

***Proficiency in Languages Other Than English:
How Did the Shrewsbury High School Class of 2022 Perform in the Seal of Biliteracy?***

Presented to the School Committee on January 25, 2023

By Kenneth A. Almeida

Director of World Languages Shrewsbury Public Schools

Summary:

The first cohort of students from Shrewsbury Public Schools participated in the Seal of Biliteracy Program in the second half of the 2021-22 academic year. The results were reported to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) via the year-end Student Information Management System (SIMS) report. It is important to note that the data on this report is slightly different than on the SIMS report for two reasons. The SIMS data reported to DESE did not include students that qualified via results on Advanced Placement (AP) exams, as that data was received after the SIMS reporting deadline. As a result, 15 additional students have earned the Seal based on their AP scores. AP results also changed original reporting for students who scored Intermediate High on the ACTFL Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL) test but earned a 5 (*Advanced*) on the AP exam. This resulted in three students receiving the Seal with Distinction who were originally reported as earning the Seal. An inquiry was made to DESE regarding amending the originally reported results but DESE does not allow for this. The World Language DESE representative advised that districts award the Seal to those students whose results are received after the submission of the SIMS report. In addition, students were awarded a Seal per language for which they met the qualifying score. DESE only allows one Seal per student reported on SIMS data, regardless of the number of languages other than English in which the student has received a rating of *Intermediate High* or above. After consultation with other district leaders from the Eastern

Massachusetts Foreign Language Association, students were awarded a Seal per language in which they scored the appropriate ACTFL proficiency targets.

The Shrewsbury High School (SHS) Class of 2022 garnered a total of 47 Seal of Biliteracy awards. There were 137 applicants to the program, some of whom participated in more than one language. One-hundred and five (105) participants were World Language students enrolled in an SHS course and 32 were students who identified their home language as one other than English. Thirteen (13) languages were assessed. The largest group in World Languages was Spanish and in LOTE (Languages Other Than English) was Portuguese, with 50 and 11 students participating respectively. Consequently, those two languages were awarded the highest number of Seals in their categories - 17 World Language students earned the Seal in Spanish and six LOTE students were awarded the Seal in Portuguese. In total, 31 World Language students earned the Seal accounting for 61.9% of all recipients, seven of whom earned the Seal with Distinction. Sixteen (16) LOTE students earned the Seal accounting for 38% of the total recipients, four of whom earned the Seal with Distinction.

The LOTEs that earned the Seal with Distinction were Chinese (one student), Spanish (one student) and Tamil (two students). The World Languages making the Seal with Distinction were French (four students), Spanish (two students), and Chinese (one student). Preliminary AAPPL testing results in World Language students for the class of 2023 indicate a higher number of participants earning the Seal of Biliteracy through AAPPL testing, pending Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) data verification. Twenty-three (23) World Language students from the SHS Class of 2023 are estimated to earn the Seal of Biliteracy based on AAPPL test results, eight more than those receiving the Seal on the same assessment from the class of 2022, representing a 53% increase. In addition, five students from the current

senior class have scored *Advanced* on the AAPPL test, qualifying them for the Seal with Distinction. It is worthwhile to note that these students from the class of 2023 were tested as juniors. Additional time and Professional Development for staff will be needed to adjust practices and curriculum in the SPS World Language Program to achieve higher levels of proficiency overall.

Overview of the Massachusetts Seal of Biliteracy Program

The Seal of Biliteracy Program in Massachusetts is one of the building blocks for the 2021 Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for World Languages. The Framework states that “All Massachusetts students should acquire a high level of linguistic and cultural proficiency in at least one world language. Proficiency in one or more world languages will empower students to use languages other than English to tell their own stories, understand the stories of others, and engage with their communities” (6). The assessments available in World Languages assist in ensuring that districts’ programs are highly effective according to the Guiding Principles of “including and benefiting all students; producing high levels of linguistic and cultural competency; and measuring linguistic proficiency” which are found in the Framework (11).

The Seal of Biliteracy is a key element of the Look Act, which Governor Baker enacted on November 22, 2017 (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020). Its implementation in the Commonwealth aims to:

- encourage students to study and master languages;
- certify attainment of biliteracy skills;
- 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; and
- strengthen intergroup communication and honor the multiple cultures and languages in a community.

