



CAMBRIDGE

## **SLIFE:**

Students with  
Limited or  
Interrupted  
Formal  
Education

Literacy Texas 2023

Katie Welch, Ph.D.

Where your world grows



# Introducing today's speaker

## **Katie Welch, Ph.D.**

Educational Consultant  
Welch Education

- Linguistics, Language Acquisition, & Learning
- Executive Board of TexTESOLV
- Teacher Trainer & University Instructor
- Experience in Higher Ed, Adult Ed & K-12 Classrooms



# Learning Objectives:

During our time together, we will answer the following questions about SLIFE learners:

- Who are these students?
- What makes them unique from other beginning ESL students?
- What assets do SLIFE students bring with them to the classroom?
- What scaffolds/supports can teachers provide to accommodate this type of learner?
- What free and widely-available research/tools/resources exist for SLIFE?
- What resources does Cambridge Ventures curriculum provide for teaching low-literacy learners?

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# SIFE or SLIFE?

- Term was originally SIFE
- Re-coined to SLIFE to include students whose education wasn't just *interrupted* at some point, but was also *limited* (DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2009)
- Usually refers to K-12 learners, though not always

Majority are enrolled in 6-12 grades

S I F E

Based on the book *Boosting Achievement* by Carol Salva & Anna Matis  
Sketch by ValentinaESL

Students with Interrupted Formal Education

Limited or

- Interrupted
  - minimal
  - no
- } FORMAL education



Circumstances that may contribute to limited EDUCATION:

- war
- natural disaster
- poverty
- political turmoil
- resources

Some LACK:

- basic reading & writing skills
- numeracy skills
- study skills
- school procedures

- Need--
- culturally responsive teaching
  - empathy
  - an enhanced, safe environment
  - interaction
  - language & content
- and much more!

Newcomer Migrant Asylee Refugee

ALSO KNOWN AS

**A.K.A**

The SLIFE adult population is sometimes also known as LESSLA.



# LESSLA

Literacy Education and Second Language Learning Adults

# Who are these learners?

- **SLIFE:** “Recent-arrival adolescent English learner (EL) students who have significant gaps in formal schooling” (Browder, 2014).
- **LESSLA:** “Adults with little or no home language schooling or literacy, who are now learning to read and write for the first time in a new language” (LESLLA, n.d.-b, para. 1).





# Limited schooling + emerging literacy

## Reasons:

- war-torn countries
- rural areas with limited resources
- famine -> forced migration
- refugee camps where educational resources do not exist
- gender role expectations
- cultural norms

(Pew Research Center, 2016; UNESCO, 2019; Bigelow & Schwarz, 2010)







**Refugees.** In 2019, 30,000 refugees were resettled in the United States, with the largest group of refugees originating from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, followed by Burma (Myanmar), Ukraine, Eritrea, and Afghanistan.<sup>6</sup> The states of Texas, Washington, Ohio, New York, and California resettled more than a quarter of all refugees in 2018.

