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# Recognizing Language as an Asset: Credentialing Students at Nashoba Valley Technical High School

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## Case Study

Created by Language Testing International and Amy St. Arnaud, Spanish Teacher and Seal of Biliteracy Coordinator at Nashoba Valley Technical High School

## Introduction

In an increasingly globalized world, the ability to communicate across languages is a critical skill for success in both college and careers. Nashoba Valley Technical High School (Nashoba Tech), a regional school located in Westford, Massachusetts, has embraced this reality by offering a unique learning environment where students can explore career and technical education alongside academic programs

and by implementing language credentialing through programs like the Seal of Biliteracy. As a Seal of Biliteracy Coordinator and Spanish teacher, Amy St. Arnaud works to ensure students have access to meaningful language credentialing opportunities that support their academic and professional goals.

# Summary

Nashoba Valley Technical High School serves eight towns in Massachusetts, offering an innovative blend of academic rigor, technical education, and extracurricular opportunities. With 18 Chapter 74 technical programs, Early College pathways, and a commitment to student success, Nashoba Valley Tech is a leader in career and technical education (CTE).

To provide students with opportunities to earn the Massachusetts State Seal of Biliteracy, Nashoba Tech implemented the ACTFL Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL) in 2023. This aligned with the school's focus on career and technical education, enabling students to demonstrate their language skills and earn valuable credentials. By integrating the AAPPL, Nashoba Tech has not only increased student engagement in language learning but also opened doors to new academic and career opportunities.

*We were drawn to the AAPPL because of its emphasis on language as a skill and the idea of certifying a language. LTI very explicitly states CTE programming in its newsletters and publications.*

*Amy St. Arnaud,  
Spanish Teacher & Seal  
of Biliteracy Coordinator*

## Challenge

Nashoba Tech faced several challenges related to its language program. Spanish is the only language offered, with minimal instructional hours

(approximately 65 per year due to the hours students spend in their technical programs). This limits students' opportunities to achieve higher proficiency levels. Furthermore, as a regional school, Nashoba Tech enrolls students from diverse middle schools with varying levels of language preparation. Despite these obstacles, the school sought a way to implement the Seal of Biliteracy program and provide equitable access to language credentialing for all students.

## Solution and Implementation

To address these challenges, Nashoba Tech implemented targeted strategies to elevate its language education initiatives:

**Seal of Biliteracy Program:** Nashoba Tech introduced the Seal of Biliteracy as a way to formally recognize students' proficiency in English and an additional language. This distinction not only promotes language learning but also highlights bilingualism as a valuable credential for college admissions and the workforce.

**Language Assessments with the AAPPL:** The school adopted the AAPPL in 2023 as a key component of its language program. The decision was driven by the AAPPL's emphasis on language as a skill, its ability to measure real-world communication skills, and Nashoba Tech's goal of preparing students for practical language use in academic and professional settings. In 2024, with grant funding from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Nashoba Tech was able to offer the AAPPL to all Spanish students, ensuring broad participation and important data collection.

**Focus on Global Readiness:** By recognizing language proficiency as part of career and college readiness, Nashoba Tech demonstrates the relevance of multilingualism in today's economy, preparing students to stand out in competitive global markets.

All four components of the AAPPL are administered during the school day, with accommodations for students needing additional support. Testing takes place twice during the school year, in October and April. AAPPL scores are used to award the MA Seal of Biliteracy, Global Seal of Biliteracy, and the

Massachusetts Language Opportunity Coalition Biliteracy Pathway Certificates. **“I have used a few different proficiency assessments. The AAPPL is the best fit for our school, as it is focused on certifying languages as a skill, not simply rewarding academic achievement,”** shared St. Arnaud.

## Results

The implementation of the AAPPL has yielded significant outcomes:

- **Enhanced Proficiency Awareness:** Students now have more focus on proficiency in their language use. Rubrics aligned with ACTFL proficiency targets help them set realistic goals and understand workplace language requirements.
- **Increased Recognition:** Students have earned distinctions such as the Massachusetts Language Opportunity Coalition Biliteracy Pathway Awards, the Global Seal of Biliteracy, and the Massachusetts Seal of Biliteracy.
- **Proficiency Growth:** Despite limited instructional hours, data revealed that many freshmen tested at Novice High or Intermediate

Low levels due to middle school study. These findings highlight students' potential to achieve higher proficiency levels with enhanced language programming.

- **Recognition of Multilingual Skills:** Through the AAPPL, students gain verified credentials of their language abilities. This credentialing demonstrates to colleges and employers that these Nashoba Tech graduates are equipped with practical communication skills.
- **Increased Motivation Among Students:** The opportunity to earn the Seal of Biliteracy has inspired students to take their language studies seriously, viewing language proficiency as a critical asset for their futures.

*The Seal of Biliteracy is a certification that opens many doors. From construction to healthcare, communicating with customers, clients, and coworkers in their preferred language is always beneficial. The Seal of Biliteracy can help you get into a better college, provide you with better job opportunities, and get employed in key positions.*

*Talles De Barros,  
Candidate for the Seal of Biliteracy in Spanish and Portuguese,  
Nashoba Valley Technical High School Student*



## Conclusion

By integrating the AAPPL assessment into its programs, Nashoba Tech has created a pathway for students to earn language certifications that enhance their academic and career prospects. The school's commitment to recognizing language as a skill aligns with its CTE philosophy, providing students with valuable credentials and fostering a deeper appreciation for multilingualism. Amy St. Arnaud's efforts exemplify how thoughtful implementation of language assessments can transform a school's language program and empower students to succeed in an increasingly globalized world.

*My everyday life has shifted since I started studying other languages and cultures.*

*Hannah McAnulty,  
Nashoba Valley Technical  
High School Student*