For students to earn the Seal, they must meet all graduation requirements, demonstrate high levels of proficiency in English, and demonstrate high levels of proficiency in a language other than English. Students may indicate a status of “language-confirmed candidates” for the Seal of Biliteracy if they have met the English and the LOTE requirements, pending the completion of all graduation requirements. Students do not need to wait until their senior year to test in the LOTE. The English proficiency levels are determined by the grade 10 English Language Arts (ELA) MCAS scores. The minimum qualifying score for the Seal of Biliteracy is 472 (MCAS NextGen); for the Seal with Distinction, the minimum score is 507 (MCAS NextGen). Students that score between 455-471 on the MCAS may still qualify if they fulfill the requirements of an Educational Proficiency Plan and attain a minimum score (472) on an MCAS retake, or for English Language Learners (ELLs), take the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State (WIDA-ACCESS) exam and score 4.2 (overall) and 3.9 (composite literacy).

In addition to the high level of Proficiency in English, students must meet high standards in a LOTE. Students must attain the minimum level of *Intermediate-High* (or equivalent) on all relevant skills in the LOTE on an approved test or portfolio to earn the Seal of Biliteracy. To earn the Seal with Distinction, students must score *Advanced-Low* (or equivalent) on all relevant skills in the LOTE on an approved test or portfolio. The relevant skills may vary according to whether the language is spoken or not, has a written representation, and/or is an ancient/classical language.

This initiative is of equal importance to our heritage learners and speakers of languages other than English, as some state universities and community colleges are offering college credit for students who earn the Seal, as is done with Advanced Placement scores. In this way, English Language Learners can be awarded credit for their native language skills rather than being required to learn a language in addition to English. The Massachusetts Seal of Biliteracy creates more equitable schools by “recognizing all students’ linguistic assets regardless of the language that students speak/sign” (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020).

Program Enrollment and Logistics

The two subsets of participants (World Language and LOTE homes) were enrolled in the program in a distinct manner. All World Language students enrolled in Intermediate Four, Five, and AP Modern Language courses, as well as those students in Latin Four and Five, were automatically entered into the program by the Director. Chinese, French, and Spanish students were given the AAPPL test. Latin students were administered the ACTFL Latin Interpretive Reading Assessment (ALIRA) test. Level Five and AP World Language courses took the tests in

February 2022. AP students took their corresponding AP exam in May. Level 4 students took the respective assessment in May/June as part of their final examination in their courses. Only the Interpretive Reading test counted towards their final examination. The decision to include the Interpretive Reading test as the final examination was because all languages have this component as testing for the Seal. Furthermore, the results for level five students indicated that SPS students scored higher in this skill. Having data from a standardized ACTFL-based test will assist in targeting underperforming segments and curriculum design.

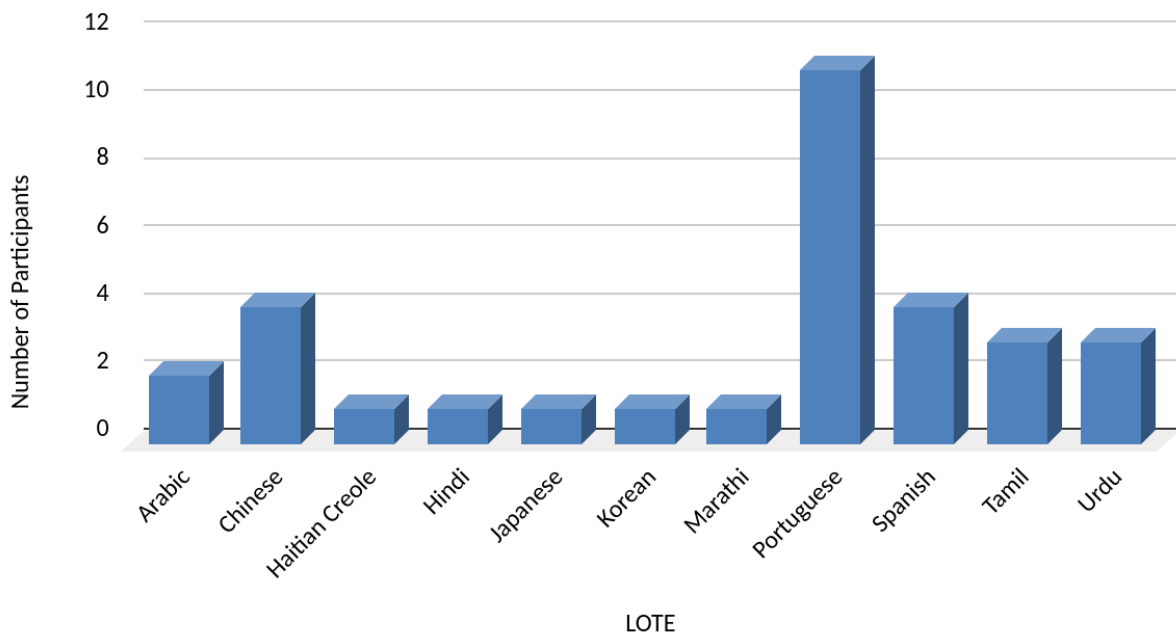
Students from LOTE homes were enrolled in the Seal of Biliteracy Program with the assistance of the English and ELE departments. Senior English/ELE teachers gave their students a language survey and an invitation to participate in the SEAL of Biliteracy Program. Once that data was collected, the director of World Languages had to find the DESE-approved proficiency assessments for those languages. The majority of the languages were available in the AAPPL testing program. However, four of the languages needed to be assessed through other exams. Those exams were the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) and Writing Proficiency Test (WPT) for Haitian Creole and Urdu, the Avant World Speak for Marathi, and the Aja Exam in Tamil. Students were excused during the academic day to take those exams. The Aja Tamil exam is only administered during the evening so the three participants were notified in advance.