# Challenges with Identifying SLIFE learners

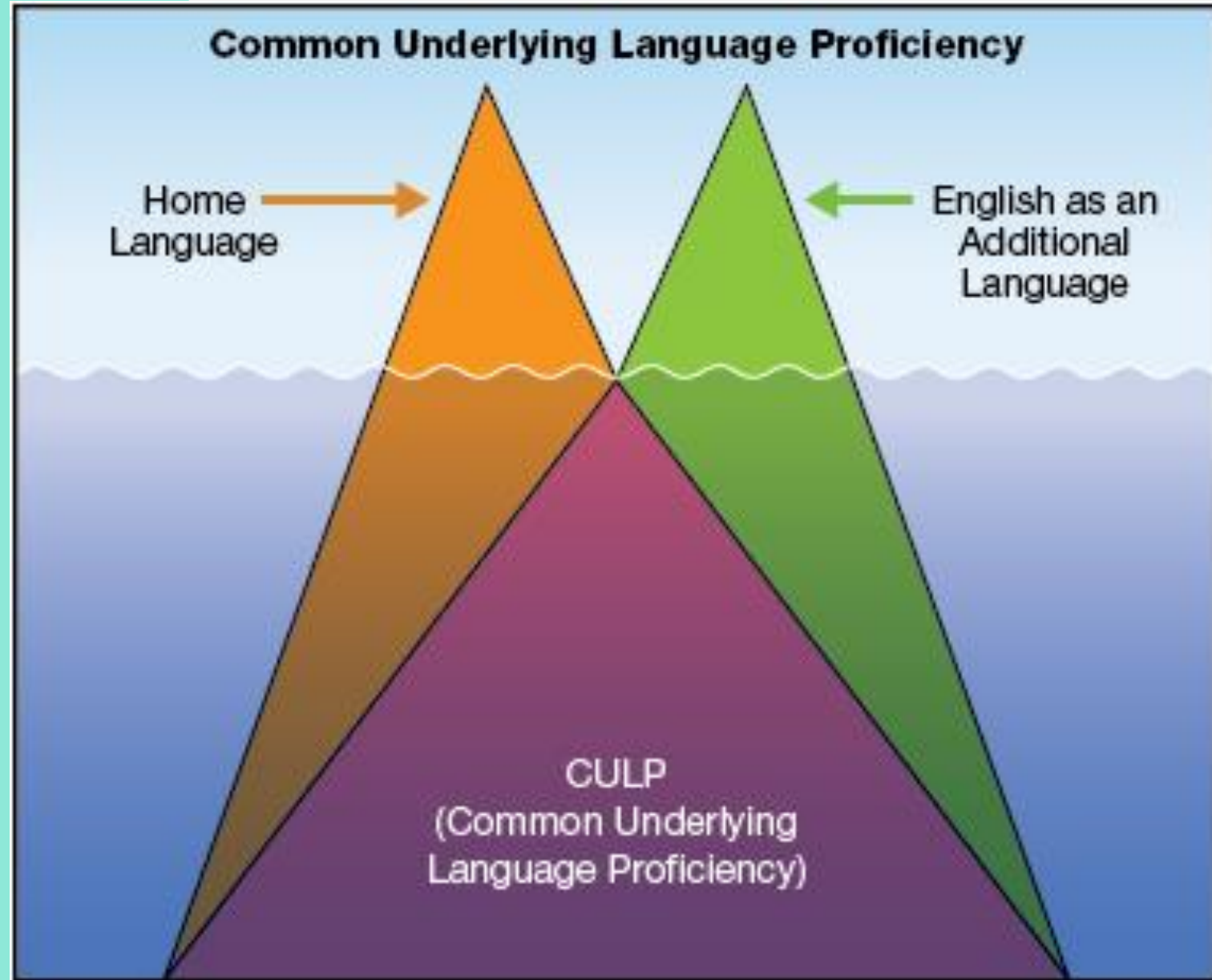
- Assessments often not created with SLIFE learners in mind
- Intake forms may not be asking about education level
- Students may struggle filling out intake forms, even if they are translated into the home language
- SLIFE learners may be reluctant to self-disclose
- On the surface, they may not look that different than other ELs





# SLIFE vs other ELs

- **SLIFE do not have the benefit of CULP; Other ELs do.**
- **What is CULP?**
  - Concepts developed in the native language do not have to be relearned
- **What does that mean?**
  - It will take a SLIFE longer because they need to learn both the concept + language, other ELs only have to attend to the language.



# Challenges SLIFE face

- 1. Stress**
- 2. Literacy and academic gaps**
- 3. Frustration**
- 4. High risk of dropping out**

(Office of English Language Learning & Migrant Education, 2008, p.1)





