

POLICY GUIDE

STUDENTS
5460.02/page 1 of 2
Bridge Year Pilot Program
May 21
M

[See **POLICY ALERT No. 223**]

5460.02 BRIDGE YEAR PILOT PROGRAM

The New Jersey Commissioner of Education has established a three-year "Bridge Year Pilot Program," under which each school district with a high school shall offer students in the graduating classes of 2021 and 2022 the opportunity to pursue a Bridge Year during the year immediately following their senior year of high school, in accordance with the provisions of P.L. 2020 c.41. The purpose of the Bridge Year Pilot Program shall be to provide participating students an additional year to address learning loss and missed opportunities in extracurricular activities, including spring sports programs, as a result of the public health state of emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the purpose of this Policy, "host high school" means the high school that a student, who pursues a Bridge Year pursuant to the provisions of P.L. 2020 c.41, attended as a junior in high school.

Under the Bridge Year Pilot Program, each high school in a school district shall designate a school staff member as a Bridge Year Liaison to serve as the school's central point of contact for students interested in pursuing a Bridge Year and for students participating in a Bridge Year. Nothing in P.L. 2020 c.41 shall be construed to require a school district to hire an individual to serve as a Bridge Year Liaison.

To be eligible to participate in the Bridge Year Pilot Program, a student shall be nineteen years of age or younger and shall not turn twenty years of age at any time during the Bridge Year, except that a classified student shall be eligible to participate if the student will turn twenty years of age during the Bridge Year due to services provided pursuant to the student's individualized education program. To participate in the Bridge Year Pilot Program, eligible students must notify their host high school's Bridge Year Liaison by February 15 of their senior year.

The Bridge Year Liaison shall develop, in consultation with Bridge Year students, an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) for each student. To ensure ample time to plan for the implementation of services outlined in the ILP, each Bridge Year student's ILP shall be completed by May 15, but no later than June 1 of the student's senior year.



POLICY GUIDE

STUDENTS
5460.02/page 2 of 2
Bridge Year Pilot Program

During the fall semester of the student's Bridge Year, the student shall take between nine and twelve credits at the host high school, the county college that serves the county of the host high school, or a combination thereof. During the spring semester of the student's Bridge Year, the student shall take between nine and twelve credits at the county college that serves the county of the host high school. During either semester of the Bridge Year, a student may also take up to three credits offered by a four-year institution of higher education at any high school in the State or at any other location to fulfill the student's credit requirement. At the conclusion of each semester of the Bridge Year, the host high school shall update the student's high school transcript to reflect any high school credits earned during the Bridge Year.

In the event that a student initially decides to pursue a Bridge Year in the fall semester, but does not continue the Bridge Year in the spring semester, the student's host high school shall release all final transcripts and other records as necessary and as may be requested. A student who decides not to continue the Bridge Year in the spring semester shall not be eligible to participate in a spring sports program or extracurricular activities pursuant to P.L. 2020 c.41.

The State Board of Education shall promulgate regulations pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B -1 et seq.), necessary to effectuate the provisions of P.L. 2020 c.41.

The Higher Education Student Assistance Authority shall promulgate regulations, pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B -1 et seq.), necessary to effectuate the provisions of subsection d. of section 2 of this Act.

P.L. 2020 c.41

Adopted:



REGULATION GUIDE

STUDENTS
R 5460.02/page 1 of 7
Bridge Year Pilot Program
May 21
M

[See POLICY ALERT No. 223]

R 5460.02 BRIDGE YEAR PILOT PROGRAM

All public school districts, including charter and renaissance schools, that enroll high school students must offer all eligible students the opportunity to participate in the Bridge Year Pilot Program (P.L. 2020 c.41).

To participate in the Bridge Year Pilot Program, eligible students must notify their host high school's Bridge Year Liaison of their intent to participate by February 15 of their senior year.

