

Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy

Statewide English Learner Administrator Conference

Multilingual/Language Development Department

2026-2027

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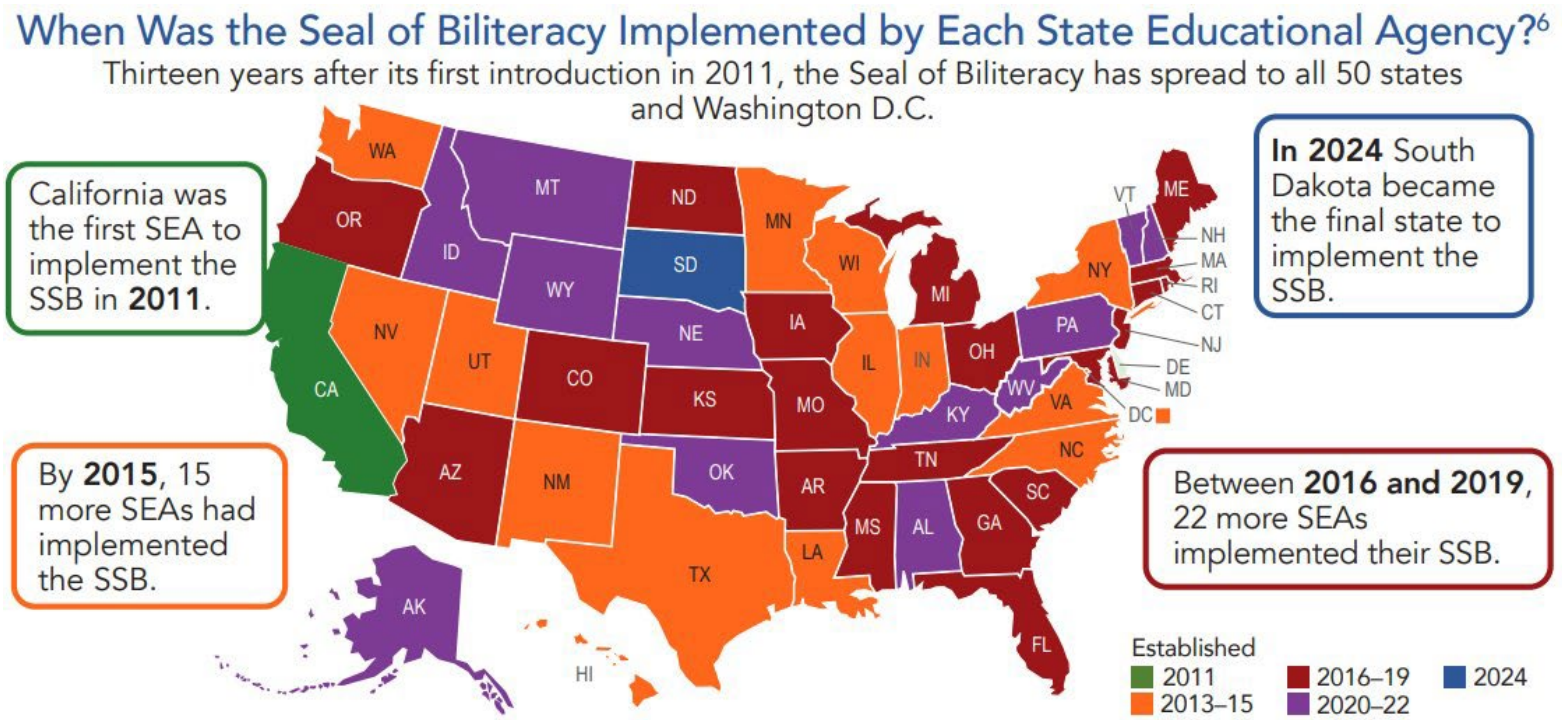
Agenda

- 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
- Considerations for Multilingual Learners
- Awards and Data
- Reminders

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Seal of Biliteracy Origins

- **Establishment**
  - In response to English-only mandates in California
- **Purpose**
  - Honor and support home languages
  - Promote multilingualism
- **Currently**
  - All 50 states offer a Seal of Biliteracy



