



SEAL OF BILITERACY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the Michigan Seal of Biliteracy?

- The Michigan Seal of Biliteracy has been created to recognize high school graduates who exhibit language proficiency in English and at least one additional world language.
- The Seal may be awarded to any student receiving a high school diploma, a high school certificate of completion or a high school equivalency certificate
AND
who has demonstrated Intermediate High proficiency on acceptable world language assessments and met the English Language Arts requirements for graduation.

2. What is the purpose of the Michigan Seal of Biliteracy?

- The Seal was created to encourage students to learn world languages and/or maintain their native and heritage languages.
- The Seal provides employers with a way to identify individuals with strong language and biliteracy skills.
- The Seal serves as an additional tool for colleges and universities to recognize applicants' language abilities for admission and placement.

3. When was the Michigan Seal of Biliteracy established?

- The State Board of Education approved the Michigan Seal of Biliteracy on January 9, 2018.

4. What resources are available for more information?

- Official Seal resources can be obtained at the [Michigan Department of Education \(MDE\) Seal of Biliteracy website](#).

5. How many states offer the Seal of Biliteracy?

- Currently 36 states (including Michigan) and Washington DC have an approved Seal of Biliteracy. (08.01.2019)

6. What are the criteria for awarding the Seal in the state of Michigan?

- **ENGLISH:** All recipients of the Seal must demonstrate proficiency in English through the successful completion of the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) graduation requirements as well as individual district requirements.
- **WORLD LANGUAGES:** All recipients of the Seal must also demonstrate Intermediate High or equivalent proficiency in a World Language as defined by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) on approved commercially-produced assessments or the [Alternative Process for Assessment](#). See also the [Michigan Seal of Biliteracy Approved Commercial Language Assessments](#) document.



7. Who is eligible to receive the Seal?

- The Michigan Seal of Biliteracy has been designed to be awarded to high school graduates or the equivalent. The Seal may be awarded to any student receiving a high school diploma, a high school certificate of completion or a high school equivalency certificate.
- A designated representative from the LEA must apply for the Seal on behalf of the student.

8. Can a student or parent apply?

- In the event that a district is not currently providing the Seal, a parent/guardian can apply for the student. All documentation must be attached to the application to demonstrate the required levels of proficiency in the two languages.

9. How is the English component assessed/verified?

- All recipients of the Seal must demonstrate proficiency in English through the successful completion of the MMC graduation requirements as well as individual district requirements.

10. How is the world languages component assessed/verified?

- A student must demonstrate Intermediate High proficiency on approved world language assessments in all domains that pertain to the language in question. See the list of [Michigan Seal of Biliteracy Approved Commercial Language Assessments](#).

11. What is the minimum level of proficiency required for the world language component?

- [Intermediate High](#) (Speaking p.7, Writing p.13, Listening p.18, Reading p. 23) or equivalent proficiency is the minimum level required and can be demonstrated through an approved commercial language assessment, foreign transcripts and other formal documentation. Resource: [Seal of Biliteracy Policy document Appendix B](#).

12. Which language domains must be assessed?

- All pertinent domains of a language must be assessed.
NOTE: Most languages consist of four domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
EXCEPTION: A domain that does not exist in a particular language (the speaking domain in Latin or the writing domain in Silhet, for example), does not need to be assessed.



13. Which assessments can be used to demonstrate proficiency?

- See the list of [Michigan Seal of Biliteracy Approved Commercial Language Assessments](#).

14. How can assessment for the Seal be funded?

- Districts that have are just beginning to provide funding for the assessments for the Seal of Biliteracy may choose to use their Title IV funding (subject to supplement not supplant rules).
- District's general funds may be used to fund assessments for the Seal of Biliteracy.
- Local donors may provide funding for the assessments for the Seal of Biliteracy.
- ISDs, RESAs, AESA may help offset costs.
- In instances where funding is not able to be leveraged, students may also pay for the assessments for the Seal of Biliteracy.

15. Can a student earn the Seal for American Sign Language?

- Yes, American Sign Language is considered a world language.

16. Is an exchange student eligible for the Seal?

- As long as the exchange student is receiving a diploma/graduating from a Michigan LEA, exchange students are eligible to receive the Seal. Transcripts from the student's home country may be used to grant the Seal in lieu of an approved assessment.

