



Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

## REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

# UPDATE: World Languages and the Washington State Seal of Biliteracy 2025

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

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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 intends to increase the number of students who are proficient in at least two languages. In 2024–25, 7,125 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 language competency-based credit policy.

In 2024–25, 6,260 students earned world languages competency-based high school credits.

Starting in 2025–26, students will be able to earn an Intermediate Seal which is the current Seal or a new Advanced Seal by demonstrating proficiency in one language other than English at an advanced level or proficiency in two languages other than English at an intermediate level.

# 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 earn the Intermediate level of the Seal, students must earn four credits in a language other than English either through course completion or competency credit by proficiency and demonstrate proficiency in one language other than English in one of the following ways:

- 1) Demonstrating **Intermediate Mid** proficiency in **one** language by receiving a passing score on a performance-based dual credit language exam (Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or Cambridge International (CI)), or
- 2) Demonstrating **Intermediate Mid** proficiency in **one** language on an assessment that corresponds to either the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages' (ACTFL) Proficiency Level descriptions, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scale, or the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale.

To earn the new Advanced level Seal starting in 2025–26, students must demonstrate Advanced proficiency in at least one language other than English in one of the following ways:

- 1) demonstrating **Advanced Low** proficiency in **one** language other than English by receiving a passing score on a performance-based dual credit language exam (AP, IB, or CI) or an assessment corresponding to the ACTFL Proficiency Level descriptions,
- 2) demonstrating **Intermediate Mid** proficiency in **two or more** languages other than English by receiving passing scores on a performance-based dual credit language exam (AP, IB, or CI) or an assessment corresponding to the ACTFL Proficiency Level descriptions, CEFR, or ILR proficiency scales, or
- 3) earning **four credits in dual language arts** in a language other than English.

More information can be found in the Update Status section below regarding these changes. Passing scores on each allowable assessment can be found on the [OSPI World Language Proficiency Assessment Options](#) webpage.

## 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

### Competency-based Credits in Languages Other than English

In 2024–25, 6,260 students earned at least one competency-based world language credit, but not all qualified for the Seal of Biliteracy. While most Seal recipients likely earned some credits, many students with competency-based credits did not meet the proficiency level required for the Seal.

Students again earned the most competency credits in Spanish, Russian, Chinese Languages, Ukrainian, and Korean in 2024–25, which reflects some of the top home languages for students in grades 6 through 12.

### Custom Testing

The Custom Testing program has continued to be highly successful and well-received by participating districts. Due to the rarity of many of these languages, the agreed-upon cost per test was \$250. This amount paid for finding, training, and paying the raters for each requested language. 96 languages were tested, representing all six of the world’s regions as defined by the [United States Department of Homeland Security](#). Top languages included Romanian (23), Iraqi Arabic (13), Mandinka (11), Tongan (10), Dari (10), Mongolian (9), and Indonesian (9). For Arabic, a language with over 25 spoken dialects, OSPI offered nine varieties, accounting for 39 tests. Native and Tribal language assessments are not administered through Custom Testing as the languages are subject to Tribal Language Sovereignty. When requests for a Tribal language were received by OSPI, they were passed to the Office of Native Education.

In 2024–25, 227 students earned a total of 606 credits, averaging more than 2.5 credits per student. Washington requires students to earn at least two credits in World Language for graduation, meaning that students participating in Custom Testing, on average, met the graduation requirement. Additionally, 81 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.

39 districts participated in Custom Testing. All local education agencies (LEAs), including public districts, public charters, and State Tribal Education Compact schools, were eligible. The top five districts to give these assessments were Lake Washington (34), Mukilteo (31), Evergreen (Clark) (22), Tacoma (17), and Vancouver (16). A complete list of all Custom Testing languages assessed is available in Appendix C.

# Washington State Seal of Biliteracy

## Seals Earned

In 2024–25, 7,125 graduating seniors earned the Washington State Seal of Biliteracy. This total includes 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 2024–25 school year.

