



REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

# Washington State Seal of Biliteracy

2017

**Authorizing legislation:** Senate Bill 6424, Chapter 102, Laws of 2014

([http://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2013-14/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/6424.SL.pdf?cite=2014 c 102 § 2](http://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2013-14/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/6424.SL.pdf?cite=2014%20c%20102%20%24))

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## Executive Summary

An estimated one in five students in Washington state speak a language other than English at home. Recognizing the importance of learning a second language for all students, the Washington state Legislature created the Seal of Biliteracy in 2014. The intent of the Seal was to increase the number of students who are proficient in at least two languages, whether English is their first language or not.

As of 2017, 26 states have authorized the Seal of Biliteracy. The Learning and Teaching Division at the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) provides oversight and guidance on the Seal of Biliteracy.

There are many benefits to biliteracy, such as:

- **College:** Washington state colleges generally require two or three high school world language credits (same language) upon entrance.
- **English learners:** Credit for proficiency in their native home language can be earned while demonstrating the required English proficiency by high school graduation.
- **Economy:** Bilingual employees can better participate in global political, social, and economic arenas.
- **Language and Culture for Life:** Washington's heritage includes people from multiple cultures and languages. Cultivating native languages in addition to English builds trust and understanding among diverse cultures.

Since its inception, more than 4,000 students have been awarded the Seal of Biliteracy, which is noted on the student's diploma and high school transcript. In addition to satisfying English Language Arts requirements by graduation, students may earn the Seal through:

- Strong (passing) scores on Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) world language exams.
- Strong proficiency scores on nationally-recognized and OSPI accepted/approved proficiency tests which reflect an overall minimum Intermediate-Mid proficiency level aligned to the rating scale of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).

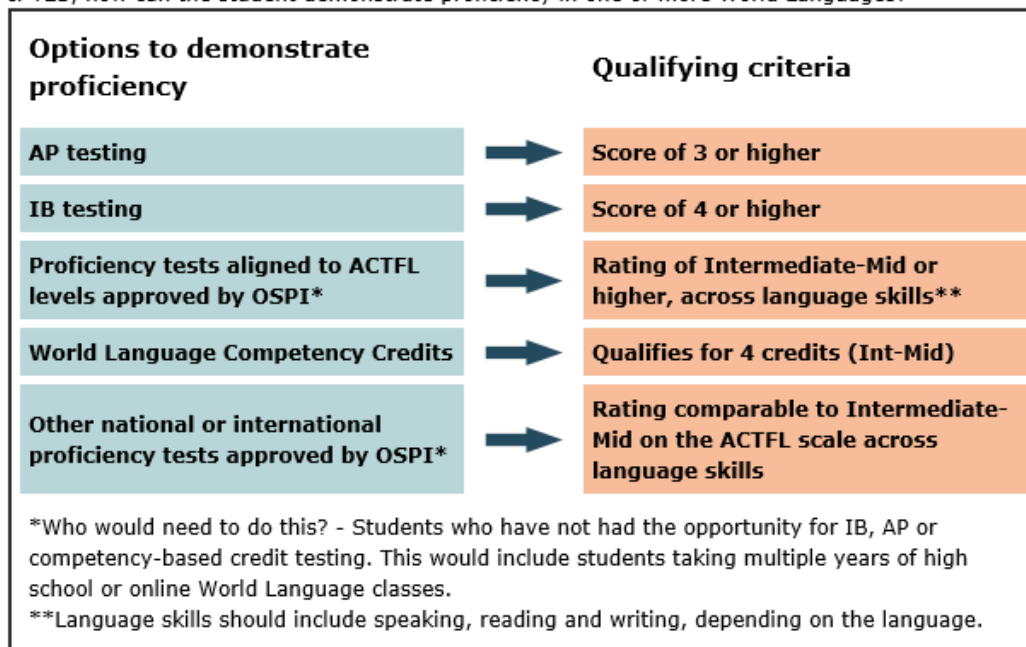
# Introduction

Washington state was among the first states in the United States, following California and New York, to authorize a Seal of Biliteracy.