Test Data:

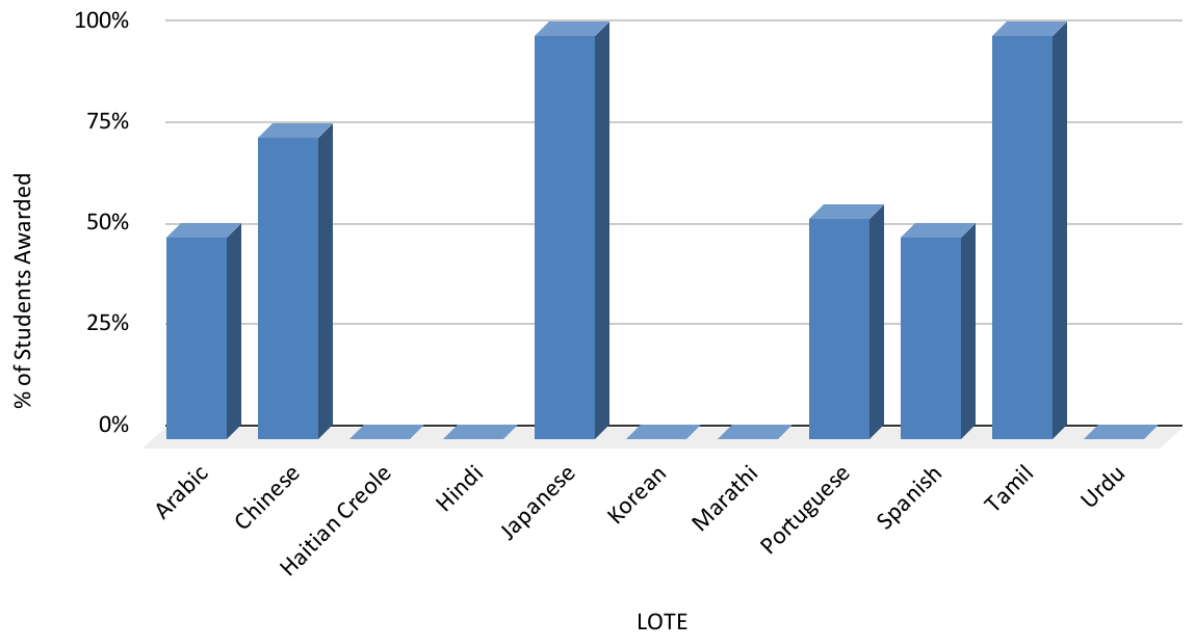
In order to understand the results and compare them with national averages, a distinction must be made between the two student subsets. As mentioned above, the cohort of participants was grouped by student type: World Language and students from LOTE homes. An analysis of the two subsets was conducted and its findings are detailed below.

For students from LOTE homes, 50% of the participants received the Seal of Biliteracy. Of those students, four received the Seal of Biliteracy with Distinction. This means that those students are at an advanced proficiency level in English and a LOTE. The LOTE earning the most Seals measured as the percentage of participants was Tamil with all of the participants awarded. Tamil was also the LOTE with the most students earning the Seal with Distinction. However, in terms of the Seal recipients by language, speakers of Portuguese were awarded the majority of the Seals of Biliteracy accounting for nearly 38% of the subset. It is important to note that 55% of students whose LOTE is Portuguese earned the Seal and this was the largest LOTE tested in the subset.