A. Bridge Year Liaison

1. To facilitate compliance with the requirements of the Bridge Year Pilot Program, each public high school in a school district shall designate a school staff member as a Bridge Year Liaison.
2. The school's Bridge Year Liaison shall serve as the school's point of contact for students interested in participating in the Bridge Year Pilot Program, facilitate planning of the Bridge Year students' academic services, and regularly communicate with the respective county college regarding students' academic progress.
3. Bridge Year Liaisons shall develop, in consultation with Bridge Year students, an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) for each student.
4. The Bridge Year Liaison:
 - a. Shall collect and report attendance in accordance with the school district's policy for those students participating in classes not at the host high school consistent with N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.6. Attendance for classes at the host high school shall be collected and recorded in the normal course;
 - b. Must receive reports from the institution of higher education that a Bridge Year student attends at least quarterly. The reports must demonstrate, in a manner specified by the student's ILP, the student's academic progress and performance; and



REGULATION GUIDE

STUDENTS
R 5460.02/page 2 of 7
Bridge Year Pilot Program

- c. Shall ensure that at the conclusion of each semester of the Bridge Year, the student's high school transcript reflects any high school and college credits earned during the Bridge Year in accordance with Policy and Regulation 5460.02.

B. Student Eligibility

1. To be eligible to participate in Bridge Year Pilot Program, a student must:
 - a. Be in the graduating classes of 2021 or 2022;
 - b. Meet all applicable high school graduation requirements by the end of their senior year of high school;
 - c. Be nineteen years old or younger during the entirety of the Bridge Year; a student that would turn twenty years old before the end of their Bridge Year is not eligible to participate;
 - (1) A student with disabilities is eligible to participate if the student will turn twenty years old during the Bridge Year due to services provided under the student's individualized education program (IEP); and
 - d. Maintain a grade point average of 2.0 during the Bridge Year.
2. Students with disabilities who receive special education and related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) must be granted the opportunity to participate in a school district's Bridge Year Pilot Program in accordance with Federal and State special education requirements.
 - a. Regarding the Bridge Year's age requirements in B.1.c. above, school districts that have students with disabilities who have satisfied their State and local graduation requirements, but may need an extra year of services, and



REGULATION GUIDE

STUDENTS
R 5460.02/page 3 of 7
Bridge Year Pilot Program

will not turn twenty-one years old before June 30, may receive services for another year as determined by the student's IEP team, which includes the student and the student's parent(s).

- b. The school district's Bridge Year Liaison should collaborate with the student's IEP team as the services provided to students with disabilities should be focused on transition services. Services shall be delivered via the IEP.

C. Academics

1. Individual Learning Plans (ILP)

- a. Each Bridge Year student's academic and co-curricular goals for the Bridge Year shall be defined in an ILP. A student's ILP shall detail the activities and strategies for accomplishing these goals, including, but not limited to, counseling, academic support, coursework, and co-curricular or athletic participation. The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) developed an ILP template for school districts, which will be available on the NJDOE's webpage.

- (1) In developing a student's ILP, a school district should utilize the considerations outlined in Bridge Year Pilot Program (P.L. 2020 c.41) Implementation Guidance.

- b. To ensure ample time to plan for the implementation of services outlined in the ILP, each Bridge Year student's ILP shall be completed by May 15, but no later than June 1 of the student's senior year.

2. Academic and Course Requirements

- a. Students participating in the Bridge Year Pilot Program shall meet the following academic and course requirements:



REGULATION GUIDE

STUDENTS
R 5460.02/page 4 of 7
Bridge Year Pilot Program

- (1) During the fall semester, students shall take between nine and twelve credits at the host high school, county college in the county in which the host high school is located, or a combination thereof;
- (2) During the spring semester, students shall take between nine and twelve credits at the county college in the county in which the host high school is located;
- (3) During either semester, students may take up to three credits offered by a four-year institution of higher education at any high school in the State or any other location to fulfill the student's credit requirements described in C.2.a.(1) and (2) above;
- (4) Students who pursue a Bridge Year and participate in a spring sport sanctioned by the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) shall enroll in less than twelve college credits, or otherwise be enrolled in a number of college credits as to not be considered a full-time college student, in each of the fall and spring semesters during the student's Bridge Year;
- (5) During the Bridge Year, students do not need to participate in health, safety, and physical education as required by N.J.S.A. 18A:35-5, 7, and 8 (N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)1.vi); and
- (6) A Bridge Year student shall be considered a non-matriculated student of the respective county college.



