



NH Seal of Biliteracy Award: Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why should a district participate in New Hampshire's Seal of Biliteracy program?

The award allows districts to acknowledge the achievements of NH's bilingual or multilingual students; having a common process and set of standards for all students ensures consistency across the state and alignment with the national award standards.

2. Who is eligible to receive the Seal?

The award is open to ALL eligible students in the district at the high school level. Eligible students should submit applications to the school or district coordinator, who will help the student determine the next steps. The award coordinator will submit a list of student awardees to the state committee. The state committee will provide the award materials and announce the school or district's awardees in official state publications (with student/family permission).

3. Can homeschool and non-public school students receive the award?

Yes, absolutely! Home school and non-public school students must meet the requirements stated above. The student or family should contact the state committee for additional support to finalize their application.

4. What are the related costs for the program?

The cost for the promotional materials associated with the award program (i.e., diploma seal, award certificate, honors cord, or medal) are covered by a NH Department of Education (NHED) grant. The cost for English proficiency testing, SATs and ACCESS, is also paid for by NHED. The World Language proficiency tests are typically paid for by participating schools or districts. Districts are encouraged to use Title IV, Title III or other state, federal, and local funding to cover the fees for student applicants. If a school is unable to find funding for the testing, the NHED may have additional funding available to support students. Please contact the state committee for more information. Cost should not be a barrier to participation. Homeschool students may contact their local school district to arrange to take SATs.

5. How do I promote the program in my district?

Schools or districts are encouraged to provide written notification about the State Seal of Biliteracy to students and families. Language educators are encouraged to discuss the Seal of Biliteracy with students and families. Participating schools are also encouraged to honor award recipients during graduation ceremonies or annual award events. Schools are also encouraged to post photos or press releases of awardees on school/district websites.

6. Why do English Learners need to show competency in their native languages?

All students must demonstrate intermediate-high level language proficiency in speaking, reading, writing, and listening in all languages for which they are applying. ELs can choose a portfolio assessment option if a formal language assessment is not available in the target or heritage language.

7. Can current EL students, including those in Monitor status, submit ACCESS scores as evidence of English language proficiency (ELP)?

Yes, any English learner in active or Monitor status may use WIDA ACCESS scores as evidence of ELP if the scores meet the state's standard of an overall composite of 4.5 or higher.

8. How do I know if a student should complete a portfolio or take a language test?

Generally, portfolios are used for less common languages for which there is no standardized assessment.

9. How should our district begin preparations?

First, choose a test. The most commonly used tests are: Advanced Placement (AP) test or the International Baccalaureate (IB) test, the AAPPL and STAMP. Most tests offer online demos. It is important to have world language and EL teachers participate in the decision making. Testing timelines, test construct, platform and technology requirements should be considered. The state committee highly recommends students also participate in a test demo to reduce test anxiety. The state committee has compiled a [list of approved assessments](#).

10. When should we test students?

It is advantageous to test seniors as early as possible, so there is time for retakes as needed. At the latest, late February or early March is recommended. The state committee recommends testing juniors in March of their junior year; that way, if they choose to retest in June or even in late September, they have time to receive results before submitting college applications. Students who are on-track to graduate may tell colleges that they are "Seal of Biliteracy eligible." AP scores will only be useful for awarding the Seal if the enrolled students are juniors. Seniors enrolled in AP and IB courses will not have their scores in time to qualify for the Seal. Many districts choose to use the AAPPL or STAMP for seniors to ensure student results arrive in time to make determinations for the award.

11. Can a student earn the Seal of Biliteracy in more than one language?

Yes!

12. How will attainment of the Seal of Biliteracy benefit students with their post high school plans?

The ability to speak more than one language is a valuable skill in today's diverse world. Bilingual students have increased understanding of other cultures and gain a competitive edge in the job market. Many colleges and universities also acknowledge the Seal of Biliteracy and offer awardees language credit. The state committee is actively engaged in ongoing conversations with professors and department chairs from the state's institutions of higher education. The goal is to have NH colleges and universities universally recognize the Seal of Biliteracy and award language credits, but we are not there yet. In the meantime, please check with your specific college about accepting the Seal of Biliteracy for college credit.

13. What about elementary and middle school students who are proficient in more than one language?

During the initial implementation of the program, the award will only be available to high school seniors. It is the committee's intention to expand the award program to eventually offer pathway level awards at the elementary and middle school levels.

14. Which language domains must be assessed?

Most languages consist of four domains: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Exception: languages that do not have a particular domain (e.g., Latin, Sylhet) do not need to be assessed in domains that are not relevant.

15. Which world language proficiency tests are approved to determine eligibility?

The state committee used guidance from the national award program to compile [a list of approved assessments](#). The assessments listed are aligned to the National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Languages (NCSSFL) & American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency standards. Can students earn the Seal in American Sign Language or Latin?

Yes, both are considered world languages.

16. If a student must complete a portfolio, what is required?

If an approved assessment does not exist for the target language, please contact the State Seal Committee (nhseal@nhawlt.org) for more information. The state committee will have an alternative assessment developed for your student. If a portfolio is needed, please contact the state committee by March 1.

17. What are the performance measures for intermediate-high language proficiency? NH uses the National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Language (NCSSFL) & American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) [language proficiency benchmarks](#). Students are expected to be at the intermediate-high level to successfully pass the state approved tests and qualify for the award.**18. Can a student take the language assessments more than once?**

Yes, there is no limit on the number of times a student can take the approved language assessments, if results are back by May 15.

19. Are accommodations made available for students with IEPs or 504 plans?

Yes, any testing accommodations that are included in the student's IEP or 504 plan and approved for use on any NH statewide assessment must be provided to the student, as consistent with state policy.

20. How does the district obtain the award materials (e.g., diploma seal, award certificate, graduation cords and/or award medals)?

The NHDOE will provide award materials: a diploma seal and your choice of a graduation cord or award medal. After districts/schools submit a NH SoBL Intent to Implement form, a member of the State Committee will contact you to get your award materials order.

21. Are international exchange students eligible to receive the SoBL award?

The state committee recommends that international exchange students apply for the Global Seal of Biliteracy independent of the State Seal of Biliteracy program, as the Global program is recognized across national borders.

22. If my school district does not offer the award, can I still apply?

Yes, any eligible student may apply, if their school district does not offer the award. Please contact the state committee at the email address below to initiate the process.

For other questions or suggestions, please contact the State Seal of Biliteracy Committee: nhseal@nhawlt.org

