



NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION

New York University

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Position Statement on the New York State Seal of Biliteracy

The main goal of the New York State Association for Bilingual Education (NYSABE) is to ensure equitable and meaningful educational opportunities for English language learners (ELLs)/bilingual learners by strengthening the professional skills of educational communities and promoting their significant participation in the decision-making process and policy implementation regarding ELLs/bilingual learners in New York State. To this end, the comments presented in this document reflect the collective views and expertise of more than 1,000 members, including educators, parents/families, and community members whom NYSABE represents.

Rationale

After careful review and discussions of the commissioner's regulations relating to the New York State Seal of Biliteracy during the 45-day review window, NYSABE wishes to stand strongly in support of the regulations governing implementation of the NYS Seal of Biliteracy.

NYSABE strongly encourages the Board of Regents to approve these regulations regarding the NYS Seal of Biliteracy, with the modifications outlined below, for the following reasons:

1. The Seal of Biliteracy is a way to recognize high school graduates who have obtained high levels of proficiency in more than one language;
2. It encourages school districts to recognize bilingualism as an asset by conferring the seal; and
3. It acknowledges the diversity in students' strengths by implementing a point system for demonstrating proficiency in English and a world language.

Recommendations


1. There is a need to recognize the rigorous work completed by students in College Now, early college and dual enrollment programs; therefore, we recommend that the following count toward meeting the requirements:
 - a. one point of the English proficiency requirement by completing a college-English composition course with a passing grade, and
 - b. one point of the world language proficiency requirement by completing a college literature course in a language other than English with a passing grade.

2. The proposed regulations set forth unique requirements for some specific languages: Native American languages, Latin and Classical Greek, and American Sign Language. We believe that unique requirements, similar to those proposed for Native American languages, should be added for all low incidence languages that may not have a written code.
3. Many students with high levels of proficiency in a language that is not currently widely available for study have limited opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in this language under the current proposal, especially considering that many of these students may not have transcripts from their home countries. We recommend the provision of additional opportunities for these multilingual learners so that they may demonstrate proficiency in a world language.

In addition to the views expressed above directly related to the Seal of Biliteracy document, we would like the Board of Regents to note that with the exception of Spanish, three of the four languages most widely available for study in New York State schools, French, German, and Italian, are different from the predominant languages spoken by ELLs/bilingual learners in New York State (the top five are Spanish, Chinese languages, Arabic, Bengali, and Haitian Creole). Also, many of the over 200 languages spoken by New York students are not presently available for study. In this regard, we recommend the expansion of opportunities to study more of the languages spoken by ELLs/bilingual learners in New York State schools via an expansion of bilingual programs at all levels and home language and literature classes at the secondary levels.

In closing, NYSABE congratulates the New York State Board of Regents and the New York State Education Department's staff on their efforts to support and advance the Seal of Biliteracy. This work reflects our common continued commitment to and support of bilingual education and the recognition of bilingualism and biliteracy as an asset that is essential to a world class education.

Sincerely,



Tamara Alsace, Ph.D.
NYSABE President