

# Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy

Annual Training Webinar

Multilingual/Language Development Department  
2025 - 2026

# Agenda

- Origins of certifying bilingualism for high school graduates
- The Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy
  - Origins
  - School Code and Administrative Rules
  - Benefits of participation
- How students qualify for the Seal
- Coordinating a Seal program
- Identifying candidates
- Award trends and data
- Reminders, suggestions



## Agenda

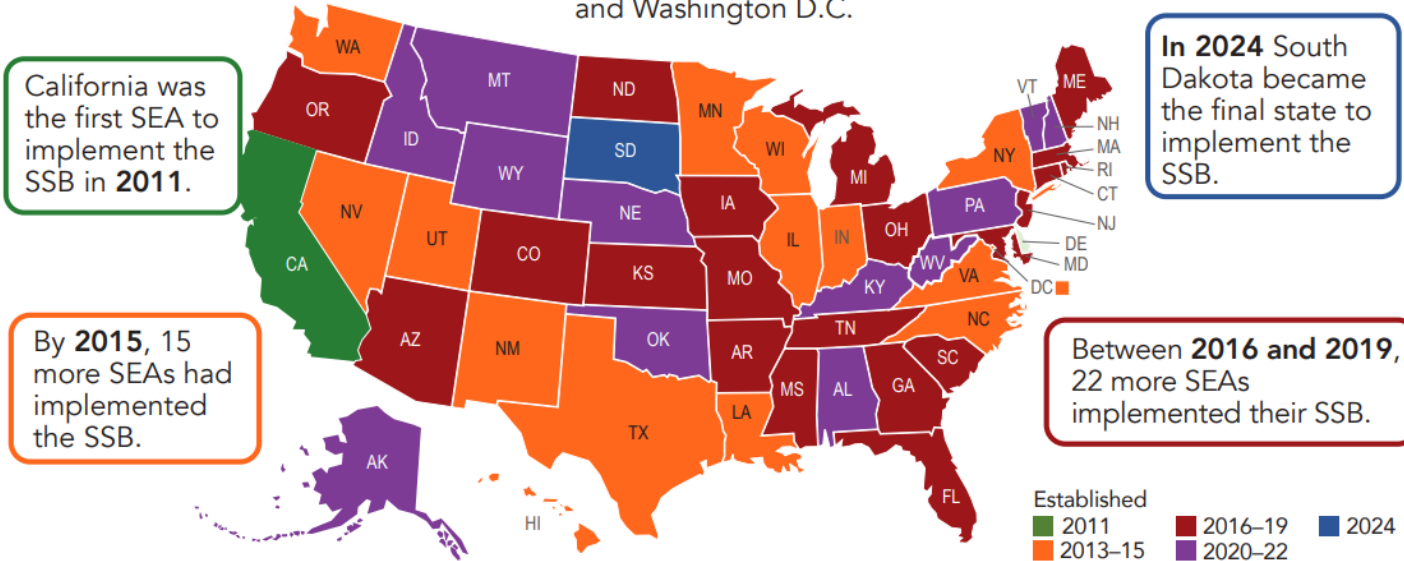
# Origins

## National & Illinois

# Seal of Biliteracy Origins

## When Was the Seal of Biliteracy Implemented by Each State Educational Agency?<sup>6</sup>

Thirteen years after its first introduction in 2011, the Seal of Biliteracy has spread to all 50 states and Washington D.C.



**2011:** Bilingual education was illegal in California between 1998 and 2016.

The concept of a Seal of Biliteracy was introduced in response to the English-only mandates of the time.

The Seal was intended to honor and celebrate the non-English backgrounds of students and families and to encourage students to maintain and develop their home languages.

**2025:** Each state has now developed its own program for certifying bilingualism, multilingualism, or global languages. Seals of Biliteracy can be earned by students of **all linguistic backgrounds**.

# The Seal of Biliteracy Is for Everyone

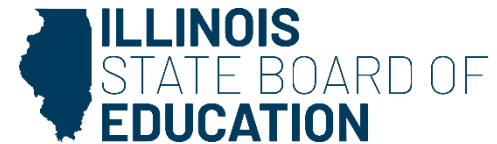
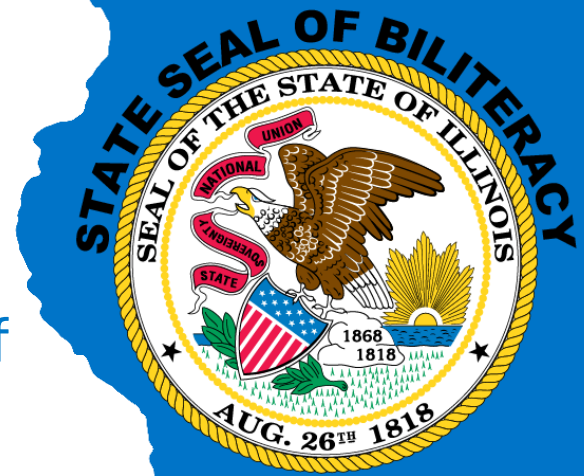
Bilingual and/or bicultural students, English learners, former English learners, students with non-English languages in their homes or communities.

