

Illinois Pathways to Biliteracy Awards

Annual State Meeting for Administrators
Supporting English Learners

Multilingual/Language Development Department
2026-27

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Public Act 104-0266

(105 ILCS 5/14D-15)

Sec. 14D-15. Biliteracy recognition. **By July 1, 2027**, the State Board of Education shall establish **recognition pathways for biliteracy at various levels** before high school. School districts may choose to participate in the pathways to biliteracy program. The pathways recognition shall include:

(1) a recognition pathway for biliteracy for **prekindergarten or kindergarten** students;

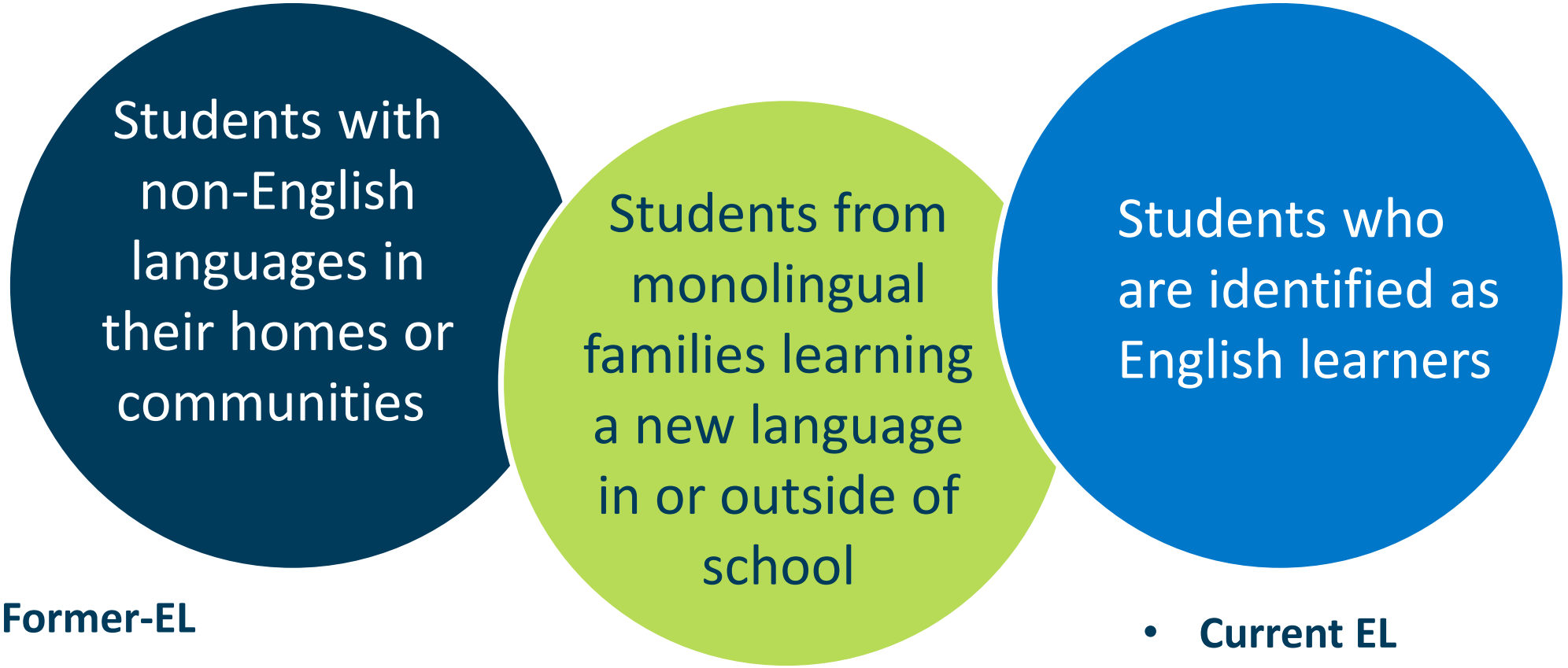
(2) a recognition pathway for biliteracy for **5th grade** students; and

(3) a recognition pathway for biliteracy for **8th grade** students.

The State Board of Education may adopt rules to implement the requirements of this Section.

