

# *The Connecticut* Seal of Biliteracy

## GUIDELINES



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Education

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## The Connecticut Seal of Biliteracy



### Key Points

- CT's Seal of Biliteracy is founded on equitable access to the Seal initiative for all students.
- To earn the Seal of Biliteracy, students must demonstrate proficiency in a language other than English.
- The English proficiency component is met by meeting the district's graduation requirements.
- Students may demonstrate proficiency in the other (non-English) language when they are in grades 10, 11, and 12.
- There are a range of assessment options for demonstrating proficiency.
- If a student earns the Seal of Biliteracy, it is placed on the diploma and transcript.

## Introduction

The Connecticut State Seal of Biliteracy was established to recognize public high school graduates who have attained a functional level of proficiency in English and one or more languages. Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-5 (f), as amended by Public Act 24-78, now states: "The Department of Education shall establish criteria by which a local or regional board of education, or the governing board of any other school that awards diplomas, may affix the Connecticut State Seal of Biliteracy on a diploma awarded to a student who has achieved a high level of proficiency in English and one or more foreign languages. For purposes of this subsection, "foreign language" means a world language other than English and includes American Sign Language and any other language spoken by a Native American tribe." The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) strongly encourages district participation in this initiative.

Connecticut's Seal of Biliteracy initiative is founded on the principle of equitable access for all students. This initiative is aligned to the [National Seal of Biliteracy Guidelines](#), which were developed and updated by a broad range of stakeholders representing a diverse group of professional organizations. Since its inception in the 2017-2018 school year, Connecticut's Seal of Biliteracy program has developed into a robust, widely implemented initiative. As shown in this [infographic](#), thousands of students in Connecticut have annually earned this prestigious accolade since its inception. The original Guidelines document was created in 2017 to ensure consistency in the meaning of this recognition. That document was reviewed and updated by a CSDE-convened work group of stakeholders in the spring and summer of 2023, and these updated Guidelines were developed.

Note that the subsequent sections of this document address key points and considerations for implementing the Seal of Biliteracy. It is essential to review all sections of this document to ensure appropriate implementation that is aligned to the requirements and expectations of Connecticut's Seal of Biliteracy program.

## Purpose

As stated in the National Seal of Biliteracy Guidelines:

*“The Seal of Biliteracy recognizes the linguistic resources that students develop in homes and communities as well as through a range of educational experiences. The Seal acknowledges and communicates the value of the nation’s diversity in language assets. It encourages language learners to maintain and improve their first or heritage language while also acquiring proficiency in additional languages. The Seal of Biliteracy builds upon strong research about the benefits of mastery of two or more languages for individual students, and the increasing awareness of the need in our communities, state, nation, and world for people with biliteracy and cross-cultural skills. It will benefit learners in the labor market and the global society while strengthening intergroup relationships and honoring the multiple cultures and languages in a community.”*

These statements in the National Seal of Biliteracy Guidelines align to Connecticut’s Seal program and reflect the values that underlie this initiative in Connecticut.

Affixed on the high school diploma and transcript, the Connecticut Seal of Biliteracy provides immediate recognition of critical 21st-century language and communication skills. **This award is given by a school district (and/or a high school diploma-issuing institution) in recognition of students who have studied and attained proficiency in English as per the CSDE high school graduation requirements and have developed a level of functional proficiency in one or more other languages by high school graduation.** The Seal of Biliteracy recognizes the value of students’ academic efforts and the tangible benefits of having proficiency in multiple languages. Earning the Seal signals that students have developed skills that will help them to be 21st-century global citizens in a multicultural, multilingual world. Paths to proficiency vary widely, and the Seal of Biliteracy is therefore not intended to be used by districts for program evaluation.

