



Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

# UPDATE: World Languages and the Washington State Seal of Biliteracy

*2023*

Authorizing Legislation: [RCW 28A.300.575](#)

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2014, the Legislature created the Washington State Seal of Biliteracy, an award earned by graduating high school seniors who can meet certain proficiency standards in both English and a second language. The intent of the Seal was to increase the number of students who are proficient in at least two languages.

In addition to the Seal of Biliteracy, students may also earn competency-based credits in high school if they complete all proficiency components of an assessment in a language other than English. Districts award world language competency-based credits when students meet the level of proficiency established by their district's world languages competency-based credit policy.

The Legislature requires the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to provide a summary report by December 1 of each year on:

- The annual number of graduating high school seniors within the district earning the Washington State Seal of Biliteracy; and
- The number of high school students earning competency-based high school credits for world languages by demonstrating proficiency in a language other than English.

In 2022–23, 5,655 high school seniors earned the Seal in 131 districts and 12,568 students earned world languages competency-based high school credits.

# BACKGROUND

Washington's K–12 students bring with them a rich heritage of many cultures and languages. Recognizing the importance of multilingual communication skills and valuing the cultural backgrounds of our state's students, the Legislature created the Washington State Seal of Biliteracy in 2014. The Seal of Biliteracy (the Seal) is an award earned by graduating seniors who meet certain proficiency standards in both English and a second language. The intent of the Seal was to increase the number of students who are proficient in at least two languages.

In addition to the Seal of Biliteracy, students may also earn competency-based credits in high school if they complete all proficiency components of an assessment in a language other than English. Districts award world language competency-based credits when students meet the level of proficiency established by their district's world languages competency-based credit policy.

## Washington State Seal of Biliteracy

The 2014 Legislature established the Washington State Seal of Biliteracy (the Seal) to recognize public high school graduates who attain a high level of proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in one or more languages in addition to English ([RCW 28A.300.575](#)). OSPI adopted rules to implement the Seal and provides ongoing technical assistance to support districts to help students attain the Seal: See Washington Administrative Code (WAC) [392-415-070](#) (mandatory high school transcript contents) and WAC [392-410-350](#) (Seal of Biliteracy).

## English Requirement

The Seal recognizes the significance of second language proficiency while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of cultivating and maintaining strong proficiency in English language arts. To earn the Seal of Biliteracy, students must present proficiency in English, in one or more other languages, and graduate. English proficiency is documented when a graduating student completes all English Language Arts requirements in accordance with [Chapter 252, Laws of 2019](#) (High School Graduation Requirements).

## World Language Requirement

To demonstrate proficiency in a language other than English, students must receive a passing score determined by OSPI on a performance-based language exam (Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or Cambridge International) or earn four World Language competency-based credits by demonstrating Intermediate-Mid proficiency, the equivalent of four years of high school World Language courses. OSPI revised WAC 392-410-350 to expand the English proficiency strategies to align with the new law.

## *Tribal Languages*

For Tribal languages—honoring tribal sovereignty, tribal consultation, and government-to-government relationships between Tribes and districts—each Tribe determines the proficiency level students need to be considered biliterate. Tribes develop the methods and processes for determining proficiency in their respective Tribal languages. Teachers who instruct Tribal languages

must be certified through the First Peoples' Language, Culture, and Oral Traditions Certification Program ([WAC 181-78A-700](#)). Affirmation that students have successfully earned the Seal of Biliteracy for Tribal languages follows the agreed processes determined through consultation with each Tribe.

## Competency-based Credits

Competency-based credits can be earned by students in high school who speak, read, write, and listen in a language other than English ([RCW 28A.230.090](#)). Students may receive up to four competency credits on their high school transcript based upon their level of proficiency established by their district's world languages competency-based credit policy. The Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) model policy for world languages recommends proficiency levels based on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language's (ACTFL's) proficiency guidelines for world languages.

