

Council Designations: Seal of Biliteracy Criteria

Purpose of this Document

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the intent of the Seal of Biliteracy Council Designation, outline the criteria by which a Seal of Biliteracy Council Designation can be earned by students, and provide clarification on the logistics for students to earn a Seal of Biliteracy. RIDE will provide additional information in separate documents or alternative formats, including frameworks for structures and processes necessary to ensure full implementation of the Seal of Biliteracy Council Designation.

Overview and Intent of Seal of Biliteracy

The Seal of Biliteracy celebrates students who have multilingual competence – a critical skill in today’s global society. The Seal of Biliteracy certifies that a student has demonstrated skill in English language and one or more other world languages. Students earn a Seal of Biliteracy by demonstrating competence in both state-adopted high school English Language Arts standards and nationally-recognized world language standards (e.g. ACTFL).

The Seal of Biliteracy will be offered at two levels:

- **Gold:** The Rhode Island Gold Seal of Biliteracy will be given to a learner who demonstrates the ability to narrate and describe in the major time frames of past, present, and future in paragraph-length discourse with some control of aspect. Writers are able to combine and link sentences into texts of paragraph length and structure. The Gold writer demonstrates the ability to incorporate a limited number of cohesive devices, and may resort to some redundancy and awkward repetition. Listeners demonstrate the ability to comprehend language on a range of topics of general interest. They have sufficient knowledge of language structure to understand basic time-frame references. Readers are able to understand conventional narrative and descriptive texts with a clear underlying structure though their comprehension may be uneven. These texts predominantly contain high-frequency vocabulary and structures. The Gold level is aligned with the ACTFL “Advanced Low” Proficiency Guidelines (2012).
 - Students will earn a Gold Seal of Biliteracy if they meet the Gold-level performance standard on both an English and a World Language assessment from the RIDE-approved assessment list.
- **Silver:** The Rhode Island Silver Seal of Biliteracy will be given to a learner who can successfully handle a variety of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is generally limited to those predictable and concrete exchanges necessary for survival in the target culture. They can write short, simple communications, compositions, and requests for information in loosely connected texts about personal preferences, daily routines, common events, and other personal topics primarily in the present time tense. The learner’s comprehension is most often accurate with highly familiar and predictable topics although a few misunderstandings may occur. They are able to understand short, non-complex texts that convey basic information and deal with basic personal and social topics. This description applies as a baseline level of skill for both English and another world language for the learner. The Silver level is aligned with the ACTFL “Intermediate Mid” Proficiency Guidelines (2012).

- Students will earn a Silver Seal of Biliteracy if they meet the Silver-level performance standards on both an English and a World Language assessment from the RIDE-approved assessment list.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How will schools be held accountable for students earning a Seal of Biliteracy?

Like the other two types of Council Designations available to the Rhode Island graduating class of 2021, the state Seal of Biliteracy will be recognized within the accountability system starting in the 2022 school year. The Post-Secondary Success indicator within the accountability system measures students' success in demonstrating achievements beyond those needed to earn a high school diploma. The Post-Secondary Success indicator will measure the percent of students in each high school that graduate each year with one or more of the following: Career and Technical Education industry-approved credential, college credits through dual or concurrent enrollment, or successful completion of Advanced Placement tests. Rhode Island will analyze data for this indicator after the 2016-2017 school year when data has been collected and validated to ensure it will support meaningful differentiation of schools. Commencing with the graduating class of 2021, this indicator will expand to include two Council Designations that are outlined in the Rhode Island Secondary School Regulations: Seal of Biliteracy and Pathway Endorsement.

2. When will the state Seal of Biliteracy criteria go into effect?

While many districts and schools are awarding a Seal of Biliteracy based on local criteria, the criteria listed above for the state Seal of Biliteracy will go into effect for the class of 2021, who will be 9th graders in the 2017-2018 school year.

3. My district currently gives out a Seal of Biliteracy based on local criteria. How can we make the transition?

LEAs may adopt and award a local Seal of Biliteracy at any time. RIDE recommends that LEAs award the Seal of Biliteracy according to the guidelines published on page 15 of the [RI Dual Language Program Standards](#) or aligning the local criteria with the new criteria of the state Council Designation Seal of Biliteracy. LEAs may award a Seal of Biliteracy and note that it is aligned with the state criteria for the Council Designation. Starting with the graduating class of 2021, LEAs may offer the state Seal of Biliteracy under the criteria listed in this document to any student meeting the criteria for either a Gold or Silver level Seal of Biliteracy.

4. What level of Seal of Biliteracy does a student receive if they only reach the Gold performance standard on one of the assessments?