For the purpose of this report, 755 Seals were awarded to students who qualify for Transitional Bilingual (English Language Learner (ELL)) services in the past two years. This represents 472 Seals in 2016 (22% of all students who earned the Seal) and 283 Seals in 2017 (17% of all students). The most spoken and tested language for the Seal is Spanish (more than 50%). Students have qualified for the language portion of the Seal through World Language Competency-based Credit Testing (58%) and Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) (42%). The number of districts participating in Competency-based Credit Testing and eventually awarding the Seal has increased from seven Road Map districts in 2012–2015 to 59 in 2017.

## Identifying Students for the Seal of Biliteracy

Is the student on track to meet ELA graduation requirements and pass ELA state assessments?  
 If YES, how can the student demonstrate proficiency in one or more World Languages?



As shown in the graph, students may earn the Seal through AP testing and IB testing in high school. Alternately, students may qualify for the Seal by earning four high school world language credits based on demonstrated minimum overall Intermediate-Mid (ACTFL rating scale) proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing a language other than English. Proficiency testing is conducted in participating school districts by using nationally and OSPI accepted/approved world language competency tests, as well as Custom Tests organized through the Washington Association for Language Teaching (WAFLT).

English Language Learners (ELLs) and emerging bilingual students may earn credit for proficiency in one or more of their native home languages while demonstrating the required English proficiency by high school graduation. Languages less-commonly-taught and tested in the United States (languages not widely spoken) are supported under the Custom Testing option in Washington state. An example language has been Punjabi. Due to increasing demand and OSPI's coordination with national testing companies, Punjabi Speaking and Writing tests are now offered through ALTA Language Services, one of the state-approved testing companies. This is a step forward in that it shows how demand drives access. Using an established national proficiency test normally reduces testing costs to the district. In contrast, Custom Tests, coordinated through WAFLT, can be labor intensive and costly to evaluate. OSPI developed the Custom Testing option for less-commonly-taught and tested languages with the Center for Applied Second Language Studies (CASLS) at the University of Oregon and Avant Assessment and then arranged for WAFLT to coordinate the Custom Testing services. (See [WAFLT's Custom Testing website](#).)

A three-year grant program for world language competency testing (2012–2015) began with seven Road Map Project school districts from South King County; Auburn, Federal Way, Highline, Kent, Renton, Seattle, and Tukwila. Funding was provided by the Gates Foundation. These seven districts were instrumental in helping launch other districts to confidently come on board with competency-based testing and credit. This was foundational for developing additional pathways to the Seal of Biliteracy award, once the Seal was authorized by the Legislature in the spring of 2014.

In 2017, there were 59 districts that awarded the Seal of Biliteracy. Nearly 60 percent of these awards were based on world language competency testing and credit for the world language portion of the requirement. This Seal of Biliteracy success story is attributed to a combination of factors, including:

- The success of competency testing and credit in the original seven Road Map districts.
- The assistance the Road Map districts afforded neighboring districts with competency testing.
- The active contributions to Custom Testing by WAFLT.
- The leadership OSPI has provided for advancing interest in awarding the Seal of Biliteracy through a variety of pathways.

The Seal of Biliteracy provides an equitable opportunity to acknowledge diversity and high-level language skills for Washington state students in districts that choose to participate.

### **Legal underpinnings and report requirements**

The Washington State Seal of Biliteracy was established to recognize public high school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in one or more world languages in addition to English. [RCW 28A.300.575](#) established the Seal of

Biliteracy in 2014 as a result of Senate Bill 6424. The State Legislature empowered OSPI to provide technical assistance to support districts to help students attain the Seal of Biliteracy award. [WAC 392-415-070](#) (mandatory high school transcript contents) and [WAC 392-410-350](#) (Seal of biliteracy) pertain to the Seal of Biliteracy.

