



# MISSISSIPPI SEAL OF BILITERACY

GUIDELINES  
Revised July 2022



MISSISSIPPI  
DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

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# MISSISSIPPI SEAL OF BILITERACY NETWORK AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

We wish to extend a very special thank you to the following members of the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy Network and Review Committee. Each member's leadership and guidance were key to the development of the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy policy and guidelines.

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**American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages**  
**National Association of Bilingual Education**  
**National Council of State Supervisors for Languages**  
**Teachers of English to Students of Other Languages International Association**

# INTRODUCTION

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This document is in accordance with the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy State Board Policy Rule 28.8 (Adopted October 10, 2019), found in Appendix A of this document. The purpose of the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy Guidelines is to provide assistance, examples, and resources to local school districts on the process of awarding and recognizing students who have attained proficiency in one or more world languages and English by high school graduation. Although not required, the State Board of Education recognizes and honors students who have attained proficiency in two or more languages. The Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy Guidelines will be revised as needed to be aligned with national organizations for biliteracy.

Recognition for demonstrating a level of biliteracy must be indicated on the high school transcript for students. This recognition acknowledges attainment of biliteracy in English and a world language for students, employers, and postsecondary institutions. It is a statement of accomplishment that helps to signal evidence of a student's readiness for college and career and for engagement as a global citizen.

To ensure consistency in the meaning of this recognition, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) researched four national organizations' recommendations and utilized their guidance in the development of the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy. The four national organizations are the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE), the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL), and Teachers of English to Students of Other Languages (TESOL) International Association Panel. Additional input was provided by the Mississippi Foreign Language Association and the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy network and review committees.

The Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy website [www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy](http://www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy) contains additional resources that provide clarity and address questions regarding the implementation of the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy program. The website will be updated as needed to answer frequently asked questions and provide further explanation on the following topics:

- Information and score requirements on the silver and gold levels of biliteracy
- A list of acceptable assessments for determining language proficiency for English and world languages
- Information and sample rubrics for portfolio-based assessments
- State Board and local policy requirements for awarding the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy
- Step by step guidance for district participation (see Appendix B for form) and reporting student data to the Mississippi Department of Education through the Mississippi Student Information System (MSIS)

# QUALIFICATIONS FOR EARNING

## The MISSISSIPPI SEAL OF BILITERACY

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For the purposes of the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy, world languages are viewed as any natural human language other than English.

All students (including a student whose native language is English or another world language and a student with disabilities) are eligible to attain one of the following levels of biliteracy:



**Silver Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy** - which demonstrates a functional fluency level at the intermediate-mid range. (See the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy website [www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy](http://www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy))



**Gold Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy** - which demonstrates a working fluency at the advanced-low range. (See the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy website [www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy](http://www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy))

This accomplishment is based on evidence of the student achieving the designated level of language proficiency in **English, plus one or more other world language** during their high school years (grades 9-12). Students shall demonstrate a minimal level of proficiency in English, and one or more additional languages (whether that language is a native language, heritage language, or a language learned in school or another setting). Acceptable levels of proficiency are found on the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy website [www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy](http://www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy).

In accordance with the National Guidelines for Implementing the Seal of Biliteracy, “schools and districts are encouraged to provide other forms of recognition prior to high school graduation that reflect progress along the pathway toward achieving the specified level of biliteracy. This may occur prior to the senior year (as with English learners; students of American Sign Language, tribal languages, and other populations). Biliteracy refers to having a functional or working level of proficiency in each language: the level of proficiency is not necessarily identical for both languages” (page 2-3). The attainment of this seal is the first step towards a lifetime of communication on a global level.