Students from monolingual English origins or families who are learning a new language in or outside of school.

In Illinois, there is no classroom enrollment requirement in a foreign language class to qualify for the Seal.

# Origins: Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy

- In 2013, Illinois became the third state to establish a State Seal of Biliteracy. The Illinois state seal is unique in being written into law. The rationale included in the bill are as follows:
  - To encourage pupils to study languages.
  - To certify attainment of biliteracy.
  - To provide employers with a method of identifying people with language skills.
  - To provide universities with an additional method to recognize applicants
  - To prepare pupils with 21st century skills.
  - To recognize the value of language instruction in public and nonpublic schools.
  - To strengthen intergroup relationships, affirm the value of diversity, and honor the multiple cultures and languages of a community.



## Agenda

# Rules & Regulations

# School Code is Law

105 ILCS 5/2-3.159 codifies two benefits to earning the State Seal:

(i) For admissions purposes, each public university in this State shall accept the State Seal of Biliteracy as equivalent to **2 years of foreign language coursework taken during high school** if a student's high school transcript indicates that he or she will be receiving or has received the State Seal of Biliteracy.

(j) Each public community college and public university in this State shall establish criteria to **translate a State Seal of Biliteracy into course credit** based on foreign language course equivalencies identified by the community college's or university's faculty and staff and, upon request from an enrolled student, the community college or university shall award foreign language course credit to a student who has received a State Seal of Biliteracy.



# Seal Recipients Earn College Credit

- Entities may award course credit in different ways based on criteria that they have established.

- [College credit document](#) is available on the ISBE State Seal of Biliteracy [webpage](#).  
(Updated as IHEs change their policies or update links.)

## Resources

- [College Credit for the Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy](#)
- [FAQ for the Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy](#)
- [Benefits of Receiving the Seal of Biliteracy](#)
- [Seal of Biliteracy National Program](#)
- [Center for Applied Linguistics Foreign Language](#)
- [Common European Framework of Reference for Languages](#)
- [Education Week Blog: How the State Seal of Biliteracy](#)

While the legislation requires that schools translate the Seal into course credit, many schools also use the Seal as a placement tool or to satisfy certain graduation requirements. It is the student's responsibility to seek these credits and approvals in a timely manner at the institution of higher education.

The following information was gathered from individual college and university websites and is subject to change as unique entities update their websites. If you encounter a broken link or incorrect information, please send an email to [biliteracy@isbe.net](mailto:biliteracy@isbe.net).

Chicago State University	A student who has received the State Seal of Biliteracy will be awarded a total of <b>6 credits</b> (lower division). This is the equivalent of first semester (3 credits) and second semester (3 credits) of language study at CSU. When the seal is granted in a language not offered at Chicago State University, 6 credit hours of lower division foreign language elective will be awarded.	Published yearly in the CSU course catalog PDF
Eastern Illinois University	A student who has received the State Seal of Biliteracy will receive a total of <b>8 credits</b> (lower division). This is the equivalent of first semester (4 credits) and second semester (4 credits) of language study at EIU.	<a href="#">Registrar: Biliteracy</a>
Governors State University	Students who present appropriate documentation of the Seal to their advisor within three years of high school graduation will be awarded <b>six hours</b> of foreign language credit.	<a href="#">Admission Information</a>
Illinois State University	Illinois State University accepts the State Seal of Biliteracy from any state as equivalent to two semesters ( <b>8 credits</b> ) of language study (LAN 111-112) in languages offered at the University. If the seal is granted in a language not offered at Illinois State University, eight credit hours of lower division foreign language will be awarded.	<a href="#">Office of the Registrar</a>
	If you are earning a B.S. in the College of Arts and Sciences, then your language requirement is to complete a world languages class at the level of 112 or higher, or completion of Level III of one high school world language or earning the Seal of Biliteracy.	<a href="#">Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures</a>
Northeastern Illinois University	Students who receive the State Seal of Biliteracy will receive a total of <b>6 credits</b> (lower division) of language study at Northeastern.	<a href="#">Transfer Center</a>

# Benefits of Participation – Students and Families

- College credit – Save time and money.
- College placement – Advance through a major or minor more quickly.
- Add to résumé – Advocate for compensation.
- Waive the target language exam requirement to become a bilingual or world language [educator](#).
- Credentialed language skill – documented information for employers
- Connect with and honor home languages and family members.
- Communicate and connect with more people around the globe.
- Cognitive and social/emotional benefits of multilingualism and consideration of diverse perspectives.