For American Sign Language (ASL), WSSDA's policy defers to OSPI's credit alignment chart for Gallaudet University's American Sign Language Proficiency Interview (ASLPI) and the Sign Language Proficiency Interview: American Sign Language (SLPI: ASL), which has multiple providers, including Bridges Oregon and Rochester Institute of Technology (NY).

To honor Tribal Sovereignty and in accordance with Chapter [43.376](#) RCW, each Tribe determines assessment proficiency levels and assessments.

# UPDATE STATUS

## Language Proficiency Assessment

### Custom Testing

OSPI entered a contract with Avant Assessment to provide Custom Tests for languages which have one or fewer available assessments. With support from Extempore, an online platform designed for language education, 23 districts had 99 students take a Custom Test, resulting in students earning a total of 318 Competency-based Credits. A complete list of all languages tested is available in Appendix D.

### Seal of Biliteracy

In 2022–23, 5,595 graduating seniors earned the Washington State Seal of Biliteracy. These figures include the number of students enrolled or previously enrolled in the Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program and the languages spoken by those students. Appendix A includes the full list of districts who reported data and Appendix B includes a full list of languages reported being tested in the 2022–23 school year.

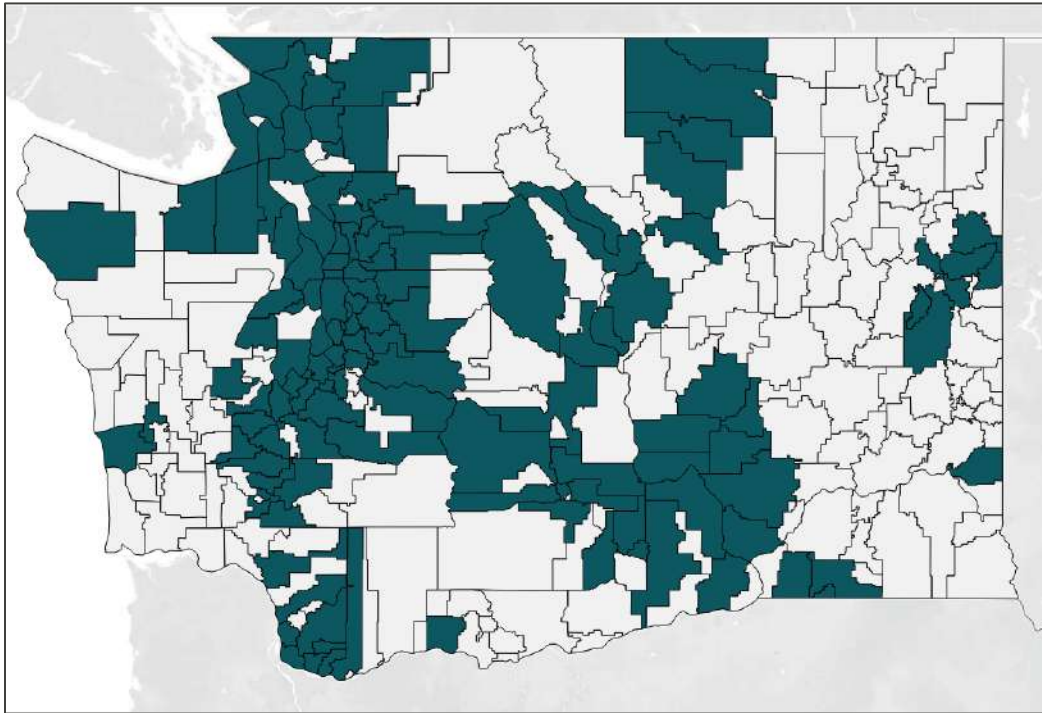
131 school districts reported awarding the Seal and 87 languages were tested. The top five languages tested were Spanish, Russian, Chinese Languages, French, and Japanese. The top five districts awarding Seals were Bellevue (573), Seattle (517), Lake Washington (343), Yakima (336), and Kent (180).

A new image for the Seal was commissioned due to the original not being specific to Washington. It features the Space Needle against a background of both mountains and a city skyline rising out of a book.

