



Iowa Seal of Biliteracy Guidance

Introduction

The Seal of Biliteracy is an award given by a district to recognize students who have attained proficiency in two or more languages, one of which is English, by high school graduation.

Governor Kim Reynolds signed SF475 into law during the 2018 legislative session. The language of the bill is as follows:

Sec. 17. Section 256.9, Code 2017, is amended by adding the following new subsection: Develop and administer a seal of biliteracy program to recognize students graduating from high school who have demonstrated proficiency in two or more world languages, one of which must be English. Participation in the program by a school district, attendance center, or accredited nonpublic school shall be voluntary. The department shall work with stakeholders to identify standardized tests that may be used to demonstrate proficiency. The department shall produce a seal of biliteracy, which may include but need not be limited to a sticker that may be affixed to a student's high school transcript or a certificate that may be awarded to the student. A participating school district or school shall notify the department of the names of the students who have qualified for the seal and the department shall provide the school district or school with the appropriate number of seals or other authorized endorsement. The department may charge a nominal fee to cover printing and postage charges related to issuance of the biliteracy seal under this subsection.



Why is the Seal of Biliteracy Important?

Being able to know and use more than one language is a critical skill for the 21st century. The seal of biliteracy:

- Values language as an asset
- Recognizes the value of language diversity & cultural identity
- Prepares students with 21st century skills that will benefit them in the labor market and the global society
- Provides employers, universities, and grant/scholarship providers with a method to recognize applicants for their dedication to attainment of biliteracy

What is Language Proficiency?

The seal of biliteracy focuses not on “seat time” or completion of language courses; it relies on demonstrating proficiency in a given language. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) outlines the meaning of language proficiency, and they use the terms novice, intermediate, advanced, superior and distinguished to indicate levels of proficiency. For the purposes of this seal, a score that mirrors the ACTFL intermediate level is considered proficient. To learn more about how ACTFL outlines levels of language proficiency see the appendix.

Requirements to Demonstrate Knowledge of English

To be eligible to be awarded the Iowa Seal of Biliteracy, each student shall demonstrate proficiency in English. The assessment options to demonstrate proficiency in English include:

Exam	Minimum Score
ACT	English 18
AP Language or AP Literature Exam	3
English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21 st Century (ELPA 21) in grades 9-12	4 or 5 in all domains (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) which equates to an overall proficiency of 3
SAT	English 470
Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP) in grades 9-12	Proficient in English/Language Arts
Past Iowa Assessment results in grades 9-12	Proficient in Reading Comprehension
TOEFL	Total score 80, no part score under 17

World Language Assessment Options

To be eligible to be awarded the Iowa Seal of Biliteracy, students shall demonstrate proficiency in a world language. The assessment options to demonstrate proficiency in a world language include:

Assessment	Language(s)	Minimum Score to Qualify for Seal of Biliteracy	More Information on Assessment
Advanced Placement (AP) Language and Culture Exam	Spanish, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese	3	AP Language and Culture Exams
Advanced Placement (AP) Latin Exam	Latin	3	AP Language and Culture Exams AP Latin

Assessment	Language(s)	Minimum Score to Qualify for Seal of Biliteracy	More Information on Assessment
International Baccalaureate	Any instructed language in an IB program	4	IB Exams Available only to students currently enrolled in IB programs.
ACTFL Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL) Measure	Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), French, German, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Thai	Intermediate Two (I-2) The level is required on all four components of the assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretive Listening • Interpretive Reading • Interpersonal Listening and Speaking • Presentational Writing 	AAPPL Exam
ACTFL Latin Interpretive Reading Assessment (ALIRA)	Latin	Intermediate Two (I-2)	ALIRA Exam
Standards Based Measurement of Proficiency (STAMP)	Arabic, Chinese (Simplified and Traditional), French, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Portuguese	Intermediate-Mid (5) This level is required on all components.	STAMP Exam
National Examinations in World Languages (NEWL)	Arabic (MSA), Korean, Portuguese (global), and Russian	Intermediate Mid This level is required on all components.	NEWL Exam
Diplomas of Spanish as a Foreign Language (DELE)	Spanish	B1 This level is required on all components.	DELE Exam

