Iowa Biliteracy Seal Guidance

Introduction

In 2018, Governor Kim Reynolds signed Senate File (SF) 475 into law. SF 475 required the Iowa Department of Education (Department) to develop and administer the Seal of Biliteracy Program to any participating school district, public attendance center (i.e., school building), or accredited nonpublic school. The purpose of the program is to recognize graduating high school students who have demonstrated proficiency in English and at least one other world language. [1]

Importance of Biliteracy in the 21st Century

A biliteracy seal is important because knowing and using more than one language is a critical 21st-century skill. A biliteracy seal:

- Values language as an asset;
- Recognizes the value of language diversity and cultural identity;
- Prepares students with 21st-century skills that will benefit them in the labor market and global society; and
- Provides employers, institutions of higher education, and grant or scholarship providers evidence of a student's world language skills and dedication to attaining biliteracy.

Guidance Purpose

This guidance's purpose is to provide school districts, public school buildings, and accredited nonpublic schools with information related to the biliteracy seal program requirements. Specifically, the guidance includes:

- General language proficiency information,
- Assessment options to demonstrate proficiency in English and a world language or languages,
- Annual district and accredited nonpublic school requirements to offer the program, and
- Answers to frequently asked questions.

Language Proficiency

A biliteracy seal relies on demonstrating proficiency in a given language; it does not focus on "seat time" or completing language courses. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) defines language proficiency using the terms Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, and Distinguished (see Appendix A to learn more about each level). For the purposes of this seal, language proficiency requires a student to receive a score that mirrors the ACTFL's Intermediate level.

Biliteracy Seal Assessment Options

To be eligible for an Iowa biliteracy seal, each student must demonstrate proficiency in both English and a world language. The following tables provide the allowable assessment options to demonstrate proficiency in English and a world language or languages.

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[1] The term "world language" includes American Sign Language.

English Assessment Options

The assessment options to demonstrate proficiency in English include:

Exam	Minimum Score(s)
ACT	English: 18
Advanced Placement (AP) Language or AP Literature Exam	3
English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21) in grades 9 through 12	All domains (reading, writing, speaking, and listening): 4 or 5, which equates to an overall proficiency of 3
SAT	English: 470
Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP) in grades 9 through 11	English/Language Arts: Proficient
Past Iowa Assessment results in grades 9 through 11	Reading Comprehension: Proficient
Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)	Total score 80, no part score under 17
ACTFL Assessment of Performance Toward Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL)	Intermediate Two (I-2) (required on all components: Interpretive Reading and Listening, Interpersonal Listening and Speaking, and Presentational Writing)
Standards-Based Measurement of Proficiency (STAMP) Exam	Intermediate-Mid (5) (required on all components)

World Language Assessment Options

The assessment options to demonstrate proficiency in a world language include:

World Language Assessment(s)	Language(s)	Minimum Score or Level Required
AP Language and Culture Exams	Spanish, Chinese, French, German, Italian, and Japanese	3
AP Latin Exam	Latin	3
International Baccalaureate (IB) Exams (Only available to currently enrolled IB students)	Any instructed language in an IB program	4
ACTFL AAPPL	Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish	Intermediate Two (I-2) (required on all components)

World Language Assessment(s)	Language(s)	Minimum Score or Level Required
ACTFL Latin Interpretive Reading Assessment (ALIRA) Exam	Latin	Intermediate Two (I-2)
STAMP Exam	Arabic, Chinese (Simplified and Traditional), French, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Russian, Spanish, and Portuguese	Intermediate-Mid (5) (required on all components).
National Examinations in World Languages (NEWL) Exam	Arabic (MSA), Korean, Portuguese (global), and Russian	Intermediate-Mid (required on all components).
Diplomas of Spanish as a Foreign Language (DELE) Exam	Spanish	B1 (required on all components).
German Language Diploma/ Deutsches Sprachdiplom (DSD) Exam	German	B1 (required on all components).
Diplomas of French Language Studies (DELF) Exam	French	B1 (required on all components).
American Sign Language Proficiency Interview (ASLPI) Exam	American Sign Language	3
Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI)	American Sign Language	Intermediate
Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) Exam (must take in conjunction with the WPT)	See list of OPI languages	Intermediate-Mid
Oral Proficiency Interview-Computer (OPIc) Exam (must take in conjunction with the WPT)	Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Pashto, Persian Farsi, European Portuguese, Brazilian Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish	Intermediate-Mid
Writing Proficiency Test (WPT) Exam (must be taken in conjunction with the OPI/OPIc)	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, and Vietnamese	Intermediate-Mid