# **Benefits of participation – Schools and Communities**

- Align your language programs to proficiency goals.
- Improve academic outcomes by encouraging first and second language development for students of all backgrounds.
- Students are motivated by the award and documented language credential.
- Increase opportunities for postsecondary advancement for students.
- Enhance engagement with parents and community members.
- Opportunity to “grow your own” future bilingual and language educators
- Establish pipeline of bilingual employees of all sectors to participate in your own diverse local economy.
- Honoring multilingualism fosters a positive school climate for all students.



# 23 Illinois Administrative Code 680

**"Communicative Competence"** means the knowledge of linguistic and sociolinguistic rules of a language and the ability to use such knowledge in communication.

**"Language Other Than English", "LOTE",** or "Targeted Language" means any language other than English, including all modern languages, Latin, American Sign Language, Native American languages, and other native languages spoken by an individual whose first language is not English. This does not include computer coding languages.

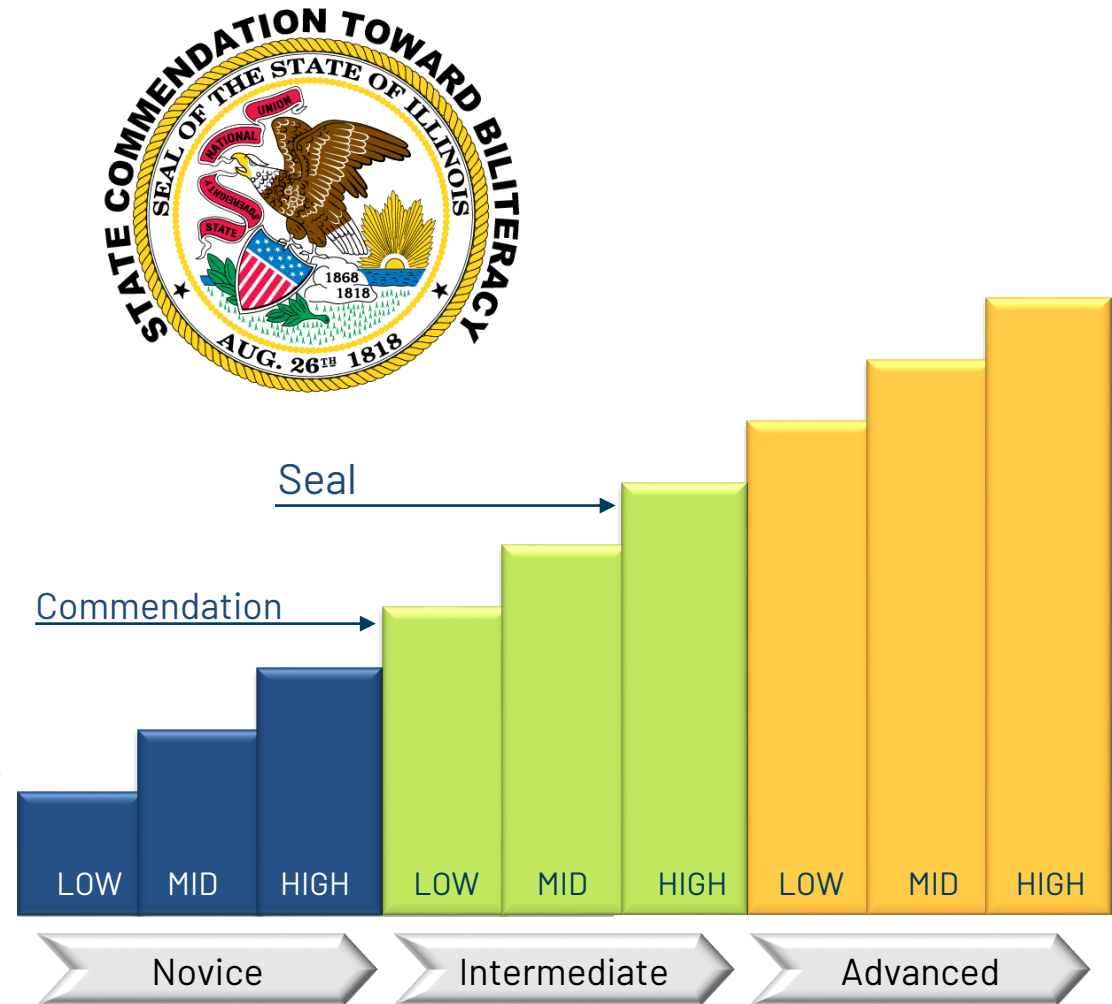
- a) World Language Proficiency in a language other than English  
A school district or nonpublic school may award the State Seal to any high school graduate *who attains a high level of proficiency, sufficient for meaningful use in college and a career* (Section 2-3.159 of the Code), in a language other than English, as evidenced by attainment of an "intermediate high" score, or its equivalent, on an approved assessment. ~~composite score, or an "intermediate high" score in each of the domains when no composite score is provided, or its equivalent, on a standardized assessment that addresses the four domains of speaking, writing, listening, and reading in the targeted world language.~~  
Proficiency may be shown using one of the methods outlined in this subsection.

