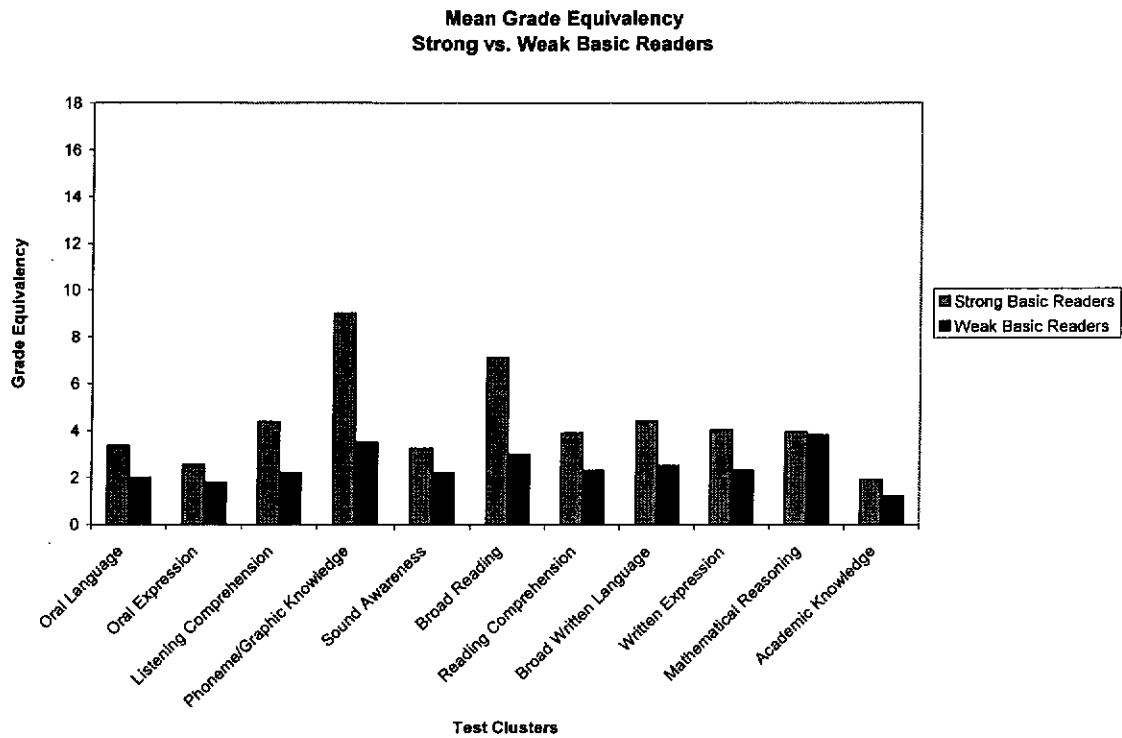


Figure 4

Weak basic readers are represented by the purple bars and strong basic readers by the blue bars. The weak basic readers do not reach fourth grade level in any skill or knowledge area. In some skills they are just above or below second grade equivalency (e.g. oral expression, listening comprehension, sound awareness, reading comprehension).

The strong basic readers score close to grade level in spelling of sounds. Their broad reading skills, with a mean of seventh grade, are higher than those of the weak basic readers, meaning that good basic readers can read words quickly and comprehend connected text. However, their reading comprehension of longer passages and their academic vocabulary and reasoning skills are low, with a mean of just under fourth grade level; their writing skills also hover around fourth grade.

In an effort to see whether there were any correlations between basic reading and other skills, we subjected these scores to further statistical analysis. In particular we compared the weak basic reading group and the strong basic reading group on their average scores in four areas: oral and listening comprehension skills, reading comprehension (at the text level), writing skills and content area knowledge. Strong basic readers showed higher means in all four areas, although this difference reached statistical significance only for writing ($p=.01$).

We can conclude that strong basic reading skills are necessary but not sufficient for the academic language and literacy skills needed for high school success. The strong basic readers, like the weak basic readers, need foundational literacy skills, although they can proceed from a more advanced starting point. This will be discussed in our recommendations.

Finally, academic content knowledge is the one assessment area on which all of our participants performed at very low grade levels. This is now shown in Figure 5.

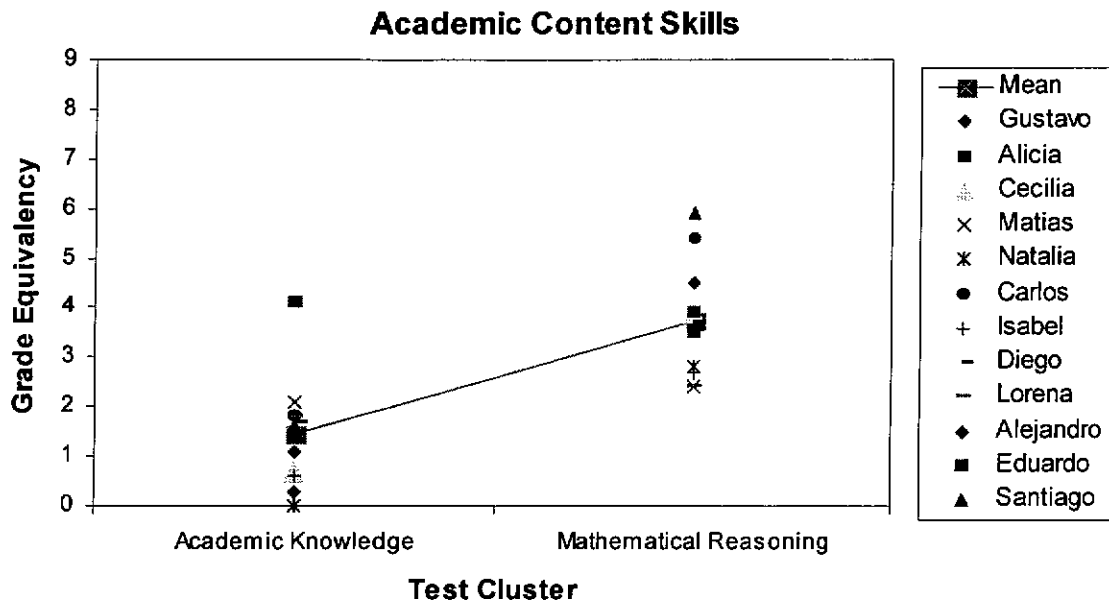


Figure 5

Figure 5 indicates that all the students in our study performed very poorly on tests of academic content knowledge (science, social studies, cultural knowledge). This is not surprising, given that most of these students come from rural schools, with uneven backgrounds in prior academic knowledge. For every student in our sample, these represented the lowest scores of any assessment (see Figure 1 above), most students scoring below third grade level. Math reasoning, on the other hand, was higher: Two students performed between the fifth and 6th grade levels, while mean scores for the whole group were between the third and the fourth grade.

In sum, the results of the assessments described in this section of our report indicate that students in this SIFE population still require fundamental skills needed to perform successfully in the first year of high school (i.e. ninth grade). The weak basic readers need to begin with foundational literacy skills, while the

stronger basic readers should begin with these skills but move to more advanced reading skills, like reading comprehension. All need higher level academic reasoning skills and academic content knowledge. These needs are further discussed in section 4.

3.3 Findings from the Classroom Observations

First, it is obvious that the SIFE teachers at both these schools are working very hard to serve these students as best they can. The dedication and skills of the administrators and teachers in the programs we observed support their well-deserved reputation for success in educating non-SIFE ELLs. We note that the SIFE in our study expressed strong motivation to learn and succeed, which is probably due to their positive initial experiences in each school, where they have felt welcomed and supported. In this section we report on their academic engagement in and comprehension of their lessons at school.

Schools A and B have two major differences in their approach to the education of SIFE: At School A, SIFE classes are sheltered, i.e. these students travel as a group to all their classes. Most of the classes we observed were conducted in English, or English with some native language support, except for math class which was conducted mostly in Spanish. At School B, SIFE are mixed with regular ESL students; that is, SIFE are not sheltered. Classes in the ninth grade at School B are all conducted in Spanish, except for ESL.

For each of the twelve SIFE participants in our study, we observed ESL, science and math classes. Our results across the two schools are similar, with one striking exception, discussed below.

As a whole, the content and language of the ESL classes, taught in English, generally match the students' level of proficiency, i.e. these classes are taught at a beginning level. However, interest does not always match students' high levels of motivation to learn English (as described above): Students at both schools were generally engaged in their ESL classes, except during reading and writing activities. Comprehension of English lessons was therefore not always optimal, even though teachers used a variety of scaffolding techniques and materials to increase understanding. Students' oral and written performance in these classes was generally very low.

