



# SEAL OF BILITERACY

## LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY TOOLKIT

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## LETTER FROM THE DC STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

**Antoinette S. Mitchell, Ph.D.**

Dear Colleagues and Community Partners,

Across the District, more than 12,000 students are English learners, and many more are heritage language speakers whose families sustain [AA1.1]more than 100 home languages. As the state education agency, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) remains committed to advancing excellence and equity for all students.

It is a privilege for OSSE to launch the District of Columbia's Seal of Biliteracy, which honors students who demonstrate proficiency in English and at least one additional language by graduation. [DT2.1]This seal celebrates the District's multilingual heritage, encourages students of all backgrounds to engage with world languages, and underscores the importance of global learning for engaged citizenship and future opportunity.

This guidebook is designed to support educators, students, and families as they engage with the DC Seal of Biliteracy and the opportunities it provides.

The benefits of biliteracy extend far beyond high school. Multilingual individuals bring valuable strengths to the workforce, including the ability to navigate multicultural environments and communicate across diverse communities. In college admissions, demonstrated proficiency in multiple languages signals academic rigor, advanced communication skills, and readiness to contribute to vibrant, diverse learning environments. We are proud to recognize seal recipients as cultural stewards and global communicators whose skills will strengthen our workplaces, communities, and civic institutions.

OSSE is proud to join the national Seal of Biliteracy movement, embraced in all 50 states, to uplift multilingualism as a powerful asset for students and for our city. The launch of the citywide DC Seal of Biliteracy establishes consistent award criteria across participating local education agencies (LEAs) in District public and public charter schools[BA3.1].

I extend my appreciation to the educators, partners, and community members who continue to champion multilingualism across the District. Together, we are building a stronger, more inclusive future that recognizes and celebrates the full breadth of what DC students bring to our city and our world.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Antoinette S. Mitchell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

**Antoinette S. Mitchell, Ph.D.**  
State Superintendent of Education

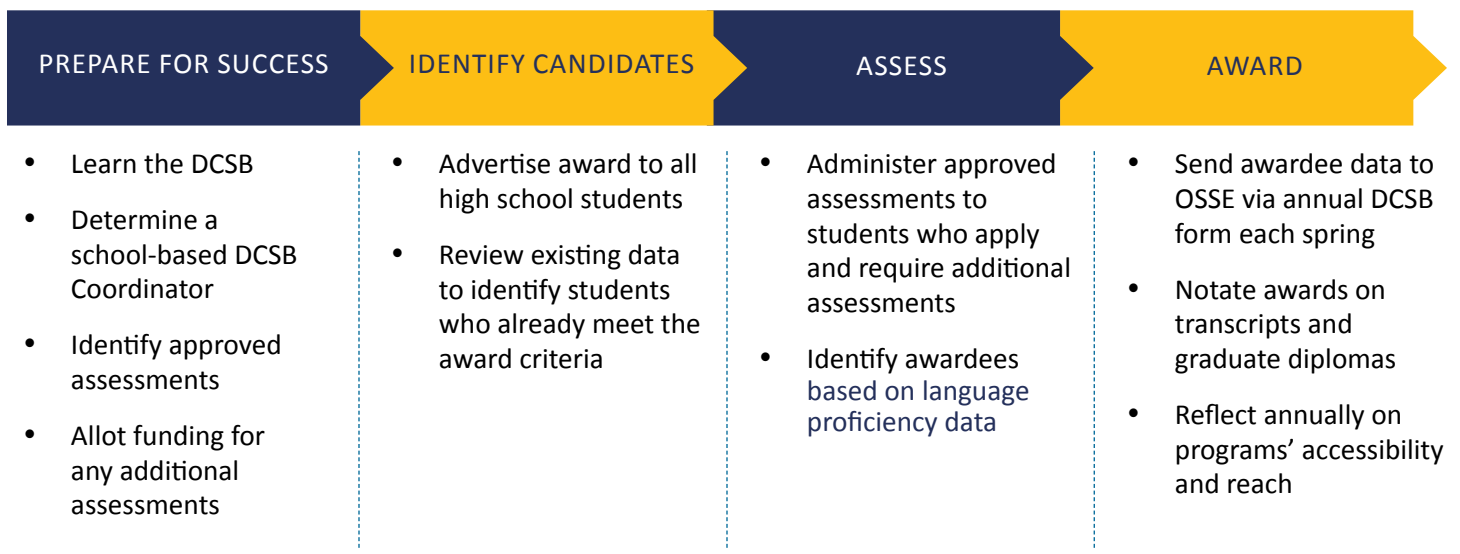
# DC Seal of Biliteracy Overview

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) issues guidance and model forms to assist local education agencies (LEAs) in creating high-quality education experiences for students that prepare them for college and careers. The purpose of the DC Seal of Biliteracy handbook is to guide DC local education agencies (LEAs) and families in implementing the DC Seal of Biliteracy program.