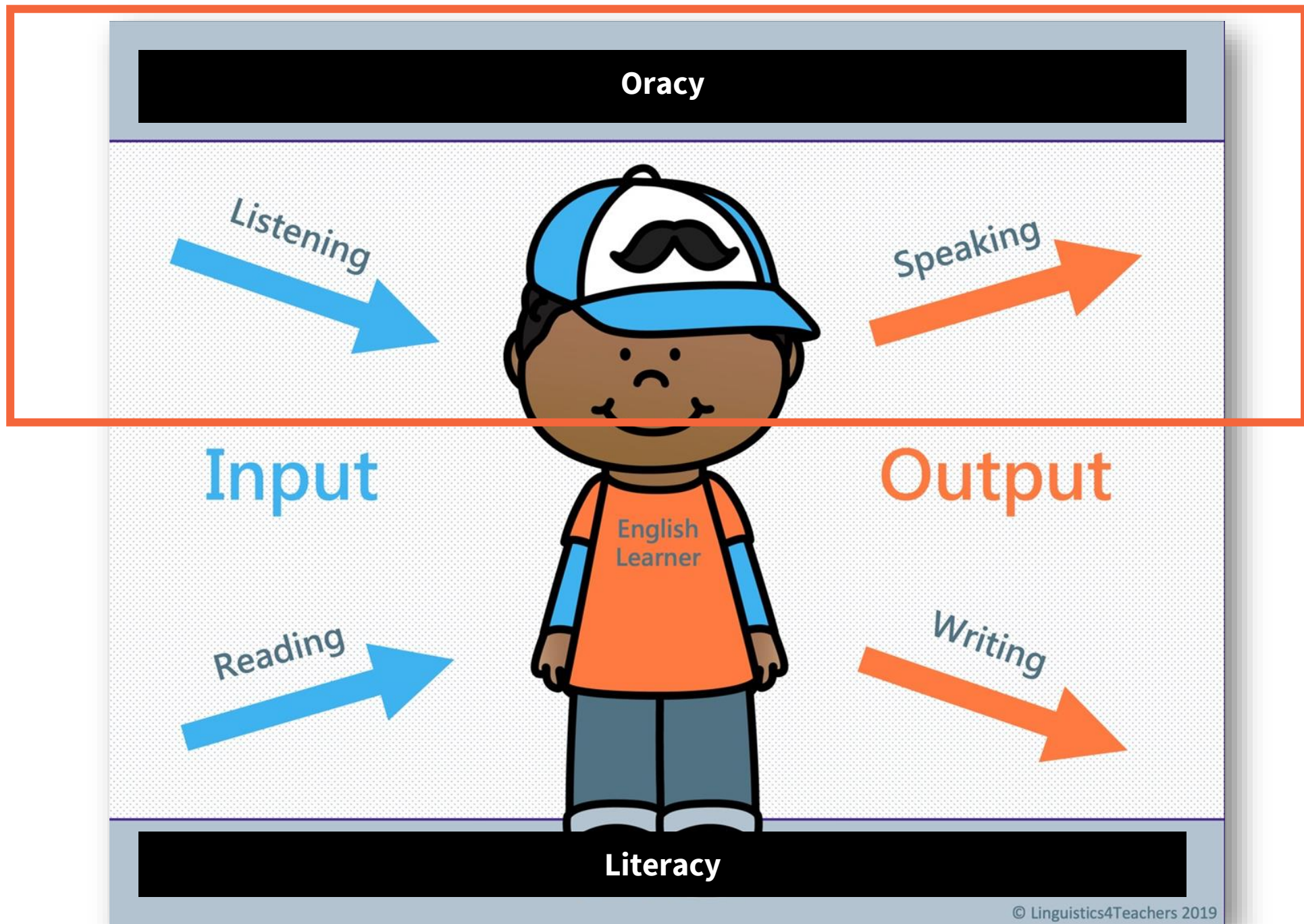
Use instructional strategies that capitalize on oral language & create a bridge to literacy!

Example: TPR

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strong  
oracy  
skills  
=  
asset





# SLIFE

## What Every Teacher Needs to Know

Andrea DeCapua



A familiar topic



Oral language interaction



Add reading & writing words & phrases



Add reading & writing sentences



Add reading & writing sentences w/ academic task



2 Practice

A Read and circle. Then write.



