



# **Celebrating Bilingualism: Pathways to Biliteracy Awards / *Celebrando el bilingüismo: Celebraciones para los estudiantes bilingües* (TK – 6<sup>th</sup> Grade)**

## **Summary**

In 2012, California became the first state in the nation to establish a Seal of Biliteracy award to students who have studied and attained proficiency in two or more languages by high school graduation. The Seal of Biliteracy is a recognition of the high level of academic skill involved in biliteracy, and a statement about the value of and need for people who develop the language skills to bridge across communities. The Seal of Biliteracy was created as a way to encourage students to pursue bilingualism, to stem the tide of language loss among English Learners who leave their home language behind as they become English speaking (subtractive bilinguals), and to celebrate the attainment of multiple language proficiencies. In addition to the State Seal of Biliteracy, many districts (including our SEAL districts) either award Seals of Biliteracy or feed into high school districts that provide such awards.

However, the attainment of biliteracy is a process that takes years and there is much misinformation about dual language development. To build a pipeline towards biliteracy attainment, attention is needed to encourage children from a young age to value bilingualism, to pursue learning and using more than one language, and to prevent rejection of home and heritage language among children whose family language is other than English. For these reasons, Pathways to Biliteracy Awards and Budding Bilinguals Celebrations are used at crucial developmental points along the schooling path where decisions are made about language study.

The preschool years are one crucial juncture, because it is when families make a decision about which language program to place their children in for Kindergarten. At end of second grade or third grade, when transitional bilingual programs evolve into all-English instruction is another. It is also a vulnerable time for children in Dual Language/Two Way Immersion programs as fear about English testing begins to drive some parents towards English-only instruction. For all children, language attitudes are being developed that can result in prejudices and bias against bilingualism and languages other than English. This is also when positive attitudes towards language diversity can be cultivated. This opens children to language study.

In SEAL classrooms, for all children the value of bilingualism is highlighted, and budding bilingual skills are celebrated. In SEAL classrooms, the development of academic bilingualism and participation in bilingual study is recognized and awarded.

## Classroom Implementation: Path to Biliteracy Board

As we celebrate bilingualism as a school, we must also create structures and supports in the classroom that encourage students to make use of, and celebrate, the multiple languages available to them.

### Step One: Conduct Home Language Interviews

At the beginning of the year, the teacher conducts language interviews with students (see Module I binder), these interviews become the basis for the Path to Biliteracy Board.

### Step Two: Introduce students to the Seal of Biliteracy and establish the Path to Biliteracy Board

Tell the students how much fun you had talking to them and learning about the languages they speak and the languages they are interested in learning.

- Show them a bar graph or a pie chart with all of the languages spoken in the classroom, compared with the school, the state, the nation.
- Create a class web about the benefits of bilingualism
- Have students reintroduce themselves to one another by stating their names and the languages they speak and are learning.

Introduce the Seal of biliteracy by showing students an image of the seal and letting them know that if they work hard on becoming literate in two languages, they can earn a Seal of biliteracy on their high school diploma! High School is a long way away, however, we can work on earning our Elementary Bilingual Service and Participation Award (BSPA). Tell students that as a class, you are going to be working on encouraging everyone to learn more than one language. All of our ideas and celebrations will be gathered in one place: the Path to Biliteracy Board.

- Place the class language graphs, and web onto the board. Explain to students that it will grow over the course of the year and be a place to put ideas and celebrations.

### Step Three: Introduce the “My Path to Biliteracy” Template

Tell students that if they are interested in earning an **Elementary School Bilingual Service and Participation Award (BSPA)**, they need to start thinking now about ways to build, demonstrate and share their bilingualism. Have the class brainstorm ways that they can use or demonstrate multiple languages in the classroom. Note, it may be useful to read over the template (below) and help seed some ideas for the students if they are struggling. Place the class brainstorm on the Path to Biliteracy Board.

Tell students that based on their ideas you have created a tool that will help them keep track of their bilingual service and participation (feel free to alter the provided template to include student generated ideas). Walk the students through the template and then have them work with a partner to identify one or two boxes that they would like to check and come up with a plan as to how they will accomplish this. For example, if they want



to read bilingual books to a buddy, they need to work with their teacher to find a buddy in another class, and also think about which books they will read, where they will find them, and perhaps even make a plan to practice their reading. Post several copies of the template on the Path to Biliteracy Board for the students to access easily.