Science classes are either taught solely in Spanish, or in English with native language support (mainly for clarification of directions and instructions). Across both schools, the science lessons were generally above SIFE level, limiting comprehension and learning. In some classes, activities focused on literacy practices, especially vocabulary acquisition, with group-work and collaborative activities nicely incorporated into the lessons. However much of the classroom technical language deals with science concepts for which SIFE have very little

prior knowledge (as indicated by their scores on the Academic Knowledge tests described above).

Science classes, particularly when mixed with non-SIFE ELLs, were generally pitched at a higher level than SIFE can understand, even with scaffolding through visual and reality-based materials and other creative approaches to science. Engagement and comprehension are clearly enhanced when art and other non-verbal strategies are used to support some of the difficult science concepts being presented. However, while the SIFE in these classes are clearly proficient in the Spanish language (as measured by the RISLUS Syntax Test), they lack *academic* language skills and knowledge. Therefore they will need much more direct instruction in elementary concepts in science before they can understand and learn from the often imaginative and interesting lessons provided by their teachers.

Of all the classes we observed, one math class taught in Spanish is noteworthy. In this class, most SIFE, including those with very low skills in mathematics, are generally engaged and participate in the lesson with enthusiasm. The room is set up with tables around which the students work in groups on tasks and problems, which they solve together. The teacher begins class by focusing them on a topic, asks interesting and relevant questions to the group, introduces simple calculations and problems on the chalkboard – using numbers, drawings, and other scaffolding to improve comprehension. The students solve these together and then work in groups on related tasks and problems as the teacher walks around questioning, though rarely, if ever, giving answers. The class comes together from time to time to discuss the problems they are solving, and the teacher expertly uses their errors as teaching points to further develop the lesson.

This sheltered SIFE class provides the foundations of math that these students are lacking, and it does so using materials and strategies that engage all the students. It proceeds step-by-step, building concepts in a logical order, gradually increasing the difficulty of math calculations and reasoning. It uses a variety of visual, tactile and auditory techniques to help with comprehension of difficult material, and moves at a challenging but realistic pace. All students participate because a jigsaw approach involves each student in the solution of a problem, and most students experience small successes that, in turn, increase motivation for more learning. Visual arts are integrated into the lesson as students draw, make imaginative graphs, and create books and posters to illustrate math problems. Engagement is enhanced by competition across pairs and groups for a “prize” when a problem is solved correctly, providing a concrete goal towards which students actively strive. We use this class as a model for our SIFE recommendations in section 5.

4. SIFE Needs Assessment

In this section we describe the learning standards for ESL, ELA and reading abilities expected in the ninth grade, that is, the grade at which the group of SIFE participants entered, and give a brief evaluation of SIFE instructional needs to bring them up to these levels.

The New York State ESL and ELA Learning Standards state that students should be able to read, write, listen and speak English for information and understanding, for literary response and expression, for critical analysis and evaluation and for classroom and social interaction. In addition, the Learning Standards for Reading Comprehension at the Eighth Grade level require students to be able to make inferences regarding the meaning of a passage, summarize material and extract main ideas, identify outcomes and conclusions of stories and non-fictional accounts, identify causes of events and draw conclusions based on evidence. The latter includes the ability to differentiate between conclusions based on fact and those based on opinions, and the ability to gather information from a variety of sources to explain a situation or solve a problem. These reading skills are applicable in any content area, including math, science and social science.

Clearly, the above standards are intended to describe the academic skills required of a student entering high school and having to handle substantial volumes of texts and discourse. Students must further be able to apply these skills to the learning of language, e.g. English as a linguistic system, the learning of English Language Arts, i.e. English and its literature, and all the content area subjects.

Equally clearly, the results obtained from the Bateria III taken by the SIFE participants in this study indicate that there are great gaps between the skills they bring with them, and the skills required by the above Standards. Indeed, for these students the academic literacy skills required by the Standards are not accessible even in their first language, Spanish, as is indicated by their scores on the reading, writing and listening test clusters. Furthermore, their scores on academic content knowledge show even lower levels of achievement.

While this state of affairs is far from surprising, and even to be expected, given the lacunae in this group's prior education, it also argues strongly for a period of intensive instruction in academic language and literacy skills and in some cases, basic reading skills. It is important to note that instruction in these academic skills must be provided to them in the native language, as it would not only be futile but counterproductive, to teach these skills in English, as their scores on the IPT-English test clearly showed them to be non-English speakers. The challenge SIFE are facing, in other words, is to acquire, almost from scratch, three foundational skills for success in US high schools, skills which they presently lack: The first is to gain the academic skills required for the study of

any subject matter, including ELA. The second is to gain mastery of the English language (i.e. ESL instruction). And the third is to learn to apply the required academic skills to the study of any subject matter taught in the English language. It should be clear that these three goals are separate and independent of one another and should be treated as such in the implementation of any instructional programs for SIFE.

In addition, SIFE clearly show great gaps in background knowledge relevant to academic subjects taught in the ninth grade and will have to be brought up to grade level in these areas. These points will be further discussed in section 5 below, when we present our recommendations.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

We first report our conclusions from the oral interviews, skills assessments and classroom observations among the twelve ninth grade SIFE that we studied.

From the oral interviews, we conclude that some of these students have not had interrupted schooling, although they have dramatic gaps in the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in school. We conclude that the criteria for identification of SIFE should be changed (see recommendations). They are highly motivated to learn English and have high expectations to graduate from high school as well as college. There is a wide gap, however, between the hopes they and their families have for the future and the reality of the skills and knowledge these students bring to school.

Our analysis of their L2 English skills suggests that the SIFE we studied, while having some comprehension of basic English, can be considered non-English speaking when it comes to the academic language needed for school. They are all beginning English language learners.

Our analysis of their L1 Spanish skills indicates that their natural language skills are age-appropriate, showing normal development. However, the language skills SIFE need for academic work (e.g. listening comprehension, vocabulary, understanding directions, retelling stories) are very low, i.e. below third grade level.

The majority of these students do not exhibit adequate basic reading skills that provide the foundations for literacy development (e.g. sound awareness, knowledge of phonics and sight words, basic academic vocabulary), recording scores well below grade level. Regardless of their scores in basic reading, no one is reported to have a reading comprehension score close to grade level. This measure also indicates lack of academic reasoning skills required for high school

level work. As expected, the writing skills of these students are also very weak, while their lowest scores are in academic content knowledge.

We conclude that all these students need four foundational skills that will require sheltered, intensive instruction over a given period of additional school time:

1. The literacy skills needed for the study of all academic subjects.
2. The background knowledge needed to take them to ninth grade level in all academic subjects.
3. Mastery of the English language (i.e. ESL instruction).
4. Application of academic literacy skills and background knowledge (in 1, and 2.) to the study of academic subjects taught in English.

We also conclude that at least two sub-groups of SIFE can be identified to educators in planning literacy instruction: those with weak basic reading skills and those with strong basic reading skills (see recommendations below).

Our classroom observation data revealed supportive schools and hard-working, dedicated teachers. However, we conclude that the needs of SIFE largely exceed what these teachers can provide in their current programs. We found that SIFE exhibited a general lack of comprehension and engagement in most classroom lessons and therefore learning was minimal.

5.2 Recommendations

1. We propose a change in the criteria for the identification and selection of SIFE for special services, considering that not all have had interrupted formal education, but some have had *prior schooling of very poor quality*; such schooling has delayed the development of their academic literacy skills and content knowledge. On the other hand, some students with interrupted schooling may not require the additional services of a SIFE program.

We therefore strongly recommend that SIFE identification be based on a skills and knowledge assessment similar to the ones we used in this study. This could be administered during intake procedures for incoming ELLs recommended at the regional or school level.

2. Following identification of SIFE, we recommend that they be placed into two instructional sub-groups determined by their basic reading scores (and, pending further research, other sub-groups will certainly emerge).³

³ Since native language support is included in our recommendations, optimal organization of SIFE into sub-groups would include homogeneity of L1; for example, Chinese-speaking SIFE would be separated from Spanish-speaking SIFE. When native language support is not available, mixed L1 groups of SIFE would occur, with delivery of instruction solely in English and native language peer groups encouraged.

- Spanish L1, with low basic reading skills
- Spanish L1, with high basic reading skills

Instruction of each group must, critically, be *targeted* with very specific instructional goals to meet their language, literacy and academic needs (as shown in their intake protocols) as quickly as possible. The group with low skills will require basic phonics instruction, along with word attack skills and fundamental academic listening, reading and writing development. Those with higher basic reading skills also need a carefully planned and implemented literacy program. Taking their basic reading scores as a starting point, instructors must provide strong interventions to improve these students' oral skills along with broader reading and writing skills. A major focus on vocabulary development will especially be required for SIFE, as the latest educational research on literacy has made this an important recommendation for all students in US schools (e.g. Hirsch, Jr. 2006; Neuman 2006).

