



Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

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

*2024*

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

**Rebecca Wallace**

**Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education  
and Pathway Preparation**

Prepared by:

- **Katie Taylor**, Director of Secondary Education Content

[katie.taylor@k12.wa.us](mailto:katie.taylor@k12.wa.us) | 360-706-3763

- **Veronica Trapani-Huebner, Ed.D.**, Associate Director, World Languages

[veronica.trapani@k12.wa.us](mailto:veronica.trapani@k12.wa.us) | 360-819-0950

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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 Seal's intent is to increase the number of students who are proficient in at least two languages. In 2023–24, 6,306 high school seniors earned the Seal in 138 districts in 89 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.

In 2023–24, 5,160 students earned world languages competency-based high school credits.

# BACKGROUND

The Legislature requires OSPI to provide a summary report by December 1st of each year on the:

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

## 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](#)). The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (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 corresponding to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages' (ACTFL) Proficiency Level descriptions, the equivalent of four years of high school world language courses.

## 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 Languages' (ACTFL's) proficiency guidelines for world languages. For American Sign Language, 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

The Custom Testing (CT) program has been successful and well-received in districts that have chosen to participate. Due to the rarity of many of these languages, the agreed-upon cost per test is \$250. This amount pays for finding, training, and paying the rates for each requested language. Seventy languages were tested, representing all six of the world's regions as defined by the [United States Department of Homeland Security](#). The language with the most tests was Romanian (20), followed by Mandinka (17), Kosraean (14), Q'anjob'al, and Dari (both with 10). For Arabic, a language with over 25 spoken dialects, OSPI offered eight varieties, accounting for 30 tests. Native and tribal language assessments are not administered through CT as the languages are subject to Tribal Language Sovereignty. When requests for a Tribal language were received by CT, these were passed on to the Office of Native Education.

The original goal was to administer at least 100 assessments, and the goal was surpassed at 263. This gives OSPI more accurate data on how many assessments to anticipate in SY 24–25. 263 students earned a total of 704 credits, averaging 2.7 credits per student. Washington requires students to earn at least two credits in world language for graduation, meaning CT students averaged more than the requirement. Additionally, 104 students qualified as "Proficient" for the Washington State Seal of Biliteracy. This requires the student to earn four competency-based credits. These students will earn the Seal upon graduation and completion of English language arts requirements.

Forty-three (43) districts participated in CT. All Local Education Agencies (LEAs), including public districts, public charters, and State Tribal Education Compact schools, were eligible. The top five districts to give assessments were Mukilteo (48), Evergreen (Clark) (35), Lake Washington (31), Vancouver (22), and Highline (17). One public charter, Rainier Prep, gave three tests, and one alternative learning institution, the Washington Youth ChalleNGe Academy, tested two students. A complete list of all CT languages tested is available in Appendix C.

### Seal of Biliteracy

In 2023–24, 6,306 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 2023–24 school year.

138 school districts reported awarding the Seal, and 89 languages were tested. The top five languages tested were Spanish, Chinese Languages, Russian, French, and Japanese. The top five districts awarding Seals were Bellevue (643), Seattle (493), Yakima (362), Lake Washington (345),

and Pasco (226). For the first time, OSPI also requested data on students earning two or more Seals in a language other than English. Sixty-four (64) graduating seniors earned multiple Seals. Pursuant to the revision of the current Seal rules, OSPI hopes to encourage more students to continue deeper learning in languages.

Graduating Emerging Multilinguals (Ems), students classified as English Language Learners (ELLs), earned almost 20% (1,090) of the Seals this year. Yakima (83), Pasco (81), Auburn (57), Kent (51), and Evergreen-Clark (50) are the top five districts awarding the Seal to Ems.

In [3SHB1228](#), the legislature wrote and Governor Inslee signed two major changes for the Seal of Biliteracy (Seal) into law. First, beginning in the school year 2025–26, districts will be required to offer the Seal. Previously, the Seal was an opt-in program that created inequities between districts. As most local education agencies already have a competency-based credit testing policy and procedure ([2409/2409P](#)) adopted by their local school boards, this will be an addition. The second change to the Seal was the language change in the RCW, which explicitly allows for oral-only/non-written languages to qualify for the Seal. While OSPI had previously approved these languages for assessments through WAC rules, this codifies the access for these languages.