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Illinois Pathways to Biliteracy Awards (Pathway Awards) are for Everyone



- **Former-EL**
- **Never-EL**

- **Language other than English (LOTE) learners**

- **Current EL**

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Seeking Feedback

CONTENTS

- Rationale
- Multiple On-Ramps, Multiple Pathways
- Awards
- Resources/Appendices

AWARD OPTIONS

- **Becoming Bilingual:** Participation awards available at pre-K, K, 5th, 8th
- **Biliteracy Milestone:** Proficiency achievement awards available at 5th, 8th

EVIDENCE

- Becoming Bilingual
  - Activities within the home and community
  - In-school programs and activities
- Biliteracy Milestone
  - 5th grade: Evidence of Novice Mid
  - 8th grade: Evidence of Novice High

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Draft Pathways Guidance: Feedback Requested

- Rationale
- On-Ramps, Pathways
- Award Options
- Participation Activities
- Proficiency Criteria
- Contents & Appendices

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Rationale

Provide feedback about why a district should implement Pathway Awards for students on various pathways to biliteracy.

Rationale: Why should a district implement Pathway Awards?

Bilingualism and biliteracy open personal, academic, and professional doors for students and enrich our communities and workforce. Establishing pathways to proficiency with Pathway Awards may be able to:

- **Foster Student Engagement in Language Acquisition**

Offering awards for students on the pathway to biliteracy cultivates enthusiasm for continued language learning, encouraging students to develop a lifelong appreciation for multilingualism.

- **Enhance Parental Support and Engagement**

Pathway awards are appealing to parents who are proud to see their students maintaining and developing literacy in a home language or dedicated to achieving high proficiency in an entirely new language. Parents are invested in their children's ongoing academic success.

Rationale Continued:

Establishing pathways to proficiency with Pathway Awards may be able to:

- **Strengthen District Commitment to Educational Programming**

A clear focus on biliteracy programming demonstrates the district's commitment to academic excellence and preparing students for long-term success as members of the global community. District leaders may find it necessary to expand and sustain language programming, ensuring resources and support are dedicated to language development initiatives for *all* students.

- **Promote Community Involvement and School Visibility**

In linguistically diverse communities, the implementation of biliteracy pathways can strengthen engagement with families and community members, fostering deeper connections and collaboration with the schools and district. This initiative can serve as a positive catalyst for community support and pride.

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Feedback: Rationale



1. What should be removed?
    a) Description in the text:
    b) Entire category:
2. What should be added?
    a) Description in the text:
    b) Entire category:

- **Foster student engagement**
- **Enhance parental support**
- **Strengthen district commitment**
- **Promote community involvement**

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Multiple On-Ramps, Multiple Pathways

Provide feedback about the "road" conceptualization of students from diverse backgrounds on various pathways to biliteracy.

On-Ramps and Pathways

- Many learners begin their academic experience with one or more LOTEs spoken in the home. Alternatively, many students start school with English as the only language in their background. Regardless of a child's or their family's linguistic and cultural background, every child enters their formal academic years with pathways to continue developing language in front of them.
- Linguistic diversity is an asset and resource for all students, whether it means maintaining a home language, learning English, or adding a LOTE.
- Establishing pathways to biliteracy creates opportunity for students to enrich their language repertoire with more than one language, and the Pathways Awards offer opportunities to celebrate their language growth while on the journey to a multilingual future.

On-Ramps and Pathways (Continued)

- **English learners**: Many students are on the pathway to learning English. English learner (EL) students may come from families or backgrounds that are multilingual or their pathway up until pre-K/kindergarten may have only included a LOTE.

  Pathway to biliteracy: Maintain and develop home language(s); develop English.

- **Multilingual students:** Many students come from multilingual backgrounds that include a LOTE and may also be English-proficient and not qualify for EL services in school. These students may have one or more additional languages at varying levels of proficiency.

  Pathway to biliteracy: Maintain and develop home language(s); maintain and develop English.

- **LOTE learners:** Students who have not encountered languages other than English on their pathway to pre-K/kindergarten have been developing their early English literacy before school begins. These students also have the opportunity to gain biliteracy if they have access to a pathway to do so.

  Pathway to biliteracy: Maintain and develop English; develop a new LOTE.

- **English-speaking students with previous LOTE study:** These students may come from families that speak English or predominantly speak English but have had exposure to a LOTE during their academic years. This may include students who have participated in dual language programs, FLEX or FLES programs, or community programs to learn a LOTE.

  Pathway to biliteracy: Maintain and develop English; continue to develop LOTE.

Feedback: On-Ramps and Pathways



1. Is the concept of on-ramps and pathways appropriate?
2. Are there any on-ramps (student groups) missing?
3. Is there any descriptive language that should be added or changed for the four student groups?