Senate Bill 6424 (2014) requires OSPI to submit a report to the education committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2017. In the report, OSPI shall:

1. Compare the number of students awarded the Washington state Seal of Biliteracy in the previous two school years and the languages spoken by those students, to the number of students enrolled or previously enrolled in the transitional bilingual instruction program and the languages spoken by those students.
2. Report the methods used by students to demonstrate proficiency for the Washington state Seal of Biliteracy
3. Describe how OSPI plans to increase the number of possible methods for students to demonstrate proficiency, particularly in world languages that are not widely spoken.

Additionally, this report identifies next steps and future actions to support the continued implementation of the Seal.

## Number of Students Awarded the Seal and Languages Spoken

**Table 1: Total Number of Seals of Biliteracy Earned**

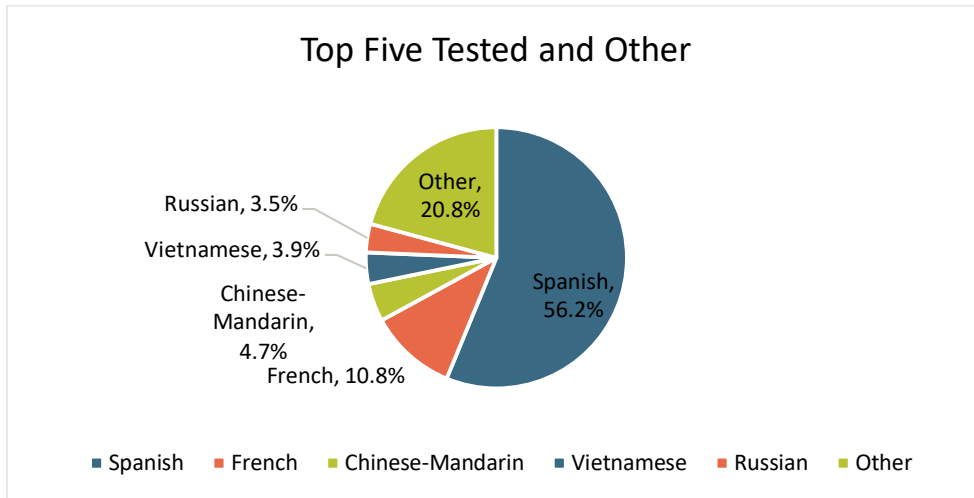
School Year	2015–16	2016–17
All Students	2,108	1,660*
Transitional Bilingual Program Students (TBIP)	472	283*
Percent TBIP	22%	17%*

**Table 2: Languages Tested and Spoken at Home**

School Year	2015–16	2016–17
All Students	48.6%—Spanish 9.8%—French 9.2%—Russian 6.8%—Chinese/Mandarin 3.5%—Japanese 22.1%—Other	56.2%—Spanish 10.8%—French 4.7%—Chinese/Mandarin 3.9%—Vietnamese 3.5%—Russian 20.8%—Other
Transitional Bilingual Program Students (TBIP)	28.0%—Spanish 9.5%—Vietnamese 6.6%—Somali 6.4%—Korean 5.9%—Russian 43.6%—Other	33.9%—Spanish 13.4%—Vietnamese 5.3%—Somali 3.9%—Punjabi 3.5%—Amharic and Arabic, each 40%—Other

\*The number of students earning the Seal of Biliteracy may decline from one year to the next even as more districts participate. Contributing variables include, but are not limited to, timely district reporting of data through the Student Information System (SIS), occasional glitches in SIS systems in the field, graduation class sizes and varying numbers of students seeking the Seal in a given year, and students qualifying for the Seal after graduation due to delays in the College Board reporting of AP test scores. **This report reflects data that was reported by the 59 districts as of October 3, 2017.**