- 1) Assessment Method

- iv) "Approved Standardized assessment" is one that is available for use on a statewide or national basis, has been approved by the Program, and meets generally accepted standards of fairness, validity, and reliability as stated in "Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing" (2013), published by the American Educational Research Association, 1430 K Street, N.W., Suite 1200, Washington DC 20005. (No later amendments to or editions of these standards are incorporated.)

# The Illinois Commendation toward Biliteracy

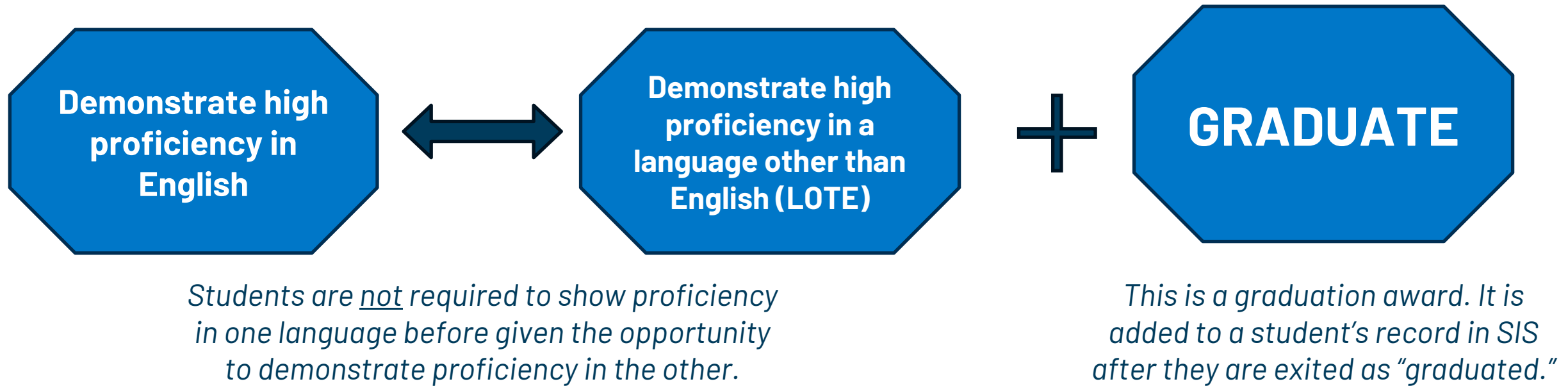
- The Commendation is an award indicating Intermediate Low language proficiency, while the Seal demands Intermediate High.
- The same assessment approvals apply but cut scores are lower to reflect correspondence with Intermediate Low.  
(This does not apply to the ACT/SAT, which have minimum scores that apply to both the Commendation and the Seal.)
- It is a way to officially celebrate and honor students on the path to language proficiency and encourage continued study.
- Some colleges *may* award credit for the Commendation or use it as a placement indicator.



## Agenda

# How Students Qualify

# How Students Qualify for the Seal



- Evidence of proficiency must be from the student's 9-12 school years.
- 23 Ill Adm. Code 680 guides the approval of methods to demonstrate proficiency. **A revision of these rules went into effect July 1, 2025.**



# How Students Qualify for the Seal

23 Ill. Adm. Code 680 identifies the methods in which students can qualify (approved assessment or portfolio) and the proficiency level they must reach in both English AND the LOTE (**Intermediate-High**). If the assessment provides discrete scores for different modalities of the language, each score must meet the minimum criteria.