Assessment	Language(s)	Minimum Score to Qualify for Seal of Biliteracy	More Information on Assessment
German Language Diploma <u>D</u> eutsches <u>S</u> prach <u>d</u> iplom (DSD)	German	B1 This level is required on all components.	DSD Exam
Diplomas of French Language Studies (DELF)	French	B1 This level is required on all components.	DELF Exam
American Sign Language Proficiency Interview (ASLPI)	American Sign Language	3	ASLPI Exam
Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI)	American Sign Language	Intermediate	Email
Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)	See list of OPI languages	Intermediate-Mid Must be taken in conjunction with the WPT	OPI Exam
Oral Proficiency Interview- computer (OPIc)	Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Pashto, Persian Farsi, European Portuguese, Brazilian Portuguese, Russian and Spanish	Intermediate-Mid Must be taken in conjunction with the WPT	OPIc Exam
Writing Proficiency Test (WPT)	Albanian (Booklet form only), Arabic, Cantonese Chinese, Mandarin Chinese, English, French, German, Greek (Modern), Haitian Creole (Booklet form only), Hebrew (Booklet form only), Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Persian Farsi, Polish, European Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish, Vietnamese	Intermediate-Mid Must be taken in conjunction with the OPI/OPIc	WPT Exam

Assessment	Language(s)	Minimum Score to Qualify for Seal of Biliteracy	More Information on Assessment
SIELE	Spanish	B1	SIELE Exam
World Speak Note: These assessments only assess writing and speaking. Districts would need to assess students on reading and listening in addition to using these assessments.	Amharic, Armenian, Chin (Hakha), Czech, Filipino (Tagalog), Haitian-Creole, Hmong, Ilocano, Marathi, Samoan, Somali Maay Maay, Somali Maxaa, Tamil, Telugu, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese, Yup'ik	Level 5 Intermediate-Mid	WorldSpeak Exam
World Languages in Which No Assessment Exists	Portfolios are individually approved by the local school district, but should assess students in the four language domains- reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Products to demonstrate proficiency may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal presentations in the targeted world language; • Student-produced compositions, articles, papers and other formal documents in the targeted world language; and/or • Certificates, transcripts, diplomas, results from tests or assessments other than those identified above and additional achievements that demonstrate sufficient proficiency in the targeted world language. 		

District Requirements in Order to Offer the Seal of Biliteracy

Component	Description	Timeline
Notification of Participation	Notify the Iowa Department of Education of intent to participate each year and include the name and contact information of the district coordinator in the intent to participate.	Within the Fall BEDS collection window
Designation of Coordinator	Designate one individual to serve as district coordinator of the State Seal of Biliteracy program. The role of the coordinator includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving all communication from Department • Serving as the main point of contact regarding the seal for your district • Disseminating key information to stakeholders 	Within the Fall BEDS collection window

Iowa Department of Education guidance should be viewed as advisory unless it's specifically authorized by state statute, according to Iowa Code section 256.9A as enacted by Senate File 475. This does not apply to administrative rules, declaratory orders, or materials required by federal law or courts.

Component	Description	Timeline
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure equitable access for all students in the district for participation in the Seal of Biliteracy (world language, ELs, other bilingual students) 	
<p>Make Decisions about District Program</p>	<p>Determine how the district will implement the program. For instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the district communicate information about the possibility of earning the seal to all students and parents? • What supports (classes, test administration, etc.) will the district offer to students who want to earn the Seal? • How will the district recognize students who earn the award? 	<p>Early in the school year in order to facilitate student participation in the program</p>
<p>Inform Students and Parents about the Program</p>	<p>Make the following information about the district's State Seal of Biliteracy program available to students and parents by posting it on the district's website, if the district maintains a website, and including it in the student handbook:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General information about the State Seal of Biliteracy program and the opportunity for students to participate; • A description of the ways in which students must demonstrate proficiency in English; • A description of the assessments a student may use to demonstrate proficiency in a world language; • An estimate of the costs, if known, that students might incur to demonstrate proficiency in the world language • The name and contact information for the coordinator of the program. <p>Districts are encouraged to set an internal deadline for students to indicate interest and to indicate scores on required assessments.</p>	<p>Early in the school year in order to facilitate student participation in the program. This should be housed locally.</p>

