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Dear Parent or Guardian, Re: Massachusetts State Seal of Biliteracy

An important goal of the West Bridgewater Public Schools' World Language Department is to adopt the principles of communicative proficiency in a second language. Our focus is on what our students can actually "**DO**" with a second language, not how much they know "about" a language's mechanics. This is a progressive philosophy that is spreading across the nation and as such, Massachusetts has joined over 40 other states in awarding a **Seal of Biliteracy** upon graduation that certifies a student's communicative ability in a second language to future schools and employers.

On June 26, 2018 the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted regulations that describe the criteria that school districts must use to award the **State Seal of Biliteracy** on the diplomas and transcripts of graduating seniors.. The purposes of the seal include to:

- Recognize the value of language diversity
- Provide employers with a method of identifying people with language and biliteracy skills.
- Provide universities with a method to recognize and give credit to applicants for the attainment of high level skills in languages
- Prepare students with skills that will benefit them in the labor market and the global society
- Strengthen intergroup communication and honor the multiple cultures and languages in a community.

This opportunity is open to all of our students. What does a student need to do in order to qualify for the **Seal of Biliteracy** upon graduation?

If your child is a native speaker or heritage speaker of a language other than English and has attained a high level of literacy in this native or heritage language, then they can apply to take a language proficiency test in their native language by speaking to any ESL teacher or any World Language Teacher at the middle/high school. They must also have passed the 10th Grade ELA MCAS in English.

If your child is a native English speaker, then they can earn this seal by starting a second language early in their school career and staying with it as long as possible since learning a second language is a complex cognitive process that takes a number of years to master. Mid April each year we will offer our World Language learners the opportunity to take a language proficiency exam in their developing second language. The exams are scored externally by certified raters and are reported separately for each of the four domains of language (listening, reading, speaking, and writing). The rating provided by this assessment is a nationally recognized rating that can be used both academically and professionally to describe one's proficiency in a language.

If you have any questions please contact any World Language Teacher or ESL teacher. We are very excited about this initiative and the many benefits it will provide as well as doors this will open for our students.