Composite scores do not qualify.

Our list of approved assessments is **UPDATED** this year! The following English and LOTE assessments are a sampling of what can be found on our approved assessment list, located on our website.

## English Proficiency (choose one)

1. ACCESS for ELLs: **4.8** composite
2. AP English Language and Composition exam: **4**
3. ELA Dual-Credit Course: **3.0 GPA**
4. STAMP 4S: **6**
5. ACT: **18** composite or **18** ELA
6. AAPPL form B: **1-5** (Intermediate High)
7. SAT: **480** Evidence Based Reading and Writing

## LOTE Proficiency (choose one)

1. AP Language and Culture exam: **4**
2. STAMP 4S, WS, SuperLanguage: **6**
3. AAPPL form B: **1-5** (Intermediate High)
4. ACTFL OPI & WPT for the Seal of Biliteracy®:  
**Intermediate High**
5. International Baccalaureate Language B: **3**(HL) - **4** (SL)
6. ALTA exam: **6**, 1+ (ILR)
7. NEWL: **Intermediate High**

# 2025-2026



## Agenda

# Coordinating a Program

# How to Coordinate a Seal Program

1. Designate a Seal of Biliteracy **coordinator**.

2. Apply to ISBE **yearly**, by October 1.

(Applicant must have RCDT admin access.)

- **Annual webinar** required. (*This is it!*)

3. Identify candidates:

- English learners (ELs) and former ELs
- World language students
- Heritage speakers who may have never been designated EL

*Do any of your students attend ethnic language schools? Check to see if those schools are already assessing students' home languages via an approved assessment. They may already have scores available!*

4. Determine how your students qualify:

- Assessments or portfolios? Which assessments are approved/available for their languages?
- What are the supports to put in place?
- Implement timeline for annual **assessments**.

5. **Publicize** program:

- Website, student handbook, newsletters, etc.
- Variety of departments in your school. (Maybe CTE?)
- Distribute or link to one-pagers from our website.

6. Award the Seal:

- **Diploma and transcript** designation REQUIRED.
- Anything else is allowable for celebration but not required.

7. **Annual Report**

- **Due in SIS** Sept. 15 after graduation.

Set a  
reminder!

Set a  
reminder!

## Agenda

# Identifying Candidates

# Who are candidates for the Seal of Biliteracy?

Students who have studied languages within or outside of school for 3+ years.

"Never ELs" who have a home or native language other than English.

English learners (ELs) – current and former.

Students who attend community-based heritage language schools.

Students who have been enrolled in dual language immersion programs.

Students involved with Career and Technical Education programs.

## Seal of Biliteracy for CTE and Industry

### What is it?

The Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy is an award that high school graduates can earn on their diplomas. It was created by [legislation](#) and is coordinated by the Illinois State Board of Education.

### What does it represent?

A student who graduates with the Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy has demonstrated that they can competently communicate at an Intermediate High level in English and at least one other language at some time during their 9-12 school years. The seal is a representation that a student has credentialed their language skills beyond listing coursework on a transcript.

### What do Intermediate High language skills look like?

The National Council of State Supervisors for Languages and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) issued a list of [Can-Do Statements](#) in 2017 indicating the capabilities of people with proficiency at various levels. Some examples of Intermediate High language competencies include:

- I can understand the main idea and flow of events expressed in various time frames in conversations and some discussions.
- I can exchange information in conversations and some discussions on a variety of topics.



- I can interact with others to meet my needs, including when a complication arises.
- I can state my viewpoint on familiar or researched topics and provide reasons to support it.
- I can give detailed presentations on a variety of familiar topics and some concrete topics I have researched.
- I can follow the main message in various time frames informational texts.



### How rigorous is the testing to prove Inter proficiency?

All assessments for the Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy are approved by ISBE. They must be set forth in [Ill. Admin. Code 680](#) and nationally and internationally recognized proficiency scales, such as ACTFL European Framework of Reference or the Interagency Language Roundtable. Information can be found on the [ISBE website](#), including a list of approved

### How can I use the Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy setting?

Hiring managers may use "bilingual preferred" as a way to identify the communication skills of an applicant. The Seal of Biliteracy can identify credentialed their language skills. School Technical Education (CTE) programs can coordinate, and industry professionals can credential and encourage seal recognition. CTE coursework can be developed for specific purposes to integrate bilingual career preparation.