1. A Do you have a brother?  
 B Yes, I do.  
 Yes, I do. No, I don't.



2. A Do you have a sister?  
 B \_\_\_\_\_  
 Yes, we do. No, we don't.



3. A Do you have a son?  
 B \_\_\_\_\_  
 Yes, I do. No, I don't.

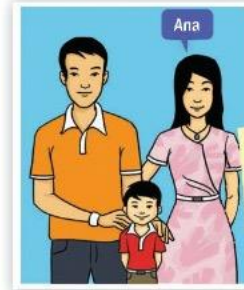


4. A Do you have a daughter?  
 B \_\_\_\_\_  
 Yes, we do. No, we don't.

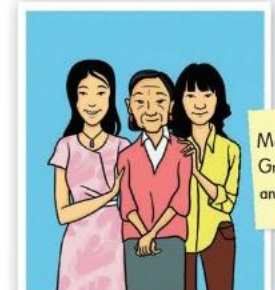
Talk with a partner. You are Ana. Ask and answer.

- A Do you have a sister?  
 B Yes, I do.  
 A What's her name?  
 B Diana.  
 A Do you have a brother?  
 B No, I don't.

B Listen and repeat. Then write.



Ken,  
 Danny,  
 and me



Me,  
 Grandma Rose,  
 and Diana



CD1, Track 34

Do you have a ... ?

- |            |     |
|------------|-----|
| 1. sister  | yes |
| 2. brother |     |
| 3. husband |     |

Do you have a ... ?

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| 4. son         |  |
| 5. daughter    |  |
| 6. grandmother |  |



# Total Physical Response

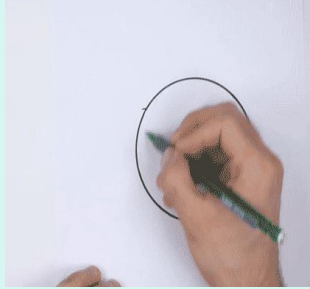
- Teacher gives commands
- Student follows
- Student eventually transitions to producing the commands him/herself

The teacher strategically plans commands that coincide with planned literacy experiences in order to **build oral language before engaging the students in printed text.**