### **Building a local Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy support team**

While the school counselor may be the main contact to help the student track their progress, it is recommended that the district and/or school create a local Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy team

to support student success in the program. School Seal of Biliteracy team members may include school personnel interested in supporting the program such as:

- Building administrators
- Counselors
- World language teachers
- English learner teachers and/or coordinators
- Personnel responsible for entering and reporting student data to MDE
- English teachers
- Other interested school personnel

### **Process for earning and awarding a Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy**

The process for earning and awarding a Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy may vary slightly; however, it is recommended to start informing students as early as 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade and beyond about the opportunity and the importance of the Seal of Biliteracy along with the requirements to earn it by graduation. Students should meet regularly with their high school counselor to track their progress towards biliteracy. This tracking should include requirements for both English and a world language. Suggestions for informing students and tracking this progress towards biliteracy may include one-on-one planning meetings with parents and students. Schools can use additional meetings such as student clubs and organizations to provide opportunities for students to discuss the requirements for the seal and to interact with and encourage each other through the enhancement of cultural experiences.

After meeting the requirements for a Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy, it is recommended that the student works with the school Seal of Biliteracy team members to complete and **submit an application** where the evidence will then be verified by the counselor. Once the evidence is verified, the earned Seal is indicated on the high school transcript and recognized at school award ceremonies.

The school will then be required to report the information to the MDE. The following chart outlines the basic process for notifying, awarding, and documenting the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy.

# PROCESS FOR EARNING AND AWARDING

## EXAMPLE TIMELINE

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# ASSESSMENTS FOR DETERMINING LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

For current *minimum* target levels and acceptable assessment options, refer to the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy website [www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy](http://www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy).

## English

Comparable evidence of English proficiency must be demonstrated by both native and non-native speakers of English, as determined on the on the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy website [www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy](http://www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy). The language performance must be demonstrated in both social and academic (content-based) use of the language, in all modes of communication appropriate to the tested language.

## World Languages

Evidence of proficiency in one or more world languages must be provided by both native and non-native users of a language other than English as determined on the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy website [www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy](http://www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy). The student must demonstrate proficiency in all domains (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) and all modes of communication (Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational) appropriate to the tested language.

Note: Not all languages have all modes of communication. Modes of communication assessed include interpersonal communication involving conversational speaking and listening or signed exchanges; interpretive reading, listening, or viewing; and presentational communication shown by creating messages for a reader, listener, or viewer through writing, speaking, or signing.



Knowledge of more than one language and culture is **ADVANTAGEOUS** for all students... Bilingualism is an individual and societal **ASSET**.



*PreK-12 English Language Proficiency Standards, TESOL International Association, 2006*



# ASSESSMENT OF PROFICIENCY FOR LANGUAGES That Do Not Use All Modes of Communication

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The National Guidelines for Implementing the Seal of Biliteracy state, “Due to unique characteristics of certain languages, special allowances may need to be made. We recommend that in cases where language assessments across all three modes of communication may not be appropriate or available, districts/schools have the right to substitute a different assessment” (or use a portfolio assessment such as the one provided on the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy website [www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy](http://www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy)) that meets the spirit of the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy guidance. “Students seeking a seal through languages not characterized by the use of listening, speaking, reading, or for which there is not a writing system (such as American Sign Language), will then demonstrate the expected level of proficiency on an assessment of the modalities that characterize communication in that language.” (page 3)

Examples include:

- Latin and Classical Greek – recommend assessment of interpretive reading and presentational writing, not of listening or interpersonal face-to-face communication
- American Sign Language (ASL) – recommend assessment of interpersonal signed exchange, presentational signing, and demonstrating understanding of ASL (such as interpreting a signed lecture or by summarizing and responding to questions aimed at general understanding)
- Native American Languages – recommend assessment of interpersonal face-to-face communication as well as interpretive listening, presentational speaking, and writing and reading where a written code exists

# REQUIRED EVIDENCE OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

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For many languages, including English, specific assessment options are provided on the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy website [www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy](http://www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy). The assessments evaluate students' functional use of the language, not knowledge about the language. The acceptable assessment scores were determined through research of the committee based on Seal of Biliteracy policies of other states and the National Seal of Biliteracy at [sealofbiliteracy.org](http://sealofbiliteracy.org).

