

Californians Together

presents

THE SEAL OF BILITERACY PROGRAM



The Seal of Biliteracy is an award given by a school, school district or county office of education in recognition of students who have studied and attained proficiency in two or more languages by high school graduation. Appearing on the transcript of the graduating senior, the Seal of Biliteracy is a statement of accomplishment for future employers and for college admissions.

*T*he guidelines for these awards were authored by Dr. Laurie Olsen. The text inside may be downloaded from:

www.californianstogether.org.



Special Acknowledgment to

California Assemblyman Joe Coto for his vision and commitment to promoting second language learning for all students. Assemblyman Coto instituted the Seal of Biliteracy during his tenure as Superintendent of East Side Union High School District in San Jose, California.

Glendale Unified School District for envisioning and pioneering the Seal of Biliteracy. They have graciously shared their experiences and resources with districts throughout the state.



Special thanks to

Shelly Spiegel-Coleman (Californians Together) and
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What is a Seal of Biliteracy?

The Seal of Biliteracy is an award given by a school, school district, or county office of education in recognition of students who have studied and attained proficiency in two or more languages by high school graduation. The Seal of Biliteracy appears on the transcript or diploma of the graduating senior and is a statement of accomplishment for future employers and for college admissions.

Californians Together developed the concept of a Seal of Biliteracy in 2008 and has worked throughout the state to help school sites, districts, and others adopt and implement the SEAL. The SEAL has now been adopted and implemented in dozens of school districts; thousands of students have received the award. An increasing number of professional organizations and other entities have endorsed the SEAL. (For an updated listing of districts awarding the SEAL and a current list of endorsements, go to: www.californianstogether.org).

To encourage students along the trajectory towards attaining biliteracy, a series of pathway awards has also been established. Proposed criteria for students graduating from preschool and upon completion of third grade and graduation from elementary and middle school are included in this booklet.

Why Implement a Seal of Biliteracy?

A Seal of Biliteracy and the Pathway awards are a statement by the school system that mastery of two or more languages is important. It encourages students to pursue biliteracy, honors the skills our students attain, and can be evidence of skills that are attractive to future employers and college admissions offices.

Is the Seal of Biliteracy just for English Learners? What about students who are not English Learners and are studying a second language?

A Seal of Biliteracy is granted to all students who meet the criteria for the award. For each level, criteria are set for students whose first language is English who are learning a second language and for English Learners who are developing academic proficiency in their home language while mastering English.

Is this just for Spanish speakers? What about other language groups?

Seals of Biliteracy are intended for all students who master standard academic English and any other language, including American Sign Language. Assessments, including Advanced Placement Tests, are available in many languages. Some districts have developed their own assessment process for languages where there are no existing tests and use a common rubric for scoring the tests aligned with World Language Standards. A Linguafolio approach has been developed by the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages. Currently, schools use a combination of assessments, course requirements, student work, and performance. If your school or district is seeking models and ideas for how this is done, contact Californians Together or one of the individuals listed on the Resource Page of this document.

Who awards the Seal of Biliteracy?

The Seal of Biliteracy was designed to be awarded by school districts; however, an individual school site or school program may also decide to implement the award. For example, the dual language strand in one K-8 school has instituted an award for students who complete its program, thus recognizing the high levels of biliteracy achievement. One elementary school has instituted a Bilingual Recognition Award for students based on second grade test scores on both the California Standards Test of English Language Arts and the Standards Test in Spanish.

County offices of education can invite individual schools and/or districts to institute a Seal of Biliteracy approach. The county office can provide assistance in identifying appropriate language assessments and publicizing a Seal of Biliteracy model. It is up to the schools and/or districts to actually engage students, put together an application process, and certify that students have met the requirements for a Seal. The list of students who qualify is then submitted to the county office. The county office provides a Seal (or an extra award if the district has provided a Seal), and hosts a county-wide award ceremony or celebration. Some county offices are specifically reaching out to the Dual Language programs in their county through their Bilingual Directors' networks and through their World Languages specialists.

What are the steps towards implementing a Seal of Biliteracy effort in a district or school?

There are six steps to take towards implementing a Seal of Biliteracy effort.

I. Clarify the Purpose(s) and Rationale

The purposes for instituting the Seal of Biliteracy and the “Pathways to Biliteracy” Awards include:

- To encourage students to study languages
- To certify attainment of biliteracy
- To recognize and value the biliteracy skills of all students
- To provide employers with a method of identifying people with language and biliteracy skills
- To provide universities with a method to recognize and give credit to applicants
- To prepare students with 21st century skills
- To strengthen intergroup relationships, affirm the value of diversity, and honor the multiple cultures and languages of a community

A first step towards implementing a Seal of Biliteracy or any of the Pathway awards is to clarify your district or site’s purpose for giving the award and to articulate the “frame” rationale that resonates within your community. For one district, for example, the emphasis on 21st century skills and jobs may be most appropriate. For another district, emphasizing bringing students together across communities and learning respect for diversity may be the most relevant approach. Sample school board policy statements and districts’ resolutions may be found on the Californians Together website.



