



Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy

Annual Webinar for Program Coordinators
Multilingual/Language Development Department
2026-2027

Agenda

- Origins of the Seal of Biliteracy
- The Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy
 - Benefits of Participation
 - School Code
 - College Credits
 - 23 Ill. Adm. Code 680
- Qualifying
- Coordinating
- Identifying Candidates
- Awards and Data
- Reminders

Seal of Biliteracy Origins

- **Establishment**

- In response to English-only mandates in California

- **Purpose**

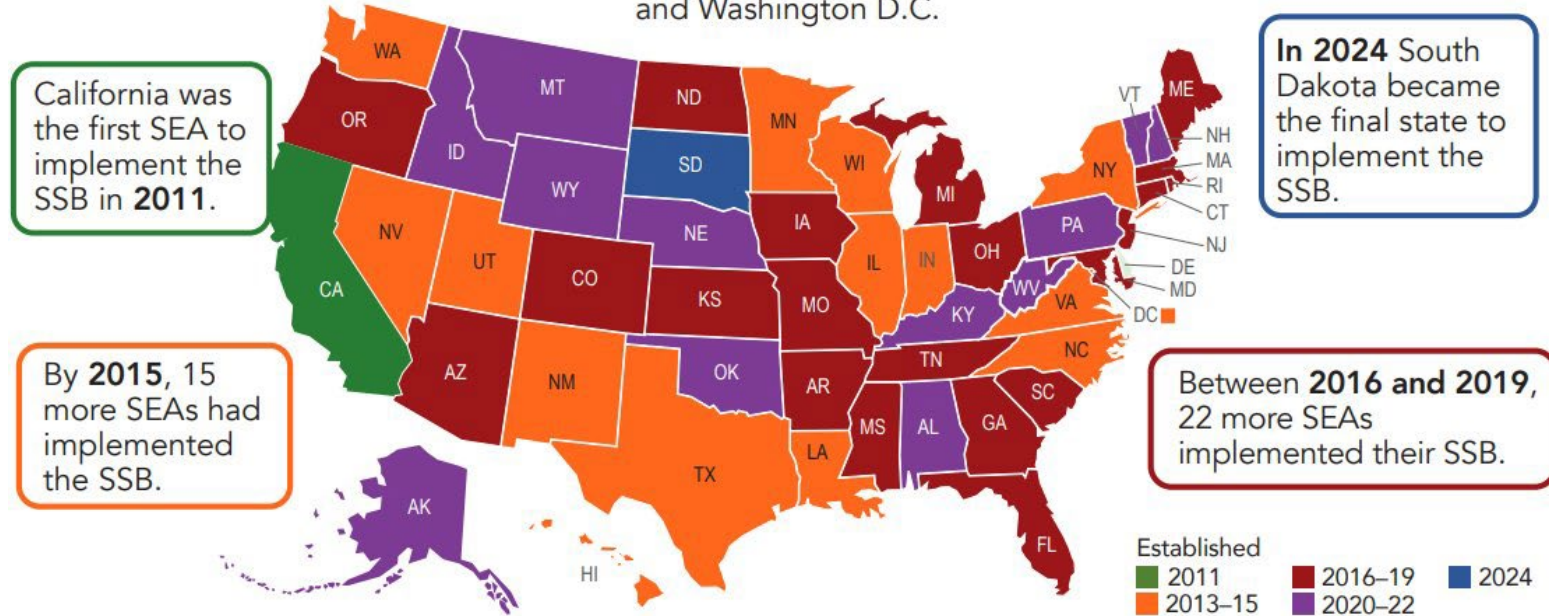
- Honor and support home languages

- **Present Day**

- All 50 states offer a Seal of Biliteracy



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



Origins: Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy

- Illinois was the third state to establish a State Seal of Biliteracy.
- The State Seal of Biliteracy is written into Illinois' School Code.
 - “The State Seal of Biliteracy certifies attainment of a **high level of proficiency**, sufficient for meaningful use in college and a career, by a graduating public or non-public high school pupil in one or more languages in addition to English”