Connecticut’s Seal of Biliteracy initiative:

- Validates and celebrates students’ linguistic and cultural knowledge;
- Encourages students to develop communicative proficiency in multiple languages;
- Values the knowledge and skills of both English speakers learning world languages and English learners/Multilingual learners (ELs/MLs) studying English and/or other world languages;
- Encourages students to study languages;
- Certifies attainment of biliteracy skills;
- Recognizes the value of multilingualism;
- Provides employers with a method of identifying Connecticut high school graduates with biliteracy skills;
- Assists universities in recognizing applicants with language skills;
- Equips students with the 21st-century skills that will allow them to succeed in college and careers in a global society; and
- Strengthens relationships and honors the multiple cultures and languages represented in Connecticut communities.

## Paths to Proficiency for Awarding the Seal of Biliteracy

Districts are encouraged to celebrate students' bilingualism and biliteracy prior to earning the Seal using other forms of recognition to reflect progress along the pathway toward multilingualism. While it is at the discretion of districts to offer pathway awards, it may be particularly relevant to districts that offer dual language, bilingual, and/or elementary world language programs. However, districts could choose to honor developing multilingualism through pathway awards regardless of whether they offer formal bilingual or world language programs at the elementary and/or middle school levels.

**All students** should receive information on the Seal of Biliteracy upon entering middle and high school settings so that they are able to organize their schedules and meet the requirements to potentially earn the Seal. Districts that have dual language and/or elementary world language programs are encouraged to share information with students and families at the time of enrollment in such programs.

Students may acquire proficiency in multiple languages through various pathways. Some examples include, but are not limited to:

- Heritage language knowledge
- Middle school or high school world language programs (including general world language courses, Early College Experience, Advanced Placement, etc.)
- Dual language programs
- Bilingual education programs
- Traditional ESOL programs
- Elementary world language programs
- K-12 world language immersion programs
- Time spent immersed in the target culture and language
- Community language programs
- Independent language study

## Ensuring Equitable Access to Earning the Seal of Biliteracy

**All students** are eligible to receive the Seal of Biliteracy based on evidence of achieving the designated level of language proficiency in two or more languages by high school graduation. To receive the Seal of Biliteracy, a student must meet two criteria. One requirement is that the student must complete all English language arts requirements for graduation. The other requirement is that the student must demonstrate a level of proficiency in one or more additional languages in grade 10, 11, or 12.

To attain the Seal of Biliteracy, a student's ability to communicate must be demonstrated in a language for which the student wishes to show proficiency, rather than the student's knowledge about that language. Therefore, a student must demonstrate proficiency in English and another language by meeting the criteria described in the Eligibility Criteria section.

## Eligibility Criteria and Assessment Information

As noted in the sections above, all students and all languages should be considered for the Seal. Districts must ensure that the opportunity to demonstrate one's language proficiency is made available broadly to all students in eligible grades and that, when applicable, students receive accommodations in accordance with their IEP or Section 504 Plan. Domain exemptions should be taken into account per the IEP when applicable.

Languages are unique and often differ in their structure, complexity, and domains. Therefore, language performance should be demonstrated in all modes of communication that are characteristic of the language. While generally these include speaking, listening, reading, and writing, there are languages that have fewer than four domains. It is therefore important to ensure that varied forms of assessment are considered to enable students to demonstrate proficiency in any human language that they use. The *National Seal of Biliteracy Guidelines* document states that, "To ensure that all learners have access to the Seal of Biliteracy, alternative means to evaluate language proficiency may be considered. Alternative measures involve using the same descriptive criteria for the required level of proficiency and evaluating the evidence presented."<sup>1</sup> In practice, this means that in cases where standardized assessments of language proficiency across the domains do not exist, proficiency can be demonstrated in alternative ways such as through portfolios and interviews.

Students will become eligible to receive the Seal of Biliteracy based on evidence of meeting two criteria.

### The two academic requirements below must be met:

1. Students must complete all English language arts requirements for graduation.
2. Students must demonstrate proficiency in a language other than English at a level comparable to Intermediate Mid on the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines as demonstrated through one of the following methods in grade 10 or later.