**Chart 1: 2016–17 All Students Who Earned a Seal of Biliteracy**



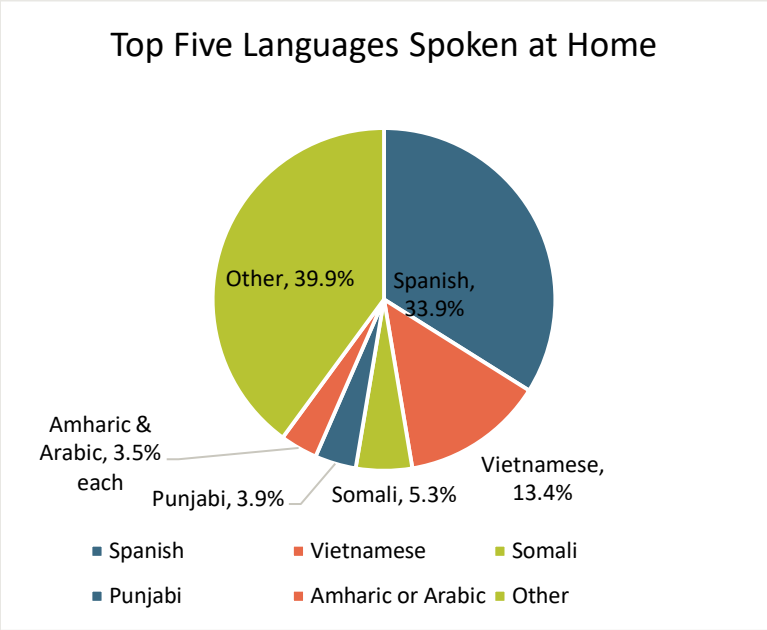
**2016–17 “Other” 20.8% Specification of Languages Tested**

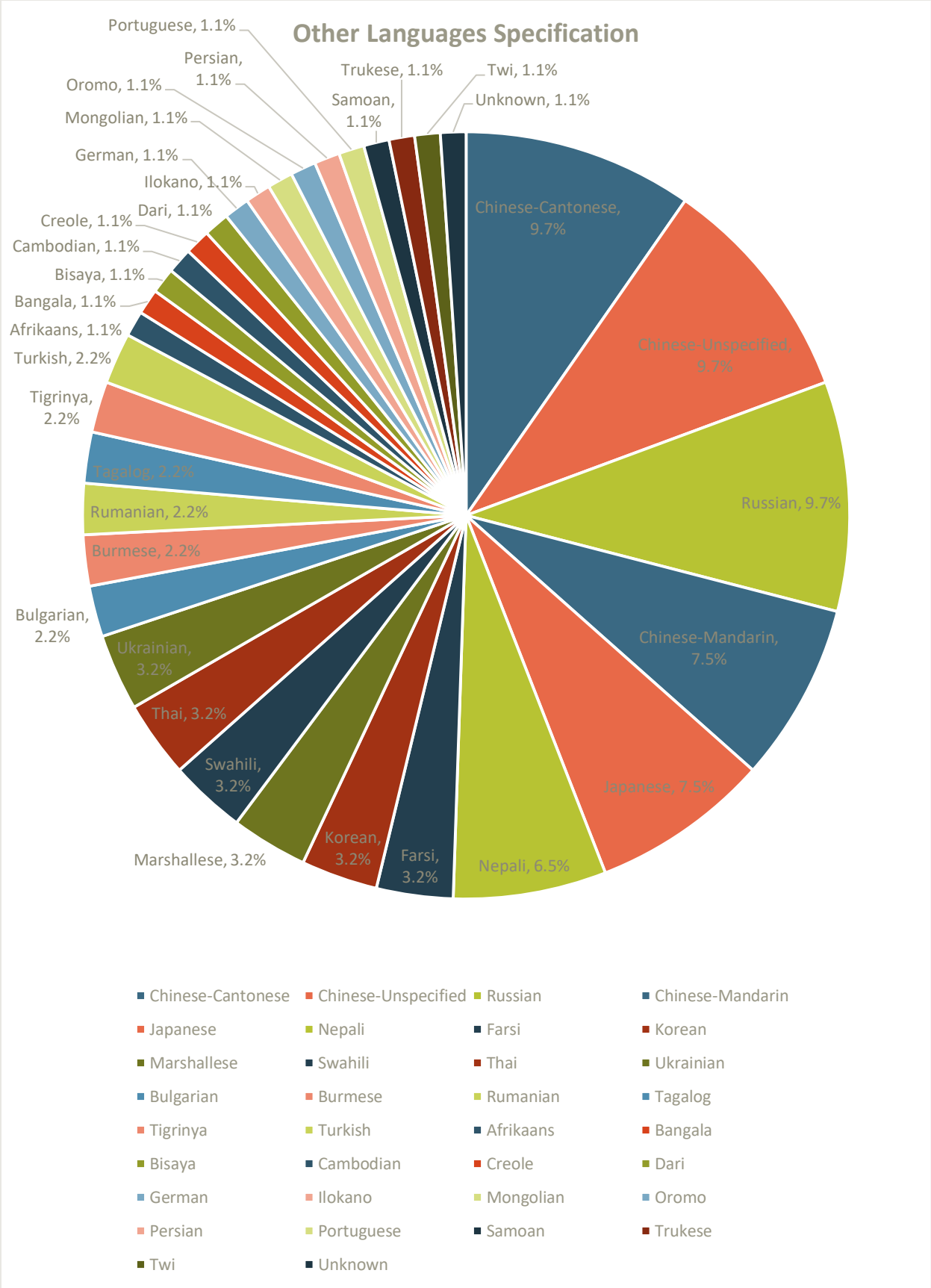
Name	Proportion of 20.8% “Other”
Chinese-Unspecified	15.9%
Japanese	12.5%
Somali	6.8%
German	6.5%
Arabic	5.7%
Korean	5.1%
Punjabi	4.5%
Tagalog	4.2%
Romanian	4.0%
Amharic	3.4%
Ukrainian	2.8%
Nepali	2.3%
Turkish	2.3%
Chinese-Cantonese	2.0%
Hindi	2.0%
Polish	1.4%
Portuguese	1.4%
Swahili	1.4%
Tigrinya	1.4%
Bulgarian	1.1%
Farsi	1.1%
Marshallese	1.1%
Thai	1.1%
Bosnian	0.8%