17. What should I do if my application is rejected?

- Applications are typically rejected due to missing information. Please note any comments that were included with the rejected application, make the required changes, and re-submit the application.

18. If I need support, what is the appropriate contact?

- Please contact the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Educational Supports, English Learner Consultant, Kelly Alvarez at alvarezk@michigan.gov or 517-241-5392.

19. When can schools apply for the Seal on behalf of their students?

- The Seal of Biliteracy is intended for graduating seniors. Therefore, schools are encouraged to apply for the Seal no later than five months prior to graduation.
- Demonstration of Intermediate High proficiency must be established prior to applying for the Seal.
- For the purpose of awarding the Seal, the MDE recommends that a student's proficiency be tested beginning in his/her second semester of their junior year through the end of the first semester of the senior year. The expectation is that the scores accurately reflect Intermediate High or equivalent proficiency at the time of graduation.



- Exceptions to these recommended timelines may apply to less commonly assessed languages.
- Note that students tested in their senior year may not receive test results until summer of their graduating year. As a result, the Seal will be awarded retroactively following graduation.

20. How do schools and others apply?

- The application process uses the MDE portal.
- In order to apply, schools/others will need to create a MEIS account.
- To create a login for MEIS for submitting student applications, click on the following link: [Application link](#)
- The application process requires basic information about the requesting entity, student name, language, type of assessment used, and the acknowledgement of all assurances.

21. What is the procedure for languages that do not have a commercially produced assessment?

- The MDE Seal of Biliteracy Council has created an [Alternative Process for Assessment](#) for districts to follow.

22. When and how is the Seal awarded?

- The Michigan Seal of Biliteracy will be awarded in the form of an official letter, official prepopulated certificate and a gold foil seal.
- Once the application has been submitted and approved, the contact listed in the application will receive an email including attachments for both the letter and certificate.
- The gold foil seal will be mailed out by MDE, upon approval, to the address associated with the MEIS account.
- Recognition of the Michigan Seal of Biliteracy may also be placed on the diploma and transcript. The official language to add to the transcript is, “Michigan Biliteracy Seal Awardee – Spanish/English”.

23. What can schools and districts do to promote the Seal?

- Schools can engage in a variety of activities to promote the Seal.
To promote the Seal of Biliteracy, language teachers should discuss the Seal of Biliteracy with students during a class period and with parents during Parent-Teacher conferences using the Seal of Biliteracy Brochure that exists in English and other languages.
 1. [Chinese](#)
 2. [English](#)
 3. [Polish](#)
 4. [Spanish](#)
 5. Bengali (coming soon)
 6. Arabic (coming soon)



- Download and post the [Seal of Biliteracy Poster](#) in all language classrooms.
- Honor the Seal of Biliteracy awardees at a special ceremony such as an Honors Assembly or Honors Convocation.
- Honor the Seal of Biliteracy awardees during graduation ceremonies.
- Post photos of Seal of Biliteracy ceremonies and awardees on school and district websites.
- Post photos and articles on the Seal of Biliteracy awardees on social media.
- Send a press release and photos about Seal of Biliteracy awardees to appropriate newspapers and newsletters.

24. How can colleges and universities support and engage with the Seal?

- It is recommended that colleges and universities use the Seal of Biliteracy for admissions, placement, and granting of credit for language courses. Please contact your college or university to identify ways in which they are valuing the Seal of Biliteracy.
- Colleges and universities can contact prospective students and recently admitted students who have been awarded the Seal to promote their language courses and programs in order to increase enrollments.

25. How can parents support and engage with the Seal?

- Parents can encourage their son or daughter to continue with world language study beyond the language requirement in order to qualify for the Seal of Biliteracy.
- Parents can encourage the maintenance of a native or heritage language by using it in the home environment. Students can then use their native or heritage language when applying for the Seal.
- Parents can encourage their school or district to offer long-sequence, well-articulated language programs so that students meet the minimum qualifications for the Seal of Biliteracy.
- Parents can encourage their child to seek out opportunities to use the language in the community where it is spoken, for example, in a service learning project.
- Parents can encourage school districts to promote and support travel abroad as language and cultural experiences.

26. What if my question was not answered in this Frequently Asked Questions document?

- Please contact the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Educational Supports, English Learner Consultant, Kelly Alvarez at alvarezk@michigan.gov or 517-241-5392.