The Seal of Biliteracy Is For Everyone

Students with
non-English
languages in
their homes or
communities

Students from
monolingual
families learning
a new language
in or outside of
school

No classroom
enrollment
requirement in
Illinois to qualify
for the Seal

Benefits of Participation for Schools and Communities

Programs & Instruction

- Align to proficiency goals
- Improve language outcomes
- Boost student motivation

Students & School Climate

- Expand postsecondary access
- Foster inclusion
- Engage families

Workforce & Community

- Develop bilingual educators
- Build workforce pipeline
- Strengthen local economy

Benefits of Participation for Students & Families

Academic & Career Advantages

- Earn college credit
- Document language skills
- Achieve a minor or major more quickly

Professional Pathways

- Support for higher pay and eligibility for bilingual or language education roles

Personal & Global Benefits

- Honor home language
- Connect with others worldwide
- Build cognitive and social skills

Rules and Regulations

In Illinois

School Code is Law

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

Public colleges
accept the Seal of
Biliteracy as
**two years of
language** credit on
a high school
transcript.

Colleges must set
rules to convert
the Seal of
Biliteracy into
language **course
credit** and must
award it upon
request.

Seal Recipients Earn College Credit

- Entities award course credit based on criteria that they have established
- A college credit document is available on the [ISBE State Seal of Biliteracy webpage](#) under the "Additional Resources" dropdown menu

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.

Chicago State University	A student who has received the State Seal of Biliteracy will be awarded a total of 6 credits (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	Seal of Biliteracy: 12 credits (lower division) Commendation toward Biliteracy: 8 credits (lower division) EIU recognizes the State Seal of Biliteracy and the Commendation toward Biliteracy regardless of the state in which it was earned.	Registrar: Biliteracy
Governors State University	Students who present appropriate documentation of the Seal to their advisor within three years of high school graduation will be awarded six hours of foreign language credit.	Admission Information
Illinois State University	Illinois State University accepts the State Seal of Biliteracy from any state as equivalent to two semesters (8 credits) 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.	Office of the Registrar
	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.	Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures
Northeastern Illinois University	Students who receive the State Seal of Biliteracy will receive a total of 6 credits (lower division) of language study at Northeastern.	Transfer Center

The Seal is a Graduation Award

- Districts must designate the award on the final transcript and the diploma.

Lvl	1st Sem	2nd Sem	Summer 1	Summer 2	Credit	T *
	A				0.500	
	A-				0.500	
	A+				0.500	
		A+			0.250	
			P		0.500	
H	A-				0.500	
H		A-			0.250	
	A+				0.250	
	A-				0.500	
		A-			0.500	
H	B+				0.500	
H		A-			0.500	
H	A-				0.500	
H		A			0.500	
					6.750	
67	H	A+			0.500	
		A+			0.500	
			A+		0.500	
			A		0.500	
			A-		0.500	
			A+		0.500	
			A		0.250	
			P		0.250	
			P		0.500	
H	A-				0.500	
H		A			0.500	
H			A		0.500	
H			A		0.500	
					7.000	
31				A+	0.500	
				P	0.250	
					0.500	
H	A-				0.500	
H		A-			0.250	
H	A+				0.250	
H		A+			0.500	

Waterloo Community High School



This Certifies That

having completed the Course of Study prescribed by the
Board of Education is hereby declared a graduate
of the Waterloo Community Unit High School,
District No. 5, and is entitled to this

Diploma

Given at Waterloo, in the State of Illinois,
May, 2020

John Camp
President

Brian D. Channon
Superintendent

Lori Dillenger
Secretary

Abri Costello
Principal

Illinois Administrative Code Updates (23 Ill. Adm. Code 680)

In Effect Since School Year 2025-26

23 III. Adm. Code 680 Updates

- **“Communicative Competence”**
 - The knowledge of linguistic and sociolinguistic rules of a language and the ability to use such knowledge in communication
- 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
- **“Language Other Than English” (LOTE) or “Targeted Language”**
 - Any language other than English
 - Does **not** include computer coding languages
- **“Approved 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.)

