

Seal of Biliteracy recognizes multilingual students

New exam offers diploma of biliteracy for students in language classes.

by Mack Guthrie

This year the MCL department will be offering students the opportunity to earn a Seal of Biliteracy in various languages on their diploma.

The Seal of Biliteracy and its sibling, Commendation towards Biliteracy, started in California, and was adopted by Illinois in 2013. The award can be earned in various languages, as well as for non-native English speakers. It takes the form of a physical stamp on a graduate's diploma and their transcript.

While students can earn the seal by scoring a 4 or 5 on the AP exam in their respective language, a new test from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) called the Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL) exam is available in more languages.

The AAPPL tests all realms of language knowledge, including listening, speaking, reading and writing. A friendly on-screen avatar guides the students to say as much as you can in the language and nods and tilts its head mimicking the body language of a real-life listener.

"It's really about what you can do with the language. Can you read, can you listen, can you respond appropriately?" asked Lorri Starck-King, the MCL Department Chair.

Senior Ellie Pearlman, who took the test last year as the department piloted the program said, "I thought it was kind of fun, it was cool because part of the speaking portion was a simulation of a facetime conversation with a native speaker."

Hebrew and Japanese students will take a different test called the Standards-based Measurement of Proficiency, and Latin students will take a different test from the ACTFL called the Latin Interpretive Reading Assessment to earn the seal of biliteracy.

The test is also being geared in part towards heritage language speakers, such as the children of first or second generation immigrants who have learned a language at home.

For this reason, the school will also allow students to test for the seal in Arabic, Portuguese, Italian, and Russian.

"In today's world, it is extremely beneficial for our students to embrace their ancestry, native languages and cultural diversity," said Alderman Ray Suarez of Chicago's 31st ward, after CPS adopted the seal in 2015.

Stark-King said that this program "recognizes our native speakers and our heritage language



The Seal of Biliteracy exam can be taken as a junior or senior in IL. | New Trier

students, those students who may not be in a French class but might speak French at home."

She explained that the department has already had several students sign up to take tests for languages not taught New Trier, namely several speakers of Russian.

However some students feel excluded by the current offering of languages. Junior Ana Cornell, the daughter of Romanian immigrants felt that the languages offered were a bit unfair.

"I can name seven people off the top of my head that speak Romanian at this school. I can't think of one Portuguese speaker" she said in protest. "I also learned two languages, why does the fact that mine is more uncommon have to hurt me?"

Junior Stephen Hajjar, who does in fact speak Portuguese, felt differently, explaining that

the test wasn't too big of a deal, particularly for college admissions.

"I am already listing Portuguese as my first language, so I don't think the test would make a big difference," He said. Hajjar also studies Spanish at New Trier and is planning to take the AP exam, making him eligible for the seal.

Another Romanian speaker, senior Paul Farcasanu, explained that he didn't mind much that Romanian was not eligible for the seal.

Stark-King explained that the tests are developed and approved by an outside organization and that "those are the ones that are available, so those are the ones we offer."

The ACTFL has stated that AAPPL tests for new languages are in development.

Farcasanu, who studied French all four years explained that he does not plan to take the

test for French either as he has already been accepted to college.

Pearlman felt similarly, and explained that despite the "part of me that cares about the stamp," she had already been admitted to college, and wasn't sure if she wanted to spend the time or money.

"I don't know how much it would have helped either way, unless you're majoring in communications or Spanish," she said

Charles Murphy Associate Director of Recruitment & Outreach from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign office of undergraduate admissions said that while the Seal of Biliteracy would be considered an honor or award in their application review process, "we will put much more emphasis on the performance and level of second language courses in high school."

Stark-King explained that, because of the limited number of people who can take the test, seniors are given priority. "Since the further you get along in your language learning, the more you will be able to do, we think students will be more successful if they get further down that path."

Reminding students that neither a single test nor the seal is the end-all-be-all of language learning, she added, "We hope they will be life-long language learners no matter what language they are studying."

Pledge participation causes controversy

The pledge is under scrutiny as patriotism is examined

by Lexi Shoup

With recent controversy surrounding players kneeling during the National Anthem before NFL games, the recitation of patriotic statements has been in question.

Colin Kaepernick, quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers, knelt during the National Anthem during the NFL preseason this year.

After a photo of him kneeling was tweeted, he gained immense media attention for his protest. Many claimed his protest was unpatriotic and disrespectful.

Junior Ilana Nazari thinks the opposite. "I don't think what he did was wrong. I think he was well within his right," She said.

Defending his decision to kneel, Kaepernick said, "When there's significant change and I feel that flag represents what it's supposed to represent, and this country is representing people the way that it's supposed to, I'll stand."

The Pledge of Allegiance plays on the New Trier loudspeaker each morning during the daily announcements.