3. Following research on bilingual education, we recommend that the literacy skills mentioned in 2. and background content be taught in their native language, whenever possible. This conclusion is explained by the Common Underlying Proficiency Model, most recently discussed by Cummins in terms of academic achievement in Canada (2006). According to this model, concepts, strategies and linguistic elements learned in the native language are readily transferred to the new language, in this case English. At the same time, these students should participate in a strong English language program from the beginning of their entrance to school.

4. We recommend a lengthening of the time allotted for SIFE to complete their high school education, since the development of their foundational skills will require a longer period of schooling than that needed for other ELLs. This recommendation is strongly supported in recent research by Shohamy (2006a. b.) who reports that Ethiopian children entering Israeli middle schools with little or no formal education often take more than 9-10 years to acquire academic literacy skills in their new language.

5. For SIFE who are at high-school age, we recommend sheltered SIFE classes for the first two years of their schooling. In particular, we recommend a 2-year sheltered, transitional program that selected SIFE would attend before entering the ninth grade.⁴ This specialized program would, optimally, be housed in a separate (small) school or be part of a pre-existing newcomer school.

⁴ An extensive proposal for this program is beyond the scope of this report, but we can envision many possibilities for planning a challenging and exciting course of study. In addition, if a student can successfully complete his/her required course of study after one year, as evaluated by assessments built into the program, s/he can transfer to 'regular' ELL classes (i.e. in a ninth grade curriculum) in the second year.

This intensive intervention is necessary because SIFE need time and specialized instruction to develop both their academic literacy skills and the content knowledge they are lacking. This transitional program would then prepare them for entry into ninth grade.

In contrast to a remedial or deficit model, we envision a very rigorous curriculum, a great deal of technology and advanced instructional materials, portfolio assessments to supplement standardized tests (Cummins, personal communication, May 6, 2006), along with high goals and expectations on the part of students and educators alike. Students and their families must feel that they have been *selected* to participate in this program and students must expect to work very hard to reach grade level. This follows from our findings, which show their strong motivation and desire to succeed.

We predict that this two year program will allow these students to have the successes that they are not now experiencing. It will, we also predict, lower their drop-out rate by giving them a more solid background for successfully undertaking secondary schoolwork. To this end, we envision that beginning in their third instructional year, these students can start ninth grade level work, with the type of *best practices* for instruction that should be used for all students but which serve as a lifeline for SIFE.

6. Among *best practices*, we recommend the following characteristics that we observed in the most effective SIFE classes we visited:

- Student-centered classes, where rooms are set-up for group work and collaborative learning
- Focus on task-based learning and problem-solving activities
- Inclusion of appropriate literacy activities, in every class, geared to needs of students
- All literacy activities preceded by oral introduction and practice of the relevant material
- Inclusion of varied and extensive scaffolding techniques and materials for optimal comprehension of both oral and written material
- Use of jigsaws and other techniques to ensure participation of all students
- Assessment built into every activity so that comprehension and learning are continually evaluated
- Inclusion of effective technology for motivation and learning
- In bilingual classes, language switching and translation done in a principled way
- English taught through interesting and relevant academic content
- Continual focus on vocabulary development in English, with emphasis on *depth* as well as *breadth*
- Inclusion of challenging oral questions and discussion, to enhance higher level thinking skills

7. We make the following recommendations⁵ for further research among the SIFE population (see a more detailed research proposal to follow):

- A comparison of the findings from the present study with assessment of non-SIFE ELLs, and a control group of English native speakers, matched in age and grade level with the SIFE participants we tested.
- A longitudinal investigation and evaluation of the students involved in the present study along with students in other SIFE programs.⁶
- A study of SIFE who speak languages other than Spanish
- A study comparing SIFE who choose or do not choose bilingual instruction

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⁵ There are many more potential areas for rich and varied research among this population, but these are what we feel would be most useful at this time.

⁶ Such an investigation would follow a student through high school.

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7. Appendices

APPENDIX A

The following skills assessment tests were used for this project:

- Oral Interview Questionnaire (Klein, E., 2005, CUNY Graduate Center)
- IPT Oral – English (2001, Ballard & Tighe)
- RISLUS Syntax Test (English & Spanish) (Martohardjono, G. & R. Otheguy, 2005, CUNY Graduate Center)
- Batería III – Woodcock-Muñoz pruebas de aprovechamiento (2005, Riverside Publishing)

APPENDIX B
Sample items from questionnaire with English translation

Historial Educativo e Inmigratorio

Ahora me gustaría hacerte algunas preguntas sobre tu experiencia en la escuela hasta este año.

Voy a repetir algunas de las preguntas para cada año que estuviste en la escuela.

1) ¿Qué edad tenías cuando empezaste a ir a la escuela por primera vez? _____

2) ¿Fuiste siempre a la escuela hasta que te mudaste aquí o hubo alguna época en la que no ibas a la escuela?

(Intente obtener un panorama general del historial educativo del estudiante, incluyendo los períodos en que no asistió a la escuela, antes de pasar a la tabla de abajo. Luego, comenzando con la edad en que el estudiante comenzó la escuela, haga todas las preguntas en esa línea, empezando por '¿En qué país estabas viviendo?'. Continúe completando la información para cada año. Comience cada línea haciendo la pregunta 3 y siga las instrucciones debajo de esa pregunta.)

3) Cuando tenías _____ (diga el rango de edades) , ¿continuó todo igual que el año/los años anterior(es)?

(En caso afirmativo, marque 'NC' (=sin cambios) en el primer recuadro de esa línea, bajo la pregunta '¿En qué país estabas viviendo?'. De lo contrario, haga todas las preguntas en esa línea para ese rango de edades y marque las respuestas correspondientes.)

Rango de edades	¿En qué país estabas viviendo?	(No haga esta pregunta para el primer año) ¿Fuiste a la escuela ese año?	(En caso afirmativo) ¿estaba tu escuela en una ciudad o en el campo? (marque una opción.)	(Si asistió a la escuela, haga las siguientes preguntas.) (complete las respuestas correspondientes.)				(Si no asistió a la escuela, haga las siguientes preguntas.) (ingrese S o N según corresponda.)				
				¿Aprox. cuántos días por semana?	¿Aprox. cuántas horas por día?	¿En qué idioma se brindaban las clases?	¿Estudiaste algún otro idioma ese año?	¿Estudiaste en tu casa ese año?	¿Trabajaste ese año?	¿Hubo algún otro problema que te impidió asistir a la escuela?		
5 - 6												
6 - 7												
7 - 8												
8 - 9												
9 - 10												
10 - 11												
11 - 12												
12 - 13												
13 - 14												
14 - 15												
15 - 16												
16 - 17												
17 - 18												

Si un estudiante no asistió a la escuela durante más de 2 años desde los 9 años, podría considerarse un/a SIFE.
En base al historial educativo del estudiante según se desprende de la tabla que antecede:

¿Parecería que este estudiante es un/a SIFE?

(marque una opción) **SÍ**

NO

Historial Educativo e Inmigratorio

Me gustaría saber un poco más sobre tu experiencia en la escuela.

- 1) ¿Qué materias te resultaban más fáciles en tu país? *(marque todas las opciones que correspondan)*
- | | | | | |
|------------|----------|-------------------|------------|-------------|
| Matemática | Ciencias | Estudios Sociales | Literatura | Otra: _____ |
|------------|----------|-------------------|------------|-------------|
- 2) ¿Y ahora qué materias te resultan más fáciles?
- | | | | | |
|------------|----------|-------------------|------------|-------------|
| Matemática | Ciencias | Estudios Sociales | Literatura | Otra: _____ |
|------------|----------|-------------------|------------|-------------|
- 3) ¿Qué materias te resultaban más difíciles en tu país?
- | | | | | |
|------------|----------|-------------------|------------|-------------|
| Matemática | Ciencias | Estudios Sociales | Literatura | Otra: _____ |
|------------|----------|-------------------|------------|-------------|
- 4) ¿Y ahora qué materias te resultan más difíciles?
- | | | | | |
|------------|----------|-------------------|------------|-------------|
| Matemática | Ciencias | Estudios Sociales | Literatura | Otra: _____ |
|------------|----------|-------------------|------------|-------------|

(Pregunte al estudiante cómo se siente, si quiere tomar un poco de agua, y si está listo/a para continuar.)