The following list provides districts with various assessment options in numerous languages. Districts must use these externally validated assessments when a test is available for the language. The list is organized in the following order: tests that assess multiple languages, tests that assess one language, and tests that can only be taken if the student has participated in a special program. Note that on assessments for which domain scores are reported, the minimum score noted below must be earned on each domain, rather than just on the composite score. See guidance following the list for what to do if no test is available for a language.

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1. "Guidelines For Implementing The Seal of Biliteracy", ACTFL, et al, 2020, {[sobl-guidelines-2020-final.pdf](#)}.

## Multiple Language Assessments

**Assessment:** [ACTFL Assessment of Performance Toward Proficiency in Languages \(AAPPL\)](#) Form B

**Languages:** Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish

**Minimum score:** 1–3 In all four domains

**Assessment:** [Language Testing International \(LTI\)](#)

*Writing Proficiency Test (WPT) or OPI/WPT for the Seal of Biliteracy*

**Languages:** Domain tests offer different language options. These are noted below.

**Minimum score:** Intermediate Mid

**Assessment:** [ACTFL | Oral Proficiency Interview \(OPI\)](#) or [Oral Proficiency Interview-Computer \(OPIC\)](#)

**Languages:**

OPI: Over 100 languages are available; more information available on website

OPIC: Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Pashto, Persian Farsi, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese

**Minimum score:** Intermediate Mid

**Assessment:** [ACTFL | LPT](#)

*Taken in combination with the ACTFL OPI, RPT, and WPT when applicable.*

**Languages:** Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish

**Minimum score:** Intermediate Mid

**Assessment:** [ACTFL | RPT](#)

*Taken in combination with the ACTFL WPT, OPI, and LPT when applicable.*

**Languages:** Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish

**Minimum score:** Intermediate Mid

**Assessment:** [Writing Proficiency Test \(WPT\)](#)

*Taken in combination with the ACTFL OPI, RPT, and LPT when applicable.*

**Languages:** Available on-demand: Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Spanish

*Available in limited quantities:* Albanian (booklet form only), Amharic, Armenian, Czech, Dari, Dutch, Greek (Modern), Haitian Creole, Hebrew, Hindi Pashto, Persian Farsi, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Swahili, Swedish, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese

**Minimum score:** Intermediate Mid

**Assessment:** [OPI and WPT for Seal of Biliteracy](#)

*Taken in combination with WPT, RPT, and LPT when applicable.*

**Languages:** Albanian, Amharic, Bengali/Bangla, Bosnia/Croatian, Bulgarian, Cantonese, Dari, Gujarati, Haitian Creole, Hebrew, Hindi, Malayalam, Pashto, Polish, Swahili, Tamil, Tagalog, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Yoruba

**Minimum score:** Intermediate Mid

**Assessment:** [ALTA Languages Services, Inc.](#)

*May only be used for languages for which there is no four-domain assessment available.*

**Languages:** ALTA three-domain assessments (speaking-listening and writing) may be used for the following languages: Afrikaans, Azerbaijani, Burmese, Cambodian, Ewe, Fante (Akan), Fulani (Pulaar language from Senegal), Ga, Georgian, Hausa, Igbo, Indonesian, Jamaican Creole English (Patois), Kazakh, Kinyarwanda, Kurmanji, Lao, Latvian, Malay, Navajo, Nepali, Punjabi (Eastern), Punjabi (Western), Sinhala, Sorani, Tajik, Tigrinya, Twi, Uzbek, Wolof

**Minimum score:** Interagency Language Roundtable IRL Scale + 1

**Assessment:** [Avant STAndards-based Measurement of Proficiency \(STAMP\) 4S](#)

**Languages:** Arabic, French, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Chinese (Simplified and Traditional), Polish, Portuguese (Brazilian), Russian, Spanish