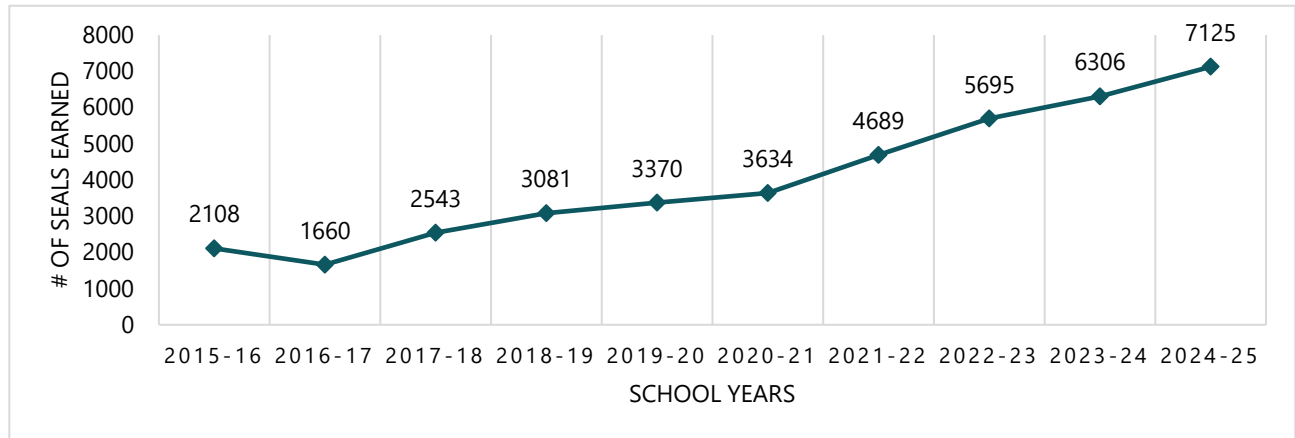
134 school districts reported awarding the Seal in 94 languages. The top five languages tested were Spanish, Chinese Languages, Russian, French, and Japanese. The top five districts awarding Seals were Bellevue (590), Lake Washington (516), Seattle (471), Highline (338) and Yakima (304). Figure 1 shows the five-year trends of top languages tested, and Figure 2 shows the overall growth in the number of Seals awarded over the past ten years.

**Figure 1: Five-Year Trends of Top Languages Tested (Alphabetical)**

Language	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
<b>Chinese Languages</b>	237	243	288	165	416
<b>French</b>	114	168	237	120	213
<b>Japanese</b>	90	96	123	110	160
<b>Korean</b>	67	86	116	84	121
<b>Russian</b>	183	245	243	303	287
<b>Spanish</b>	2190	2986	3867	4130	4827
<b>Tagalog</b>	72	76	56	71	57
<b>Ukrainian</b>	57	52	71	117	128

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

**Figure 2: Total Seals Earned by Year, 2016–2025**



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

## New Rule Making

Throughout 2024 and into 2025, OSPI initiated a WAC rules update for the Seal. Through feedback groups, OSPI learned that there was a desire for an additional level to the Seal to recognize higher levels of proficiency as well as proficiency in more than two languages. There was also interest in identifying more proficiency scales and assessments. The last request was to establish a formal official reporting date for all Seals earned by graduating students by the end of the summer.