Education and Immigration History

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about your experiences going to school up until this year. I'll be repeating some of the questions for each year you've been in school.

- 1) How old were you when you first started school?
- 2) Did you always go to school until you moved here or was there a time when you weren't going to school?

(Try to elicit an overview of the student's educational history, including any gaps, before moving to the chart below. Then, starting with the age the student first started school, ask all the questions in that row, beginning with 'In what country were you living?'. Continue filling in the information for each year. Start each row by asking question 3 and follow the directions below that question.)

- 3) When you were _____ (give age range) , did everything stay the same as the year(s) before?

(if yes , mark 'NC' (=no change) in the first box of that row, under the heading 'In what country were you living?'. If no , then ask all the questions in that row for that age-range and check appropriate answers.)

Age - Range	In what country were you living? (write in Country Name)	(skip this question for the first year) Did you go to school that year? (Y or N)	If yes, was your school in a city or the countryside? (check one)		(if s/he did attend school, ask the following questions.) (fill-in answers appropriately)				(if s/he did not attend school, ask the following questions.) (enter Y or N as appropriate)			
			City	Country	About how many days per week?	About how many hours per day?	In what language(s) were the lessons given?	What other language(s), if any, did you study that year?	Did you study at home that year?	Did you work that year?	Were there problems that prevented you from going to school?	
5 - 6												
6 - 7												
7 - 8												
8 - 9												
9 - 10												
10 - 11												
11 - 12												
12 - 13												
13 - 14												
15 - 16												
16 - 17												
17 - 18												

If a student has missed more than 2 years of schooling since age 9, s/he could qualify as SIFE.
Based on the student's education history from the previous chart:

Does this student appear to qualify as SIFE?

(circle one) YES NO

Education and Immigration History

I'd like to know a little bit more about your experiences at school.

- 1) What subjects were easy for you in your country? *(circle all that apply)*
- | | | | | |
|------|---------|----------------|------------|--------------|
| Math | Science | Social Studies | Literature | Other: _____ |
|------|---------|----------------|------------|--------------|
- 2) What subjects are easy for you now?
- | | | | | |
|------|---------|----------------|------------|--------------|
| Math | Science | Social Studies | Literature | Other: _____ |
|------|---------|----------------|------------|--------------|
- 3) What subjects were hard for you in your country?
- | | | | | |
|------|---------|----------------|------------|--------------|
| Math | Science | Social Studies | Literature | Other: _____ |
|------|---------|----------------|------------|--------------|
- 4) What subjects are hard for you now?
- | | | | | |
|------|---------|----------------|------------|--------------|
| Math | Science | Social Studies | Literature | Other: _____ |
|------|---------|----------------|------------|--------------|

(Ask the student how s/he feels, if s/he would like some water, and then if s/he is ready to continue.)

Sentimientos y Opiniones (Parte II)

Ahora dime, ¿quieres aprender inglés? (marque una opción) **SÍ** **NO**

(En caso afirmativo, continúe con esta sección. Si no, pregunte por qué pero no continúe con esta sección. Siga con la siguiente.)

Entonces, lo que quiero saber ahora es por qué quieres aprender inglés. Nuevamente, voy a decir unas oraciones y te voy a mostrar una gráfica.

(Señale cada barra mientras que la describe.)

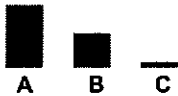
La barra más alta significa que estás totalmente de acuerdo con lo que digo.

La barra del medio significa que no estás ni completamente de acuerdo ni completamente en desacuerdo con lo que digo.

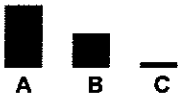
La barra más baja significa que estás totalmente en desacuerdo con lo que digo.

(Marque la letra debajo de la barra que el estudiante ha señalado.)

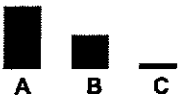
1) Quiero aprender inglés para hablar más con los demás.



2) Para que la gente no se burle de mí.



3) Para ganar más dinero y conseguir un buen trabajo.



4) Porque mi familia quiere que aprenda inglés.



5) Porque me da vergüenza no saberlo.



6) Porque quiero ser como un americano.



7) Para poder traducir para mis familiares.



Sentimientos y Opiniones (Parte II)

Ahora me gustaría saber más sobre lo que sientes y opinas.

8) Es importante leer y escribir bien en mi idioma.



9) Prefiero estar con amigos que hablan mi idioma.



10) Es importante leer y escribir bien en inglés.



11) Es importante graduarme de la secundaria.



12) Estoy seguro/a de que voy a poder aprender a leer y escribir en inglés.



13) Trato de hablar en _____ lo más posible.
(Escriba el idioma principal del entrevistado)



14) Me gustaba ir a la escuela en mi país.



15) Me va a ser fácil tener éxito en los Estados Unidos.



Feelings and Opinions (Part II)

Now tell me, do you want to learn English? (circle one) YES NO

(If yes, continue with this section. If no, ask why not, but do not continue with this section. Move on to the next section.)

OK, what I would like to know now is why you want to learn English. Again, I am going to say some sentences and show you a bar chart.

(Point to each one of the bars as you describe them.)

The highest bar means that you strongly agree with what I say.

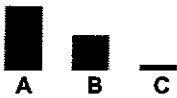
The bar in the middle means that you neither completely agree nor completely disagree with what I say.

The lowest bar means that you strongly disagree with what I say.

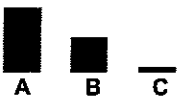
Point to one of the three bars, the one that best matches how you feel about what I say.

(Circle the letter under the bar that the student has pointed to.)

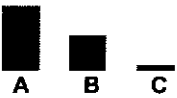
- 1) I want to learn English to speak more with others.



- 2) So that others won't make fun of me.



- 3) In order to earn more money and get a good job.



- 4) Because my family wants me to learn English.



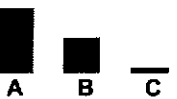
- 5) Because I feel ashamed about not knowing the language.



- 6) Because I want to be like an American.



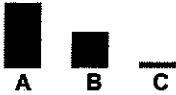
- 7) So that I can translate for my family.



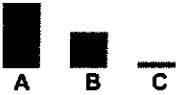
Feelings and Opinions (Part II)

Now I'd like to learn more about your feelings and opinions.

- 8) It is important to read and write well in my home language.



- 9) I prefer to hang out with friends who speak my language.



- 10) It is important to read and write well in English.



- 11) Graduating from high school is important.



- 12) I am sure that I will be able to learn to read and write in English.



- 13) I try to speak _____ as often as possible.
(Fill-in interviewee's primary language)



- 14) I liked going to school in my home country.



- 15) It will be easy for me to be successful in the United States.



APPENDIX C
Samples from RISLUS Syntax Test
(Spanish & English versions)

Spanish

4 types of coordination

- a) Subject: El conejo y el gato empujan al oso.
- b) Object: El gato golpea al perro y al conejo.
- c) Verb: El conejo golpea y pateo al gato.
- d) Sentence: El gato corre y el mono baila.

3 types of relative clauses

- a) Object-Subject: El perro pateo al gato que golpea al oso.
- b) Subject-Object: El mono que el perro pateo, come.
- c) Subject-Subject: El conejo que golpea al gato, baila.

2 types of temporal adverbial clauses

- a) Natural Sequence: Después de saltar, el perro pateo al gato.
- b) Reverse Sequence: El gato pateo al perro después de saltar.

2 types of subjectless subordinate clauses:

- a) El mono manda al gato a dormir.
- b) El oso le promete al mono bailar.

English

4 types of coordination

- a) Subject : The bear and the dog chase the cat.
- b) Object: The dog pulls the monkey and the bear.
- c) Verb: The dog pushes and punches the monkey.
- d) Sentence: The bear swims and the dog walks.

3 types of relative clauses:

- a) Object-Subject : The cat pushes the bear who holds the monkey.
- b) Subject-Object : The dog who the bear punches dances.
- c) Subject-Subject : The bear who touches the dog dances.

2 types of temporal adverbial clauses

- a) Natural sequence: After jumping, the dog kicks the cat.
- b) Reverse sequence: The dog punches the cat after sleeping.

2 types of subjectless subordinate clauses:

- a) The cat tells the bear to jump.
- b) The monkey promises the dog to sleep.

APPENDIX D
Sub-tests used in this study
Tests indicated with asterisks are critical to the evaluation of SIFE skills

Batería III Woodcock-Muñoz

Reading Tests

**Test 1: Letter-Word Identification*

This test measures word identification skills. The initial items are at the level of pre-literacy, testing print awareness including the identification of letters. The remaining items require the individual to pronounce words correctly, a literacy skill.