The MDE recommends that schools help students maintain a portfolio of their language performance, tracking improvement and progress toward the level required for a biliteracy recognition. While guidance is provided, it is the districts responsibility to determine a local process for assessing students to meet the requirements of the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy in cases where assessments of specific languages may not be available.

Note: Educators should be aware that some tests may be given only once per academic year. Based on the chosen test, teachers, counselors, and students will need to plan in advance so that learners have the time to reach proficiency milestones, take the assessment and receive scores prior to graduation.

## **General Guidelines for determining language proficiency in English and world languages:**

### **English**

Students must demonstrate proficiency in English by meeting language arts requirements for high school graduation or by demonstrating proficiency on a validated assessment of proficiency for English learners or other acceptable assessments as listed on the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy website [www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy](http://www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy). Assessments in English may include one or more of the following as determined by the district:

- State assessments of English Language Arts as required for all learners, *or*
- State assessments of English language development for English learners, *or*
- Other assessments identified by the state as appropriate for demonstrating English proficiency equivalent to meeting high school graduation requirements

### **World Languages**

The MDE requires a proof of proficiency in a language other than English by demonstrating an acceptable skill level on a validated test of proficiency as determined by the Mississippi Department of Education. Assessments for determining the level of language proficiency must include:

- Adherence to the current ACTFL standards and proficiency scale
- Assessment in all language domains (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) or those appropriate to the given language

Note: For the most current vetted list of assessments and updated requirements, see the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy website [www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy](http://www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy).

### Tribal Language Assessments

Tribes may use existing or newly developed processes for determining language proficiency according to the unique needs of the language. Reading and writing components are to be used only when appropriate for the specific tribal language and approved by the tribe.

### Portfolio-Based Assessment

A portfolio-based assessment may also be used to demonstrate language proficiency under certain circumstances such as accommodating certain student disabilities or assessing a language for which there is not a computer assessment available. These circumstances and an example portfolio rubric are located on the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy website [www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy](http://www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy).



For 25 years we have taken the position that at the

**BASIS OF EVERYTHING** – the basis for *success* in school, the basis for *success* in work, and in the community in general – is language.

**LANGUAGE IS FIRST FOR ALL CHILDREN.**



*Edward DeAvila and Sharon Duncan, LAS authors*



## EQUITABLE ACCESS

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All students should continue to receive information on the options available for the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy upon entering middle and high school settings. This will enable them to organize their schedules and work towards meeting the requirements to receive this honor upon graduation. A sample notification form (see Appendix C ) and a sample student application (see Appendix D) are available in this document.

All students are eligible to attain a Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy regardless of language background or any identified condition that may exclude demonstration of language proficiency in one of the modes of communication. This includes but is not limited to blindness, deaf or hearing impaired, cognitive disabilities, or learning disabilities, etc. Accommodations and/or the use of technology, such as those already in place for state-required assessments of language, should be included for assessments used to qualify for a Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy.

# DISTRICT REQUIREMENTS

## When Awarding the Seal of Biliteracy

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Each district that chooses to participate in the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy program must adopt a local board policy which adheres to basic guidance set forth by the MDE. Districts must report their District Participation form, local board policy, and agenda with approved board minutes adopting their local seal of biliteracy to MDE (see Appendix B). Districts recognizing students for earning a seal of biliteracy must also determine practical methods for identifying and recording the name(s) of students who have met the requirements. Districts must report this information to the MDE through MSIS (see the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy website [www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy](http://www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy) for upload directions). Schools with students receiving the recognition of biliteracy shall follow their district policy for determining and verifying qualifications. Awarding of the Silver Seal of Biliteracy or the Gold Seal of Biliteracy must be completed by high school graduation.

Each district shall determine the process for awarding and recognizing either level of the Seal of Biliteracy, including the following:

- The seal must be added to the high school transcript as it is the credential that is viewed by post-secondary institutions and future employers
- Districts and schools are encouraged to recognize the achievement of biliteracy at graduation and award ceremonies
- Districts must set up their own procedures for collecting, recording, and maintaining student data for those recognized for biliteracy and the evidence upon which it is based. Data will include but is not limited to:
  - English and world language assessment scores and levels of achievement
  - languages other than English in which students earned the seal,
  - number earning the seal who are former English learners, and
  - seal level earned by each student.