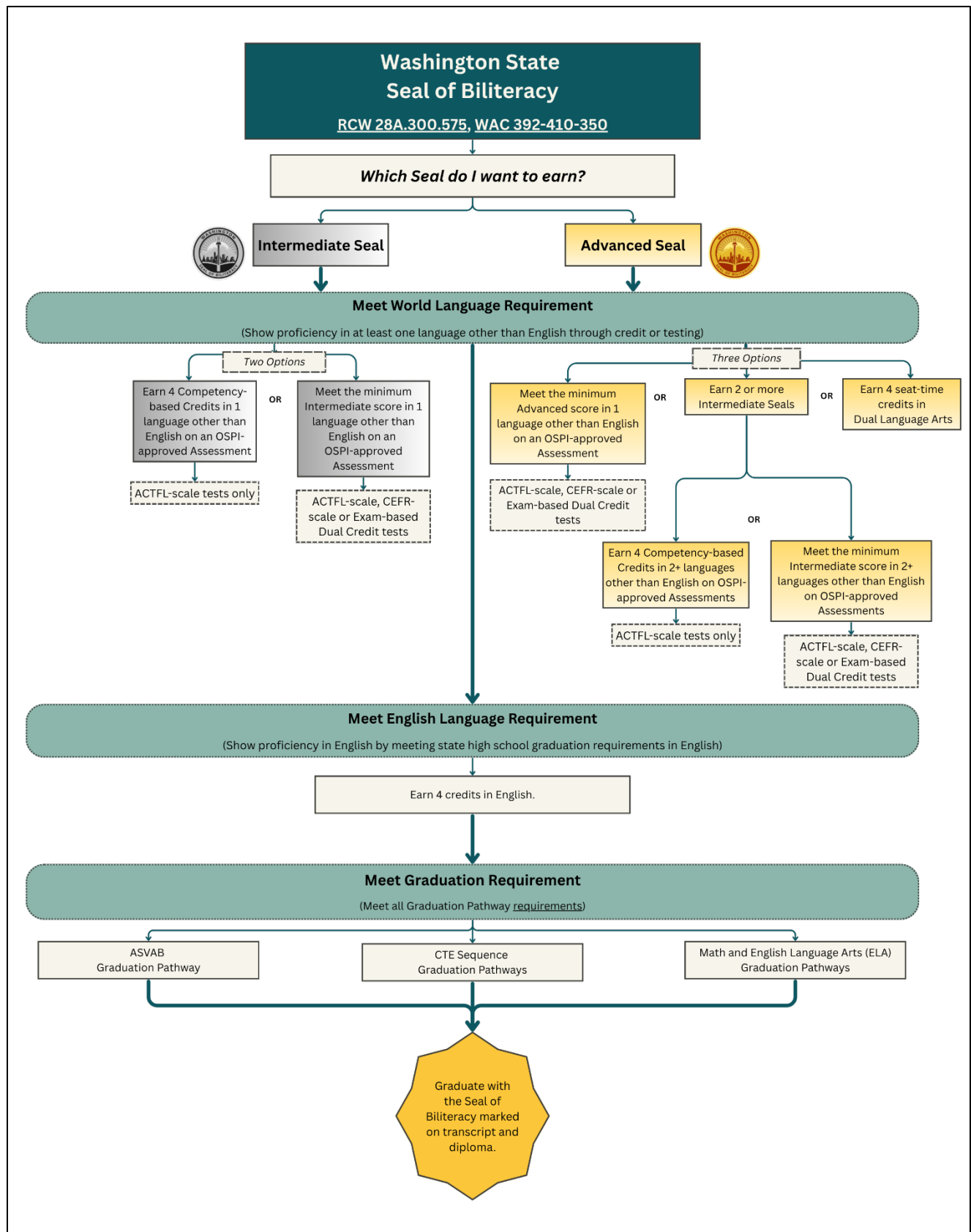
OSPI drafted rules and filed paperwork to host a public hearing in April 2025. From that session and through email, OSPI received positive feedback and filed paperwork to adopt the new rules which include:

- The Seal can now be awarded to assessments that correspond with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages' (ACTFL) proficiency scale, the federal Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale, and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scale. This has expanded access to a further 25+ assessments from around the world.
- The Intermediate Seal now replaces the original Seal. All requirements remain the same, with the addition of new guidance on awarding the Seal for CEFR and ILR proficiency scales.
- The Advanced Seal has been established. While English Language Arts (ELA) requirements remain the same, students must show advanced proficiency in one language, intermediate proficiency in two or more languages other than English, or earn four credits in a Dual Language Arts course.
- Finally, the last business Friday in August is the new deadline for districts to report Seals earned by graduating seniors.

Figure 3 is a flowchart of how students can earn the Intermediate Seal or the new Advanced Seal.



**Figure 3: New Flowchart to Earn Seal of Biliteracy Awards**



## **Statewide Proficiency Initiative for Languages and Leadership**

The Statewide Proficiency Initiative for Languages and Leadership (SPILL) continued the work started last summer to guide participants in applying what they learned through Avant ADVANCE proficiency training, Dr. Jennifer Eddy's "Designing World Language Curriculum for Intercultural Communicative Competence" workshop, and through an online course designed by leaders in World Language-adjacent topics such as careers and technical education in translation and interpretation, disability and inclusion, leadership, and assessment.

The SPILL team met once a month to review course topics as well as share updated drafts of their Open Education Resources (OER), which incorporated the learning as well as practical lesson planning in their own classrooms. SPILL participants became contractors who created resources in their language that aligned with their district scope and sequence. These unit and lesson plans include such varied student audiences as high school dual language Mandarin Chinese students, all-level Tribal language students, Spanish dual language university teacher candidates, and elementary Spanish bilingual learners.

All resources correspond to current Washington World Language Learning Standards and will be updated once the World Language Standards revision is complete. All learning plans will be uploaded to the OER Commons platform throughout the year and shared with World Language networks to publicize the contractors' work.

# CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

## Language Proficiency Testing

Over the past two years, Custom Testing has been a highlight of Washington's language work. OSPI has been recognized nationally by the Department of Education and the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA) for awarding our state Seal in the most languages in the country. Custom Testing expanded from 84 to 96 languages

The Custom Testing program has now transitioned to a national platform hosted on Avant's website called "[SuperLanguage](#)," and the rate per test has dropped from \$250 to \$150. However, access and cost are still the biggest challenges faced by the Custom Testing. Due to the rarity of the languages and the high cost of translation, English is still used for test directions and questions which may be problematic for some students.

The funding for this body of work has been discontinued by the legislature. Potential opportunities will depend on future legislative direction and resources dedicated to the work. If this work were to be continued, future opportunities for Custom Testing include providing access to a wider range of languages, supporting test item translation, and increasing access to more districts. One of the most requested updates was to have test items translated This testing also supports competency-based credits, which enable students to earn up to four high school credits toward graduation.

## Seal of Biliteracy

In March 2024, the legislature approved a revision to [RCW 28A.300.575](#) which now mandates districts to offer the Seal beginning in the 2025-26 school year. The 2024-25 school year was a grace period for districts to begin to create processes and procedures to allow students to test for the Seal. OSPI has been reaching out to districts to help support this transition through meetings, technical assistance, and professional development for educators, registrars, and central office staff.

The most important next step for the Seal is to clarify reporting instructions in the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS). The RCW requires the Seal to be marked on transcripts so that will not change, but the level of the Seal is new. Currently districts only report if a student has earned a Seal and in which language. A distinction between Intermediate and Advanced will need to be reported so that OSPI can track how many students are earning each Seal and in which languages.

A challenge the Seal of Biliteracy program faces is coordinating testing for smaller districts that may not be equipped to offer it. Districts struggle to coordinate language proficiency testing for

students from other districts when assessments are often offered only once a year. A proposed solution is for districts to align schedules, share costs, and collaborate on bulk test purchasing.

Another challenge faced by districts offering the Seal is the cost of proficiency testing. While \$25 for a Spanish assessment might seem reasonable, it can become a barrier when students and families are responsible for paying or when the district does not have the budget to assess every student. While OSPI received multiple communications from districts about how helpful and cost-saving the Custom Testing payments were, not every district was able to participate, and many are still looking for guidance on how to best fund proficiency testing for common languages.

Finally, the Washington World Language Learning Standards are currently under revision. The first draft of the standards has been completed and OSPI is hosting feedback sessions with educators and professional organizations around the state. This revision will align the requirements for earning competency-based credits and the Seal of Biliteracy with the State Learning Standards.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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 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. (2025). High School Competency-based Credits (vers. 2024–2025) [Data set]. CEDARS.

Comprehensive Education Data and Research System. (2025). Seals of Biliteracy Earned (vers. 2024–2025) [Data set]. CEDARS.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Districts Reporting Earned Seals of Biliteracy, 2024-25

Aberdeen School District	Edmonds School District
Anacortes School District	Ellensburg School District
Arlington School District	Enumclaw School District
Auburn School District	Everett School District
Bainbridge Island School District	Evergreen School District (Clark)
Bellevue School District	Federal Way School District
Bellingham School District	Ferndale School District
Bethel School District	Fife School District
Blaine School District	Franklin Pierce School District
Boistfort School District	Grandview School District
Bremerton School District	Granger School District
Bridgeport School District	Granite Falls School District
Cascade School District	Highland School District
Central Kitsap School District	Highline School District
Central Valley School District	Hoquiam School District
Centralia School District	Issaquah School District
Chehalis School District	Kalama School District
Cheney School District	Kelso School District
Clover Park School District	Kennewick School District
College Place School District	Kent School District
Davenport School District	Lake Chelan School District
East Valley School District (Spokane)	Lake Stevens School District
East Valley School District (Yakima)	Lake Washington School District
Eastmont School District	Lakewood School District
Eatonville School District	Lind School District

Longview 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  
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  
Orcas Island School District  
Oroville School District  
Orting School District  
Pasco School District