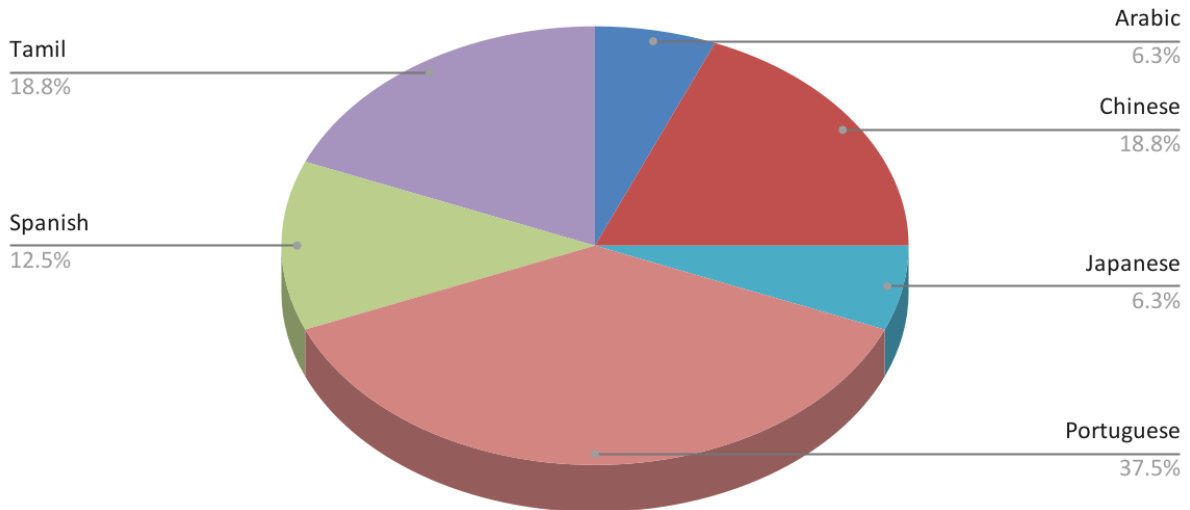
Number of Participants by LOTE



% of Students Awarded in Language (LOTE Students)



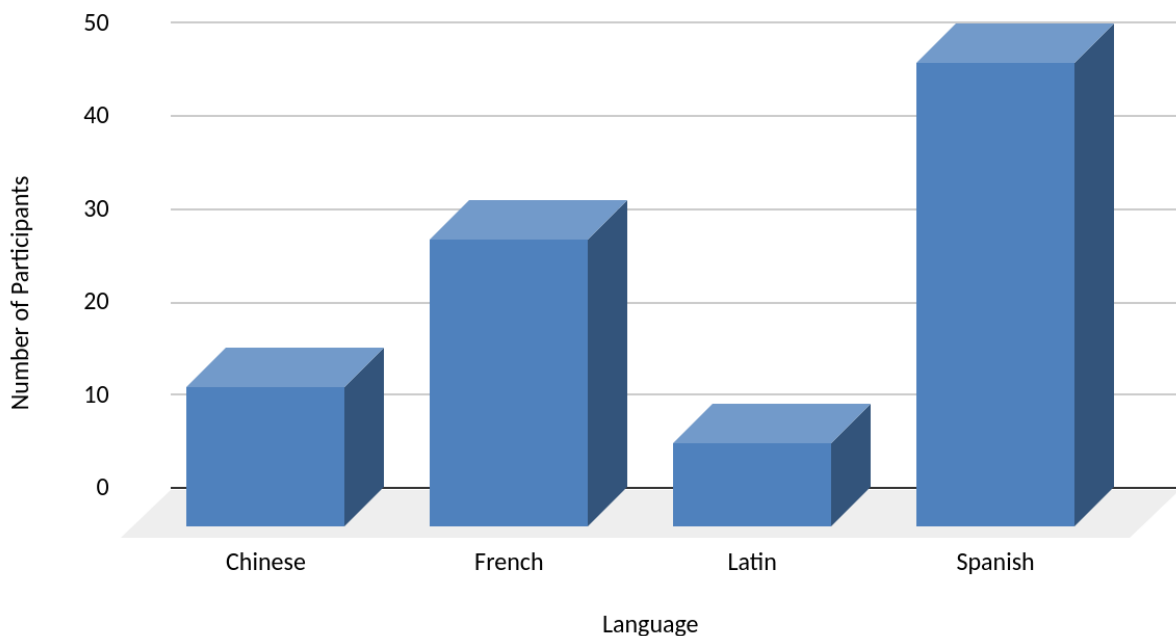
% of Total Recipients by Language (LOTE Students)



