



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.

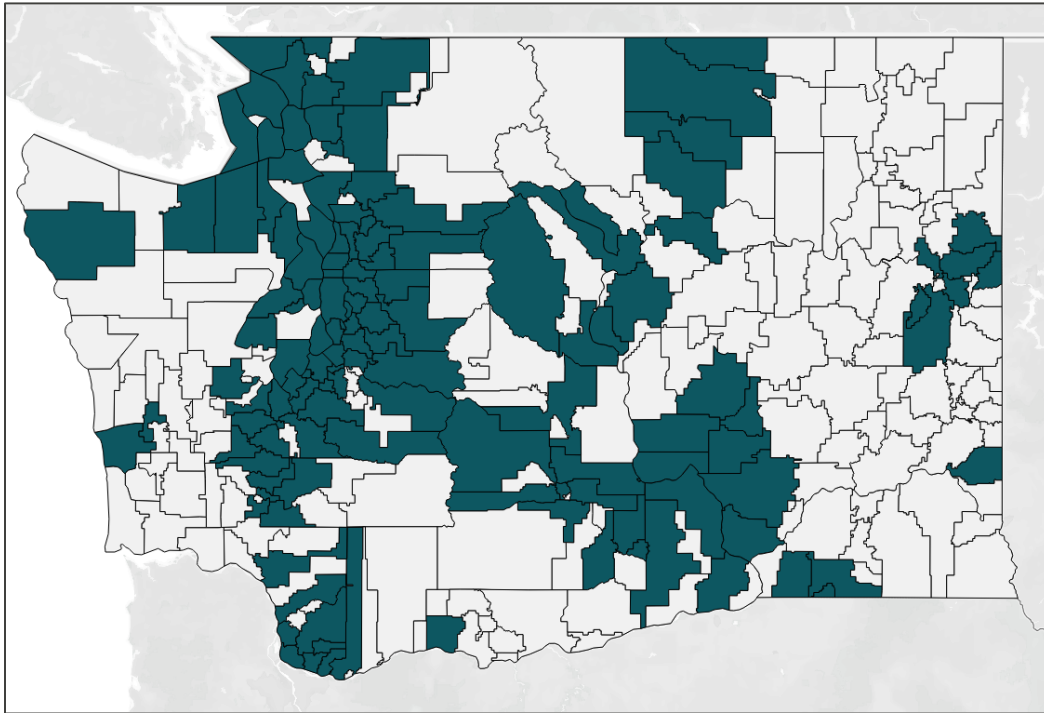
131 school districts reported awarding the Seal and 87 languages were tested. The top five languages tested were Spanish, Russian, Chinese Languages, French, and Japanese. The top five districts awarding Seals were Bellevue (573), Seattle (517), Lake Washington (343), Yakima (336), and Kent (180).

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.