Students who reach the Silver performance standard on either the English assessment or the world language assessment and who reach the Gold performance standard on the other assessment will be eligible for a Silver Seal of Biliteracy. Only students who achieve the Gold-level performance standard on both assessments can earn a Gold Seal of Biliteracy.

5. When can a student earn a Seal of Biliteracy?

A student may earn a Seal of Biliteracy any time after they have demonstrated the performance standard on both the English and a world language assessment. Qualified assessments taken at any point during the high school years would be eligible for meeting the criteria to earn a Seal of Biliteracy. Earning this Seal should be noted on the student's transcript immediately after meeting the criteria. If a student earns a Silver level Seal of Biliteracy and then later earns a Gold level Seal of Biliteracy in the same language, the Gold Seal of Biliteracy should replace the Silver on the students' transcripts. A student's Seal of Biliteracy will be officially conferred upon high school graduation and will be noted on the student's diploma and final transcript.

6. Must a student show proficiency on an English and a world language assessment to earn a Seal of Biliteracy?

Yes, a student must show proficiency on at least one of the qualified English assessments and at least one of the qualified world language assessments. Students who demonstrate proficiency at the performance standard on multiple qualified English assessments or multiple qualified world language assessments of the same language will only earn one Seal of Biliteracy.

7. Can a student earn more than one Seal of Biliteracy for multiple languages?

Yes, if a student meets the performance standard for the Seal of Biliteracy in multiple world languages and meets the performance standard on one of the qualifying English assessments, a student may earn multiple Seals of Biliteracy (e.g. a student could earn a Silver Seal on Biliteracy in Spanish, and a Gold Seal of Biliteracy in Portuguese).

8. How will employers and institutions of higher education know what a Gold or Silver Seal of Biliteracy means?

RIDE will be communicating with major employers and institutions of higher education about the meaning of the Gold and Silver Seal of Biliteracy using the performance descriptors listed in this document. RIDE will also post this information on the RIDE website. Students should also be prepared to share this information with their potential employers or institutions of higher education.

9. Can a student earn a Seal of Biliteracy before they earn a diploma?

A student who has met the criteria for a Seal of Biliteracy will have that designation noted on their transcript. However, the designation should be noted as "pending high school diploma" until the student has earned a high school diploma. Students who do not graduate with a high school diploma cannot officially earn a Seal of Biliteracy.

10. Who pays the fees for students to take the World Language assessments?

Most qualifying World Language assessments can be taken with a nominal fee, or have a process for low-income students to apply for a fee waiver. An LEA or school may choose to make certain assessments available to students at the cost to the LEA or school.

11. Are re-takes of eligible assessments allowed?

A student is allowed to take a qualifying assessment as many times as they wish and the score that meets the performance standard will be counted toward the Seal of Biliteracy. However, schools and LEAs are not required to administer or pay for multiple administrations of a particular assessment.

12. Can a student earn a Seal of Biliteracy through other means than taking assessments?

No. As a council designation, the Seal is an externally validated recognition that must be earned through demonstration of proficiency at a designated performance standard on a set of qualifying assessments. However, local recognitions may be an option for students who do not meet the designated performance standard on qualifying assessments.

13. For which languages can a student earn a Seal of Biliteracy?

Students may earn a Seal of Biliteracy in any language that is assessed in one of the qualifying world language assessments, which will include ASL. Should a student want to earn a seal in a language that is not currently covered by the list of qualifying world language assessments, the superintendent of the student's LEA may nominate an appropriate assessment to RIDE via the nomination process (see Seal of Biliteracy Assessment Nomination Process section of this guidance).

14. How will students know that they can earn a Seal of Biliteracy?

In accordance with the Secondary School Regulations adopted in 2016, starting in 2017 for the class of 2021, each graduating class must be notified of the requirements of the Seal of Biliteracy at both levels no later than October 1 of the cohort's ninth grade year or when that student is enrolled in the high school after the ninth grade year.

15. What is the difference between a Seal of Biliteracy and a Pathway Endorsement in Humanities and World Languages?

The Seal of Biliteracy is an assessment-based recognition of student proficiency in English and another world language. The Pathway Endorsement recognizes students who have undergone a series of connected experiences that leads to deep learning in one language. Students may choose to pursue both of these, though the requirements for earning them are separate, non-duplicative, and unique.

16. How and when should the Seal of Biliteracy be noted on a student's transcript?

Immediately upon meeting the criteria for a Seal of Biliteracy Council Designation, it should be noted on the student's transcripts that they earned the Seal of Biliteracy, pending a high school diploma. It should also be noted at which level they earned the Seal of Biliteracy (Gold or Silver), and in what languages a student earned the Seal of Biliteracy (e.g. Gold Seal of Biliteracy in English and Mandarin earned October 2020, pending earning a high school diploma).