World Language Assessment(s)	Language(s)	Minimum Score or Level Required
Servicio Internacional de Evaluación de la Lengua Española (SIELE) Exam	Spanish	B1
STAMP WS Exam *Note: This assessment only assesses writing and speaking. Districts and accredited nonpublic schools would also need to assess students in reading and listening.*	Amharic, Armenian, Chin (Hakha), Czech, Filipino (Tagalog), Haitian-Creole, Hmong, Illocano, Marathi, Samoan, Somali Maay Maay, Somali Maxaa, Tamil, Telugu, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese, Yup'ik, and Zomi	Intermediate-Mid (5)

WORLD LANGUAGES IN WHICH NO ASSESSMENT EXISTS

If there is not an assessment for the world language, the local school district or accredited nonpublic school must review and assess the student's portfolio in the four language domains: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Products to demonstrate proficiency may include:

● 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 previously identified, and additional achievements that demonstrate sufficient proficiency in the targeted world language.

Annual Requirements to Offer the Biliteracy Seal

To offer the biliteracy seal to its students, the district or accredited nonpublic school must annually complete all the following steps.

Requirement	Description
Designate Biliteracy Seal Coordinator During the Fall Basic Educational Data Survey (BEDS) Collection Window	The district or accredited nonpublic school must designate one individual to serve as its coordinator during the fall BEDS collection window. The role of the coordinator: ● Receives all communication from the Department; ● Serves as the main point of contact regarding the seal for your district or school; ● Disseminates key information to stakeholders; and ● Ensures all students (e.g., students in world language classes, English learners, other bilingual students) have equitable access to participation information.
Notify the Department of Intent to Participate Annually During the Fall BEDS Collection Window	Each year during the fall BEDS collection window, the district or accredited nonpublic school must notify the Department of its intent to participate in the biliteracy seal program. In its notice, the district or accredited nonpublic school must include its biliteracy seal coordinator's name and contact information.

Requirement	Description
Make Local Program Implementation Decisions Early in the School Year	The district or accredited nonpublic school must determine how it will implement the program locally. This should be done early in the school year to facilitate student participation. Questions to determine implementation include (but are not limited to): ● How will you communicate information to all students and parents about the possibility of earning the seal? ● What supports (e.g., classes, test administration) will you offer to students who want to earn the seal? ● How will you recognize students who earn the seal?
Inform Students and Parents About the Program Early in the School Year	To inform students and their parents, the district or accredited nonpublic school must post the following biliteracy seal program information on its website and include the information in the student handbook early in the school year: ● General program and participation information; ● A description of how students must demonstrate English proficiency; ● A description of the approved assessments a student may use to demonstrate world language proficiency; ● An estimate of the costs (if known) that students might incur to demonstrate proficiency in the world language; and ● The name and contact information for the program coordinator.
Coordinate Testing Sessions (As Needed)	The district or accredited nonpublic school may need to coordinate testing sessions.
Set an Internal Deadline for Students to Indicate Interest (Recommended)	The district or accredited nonpublic may set an internal deadline for students to indicate interest and provide their scores on required assessments.
Identify Students Qualifying for the Biliteracy Seal	The district or accredited nonpublic must identify the students that qualify for a biliteracy seal. To qualify, a student must meet the qualifications in both English and another language. Students may meet requirements at any time during their high school enrollment. However, 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.
Maintain Qualifying Documentation	The district or accredited nonpublic school should maintain documentation of how students qualified for these awards to report data to the Department.
Receive the Electronic Biliteracy Seal by February 1	The biliteracy seal coordinator will receive the electronic seal from the Department by February 1 of each year. This is the official seal (and the only seal that should be used).
Request an Alternate Seal Format (Optional)	The district or accredited nonpublic school can choose additional formats (e.g., certificate, medal, physical sticker) to award the seal if the official seal is used on the student's transcript. If needed, the district or accredited nonpublic school can also request a physical sticker of the seal from its area education agency (AEA; see frequently asked question [FAQ] #13 in the following section).
Confirm Student Met All the Biliteracy Seal Requirements	The district or accredited nonpublic school must confirm that each student working toward the seal met all requirements and cannot award the seal in the next step if any requirement is unmet. If the student's assessment scores are not available by graduation, the district or accredited nonpublic can note the student's candidacy in

Requirement	Description
	the biliteracy seal program on the student's transcript.
Award the Official Biliteracy Seal Upon Graduation	The district or accredited nonpublic school must include the official seal image containing the year (or note that the student earned the biliteracy seal) on the student's transcript. The district or accredited nonpublic school seal can ONLY officially award the biliteracy seal upon graduation, unless the district or accredited nonpublic school does not receive the student's proficiency results until after graduation (see #7). In such a case, the district or accredited nonpublic school can only award the candidate a biliteracy seal if and when the results demonstrate the student is proficient.
Annual Report in the Spring	The district or accredited nonpublic school must submit an annual report to the Department. The report requires the district or accredited nonpublic school to provide its list of students awarded a biliteracy seal and the language(s) for which the seals were awarded. The report must only include data of graduating seniors who have been awarded the seal. - The district must do so through Student Reporting in Iowa (SRI) in the spring. - Accredited nonpublic schools that do not use SRI will report in the spring BEDS collection. - State operated programs should send this information to Linda Fandel at linda.fandel@iowa.gov by June 30 each year.