## Purpose

The DC Seal of Biliteracy (DCSB) is an award granted to graduating students from District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and DC public charter schools who demonstrate proficiency in English and one or more additional languages. The award recognizes the academic talents of DC’s multilingual learners and encourages the pursuit of global citizenship through language learning. Multilingualism broadens students’ college and career opportunities and enables them to build deeper connections across differences. OSSE is proud to honor the academic achievement and cultural competence of students who qualify for the DCSB.

## DC Seal of Biliteracy Implementation Overview



# Criteria for Award

## Eligibility Criteria

To receive the DC Seal of Biliteracy, high school students must demonstrate proficiency in both English and one or more additional languages. Students may qualify by learning additional languages in school, through community-based programs, or through home and life experiences. Enrollment in world language courses is not required. Students may qualify for the award anytime from ninth through 12th grade, though the award is officially conferred in 12th grade. Qualifying assessments may also be taken during these years. To ensure that language proficiency is current, tests taken before high school will not be accepted for DCSB qualification.

DC Public Schools and public charter school students may earn one of two levels of the DCSB Award: the DCSB and the DCSB with Distinction.

## Proficiency Criteria

The DCSB recognizes high school students who demonstrate grade-level proficiency in English and intermediate-mid proficiency, as defined by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), in an additional language.

<b>Qualifying English Assessment Scores</b> (must achieve at least <u>ONE</u> of the following)	<b>Qualifying World Language Assessment Scores</b> (must achieve at least <u>ONE</u> of the following)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>State Assessment (CAPE):</b> Score of 4 or above on the ninth or 10th grade DC CAPE ELA exam</li><li>• <b>Advanced Placement (AP) Test:</b> Score of 3 or above on the English AP exam (Composition or Literature)</li><li>• <b>International Baccalaureate (IB) Test:</b> Score of 4 or above on IB Level II English exam</li><li>• <b>ACCESS for English Learners (ELs) Test:</b> Score of 4.5 or above on ACCESS 2.0 for ELs (only accepted if achieved in grades 9-12)</li><li>• <b>SAT:</b> Score of 500 or above on the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section of the SAT</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Advanced Placement (AP) Test:</b> Score of 3 or above on a World Language AP exam</li><li>• <b>STAMP 4S Test:</b> Score of 5 or above on STAMP 4S (all sections)</li><li>• <b>International Baccalaureate (IB) Test:</b> Score of 4 or above on IB Level B exam</li><li>• <b>OSSE-Approved Tests:</b> Score equivalent to Intermediate-Mid proficiency on an OSSE-approved test (see list below)</li><li>• <b>Other:</b> Additional assessments that measure speaking, listening, reading, and writing components (as applicable) may be reviewed by OSSE</li></ul>

## DC Seal of Biliteracy with Distinction

LEAs may offer an additional award level to students, the DCSB with Distinction. This award recognizes students who have gone above and beyond to learn multiple languages or broaden their cultural competency through application of their language skills. Students can qualify by meeting ONE or more of the criteria detailed below:

### Cultural Competency Pathway (must achieve at least ONE of the following)

- Twenty-five hours of community service in the target language
- Participation in a service-learning summer activity in the target language
- Participation in language- or culture-focused travel of at least one week in the target language
- Completion of two-week internship in the target language

### Multiple Languages Pathway

- Demonstrated intermediate-mid proficiency in two or more languages in addition to English (following the same qualifying score criteria as the standard DCSB award)

### Advanced Proficiency Pathway

- Demonstrated advanced-low proficiency in one (or more) languages in addition to English. See chart below for qualifying scores

## OSSE-Approved Assessments

Assessment	Language(s) Available	DCSB Minimum Score	DCSB with Distinction (Advanced Proficiency Pathway), Minimum Score
<b><u>AAPPL</u></b> ACTFL Assessment of Performance Toward Proficiency in Languages	Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish	I-4 in all domains (Form B)	A-5 in all domains (Form B)
<b><u>AP</u></b> Advanced Placement Language Examination	Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Latin, and Spanish	3	5
<b><u>ASLPI</u></b> American Sign Language Proficiency Interview	American Sign Language (ASL)	3	4
<b><u>Avant STAMP 4S</u></b> STAndards-based Measurement of Proficiency	Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), English, French, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish	5 in all domains	7 in all domains
<b><u>Avant STAMP for ASL</u></b> STAndards-based Measurement of Proficiency	American Sign Language (ASL)	5 in all domains	7 in all domains
<b><u>Avant STAMP for Latin</u></b> STAndards-based Measurement of Proficiency	Latin	5 in all domains	7 in all domains