### **Add to Path to Biliteracy Board throughout the Year**

Items to include:

- Image of and information about the Seal of Biliteracy
- Link to Seal of Biliteracy Twitter feed
- Graphs (bar graph / pie chart) of student home languages (gathered from home language interview)
- Maps with student/family countries of origin and corresponding languages
- Samples of text in student home languages (newspapers, fliers, announcements, copies from books, etc.). As part of a Bridging School to Family project, students could bring in resources in their home language.
- Bridging School to Family projects completed in home language (chants, draw and labels, responses to prompts, graphic organizers, etc.)
- Path to Biliteracy templates
- “Bilingual Ambassador” badges and sign-up sheets
  - Students can volunteer to be “Bilingual Ambassadors” for gallery walks, volunteer to translate for and help another student who speaks their home language, teach a student who DOESN’T speak their home language some words and phrases, etc.
- Bilingual student work (Draw and Label, VIC, Frayer Model, etc.)
- Photos of students reading bilingual books to a buddy
- Posters in other languages

## School-Wide Implementation

### Preschool Budding Bilinguals Awards and Celebration

Throughout preschool, children should be learning songs in various languages (at least the languages spoken in the homes of the children in the program) and learning basic phrases. The purpose of the Budding Bilinguals Preschool award is to help young children and their parents feel pride and excitement about participating in two or more languages. It is a participation award rather than an attainment award. Because all children in the program have been engaged in some exposure to multiple languages, the award goes to every child.

The celebration is for all children and their families in any program that meets the criteria:

- Teachers have actively affirmed the value of bilingualism (e.g., signs and posters are in multiple languages, children are routinely exposed to songs and phrases and chants in different languages, adults speak about how wonderful it is to be able to speak more than one language)
- The preschool staff educate parents about how to support dual language development and encourage parents whose home language is other than English to talk to and read to their children in their home language
- The preschool actively promotes rich oral language development in the children's home language whenever possible
- The preschool actively engages children in developing a love of books and print, and exposes children to books with images of and about children from multiple cultural backgrounds.

The celebration should include children singing songs for their families in multiple languages, and presenting children with some kind of award (certificate, pin, medallion). Examples from SEAL pilot sites include: pins that say "I am Bilingual/Yo Soy Bilingue," paper crowns that say "Bilingual/Bilingue." Signs should welcome families in all of the languages of the classroom. The celebration is also an opportunity to provide information also about the dual language/two-way immersion and bilingual opportunities in the district.

### Elementary Bilingual Service and Participation Award (BSPA)

The intention of the Elementary School "Bilingual Service and Participation Award" (BPSA) is to encourage students who speak a language other than English, and who are developing or have English competencies along the path of bilingualism—even though they are not actually in a dual language or bilingual program leading to biliteracy. This award recognizes participation and service, rather than academic biliteracy attainment. The BSPA can be awarded at the end of any grade level in elementary school, and it **recognizes active participation in two or more languages**. It is up to each school to define the specific components of participation, but they could include any or all of the following:

- Participation in whole class activities (learning songs and phrases in multiple languages)

- Serving as a bilingual ambassador during gallery walks
- Serving as a classroom Ambassador/Buddy to befriend and translate for a new student who doesn't speak English
- Teaching words and phrase in their home language to other students
- Serving as team captain for a bilingual work group—this could include creating a draw and label in another language, creating a bilingual chant, creating their own VIC or Frayer Model in another language, etc.
- Hosting a visiting group
- Serving as a reading buddy for a younger child in a language other than English
- Demonstrating positive attitudes towards bilingualism
- Demonstrating knowledge of the values and benefits of bilingualism through an essay or oral presentation.

### **Elementary School “Biliteracy Attainment Award”**

The intention of the Biliteracy Attainment Award is to honor development and **attainment of age-appropriate biliteracy** and academic work in two languages for students who have been in Immersion, Heritage, Foreign Language, Two-Way Bilingual Immersion, Dual Language, transitional or maintenance/developmental bilingual programs. Third grade is an important milestone year of these awards, as is end of elementary school program. Criteria could include:

- Grade level proficiency or above on standards-based assessment of English language arts AND demonstration of proficiency in a language other than English (e.g., Standards Test in Spanish Language Arts at the “Proficient” level or above, attainment of a level 4 or higher on the Spanish LAS, or any other assessment of that language).
- Grade level proficiency or above on both the standards-based assessment of Math in English AND demonstration of grade level proficiency or above on Math assessed in Spanish.