Chin	0.8%
Hebrew, Modern	0.8%
Italian	0.8%
Burmese	0.6%
Indonesian	0.6%
Oromo	0.6%
Urdu	0.6%
Afrikaans	0.3%
American Sign Language	0.3%
Armenian	0.3%
Bengali	0.3%
Cambodian	0.3%
Chuuk	0.3%
Finnish	0.3%
Haitian Creole	0.3%
Khmer	0.3%
Latin	0.3%
Mongolian	0.3%
Persian	0.3%
Samoan	0.3%
Tedim	0.3%
Twi	0.3%



Chart 2: 2016–17 Transitional Bilingual Students Who Earned a Seal of Biliteracy





## Methods Used

The methods used to test world language proficiency for the Seal of Biliteracy are listed below.

### World Language Competency Testing Strategies

- 38% qualified through Standards-based Measure of Proficiency (STAMP). This nationally-recognized test was created by Avant Assessment, Eugene, Oregon. Students are tested in speaking, reading, and writing.
- 10% qualified through nationally-recognized exams from:
  - a. Language Testing International, including tests sponsored by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, i.e.: the *OPI Oral Proficiency Interview*, the *WPT Writing Proficiency Test*, and the *Performance toward Proficiency in Languages* AAPPL.
  - b. ALTA Language Services.
- 10% qualified through Custom Testing for less-commonly-taught and tested languages, coordinated by the Washington Association for Language Teaching (WAFLT)

### AP and IB Testing

- 32% qualified through Advanced Placement (AP) Exams from the College Board
- 10% qualified through International Baccalaureate (IB) Exams

### Plans to Increase the Number of Methods for Students to Demonstrate Proficiency

- OSPI will continue to collaborate with WAFLT to offer Custom Testing to meet the increasing demands related to languages less-commonly-taught and tested.
- OSPI will continue to partner with Avant Assessment to improve the technology and access of proficiency tests, such as their new WorldSpeak which recently added: Alaskan Yup'ik, Somali Maay Maay, Somali Maxaa, Filipino (Tagalog), and Vietnamese.
- OSPI will continue to work with ALTA Language Services to provide additional proficiency tests. This year ALTA added Punjabi and Tigrinya.
- OSPI will continue to develop and revise the Seal of Biliteracy and Competency Testing and Credit websites in order to keep districts apprised of updates, professional development opportunities, and guidelines for success in pursuing the Seal of Biliteracy.
- OSPI will continue to provide prompt and professional customer service to school staff, families, and community members and organizations in response to the increasing interest in the Seal.

