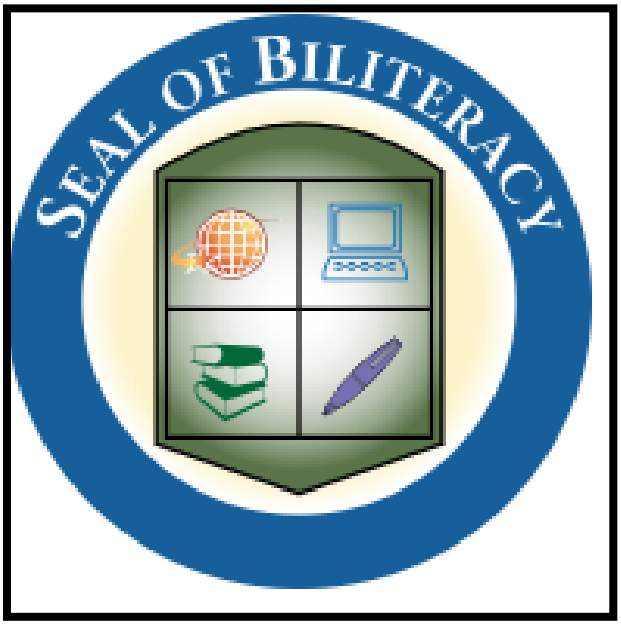
The Seal of Bilteracy

By Dr. Patrick Daly, Assistant Superintendent

I am excited to provide this update on the Seal of Biliteracy and the achievements of our students who are literate in both English and another language. I wish to recognize the efforts of our K-12 Foreign Language Curriculum Leader, Ms. Amy St. Arnaud, in researching the model for the Seal of Bilteracy and for facilitating our school district's committee, comprised of educators, administrators, parents, and students.

The Seal of Biliteracy is an award given to graduating seniors who have attained complete proficiency in English and a partner language. The awarded student will have fluency in all four domains of language (reading, writing, speaking and listening, when all exist) of both languages.



This program is designed to both motivate and recognize students who have pursued and attained bilingualism during their academic career in North Reading. It is a national initiative which was signed into law by the State of Massachusetts in November of 2017 as a part of the Look Act.

Junior and senior students attending North Reading High School are eligible to apply for this award. Students must demonstrate proficiency in English and in a partner language on district-selected standardized tests, as well as commit to engaging in a minimum of five hours of community service for the North Reading Public Schools.

This year, nearly twenty students participated. Of those twenty, we anticipate that at least five will earn the State Seal of Biliteracy and one will earn the State Seal of Biliteracy with Distinction. Our other students scored well enough to earn the Biliteracy Achievement Award from the Language Opportunity Coalition, the group that piloted the Seal of Biliteracy program in Massachusetts.

As a part of the application process, students are asked to describe what working towards the Seal of Biliteracy means to them. Here are a few of their responses:

"Throughout my exploration of foreign language during high school, I have been introduced to a world of culture and expressions that I never knew before. I have acquired a greater understanding of the relationship between different languages and how they are unique to their cultures."

"Being bi-literate in the 21st Century is absolutely crucial and has opened up many doors for my future."

"The emotion, the truth, and the meaning that comes from speaking with one another cannot compare to anything else."

"I have worked very hard to become fluent in two languages, Arabic and English. My teachers and my family have worked very hard to help me also. This Seal represent[s] the achievement not only for myself and my family but also the school community."

Awards and recognition will be given to graduating seniors at the High School's annual Spring Student Recognition Night ceremony and at the High School's graduation ceremony. For those qualifying for the State Seal of Biliteracy and the State Seal with Distinction, a notation will be added to the students' transcript and a seal from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will appear on their high school diploma.

Applications for 2019-20 will begin early in the fall. If anyone has questions about the Seal of Biliteracy, please contact me at pdaly@nrpsk12.org or visit our website to learn more.

Congratulations to all of the students on their achievements!