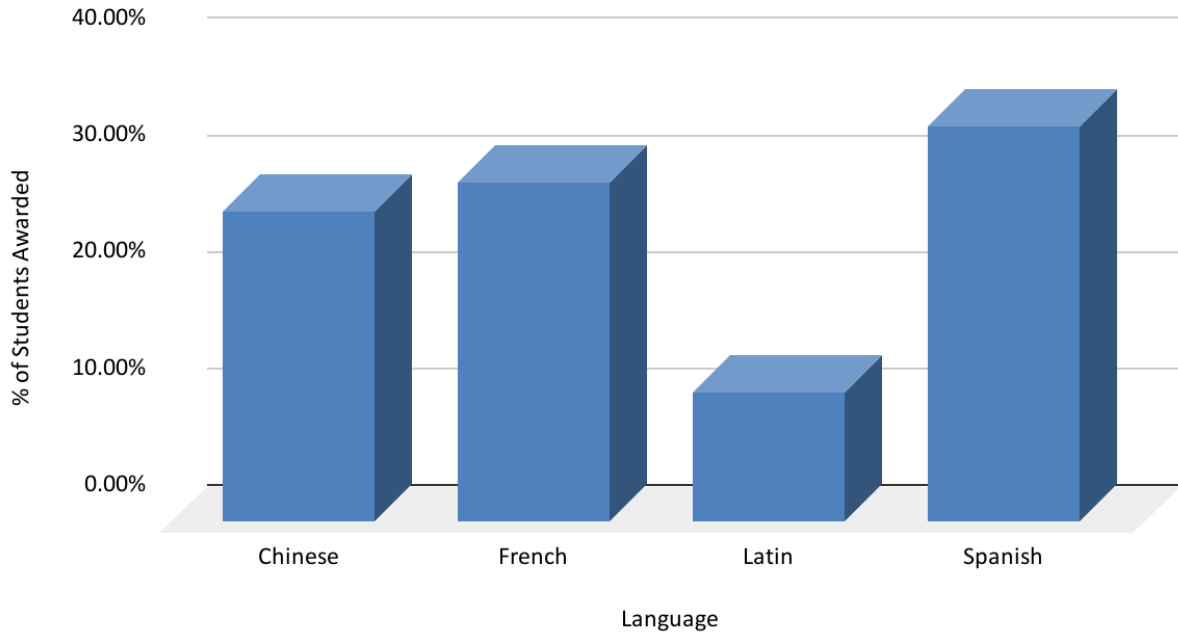
In the World Language subset, nearly 30% of participants (31 students) earned the Seal of Biliteracy. Of those students who earned the Seal, seven earned the Seal with Distinction.

However, had DESE fully waived the MCAS requirement, an additional student would have earned the Seal with Distinction. Nearly 55% of the total World Language Seal recipients were enrolled in an SHS Spanish class. In addition, the highest percentage of Seal recipients by language was also Spanish with 34% of all Spanish participants earning the Seal. French language students earned the highest number of Seals with Distinction (seven). The majority of those who did not receive the Seal of Biliteracy in a Modern Language via AAPPL testing missed it in one or two modes. Of those that missed the Seal in one mode, nearly 89% of them scored I4 with I5 being the qualifying score. Seventeen (17) of the 27 students missed the qualifying score in speaking and ten in writing. SHS World Language staff have analyzed these results and were encouraged to focus on those opportunities for higher student outcomes by adjusting practices to target improved speaking and writing scores.