23 III. Adm. Code 680 Updates Continued

As of July 1, 2025, composite scores do not qualify a student for the Seal

- Given the nature of “communicative competence,” it is necessary for students to demonstrate intermediate high proficiency in each of the modalities for which the language is assessed.
- The Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy qualifies students for two years of high school language credit on college applications, translates into college credit at Illinois public colleges and universities, and allows teaching candidates to wave target language or bilingual assessments toward licensure.
- The "Intermediate High" criteria is maintained for all language domains to ensure that students who receive the Seal can meet the expectations of college level coursework. The Intermediate High level also maintains the integrity of the seal as a language credential in the field.
- Discrete scores are also required in: Missouri, Indiana, Iowa, Wisconsin, Kentucky, and for the Global Seal of Biliteracy.

Qualifying for the Seal

How Students Qualify for the Seal

- Demonstrate Intermediate High Proficiency in English*
- Demonstrate Intermediate High Proficiency in a Language Other than English (LOTE)*
- Graduate

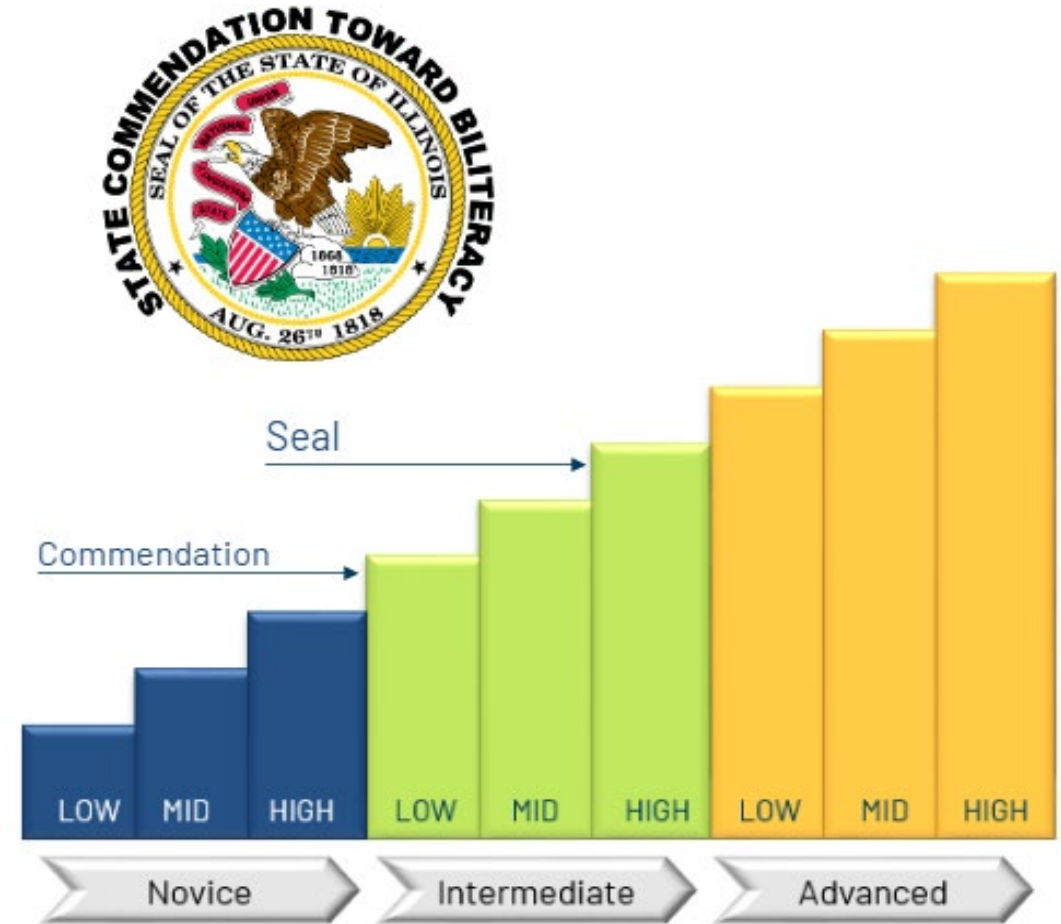
Per 23 Ill. Adm. Code 680, students may demonstrate Intermediate-High proficiency by using:

- An approved assessment
- The portfolio method

***Demonstration of English proficiency or LOTE proficiency does not need to occur in any sequential order.**

The Illinois Commendation Toward Biliteracy

- **Level difference**
 - Commendation requires Intermediate Low; Seal requires Intermediate High
- **Assessment**
 - Same tests, lower cut scores (**ACT/SAT cut scores unchanged**)
- **Purpose**
 - Recognize progress and encourage continued study



Sample Assessments for English and LOTE

An approved assessment list can be found on the [ISBE State Seal of Biliteracy webpage](#).

English

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** ELA
6. AAPPL form B: **I-5** (Intermediate-High)

LOTE

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

* The ACCESS for ELLs is only an approved method for students who are designated as English learners.

Coordinating a Program

How to Coordinate a Seal Program

1. Designate a coordinator
2. Apply to ISBE **yearly**, by October 1
 - Annual webinar required
3. Identify candidates
 - Current ELs, former ELs, heritage students, world language students
4. Determine how candidates will qualify
 - Timeline for assessments, kinds of assessments

How to Coordinate a Seal Program Continued

- Award the Seal
 - Diploma and transcript designation **required**
 - Anything else is allowable to celebrate but not required
- Annual Report
 - Due in SIS by September 15 after graduation

Identifying Candidates

Who Are Candidates for the Seal of Biliteracy?

Enrolled in Language

- Current WL students
- Current EL students
- Dual language bilingual education (DLBE) students

Language Background

- Heritage speakers
- Never ELs with a language other than English
- Former EL students
- Students from a DL program during K-8

Other Considerations

- Students who attend community-based heritage language schools
- Students in Career and Technical Education

Equity in District Administration of the Seal of Biliteracy

- Does your district participate in the Seal? Commendation?
- Who coordinates the program? How are candidates identified?
 - Counselor? Teacher? Principal? District office admin?
- How is it publicized? To whom?
 - Publicizing the Seal is required by 23 Ill. Adm. Code 680
- Have you considered equity in assessments?
 - Timing, cost, and how students demonstrate proficiency

Award Trends and Data

Data from Prior Years for the Seal

Then and Now

2014-15 school year:

- **17** districts participated
- **503** Seals awarded
- **214** Commendations awarded
- **10** different languages celebrated

2018-19 school year:

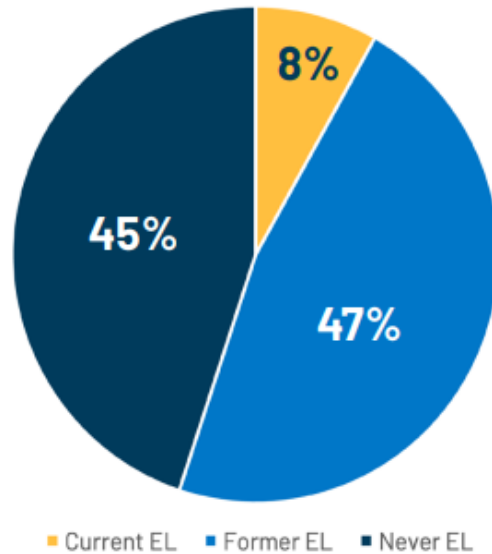
- ISBE began using the Student Information System (SIS) to manage district participation in the Seal of Biliteracy and student award data

2024-25 school year:

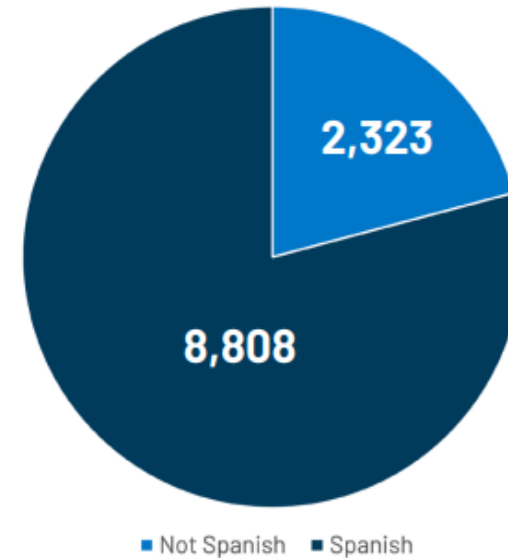
- **139** districts participated
- **11,131** Seals awarded
- **5,980** Commendations awarded
- **62** distinct languages
- **12%** of all high school graduates earned at least one Seal or Commendation

Languages Awarded for the Seal in 2025

Students who Earned a Seal of Biliteracy per EL Status



Languages Awarded



Top 10 Languages of Non-Spanish Seals of Biliteracy Awarded

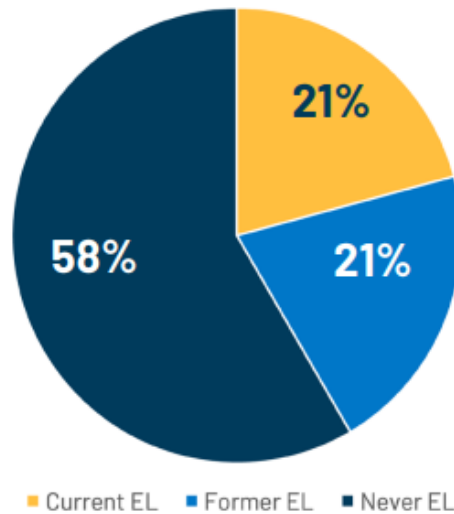
■ Polish: **555**
■ French: **365**
■ Mandarin
(Chinese): **251**

■ American Sign
Language: **149**
■ Russian: **128**
■ German: **116**

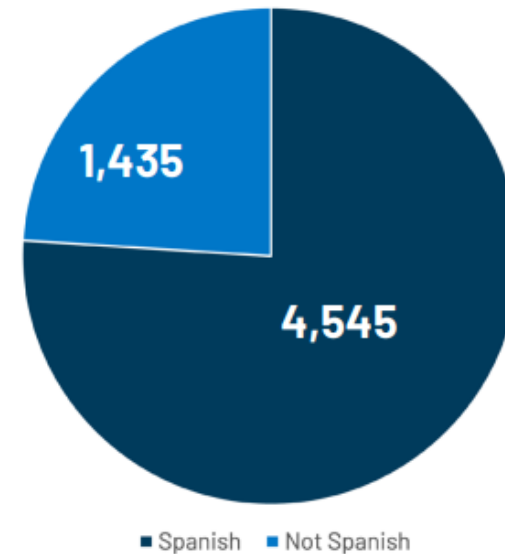
■ Ukrainian: **70**
■ Latin: **62**
■ Korean: **60**
■ Japanese: **57**

Languages Awarded for the Commendation in 2025

Students who Earned a Commendation Toward Biliteracy
per EL Status



Languages Awarded



Top 10 Languages of Non-Spanish Commendations Toward Biliteracy Awarded

■ French: 700	■ Polish: 76	■ Italian: 40
■ German: 157	■ Latin: 58	■ Arabic: 34
■ Mandarin (Chinese): 154	■ American Sign Language: 46	■ Japanese: 31
		■ Hebrew: 24

Final Notes and Reminders

Take Note

- Applications due October 1
 - Response follows with access to a password-protected graphics library
 - The library password updates annually on July 1

- Submit all award data by September 15
- Designation of the Seal **must** be on transcripts and diplomas
- View webinar and website updates annually

- Collaborate with K-8 schools
 - What is the language history of incoming freshmen?
- Remember equity
- Promote and celebrate language and student progress

Thank you!



Biliteracy@isbe.net



312-814-3850