

SENATE, No. 3279

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
216th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED DECEMBER 10, 2015

Sponsored by:

Senator SHIRLEY K. TURNER

District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

District 29 (Essex)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes State Seal of Biliteracy to recognize high school graduates who have attained a high level of bilingual proficiency.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 12/15/2015)

1 AN ACT establishing the State Seal of Biliteracy and supplementing
2 chapter 7C of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

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4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
5 *of New Jersey:*

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7 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

8 a. It is the intent of the Legislature to encourage excellence for
9 all students, and the Legislature wishes to publicly recognize
10 students for exemplary achievements in academic studies;

11 b. The study of world languages in elementary and secondary
12 schools should be encouraged because it contributes to a student's
13 cognitive development and to the national economy and security;

14 c. Proficiency in multiple languages is critical in enabling New
15 Jersey to participate more effectively in the current global political,
16 social, and economic context, and in expanding trade with other
17 countries;

18 d. The demand for employees to be fluent in more than one
19 language is increasing in New Jersey and throughout the world;

20 e. The benefits to employers in having staff fluent in more than
21 one language are clear: access to expanding markets, allowing
22 business owners to better serve their customers' needs, and the
23 sparking of new marketing ideas that better target a particular
24 audience and open a channel of communication with customers; and

25 f. It is the intent of the Legislature to promote linguistic
26 proficiency and cultural literacy in one or more world languages in
27 addition to English and to provide recognition of the attainment of
28 those needed and important skills through the establishment of the
29 State Seal of Biliteracy. The State Seal of Biliteracy would be
30 affixed on the high school transcripts of graduating students
31 attaining proficiency in one or more world languages in addition to
32 English.

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34 2. The State Seal of Biliteracy is established to recognize high
35 school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in
36 speaking, reading, and writing in one or more world languages in
37 addition to English. The State Seal of Biliteracy shall be awarded
38 by the local board of education to graduating high school seniors
39 who meet the criteria established by the State Board of Education
40 pursuant to subsection a. of section 3 of this act. School district
41 participation in this program is voluntary.

42 The purposes of the State Seal of Biliteracy are as follows:

43 a. To encourage students to study languages;

44 b. To certify attainment of biliteracy;

45 c. To provide employers with a method of identifying people
46 with language and biliteracy skills;

47 d. To provide universities with a method to recognize and
48 award academic credit to applicants seeking admission;

- 1 e. To prepare students with 21st century skills;
- 2 f. To recognize and promote foreign language instruction in
- 3 public schools; and
- 4 g. To strengthen intergroup relationships, affirm the value of
- 5 diversity, and honor the multiple cultures and languages of a
- 6 community.

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8 3. a. The State Board of Education shall promulgate rules

9 pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,” P.L.1968, c.410

10 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), establishing criteria for the award of a State

11 Seal of Biliteracy. The criteria shall require a student to

12 demonstrate proficiency in English by meeting State high school

13 graduation requirements in English, including through State

14 assessments and credits, and proficiency in one or more world

15 languages other than English. The criteria shall permit a student to

16 demonstrate proficiency in a world language other than English

17 through multiple methods, including nationally or internationally

18 recognized language proficiency tests.

19 For the purposes of this section, a world language other than

20 English shall also include American Sign Language and Native

21 American languages.

22 b. The Commissioner of Education shall prepare and deliver to

23 participating school districts a certificate to be awarded to the

24 student and an appropriate insignia to be affixed to the transcript of

25 the student indicating that the student has been awarded the State

26 Seal of Biliteracy. The commissioner shall also provide any

27 information the commissioner deems necessary for a school district

28 to successfully participate in the program.

29 c. A school district that participates in the program under this

30 section shall maintain appropriate records in order to identify

31 students who have earned the State Seal of Biliteracy, and shall

32 award the certificate and affix the appropriate insignia to a

33 qualifying student’s transcript.

34 d. A school district that participates in the program may pay

35 the costs of the program or may charge a fee to students who

36 participate to cover the costs.

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38 4. The commissioner shall submit a report to the Governor, and

39 the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-

40 19.1), by September 1 of each school year that includes the number

41 of students awarded the State Seal of Biliteracy in the previous

42 school year, the languages in which those students attained

43 proficiency, and the methods used by students to demonstrate

44 proficiency for the State Seal of Biliteracy.

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46 5. This act shall take effect immediately and shall first apply to

47 the 2015-2016 school year.

STATEMENT

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This bill establishes the State Seal of Biliteracy to recognize high school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in one or more world languages in addition to English. The purposes of the State seal are to: encourage students to study languages and promote foreign language instruction in public schools; certify attainment of biliteracy; provide employers with a method of identifying people with language skills; provide colleges and universities with a method to recognize and award academic credit to applicants seeking admission; prepare students with 21st century skills; and affirm the value of diversity and honor multiple cultures.

The State Board of Education will establish the criteria for awarding the State Seal of Biliteracy. The criteria will require a student to demonstrate proficiency in English by meeting State high school graduation requirements in English, including State assessments and credits, and proficiency in one or more world languages other than English. The criteria will permit a student to demonstrate proficiency in a language other than English through multiple methods, including nationally or internationally recognized language proficiency tests. A world language will also include American Sign Language and Native American languages. School district participation in the program to award the State Seal is voluntary.

A State Seal of Biliteracy will be awarded by a participating school district to graduating high school seniors who meet the criteria established by the State board. The Commissioner of Education is to prepare and deliver to participating school districts a certificate to be awarded to a qualifying student and an appropriate insignia to be affixed to the student's transcript.