## Services Provided

In the 2015–16 school year, OSPI began collecting data on the number of students awarded the Seal of Biliteracy across the state. The report contains other relevant information as specified by the Legislature in [RCW 28A.300.575](#).

1. An annual legislative budget proviso for the Seal of Biliteracy has supported OSPI in providing staff time to assist districts in offering the Seal of Biliteracy to students. Per state statute, "Participating school districts with students eligible to receive the Seal, shall place a notation on a student's high school diploma and high school transcript indicating that the student has earned the seal." ([RCW 28A.230.125](#))
2. Eligibility to earn the Seal of Biliteracy is made available through a variety of pathways: Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate testing, as well as nationally-recognized proficiency testing conducted by OSPI-approved testing agencies and in partnership with WAFLT for Custom Testing.
3. Districts may request the Seal of Biliteracy imprint for creating embossed diploma labels or medallions from OSPI. Detailed information on the [Seal of Biliteracy](#) can be found on the OSPI website.
4. OSPI collaborates with WAFLT and has worked with CASLS and Avant Assessment to provide Custom Tests for less-commonly-taught and tested languages not provided through national proficiency tests. This customized competency testing and credit opportunity allows Washington students an equitable and standards-based opportunity to earn the Seal of Biliteracy.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

The Seal of Biliteracy has emerged as a valuable asset for students. Hundreds of graduating seniors wear the Seal with pride as a special medallion during commencement exercises. Washington state's four-year colleges and universities regard the Seal of Biliteracy award as "added value" for enrollment consideration into higher education. Washington state's community and technical colleges are reviewing the potential of adding the Seal of Biliteracy to their system's achievement awards so that students transitioning from community and technical colleges to technical careers and four-year colleges may graduate with the honor of the Seal. Each year, new K–12 public school districts have added the Seal as an option for their students. Interest continues to grow.

The Seal is also an opportunity to increase access to an equitable education for some of our most marginalized student populations. One of the populations served by earning the Seal of Biliteracy are migrant students. Many migrant students have trouble finishing high school due to the mobility of their families. Earning the Seal of Biliteracy through World Language Competency Credit is a good option for credit retrieval.

In closing, the Seal of Biliteracy incentivizes students toward high achievement and helps to ensure that students have the opportunity to graduate with strong English and world language skills. It provides a gateway to the future; an achievement award that opens doors for career, college, and life.

## Acknowledgments

Many individuals and organizations are to be commended for their efforts in helping establish and grow the Washington State Seal of Biliteracy.

- Kathe Taylor, Ph.D., Assistant Superintendent, Learning and Teaching, OSPI
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- Sandy Benedetti, World Languages Administrative Assistant, OSPI
- Bridget Yaden, Ph.D., WAFLT Board of Directors, Testing and Special Projects, and Professor of Spanish, PLU
- Michele Anciaux Aoki, Ph.D., International Education Administrator, Seattle Public Schools, and WAFLT Board of Directors/Advocacy
- Paris Granville, World Language Curriculum Developer, Bellevue School District
- Washington Association for Language Teaching (WAFLT)
- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)
- National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Languages (NCSSFL)
- OneAmerica (Seattle Chapter-Nonprofit)