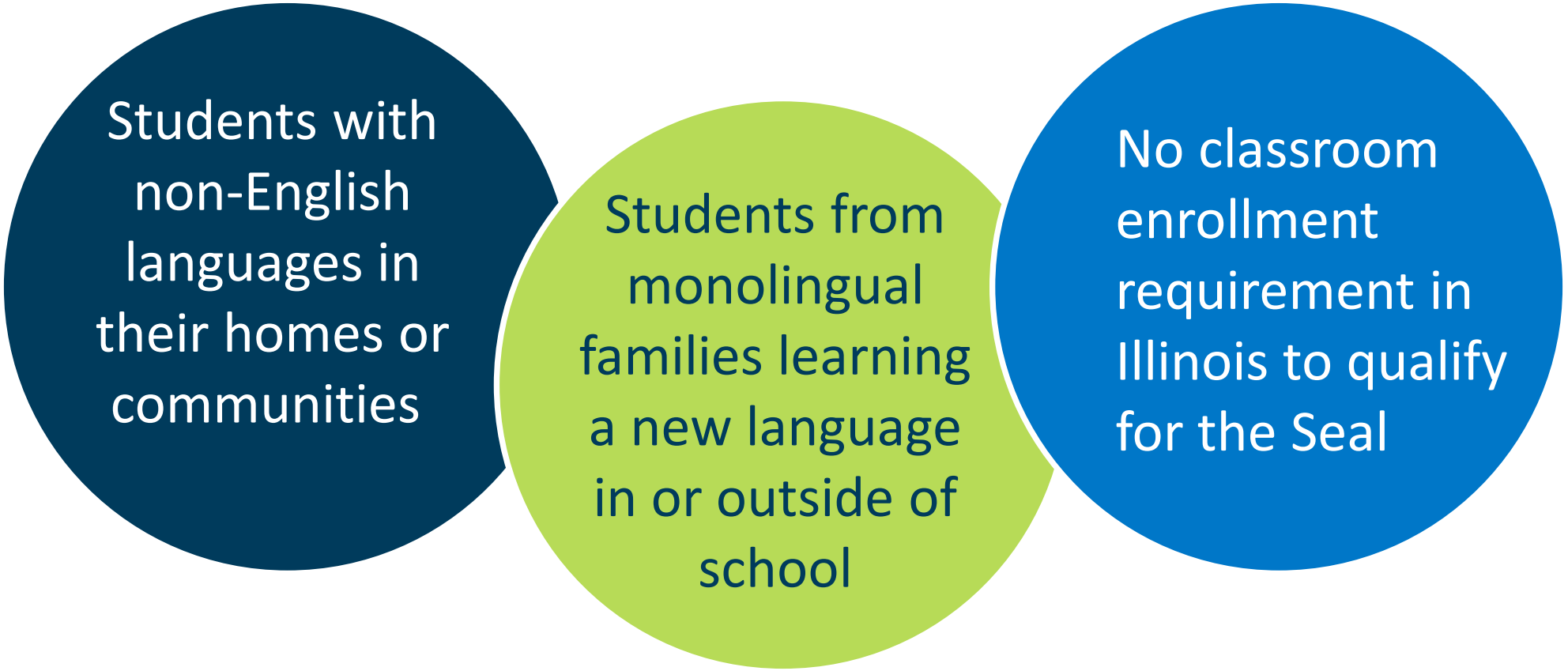
Origins: Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy

- Illinois was the third state to establish a State Seal of Biliteracy.
- First awards earned by class of 2015
- 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”



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The Seal of Biliteracy Is For Everyone



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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

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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