## OSSE-Approved Assessments (Continuation)

Assessment	Language(s) Available	DCSB Minimum Score	DCSB with Distinction (Advanced Proficiency Pathway), Minimum Score
<b><u>Avant STAMP WS</u></b> STANDARDS-based Measurement of Proficiency	Amharic, Armenian, Bengali, Cabo Verdean, Chaldean (Speaking only), Chin (Hakha), Chuukese, Czech, Filipino (Tagalog), Greek, Haitian Creole, Hawaiian, Hmong, Ilocano, Kannada, Khmer, Marathi, Marshallese, Nepali, Pashto, Persian-Farsi, Punjabi, Samoan, Somali Maay Maay, Somali Maxaa, Swahili, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Tigrinya, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Yoruba, Yup'ik, Zomi	5 in all domains	7 in all domains
<b><u>DELE</u></b> Diploma de Español como Lengua Extranjera	Spanish	B1	B2
<b><u>DELF</u></b> Diplôme d'études en langue Française	French	B1	B2
<b><u>Ellinomatheia</u></b> Offered by the Greek Ministry of Education	Greek	B1	B2
<b><u>IB</u></b> International Baccalaureate Language Exams  *Available only to students enrolled in IB programs	Chinese, Greek, Spanish, Latin, French, German	4	6
<b><u>NEWL</u></b> National Examinations in World Languages	Arabic, Korean, Portuguese, and Russian	3	5
<b><u>SIELE</u></b> Servicio Internacional de Evaluación de la Lengua Española	Spanish	B2	C1
<b><u>TOCFL</u></b> Test of Chinese as a Foreign Language	Mandarin Chinese	B1	B2

\*If a student is seeking a DCSB award for a language that is not assessed by one of the previously listed tests, the school's DCSB coordinator should reach out to OSSE's multilingual specialist to determine an alternate option and confirm approval. Schools will need to certify that the proposed assessment method measures proficiency in all domains (speaking, reading, listening, and writing), as applicable.

# Program Implementation

Participation in the DCSB program is voluntary for all DC LEAs. LEAs may choose to establish their own independent Seal of Biliteracy awards with locally defined criteria.

LEAs participating in the citywide DCSB program must ensure alignment with the requirements listed below. Additional implementation guidance is provided, and technical assistance is available to support the development of equitable and effective award programs.

## LEA Responsibilities:

- LEAs must select a school-based DCSB coordinator for each participating high school campus and provide updated contact information to OSSE annually.
- LEAs must determine award eligibility and award levels in accordance with state-level criteria.
- LEAs must independently verify students' eligibility for DCSB awards and submit annual records—including award levels and assessed languages—to OSSE. These records will be collected through an End-of-Year DCSB Data Form sent to DCSB coordinators each spring.
- LEAs must determine whether they will offer the DCSB with Distinction (optional) and report to OSSE which pathway(s) they will make available to students.
- LEAs must ensure equitable access for low-income students and guarantee that testing fees do not create a barrier to earning DCSB awards.

## DCSB Implementation Overview

1. Determine a school-based DCSB coordinator for each high school campus.
2. Determine what approved assessments will be used to assess award criteria.
  - a. Allot funding for any additional testing.
  - b. Plan for the testing timeline.
3. Advertise award to all high school students.
4. Administer assessments.
5. Identify awardees based on language proficiency data.
6. Send awardee data to OSSE via annual DCSB form each spring.
7. Notate awards on transcripts and graduate diplomas.
8. Celebrate with students and families at graduation or additional ceremonies.
9. Reflect annually on program's accessibility and reach.