## MINIMAL REQUIREMENTS

### For the Silver Seal of Biliteracy and the Gold Seal of Biliteracy

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The minimal score requirements and acceptable assessments for both levels of biliteracy are identified on the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy website [www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy](http://www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy). These minimum score requirements may change from year to year, so it is essential that schools use the most updated version of the score requirements as stated on the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy website [www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy](http://www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy). Native or non-native English speakers shall meet the criteria prior to graduation.

Students are only recognized and awarded at one level of biliteracy per world language. Students may earn a Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy in more than one language. The score scenario examples provided on the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy website [www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy](http://www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy) will assist in determining the level of recognition.



We must acquire  
the ability to  
*understand*  
and  
*be understood*  
in the languages  
of the  
**WORLDWIDE  
NEIGHBORHOOD**



*World-Readiness  
Standards for Learning  
Languages, 2015*



# EXAMPLE POLICY

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Below is an example policy to assist local school districts in developing a Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy policy to be approved by their local school board.

## **Introduction**

The local school board is committed to preparing every student who enrolls in our schools to graduate from high school college and career ready. Students will have the skills, capacities, and dispositions necessary to participate fully in the 21st century economic, scientific, political, cultural, and intellectual life of our global society. Achieving high levels of academic competency in both English and at least one other world language is an integral part of making the vision of student accessibility to success a reality.

Therefore, in order to encourage and recognize linguistic proficiency and cultural literacy, the local school district will present a Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy as a recognition on a student's transcript, to each graduating high school student who demonstrates proficiency in one or more languages in addition to English.

## **Purpose of the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy**

- Recognize students who attain a high level of proficiency in two or more languages including English.
- Provide employers and postsecondary institutions with biliterate students who are able to perform high level academic and professional tasks in another language as well as English.
- Assign high status to students who demonstrate biliterate competence in English and in at least one additional world language.
- Revitalize, promote, and encourage the development of effective dual language immersion, world language, and heritage language pathways in grades 9-12 that prepare students to successfully interact in the global marketplace of the 21st Century.
- Build on student strengths, recognizing that home language and culture are valued resources that contribute to academic success.

## **Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy Eligibility**

Every Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy student candidate needs to complete an application with his/her counselor in order to begin the process to obtain the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy.

Native or non-native English speakers who meet the following criteria before the senior year or the spring semester before graduation:

1. Show evidence of proficiency in literacy in English by meeting the current MDE minimum score requirements as outlined on the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy website [www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy](http://www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy).
2. Show evidence of proficiency in literacy in **a world language** other than English by meeting the criteria as outlined on the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy website [www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy](http://www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy).



# APPENDIX A

## Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy State Board Policy

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### Chapter 28: Curriculum

#### Rule 28.8 Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy

##### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish minimum criteria for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in awarding Seals of Biliteracy. The Seal of Biliteracy recognizes and awards students who have attained proficiency in one or more world languages and English by high school graduation. The Seal of Biliteracy demonstrates attainment of biliteracy for students, employers, and postsecondary institutions. It also signals a student's readiness for college and career and for engagement as a global citizen. Participation in the Mississippi Department of Education's (MDE) Seal of Biliteracy shall be determined by LEAs. Beginning school year 2019-2020 the MDE shall require participating school districts to follow the award process as defined in the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy Guidance Document. LEAs are also required to report Seal of Biliteracy award data to the MDE.

##### 2. District Requirements when Awarding the Seal of Biliteracy

Each district shall adopt local school board policy which adheres to the basic standards set forth by the MDE.