Peninsula School District  
Port Angeles School District  
Port Townsend School District  
Prescott School District  
Prosser School District  
Pullman School District  
Puyallup School District  
Quillayute Valley School District  
Renton School District  
Richland School District  
Riverside School District  
Rochester School District  
Royal School District  
San Juan Island School District  
Seattle School District No. 1  
Sedro-Woolley School District  
Selah School District  
Sequim School District  
Shelton School District  
Shoreline School District  
Snohomish School District  
Snoqualmie Valley School District  
Soap Lake School District  
South Whidbey School District  
Spokane School District  
Stanwood-Camano School District  
Steilacoom Hist. School District  
Sultan School District  
Summit Public School: Atlas  
Sumner-Bonney Lake School District



Sunnyside School District	Walla Walla Public Schools
Tacoma School District	Wapato School District
Tahoma School District	Warden School District
Tonasket School District	Waterville School District
Toppenish School District	Wenatchee School District
Touchet School District	West Valley School District (Spokane)
Tukwila School District	West Valley School District (Yakima)
Tumwater School District	White River School District
University Place School District	White Salmon Valley School District
Vancouver School District	Woodland School District
Vashon Island School District	Yakima School District
Wahluke School District	Yelm School District

**Source:** Comprehensive Education Data and Research System. (2025). Seals of Biliteracy Earned (vers. 2024–2025) [Data set]. CEDARS. 15 August 2025

## Appendix B:

### Seals Earned - Languages, 2024-25

Language Tested	Student Count	Language Tested	Student Count	Language Tested	Student Count
Spanish	4827	Hebrew, Modern	22	Mongolian	5
Russian	287	Romanian	36	Khmer	4
Chinese Languages	404	Pilipino/Filipino	16	Marathi	4
French	213	Pashto	16	Bengali	4
Japanese	160	Farsi	15	Thai	4
Vietnamese	139	Marshallese	14	Kannada	4
Ukrainian	128	Italian	14	Yakima	4
Korean	121	Polish	13	Javanese	3
Hindi	81	Tigrinya	12	Kinyarwanda	3
Tagalog	57	Tamil	11	Unknown	3
Dari	51	Telugu	9	Ilokano	3
Portuguese	44	Oromo	9	Indonesian	3
German	43	Chuuk	7	Lithuanian	3
American Sign Language	42	Swedish	7	Cambodian	3
Punjabi	36	Urdu	7	Serbian	3
Amharic	35	Bosnian	7	Bulgarian	3
Arabic	28	Dutch	6	Malayalam	3
Swahili	27	Czech	6	Hungarian	3
Turkish	23	Kosraean	6	Karen	2
Somali	23	Finnish	5	Palau	2

Language Tested	Student Count	Language Tested	Student Count	Language Tested	Student Count
Wolof	2	Croatian	1	Persian	1
Danish	2	Shona	1	Haitian Creole	1
Soninke	2	Jamaican	1	Latvian	1
Gujarati	2	Burmese	1	Fijian	1
Mam	2	Uzbek	1	Lingala	1
Nepali	2	Norwegian	1	Krio	1
Serbo-Croatian	2	Armenian	1		
Sanskrit	2	Icelandic	1		
Mandinka	2	Tok Pisin	1		
Afrikaans	2	Greek, Modern	1		
Albanian	1	Ga	1		
Lushootseed	1	Samoan	1		

**Source:** Comprehensive Education Data and Research System. (2025). Seals of Biliteracy Earned (vers. 2024–2025) [Data set]. CEDARS. 15 August 2025

## Appendix C:

### Custom Testing Languages, 2024–25

Afaan Oromo	Fijian	Mandingo
Albanian	Fulani	Mandinka
Arabic (Egyptian)	Fulani/Fula	Mongolian
Arabic (Iraqi)	Georgian	Norwegian
Arabic (Jordanian)	Gujarati	Norwegian (Bokmal)
Arabic (Lebanese)	Hausa	Palauan
Arabic (Libyan)	Hungarian	Pangasinan
Arabic (Moroccan)	Icelandic	Pashto
Arabic (Sudanese)	Indonesian	Pohnpeian
Arabic (Syrian)	Jamaican Patois	Portuguese (Portugal)
Arabic (Yemeni)	Jinghpaw	Romanian
Bambara	Karen	Sanskrit
Bisaya	Kikuyu	Serbian
Bosnian	Kirundi	Soninke
Burmese	Kosraean	Swedish
Cantonese	Krio	Tongan
Cebuano	Lao	Turkmen
Dari	Lingala	Visaya
Dinka	Lisan ud-Dawat	Visayan
Dutch	Luganda	Wolof
Estonian	Malayalam	Yapese
Ewe	Mam	

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