In addition to the requirements outlined above, both the Bilingual Service and Participation Award and the Biliteracy Attainment Award could require students to complete several additional criteria that demonstrate actual use of two languages. These might include, for example:

- Completion of a set number of hours of community service using primary language skills in service to the school or community and demonstrating the ability to use translation in social situations;
- A written paper in two languages (translation)
- A written essay on why bilingualism is important to them personally, to their community, and to the world;
- Oral presentation about five careers where bilingualism is important and why and how bilingualism is a benefit in those careers
- Reading logs signed by their teachers of ten books (at grade level) read independently in English and ten books (at grade level) read independently in a language other than English.



The Celebrations should be Family and Community events that affirm the value of bilingualism as an academic skill, as a benefit in the labor market, and as an important community needed resource. Singing songs, student speakers or reading essays children have written about bilingualism, displays of student work in two languages, awarding of the awards with opportunities for children to stand up, etc. make it a memorable event that lets children know that bilingualism is important.

Resources:

Santa Clara County Office of Education's Biliteracy and World Communications Toolkit has web-based videos of families and students and teachers talking about the importance of bilingualism, presentation modules and PowerPoints that can be downloaded, and a research overview on why bilingual skills are important and need to be part of education for global competence. The Toolkit includes a section on "What are Pathway Awards?" [www.sccoe.org](http://www.sccoe.org)



## Language Interviews

I'm so excited to work with you this year, and I'd like get to know more about you and your family. We've been talking about the variety of languages spoken in our classroom—it's pretty phenomenal! Let's talk some more about language—it's an excellent way to get to know someone.

- Do you speak a language other than English with your family?

**Note:** Even if a student responds, “No, I only speak English with my family,” continue with the interview. Even our “English only,” students are growing up in a multilingual world and should be helped to think of themselves as emerging bilinguals. Use this time as an opportunity to explore their language noticing and goals).

- Which languages do you see and hear in your neighborhood? In our school?
- Do you know how to read or write in another language?
- Do you ever watch TV or movies or listen to music in another language? If you don't, would you like to?
- Does anyone in your family speak a language that you don't know or understand?
- Are you learning any languages? Which other languages would like to learn?



Student Name	Other home Languages	Neighborhood-School Languages	Read and Write	Music	Unfamiliar Family Language	Learning Language





# My Path to Biliteracy

## Bilingual Service & Participation Award

Name \_\_\_\_\_

- I have participated with my class in activities like singing songs and chants and learning phrases in multiple languages
  
- I have served as a bilingual ambassador during gallery walks

<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Who I Helped</b>	<b>What I did</b>

<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Who I Helped</b>	<b>What I did</b>

<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Who I Helped</b>	<b>What I did</b>



- I was a classroom Ambassador/Buddy to a new student

<b>Date:</b>
<b>Name of New Student:</b>

<b>Date:</b>
<b>Name of New Student:</b>

<b>Date:</b>
<b>Name of New Student:</b>

- I taught words and phrases in a language other than English to other students

<b>Date:</b>
<b>What I Taught:</b>

<b>Date:</b>
<b>What I Taught:</b>

<b>Date:</b>
<b>What I Taught:</b>



- I participated in a bilingual work group

<b>Date:</b>
<b>What I did (this could include creating a draw and label in another language, creating a bilingual chant, creating our own VIC or Frayer Model or anything else we could think of!)?</b>

<b>Date:</b>
<b>What I did (this could include creating a draw and label in another language, creating a bilingual chant, creating our own VIC or Frayer Model or anything else we could think of!)?</b>

- I was a reading buddy for a younger student in a language other than English

<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Name of my Buddy</b>	<b>What we Read</b>



- I wrote an essay or gave a presentation on the values and benefits of bilingualism

<b>Date Completed</b>	
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- I did community service using my language skills in service to the school or community

<b>Date:</b>
<b>What I did?</b>

- I read books in languages other than English

<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>

<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>

<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>

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