

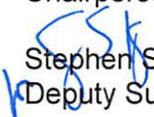


STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

June 16, 2015

TO: The Honorable Donald G. Horner  
Chairperson, Board of Education

FROM:  Stephen Schatz  
Deputy Superintendent

SUBJECT: **Board Action on Student Achievement Committee Recommendations  
Concerning New Board Policy, Unnumbered, Seal of Biliteracy**

1. RECOMMENDATION

Hawaii has historically been a culturally and linguistically diverse state and the Department of Education is pleased to support this opportunity to encourage students to develop and maintain proficiency in multiple languages. This not only honors the many cultures that have made Hawaii their home, but also positions our students to be successful in an increasingly globalized world.

The Department, does, however, have some concerns. Upon receipt and review of feedback from complex area superintendents and principals, who are concerned about the workload that may be required under obligations created by the policy, we recommend the following amendments to the Seal of Biliteracy policy as passed at the June 2, 2015, Student Achievement Committee:

The Board of Education hereby establishes a Seal of Biliteracy to be awarded upon graduation to students who demonstrate a high proficiency in ~~[English]~~ either of the State's two official languages and at least one additional language, including American Sign Language; provided that a student who demonstrates a high proficiency in both of the State's two official languages shall be awarded a Seal of Biliteracy.

The purposes of the Seal of Biliteracy are to recognize the importance of: (1) enabling students to be college, career, and community ready in today's global society; (2) establishing an educational culture that recognizes and values the wealth of linguistic and cultural diversity students bring to the classroom; (3) supporting opportunities for study of and increasing proficiency in 'Ōlelo Hawai'i, an official language of the State of Hawai'i; and (4) encouraging partnerships with institutions of higher education and community organizations to increase access to language instruction in a variety of languages.

The Department of Education shall implement the Seal of Biliteracy, including development of criteria that ~~[provide for high levels of proficiency for those receiving the Seal]~~ students must satisfy to receive the Seal.

Rationale: The Board of Education recognizes that there is personal, cultural, social, academic, and vocational/occupational value in encouraging students to maintain, or develop, proficiency in [~~English and an additional~~] more than one language.

With the Ramseyer formatting removed, the amended language reads:

The Board of Education hereby establishes a Seal of Biliteracy to be awarded upon graduation to students who demonstrate a high proficiency in either of the State's two official languages and at least one additional language, including American Sign Language; provided that a student who demonstrates a high proficiency in both of the State's two official languages shall be awarded a Seal of Biliteracy.

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The Department of Education shall implement the Seal of Biliteracy, including development of criteria that students must satisfy to receive the Seal.

Rationale: The Board of Education recognizes that there is personal, cultural, social, academic, and vocational/occupational value in encouraging students to maintain, or develop, proficiency in more than one language.

2. RECOMMENDED EFFECTIVE DATE

If the proposed amendments are included, the Department recommends that the effective date be the date of passage.

3. RECOMMENDED COMPLIANCE DATE

Same as the effective date to the extent that the Department's capacity permits implementation.

4. DISCUSSION

a. Conditions leading to the recommendation

The Department solicited feedback from complex area superintendents, principals, and other Department staff who may be affected by the implementation and administration of this policy. Overwhelmingly, the feedback indicated a concern with the possible obligations of the Department under the policy and the concomitant workload. Additionally, there were concerns regarding the Department's ability to implement the policy given the vast number of languages students bring with them to the public schools.

b. Previous actions of the Board on the same or similar matter

The Board of Education took action on this policy on May 5, 2015, and June 2, 2015.

c. Other policies affected

Policy 4540 may also be affected as the Seal is a recognition awarded to graduating students.

d. Arguments in support of the recommendation

Hawaii has historically been a culturally and linguistically diverse state and the Department of Education is pleased to support this opportunity to recognize students who demonstrate their linguistic proficiency. However, the Department desires clarity in its responsibilities and obligations under the policy, particularly given the vast number of languages students bring with them to the public schools. We believe our recommended amendments provide this clarity.

Additionally, with the clarity provided by our recommended amendments, it is clear that the Department is not mandated to create assessments or classes and the responsibility is on the student to demonstrate proficiency under the policy. As such, the Department can begin implementation, including by developing criteria that students must satisfy to receive the Seal. The Department would like to emphasize, however, that the policy must be implemented in accordance with the Department's current capacity. As with any new policy, there are financial and workload implications that must necessarily result in a staggered implementation over time.

e. Arguments against the recommendation

None.

f. Other agencies or departments of the State of Hawaii involved in action:

The University of Hawaii has been advocating for the passage of this policy and may be called upon by the Department to assist with implementation.

g. Possible reaction of the public, professional organizations, unions, Department of Education staff, and others to the recommendation:

Affected staff and interested stakeholders will appreciate the recommendation as it clarifies the role of the Department in the administration of this policy and emphasizes the importance of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i.

h. Educational Implication

Once implementation occurs, this policy will encourage students to take the initiative in providing documentation to the Department demonstrating that they have met the criteria for the Seal, which will result in students working independently or through classes already offered at schools towards obtaining multiple language proficiency.

i. **Financial Implication**

Based on the June 2, 2015, memorandum from Board Member Patricia Halagao to Student Achievement Committee Chairperson Cheryl Ka'uhane Lupenui regarding the Seal of Biliteracy, the intent of the policy is as follows:

The policy is not intended to require the Department to provide, establish, or maintain assessments for any and every language that a student speaks. This policy also does not require the Department to teach all languages that a student speaks or desires to learn. In earning the Seal of Biliteracy, it is incumbent on the student to provide evidence of proficiency at a level to be determined by the state in English and in an additional language. The Department would be responsible for identifying the assessments which are acceptable evidence of language proficiency in English and another language.

Since the Department of Education is not mandated to create assessments or classes and the responsibility would be on the student to demonstrate proficiency, in the foreseeable future, financial implications would include the administration of the Seal, which may include changes or upgrades to the electronic student information system and an increase in personnel to address administration. There may also need to be monies allocated to informing Department staff and students of their roles and responsibilities.

5. **OTHER SUPPLEMENTARY RECOMMENDATIONS**

None.

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