**read**



**circle**



**write**



**listen**



**talk with  
a partner**



## UNIT 4

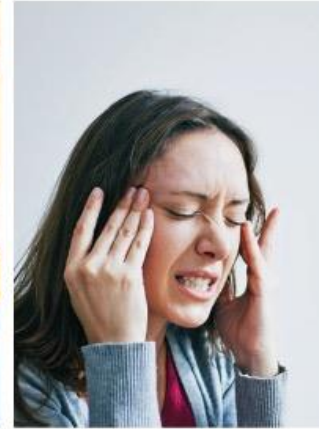
## 4 Picture dictionary Health problems



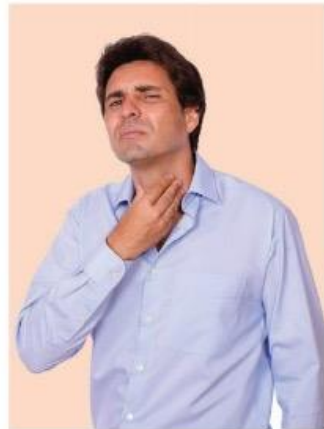
1. a cold



2. a fever



3. a headache



4. a sore throat



5. a stomachache



6. a toothache

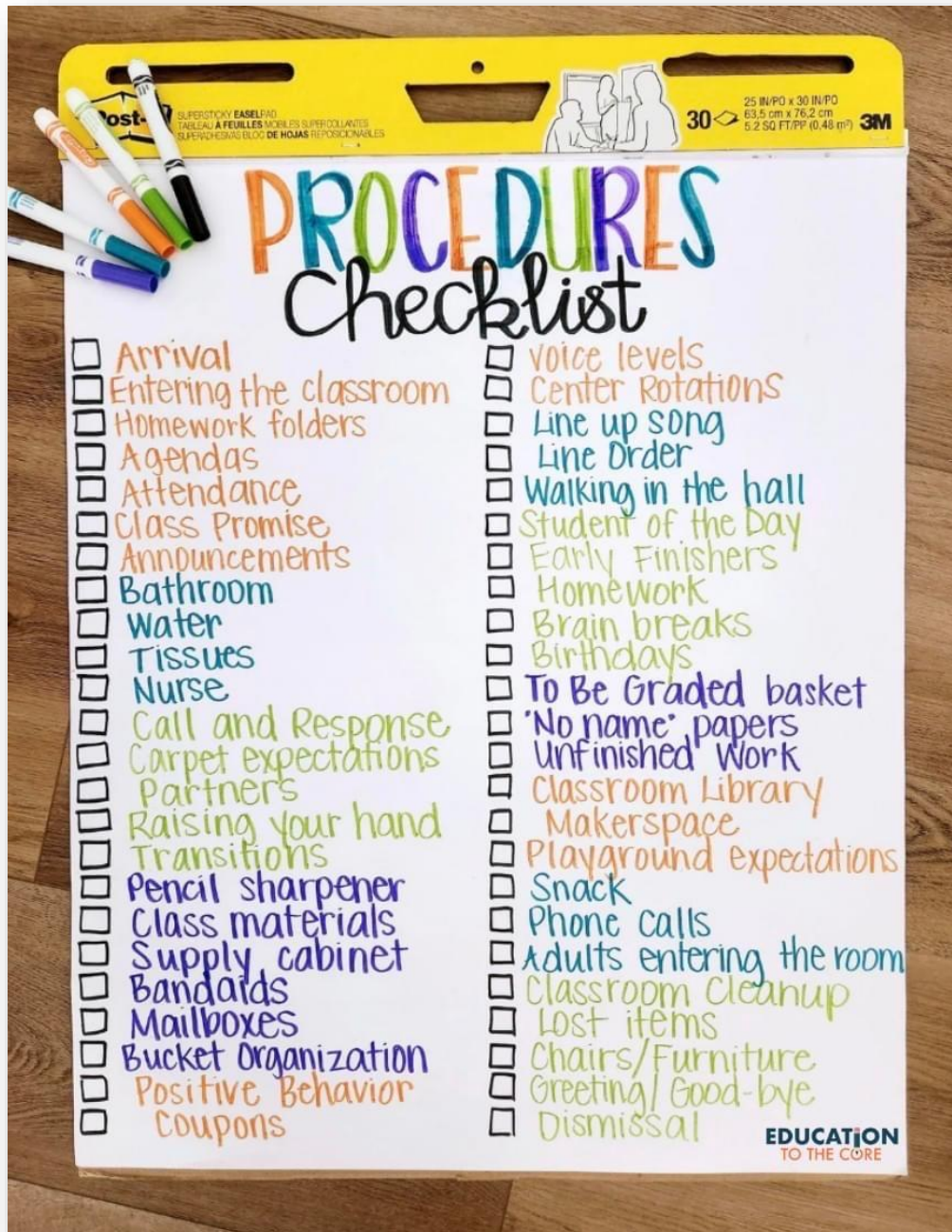
# Teach the “Hidden Curriculum” explicitly.

Example: Modeling via  
Gradual Release

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Hidden Curriculum  
=  
unwritten rules  
and unspoken norms  
of the classroom

