HAWAI'I SEAL OF BILITERACY FACT SHEET

PREPARED BY THE HAWAI'I LANGUAGE ROADMAP INITIATIVE
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WHAT IS A SEAL OF BILITERACY?

The Seal of Biliteracy is awarded at high school graduation to recognize students who have attained a high level of proficiency in English and at least one additional language. Students may develop these proficiencies through learning in school or in other settings. They demonstrate proficiency through criteria established by the Hawai'i DOE (HIDOE), such as passing grades in all English classes required for graduation, and a score at or above a specified level on an approved language proficiency test. Requirements are adjusted to appropriately recognize proficiency in American Sign Language and languages having no written form.

WHERE ELSE ARE SCHOOLS AWARDING A SEAL OF BILITERACY?

California established the Seal in 2011, and eight other states (Washington, New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, and New York) and the District of Columbia have been quick to follow. Seven other states, including Hawai'i, are actively working toward a Seal. In March 2015, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE), the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL), and TESOL International Association published recommendations for states implementing the Seal, a strong signal of its national visibility and growing importance. Download the guidelines at: http://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/SealofBiliteracyGuidelines_0.pdf

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF THE SEAL OF BILITERACY FOR STUDENTS?

Research in California school districts that have adopted the Seal has found an increase in student registration for AP tests in world languages (one of the eligible measures for proficiency), which increases a student’s opportunity for earning college credits. These studies also find that employers value the Seal and are more likely to hire a student who has earned one. Finally, the studies reported increased parental involvement in the schools where a Seal was offered.
What is the suggested process for earning a Seal of Biliteracy?

a) The student will:
- complete all English courses required for graduation at the required level;
- pass a language proficiency test (including assessment of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills) at the required level; and
- submit an application for a Seal of Biliteracy and evidence of proficiency in an additional language to his/her high school.

b) The school will:
- confirm each student’s eligibility for the Seal of Biliteracy;
- send a list of recipients to the HDOE to check for any irregularities; and
- award the Seal of Biliteracy to qualified students.

How does a student know which test of language proficiency to take?

The national Guidelines for Implementing the Seal of Biliteracy propose that each state that awards the Seal establish a list of valid proficiency tests.

What language proficiency tests are available?

The following are listed in the national Guidelines for Implementing the Seal of Biliteracy document (see second web resource on the final page of this handout):
- Advanced Placement Exam
- International Baccalaureate Exam
- Oral Proficiency Interview, Reading Proficiency Test, or Writing Proficiency Test
- Standards-based Measurement of Proficiency (STAMP4S)
- ACTFL Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL)
- Tribal language assessments
- Signed Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI) for American Sign Language

Does the HIDOE have to create any tests?

No. The HIDOE is not required by the policy to develop any language proficiency assessment instruments, nor is there any obligation for the HIDOE to provide opportunities for students to participate in language proficiency assessments.

How may the Seal of Biliteracy be implemented?

The HIDOE shall implement the Seal of Biliteracy. A Task Force will be formed to plan and support implementation in a graduated manner, with the possibility of several schools selected as pilot programs in the first year, and feedback from these programs informing the expansion to additional schools in subsequent years. Student participation in this program is voluntary.
WHO IS SUPPORTING THE SEAL OF BILITERACY IN HAWAI‘I?

Among those who have submitted testimony to the State Senate’s Committee on Education or the Board of Education are: the Chamber of Commerce Hawai‘i, Enterprise Honolulu, the State Office of Language Access, the Susannah Wesley Foundation, Pacific Gateway Center, the University of Hawai‘i-Mānoa, HE’E Coalition, Hawai‘i TESOL, the Hawai‘i Association of Language Teachers, the local language associations for Japanese (HATJ), Chinese (CLEAR), French (AATF-HI) and ASL/Deaf communities, a number of private language schools, and the Inter-Agency Council on Immigrants/Refugees, among many, many others.

WHY IS THE HIDOE BEING ASKED TO AWARD THE SEAL OF BILITERACY?

The Seal of Biliteracy is part of a nation-wide movement to address the growing need for language skills in the American workforce. Over the past two and a half years, the Hawai‘i Language Roadmap Team has gathered information from multiple stakeholders that documents a parallel need in every aspect of our workforce, from first responders and disaster relief personnel to retail and service providers. Schools may not be equipped to develop the depth and breadth of world language classroom instruction required to fill the needs of the state’s workforce. Thus, nurturing and valuing our students’ existing language proficiency, while continuing to provide in-school opportunities for learners to develop new language skills through World Language instruction, is one way that the HIDOE may be able to address the needs of the state’s workforce.

WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE SEAL OF BILITERACY?

http://sealofbiliteracy.org -- This website tracks initiatives to implement the Seal of Biliteracy across the U.S. and provides updates on programs that have already been established. Sponsored by Californians Together and Velazquez Press.

http://www.actfl.org/news/press-releases/seal-biliteracy-guidelines-released -- This website introduces the national guidelines for implementation of the Seal of Biliteracy, as well as the four national organizations that carried out this effort.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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