§ 815. State seal of biliteracy. 1. (a) The state seal of biliteracy is established to recognize high school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in one or more languages in addition to English. The state seal of biliteracy shall be awarded by the commissioner. School district participation in this program is voluntary.

(b) The purposes of the state seal of biliteracy are as follows:

(1) To encourage pupils to study languages.

(2) To certify attainment of biliteracy.

(3) To provide employers with a method of identifying people with language and biliteracy skills.

(4) To provide universities with an additional method to recognize applicants seeking admission.

(5) To prepare pupils with twenty-first century skills.

(6) To recognize the value of foreign language and native language instruction in public schools. For the purpose of this section foreign language means any language other than English (LOTE) including all modern languages, Latin, American Sign Language, Native American languages and native languages.

(7) To strengthen intergroup relationships, affirm the value of diversity, and honor the multiple cultures and languages of a community.

2. (a) The state seal of biliteracy certifies attainment of a high level of proficiency by a graduating high school pupil in one or more languages, in addition to English.

(b) The board of regents shall promulgate such regulations of the commissioner as may be necessary to establish the criteria that students must achieve to earn a state seal of biliteracy, which may include, but is not limited to attainment of units of credit in English language arts and languages other than English, passage of state assessments in English language arts and language other than English, and passage of such additional assessments of foreign language proficiency as may be approved by the commissioner for this purpose.

(c) For purposes of this section, foreign language means any language other than English (LOTE) including all modern languages, Latin, American Sign Language, Native American languages and native languages.

3. The commissioner shall do both of the following:

(a) Prepare and deliver to participating school districts an appropriate insignia to be affixed to the diploma and transcript of the pupil indicating that the pupil has been awarded a state seal of biliteracy by the commissioner.

(b) Provide other information he or she deems necessary for school districts to successfully participate in the program.

4. A school district that participates in the program under this section shall do both of the following:

(a) Maintain appropriate records in order to identify pupils who have earned a state seal of biliteracy.

(b) Affix the appropriate insignia to the diploma and transcript of each pupil who earns a state seal of biliteracy.

5. No fee shall be charged to a pupil pursuant to this section.