### Proficiency Levels in the Workplace\*

ACTFL Proficiency Level	Language Functions What is the candidate able to DO with the language?		Corresponding Professions/Positions **
	Oral	Written	
Advanced Mid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Narrate and describe events using the past, present, and future tenses.</li> <li>• Deal effectively with unexpected complications in communication.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write routine informal and some formal correspondence.</li> <li>• Narrate, describe, and summarize.</li> </ul>	Banker, bank teller, customer service representative, facilities manager, researcher/analyst, credit/loan advisor, social worker, marketing manager, patient advocate, translator (predictable contexts).
Advanced Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be understood by most people, native and non-native speakers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elaborate and paraphrase.</li> <li>• Utilize frequently used and contextually appropriate grammar structures and vocabulary.</li> </ul>	Accounting coordinator, 911 dispatcher, billing clerk, call center representative, flight attendant, employee trainer, administrative assistant, maintenance administrator, nurse, first responder, teacher, retail personnel, sales and marketing representative.
Intermediate High Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate, maintain, and bring a simple conversation to a close.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write simple letters, messages, requests for information, and notes.</li> </ul>	Administrative assistant, billing clerk, custodian, first responder, flight attendant, teacher, missionary, nurse, social service receptionist, insurance manager, tour guide, utilities installer.
Intermediate Mid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask and respond to original questions with sentence-length structure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond to simple questions and requests.</li> </ul>	Cashier, customer service, clerk, equipment technicians, drivers (truck, bus, train, car).
Intermediate Low Illinois Commendation Toward Biliteracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication may include errors that can be clarified with mutual effort.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication may include errors that are comprehensible with some clarification.</li> </ul>	Clerk, cashier, housekeeping, maintenance (incidental language use, predictable contexts).
Novice High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate with memorized formulas, lists, and phrases.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce lists and notes.</li> <li>• Transcribe familiar words and phrases.</li> </ul>	<b>Not a functional level for professional competency.</b>

New resources available on the [website](#) for the Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy

# Equity in District Administration of the Seal of Biliteracy

*If your district already offers the Seal or if you're interested in starting the program, these questions will help you maintain equitable access.*

- **Does your district participate in the Seal of Biliteracy?**
- **Who coordinates the program? How are candidates identified?**
  - Is the program housed at a district hub or are there school-level staff to assist students and families. (Who is involved and knows about it?)
  - Does a school counselor or administrator coordinate? A bilingual director? A world languages teacher? (Does the coordinator pull candidates from diverse programs?)
- **How is it publicized? To whom?**
  - Translating materials and media for LEP parents.
  - Career and Technical Education programs: Consider benefit of bilingual training in a career field!
  - Newsletters from counseling department, World Languages Department, BPAC ...
- **Have you considered equity in assessments?**
  - Method of demonstrating English proficiency: Does the district offer a variety of assessment options?
  - Cost of assessments: Does the district cover the cost or do families? Are assessments of certain languages more expensive than others?
  - Test Schedule: Keep in mind ACCESS window. Consider offering assessments early enough in 9-12 that a student has time to retest or use a different assessment before graduation.



## Agenda

# Award Trends & Data

# Then and Now

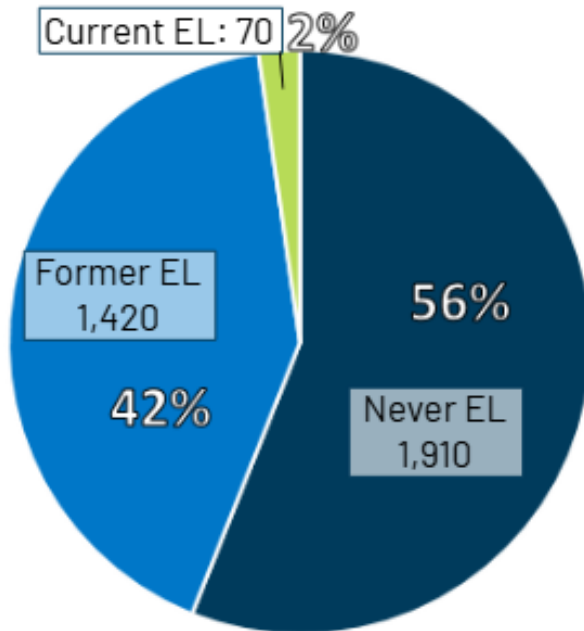
- In the 2014-15 school year, **17** districts participated, awarding **503** Seals and **214** Commendations in **10** different languages.
- In the 2018-2019 school year, ISBE began using the Student Information System (SIS) to manage district participation in the State Seal of Biliteracy and student award data.
- In the 2023-24 school year, **146** public districts participated, awarding **9,369** Seals and **5,407** Commendations in **57** different languages!
- In the 2023-24 school year, **180** seals were awarded to nonpublic students.