**Figure 1: New Washington State Seal of Biliteracy Logo/Embossment**



**Figure 2: Heatmap of 131 Districts Awarding the Seal, SY 2022–23**



**Key:** Dark areas indicate districts which awarded one or more Seals in 2023.

**Source:** Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS). An interactive map can also be found at on [Tableau Public](#).

**Table 1: Five-Year Trends of Top Five Languages Tested**

| Language          | 2018         | 2019         | 2020         | 2021         | 2022         | 2023         |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Spanish           | 1,672        | 2,281        | 1,946        | 2,190        | 2,986        | 3,867        |
| Russian           | 133          | 159          | 197          | 183          | 245          | 243          |
| Chinese Languages | 29           | 56           | 206          | 167          | 195          | 288          |
| French            | 132          | 144          | 189          | 114          | 168          | 237          |
| Vietnamese        | 109          | 105          | 97           | 132          | 132          | 109          |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>2,075</b> | <b>2,745</b> | <b>2,635</b> | <b>2,786</b> | <b>3,726</b> | <b>4,744</b> |

**Source:** Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS).

**Figure 3: Total Seals Earned by Year, 2016–2023**



**Source:** Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS).

## Competency-based Credits in Languages Other than English

In 2022–23, 12,568 students earned at least one competency-based world language credit. Not all students who earned competency-based world language credits also earned the Seal.

A student might earn competency-based world language credit, but not demonstrate the proficiency in the language needed to earn the Seal. While most students awarded the Seal probably also earned at least one competency-based world languages credit, not all students who earned competency-based world languages credits were awarded the Seal.

Students earned the most competency credits in Spanish, Russian, Chinese languages, Ukrainian, and Korean in 2023, which reflects some of the top languages listed in at-home language data for students in grades 6 through 12.



# CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

OSPI will continue to collaborate with Avant Assessment for the 2023–24 school year to offer Custom Testing (CT) to meet the increasing demands related to languages less-commonly-taught and assessed. Part of this work is accepting requests for all languages with one or fewer available assessments. This year, the State Legislature allocated funds which will cover the costs for all CTs.

OSPI developed new guidance manuals for the Seal of Biliteracy, Competency-based Credit Testing, and Custom Testing, as well as a spreadsheet to help districts organize all the necessary information for language proficiency testing. Revision of these tools will continue based on feedback from districts.

To extend the life of the Seal, OSPI is interested in adding a second tier of award. If approved, the original Seal would become the “Intermediate Seal” and the new tier would become the “Advanced Seal”, which are the main proficiency levels students need to reach to earn them. The Advanced Seal could be met by either earning a second Seal in another language or by showing Advanced Low proficiency in the original language. This will depend on a rule revision and feedback from special focus groups, such as American Sign Language users, district testing administrators, and dual language educators.

In 2024, OSPI will begin to review the World Language State Standards which were last updated in 2015. The current standards do not mirror the content’s move toward proficiency level targets. To prepare Washington educators to use proficiency levels, OSPI will be contracting with Avant ADVANCED to prepare a “train the trainers” program. This program will allow 30 language educators from around the state to take an in-depth study of the proficiency levels combined with leadership training with the specific intention that they provide professional development and mentorship for teachers in their regions.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many individuals and organizations are to be commended for their efforts in helping grow the Washington State Seal of Biliteracy and competency-based world language credits, including but not limited to:

- Avant Assessment
- Washington Association for Language Teaching (WAFLT)
- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)
- National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Languages (NCSSFL)
- American Translators Association (ATA)

# REFERENCES

Comprehensive Education Data and Research System. (2022). *High School Competency-based Credits* (vers. 2022–2023) [Data set]. CEDARS.

