



Phyllis Hardy, MABE, Helen Solorzano, MATSOL, and Nicole Sherf, MaFLA, after a 2016 Hearing at the State House

Seal Update: MA Has Gone Blue!

On November 22, 2017, Governor Baker signed a comprehensive legislation called Language Opportunity for our Kids (LOOK) which opens up the restrictive one-size-fits-all SEI mandate for districts and includes a Seal provision to reward students for functional biliteracy through the Seal. This is a monumental piece of legislation for the foreign language, dual language and English language learner (ELL) teacher groups who sponsored it.

The Seal of Biliteracy is a national movement to recognize students' functional biliteracy in English and another language. Legislation has been enacted in 29 states and the District of Columbia since 2011. In just six years, we have watched the map which indicates the states that have enacted Seal legislation on www.sealofbiliteracy.org, get bluer and bluer as more states join the movement, denoting that they have "Approved the State Seal" or passed the legislation. Massachusetts has finally joined the states who have made this strong commitment to rewarding biliteracy as a critical college and career readiness skill.

Through the MA Seal Workgroup Pilot, we have already begun to see the transformative effect of the Seal award as world language programs set proficiency targets, assess their students to see if targets are being met and make any changes to teaching or programming to do better next year. It is an exciting process that focuses on what the student can do as a result of programming and related to proficiency development.

The Seal Pilot in MA has already created pathways, resources and templates for Seal implementation across the state, even as the legislation was being considered for passage. The Seal Workgroup GoogleGroup currently has almost 90 members and at least 70 districts participating. Now in its third school year, the pilot resulted in more than 1,000 Seals being awarded in MA over the last two years and we anticipate the number to increase exponentially this spring.

We invite any district to become part of our Pilot by going to www.languageopportunity.org, watching our October 6, 2017, Webinar overview on the home page, joining our Seal Workgroup GoogleGroup on the Pilot Page and coming to our electronic GoToMeetings the fourth Monday of the month at 7PM. You'll receive updates through the GoogleGroup and can ask questions the same way. The more the merrier! Come join the movement!

The Language Opportunity Coalition (LOC) Steering Committee has been working with DESE's OELAAA office to formalize the Toolkit as well as develop the Dual Language Licensure Endorsement and program information for the state. They are happy that we have been running the Seal Pilot in the state for the last three years and with the Seal Toolkit that was collaboratively created by the Seal Workgroup (consisting of representative teachers and leaders from all types of language programs -WL, DL, ELL, TBE- and all languages and levels). The Seal Toolkit outlines the parameters of the Seal and steps for implementation in districts with exemplars. The LOC will continue to run the pilot this spring and will work with the Workgroup to update the Toolkit one last time before DESE takes over implementation of the Seal in the fall. Additionally, we will be working on the Dual Language Endorsement and program information. We have been told that the OELAAA office will be reorganized and a WL Coordinator will be named in the spring.

We are very grateful to Governor Baker, Speaker of the House Robert DeLeo, the Senate President Stan Rosenberg, Chairman Jeffrey Sanchez, Senator Sal DiDomenico, and the Chairs of the Education Committee, Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz and Representative Alice Peisch for their support of the LOOK Bill. We also thank Senator Karen Spilka and Representative Kay Kahn who championed the Seal of Biliteracy.

Thank you also to the [Language Opportunity Coalition](#) member groups: Massachusetts Foreign Language Association (MaFLA), Massachusetts Educators of English Language Learners (MATSOL), Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA), Massachusetts Association for Bilingual Education (MABE), SealofBiliteracy.org, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the Joint National Committee for Languages (JNCL-NCLIS), and all the organizations and individuals who advocated for this bill, **and especially the educators who worked to create the Seal of Biliteracy pilot program.**