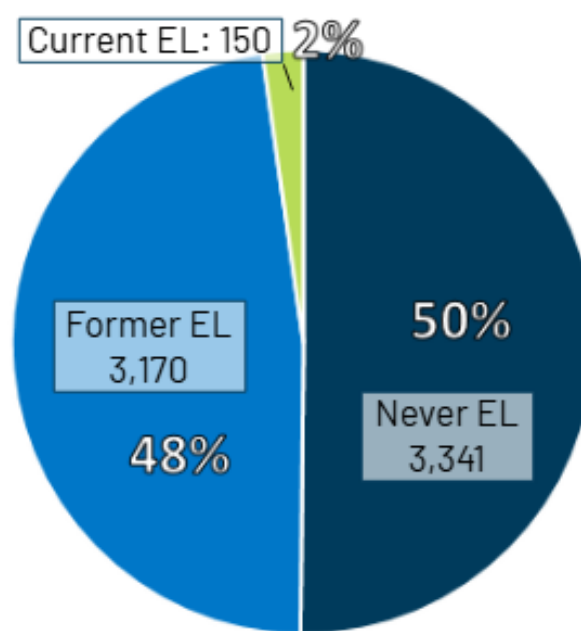


# Award Trends and Data

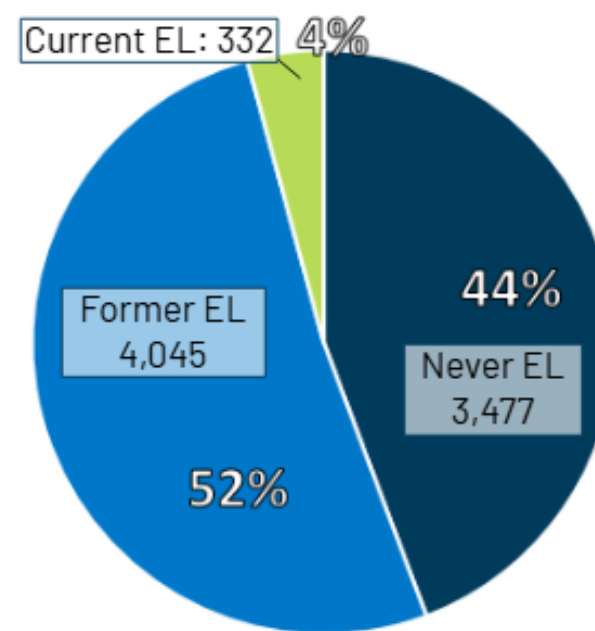
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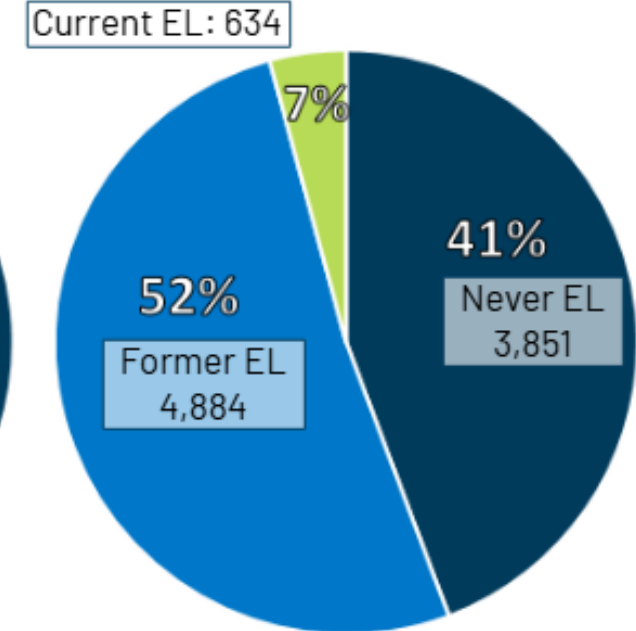
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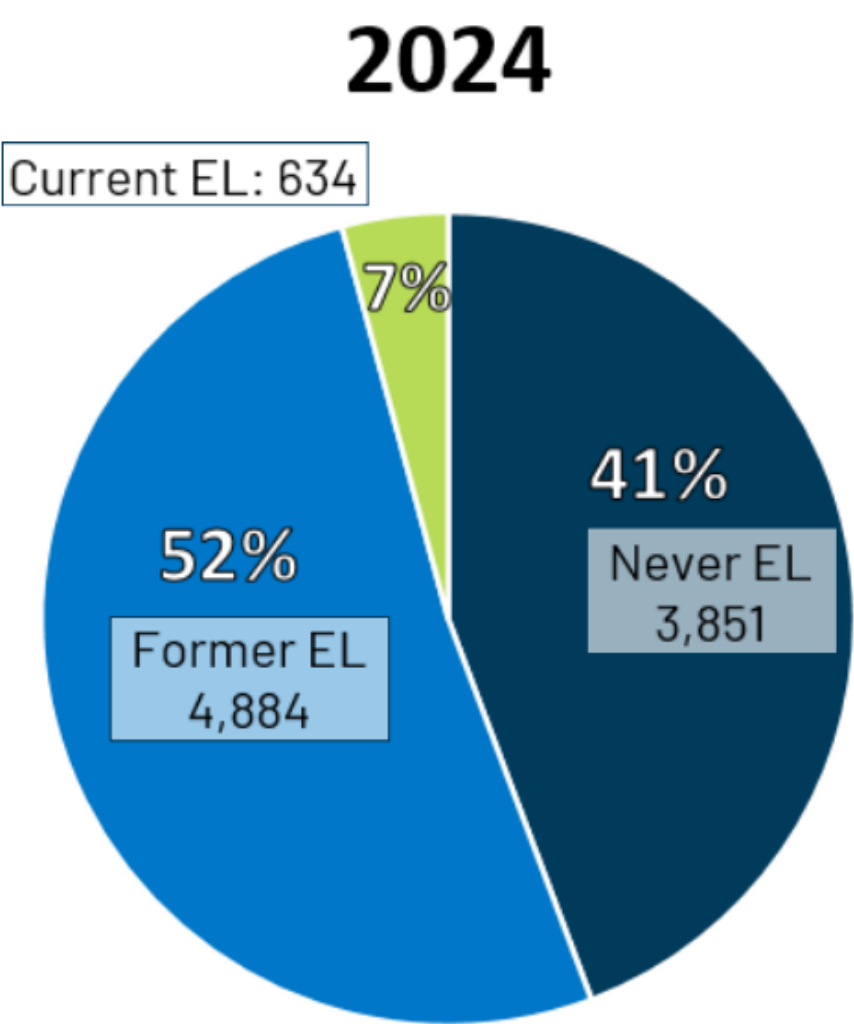
2024