**A Read the sentences.** Look at the ads. Fill in the answer.

1. What is Job A for?

- A cashier
- B receptionist
- C salesperson

2. What is Job B for?

- A driver
- B painter
- C plumber

3. You want the cashier job. What should you do?

- A write to Shop Smart
- B go to Shop Smart
- C call Shop Smart

4. You want the bus driver job. What should you do?

- A call in the morning
- B call in the afternoon
- C call in the evening

**B Write the missing letters.**

pat i ent

f     et

sto     ach

    urse

tooth a     he

    octor

off     ce

    ye

**Write the letters.** Make a word.

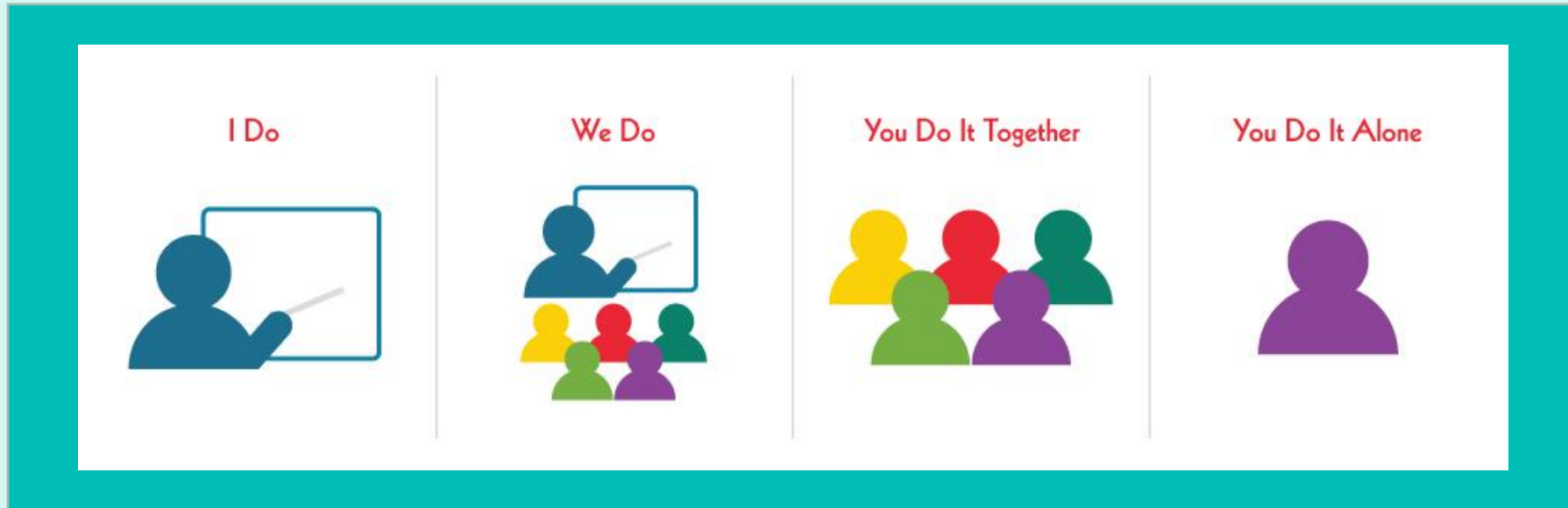


**B Circle the words in the puzzle.**

answer cashier clean count custodian  
fix mechanic sell server

t f i x a b c o u n t q  
f g m e c h a n i c r o  
s e r v e r c c l e a n  
d s e a n s w e r u b a  
s e l l i c a s h i e r  
t r c u s t o d i a n r





Use **Gradual Release** (I do, We do, You Do) to model what the students need to do

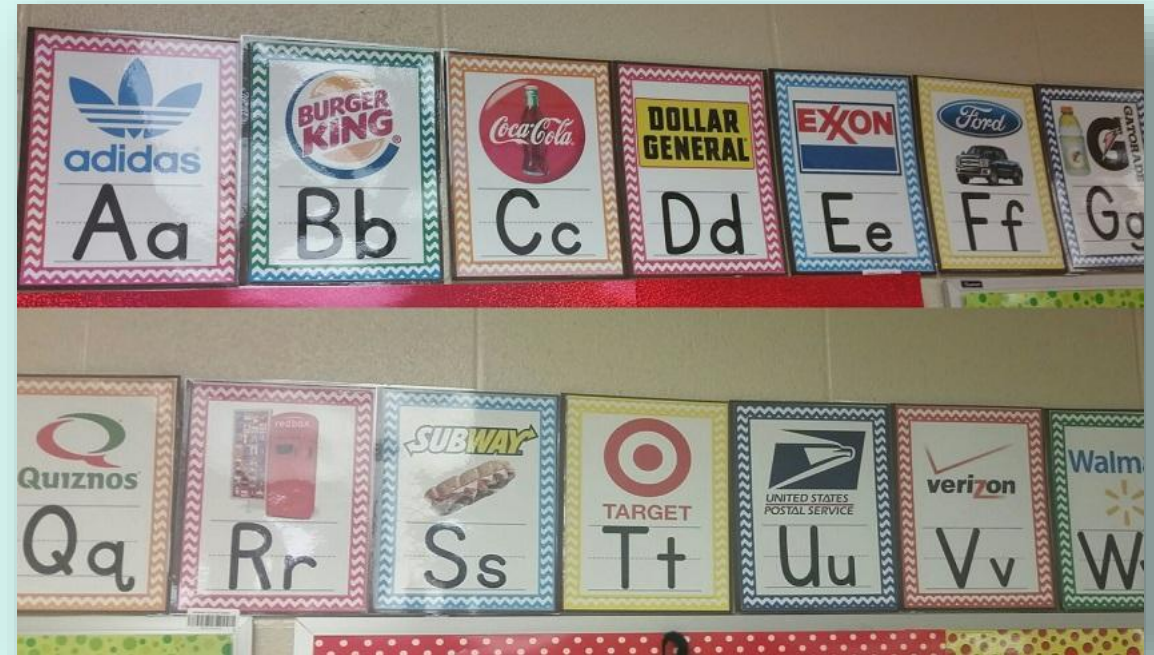
Use environmental  
print to build  
student confidence.