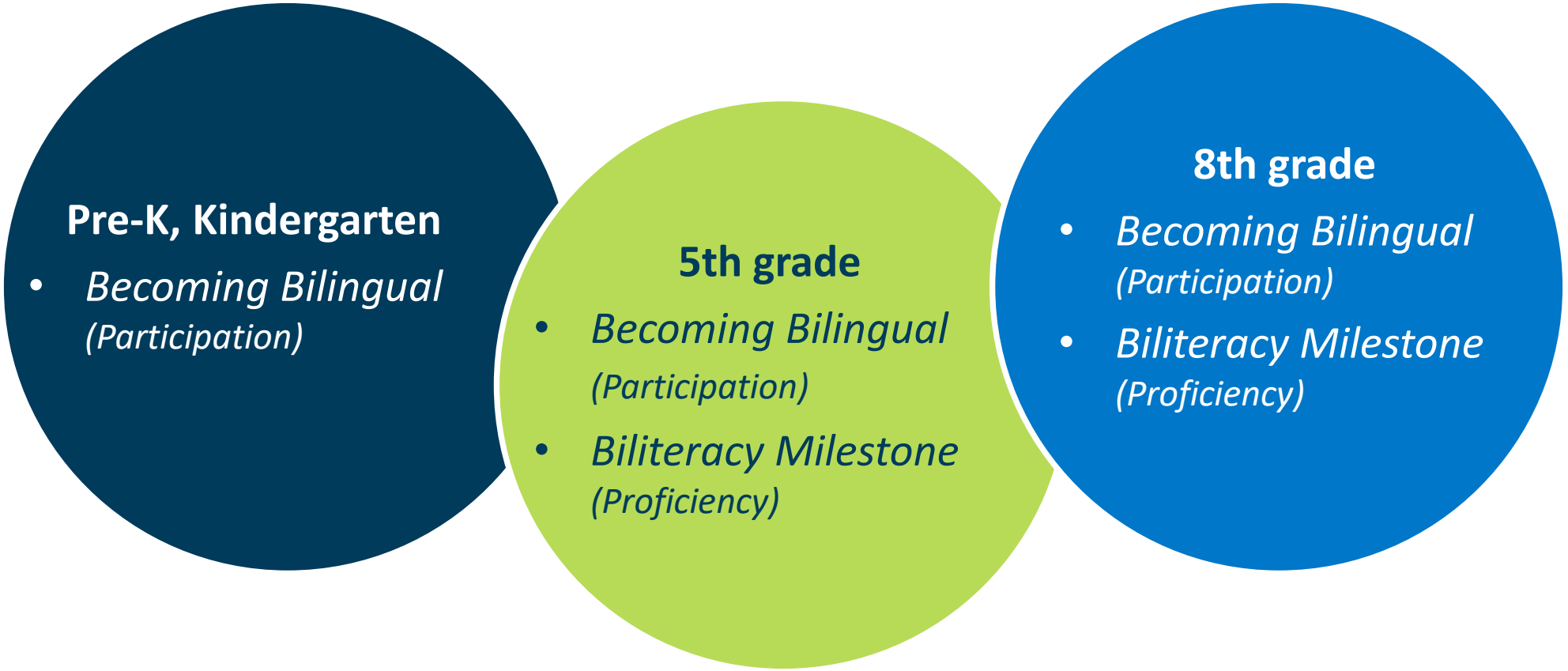
- **English learners**
- **Multilingual students**
- **LOTE learners**
- **English-speaking students with previous LOTE study**

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Award Options

Provide feedback about having participation awards available at each level in addition to proficiency achievement awards available for 5th and 8th grade.

Grade Level and Proficiency Recognition



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Pathway Awards: Participation and Proficiency Options

Becoming Bilingual	Biliteracy Milestone
Participation: Pre-K, Kindergarten, Fifth Grade, and Eighth Grade	Proficiency Achievement: Fifth Grade and Eighth Grade
• Celebrates participation in multilingual activities • No assessment or proficiency requirements • Available at pre-K, K, 5th, and 8th • English learners, LOTE learners, heritage learners • Districts report # of participants and languages.	• Celebrates reaching a designated proficiency level • Assessment process involved • Available for 5th and 8th • English learners, LOTE learners, heritage learners • Award uploaded to students' individual SIS records

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Feedback: Award Options



1. Is it appropriate to have a single pre-K/K award, or should each grade have its own?
2. Provide feedback on the titles “Becoming Bilingual” and “Biliteracy Milestone.”
3. Provide feedback on having milestones added to a student record in SIS.
4. Is it appropriate to have fifth- and eighth-grade milestones (proficiency-based awards), or would only eighth grade be more appropriate?
5. Provide feedback on having the same award options for EL and non-EL students.

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Participation Activities

Provide feedback about the types of participation activities in English and LOTE that qualify for a "Becoming Bilingual" Pathway Award (participation).