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Rules and Regulations

In Illinois

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School Code is Law

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

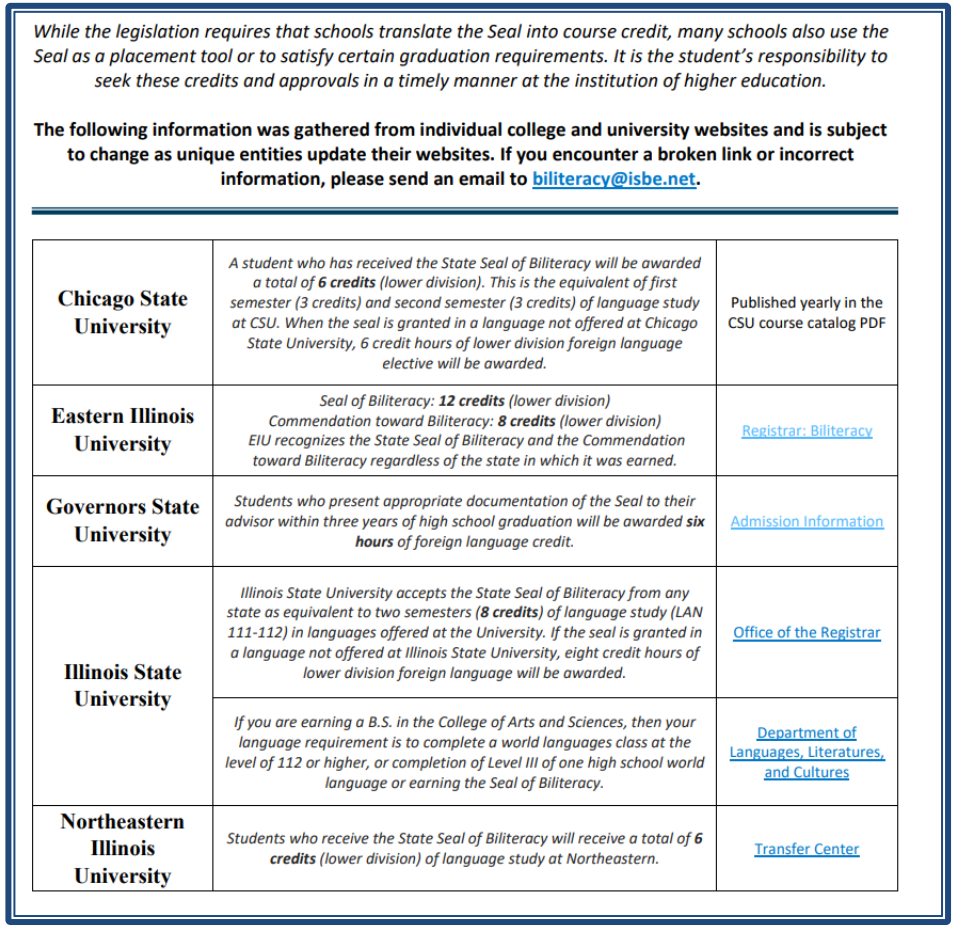
Public colleges accept the Seal of Biliteracy as **two years of language** credit on a high school transcript.

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

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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.

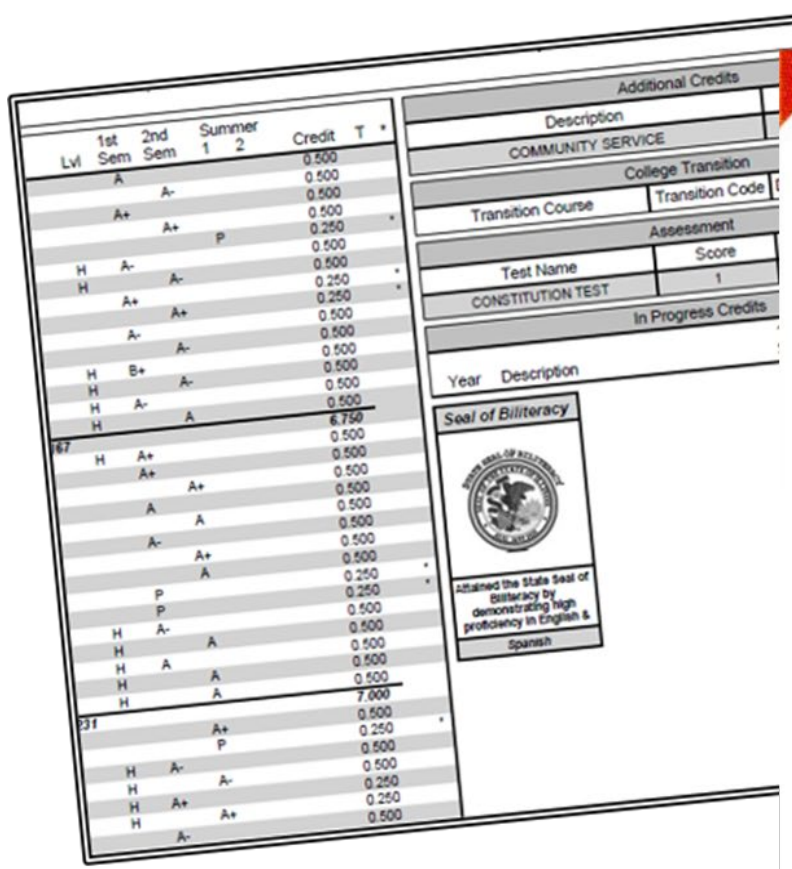
The following information was gathered from individual college and university websites and is subject to change as unique entities update their websites. If you encounter a broken link or incorrect information, please send an email to biliteracy@isbe.net.