**Test 2: Reading Fluency*

This test measures ability to quickly read simple sentences, whose level of difficulty increases gradually, and to decide if the given statements are true or false. It measures reading and reasoning.

**Test 9: Passage Comprehension*

This test begins by measuring pre-literacy skills such as pointing to pictures that represent a word or phrase heard, and then measures literacy skills such as reading short passages and filling in missing words. These passages become gradually more difficult by increasing length, level of vocabulary, and syntactic and semantic complexity.

**Test 13: Word Attack*

This test measures ability to apply phonic and structural analysis skills to pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words. The individual starts by reading single letters and then reading non-words.

**Test 17: Reading Vocabulary*

This test measures ability to read words and supply appropriate meanings by asking the individual to produce synonyms, antonyms, and analogies.

Oral Language Tests

**Test 3: Story Recall*

This test measures aspects of oral language such as meaningful memory. The task requires the individual to recall increasingly complex stories.

Test 4: Understanding Directions

This test measures oral language by asking the individual to listen to a sequence of increasingly complex instructions and follow the directions by pointing to various objects in a picture.

Test 14: Picture Vocabulary

This test measures pre-literacy skills such as oral language development and vocabulary knowledge. The individual is asked to name objects represented by pictures.

**Test 15: Oral Comprehension*

This test measures oral language comprehension, i.e. listening and reasoning skills as well as vocabulary knowledge. The individual listens to a passage and then supplies missing words by using syntactic and semantic cues.

Written Language Tests

**Test 7: Spelling*

This test measures the ability to write orally presented words correctly. It begins by measuring pre-literacy skills, such as drawing lines and tracing letters, and then advances to literacy skills such as writing single upper and lowercase letters, and full words.

**Test 8: Writing Fluency*

This test measures the ability to formulate and write simple sentences quickly.

Test 11: Writing Samples

This test measures the ability to write responses to a variety of demands. The sentences are evaluated in terms of quality of expression, while spelling and punctuation errors are disregarded.

Test 20: Spelling of Sounds

This test measures phonological and orthographic coding skills. It begins by asking the individual to write single letters of sounds heard, and then advances to letter combinations that are non-words.

Phonological Awareness Tests

Test 21: Sound Awareness

This test measures phonological awareness, a pre-literacy skill. It consists of four subtests measuring the individual's ability to manipulate the sound structure of language by rhyming and deleting, substituting and reversing sounds in words.

Math Tests

**Test 5: Calculation*

This test measures ability to perform mathematical calculations. The individual starts by writing single numbers, then performing addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division operations, and then advances to more complex operations such as geometric, trigonometric, logarithmic, and calculus. The calculations involve negative numbers, percents, decimals, fractions, and whole numbers.

Test 10: Applied Problems

This test measures ability to analyze and solve increasingly complex math problems. To do this, s/he must listen to the problem, recognize the procedure, and then perform simple calculations.

Test 18: Quantitative Concepts

This test measures knowledge of mathematical concepts, symbols, and vocabulary.

Academic Knowledge Tests

**Test 19: Academic Knowledge*

This set of three subtests measures the individual's knowledge of science, history, geography, government, economics, art, music, and literature.

APPENDIX E
Observation Checklist

SIFE Observation Checklist

Observer: _____ Date: _____

School: _____ Instructor (*initials only*): _____ Grade(s): _____ Student (*initials only*): _____

Type of class (*Circle all that apply*):

a. Bilingual	b. ESL	c. Native Language Arts: _____	d. ESL content area: _____	e. Bilingual / Native Language content area: _____	f. Other: _____
--------------	--------	--------------------------------	----------------------------	--	-----------------

Literacy Practices (Circle the number that best describes each statement)	(1=Disagree / 5=Completely agree)					
1. Activities are specifically aimed at improving literacy skills.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2. There is practice in low-level skills like decoding and literal questions.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
3. There is practice in higher-level skills like making predictions/inferences.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
4. Class reading material is comprehensible for SIFE.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
5. Time is allotted for reading and writing.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
6. Literacy material/activities are aligned with SIFE grade, proficiency level & academic needs.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
7. Academic language is used in support of literacy material & activities.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
8. There is support/scaffolding provided for literacy activities.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
9. The classroom displays print materials.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
10. New vocabulary is explicitly taught as aid to reading and writing.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
11. There is practice and use of new vocabulary.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
12. Written materials are in Native Language.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
13. Written materials are in English.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
14. Written materials match the oral language used (e.g. English / English).	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Comments on Literacy Practices:						

Lesson Overview (Circle the number that best describes each statement)	(1=Disagree / 5=Completely agree)					
15. The room is set up for maximum language practice.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
16. The language aim is relevant to the needs of SIFE.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
17. The content aim is relevant to the needs of SIFE.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
18. The lesson meets the language and content aims.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
19. The lesson is well organized and clearly presented.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
20. Assessments are built into the lesson.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
21. The lesson encourages high level of SIFE engagement.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Comments on Lesson Overview:						

Student Oral Language <i>(Circle the number that best describes each statement)</i>	<i>(1=Disagree / 5=Completely agree)</i>						
1. The student appears to understand the teacher's instructions and assignments.	E:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	NL:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2. The student follows instructions and engages in oral activities as directed.	E:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	NL:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
3. The student answers questions directed at the class or at her/him.	E:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	NL:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
4. The student asks questions and seeks help (verbal/non-verbal) when needed.	E:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	NL:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
5. The student participates and shows interest in class and group activities.	E:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	NL:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
6. The student practices the vocabulary and academic language taught in class.	E:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	NL:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
7. The student speaks in English / Native Language.	E:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	NL:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Student Written Language <i>(Circle the number that best describes each statement)</i>	<i>(1=Disagree / 5=Completely agree)</i>						
8. The student appears to comprehend writing on the board and in the lesson.	E:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	NL:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
9. The student follows written instructions and engages in activities as directed.	E:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	NL:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
10. The student engages in reading activities in the class.	E:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	NL:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
11. The student engages in academic writing activities in the class.	E:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	NL:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
12. The student seeks help for activities written in English / Native Language.	E:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	NL:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
13. The student writes in English / Native Language.	E:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	NL:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Comments and reflections on **Student Oral & Written Language:**

Teacher Language Practices (Optional) <i>(Circle the number that best matches the statement)</i>		<i>(1=Disagree / 5=Completely agree)</i>					
1. The teacher gives oral directions and instructions clearly.	E:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	NL:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2. The teacher speaks Standard Academic Language.	E:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	NL:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
3. The teacher has understandable pronunciation.	E:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	NL:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
4. The teacher provides oral language that is natural and comprehensible but challenging enough for SIFE.	E:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	NL:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
5. The teacher provides support / scaffolding for oral language.	E:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	NL:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
6. The teacher uses vocabulary aligned with content being learned and language level of SIFE.	E:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	NL:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
7. The teacher writes on the board clearly.	E:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	NL:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
8. The teacher writes grammatically on the board or on handouts / materials.	E:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	NL:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
9. The teacher speaks in English / Native Language.	E:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	NL:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
10. The teacher writes in English / Native Language.	E:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	NL:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Comments on **Teacher Language Practices** and/or additional comments:

APPENDIX F

Case Studies of SIFE Participants

For each SIFE participant in Schools A and B, the case study summarized below was developed from interview, assessment and classroom observation data. As indicated in a footnote to our report, all names have been changed to protect the identity of the twelve students in this study.

GUSTAVO

Gustavo is a 15 year old male from a rural area in the Dominican Republic, where he reports having started school "late" (at about age 7). He thus missed two early years of schooling and regards that as the reason for his falling behind; he has not missed school after that. He lives in New York with his father and two brothers, none of whom speaks English. The education of Gustavo's family is limited, with no one having gone to high school. In the Dominican Republic both his parents worked, but his father does not work in New York. Gustavo reports having worked in the DR, but not having missed school because of work. Gustavo is motivated to learn English, for all the reasons presented to him and was happy to move to the US ("people don't fight here"). He likes living in New York, enjoys everything about school, especially "learning English," and would like to see more computer classes at school. He reports very minimal reading or writing in Spanish outside of school and no use of English. Both he and his family believe that he will graduate from high school and college, but he is not so sure that it will be easy for him to be successful in the US. His future goals are not specific as yet: he would like to study and find a job.