## Recommended Implementation Steps:

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER	
<b>Plan</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Determine a school-based DCSB coordinator for each high school campus and provide an updated contact to OSSE annually. DCSB coordinators will lead school-based implementation steps and report annual data to OSSE.</li> <li>2. Determine what approved OSSE-approved assessments will be used to assess award criteria. Explore OSSE's approved test options, noting testing schedules and preparing logistics accordingly. Many test companies offer demo and practice tests.</li> <li>3. Allocate funding for any additional testing and ensure that testing fees are not a barrier for students receiving DCSB awards.</li> </ol>
SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER	
<b>Promote</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Build awareness with teachers in English, World Language, and English as a Second Language departments to support with identifying potential awardees.</li> <li>5. Advertise award to all high school students and families. Outreach and awareness-building about the DCSB can begin in any year of high school, and advertisement of testing opportunities should be particularly targeted toward 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students.</li> <li>6. Complete targeted outreach to students who are likely to already qualify (i.e., students in advanced language classes, former English learners who have passed the ACCESS test in high school, students who speak additional languages at home, etc.).</li> </ol>
DECEMBER-MAY	
<b>Identify</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Administer additional student tests as needed.</li> <li>8. Identify DCSB awardees based on the language proficiency data and additional DCSB with Distinction data (if applicable). Students can earn the DCSB or DCSB with Distinction from ninth through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Awards may be noted on transcripts and resumes from ninth through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. OSSE will provide diploma seals only for graduating students.</li> </ol>
APRIL-MAY	
<b>Report</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Send awardee data to OSSE via annual DCSB form. OSSE will send an End of Year DCSB Data form to collect information from each LEA. LEAs will report on how many graduating students have earned each seal level, what world languages students received the seal in, and how many awarded students are (or have formerly been) identified as English learners. Schools must submit this form to receive diploma seals for graduating seniors.</li> </ol>
MAY-JUNE	
<b>Celebrate</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. Notate award on transcripts (grades 9-12) and/or diplomas (12<sup>th</sup>).</li> <li>11. Celebrate with students and families at graduation or additional ceremonies. LEAs may choose to provide additional recognition materials, such as graduation cords or medals.</li> </ol>
JUNE-AUGUST	
<b>Reflect</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. Reflect annually on the program's accessibility and reach. Review procedures and any subgroup trends. Identify candidates for targeted outreach in the coming school year.</li> </ol>

## Financial Considerations

Participating LEAs should consider the potential costs of establishing a DCSB program in their schools and work toward establishing a program that is financially accessible for all students. Most notably, schools may need to dedicate additional funds to cover standardized testing fees. Additional costs may include school staff time or award and celebration materials.

OSSE will not provide additional financial assistance to implement a DCSB. DC LEAs are not required to establish a DCSB program.

## Technical Assistance

Technical assistance from OSSE to support the development of an equitable and accessible DCSB program is available. Reach out to [Francesca.Smith@dc.gov](mailto:Francesca.Smith@dc.gov) for support with your LEA's DCSB program.

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Who can offer the DCSB award?

All DC public and public charter schools can establish a DCSB program and present the award to eligible graduating high school students. LEAs may establish their own independent Seal of Biliteracy programs with different qualifications. The DCSB is an award conferred by the State Superintendent of Education. Private schools are not eligible to participate in OSSE's DCSB program but may wish to pursue the [Global Seal of Biliteracy](#).

### 2. Who issues the DCSB award?

The DCSB is issued on behalf of OSSE. Award supervision and diploma seals are provided by OSSE. Participating LEAs are responsible for establishing their own programs and award distribution.

### 3. Can students earn the award before entering high school?

Students must take the qualifying English and World Language exams during high school. If students meet the World Language AP or STAMP4S test requirements before high school, they must take a proficiency test again during high school to qualify for the DCSB award. This encourages continued study of the language and the potential to earn the DCSB with Distinction by reaching advanced proficiency.

### 4. Can 12<sup>th</sup> grade students taking the World Language AP test qualify for the DCSB?

The LEA may recognize students as "candidates for the DC Seal of Biliteracy" during graduation ceremonies. Advanced Placement (AP) test scores often arrive after the OSSE reporting date or after graduation season.

### 5. What is the role of families and communities in the DCSB program?

Families and communities are encouraged to play an active role in the DCSB process. LEAs are encouraged to discuss the value of home and heritage language development with multilingual families and promote world language learning with all families. LEAs might also partner with multilingual community-based organizations, embassies, and other groups to establish learning, service, and internship opportunities.

### 6. Is there a cost to implementing the DCSB?

LEAs are responsible for the costs of implementing a DCSB program. LEAs are encouraged to plan for accessibility and ensure that there is not a financial barrier to earning the DCSB award.

### 7. Does the DCSB award come with high school or college credits?

The DCSB award does not provide high school or college credits. Some colleges and universities may provide credit for qualifying test scores.

# Appendix

## a. External Resources

- i. [National Seal of Biliteracy Website](#)
- ii. [State Seals of Biliteracy Website](#)
- iii. Global Seal of Biliteracy: [theglobalseal.com](http://theglobalseal.com)

For additional information contact OSSE's Division of Teaching and Learning at [OSSETTA@dc.gov](mailto:OSSETTA@dc.gov).



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