Example:  
Word Wall

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**Environmental Print =**  
the print of everyday life  
(logos, brands, signs)

Provide highly contextualized learning opportunities.

Example:  
Real-world pictures





**Cognitively undemanding**  
simple language, everyday structures, familiar topics

**Context-embedded**  
Face-to-face, gestures,  
facial expression,  
concrete objects of  
reference

**Context-reduced**  
Lack of non-verbal cues,  
Abstract language

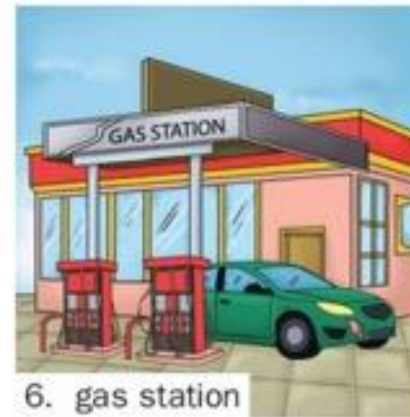
**Cognitively demanding**  
Field specific vocabulary, complex language structures  
abstract concepts, new ideas



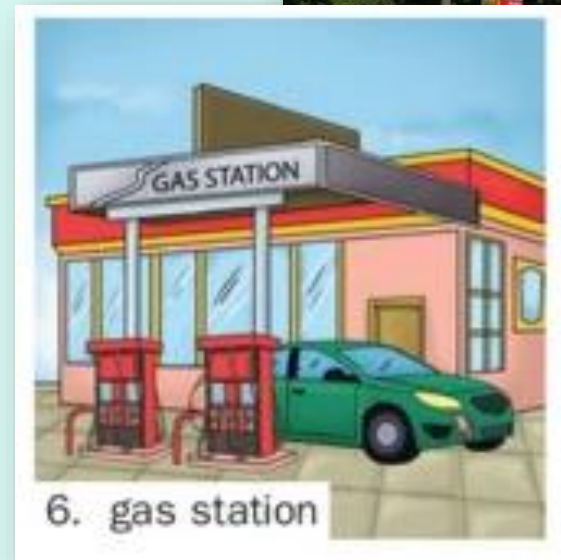
# Lesson B Places around town

## 1 Vocabulary focus

Listen and repeat.



CD1, Track 53



Abstract drawings may be too big of a leap.  
Consider bringing in actual pictures from the student's environment.



# Contextualized Learning

- Connect the new vocabulary (i.e., content) with real-life applications or places (i.e., context)
- Helps students ‘see’ how the new information is relatable and useful in their present life



Use multi-modal learning to give multiple ways to access the curriculum.

Example:  
Grammar Legos

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**Multi-Modal Learning** = teaching concepts using multiple modes of instruction (visual, auditory, tactile)



# Take advantage of the Ventures Literacy Workbook!

Example:  
Ventures Basic  
Literacy Workbook

Where your world grows





## UNIT 2 AT SCHOOL

### Lesson A Listening



CIRCLE THE SAME. A A N N A A

A A N N A A  
 N N A M M N  
 M A N M A M

READ. TRACE. COPY.

A / A A A  
 N / N N N  
 M / M M M

TRACE. READ.

CHAIR NAME  
 CHAIR NAME

### Lesson A Listening



Listen. Trace.