According to the results of the Bateria, Gustavo has basic reading skills at a grade equivalency (GE) level of 2.6. His broad reading skills are at the same GE. He also has low oral skills, with the extended oral language cluster at a grade level of K.6. Gustavo scored at a level of 1.8 in broad written language, showing that he has very limited writing skills. Like the other SIFE, he performed at a very low GE on the academic knowledge cluster (K.3), and performed better on the math reasoning subtest, with a GE of 3.7.

While Gustavo reports enjoying his school experiences in general, his observation data show that he often seems to be frustrated with understanding the lessons, especially those taught in English. He has difficulty understanding the language and the content of the ESL class, even though his interview data show that he has a strong interest in studying and learning English. In science class he also struggles with the language of the teacher, especially when she speaks English. He does not participate in class activities until further explanation is given to him in the native language, either by the teacher directly or by one of his peers. In contrast, Gustavo seems much more engaged in math and he often

calls out answers when questions are directed at the class. However, when a question is asked specifically of him, he seems more uncertain about answering. He also appears to have trouble understanding the math lesson but, unlike his other classes, once extra explanation is given to him he quickly grasps the concept and seems highly interested; this may reflect his test scores in math reasoning, which were the highest of all his academic scores.

ALICIA

Alicia is a 15 year old female from Ecuador, where she lived in a rural area except for one year spent in a city. She reports having missed two years of schooling just before she entered the ninth grade in the US. She now lives in New York with both her parents and four siblings, one of whom completed high school and another (age 17) who is also in the SIFE class. The rest of the family has a primary school education, and all but her mother are reported to be literate in Spanish. Alicia reports that her father came to New York first, works in construction, and asked the family to join him here. She reports that she likes living in New York and likes her school and classes very much, especially math. Outside of school, she reads magazines and newspapers and writes letters and cards to friends and family, all in Spanish. She watches TV in English however. Both she and her family believe that she will graduate from high school and college, and she reports that it will be easy for her to be successful in the US. Her future plans are vague: She simply wants to go to work.

Alicia is the highest scoring SIFE from her school on the basic reading cluster (GE=18). She is one of the five high scorers in these skills across both schools. However, her broad reading score is at a 4.8 grade level. Her reading comprehension is at a 3.3 GE level. She also has low oral skills, in the 2nd to 3rd GE range, as a result of low academic vocabulary. According to the broad written language and written expression clusters, Alicia is also the best writer of the SIFE at her school, recording a 4th GE level. Like other SIFE, Alicia has low academic knowledge (GE=1.4) but higher mathematical reasoning skills (GE=3.5).

Alicia's relatively high scores in basic reading are reflected in some of her activities at school. While she is generally quiet in classes, she appears to understand most directions (in English and Spanish) and is generally focused on the written material presented in class. Her low oral skills in Spanish show up in English language activities as she is particularly hesitant to engage in the oral activities of the ESL class and does not volunteer to answer questions directed at her or at the class. Although her math skills are low, her interest in math is apparent and she immediately gets to work when she enters the classroom. She always works very carefully and pays attention to the details of each task, almost all in Spanish. She is also able to ask for help when necessary. In science she concentrates mostly on translating directly from Spanish to English when given

writing assignments. Again she does not participate orally in class activities although she seems engaged in the lesson.

CECILIA

Cecilia is a female from rural Ecuador, except for one year spent living in a city. Before entering the ninth grade in the US at age 18, she missed the last seven years of her schooling – the most of any SIFE in our study – ending her education in her native country at age 11. In New York, she lives with her brother and his wife who speak “a little” English, although only Spanish is spoken at home. Her brother completed a high school education in Ecuador and is reported to be literate in Spanish. Cecilia moved to the US in order to find work and “meet someone” and reports being happy here. While she is not very enthusiastic about living in New York, she likes school, especially English classes. However, she would feel more comfortable among “older” students. Outside of school, she reports reading magazines and newspapers in both Spanish and English, but writes only in Spanish, using the Internet in that language. She and her family believe that she will graduate from high school, and she reports that she will also graduate from college, but that her family is less sure that she will do so. She reports that it will be easy for her to be successful in the US. In the future, she hopes to get a job or go back to Ecuador.

Despite the lacunae in her schooling, Cecilia scored very well on basic reading skills (GE=15.5), indicating that she is one of the five high scorers in these skills across both schools. Her broad reading score (GE=6.5) is also the highest of the SIFE at her school. While Cecilia has strong basic reading skills, like the others her reading comprehension is very low, at a 1.8 GE level. Her oral language is also low, with her sound awareness recorded at a 1.4 GE level. Cecilia also has the highest broad writing score (GE=3.8) of the SIFE in her school. Her academic knowledge is at a K.7 level, while math reasoning is higher (GE=3.9).

Overall Cecilia appears to have a great deal of trouble understanding directions in English and continually asks her fellow students for assistance. Although Cecilia reports great interest in her ESL class, she appears to require native language support for most of the activities; once the activity is translated into Spanish, she seems more engaged. She does not participate in any oral activities but she stays focused on the lesson. Appearing to lack self-confidence, she seems to depend on her peers for confirmation of assignments in all classes. In math she does not like to answer questions directed at her, though she portrays an understanding of what is being asked of her and seems interested in the lesson, which is conducted in Spanish. Her behavior in science class is no different from that in her other classes; she seems too insecure to attempt to complete any work on her own. It seems clear that her native language decoding and writing skills are not sufficient to help support her academic work in English, or in Spanish for that matter.

MATIAS

Matias is a 15 year old male who comes from Mexico. He lived in a rural area there, except for the year before he came to the US when he lived in a city. In Mexico, he missed two years of schooling, at ages 12 and 14. Having left his parents in his native country, he "just decided" to come to the US. He now lives with a large group of relatives, including his brother, brother-in-law, both of whom are literate in Spanish, and several nephews, one of whom speaks English. He reports that only his brother completed high school (in Mexico). He reports being very happy to move to the US and likes living in New York very much. At school, he likes his English and Spanish classes. Outside of school, he reports reading magazines and newspapers and writing to friends and family in Spanish, and watching TV and using the Internet in English. He reports that his family believes that he will graduate from high school and college, but he is less sure that he will accomplish these goals; he believes that graduating from high school is important, but graduating from college is less so. He is also not so sure that it will be easy for him to be successful in the US. His future plans include finishing school, getting a job and visiting his family in Mexico.

Matias' basic reading skills are at a 3.9 grade level and his broad reading is at a 2.6 grade level. The difference in these scores results from the fact that Matias performed much better on the reading and spelling of non-words than he did on the reading and spelling of real words, a curious finding. His oral skills are low, in the 1st to 2nd GE range. His writing is also at a low level, with his broad writing at a GE of 2.4. Matias' highest score, though still low, is on the academic knowledge cluster, with a GE of 2.1. His math skills are roughly on the same level, with a GE of 2.4.

Matias appears to have a lot of trouble understanding directions in English in both his ESL and science class. In general he does not ask questions or seek help from the teacher, but instead waits for one of his peers to explain what is going on. During groupwork in science class, Matias works very diligently with the rest of his group. Although the class is taught in English he uses mainly Spanish and therefore spends most of the class working on translating the work from English to Spanish. He seems dependent on his fellow students for confirmation before answering any questions. This is also true in math class, where he has less trouble understanding the lesson. However in that class as well, he tends to lean on his partner to finish the majority of the work assigned.

NATALIA

Natalia is a 14 year old female from a city in the Dominican Republic. She reports having missed the last two years of school before coming to the US. In New York, she lives with her father and three siblings, all of whom speak some English. The level of education completed by her family members is low: only two of her

siblings completed primary school, but she reports that all of her family members are literate in Spanish. She moved to New York because her father was here, working in construction; in the DR he was not employed. She does not appear to be interested in assimilation (is not particularly enthusiastic about being “like an American”) and reports being very “sad” about her move to the US. Despite this, she appears to like her teachers and her classes very much, especially her science and math classes; she also seems to enjoy the social aspect of school, mentioning her “friends” as a positive element in her school experience. Interestingly, she would like to learn to draw at school, appearing to be interested in artistic activities. Outside of school, she reports reading magazines, newspapers, and religious materials, writing to her family and friends, and listening to music in Spanish. She reads some magazines and watches TV in English. She reports that members of her family do not think that she will graduate from high school, but that she thinks she will graduate from both high school and college, believing both to be important. Finally, she has the highest goal of any SIFE at her school: She wants to be a doctor.