Comprehensive Education Data and Research System. (2022). *Seals of Biliteracy Earned* (vers. 2022–2023) [Data set]. CEDARS.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Districts Reporting Earned Seals of Biliteracy, SY 2022– 23

Aberdeen School District  
Anacortes School District  
Arlington School District  
Auburn School District  
Bainbridge Island School District  
Battle Ground School District  
Bellevue School District  
Bellingham School District  
Bethel School District  
Blaine School District  
Bremerton School District  
Bridgeport School District  
Burlington-Edison School District  
Camas School District  
Cascade School District  
Central Kitsap School District  
Centralia School District  
Chehalis School District  
Cheney School District  
Chimacum School District  
Clover Park School District  
College Place School District  
East Valley School District (Spokane)  
East Valley School District (Yakima)  
Eastmont School District  
Eatonville School District  
Edmonds School District  
Ellensburg School District  
Enumclaw School District  
Everett School District  
Evergreen School District (Clark)  
Federal Way School District  
Ferndale School District  
Fife School District  
Franklin Pierce School District  
Grandview School District  
Granger School District

Granite Falls School District  
Highline School District  
Hockinson School District  
Issaquah School District  
Kelso School District  
Kennewick School District  
Kent School District  
Lake Chelan School District  
Lake Stevens School District  
Lake Washington Institute of Technology  
Lake Washington School District  
Lopez School District  
Lynden School District  
Manson School District  
Marysville School District  
Mead School District  
Medical Lake School District  
Mercer Island School District  
Monroe School District  
Moses Lake School District  
Mount Baker School District  
Mount Vernon School District  
Mukilteo School District  
Naches Valley School District  
Napavine School District  
Nine Mile Falls School District  
North Franklin School District  
North Kitsap School District  
North Mason School District  
North Thurston Public Schools  
Northshore School District  
Oak Harbor School District  
Ocosta School District  
Okanogan School District  
Olympia School District  
Omak School District  
Onalaska School District

Orcas Island School District  
Oroville School District  
Othello School District  
Pasco School District  
Peninsula School District  
Port Angeles School District  
Port Townsend School District  
Prosser School District  
Pullman School District  
Puyallup School District  
Quillayute Valley School District  
Renton School District  
Richland School District  
Ridgefield School District  
Riverside School District  
Riverview School District  
Rochester School District  
Royal School District  
San Juan Island School District  
Seattle Public Schools  
Sedro-Woolley School District  
Selah School District  
Sequim School District  
Shelton School District  
Shoreline School District  
Snohomish School District  
Snoqualmie Valley School District  
South Whidbey School District  
Spokane School District  
Stanwood-Camano School District  
Steilacoom Hist. School District  
Sultan School District  
Sumner-Bonney Lake School District  
Sunnyside School District  
Tacoma School District  
Tahoma School District  
Tenino School District  
Toledo School District  
Tonasket School District  
Touchet School District  
Tukwila School District  
Tumwater School District  
University Place School District  
Vancouver School District  
Vashon Island School District  
Wahluke School District

Walla Walla Public Schools  
Wapato School District  
Warden School District  
Washougal School District  
Waterville School District  
Wenatchee School District  
West Valley School District (Yakima)  
White River School District  
White Salmon Valley School District  
Woodland School District  
Yakima School District  
Yelm School District