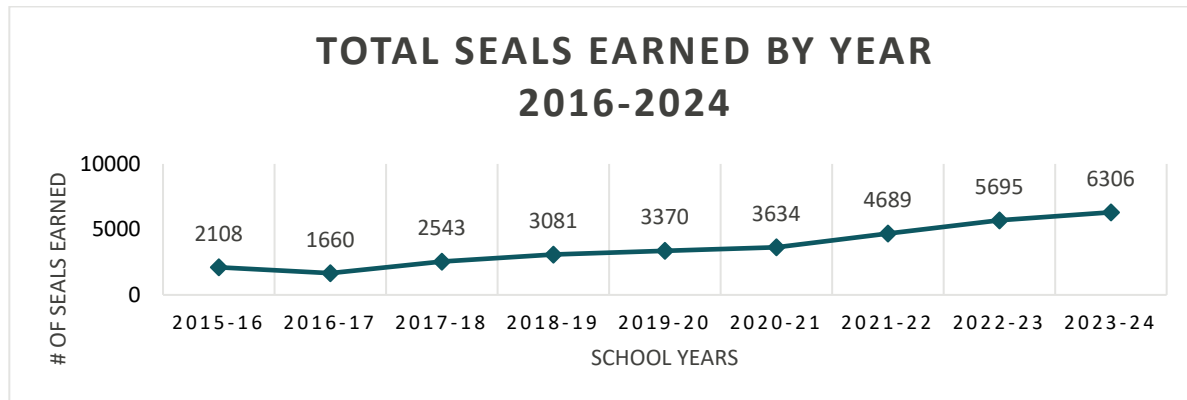
**Table 1: Five-Year Trends of Top Five Languages Tested**

Language	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Spanish	1,946	2,190	2,986	3,867	4,315
Chinese Languages	206	167	195	288	342
Russian	197	183	245	243	314
French	189	114	168	237	217
Vietnamese*	97	132	132	109	-
Japanese*	-	-	-	-	135

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

\*Japanese has moved into the Top 5 Languages, while Vietnamese has moved to sixth.

**Figure 1: Total Seals Earned by Year, 2016–2024**



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

## Competency-based Credits in Languages Other than English

In 2023–24, 5,160 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 language credit, not all students who earned competency-based world language credits were awarded the Seal.

Students earned the most competency credits in Spanish, Russian, Chinese Languages, Ukrainian, and Korean in 2024, which reflects some of the top languages listed in at-home language data for students in grades 6 through 12.



# CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) plans to continue collaborating 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 that will cover the costs for all CTs.

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

Beginning in January 2024, OSPI sent out an open application for interested parties to give feedback on the proposed new Seal of Biliteracy rules. This proviso also enabled OSPI to begin reviewing and revising the criteria to award the Washington State Seal of Biliteracy through ten (10) internal and external interest-holder feedback groups. These groups focused on K–12 World Language Educators, K–12 Dual Language Educators, Administrators, Testing Coordinators, American Sign Language Users, Less Commonly Taught/Tested Language Users, University Professors, Tribal Language Educators, and Alternative Learning Environment Educators. Proposed changes include:

- Addition of a second, higher tier for student recognition
  - Original level is the “Intermediate Award”
  - New level is the “Advanced Level”
  - This change will bring Washington into alignment with almost all states that already have multiple tiers of the Seal available. Adding a higher level of proficiency recognition might also encourage students to continue language education past the Intermediate level.
- Addition of two new language proficiency scales
  - Common European Framework for Reference (CEFR)
  - Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR)
  - These scales are international (CEFR) and federal (ILR) and will reduce the number of students who might have to re-test after already having taken another assessment corresponding to those proficiency scales.
- Addition of reporting date
  - The last Friday of August will be the yearly deadline for reporting all Earned Seals to OSPI

In 2024, OSPI created the Statewide Proficiency Initiative for Languages and Leadership (SPILL), which trained thirty (30) K–12 and postsecondary language educators in research-based language

acquisition standards and curriculum planning. Alignment across elementary, secondary, and higher education aims to set up support for all world and dual language educators in preparation for updated Seal rules and World Language State Standards.

SPILL has two purposes: 1) to onboard language education leaders around the state for the proposed new proficiency-based world language standards and 2) to create and distribute example instructional materials and professional learning centered around proficiency. To fulfill these goals, SPILL is a “train the trainer” model. Members spent the summer of 2024 learning about language acquisition proficiency levels through Avant ADVANCE, an online learning platform that increases educators' ability to internalize and understand proficiency ratings. This was accompanied by online support from Avant MORE Learning. The second part of the summer learning was a virtual training with Dr. Jennifer Eddy, author of “Designing World Language Curriculum for Intercultural Communicative Competence”. If Avant ADVANCE was the “what” of proficiency levels, Dr. Eddy’s training was the “how”. SPILL members learned ways to incorporate communication and task-centered proficiency assessment into lessons and units they currently teach. Finally, SPILL members also engaged with a Canvas course, which incorporated eight (8) modules that explored different aspects of language learning: Open Educational Resources OER), Disability and Inclusion in Language Classrooms, Leadership, Proficiency Assessment, and Translation and Interpretation.

SPILL members attended a two-day Language Summit hosted at Educational Service District 105 in Yakima in early June 2024. This in-person meeting served multiple purposes. It allowed our SPILL members to meet each other and learn more about the language landscape in Washington and the country with presentations from the United States Office of the Director of National Intelligence and Paschal Sherman Indian School.

For the second year of the SPILL project, members will finalize instructional resources to be uploaded to Washington’s Open Educational Resources hub, created in coordination with OER resource rubrics.

# 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 LLC
- 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. (2024). High School Competency-based Credits (vers. 2023–2024) [Data set]. CEDARS.

