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MEMORANDUM

TO: Members, Utah State Board of Education

FROM: Brad C. Smith
Chief Executive Officer

DATE: August 6-7, 2015

ACTION: Seal of Biliterate Proficiency

Background:

Learning languages is an important component of 21st century skills. Being fluent in a second language will enable Utah's next generation to be career and college ready. A Seal of Biliterate Proficiency (Seal) is an excellent example of K-12 practices that will continue to grow Utah's economic capacity in the 21st century.

Key Points:

A seal on a high school diploma is visible evidence to students, parents, administrators, college admissions officials, and employers of the importance of learning languages. The seal is designed to encourage all Utah elementary, middle school, and high school students to develop high proficiency in English and another language leading to the Seal of Biliterate Proficiency upon high school graduation.

Anticipated Action:

The Board will consider the creation of a Seal of Biliterate Proficiency and if directed, staff will prepare a draft of a Board rule for the Seal for the September Board meeting.

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Seal of Biliterate Proficiency



Prepared by the

Utah State Office of Education

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Seal of Biliterate Proficiency

The State School Board shall establish for a student who is proficient in English and one or more World Languages a *Seal of Biliterate Proficiency* on the student's high school diploma.

A "*Seal of Biliterate Proficiency*" means a seal placed electronically on a student's high school diploma that indicates a student has achieved, in a world language grades 1-12, a level of proficiency described in the following three categories, which align to the Utah World Language Core Standards (see indicators below):

- A. Bronze – Novice High
- B. Silver – Intermediate Mid
- C. Gold – Advanced Low

A "world language" means a language other than English, including: American Sign Language; a classical language (i.e. Latin); or an indigenous language (i.e. Navajo).

English proficiency would be demonstrated by completing all English language arts graduation requirements with an overall grade point average of 2.0 or above in English Language Arts classes; and passing the Utah Performance Assessment System in English Language Arts administered in grade 11 at the proficient level or above.

The State School Board shall require an LEA to determine through a proficiency assessment of the LEA choice if a student meets the requirements for the *Seal of Biliterate Proficiency* (see level indicators below). If a student qualifies to receive a *Seal of Biliterate Proficiency*, a LEA shall place the seal electronically on the student's high school diploma, indicating the student's category of world language proficiency as based upon the Utah World Language Core Standards; and indicate on the student's high school transcript the category of biliterate proficiency seal the student has received.

This *Seal of Biliterate Proficiency* approach to learning languages prepares students to be college and career ready and builds state and national language capacity to improve economic competitiveness and strengthen national defense strategies. Equally, it answers the growing need for the critical skills of language and cultural competencies for relationship building—a keystone for success in global business and diverse social environments

- **Why does the *Seal of Biliterate Proficiency* apply to all learners regardless of grade level?**

Learners begin new language experiences at different ages and progress toward proficiency at different rates. The amount of quality time spent in the target language (i.e., dual language immersion vs. high school level I) is a determining factor in the proficiency level that learners will reach. Learners at similar ages frequently demonstrate varying proficiency levels when assessed.

- **How does the *Seal of Biliterate Proficiency* apply to ELs and heritage users?**

Learners bring a variety of languages and cultures to Utah. They may have learned a language at home, in another country, or through local communities. Some may decide to pursue the study of their native language, while others may decide to study a different language. When ELs and heritage users choose to continue their native language, differentiated learning must take place to meet their needs.

ADVANCED LOW: Gold Seal

Students at the Advanced Low sublevel are able to handle a variety of communicative tasks. They are able to participate in most informal and some formal conversations on topics related to school, home, and leisure activities. They can also speak about some topics related to employment, current events, and matters of public and community interest.

Advanced Low users demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in the major time frames of past, present, and future in paragraph-length discourse with some control of aspect. In these narrations and descriptions, Advanced Low users combine and link sentences into connected discourse of paragraph length, although these narrations and descriptions tend to be handled separately rather than interwoven. They can handle appropriately the essential linguistic challenges presented by a complication or an unexpected turn of events.

Responses produced by Advanced Low users are typically not longer than a single paragraph. The speaker's dominant language may be evident in the use of false cognates, literal translations, or the oral paragraph structure of that language. At times their discourse may be minimal for the level, marked by an irregular flow, and containing noticeable self-correction. More generally, the performance of Advanced Low users tends to be uneven.

Advanced Low usage is typically marked by a certain grammatical roughness (e.g., inconsistent control of verb endings), but the overall performance of the Advanced-level tasks is sustained, albeit minimally. The vocabulary of Advanced Low users often lacks specificity. Nevertheless, Advanced Low users are able to use communicative strategies such as rephrasing and circumlocution.

Advanced Low users contribute to the conversation with sufficient accuracy, clarity, and precision to convey their intended message without misrepresentation or confusion. Their language usage can be understood by native users unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, even though this may require some repetition or restatement. When attempting to perform functions or handle topics associated with the Superior level, the linguistic quality and quantity of their usage will deteriorate significantly.

INTERMEDIATE MID: Silver Seal

Students at the Intermediate Mid sublevel are able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is generally limited to those predictable and concrete exchanges necessary for survival in the target culture. These include personal information related to self, family, home, daily activities, interests and personal preferences, as well as physical and social needs, such as food, shopping, travel, and lodging.

Intermediate Mid users tend to function reactively, for example, by responding to direct questions or requests for information. However, they are capable of asking a variety of questions when necessary to obtain simple information to satisfy basic needs, such as directions, prices, and services. When called on to perform functions or handle topics at the Advanced level, they provide some information but have difficulty linking ideas, manipulating time and aspect, and using communicative strategies, such as circumlocution.

Intermediate Mid users are able to express personal meaning by creating with the language, in part by combining and recombining known elements and conversational input to produce responses typically consisting of sentences and strings of sentences. Their usage may contain pauses, reformulations, and self-corrections as they search for adequate vocabulary and appropriate language forms to express themselves. In spite of the limitations in their vocabulary and/or pronunciation and/or grammar and/or syntax, Intermediate Mid users are generally understood by sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to dealing with non-natives.

Overall, Intermediate Mid users are at ease when performing Intermediate-level tasks and do so with significant quantity and quality of Intermediate-level language.

NOVICE HIGH: Bronze Seal

Students at the Novice High sublevel are able to handle a variety of tasks pertaining to the Intermediate level, but are unable to sustain performance at that level. They are able to manage successfully a number of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is restricted to a few of the predictable topics necessary for survival in the target language culture, such as basic personal information, basic objects, and a limited number of activities, preferences, and immediate needs. Novice High users respond to simple, direct questions or requests for information. They are also able to ask a few formulaic questions.

Novice High users are able to express personal meaning by relying heavily on learned phrases or recombinations of these and what they hear from their interlocutor. Their language consists primarily of short and some times incomplete sentences in the present, and may be hesitant or inaccurate. On the other hand, since their language often consists of expansions of learned material and stock phrases, they may sometimes sound surprisingly fluent and accurate. Pronunciation, vocabulary, and syntax may be strongly influenced by the first language. Frequent misunderstandings may arise but, with repetition or rephrasing, Novice High users can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors used to non-natives. When called on to handle a variety of topics and perform functions pertaining to the Intermediate level, a Novice High speaker can sometimes respond in intelligible sentences, but will not be able to sustain sentence-level discourse.