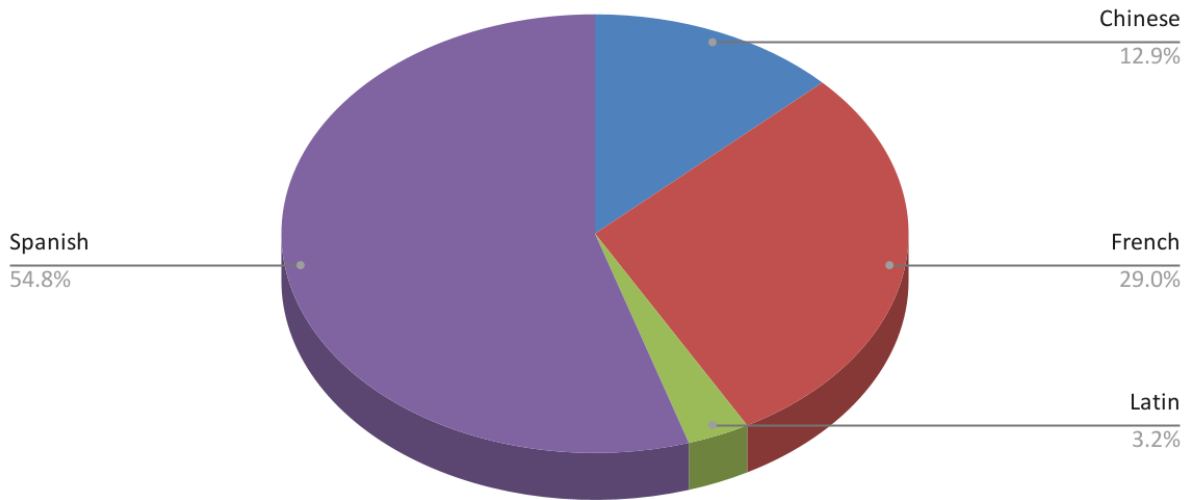
Number of Participants by Language



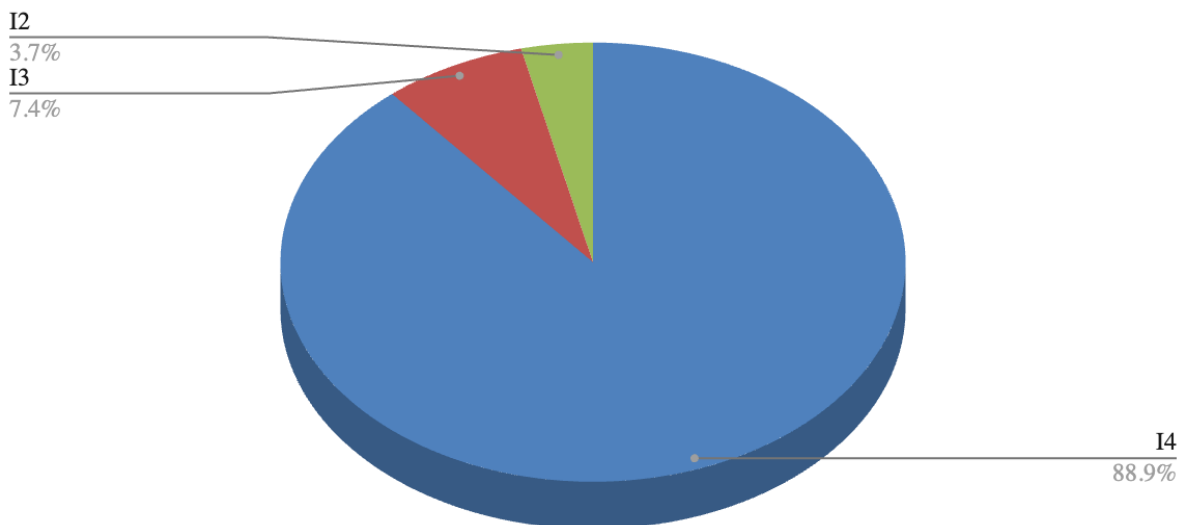
% of Students Awarded in Language (World Language Students)



% of Total Recipients By Language (World Language Students)



