



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

August 28, 2015

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: New Virginia Diploma *Seal of Biliteracy*

Senate Bill 916 and House Bill 1351 were signed into law by Governor Terry McAuliffe on March 23, 2015. The legislation required the Board of Education to establish criteria for awarding a diploma Seal of Biliteracy in time for any student graduating from a public high school in the Commonwealth in 2016 to be awarded such a diploma seal.

The following language pertaining to the Seal of Biliteracy is included in the proposed revisions to the Standards of Accreditation (SOA):

The Board of Education's Seal of Biliteracy will be awarded to students who demonstrate proficiency in English and at least one other language and meet additional criteria established by the Board. Such seal will be awarded to eligible students graduating from public high schools in the Commonwealth in 2016.

In April 2015, the Department of Education convened an Advisory Committee to develop proposed criteria for the Seal. The Committee's findings were presented to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, who recommended the Board approve the proposed criteria. On June 25, 2015, the Board of Education approved the [Guidelines for Issuing a Virginia Seal of Biliteracy](#).

The criteria adopted by the Board state:

The Board of Education's 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 Board of Education's Seal of Biliteracy will be awarded to students who earn a Board of Education-approved diploma and (i) pass all required End-of-Course Assessments in English reading and writing at the proficient or higher level; and (ii) be proficient at the intermediate-mid level or higher in one or more languages other than English, as demonstrated through an assessment from a list to be approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction.*
- b. *For purposes of this article, "foreign language" means a language other than English, and includes American Sign Language.*

Included in the Guidelines is a [list of acceptable evidence of proficiency in languages other than English](#). This list will be reviewed regularly and updated as new assessments are approved. Recommendations for additional assessments may be sent to Dr. Lisa Harris, specialist for foreign languages, at Lisa.Harris@doe.virginia.gov.

The process for ordering the Seal of Biliteracy and other diploma seals will be announced in the spring via a Superintendent Memorandum. Local school divisions will be responsible for reviewing evidence submitted by students as proof of proficiency and determining if the student has met the requirements.

For questions about the Seal of Biliteracy criteria or other world languages or international education initiatives, please contact Dr. Lisa Harris, specialist for foreign languages, by e-mail at Lisa.Harris@doe.virginia.gov or by telephone at (804) 225-3666.

SRS/LAH/vdg

Links:

- [Virginia Graduation \(Diploma\) Seals of Achievement](#)
- [Virginia Seal of Biliteracy](#)
- [Senate Bill 916](#) and [House Bill 1351](#)