II. Determine the Level of Pathway Awards to Be Granted

A high school Seal of Biliteracy is awarded upon attainment of a high level of proficiency in two or more languages. In addition to the High School Seal, awards can be provided for students along the path toward attainment. To encourage students to study languages and develop mastery in multiple languages, Pathway awards are most powerful when bestowed at crucial points along the schooling journey where student attitudes about bilingualism may be changing or where students may be facing choices about enrolling in programs and courses that can lead to biliteracy. These points include, for example:

- As students leave preschool and enter kindergarten (this is the point at which parents make decisions about the elementary school programs for their children)
- At 3rd grade (this is often when English Learners exit bilingual programs and is a point at which Dual Language Program student enrollment often falls off)
- Redesignation
- End of Middle School

Pathway awards may be given in recognition of attainment of an age-appropriate level of skill in mastering two or more languages or in recognition of participation in activities involving bilingualism.



III. Define the Criteria for Granting the Awards

The criteria for the high school Seal of Biliteracy has been defined as a standard statewide. Some districts have added to that criteria, strengthening recognition of additional aspects of biliteracy. Pathway awards can be defined by districts. Sample criteria for pathway awards follows.

Preschool Pathway Award: “Becoming Bilingual”

The purpose of the award at this level is to help young children and their parents feel pride and excitement about mastering two languages. It is important, therefore, to create a benchmark that is reachable for young children. It is more a participation award than an attainment award. To be on a path towards biliteracy, a preschooler needs to develop strong age-appropriate oral language skills and vocabulary in their home language, demonstrate active engagement with books/text and age-appropriate comprehension in their home language, and have some measure of exposure to a second language. Sample measurements for these skills include:

- Age-Appropriate Oral Language Development in Home Language:
 - Desired Results Developmental Profile items related to language use and skill at the “proficient” level
 - Ability to identify and say the names of primary colors
 - Ability to count to ten
 - Ability to follow three-step instructions given in the home language
- Measure of Active Engagement with Books/Texts
 - Is able to retell a “Read Aloud” story
 - Can dictate a story in the home language from a picture or experience
 - Has completed a log of ten books the child has been read-to in one-on-one or small group settings
 - Is able to write his or her name
- Measure of Basic Production Level in Second Language
 - Can demonstrate comprehensible production of sounds in a second language through singing two songs in that second language
 - Can demonstrate recall and fluency through reciting a poem or chant in the second language
 - Can demonstrate basic vocabulary in a second language by counting to ten and appropriately using simple greetings.



Preschool student from Redwood City School District with “I am Bilingual/Yo soy Bilingüe Award

Sample Elementary School Pathway Awards

Elementary Bilingual Service and Participation Award (BSPA)

The intent of the Elementary School “Bilingual Service and Participation Award” (BSPA) is to encourage students along the path of bilingualism for students who are not actually in a dual language or bilingual program leading to biliteracy. This can be awarded at the end of elementary school. The criteria might include:

- Attainment of age-appropriate proficiency in English (CELDT Proficiency for English Learners; California Standards Test in English Language Arts at a “Proficient” or higher level for English Only students);
- Age appropriate oral/listening proficiency in the home language for English Learners and in the second language for students whose home language is English (e.g. Spanish LAS at a level 4 or higher);
- Documentation of active use of two languages (e.g., serving as a bilingual ambassador for visitors to the school, reading books to preschoolers, etc.);
- Positive attitudes towards bilingualism and understanding that bilingualism has benefits (demonstrated through an essay or oral presentation).

Elementary School “Biliteracy Attainment Award”

This award is designed to measure attainment of age-appropriate biliteracy for students who have been in Immersion, Heritage, Foreign Language, Two-Way Bilingual Immersion, Dual Language, or maintenance bilingual programs. Criteria could include:

- California Standards Test in English Language Arts at the “Proficient” level or above in fifth grade;
- Demonstration of proficiency in a language other than English (e.g., Standards Test in Spanish at the “Proficient” level or above in fifth grade, attainment of a level 4 or higher on the Spanish LAS).

In addition to the requirements outlined above, both the Bilingual Service and Participation Award and the Biliteracy Attainment Award could require students to complete several additional criteria that demonstrate actual use of two languages. These might include, for example:

- Completion of a set number of hours of community service using primary language skills in service to

- the school or community and demonstrating the ability to use translation in social situations;
- A written paper in two languages (translation) with a rubric score of 4 or above at the 5th grade level;
 - A written essay on why bilingualism is important to them personally, to their community, and to the world;
 - Oral presentation about five careers where bilingualism is important and why and how bilingualism is a benefit in those careers;
 - Reading logs signed by their teachers of ten books (at grade level) read independently in English and ten books (at grade level) read independently in a language other than English.