Actual Scores on Missing Mode Needed to Qualify



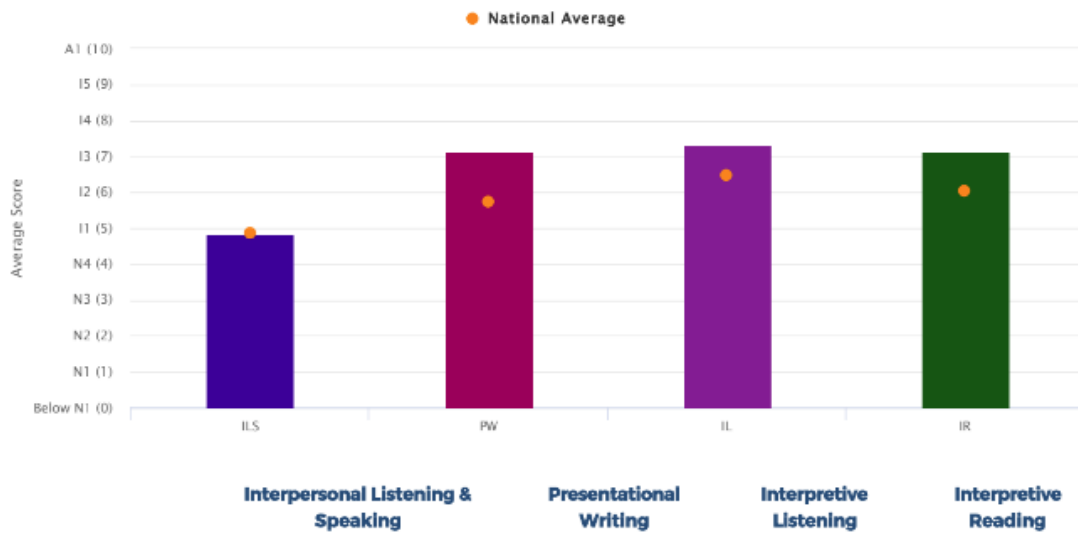
SPS World Language Students Compared Nationally:

The World Language subset of students participating in the Seal of Biliteracy in Chinese, French, and Spanish did well on the AAPPL test compared to all secondary school students nationally. This data analysis is not possible for the ALIRA test in Latin. Students in Chinese scored higher than the National Secondary School average in all modes except *Interpersonal*. Students in both French and Spanish scored higher than the National Secondary School average in all modes. It is important to note that the Quick Reference Guide for Languages with Diverse Written Representations (LDWR) from the Massachusetts World Language Curriculum Framework mentions that LDWR's such as Chinese, "require more time to learn than world languages that are more similar to English" (1). This likely explains the results of the Chinese AAPPL test. It is recommended that the Chinese language be introduced earlier in SPS in order to attain favorable results.

**Shrewsbury High School
AAPPL National Report
10/2/2022**

The following chart shows the average scores of Shrewsbury High School's Grade Level Secondary / High School students who took the Chinese AAPPL from 2/1/2022 to 3/12/2022 . The average score is presented for each mode of communication in relation to the national average for all students.

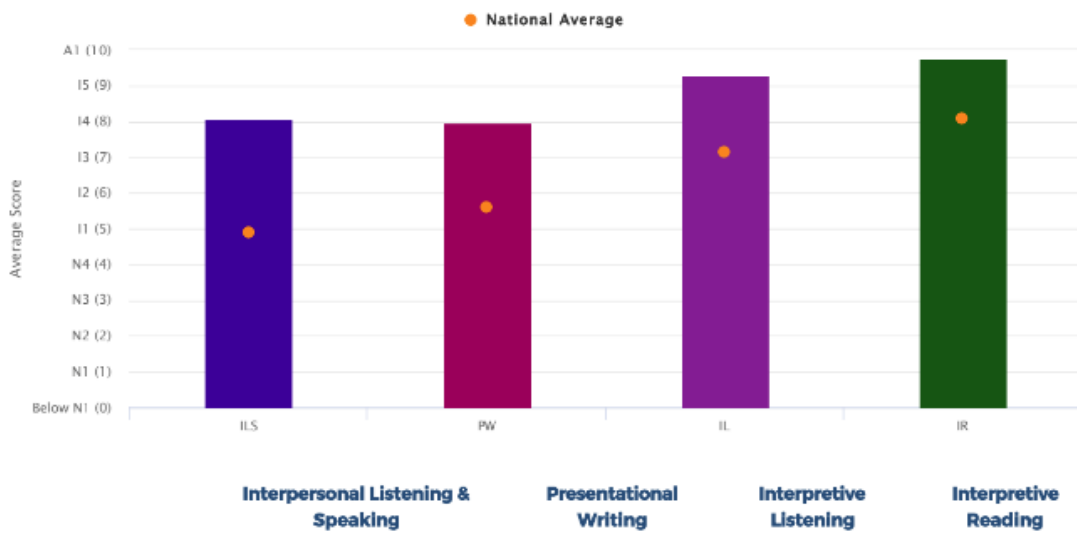
DATE RANGE	STUDENTS	LANGUAGES	GRADE LEVEL
2/1/2022 to 3/12/2022	All Students	Chinese	Secondary / High School



