

Frequently Asked Questions
State Seal of Biliteracy
State Commendation toward Biliteracy

1. What is the State Seal of Biliteracy?

The State Seal of Biliteracy is a recognition given to graduating high school students who have demonstrated a high level of proficiency in English and in reading, writing, listening and speaking in another language.

2. What is the State Commendation toward Biliteracy?

The State Commendation toward Biliteracy is a recognition given to graduating high school students who have demonstrated significant progress toward achieving a high level of proficiency in English and in reading, writing, listening and speaking in another language.

3. Where can I learn more about how a district can participate in this program?

The State Seal of Biliteracy website at <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Illinois-State-Seal-of-Biliteracy.aspx> contains information and resources including a training module for districts that wish to participate in the program.

District Application Process

4. How does a district notify the Illinois State Board of Education that it will offer the State Seal of Biliteracy?

Districts must notify the Illinois State Board of Education each year of their intent to award the State Seal of Biliteracy by submitting an application form and an Excel template with projections. These two forms are due on October 1. If a district makes the decision to participate after that date, it must notify the State Board of Education of its participation no later than 45 calendar days prior to the issuance of any State Seals or State Commendations and include in the notification evidence that the district has met all of the requirements in the rules for participating districts.

Placing the Seal or Commendation on the Diploma and Transcript

5. How are the Seal of Biliteracy and the Commendation toward Biliteracy included on the student's diploma and transcript?

The diploma must contain the Seal or Commendation symbol that ISBE provides to the district as a picture file. The transcript must contain the written statement that ISBE provides to the district.

6. May a district affix the Seal to the diploma after it is printed?

Yes, the Seal and the Commendation may be affixed to the diploma.

7. Does ISBE offer printed stickers with the Seal/Commendation?

No, each district is responsible for printing the State Seal or Commendation symbol on student diplomas or on stickers that are affixed to the diplomas.

8. May a district place the Seal or Commendation language on the transcript as soon as the student meets the criteria at any time during their enrollment in high school?
Yes, the Seal or Commendation language may be added to the student's transcript as soon as the district determines that the student meets the criteria, at any time during the student's enrollment in high school. The Seal or Commendation must also be included on the diploma when the student graduates. When the determination takes place prior to a student's graduation year (i.e. junior year), the student should be reported as receiving the Seal in their graduation year.
9. If a student is proficient in English and two or more other languages, how should this be recognized on the diploma and transcript?
The district should award a Seal of Biliteracy or Commendation for each language other than English in which the student demonstrates proficiency.
10. May a district give recipients of the Seal or Commendation other forms of recognition such as ribbons or certificates?
Yes, a district may give recipients other forms of recognition in addition to the required designation on the diploma and transcript.

Meeting Criteria for the Seal or Commendation

11. Where can I find information on using assessment results to determine whether a student meets the criteria for English proficiency and proficiency in a world language for either the State Seal of Biliteracy or the State Commendation toward Biliteracy?
As ISBE continues to develop the list of assessments with pre-established correspondence to the ACTFL standards, you can find the most updated assessment list with cut scores using this link: <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/assessment-list.pdf>
12. If a student does not take the SAT or ACCESS for ELLs® during high school, how can the student demonstrate English proficiency for the purposes of the Seal or Commendation?
A district may choose to use the ACT college entrance test. On the ACT, a student must attain either the ACT College Ready Benchmark on the English subject area test or a composite score of at least 21 to be eligible for the Seal or Commendation.

A district may also use the results of a standardized assessment meeting the requirements of 1.442(a)(1), including the ACTFL Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL), TOEIC® or TOEFL® to meet the English proficiency requirement for the Seal or Commendation.

For more information, see <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/assessment-list.pdf>
13. If a student takes the ACCESS for ELLs® and the SAT at different times during enrollment in high school, which assessment results should be used to determine eligibility for the Seal or Commendation?
The student may qualify for the Seal or Commendation by meeting any one of the criteria for English proficiency at some time during the student's high school enrollment.

14. For the Seal of Biliteracy or Commendation in Latin, may a district accept the results of the ALIRA, the ACTFL language test in one domain (reading)?

Yes, because Latin is not used as a written or spoken language today, the ALIRA may be used to demonstrate proficiency in Latin for the purposes of awarding the Seal of Biliteracy or the Commendation toward Biliteracy.

15. If a language assessment of four domains does not have a composite score, how does the district determine whether or not the student met the criteria for the Seal or Commendation?

If the assessment has no composite score, the student must attain the minimum criteria for the award in each domain.

16. May the State Seal of Biliteracy 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 results of an approved language assessment taken while the student is enrolled in the district are not available at the time of graduation, the district may award the Seal of Biliteracy or Commendation toward Biliteracy after the student graduates when results are available. The district may recognize these students as candidates for the Seal of Biliteracy at graduation but no official designation may be included on the diploma or transcript until the district obtains assessment results that indicate that the student qualifies for the award. When the Seal of Biliteracy or Commendation toward Biliteracy is awarded, a designation must be affixed to the student's diploma and included in the student's transcript.

17. May the State Seal of Biliteracy be awarded to high school students if they tested in a grade prior to attending high school?

No. In order for a student to qualify for the Seal of Biliteracy or Commendation toward Biliteracy, the English and additional language assessments must be taken during the high school years.

18. May a State Seal of Biliteracy be awarded to high school students who meet the assessment criteria but do not enroll in world language courses in high school?

Yes. Enrollment in a world language program is not a prerequisite for attaining the State Seal of Biliteracy or Commendation toward Biliteracy.

19. How can I determine whether or not an assessment not on the list of approved assessments would be accepted by ISBE for demonstrating proficiency in a language?

Contact the Division of English Learners at biliteracy@isbe.net or (312) 814-3850.

Publicizing the Program

20. How must participating districts inform parents and students about the Seal of Biliteracy program?

Participating districts must inform parents and students about the Seal of Biliteracy program by including information on the district's website, if the district maintains a website, and in the student handbook. The following information must be included:

- *General information about the State Seal of Biliteracy program and the opportunity for students to participate;*
- *A description of the process a student would use to demonstrate proficiency in the targeted language, including details about any alternative evidence that may be required if applicable;*
- *An estimate of the costs, if known, that students might incur to demonstrate proficiency; and*
- *The name and contact information for the individual designated to serve as the coordinator of the State Seal of Biliteracy program.*

21. Our student handbook was published before the district applied to offer the Seal of Biliteracy. How are we required to inform parents and students about the program?

The district should post the information on the district website, if the district has one, and distribute an addendum to the student handbook.

Networking with Other Districts

22. How can I network with other districts that offer the Seal of Biliteracy?

The Division of English Learners is compiling a directory of Seal of Biliteracy coordinators for those who would like their information shared. If you would like to be part of this directory, please let us know by sending an email to biliteracy@isbe.net.