##### 3. Standards:

- a. The Seal shall be completed by an eligible student's high school graduation date.
- b. The Seal shall be noted on the high school transcript as a credential that can be viewed by colleges, universities, and future employers.
- c. LEAs shall set up their own process for collecting, recording, and maintaining the data for students receiving the Seal of Biliteracy. This shall include the evidence verifying criteria for Seal had been met upon which attaining the Seal is based, the number of Silver Seals of Biliteracy and Gold Seals of Biliteracy awarded, and the languages other than English in which students earned the Seal. The data shall also be divided into subgroups specifying the number of students earning the Seal who are former English learners and the number of students who are native English speakers.

Source Code: Miss. Code Ann. § 37-1-3 (Adopted October 10, 2019)

# APPENDIX B

## District Participation Form

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Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy <b>DISTRICT PARTICIPATION FORM</b>	
<i>This form must be completed and uploaded to MSIS upon initial determination to participate in the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy program.</i>	
District Name	_____
District Address	_____
County	_____
District Seal of Biliteracy Contact Name	_____
District Seal of Biliteracy Contact Email	_____
Our district agrees to abide by the Mississippi Department of Education’s Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy Policy 28.8 and guidance as outlined in the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy Guidelines. We also agree to submit required information as listed on the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy website <a href="http://www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy">www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy</a> .	
_____	_____
Superintendent Signature	Date

Districts are required to notify the Mississippi Department of Education of intent to participate in the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy program by uploading:

- the district participation form (signed and dated by the superintendent) and
- the district policy and board minutes (showing when the policy was adopted).

NOTE: Further directions for uploading the required information can be found in the *Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy Supplemental Resources*.

# APPENDIX C

## Sample Student Notification Form

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This form may be used to assist students in notifying the school that they wish to pursue the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy.

Incoming Student Notification of Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy			
Student Name _____			
School _____		Expected Year of Graduation _____	
Parent/Guardian Name _____			
We have been notified of the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy and the requirements for earning this credential.			
<input type="checkbox"/> My child would like to pursue coursework and/or other requirements to work towards attaining this seal upon graduation.			
Language of Interest _____			
_____ Student Signature		_____ Parent/Guardian Signature	
_____ Date		_____ Date	

## APPENDIX D

### Sample Student Application for Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy

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The Local School District Board of Education’s Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy certifies attainment of a high level of proficiency by a graduating high school student in one or more languages in addition to English, and certifies that the graduate meets all of the following criteria:

- a. The Local School District Board of Education’s Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy will be awarded to students who earn a high school diploma and
- b. pass any one of the acceptable English Language assessments at the proficient or higher level; and
- c. demonstrate proficiency at the intermediate-mid level or higher in one or more languages other than English, including tribal languages and American Sign Language.

For the most current vetted list of the Mississippi Department of Education approved assessment vendors and updated requirements, see the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy website [www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy](http://www.mdek12.org/ese/Mississippi-Seal-of-Biliteracy).

The sample Student Application can be used by schools or districts for documentation of student’s proficiency and qualifications for receiving the Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy.

# STUDENT APPLICATION MISSISSIPPI SEAL OF BILITERACY

**Directions to Applicants:**

1. Please type or print legibly all information.
2. Complete all sections of the application.
3. Submit application and documentation of qualifying scores to your school counselor at your high school no later than (Date): \_\_\_\_\_.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Current Grade Level \_\_\_\_\_ Expected Year of Graduation \_\_\_\_\_

Counselor Name \_\_\_\_\_

Recommending Teacher Name \_\_\_\_\_

## ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

Assessment information used to document proficiency in English and at least one other language.

Language	Name of Assessment	Date Completed	Score*
English			
Other Language:			
Other Language:			

\*Attach a copy of the score report.

**Some exams do not give results until after June. Students and advisors may need to plan accordingly.**

## FOR GUIDANCE COUNSELOR USE ONLY

Qualifications checklist for a Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy:

- Passed all required end-of-course English/Reading assessments at the proficient or higher level.
- Completed all graduation requirements for a standard or advanced studies diploma.
- Acceptable evidence of proficiency at the Intermediate-Mid or higher level in at least one language in addition to English.

**Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy Awarded**

- Silver Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy
- Gold Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy

No Seal Awarded

Reason:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Counselor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Recommending Teacher Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## REFERENCES

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