**Shrewsbury High School
AAPPL National Report
10/2/2022**

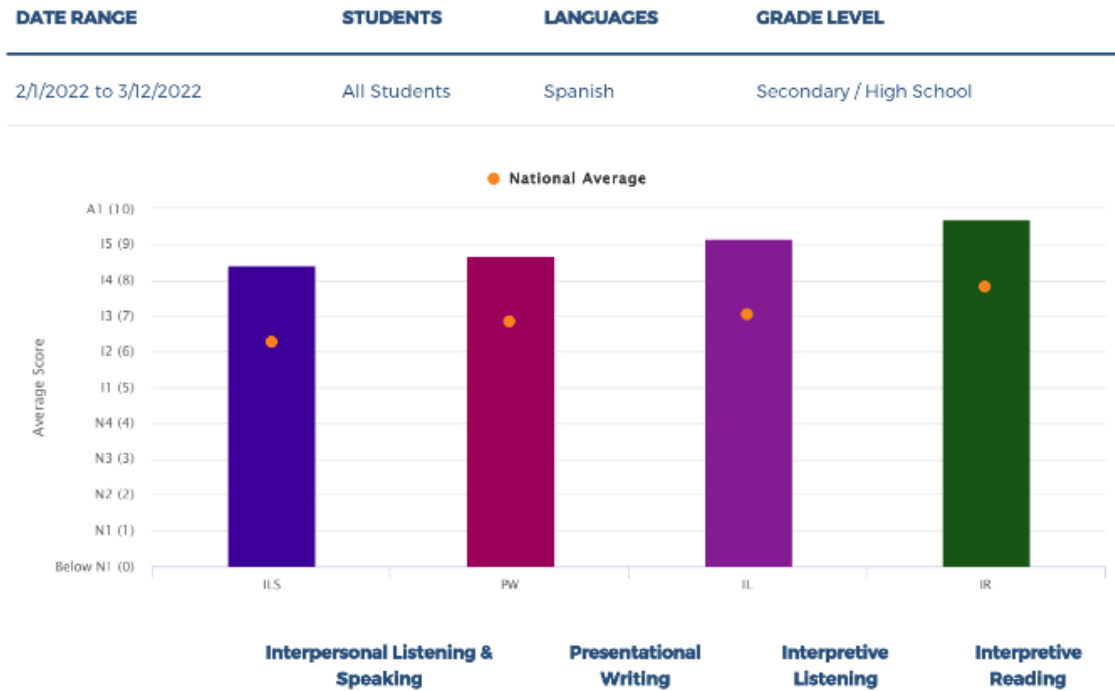
The following chart shows the average scores of Shrewsbury High School's Grade Level Secondary / High School students who took the French AAPPL from 2/1/2022 to 3/12/2022 . The average score is presented for each mode of communication in relation to the national average for all students.

DATE RANGE	STUDENTS	LANGUAGES	GRADE LEVEL
2/1/2022 to 3/12/2022	All Students	French	Secondary / High School



**Shrewsbury High School
AAPPL National Report
10/2/2022**

The following chart shows the average scores of Shrewsbury High School's Grade Level Secondary / High School students who took the Spanish AAPPL from 2/1/2022 to 3/12/2022 . The average score is presented for each mode of communication in relation to the national average for all students.



Action Steps:

The data from the first cohort of SPS students participating in the Seal of Biliteracy is promising. It shows that SPS students, regardless of their first language or class enrollment (i.e. AP versus A Level), are able to show high levels of linguistic proficiency in English and a Second Language. Although World Language students earned the majority of the Seals (61.9% of the total), 50% of the LOTE participant subgroup earned the award versus 29.5% in World Language. The Seal of Biliteracy program directly relates to Critical Thinking & Content Mastery, Global Citizenship & Engagement, and Collaboration & Communication from SPS' *Portrait of A Graduate*. Additional funding to sustain SPS' participation in the Massachusetts

Seal of Biliteracy is crucial. It is recommended that the district allocate funds from its yearly budget in order to continue the Massachusetts World Language Curriculum Framework's mission of providing opportunities for linguistic proficiency in languages other than English. In addition, data obtained from the AAPPL test is necessary for the Professional Development of the World Language staff as well as curriculum.

Works Cited

Almeida, K. (2022). [Class of 2022 Unpublished]. Shrewsbury Public Schools.

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2021). *2021 Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for World Languages*.

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2021). *Supporting the World Languages Framework: Quick Reference Guide Languages with Diverse Written Representation*.

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2020). *Seal of Biliteracy 101: An introduction to the Massachusetts Seal of Biliteracy* [Powerpoint Slides].