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

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The Seal is a Graduation Award

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





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

In Effect Since School Year 2025-26

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23 Ill. Adm. Code 680 Updates (7/1/25)

- **“Communicative Competence”**
  - 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”**
  - Any language other than English
  - Does **not** include computer coding languages

- ~~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~~a~~ "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

- "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.)

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23 Ill. 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

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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:

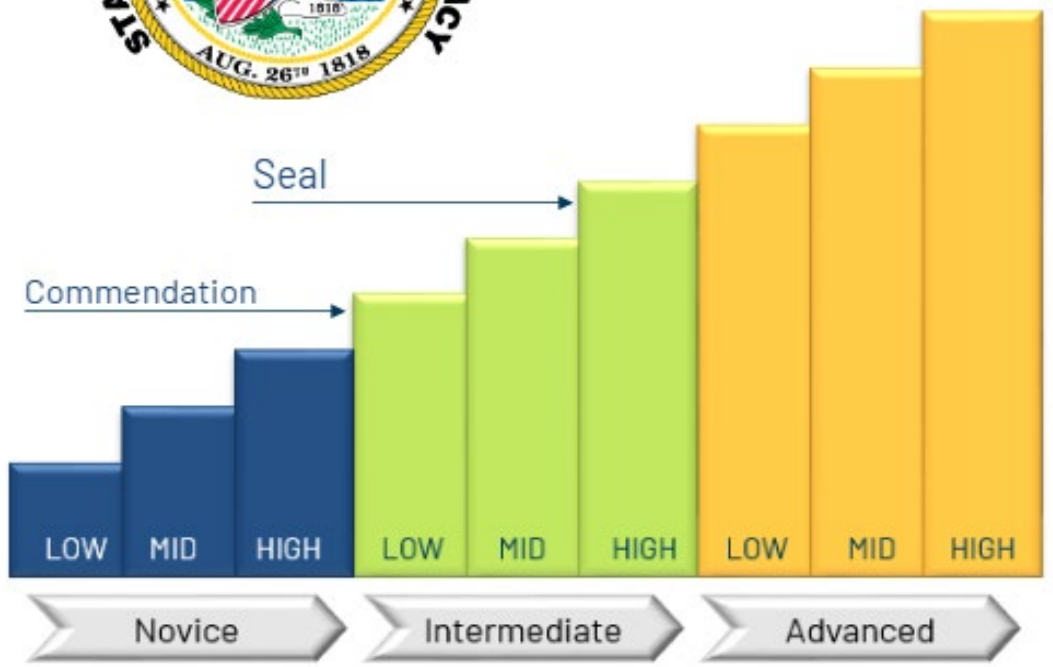
- An approved assessment
- The portfolio method

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

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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
  - Some colleges may award credit



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Sample Assessments for English & LOTE

An approved assessment list can be found on the ISBE State Seal of Biliteracy webpage.

English Proficiency

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 Proficiency

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.

Considerations for Multilingual Learners

English Assessments – Consider Options

- Approved methods in 105 ILCS 5/2-3.159 and 23 Ill. Adm. Code 680 written to allow students to qualify with assessments that are already required of them (ACT/SAT, ACCESS)
- Districts may use these assessments or may offer any other approved English assessment method (STAMP, AAPPL, AP, Dual Credit, etc.)

Consider Timing and Sequence of Assessments

- Students may take assessments and qualify at any time during Grades 9-12
- Multilingual students may feel prepared to assess in their home language before English or vice versa – consider individual student backgrounds and strengths
- EL students do not need to meet exit criteria on ACCESS to qualify for the Seal (see previous slide)
- EL students may feel more confident with opportunity to establish baseline idea of home language proficiency – consider LOTE assessment in Grades 9-10 to give time to set goals and improve

Potential Candidates – Multilingual Backgrounds

- Review language history of incoming 9th graders to establish pool of multilingual candidates
  - EL status: former or current
  - Native or home language other than English (but may have screened proficient and Never EL)
  - Students who have attended community-based heritage language schools
  - Students exiting K-8 dual language programs

Family and Staff Support

- Ensure that BPAC has information about Seal opportunities
  - Parents may be interested in earning a Global Seal alongside their students.
- Create a simple way for staff to recommend students for consideration
- Include and educate all staff about the opportunity for students to earn the Seal

- Students may share language background or express linguistic confidence to a variety of adults
  - Administrators
  - WL teachers
  - Content teachers
  - Coaches
  - School counselors
  - EL teachers
  - Support staff