In spite of her high goals, her assessment scores indicate that Natalia is the lowest-performing SIFE at her school and is also the lowest-performing student overall. While her scores on the syntax test (of conversational language) indicate very high scores in Spanish (100%) and English (82%), she has very low scores in academic literacy and pre-literacy skills. All of the reading and writing clusters place her at kindergarten level, with her broad reading and basic reading skills at a GE of K.8 and her reading comprehension at a GE of K.9. Her broad written language indicates a GE of K.9 and her written expression ability is at a GE of K.4; the same is true of her oral skills, which do not surpass a GE of 1.4, with a sound awareness GE at K.7; her academic knowledge does not reach the kindergarten level, and her highest score (GE=2.8) is on math reasoning.

With a high degree of motivation, but very low academic language and literacy skills in Spanish, Natalia nevertheless seems very engaged in class activities and is eager to help other students with their work. These friends, as she reports, play an important role in her school life here. Natalia’s excellent skills in social language appear to help her in the less-academic aspects of her classes. She especially enjoyed a lesson in science where the students put together a “book” using colored construction paper, reflecting her artistic interests. With some family members who speak English, she appears to understand directions in that language and overall her oral skills are much stronger than her written skills. Her written work, however, reflects her low literacy scores and consists mostly of copying word for word from the writing on the board or other print materials in the classroom.

CARLOS

Carlos is a 17 year old male from a city in Ecuador. He reports having missed four years of schooling, those preceding his arrival in the US. He lives here with

extended family members, i.e. brother, cousins, aunt and uncle. He reports that his cousins speak English, and that his brother completed high school, and all are literate in Spanish. He reports being disliked by his peers in his home country, not liking school so much, and always wanting "to come to the US." In fact, he likes "everything here" very much, including school in New York where he enjoys "all the programs they have," especially the "different periods." Outside of school, he reports reading (e.g. magazines and newspapers) and writing (e.g. letters and cards) in both Spanish and English, along with listening to music and watching TV in both languages. He does not appear to have strong ties to his native language or country, and feels more strongly than his family does that he will succeed in graduating from high school and college. He also believes that it will be easy for him to succeed in the US. His future plans include studying, learning English and getting a job.

Carlos' score on basic reading is at a GE of 4.2 and his broad reading score is at a GE of 4.1. This suggests that he has some basic decoding skills, along with some reading skills, but these do not begin to approach grade level, with reading comprehension in the range of 3rd GE. His broad writing is at a 3.5 grade level, and he has an equivalent score of 3.6 on oral language. Carlos has the highest math reasoning score of the SIFE at his school, with a GE of 5.4, but his academic knowledge is at a GE of 1.8.

Carlos' high degree of motivation combined with some Spanish literacy skills translate into seriousness about learning, though not from his peers. In both the ESL and science classes, Carlos distances himself from the rest of the class. Instead, he often sits in the back of the room and listens to the teacher speaking in English while he simultaneously translates this orally into Spanish. In ESL he is very engaged in the lesson and even attempts to answer questions in English. He often seeks help from the teacher and is very involved in both oral and writing activities. In the math class he positions himself close to the front of the classroom and appears to understand directions and the activities in the lesson, reflecting his relatively high math reasoning scores. He is thoroughly engaged in this class and is able to work quickly and well.

ISABEL

Isabel is a 15 year old female from a city in the Dominican Republic. She reports no interruption in her schooling before coming to the US. In New York, she lives with her large and extended family, which includes her mother and a grandparent. Several of the members of this household are reported to speak English, although the language spoken at home is Spanish. Isabel reports that some of the cousins living with her have completed high school in the DR, although her mother's education ended after primary school. Isabel was happy to move to the US, where she was able to join her mother who is employed here. Isabel, like her peers, is highly motivated to learn English while she does not seem interested in assimilating (i.e. "to be like an American"). At this point, Isabel is only mildly

content living in New York, although she likes her school and especially her teachers. She feels that she will be more comfortable here once she knows more English. Outside of school, she reads magazines, newspapers and comic books in English and Spanish, and religious materials in Spanish only. She reports writing to her family and friends in Spanish and keeping a journal in Spanish and English. She also uses the internet, listens to music and watches TV in both languages. Both she and her family believe that she will graduate high school and college, and she believes that it will be easy for her to be successful in the US. She hopes to be a journalist or a model in the future.

Isabel's scores for broad and basic reading are similar, at a GE of 3.4 and 3.7 respectively, showing that she has some decoding and related reading skills, though her reading comprehension is lower (GE=2.4). Isabel has extremely low oral skills, with the extended oral language cluster at a grade level of K.2 and an oral expression score below K level. Consistent with the previous result, she also performed very poorly on the listening comprehension test. Her broad written language score is at 3.9. On the academic knowledge cluster, she scored at a GE of K.6, while her math reasoning was higher (GE=2.7).

In the ESL class Isabel appears to be engaged and understands the aim of the lesson. She follows directions and participates. Although she still needs to improve, the class seems to be at her level of comprehension. Combined with her high motivation to learn English, Isabel appears to be gaining language skills in this class. This contrasts with math class where she does not participate or show interest, the level of the class being well above her comprehension. At one point, she refused to go to the chalkboard when asked by the teacher. A similar situation takes place in the science class. Although Isabel tries to participate, she does not appear to understand very much as, again, the lesson is above her level. However, the room setup in the Science class is more inviting than in math, and allows her to ask her classmates for help. She even volunteered to go to the chalkboard and responds to easy questions directed at her but never tries to answer questions directed to the whole class.

DIEGO

Diego is a 15 year old male from a rural area of the Dominican Republic. He reports no interruption in his schooling before coming to the US. He lives in New York with his father, uncles and two grandparents. While his father and one uncle completed high school in the DR, only one uncle in the household knows any English. Diego came to the US at the request of his father; at first, he was happy here, but now he is homesick. This may be the reason for his lack of enthusiasm for living in New York and going to school here. He complains that school starts too early, there is too much information to absorb, the level is too advanced for him and he doesn't understand much of what is going on. He would like to have more English instruction at school and more math as well. Outside of school, he reads magazines and newspapers, writes to family and friends and listens to

music in Spanish; he watches TV in Spanish and English. He reports that both he and his family believe that he will graduate from high school and college, and he believes that it will be easy for him to be successful in the US. He states that his future goal is to be an engineer.

Diego scored at a GE of 2.9 on basic reading, showing that he has low decoding and related skills. He performed similarly on the broad reading and broad writing test, with 3.5 grade levels. His oral skills are under a GE 3 level. However he scored a GE of 3.7 in math reasoning, indicating that he can perform basic math operations, but his score on academic knowledge was a GE of 1.7.

Despite his desire to learn English and his request for more English instruction at school, Diego does not seem very enthusiastic in his ESL class, although he follows directions and participates. He appears to understand the aim of the lesson, which suggests that the class is at his level. Contrary to Diego's complaints that he doesn't understand the information presented in his classes, he appears motivated and responsive in his content classes, particularly in science. In math he seems interested in the lesson yet he does not volunteer to answer questions and is slow to react and get started when students are asked to solve problems in the textbook. Since the room is set up where the students sit in pairs, he does seem more comfortable asking his neighbor for help. Diego's enthusiasm in science class is obvious: He participates all the time, even volunteering to go to the chalkboard. Even though he scored very low on tests of academic knowledge, he appears to understand the content taught in this class and responds accordingly.

LORENA

Lorena is a 15 year old female from a city in the Dominican Republic. She reports no interruption in her schooling before coming to the US. In New York, she lives alone with her father, having left her mother in the DR. Her father completed primary school and may not be literate in Spanish (she did not answer that question); her father knows no English and is employed in New York. Although she moved to New York "for my future," she reports feeling very "melancholic" now that she is here. Highly motivated to learn English, she reports liking school, especially the positive attitudes and respect that the teachers show toward the students. Lorena enjoys participating in her classes, and reports a desire to learn "acting" at school. Outside of school, she reads comic books, magazines, newspapers and religious materials mostly in Spanish, writes to friends and family and listens to music in Spanish, and watches TV in English and Spanish. She appears to have little interest in speaking Spanish and no interest in returning to the DR to live. She and her family believe that she will graduate from high school and college, and she believes that it will be easy for her to be successful in the US. She expects to be a model.

Lorena performed at almost college-level on basic reading, with a score of 17.2, making her one of the five high scorers in these skills across both schools. On broad reading her score dropped to a still high 8.6, and her broad written language was at a 6.2 grade level; both these scores were the highest of the SIFE at her school. Lorena's oral scores are relatively high (GE=3.3). Like the others, she had a low score on academic knowledge (GE=1.8) and math reasoning (GE=2.4).