Middle School Awards

Middle School Awards can be presented to students on the path to biliteracy (“Pursuit of Bilingualism Award”) or for attainment of a specified level of biliteracy (“Biliteracy Attainment Award”).

Middle School “Pursuit of Bilingualism Award”

This award is designed to reward engagement in pursuit of language skills in two or more languages, to affirm positive attitudes towards multilingualism, and to validate use of multiple languages for all students. Requirements may include:

- Participation in at least two years of a World Language class or a Native Speakers class with a passing grade;
- California Standards Test – English Language Arts portion at a “Proficient” level or above;
- Written essay on why knowing multiple languages is important;
- Oral presentation about five careers where bilingualism is important and why and how bilingualism is a benefit in those careers;
- A personal response essay to having attended two cultural events from the second language/culture being studied.

Middle School “Biliteracy Attainment Award”

This award is designed to set a standard for high level biliteracy attainment for students in a Two-Way, Heritage, Immersion, World Language, or Dual Language program. All students, English fluent and English Learners, might be required to meet the following performance standards:

- Proficient or above on the Standards Test in Spanish or District Assessment of grade-level competency in a language other than English;
- Oral Proficiency in a language other than English (e.g., for a Spanish speaker in a Two-Way Bilingual Immersion or Dual Language program, LAS at a level 6/8 or equivalent);
- California Standards Test – English Language Arts portion at a “Proficient” level or above;
- Average grades of B or higher in English classes and in World Language or Native Speakers courses;
- Written essay on why knowing multiple languages is important;
- Oral presentation about five careers where bilingualism is important and why and how bilingualism is a benefit in those careers;
- A personal response essay to having attended two cultural events from the second language/culture they are studying.

The High School Seal of Biliteracy

The High School Seal of Biliteracy certifies attainment of a high level of proficiency in two or more languages. A standard criteria has been set so that the Seal has common meaning across the state. The criteria includes:

- Completion of all English language arts requirements for graduation with an overall grade point average of 2.0 or above; Score of proficient on CELDT for English learners.
- California Standards Test – English Language Arts portion at a “Proficient” level or above.
- Proficiency in one or more languages other than English demonstrated through one of four methods (Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exam with passing score of 3 or higher; successful completion of a four-year high school course of study in the same foreign language attaining an overall grade point average of 3.0 or above; passing a district foreign language exam at a proficient level or higher; or passing a foreign government’s approved language exam and receipt of a certificate of competency from the authorizing government agency).

Some districts have elected to add additional criteria, such as use of biliteracy skills during community service activities, a district writing assessment and rubric (with a specified level of attainment), an oral interview or oral presentation assessment and rubric, use of the Linguafolio, or other district-developed performance criteria. For copies of writing prompts, writing rubrics and other assessment tools used by districts in the Seal of Biliteracy process, see the Californians Together website.



Glendale Unified School District graduates with Bilingual Competency Award medallions.

IV. Develop Outreach Strategies and an Application Process

The power of the Seal of Biliteracy as a means to encourage study of multiple languages depends upon a school and district having outreach strategies to ensure that students know about the Seal of Biliteracy. It is also important that students take the individual affirmative step of submitting an application for the Seal of Biliteracy Award. To do so, they need adequate notice about the application process and an understanding of the criteria. Outreach strategies have included, for example, school assemblies at the start of the school year focusing on the value of mastering two or more languages and featuring students who have received the Seal of Biliteracy. One district holds class meetings with all entering 9th graders to talk about the Seal and describe the components of a school program leading to the Seal.

The application may be as simple as a statement of interest or may include short essays about the students' language history. The application process is viewed by some districts as an opportunity for student reflection about their language experiences. For example, the Stanislaus County Office of Education application asks:

What language(s) did you first learn to speak in your home? Describe your family background in regard to languages, motivation to learn other languages, travel, etc. (200-word maximum)

Provide a brief history of learning other languages. Include the languages you have learned in school as well as out of school, and describe how you use the language(s) currently. (200-word maximum)

What important differences are there between the languages you have learned? What features of the languages might make it easier or more difficult than other languages? (200-word maximum)

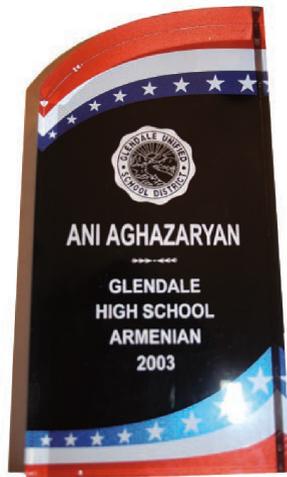
Provide a brief description of your interaction and experiences with the languages and cultural groups. (200-word maximum)