## Resources

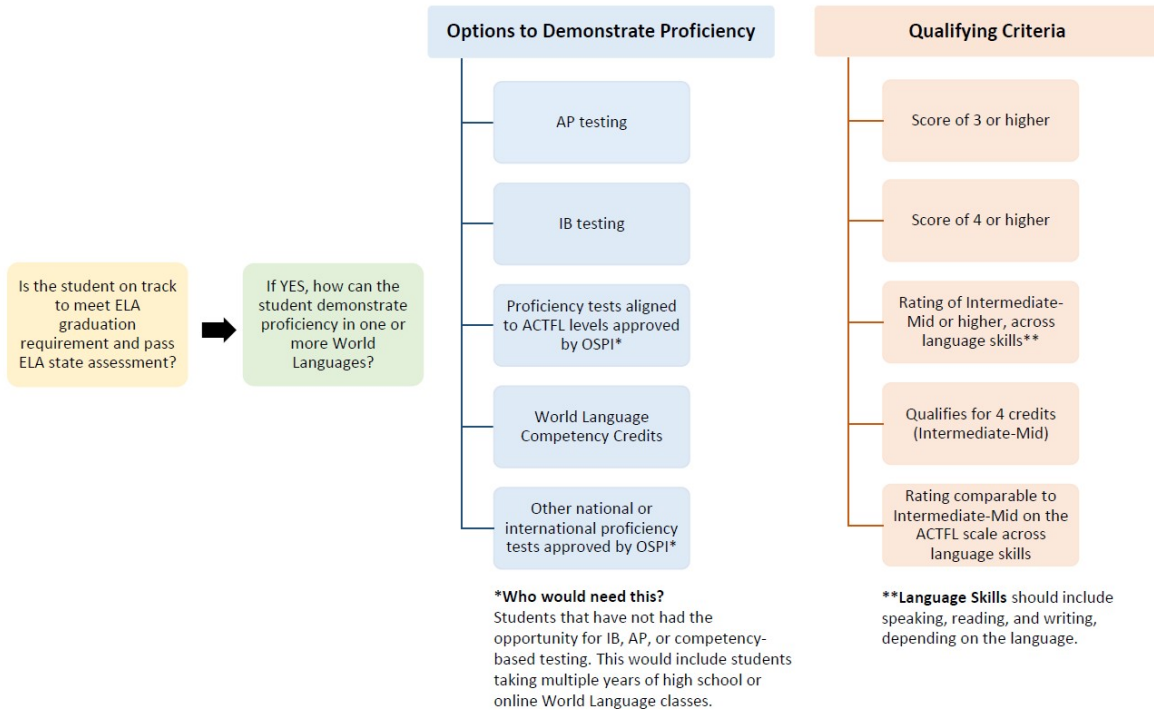
[OSPI World Language Seal of Biliteracy Website](#)

[WAFLT's Custom Testing Site](#)

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Pathways to the Seal of Biliteracy

### IDENTIFYING STUDENTS FOR THE SEAL OF BILITERACY FLOW CHART



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## Appendix B: Districts Awarding the Seal of Biliteracy in 2017

Districts listed with an asterisk and blue bold print are original Road Map districts that were supported through a Gates Foundation Grant.

1. Bainbridge Island	21. Lake Washington	41. Sedro-Woolley
2. Bellevue	22. Marysville	42. Sequim
3. Bellingham	23. Mead	43. Shelton
4. Bethel	24. Medical Lake	44. Shoreline
5. Burlington-Edison	25. Mercer Island	45. Snohomish
6. Camas School	26. Mount Baker	46. South Kitsap
7. Central Valley	27. Mount Vernon	47. Spokane School
8. Centralia	28. Nine Mile Falls	48. Stanwood-Camano
9. Cheney	29. North Kitsap	49. Tacoma
10. Edmonds	30. North Thurston	50. Tonasket
11. Ellensburg	31. Okanogan	51. Touchet
12. Everett	32. Olympia	<b>52. Tukwila*</b>
13. Evergreen (Clark)	33. Othello	53. Vancouver
14. Finley	34. Port Angeles	54. Vashon Island
15. Franklin Pierce	35. Port Townsend	55. Wahluke
<b>16. Highline*</b>	36. Prosser	56. Walla Walla
17. Issaquah	<b>37. Renton*</b>	57. Wenatchee
18. Kelso	38. Rochester	58. White River
19. Kennewick	39. Royal	59. Yakima School
<b>20. Kent*</b>	<b>40. Seattle*</b>	

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