Award Trends and Data

Data from Prior Years for the SOBL

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

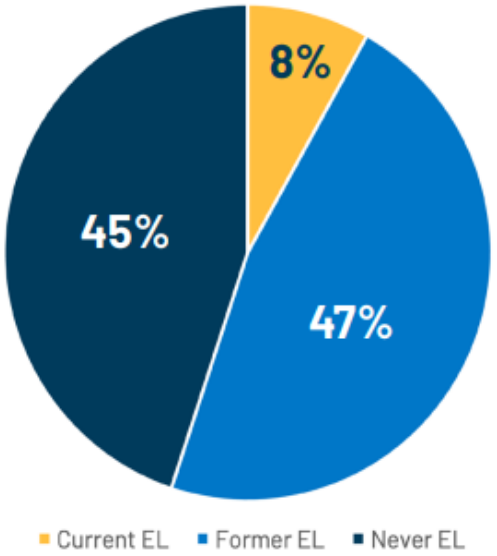
2024-25 School Year:

- **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

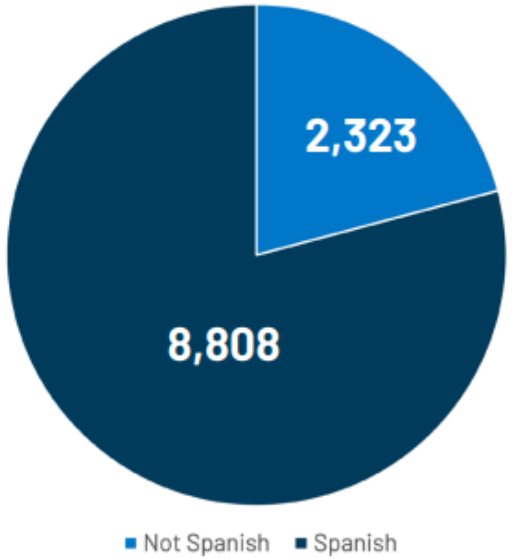
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Languages Awarded for the Seal in 2025

Students who Earned a Seal of Biliteracy per EL Status



Languages Awarded



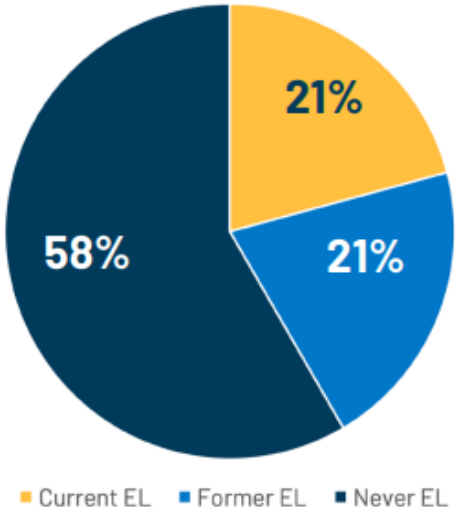
Top 10 Languages of Non-Spanish Seals of Biliteracy Awarded

- Polish: **555**
- French: **365**
- Mandarin (Chinese): **251**
- American Sign Language: **149**
- Russian: **128**
- German: **116**
- Ukrainian: **70**
- Latin: **62**
- Korean: **60**
- Japanese: **57**

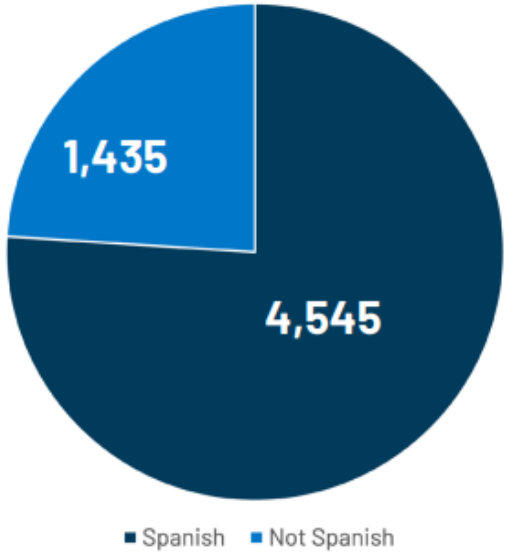
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Languages Awarded for the Commendation in 2025

Students who Earned a Commendation Toward Biliteracy per EL Status



Languages Awarded



Top 10 Languages of Non-Spanish Commendations Toward Biliteracy Awarded

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

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Final Notes & Reminders

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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

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Thank you!



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