Component	Description	Timeline
Identify Students Who Qualify for the Seal of Biliteracy	Students must meet the qualifications in both English and another language to earn the Seal. The district may need to coordinate testing sessions. Districts should maintain documentation of how students qualified for these awards in order to report data to the Iowa Department of Education in the Spring BEDS report at the end of each school year.	Students may meet requirements at any time during their high school enrollment, but note that if a student moves to a different district or state that does not recognize the seal, the student may not be able to earn the seal.
Awarding the Seal	<p>The district must include the seal on the student's transcript.</p> <p>Districts may award the seal after the student graduates if results of a test for qualification taken during high school are not available until then.</p> <p>School districts should make sure that all students working towards the seal have met all requirements before the seal is officially awarded.</p> <p>Each district will be provided with an electronic seal. If needed, districts can request a physical sticker of the seal from their AEA. See the Q & A below for who to contact at each AEA. This is the official seal and the only seal that should be used to award the Seal of Biliteracy. The seal must contain the year to be official. The district can choose additional formats to award the seal such as a certificate, medal, etc. as long as the official seal is used on the student's transcript.</p>	Electronic seal is emailed to district coordinator by February 1 each year. Districts can also request a physical sticker of the seal from their AEA. See the Q & A below for who to contact at each AEA.
Annual Report	Submit an annual report to the Iowa Department of Education using the reporting form found in the Spring BEDS collection. The report includes a list of each student awarded the Seal of Biliteracy and the language or languages for which the Seal of Biliteracy was awarded. Public districts and accredited private schools who send student level data through SRI will use this system to report.	<p>Districts should report this in the Spring BEDS collection or SRI collection, depending on</p> <p>State Operated Programs should send this information to Stefanie Wager at stefanie.wager@iowa.gov by June 30 each year.</p>

FAQs

Where can I find more information about the Iowa Seal of Biliteracy?

You can find more information at <https://educateiowa.gov/biliteracy-seal>.

What should a district do if a student graduates mid-year?

All above guidance pertains to mid-year and end of year graduates, however, districts would want to contact the Department in order to receive the electronic seal earlier. Districts will still need to report a student's scores in the Spring BEDS/SRI collection.

What happens if a student can demonstrate proficiency in more than two languages?

If a student demonstrates proficiency in more than English and another language, the district may note additional languages on a student's transcript.

What if there is an assessment we want to use that is not on the approved list of assessments?

Please request use of this assessment from the Department's world language consultant Stefanie Wager at stefanie.wager@iowa.gov. Additional approved assessments will be added yearly to the Department's guidance.

For the Seal of Biliteracy in Latin, may a district accept the results of the ALIRA, the ACTFL language test in one domain (reading)?

Yes, because Latin is not used as a written or spoken language today, the ALIRA may be used to demonstrate proficiency in Latin for the purposes of awarding the Seal of Biliteracy.

May the Seal of Biliteracy be awarded to seniors after they graduate if the results of a test administered during their final school year are not available at the time of graduation?

Yes, if the results of an approved language assessment taken while the student was enrolled in the district are not available at the time of graduation, the district may award the Seal of Biliteracy after the student graduates when results are available. The district may recognize these students as candidates for the Seal of Biliteracy at graduation but no official designation may be included on the transcript until the district obtains assessment results that indicate that the student qualifies for the award. When the Seal of Biliteracy is awarded, a designation must be affixed to the student's transcript.

In what languages can the Seal of Biliteracy be awarded?

The Seal of Biliteracy can be awarded in any language, including American Sign Language (ASL).

What if a student moves to Iowa in the middle of their senior year and hasn't yet had the opportunity to take the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress?

Equivalent tests from other states can be used to demonstrate proficiency in English. Districts can determine proficiency in English according to score guidelines from those specific assessments.

If a student does not demonstrate proficiency on a test or a portion of a test, can they retake a portion of that exam or use an alternate test?