**Minimum score:** Intermediate Mid

**Assessment:** [Avant STAndards-based Measurement of Proficiency \(STAMP\) WS \(Speaking and Writing only\)](#)

**Languages:** Amharic, Armenian, Cabo Verdean, Chin (Hakha), Kannada, Chuukese, Czech, Filipino (Tagalog), Haitian Creole, Hawaiian ('Olelo Hawai'i), Hmong, Ilocano, Marathi, Marshallese, Samoan, Somali Maay Maay, Somali Maxaa, Tamil, Telugu, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Yup'ik, Zomi

**Minimum score:** Intermediate Mid

**Assessment:** [Avant STAndards-based Measurement of Proficiency \(STAMP\) 3S \(Listening, Speaking and Writing only\)](#)

**Languages:** Swahili, Yoruba

**Minimum score:** Intermediate Mid (5)

**Assessment:** [AVANT STAndards-based Measurement of Proficiency SuperLanguage](#)

**Languages:** Over 100 languages are available; more information available on website

**Minimum score:** Intermediate Mid

**Assessment:** [The National Examinations in World Languages \(NEWL\) | American Councils](#)

**Language:** Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Portuguese

**Minimum score:** Intermediate Mid

## Single Language Assessments

**Assessment:** [STAndards-based Measurement of Proficiency \(STAMP\) for ASL](#)

**Language:** American Sign Language

**Minimum score:** Intermediate Mid (5)

**Assessment:** [American Sign Language Proficiency Interview \(ASLPI\)](#)

**Language:** American Sign Language

**Minimum score:** 3

**Assessment:** [Sign Language Proficiency Interview \(SLPI:ASL\) | National Technical Institute for the Deaf | RIT](#)

**Language:** American Sign Language

**Minimum score:** Intermediate

**Assessment:** [Educational Starting Competence \(STRT\) - B2 - CNaVT](#)

**Language:** Dutch

**Minimum score:** B1

**Assessment:** [Test of Chinese as a Foreign Language \(TOCFL\)](#)

**Language:** Chinese

**Minimum score:** Intermediate Mid, B1

**Assessment:** [Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française](#)

**Language:** French

**Minimum score:** B1

**Assessment:** [German Language - Goethe-Institut](#)

**Language:** German

**Minimum score:** B1

**Assessment:** [Ellinomatheia / Homepage \(stkhec.org\)](#)

**Language:** Greek

**Minimum score:** B1

**Assessment:** [NYS Board of Regents Greek Assessment](#)

**Language:** Greek

**Minimum score:** B1

**Assessment:** [STAndards-based Measurement of Proficiency \(STAMP\) for Latin](#)

**Language:** Latin

**Minimum score:** Intermediate Mid (5)

**Assessment:** [ACTFL Latin Interpretive Reading Assessment® \(ALIRA\) | LTI \(languagetesting.com\)](#)

**Language:** Latin

**Minimum score:** I-3

**Assessment:** [Polish Language Exam Egzaminy certyfikacyjne z języka polskiego jako obcego](#)

**Language:** Polish

**Minimum score:** B1

**Assessment:** [Certificación de Español - SIELE](#)

**Language:** Spanish

**Minimum score:** B1

**Assessment:** [Diplomas de Español como Lengua Extranjera \(DELE\)](#)

**Language:** Spanish

**Minimum score:** B1

**Assessment:** [LAS Links Español | LAS Links](#)

**Language:** Spanish

**Minimum score:** 3

**Assessment:** [Comprehensive Examination in Modern Greek](#)

**Language:** Modern Greek

**Minimum Score:** 65/100; must be comprised of the following minimum domain scores– Speaking: 16/24, Listening Comprehension: 17/26, Reading Comprehension 19/30, and Writing 13/20

**Assessment:** [Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française](#)

**Language:** French

**Minimum score:** B1

### Assessments for Participants in Specific Programs

**Assessment:** [Advanced Placement World Language Exam](#)

*Only available for students enrolled in an AP course.*

**Languages:** Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Spanish

**Minimum score:** 3

**Assessment:** [Association of Language Testers in Europe \(ALTE\)](#)

*Only available for students enrolled in an ALTE language course.*

**Languages:** Basque, Bulgarian, Catalan, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, Galician, German, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Lithuanian, Luxembourgish, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish, Welsh