List any successes or culminating events/experiences you have had in your target language(s). Include results of successful language tests or competitions which you have completed as well as any certificates or course grades you have earned. (200-word maximum)

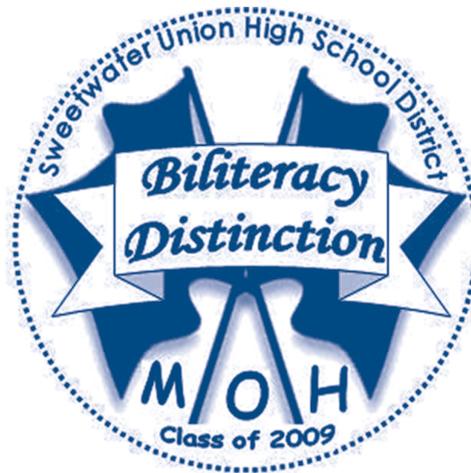
It is important to plan a school-year ahead to allow sufficient time for the outreach, application, assessment, and award process.

V. Design the Award and the Process for Award Presentation

Awards can be granted at a school or district reception, celebration, or special award assembly. They can also be awarded as part of the school graduation. Awards have included medallions, ribbons, cords, and stoles for having met the basic criteria for the SEAL. In addition, a SEAL is affixed to the transcripts or diplomas of graduating seniors along with a description of the criteria met. Some districts have added levels of awards. For example, Glendale Unified School District awards trophies to students who demonstrate mastery in three or more languages as well as special awards for the students who have scored the highest in each language on district assessments.



Glendale Unified School District



Sweetwater Union High School District
appears on graduation stole

VI. Seek Endorsements! Spread the Word!

The purpose of the SEAL of Biliteracy is to honor the skills and demonstrate the value of mastery of two or more languages. Seeking endorsements sends the message to students and parents that these skills are valued more widely than just by the school and district. It also engages community groups, corporate and business entities, and professional associations in stating their own sense of value attached to the skills of biliteracy.

Endorsements may take the form of a formal resolution or letters of support, such as the endorsements of the California School Boards Association, Association of California School Administrators, California Federation of Teachers, the California Teachers Association, and others. (See the Californians Together website for copies of these resolutions.)

The sponsorships may take the form of sponsoring the award celebration or of the awards themselves. Velázquez Press designed, produced, and donated the Biliteracy Recognition Medals for Baldwin Park and Azusa Unified School Districts. Velázquez Press believes the “Seal of Biletaracy” will encourage ELL students to succeed in school and improve graduation rates. Velázquez Press will sponsor school districts who want to adopt the “Seal of Biliteracy” by providing supporting materials that include guidelines, seals and award medals. For more information please contact them at 626-448-3448 or info@academiclearningcompany.com



Azusa Unified School District graduates wearing medallions donated by Velázquez Press.

Resources

Implementation Workshops

To help districts implement a Seal of Biliteracy, Californians Together has conducted workshops across the state in the counties of Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Fresno, Santa Clara, Solano, and Alameda and with teams from 70 other districts. If your county or group of districts would like to sponsor a workshop, contact Californians Together.

The Californians Together Seal of Biliteracy Bulletin

Californians Together has created a Seal of Biliteracy Bulletin for districts and others to share their work in creating and awarding the Seal of Biliteracy. This bulletin includes copies of the district resolutions establishing the Seal, photos of award ceremonies, copies of endorsements, featured stories about the Seal, and other resources. To receive the Seal of Biliteracy Bulletin, contact: Shelly@californianstogether.org

Another Resource for Establishing Criteria: Linguafolio

The Linguafolio is a World Language formative assessment tool that can inform instruction and be the basis for certifying a level of competency in languages. It is based on a globally recognized scale of language proficiency with six levels of performance/competency. The scale is correlated with the ACTFL performance and proficiency guidelines and was developed by the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages. The Linguafolio involves both self-assessment and performance criteria. A Linguistic Profile, Summary of Language Learning and Intercultural Experiences, Language Biography, and specific work samples are included in the portfolio. For more information go to the website: <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/linguafolio/>. An adaption of the Linguafolio for the Seal of Biliteracy criteria can be see at the Stanislaus County Office of Education website: <http://www.stancoe.org/go/SealOfMultilingualProficiency>

***For further information and support to implement a Seal of Biliteracy Program,
please contact:***

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Californians Together is a statewide coalition of parents, teachers, education advocates, and civil rights groups committed to securing equal access to quality education for all children.

Founded in 1998 after the passage of Proposition 227, Californians Together joined with other organizations to foster full participation in a democratic society through quality education for children and parents from underserved communities.

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