## Appendix B:

### Seals-Earned Languages, SY 2022–23

| Language Tested        | Student Count | Language Tested | Student Count | Language Tested  | Student Count |
|------------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|
| Spanish                | 3867          | Swahili         | 9             | Serbian          | 2             |
| Russian                | 243           | Bulgarian       | 8             | Tedim            | 2             |
| French                 | 237           | Oromo           | 8             | Bengali          | 1             |
| Chinese Languages      | 288           | Tamil           | 8             | Chin             | 1             |
| Japanese               | 123           | Telugu          | 8             | Chungki/Chunkese | 1             |
| Korean                 | 116           | Thai            | 8             | Croatian         | 1             |
| Vietnamese             | 109           | Turkish         | 8             | Czech            | 1             |
| Ukrainian              | 71            | Chuuk           | 7             | Danish           | 1             |
| Hindi                  | 59            | Javanese        | 7             | Ethiopic         | 1             |
| Tagalog                | 56            | Marathi         | 6             | Haitian Creole   | 1             |
| Punjabi                | 45            | Mongolian       | 6             | Hmong            | 1             |
| Dari                   | 32            | Nepali          | 5             | Karen            | 1             |
| Arabic                 | 29            | Urdu            | 5             | Khmer            | 1             |
| German                 | 27            | Cambodian       | 4             | Kurdish          | 1             |
| Somali                 | 25            | Finnish         | 4             | Lithuanian       | 1             |
| Amharic                | 22            | Indonesian      | 4             | Luganda          | 1             |
| Portuguese             | 22            | Swedish         | 4             | Malayalam        | 1             |
| Romanian               | 20            | Dutch           | 3             | Mandinka         | 1             |
| Marshallese            | 18            | Hungarian       | 3             | Norwegian        | 1             |
| Hebrew, Modern         | 17            | Kinyarwanda     | 3             | Palau            | 1             |
| Farsi                  | 15            | Kosraean        | 3             | Pohnpeian        | 1             |
| Italian                | 14            | Unknown         | 3             | Sanskrit         | 1             |
| Tigrinya               | 12            | Wolof           | 3             | Shona            | 1             |
| American Sign Language | 11            | Yakima          | 3             | Sinhalese        | 1             |
| Polish                 | 11            | Albanian        | 2             | Tongan           | 1             |
| Samoan                 | 10            | Gujarati        | 2             | Turkic           | 1             |
| Bosnian                | 9             | Kanjobal        | 2             | Twi              | 1             |
| Pashto                 | 9             | Kannada         | 2             |                  |               |
| Pilipino/Filipino      | 9             | Moldavian       | 2             |                  |               |

## Appendix C:

### Language Proficiency Assessment Usage, SY 2022–23

| Assessment                                                             | Seal Count |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Standards-based Measurement of Proficiency (STAMP)                     | 3,882      |
| Advanced Placement (AP) Testing                                        | 842        |
| ALTA                                                                   | 376        |
| International Baccalaureate (IB) Testing                               | 258        |
| AAPPL                                                                  | 156        |
| Local "in district" Competency Test                                    | 106        |
| Custom Testing                                                         | 51         |
| Writing Proficiency Test (WPT) & Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)      | 13         |
| American Sign Language Assessment                                      | 6          |
| Tribal Language Assessment                                             | 3          |
| ACTFL Latin Interpretive Reading Assessment (ALIRA)                    | 1          |
| Sign Language Proficiency Interview: American Sign Language (SLPI:ASL) | 1          |

## Appendix D:

### Custom Testing Languages, SY 2022–23

| Language Tested         | Student Count | Language Tested | Student Count |
|-------------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Albanian                | 1             | Swedish         | 1             |
| Bisaya/Visaya           | 2             | Tigrinya        | 1             |
| Cantonese               | 1             | Tok Pisin       | 1             |
| Cebuano                 | 4             | Tongan          | 1             |
| Cham                    | 3             | Yapese          | 2             |
| Chamorro                | 2             | Zigula          | 3             |
| Estonian                | 1             |                 |               |
| Fijian                  | 4             |                 |               |
| Fulani                  | 2             |                 |               |
| Icelandic               | 1             |                 |               |
| Ilonggo/Hiligaynon      | 1             |                 |               |
| Kanjobal/Q'anjob'al     | 4             |                 |               |
| Karen                   | 5             |                 |               |
| Khmer                   | 3             |                 |               |
| Kirundi                 | 1             |                 |               |
| Kosraean                | 10            |                 |               |
| Krio                    | 1             |                 |               |
| Kunama                  | 1             |                 |               |
| Lingala                 | 1             |                 |               |
| Luganda                 | 4             |                 |               |
| Mandinka                | 20            |                 |               |
| Nyanja (Chewa/Chichewa) | 1             |                 |               |
| Palauan                 | 5             |                 |               |
| Romanian                | 1             |                 |               |
| Saho                    | 1             |                 |               |
| Sanskrit                | 3             |                 |               |
| siSwati                 | 1             |                 |               |
| Soninke                 | 5             |                 |               |
| Sudanese Arabic         | 1             |                 |               |



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