**Minimum score:** B1

**Assessment:** [Cambridge International Education](#)

*Only available for students enrolled in a Cambridge language course.*

**Languages:** Refer to Cambridge programming for languages.

**Minimum score:** B1

**Assessment:** [International Baccalaureate \(IB\) World Language Exam](#)

*Only available to students currently enrolled in IB programs.*

**Languages:** Refer to IB programming for languages.

**Minimum score:** 4

#### If there is no test for a language, the following steps must be taken:

1. District determines a plan for measuring a student's level of proficiency in the language. This plan, to the extent practicable, includes assessment of interpersonal face-to-face communication as well as interpretive listening, presentational speaking, and reading and writing where a written code exists.

AND

2. Certification by the principal, or designee, that a language plan was completed due to there being no language test available.

## District Investment

Districts are encouraged to use a range of funding sources to support the costs of language testing so that students with a demonstrated financial need are not precluded from testing. It is critical for districts to consider equity and access when determining how assessments will be made available to **all** eligible students. Possible funding sources may potentially include but are not limited to grants such as Title I, Title I Section 1003 School Improvement, Title II, Title III, Title IV Part A, Alliance District, Commissioner's Network, and State Bilingual. Teachers may reach out to their administrators and/or grant managers to inquire about whether these grants are available in their district and if they can be used to offset the costs of the Seal of Biliteracy initiative.

The Seal of Biliteracy must be made available for all students who want to be tested and for all languages.

When a district chooses to implement the Seal of Biliteracy, the CSDE strongly encourages the district to implement the initiative for all languages in which students wish to demonstrate proficiency. For instance, if a student speaks a less commonly taught heritage language, this may require the district to use a different assessment or a portfolio to determine proficiency. Students whose language assessment costs are higher than other languages represented in the school (often due to a language being less commonly taught), should not be excluded from participating. **Districts must not offer the Seal only to certain students or only for certain languages.** Rather, if a district is offering the Seal of Biliteracy, the ability to demonstrate proficiency in a language must be made available for **all students** who choose to participate and for all languages for which they wish to be assessed.

## District Process to Award the Seal of Biliteracy and Transcripts

The Seal of Biliteracy must be awarded by high school graduation and be added to the student's transcript and diploma noting the specific language(s) for which the Seal of Biliteracy was received. School districts are responsible for documenting on the high school transcript that a student has earned the Seal of Biliteracy. In addition, school districts should determine methods for recording the name and identification of students who have earned the Seal of Biliteracy. Seal of Biliteracy test attempt information must be reported to the CSDE through the Student Achievement Module (SAM), part of the Teacher Course Student (TCS) application. *Note that this application collects all test attempts (regardless of outcome), not who has earned the seal.* SAM is managed by the CSDE's Performance Office, and the records are due each summer.

Documenting a student's progress toward earning the Seal may be relevant for the post-secondary application process, and districts may wish to reflect this information on a student's transcript before graduation. Because the English component requires that the student meet all English language arts requirements for graduation, a student cannot be awarded the Seal until graduation. However, a student may meet the additional language requirement in grades 10, 11, or 12, and districts may wish to record this information on the student's transcript prior to officially being awarded the Seal. If a district wishes to indicate that the other language requirement has been met, the district could add a note to the transcript such as, "Student has demonstrated Intermediate Mid or higher proficiency in [indicate the language(s)]" or, "Student is Seal of Biliteracy eligible in [indicate the language(s)]." While this notation would not indicate that the student has earned the Seal, it signals they have met the criteria in one or more languages, and they will earn the Seal upon meeting the English language arts graduation requirements.

## Resources

[Seal of Biliteracy Infographic](#)

[Seal of Biliteracy \(ct.gov\)](#)

[TCS Database SAM Module Help Site](#)

[www.sealofbiliteracy.org](http://www.sealofbiliteracy.org)

[National Seal of Biliteracy Guidelines](#)



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