

# Seals of Biliteracy Implementation and uptake in MN

Second Lg. Education

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
+ HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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## What is the seal of biliteracy?



### Context

- MN bilingual and multilingual seal legislation passed in 2014 as part of LEAPs Act.
- Awards a 'seal' and high school / college credit if they can proficiency in English and a language other than English.

Certificate / Seals	ACTFL Level	College credits
World Language Proficiency Certificate	Intermediate-Low	2 semesters
Gold bilingual or multilingual seal	Intermediate-High	3 semesters per language
Platinum bilingual or multilingual seal	Advanced-Low	4 semesters per language



### Research questions

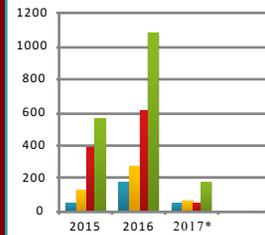
- How is the MN bilingual and multilingual seal and certificate legislation implemented to date?
- How is the MN bilingual and multilingual seal and certificate legislation constructed in discourse and narrative?
- What inequities or challenges are evident in legislation implementation?

### Methods: Multiple Case Studies

- Interviews with state and local administrators
- Collection and analysis of data reports (state and local)
- Analysis of public discourses and press coverage

## Findings: Uptake

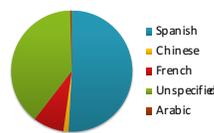
### Implementation to date



### 2015 Seals awarded by language



### 2016 Seals awarded by language



Unspecified include: Chinese, French, German, Russian, Spanish, Finnish

### Discourse Framing

#### Multilingualism as asset

"The bilingual seal is very-- has the potential to be very empowering because it's an official acknowledgement of the assets that our heritage learners bring to the school." (Suburban teacher)

#### Administrative hurdles and hyper-local implementation

### MN Seals /MDE

"Logistically explaining to schools, here's what you do to get the seals, has been very time consuming, and each situation is different. You don't know what you don't know" (MDE official)

#### Urban district

"In the legislation it says that seals must be affixed to students' transcripts. It's easy to put into words in 30 seconds, but to actually being able to do that, it took me three years." (Urban district coordinator)

#### Rural district

"It's difficult to figure out, lots of people don't know what it is. Need to keep emailing and showing the documents" (Rural district coordinator)

#### Suburban district

Has been confusing to figure out. First year to award seals will be 2018 for immersion students, 2019 for EL students. Doesn't know what seal will look like. (Suburban district coordinator)

## Findings: Gaps

### Inequities and challenges



#### Uneven access across languages

- Current efforts at the state level to develop assessments for top 12 languages + Ojibwe and Dakota, yet resources limited.
- Somali and Hmong state-developed assessments were administered for the first time in 2017.
- Many commonly spoken languages still don't have available tests (e.g. Oromo, Karen).

#### HL assesses as FL

- Questions in English and not relevant to HLL's experiences (e.g. why they're studying Spanish, study abroad), yet developing tests for HL not a priority: "Also need to pay attention to Somali speakers and Hmong speakers, and Spanish has a test. Can't justify the effort for that quite yet." (Urban district coordinator)

#### Funding for testing through EL budgets

- In rural districts with no WL Dept, funding comes from EL Depts., and competes for funding with other LEAPS Act initiatives:
- "Everybody excited about this until it comes to money. We don't have enough money for teachers, after school programs, translations, liaisons, recruiting bilingual staff. There's always a money issues." (Rural district coordinator)

#### Limited state-wide visibility

- Few suburban and rural schools have awarded seals since implementation is voluntary, there is no funding connected to it, and there is a general confusion about how to go about implementing. Limited numbers and outreach also mean limited visibility:
- "We haven't heard that it's important to employers, we haven't heard that it's important for colleges and I think that as a result we've been very passive about it and just kind of continued doing what we had always done." (Teacher)

## Implications

- Growing, but unevenly
- Need for greater state-wide promotion
- Need for early development of HL and support for multilingualism from K up



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