

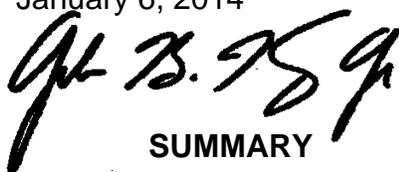


THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

**TO:** P-12 Education Committee  
**FROM:** Ken Slentz   
**SUBJECT:** Seal of Biliteracy Pilot

**DATE:** January 6, 2014

**AUTHORIZATION(S):**

  
**SUMMARY**

### **Issue for Discussion**

To provide the Board of Regents with an update on the Department's progress in implementing a Seal of Biliteracy pilot.

### **Background Information**

The State Seal of Biliteracy, passed by the Legislature and signed into law by the Governor on July 31, 2012, was 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."

Chapter 271 of the Laws of 2012 (Section 815 of Education Law) established the New York State Seal of Biliteracy 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 NYS Seal of Biliteracy will be awarded by the Commissioner to students who meet criteria established by the Board of Regents and attend schools in districts that voluntarily agree to participate in the program. The Seal of Biliteracy will be affixed to the high school diploma and transcript of graduating pupils attaining Seal criteria and must be made available to students at no cost.

New York has become the second state to implement a Seal of Biliteracy program. California was the first state to establish a program, with its legislation becoming effective January 1, 2012. In the first year of implementation, California awarded its Seal to more than 10,000 graduating high school students who demonstrated proficiency in more than 40 different languages. A number of districts in New Mexico including the largest district in the State, the Albuquerque Public Schools,

have also developed a Seal of Biliteracy program. The Albuquerque Public Schools' Bilingual Seal is currently offered only to students demonstrating biliteracy in English and Spanish; however the district is exploring how to expand the program to languages spoken by Native American communities.

### **Intent of NYS Seal of Biliteracy**

As stated in the legislation, the intent of the NYS Seal of Biliteracy is to: encourage the study of languages; identify high school graduates with language and biliteracy skills for employers; provide universities with additional information about applicants seeking admission; prepare students with twenty-first century skills; recognize the value of foreign and native language instruction in schools; and affirm the value of diversity in a multilingual society. These goals are consistent with the Regents Reform Agenda of ensuring that all New York State students graduate college- and career-ready.

### **Next Steps**

Guided by a Regents-led statewide workgroup, the Department's Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign Language Studies will implement the State Seal of Biliteracy Program in two phases, beginning with a one year Pilot Implementation Program (during the 2014-15 academic year) which will be followed by a full, implementation program. The pilot would allow NYSED to work with a few targeted districts/schools to develop a State Seal of Biliteracy proposal and implement it with high school juniors and/or seniors. Similar initiatives have been successfully implemented in a number of states and cities across the country, among which are California, Washington State and the city of Albuquerque, NM.

This pilot will afford districts/schools the opportunity to develop innovative ways of measuring and creating an approved path to the attainment of the Seal of Biliteracy (especially in the case of low incidence languages). This is an opportunity for districts/schools to inform statewide policy development and share best practices.

Districts/schools are invited to participate in the State Seal of Biliteracy Pilot Implementation Program, based on a distinct set of criteria, among which are, the school's capacity, expressed interest, demonstrated commitment to foreign language instruction, parental and community support. This is consistent with the Regents Reform Agenda which seeks to promote student college and career readiness.