REGULATION GUIDE

STUDENTS
R 5460.02/page 5 of 7
Bridge Year Pilot Program

- b. School districts that do not operate on the basis of fall and spring semesters should meet the spirit of the academic and course requirements outlined in C.2.a. above and ensure that Bridge Year students meet their total credit requirements for the entirety of the Bridge Year Pilot Program.
3. Graduation
 - a. As stated in B.1.b. above, all students must meet all applicable high school graduation requirements by the end of their senior year of high school before participating in the Bridge Year Pilot Program.
 - b. The Bridge Year student may participate in the graduation ceremony at the end of his or her senior year or the end of his or her Bridge Year.
 - c. The student's diploma will be withheld and formal matriculation from high school will be deferred until completion of the Bridge Year Pilot Program.
 - (1) Participating students are only held to the graduation requirements of their senior year and are not required to meet the graduation requirements of their Bridge Year in order to receive their high school diploma.
 - (a) For example, 12th graders in the graduating class of 2021 – whose Bridge Year would take place during the 2021-2022 school year – will be held only to the graduation requirements applicable to the class of 2021, as modified pursuant to Executive Order 214 by the Governor of New Jersey, and not to the graduation requirements for the class of 2022.



REGULATION GUIDE

STUDENTS
R 5460.02/page 6 of 7
Bridge Year Pilot Program

- d. At the conclusion of each semester of the Bridge Year Pilot Program, the host high school shall update the student's high school transcript to reflect any high school credits earned during the Bridge Year.
- e. If a student decides to pursue a Bridge Year in the fall semester, but does not continue the Bridge Year in the spring semester, the student's host high school shall release all final transcripts and other records as necessary and as may be requested.

D. Data Reporting

1. NJ SMART

- a. The NJDOE will add a new field in the NJ SMART SID Management to indicate whether 12th graders are planning to participate in the Bridge Year Pilot Program in the following year (beginning in the 2020-2021 school year) or whether a 12th grader is currently participating in a Bridge Year Pilot Program (beginning in the 2021-2022 school year).
- b. School districts will be required to begin entering this information for all 12th graders beginning with the June 2021 snapshot.

2. School and District Accountability

- a. Students participating in the Bridge Year Pilot Program will continue to be included in the accountability calculations for both Every Student Succeeds Act school accountability and New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) district accountability during their Bridge Year.
 - (1) This would include graduation rate and chronic absenteeism calculations for both school and district accountability.



REGULATION GUIDE

STUDENTS
R 5460.02/page 7 of 7
Bridge Year Pilot Program

- (2) Students participating in the Bridge Year Pilot Program will not count as graduates for graduation rate calculations until they receive a diploma at the end of the Bridge Year.

E. Athletic Requirements

1. Students participating in the Bridge Year Pilot Program are eligible to participate in NJSIAA sanctioned sports at their host high school – and only at their host high school – during the spring season of their Bridge Year.
 - a. Bridge Year students are not eligible to participate in fall or winter sports during their Bridge Year.
2. Students must meet the eligibility requirements outlined by the NJSIAA.
3. A student who decides not to continue their Bridge Year in the spring semester shall not be eligible to participate in a spring sports program or extracurricular activities.
4. Bridge Year students participating in spring athletics are subject to the athletic code of conduct, and any other applicable codes, rules, or school district policies as other students participating in the spring sport.

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