Yes

Can foreign exchange students participate in the Seal of Biliteracy?

Yes, foreign exchange students can participate in the Seal of Biliteracy, but the seal can only be officially awarded to them if they graduate from the district.

Are districts required to pay for assessments?

No

How can I request a physical sticker of the seal?

If you do not want to use the electronic version of the seal, you may request physical stickers from your AEA. Please only request the number of seals you need for the 2019-2020 school year as the seal image will change each year.

- Central Rivers AEA: Cari Teske, cteske@centralriversaea.org
- Grant Wood AEA: Dianna Geers, dgeers@gwaea.org
- Great Prairie AEA: Jane Frizzell, jfrizzell@gpaea.org
- Green Hills AEA, Julia Hood, jhood@ghaea.org
- Heartland AEA: Creative Services, <http://csonline.heartlandaea.org>. Log in with username/password you use for AEA Learning Online.
- Keystone AEA: Mindy Reimer, mreimer@aea1.k12.ia.us
- Mississippi Bend AEA: Heather Whitman, hwhitman@mbaea.org
- Northwest AEA: Pam Buysman, pbuysman@nwaea.org
- Prairie Lakes AEA: Christine Sturgeon, csturgeon@plaea.org

Who do I contact if I have questions about the Seal of Biliteracy?

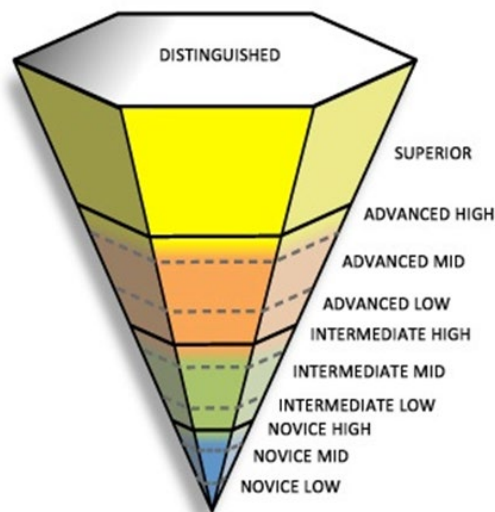
Contact the Department's world language consultant Stefanie Wager at stefanie.wager@iowa.gov.

Appendix

ACTFL Language Proficiencies

The ACTFL language proficiencies are important in order to distinguish the intricacies of learning a language and showing the ability to read, write, speak and listen in that language. Each level considers how well a speaker uses vocabulary, text type, language functions, context, accuracy control, and communication strategies. Additionally, each level takes into consideration how well the speaker is comprehended by others. A description of each of these levels is included below.

- **Novice:** The student communicates with words/characters and phrases to express basic needs on familiar topics that have been highly practiced and memorized. The learner controls the accuracy within the memorized and practiced context and can be understood by one accustomed to dealing with language learners (a sympathetic listener). Example: “gloves”, “need gloves”, “I need gloves.”
- **Intermediate:** The student communicates with sentences and some connected sentences while expressing and elaborating on basic needs. The learner controls the language with enough accuracy to be understood by one accustomed to dealing with language learners. Example: “I need winter gloves because my hands are cold.”
- **Advanced:** The student communicates in various time frames in extended, organized paragraph length discourse to respond to and resolve problems. The learner controls the language sufficiently enough to interact effectively with someone unaccustomed to dealing with language learners. Example: “If gloves are on sale when I get my next paycheck, I might go get a pair to keep my hands warm.”
- **Superior:** At this level students are able to communicate with accuracy and fluency in order to participate fully and effectively in conversations on a variety of topics in formal and informal settings from both concrete and abstract perspectives. When appropriate, these speakers use extended discourse without unnaturally lengthy hesitation to make their point, even when engaged in abstract elaborations.
- **Distinguished:** Speakers at the distinguished level are able to use language skillfully, and with accuracy, efficiency, and effectiveness. They are educated and articulate users of the language. Speakers at the distinguished level produce highly sophisticated and tightly organized extended discourse.



[Learn more about how ACTFL defines these proficiency areas.](#)