Comprehensive Education Data and Research System. (2024). Seals of Biliteracy Earned (vers. 2023–2024) [Data set]. CEDARS.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A:

### Districts Reporting Earned Seals of Biliteracy, 2023–24

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  
Camas School District  
Central Kitsap School District  
Central Valley School District  
Centralia School District  
Chehalis School District  
Cheney School District  
Chimacum School District  
Clarkston School District  
Clover Park School District  
College Place School District  
Colville 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  
Highland School District  
Highline School District  
Hockinson School District  
Hoquiam 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  
Lyle School District  
Lynden School District  
Mabton School District  
Manson School District  
Marysville School District  
Mead 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  
Nooksack Valley 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  
Pateros School District  
Peninsula School District  
Port Angeles School District  
Port Townsend School District  
Prescott School District  
Prosser School District  
Puyallup School District  
Quillayute Valley School District  
Quincy School District  
Richland 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 Kitsap School District

South Whidbey School District  
Spokane School District  
Stanwood-Camano School District  
Steilacoom Hist. School District  
Stevenson-Carson School District  
Sultan School District  
Sumner-Bonney Lake School District  
Sunnyside School District  
Tahoma School District  
Toledo School District  
Tonasket School District  
Toppenish School District  
Tumwater School District  
University Place School District  
Vancouver School District  
Vashon Island School District  
Wahkiakum School District  
Wahluke School District  
Walla Walla Public Schools  
Wapato School District  
Warden School District  
Waterville School District  
Wenatchee School District  
West Valley School District (Spokane)  
West Valley School District (Yakima)  
White River School District  
White Salmon Valley School District  
Winlock School District  
Woodland School District  
Yakima School District  
Yelm School District

## Appendix B:

### Seals-Earned Languages, 2023–24

Language Tested	Student Count	Language Tested	Student Count	Language Tested	Student Count
Spanish	4,351	Pashto	7	Tongan	2
Chinese Languages	342	Italian	7	Wolof	2
Russian	314	Bosnian	7	Burmese	2
French	217	Chuuk	7	Ilokano	2
Japanese	135	Telugu	7	Sinhalese	2
Ukrainian	119	Bulgarian	6	Kunama	2
Korean	104	Thai	6	Macedonian	2
Vietnamese	83	Polish	6	Kosraean	2
Tagalog	73	Samoan	6	Gujarati	1
Hindi	67	Kannada	6	Lao	1
Portuguese	34	Indonesian	6	Slovak	1
German	30	Dutch	5	Bambara	1
Turkish	24	Czech	5	Fijian	1
Arabic	22	Unknown	4	Soninke	1
Amharic	21	Marathi	4	Khmer	1
Punjabi	20	Finnish	4	Sonrai	1
Dari	20	Urdu	4	Portuguese	1
Hebrew-Modern	19	Javanese	3	Kirundi	1
Pilipino/Filipino	18	Albanian	3	Lingala	1
Swahili	16	Chin	3	Azerbaijani	1
Tamil	15	Mandinka	3	Malayalam	1
Romanian	15	Serbian	3	Persian	1
Somali	15	Kinyarwanda	3	Karen	1
Tigrinya	14	Armenian	2	Afrikaans	1
American Sign Language	12	Serbo-Croatian	2	Mongolian	1
Marshallese	12	Bengali	2	Pohnpeian	1
Oromo	10	Kanjobal	2	Hungarian	1
Farsi	9	Nepali	2		
Swedish	8	Khmer	2		

## Appendix C:

### Custom Testing Languages, 2023–24

Language Tested	Student Count	Language Tested	Student Count	Language Tested	Student Count
Albanian	1	Icelandic	1	Romanian	20
Arabic-Egyptian	9	Ilonggo	1	Shona	1
Arabic-Iraqi	6	Indonesian	8	Soninke	4
Arabic-Jordanian	2	Jamaican Patwah	2	Swedish	6
Arabic-Lebanese	2	Jing paw	1	Thai	7
Arabic-Libyan	2	Karen	1	Tibetan	2
Arabic-Moroccan	3	Khmer	3	Tigrinya	8
Arabic-Sudanese	5	Kikuyu	1	Tok Pisin	2
Arabic-Syrian	1	Kosraean	14	Tongan	8
Bavarian	1	Krio	3	Unidentifiable	1
Bengali	1	Kunama	2	Zigula	1
Bisaya	2	Lao	1		
Bosnian	5	Lingala	8		
Cantonese	1	Lisan ud-Da'wat	1		
Catalan	1	Luganda	4		
Cebuano	1	Malayalam	2		
Chamorro	3	Mandinka	17		
Chichewa	1	Moldovan	1		
Cantonese	1	Mongolian	8		
Dari	10	Nepali	2		
Dinka	2	Norwegian	1		
Dutch	7	Nuer	1		
Farsi	2	Oromo	4		
Fijian	2	Palauan	3		
Fulani	1	Pashto	8		
Georgian	2	Persian	1		
Greek-Modern	3	Pohnpeian	2		
Gujarati	3	Punjabi-Eastern	12		
Hungarian	2	Q'anjob'al	10		



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Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

**Chris Reykdal** | State Superintendent  
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Old Capitol Building | P.O. Box 47200  
Olympia, WA 98504-7200