# Award Trends and Data

55 Languages Awarded

- Albanian/Gheg(Kosovo/ Macedon)
  - Albanian/Tosk (Albania)
  - American Sign Language
  - Amharic
  - Arabic
  - Bengali
  - Bosnian
  - Bulgarian
  - Burmese
  - Cantonese (Chinese)
  - Croatian
  - Czech
  - Dari
  - Dutch/Flemish
  - Farsi (Persian)
  - French
  - Georgian
  - German
  - Greek
  - Gujarati
  - Hausa
  - Hebrew
  - Hindi
  - Hungarian
- Italian
  - Jamaican English Creole
  - Japanese
  - Kinyarwanda
  - Korean
  - Latin
  - Lithuanian
  - Macedonian
  - Malayalam
  - Mandarin (Chinese)
  - Mongolian
  - Norwegian
  - Panjabi (Punjabi)
  - Pilipino (Tagalog)
  - Polish
  - Portuguese
  - Romanian
  - Russian
  - Serbian
  - Slovak
  - Somali
  - Spanish
  - Swedish
  - Tamil
  - Telugu (Telegu)
- Turkish
  - Ukrainian
  - Urdu
  - Vietnamese
  - Wolof
  - Yoruba



# Final Reminders and Notes

- Consider equity.
  - Review the slides that prompt equity discussions. Collaborate with multiple stakeholders and departments in your district.
- Collaborate with K-8 schools.
  - What is the language history of incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders?
    - Dual language program, home/native language, EL status, middle school language classes
- Designation of the Seal MUST be on student transcripts and diplomas.
  - This identifies to universities and employers the Seal was officially earned and awarded.
- Graphics of the Seal and the language earned are in a password-protected library.
  - The password updates annually. It is sent in the automatic email reply when your annual application to participate is submitted.
- Please review the Illinois [State Seal of Biliteracy website](#)
  - Assessment updates, new guidance, new resources.

thank you