Nazari said that while the pledge is being recited over the loudspeaker, her advisory, "[doesn't] listen. We don't get quiet. we just keep talking. But our adviser stops to listen."

This varies from how the pledge was handled in earlier years. "Freshman year, my adviser made us stand up even if we didn't say it. We had to stand and be quiet," Nazari said.

Junior Kara Struckman added, "I used to say it more when I was in middle school, but I don't think it measures my opinions. I'm still patriotic."

The deterrence in pledge recitation could be due to a variety



Kaepernick kneels while teammates recite the National Anthem. | AP Images

of factors, including laziness, or a question of what the pledge represents.

Nazari said, "I don't say the pledge and I haven't for years. Namely because it doesn't prove anything. I'm pledging my allegiance to the flag, but what about that flag? What does that flag represent? I'm not particularly patriotic anyway, so saying the pledge has never been a big deal for me."

Senior Caroline Kelly has always stood up to recite the pledge. "I know there has been controversy about Kaepernick kneeling during the National Anthem, and I'm fine with that. I think saying the pledge is a way to bring Americans together, pledging an allegiance to our Nation," She said.

Reciting the Pledge is not required in the state of Illinois, according to First Amendment Center. Illinois law says, "The Pledge of Allegiance shall be recited each school day by pupils in elementary and secondary educational institutions supported or maintained in whole or in part by public funds."

However, the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals decided that since students have the option to opt out, this does not violate their First Amendment rights.

This means that whether or not students actually stand up and

recite the pledge is completely up to the individual, but since New Trier is a public school, the pledge will continue to play on morning announcements.

The Pledge's purpose is said to instill a state of Patriotism into students each morning. Some people though, question the Pledge's inclusion of the words "under God."

Junior Nadia James said, "I used to say the Pledge during advisory, but I never said 'under God'. I'm not a super religious person and I don't really understand why they would include that. I'm sure there are people like me that agree. Not everyone believes in the same God or even a God at all."

According to Business Insider, "under God" was added to the Pledge in 1954 when President Eisenhower urged Congress to pass legislation to include the phrase. He added this because during his presidency, the Cold War was intensifying and the United States was fighting Communism, so the line was added to inspire a more unified population. This decision has been controversial, as it brings into question the separation of Church and State detailed in the Constitution.

"I would prefer if 'under God' wasn't part of the Pledge, but it's not a big deal to just leave it out," James said.

Trevapalooza lights up the dance floor in its second year

Students prepare for annual dance over President's weekend

by Ben Morrissey

Despite the fact that Trevapalooza is on Presidents Day weekend, that will not stop students from attending the event.

Most students are actually pleased with the date that was chosen for this year's dance.

"It's good that it's in February because nothing happens in February. It is also spaced very well between Homecoming and Prom," said Senior Cooper Woolford.

Woolford also said that since there is school on the Monday after the weekend of the dance so people were less likely to schedule a vacation for that weekend.

Senior Mia Krone added that no matter what day is chosen for the dance some people are going to have a conflict that causes them to be unable to attend the dance.

This year's theme is Superheroes vs. Villains

The date is only one detail that has to be planned out for the dance. Moira Gitau, sponsor for Global Exchange Club, leads students in preparing the event.

The first thing that has to be prepared is the official name of the event and the theme of the event. This year's theme is Superheroes Vs. Villains.

Once they have the theme decided, decorations need to be made based on the theme of the dance. Then, New Trier chooses a company for that dance that provides a DJ and other entertainment. According to Gitau, New Trier has to pick one company to provide all of the entertainment

for the dance to prevent the dance from becoming too expensive.

This year's dance will have a wide variety of activities. Along with the music provided by the DJ, the dance will include a spinning joust game where students will attempt to duck under or jump over a joust coming at them. It will also include refreshments, a photo booth, and a game room with air hockey, pop a shot, ping pong, and other games.

"We want to make sure that a wide variety of students have fun at the dance," Gitau said.

The decorations are set up the day of the dance and because of other activities going on, the setup for the dance can't begin until late in the morning or early afternoon. The Gates Gym is not available until 1:00 PM.

Students use their IDs to get into the dance. This was chosen as the best way to have kids enter the dance to avoid problems with lost tickets and kids potentially selling the tickets to other people.

Another priority is having enough staff to cover all of the areas of the school. All exits are clearly labeled and the staff is there to make sure that all exits are cleared of crowds so students can safely leave the building.

"I think it's a good time to spend with friends. It's fun if you go with a good friend group," Said Senior Katy Symanietz.

Juniors and seniors also get the benefit of deciding on a theme for the group they go with.

"My favorite part is dressing up with my friends and having a good time together," said Krone.

Though the dance seems to be very popular with students, they still say that there are ways that it could be improved.

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