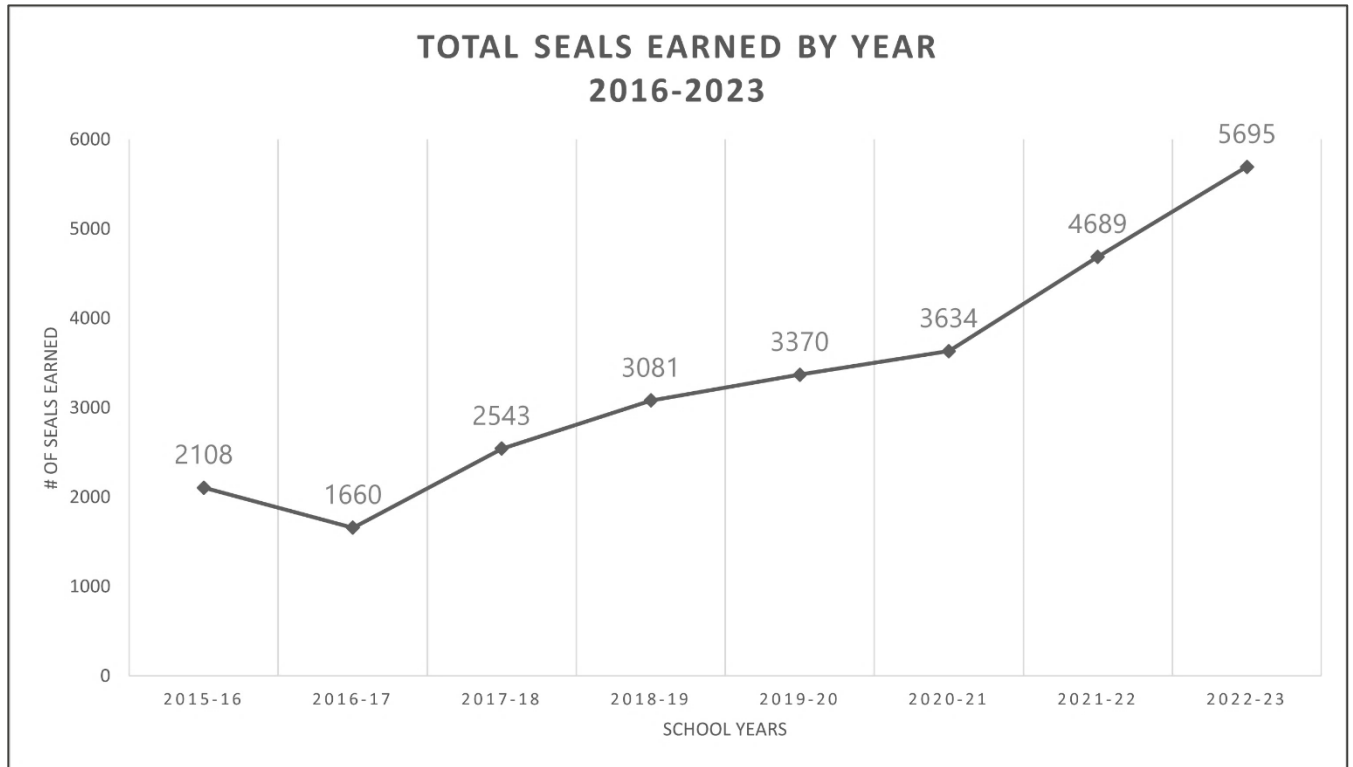
Source: Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS). An interactive map can also be found at on [Tableau Public](#).

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
Total	2,075	2,745	2,635	2,786	3,726	4,744

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	Granite Falls School District
Anacortes School District	Highline School District
Arlington School District	Hockinson School District
Auburn School District	Issaquah School District
Bainbridge Island School District	Kelso School District
Battle Ground School District	Kennewick School District
Bellevue School District	Kent School District
Bellingham School District	Lake Chelan School District
Bethel School District	Lake Stevens School District
Blaine School District	Lake Washington Institute of Technology
Bremerton School District	Lake Washington School District
Bridgeport School District	Lopez School District
Burlington-Edison School District	Lynden School District
Camas School District	Manson School District
Cascade School District	Marysville School District
Central Kitsap School District	Mead School District
Centralia School District	Medical Lake School District
Chehalis School District	Mercer Island School District
Cheney School District	Monroe School District
Chimacum School District	Moses Lake School District
Clover Park School District	Mount Baker School District
College Place School District	Mount Vernon School District
East Valley School District (Spokane)	Mukilteo School District
East Valley School District (Yakima)	Naches Valley School District
Eastmont School District	Napavine School District
Eatonville School District	Nine Mile Falls School District
Edmonds School District	North Franklin School District
Ellensburg School District	North Kitsap School District
Enumclaw School District	North Mason School District
Everett School District	North Thurston Public Schools
Evergreen School District (Clark)	Northshore School District
Federal Way School District	Oak Harbor School District
Ferndale School District	Ocosta School District
Fife School District	Okanogan School District
Franklin Pierce School District	Olympia School District
Grandview School District	Omak School District
Granger 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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