

The ASL Teacher's Guide to the Seal of Biliteracy

Expanded Draft Edition

The Seal of Biliteracy is one of the highest recognitions a high school student can earn for language proficiency. For ASL teachers, it is an opportunity to demonstrate that American Sign Language is a complete, natural language deserving of the same recognition as spoken world languages.

This guide is intended to help teachers understand the process, advocate for their students, and prepare learners for success.

Please note: Requirements differ from state to state. Always verify the most current information with your state Department of Education.

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1 What is the Seal of Biliteracy?

The Seal of Biliteracy recognizes graduates who demonstrate proficiency in English and at least one additional language. The Seal often appears on a diploma, transcript, or both, providing formal recognition of bilingual or multilingual achievement.

Colleges, employers, military recruiters, and scholarship committees increasingly recognize the value of students who possess strong communication skills in multiple languages.

2 Why American Sign Language Qualifies

American Sign Language is a complete language with its own grammar, syntax, vocabulary, regional variation, and cultural history. It is not a manual version of English. Because ASL meets the linguistic standards of a world language, many states include it within their Seal of Biliteracy programs.

Teachers should also emphasize Deaf Culture, cultural norms, and authentic communication rather than vocabulary memorization alone.

3 Student Eligibility

Although each state establishes its own requirements, most students must:

- Satisfy graduation requirements in English.
- Demonstrate proficiency in a second language using approved measures.
- Complete any state or district application procedures.

Eligibility requirements should be reviewed with counselors before the student's senior year.

4 How the Process Works

Students generally begin preparing in their first ASL course and continue developing receptive, expressive, interpersonal, and cultural competence throughout high school.

During the senior year, students complete an approved proficiency assessment if required. The school reviews eligibility, submits documentation to the state when appropriate, and the Seal is awarded after all requirements are verified.

5 Costs

The Seal itself is usually provided without cost to students. The primary expense, when applicable, is the proficiency assessment.

Some school districts pay these costs, while others rely on grants or ask students to pay the testing fee. Teachers should investigate local funding opportunities well before testing begins.

6 Assessment Options

States approve different assessments. Depending on the state, accepted options may include:

- ASLPI
- SLPI
- STAMP ASL
- Other state-approved measures

Teachers should avoid assuming that one assessment is accepted nationwide. Understanding the proficiency expectations of the approved assessment allows classroom instruction to better align with student goals.

7 Preparing Students

Successful preparation extends beyond vocabulary quizzes. Students benefit from:

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| ▪ Daily conversational practice | ▪ Storytelling |
| ▪ Role shifting | ▪ Classifiers |
| ▪ Fingerspelling | ▪ Number fluency |
| ▪ Receptive comprehension | ▪ Deaf Culture discussions |

Authentic interaction with Deaf signers should be included whenever possible. Regular feedback on expressive signing builds confidence and fluency.

8 Parent, Counselor, and Administrator Partnerships

Parents should understand the long-term value of bilingualism. Counselors should be informed early so students are scheduled into the appropriate sequence of ASL courses.

Administrators can support the process by funding assessments, recognizing student achievement, and promoting the Seal within the school community.

9 State-by-State Resources

A future edition of this guide should contain a dedicated page for every state and Washington, D.C. Each page can summarize:

- Whether ASL qualifies
- Approved assessments
- Proficiency benchmarks
- Application procedures and deadlines
- Responsible state office
- Direct links to official Department of Education resources

This would become one of the most valuable references for ASL teachers.

10 How ASLdeafined Supports Students

ASLdeafined provides a structured sequence of instruction from beginner through advanced levels. Lessons include vocabulary, receptive activities, expressive practice, Deaf Culture, review exercises, teacher lesson plans, and assessments.

Used consistently over several years, these resources can help students steadily build toward the level of proficiency expected for the Seal of Biliteracy.

Suggested Teacher Checklist

A year-at-a-glance list to keep in your planner.

- ☐ Review your state's Seal of Biliteracy requirements each summer.
- ☐ Meet with counselors before student schedules are finalized.
- ☐ Identify potential Seal candidates by ASL II or III.
- ☐ Integrate expressive and receptive proficiency activities throughout the year.
- ☐ Provide authentic Deaf Culture experiences.
- ☐ Verify approved assessments and testing dates.
- ☐ Communicate regularly with parents and students.
- ☐ Celebrate students who earn the Seal.