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How to Organize Participation Activity Guidance

There are several formats to provide lists of participation activities in the guidance that districts may use when implementing awards for Becoming Bilingual.

Lists may be varied by grade level and language of acquisition or may be combined to reduce redundancy.

Please provide feedback on which format would be most helpful.

Example Checklist 1: Varied by Grade Level and Language

Pre-K & Kindergarten "Becoming Bilingual" participation activities may include:

LOTE	ENGLISH
• Listening songs in the LOTE • Being read to in the LOTE • Sounding out words in the LOTE • Participation in dual language or bilingual education • Naming common nouns like animals and classroom items in the LOTE	• Listening to songs in English • Being read to in English • Sounding out words in English • Participating in general education classes in English • Participating in a TBE or TPI program • Visiting a library

Fifth-grade "Becoming Bilingual" participation activities may include:

LOTE	ENGLISH
• Learning lyrics to a song in the LOTE • Reading aloud in the LOTE • Playing a cooperative game using the LOTE • Participating in a "language club" • Naming common nouns or reciting common phrases in the LOTE	• Learning lyrics to a song in English • Reading aloud in English • Playing a cooperative game using English • Participation in general education classes in English • Participating in a TBE or TPI program

Eighth-grade "Becoming Bilingual" participation activities may include:

LOTE	ENGLISH
• Learning lyrics to and reciting a song in the LOTE • Reading to a younger student in the LOTE • Participating in a "language club" • Taking a world language or language exploration class	• Learning lyrics to and reciting a song in English • Reading to a younger student in English • Participation in general education classes in English • Participating in a TBE or TPI program

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Example Checklist 2: Varied by Grade Level Only

Pre-K & Kindergarten "Becoming Bilingual" participation activities may include:
• Listening to songs • Being read to • Sounding out words • Participation in a school language program • Participation in a language program outside of school • Following directions

Fifth-grade "Becoming Bilingual" participation activities may include:
• Learning lyrics to songs or singing along • Reading aloud • Playing a cooperative game • Participation in a school language program • Participation in a language program outside of school • Participation in a “language club” • Exchanging friendly greetings

Eighth-grade "Becoming Bilingual" participation activities may include:
• Learning lyrics to and reciting songs • Reading to a younger student • Playing a cooperative or competitive game • Participation in a school language program • Participation in a language program outside of school • Participation in a “language club” • Enrollment in a world language or language exploration class

Example Checklist 3: Varied by LOTE and English only

"Becoming Bilingual" participation activities may include:	
LOTE	**ENGLISH**
• Reading or being read to in a LOTE • Listening to, singing, or learning lyrics to a song in the LOTE • Participating in a community-based heritage language program in a LOTE • Participating in language clubs or extracurriculars in which the LOTE is used • Exchanging friendly greetings in a video call or with a pen pal • Enrollment in dual language program	• Reading or being read to in English • Listening to, singing, or learning lyrics to a song in English • Participating in English learner programming, including dual language • Visiting and participating in activities at a local or school library • Playing games using language • Helping an English learner with a language task

Example Checklist 4: No Variation for Age or Language

"Becoming Bilingual" participation activities may include:

- Learning lyrics to songs or singing along
- Reading aloud, listening to others read
- Playing a cooperative or competitive game that uses language
- Participation in a school language program
- Participation in a language program outside of school
- Participation in a “language club”
- Exchanging friendly greetings, chatting, or communicating with native-speakers
- Participating in activities hosted by a local or school library, or hosted by a community organization
- Helping someone else with a language task
- Enrollment in dual language, TBE, or TPI programs

Sample Checklist in Practice

Becoming Bilingual: Kindergarten Certification

Please mark all language acquisition activities in which the student participated:

- ❑ Dual-Language Program
- ❑ FLEX
- ❑ FLES
- ❑ Extended day program
- ❑ General education in English-speaking classrooms
- ❑ Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI) *
- ❑ Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE)*

** For students designated EL only*

- ❑ Reading, being read to
- ❑ Learning rhymes and poems
- ❑ Telling, re-telling stories
- ❑ Playing games
- ❑ Singing songs
- ❑ Chatting, socializing with others who speak the language
- ❑ Listening to music
- ❑ Community language program

Student Name: _____ District Name: _____ Date: _____
Certified by _____ Role: _____ School Year:_____

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Feedback: Evidence of Participation



1. Should there be separate lists for grade groups, or is one list of communicative activities appropriate?
2. Should there be separate lists for LOTE activities and English activities, or is a combined list of language activities appropriate?
3. Should there be a checklist that schools *may* attach to awards for each student? Or *may* use internally for documentation?
4. Are the listed language activities appropriate? Are there additional activities to add?
5. Should the district be required to maintain a copy of the certificate and evidence in the student's temporary file?
6. Should community-based and school-based language activities be listed together or separately?
7. Other feedback on participation (Becoming Bilingual) awards:

Proficiency Criteria

Provide feedback about the proposed proficiency levels and evidence for the 5th and 8th grade Biliteracy Milestone Pathway Awards.