Lorena's high level of motivation to learn English and go to college is displayed in the ESL class, where she is very enthusiastic, follows directions and participates all the time. She seems to be engaged with the class and to fully understand the lesson. Despite her interest in her ESL class and her claim to enjoy participation in her classes in general, Lorena is not engaged in her content classes, both of which are taught in Spanish: In math, she does not participate and seems distracted. She does not appear to understand the aim of the lesson when she does pay attention. A similar situation takes place in science, where she does not appear to understand, she does not participate much and is very distracted. In both classes, the content appears to be too difficult for her. In addition, her interest in learning English and her lack of desire to maintain Spanish may account for her behavior in classes conducted solely in Spanish.

ALEJANDRO

Alejandro is a 16 year old male from a city in the Dominican Republic. He reports no interruption in his schooling before coming to the US. Alejandro was brought to New York by his grandmother, but reports living here with his mother, two siblings and an uncle, who speaks some English. His mother's education ended after primary school. She is employed in New York and Alejandro also works, but only on weekends. He is happy to be here, enjoys living in New York, and likes his classmates, teachers and school very much, especially his classes in Social Studies, History, English and Math. He is very motivated to learn English but not necessarily because he wants to "be like an American." Outside of school he reads (e.g. magazines and newspapers) and writes (e.g. letters and cards) in Spanish, using English only to listen to music or watch TV. He and his family believe that he will graduate high school and college, and he believes that it will be easy for him to be successful in the US. He would like to become a lawyer in the future.

Alejandro scored highest on basic reading with a grade level of 7.3, showing that he has good decoding and related skills. His grade equivalency for broad reading was 4.4 and broad written language grade 3. His oral scores are in the GE range of K-3, with oral expression particularly low (GE=K.7). His lowest score is on academic knowledge with a GE of 1.1, with his grade for math reasoning higher at a GE of 4.5.

Despite his ability in basic reading, his high motivation, goals and reported enthusiasm for all his classes, Alejandro does not seem to be very interested in any of the classes we observed. In the ESL class, he appears to understand and can answer questions directed at him, but shows little engagement. In math Alejandro appears to have an understanding of the lesson yet he does not participate in oral conversations while some of the other students enthusiastically shout out answers and ask questions. He neither tries to take notes nor solve problems given by the teacher until the teacher assigns a more engaged student to assist him with the work. In science, Alejandro does not appear to understand the material very well. He does not participate much, and he does not seem very interested in the class in general.

EDUARDO

Eduardo is a 16 year old male from a rural area in the Dominican Republic, who came to the US "to study and get a career." He reports no interruption in his schooling before coming to the US. With no desire to return to the DR to live, Eduardo now resides in New York with his aunt, who is a high school graduate and speaks some English. While Eduardo reports a desire to learn English, he is not motivated to "speak more with others", nor particularly to translate for his family. In fact, he was very sad to leave his mother in the DR and shows great frustration in his report of his school experiences here: He says that he does not like school, that it is too small, and that the food is bad; he also expresses fear that in case of fire, there will be no escape. On the other hand, he reports liking his classes and his teachers, because they "teach new things." He would also like to learn more English in his school and also have more opportunity to work with computers. Outside of school, Eduardo does little reading or writing (in any language), although he reports listening to music and watching TV in both Spanish and English. While he does not like to "hang out with friends who speak my language," Eduardo also does not feel that "Americans are friendly". While he and his family believe that he will graduate from high school and college, Eduardo has little confidence that this will be easy. Eduardo reports that he hopes to become a lawyer in the future.

Eduardo scored above college level on basic reading, with a grade equivalency of 18, indicating that he is one of the five high scorers in these skills across both schools. His scores for broad reading and listening comprehension, were both relatively high in comparison with other SIFE: GE=7.3 and 8.8 respectively. Eduardo scored the lowest on oral expression and mathematical reasoning, GE=3.3 and 3.9 respectively. He scored a 4.1 on academic knowledge, the highest score of all our SIFE participants.

Eduardo's engagement in his classes does not reflect his comparatively high scores in basic reading, academic knowledge and broad reading; rather, his performance in class seems to reflect his frustration and sadness at coming here and his negative attitudes about school. In ESL, Eduardo follows directions and

appears to understand the material. The lesson seems to be at his level, but the class does not appear to hold his interest and he gets easily distracted. Eduardo does not participate in math class at all. He follows directions but he does not seem to understand the aim of the lesson. The same is true for science, where he does not appear to understand the instructions or the material and cannot work on his own. He has to ask his classmates for help, but he does not seem to be motivated to do so and gets easily distracted.

SANTIAGO

Santiago is a 15 year old male from a rural area in the Dominican Republic, who came to the US for a "better future." He reports no interruption in his schooling before coming to the US. In New York he lives with his father, stepmother, and three brothers, all of whom speak English. Santiago's father is a university graduate, was an accountant in the DR, and now drives a taxi in New York. Santiago was happy to move to the US, likes living in New York and reports that he enjoys his school, particularly the teachers; he likes Math, especially, but doesn't understand the teacher. A serious student who is very motivated to learn English, he would like to see more computers at his school; his only complaint is that his friends joke too much and should work harder. Outside of school, Santiago does not "try to speak Spanish as much as I can" and lives in a neighborhood where English, along with Spanish, is spoken. He reports reading (e.g. magazines and newspapers) and writing (e.g. cards and letters) in Spanish only, but listens to music, watches TV and uses the Internet in Spanish and English. Both he and his family believe that he will graduate from high school and college, and he believes that it will be easy for him to be successful in the US. Santiago has the aspirations of many advantaged American students: he wants to "graduate and travel the world."

Santiago scored above college level on basic reading with a grade equivalency of 18, one of the five high scorers in these skills across both schools. He also did relatively well on broad reading with a GE of 8.4 and, comparatively well in reading comprehension (6.8) and math reasoning (5.9). However, like the others, he scored lowest on academic knowledge and oral and written expression, obtaining GE scores of 1.6, 2.2 and 3.3 respectively.

Santiago's family background, his high goals, his reported interest in his classes and learning English, and his good basic reading skills in Spanish are not reflected in his performance at school. In ESL, he does not appear to understand the lesson, which seems to be above his level; therefore, he does not participate and limits his activities to copying from the chalkboard. When the class is asked to do an exercise, he does not try to do it, and only writes down the answers given by his classmates when they have all finished and the exercise is being corrected orally. It is important to note the difficulty Santiago is having with learning English in this class, even though most of his family is reported to know the language. In math, Santiago neither participates nor appears to understand

the teacher's directions, instructions, or assignments. He admits to not understanding the material presented. He sits in a corner position without a clear view of the chalkboard and the teacher. At one point towards the end of the lesson, he tells the teacher that he does not understand and is told to ask a classmate for help. The class appears to be far above his level of understanding. Santiago does not participate in science class either. Although he seems to understand the aim of the lesson, he works very slowly, far behind his classmates. Santiago is clearly not performing at a level predicted by some of his test scores.

APPENDIX G
Individual Grade Equivalency Scores

Bateria Clusters	Gustavo	Alicia	Cecilia	Matias	Natalia	Carlos	Isabel	Diego	Lorena	Alejandro	Eduardo	Santiago
Oral Language (Ext)	K.6	2.9	K.7	1.6	1.1	3.6	K.2	2.8	3.3	2.1	5.6	4.3
Oral Expression	<K	3	K.8	2.3	K.7	4.3	<K	2.8	3.5	K.7	3.3	2.2
Listening Comprehension	1.1	2.7	K.6	1.2	1.4	3.3	K.6	2.8	3.1	3.1	8.8	6.7
Broad Reading	2.6	4.8	6.5	2.6	K.8	4.1	3.4	3.5	8.6	4.4	7.3	8.4
Broad Written Language	1.8	4	3.8	2.4	K.9	3.5	3.9	3.5	6.2	3	4.2	3.8
Basic Reading	2.6	18	15.5	3.9	K.8	4.6	3.7	2.9	17.2	7.3	18	18
Reading Comprehension	1.7	3.3	1.8	2.2	K.9	3.4	2.4	2.4	3.4	3	4.2	6.8
Mathematical Reasoning	3.7	3.5	3.9	2.4	2.8	5.4	2.7	3.7	2.4	4.5	3.9	5.9
Written Expression	1.8	4.1	3.2	2.2	K.4	3.2	3.1	3.1	4.3	2.8	5.3	3.3
Academic Knowledge	K.3	1.4	K.7	2.1	<K	1.8	K.6	1.7	1.8	1.1	4.1	1.6
Spelling of Sounds	2	18	9.3	8.7	K.7	5.7	2.7	1.7	8	2.1	4.3	5.4
Sound Awareness	2.6	4.2	1.4	1.5	K.7	2.8	K.7	2.4	1.6	3	3.1	5.9