CHAIR chair  
 PENCIL pencil  
 NAME name

Read. Trace. Circle the same. chair chair char chair char

chair chair char chair char  
 pencil pen pencil pencil pen  
 name mane name name mane

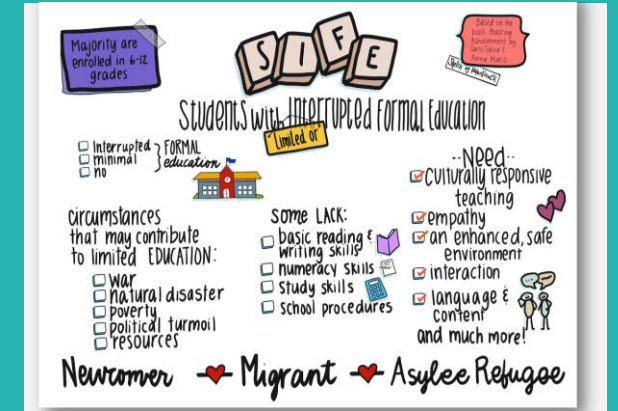
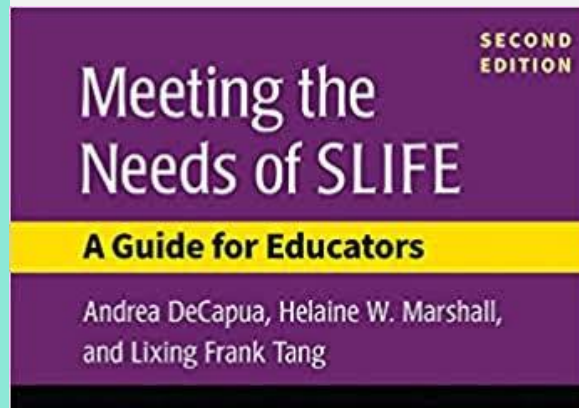
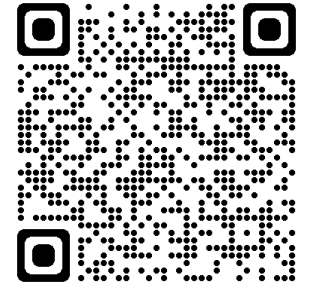
Read. Trace. Copy.

chair chair  
 pencil pencil  
 name name

Read. Copy.

a pencil \_\_\_\_\_  
 a name \_\_\_\_\_

# Free SLIFE resources



**Dr. Carol Salva**  
[@DrCarolSalva](#)  
[Twitter](#), [Facebook](#),  
[Podcast](#), [Blog](#)

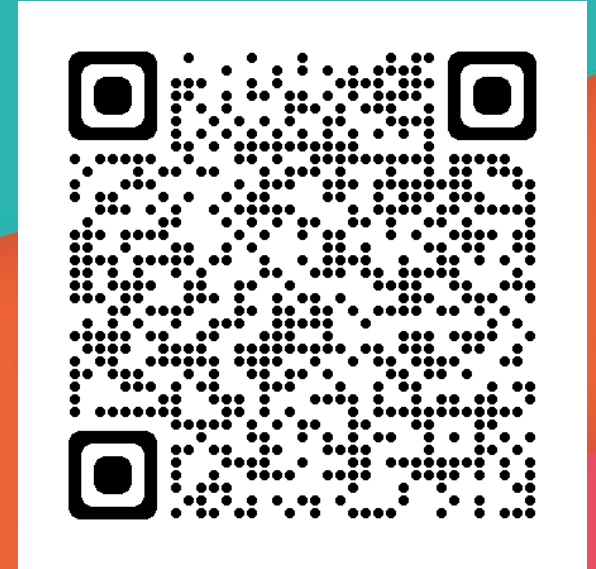
**Meeting the Needs of SLIFE** book by seminal researchers  
[Listen to a free podcast with the authors](#)

**LESLLA Organization**  
[Free Teacher Resources](#)  
Annual Conference

**Advocating for ELLs**  
[Facebook Group hosted by Valentina Gonzalez](#)  
Hear from real teachers!



Thank you  
Any questions?



Let's stay in touch!

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