FAQs

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

You can find more information at the Department's Biliteracy Seal webpage.

2. Has the program grown since its creation? If yes, how much?

Yes. Since its creation in 2018, program participation has increased 59.3%—from 575 students in the 2018-2019 school year to 916 students in the 2020-2021 school year (Iowa Department of Education, 2021).

3. What about if a student graduates mid-year?

All previously outlined requirements apply to both mid-year and end-of-year graduates. However, the district or accredited nonpublic school should contact the Department to receive the electronic seal earlier than February 1. The district or accredited nonpublic school will still need to report a student's scores in the Spring BEDS/SRI collection.

4. What happens if a student can demonstrate proficiency in more than English and another world language?

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

5. 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 Linda Fandel at linda.fandel@iowa.gov. Additional approved assessments will be added yearly to the Department's guidance.

6. For the biliteracy seal in Latin, may a district or accredited nonpublic school accept the results of the ALIRA (i.e., the ACTFL test that assesses in the single domain of reading)?

Yes. Because we do not use Latin as a written or spoken language today, the ALIRA may be used to demonstrate Latin proficiency for the purposes of awarding the biliteracy seal.

7. May the biliteracy seal 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 approved language assessment results are not available at the time of graduation, the district or accredited nonpublic school may award the biliteracy seal after the student graduates if and when the student's assessment results demonstrate their proficiency. The district or accredited nonpublic school may recognize such students as biliteracy seal candidates at graduation but cannot include the official biliteracy seal on the transcript until the district or accredited nonpublic school obtains the results and they indicate that the student qualifies for the award. When the biliteracy seal is awarded, a designation must be affixed to the student's transcript.

8. In what languages can the biliteracy seal be awarded?

The biliteracy seal can be awarded in any language, including American Sign Language.

9. What if a student moves to Iowa in the middle of their senior year and hasn't taken the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress yet to demonstrate English proficiency?

Equivalent tests from other states can be used to demonstrate proficiency in English. The district or accredited nonpublic school can determine proficiency in English according to score guidelines from those specific assessments.

10. 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.

11. Can foreign exchange students participate in the program?

Yes. Foreign exchange students can participate in the biliteracy seal program. However, the district or accredited nonpublic school can only officially award a seal to a foreign exchange student if they graduate from the district or accredited nonpublic school.

12. Are districts required to pay for assessments?

No.

13. 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 2020-2021 school year as the seal image will change each year.

AEA	Contact	Contact Information
Central Rivers AEA	Cari Teske	cteske@centralriversaea.org
Grant Wood AEA	Dianna Geers	dgeers@gwaea.org
Great Prairie AEA	Sally Lindgren	sally.lindgren@gpaea.org

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. This does not apply to administrative rules, declaratory orders, or materials required by federal law or courts.

| AEA	Contact	Contact Information
Green Hills AEA	Julia Hood	jhood@ghaea.org
Heartland AEA	Creative Services	http://csonline.heartlandaea.org. Log in with your AEA Learning Online username and password.
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	Jen Krischel	jkrischel@plaea.org

Questions and Additional Guidance

If you have questions, please contact Linda Fandel at 515-802-0989 or linda.fandel@iowa.gov. For additional biliteracy seal guidance and information, please visit the Department's Biliteracy Seal webpage.

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Appendix A: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (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 level is included below.

- **Novice:** The student communicates with words or 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.
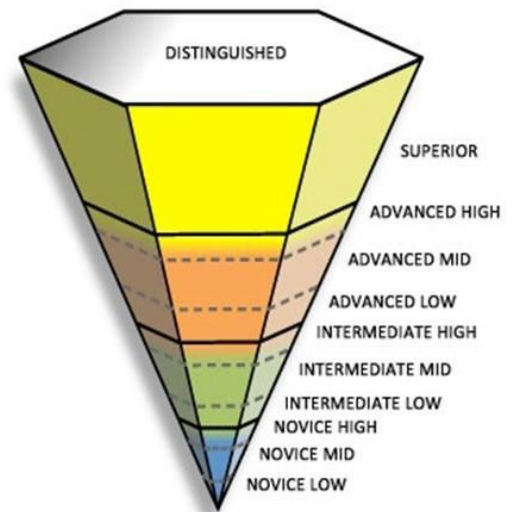
Learn more about how ACTFL defines these proficiency areas