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Example Milestone Evidence Documentation

Biliteracy Milestone: 5th grade Certification (Novice Mid)

The student has demonstrated Novice Mid communicative competence in ***LOTE*** via the following assessment method(s):

- ❑ AAPPL form A: **Novice Mid (N2)** (ASL, Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish)
- ❑ STAMP 4Se: **2** (Arabic, Cantonese, English, French, German, Hawaiian, Hebrew, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Yup'ik)
- ❑ STAMP WSe: **2** (Armenian, Ukrainian, Vietnamese)
- ❑ Local assessment**
  - ❑ Vendor: _____
  - ❑ Locally designed
  - ❑ Student portfolio

The student has demonstrated Novice Mid communicative competence in English via the following assessment method(s):

- ❑ ACCESS for ELs*: **3.5 literacy** component
- ❑ Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR): **Meet or Exceed** on ELA
- ❑ AAPPL form A: **Novice Mid (N2)**
- ❑ STAMP4Se: **2**
- ❑ Local assessment**
  - ❑ Vendor: _____
  - ❑ Locally designed
  - ❑ Student portfolio

** For students designated EL only*
*** must meet proficiency criteria of Novice Mid rubric, per ACTFL guidelines*

Student Name: _____ District Name: _____ Date: _____
Certified by _____ Role: _____ School Year:_____

Biliteracy Milestone: 8th grade Certification (Novice High)

The student has demonstrated Novice High communicative competence in ***LOTE*** via the following assessment method(s):

- ❑ AAPPL form A: **Novice High (N4)** (ASL, Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish)
- ❑ STAMP 4Se: **3** (Arabic, Cantonese, English, French, German, Hawaiian, Hebrew, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Yup'ik)
- ❑ STAMP WSe: **3** (Armenian, Ukrainian, Vietnamese)
- ❑ Portfolio**

The student has demonstrated Novice High communicative competence in English via the following assessment method(s):

- ❑ ACCESS for ELs*: **4.8 Composite**
  - ❑ (exit EL status during grades 6-8)
- ❑ Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR): **Meet or Exceed** on ELA
- ❑ AAPPL form A: **Novice High (N-4)**
- ❑ STAMP4Se: **3**

** For students designated EL only*
*** must meet proficiency criteria of Novice High rubric, per ACTFL guidelines*

Student Name: _____ District Name: _____ Date: _____
Certified by _____ Role: _____ School Year:_____

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Feedback: Proficiency Criteria



1. Given that the State Seal of Biliteracy (SOBL) awarded at high school graduation requires Intermediate High proficiency, and the Commendation toward Biliteracy requires Intermediate Low proficiency,
   a. Is it appropriate for the fifth-grade proficiency expectation to be Novice Mid? Why or why not?
   b. Is it appropriate for the eighth-grade proficiency expectation to be Novice High? Why or why not?
2. Should there be consistency with the SOBL and require evidence in both English *and* the LOTE?
3. Do the options of assessment for English and LOTE seem equitable, and is the scoring appropriate?
4. Similar to the benefit that students with the SOBL automatically earn college credit for World Language once they enroll in college or university, what possible "benefits" of attaining the Biliteracy Milestone should be considered by ISBE?

Contents of Guidance Document

Provide feedback about what we've included and what we plan to include.

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  - Biliteracy Milestone – Fifth Grade
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  - Biliteracy Milestone – Eighth Grade
- Resources/Appendices

Proposed Resources/Appendix Content

- Application to Participate
- Student Award Criteria Checklists
- Student Award Template
- Award Data Submission
- NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements

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Feedback: Content, Appendices, Overall



1. Name any sections of the guidance document that should be added, removed, or adjusted.
2. Name additions needed in the Resources & Appendices section.

3. Regarding the whole concept, identify elements within the following four categories:

MUST HAVE	**NICE TO HAVE**
DO NOT INCLUDE	**POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS**

On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the closest to an ideal Pathways Award program, please rate the current guidance: ☆☆☆☆☆

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QR Code for Feedback Form

- If you would like to provide feedback electronically, please use the QR code to reach our survey of questions.

Email address

- You may also send feedback directly to biliteracy@isbe.net.

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