



**BRIDGE**  
ACADEMY

**Virtual Program Guidelines**

**Blount County Schools**

Rodney P. Green, Superintendent

**POLICY: 5.5.1**  
**THE BRIDGE ACADEMY, A NON-TRADITIONAL PUBLIC EDUCATION**  
**VIRTUAL/BLENDED PROGRAM OPTION FOR BLOUNT COUNTY STUDENTS**

The Blount County School System offers a non-traditional public education for eligible 7-12 students provided through *The Bridge Academy*. Courses are facilitated by highly qualified, certified teachers through high-quality online curriculum aligned to the ALSDE-CCRS.

**ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

The Bridge Academy courses and programs are free for enrolled full-time students meeting the residency requirements of Blount County Schools. Students in grades 7-12 who live in areas zoned for Blount County Schools but who are not currently enrolled, may enroll in their zoned school and be served through The Bridge Academy virtually as long as they meet all eligibility requirements of both the local school and the Bridge Academy.

The curriculum is extremely rigorous and requires that students be highly motivated and self-disciplined. To ensure that students will be successful in this environment, full-time enrollment requires that the student must have and maintain a **2.0** grade point average (GPA) or grade level equivalent.

**Student Criteria Checklist**

- Discuss The Bridge Academy option with the local school counselor and/or principal.
- Submit a formal on-line application if approved by the local school.
- Maintain a minimum of a 2.0 non-weighted GPA or grade level equivalent.
- Successful completion of previous coursework.
- Demonstrate good attendance.
- Demonstrate positive behavior (no significant patterns of disciplinary infractions).
- Read at or above grade level.
- Perform math at or above grade level.
- Successfully complete an interview/application process.
- Demonstrate strong parent/guardian support from home.
- Demonstrate past success with online learning (recommended).

### **Attendance (Full-Time Enrollment)**

Attendance to the Bridge Academy campus will be based on GPA or grade level equivalent and weekly academic progress. Students who fail to meet weekly academic progress may be assigned additional time on campus. Students will be expected to attend the Bridge Academy campus weekly for participation.

Any student who fails to meet 25% of the attendance requirements (per term) can be referred for truancy and dismissal from the Bridge Academy. For example, if a term requires 16 days of attendance, a student must attend at least 12 days; missing 5 or more days could result in truancy referral and dismissal. Therefore, a student may not be absent for more than 25% of the required days at the Bridge Academy.

Students grades 9-12 are required to take a JAG (Jobs for Alabama Graduates) elective.

### **Final Exam Requirements**

In order to receive credit for virtual courses, students are required to take all final exams in a proctored setting. In the event that a student does not pass the final exam but passes the course based upon completion of course assignments, the student will be required to demonstrate mastery via alternative assessments to ensure that academic integrity is not compromised. Only until the student can demonstrate mastery of core course content will the credit be issued when the student fails the final exam.

### **Exemption of Final Exams**

The Blount County Bridge Academy final exams are the culminating assessment used to determine mastery of key concepts and state standards. Additionally, the proctored exam authenticates the work of the student and maintains the integrity of non-traditional courses. Therefore, exemptions for a course will only be granted to students who have a 90% semester average AND have completed all coursework.

### **Exam Administration**

Full-time students are required to take all exams worth ten percent (10%) of the course grade/average at the Bridge Academy.

### **Early Exam Administration**

Virtual learning allows Bridge Academy students to progress at an accelerated pace, completing courses early or at various points during the semester. To ensure optimal exam performance, students who finish a course may be permitted to take the exam upon completion. For proctored exams, full-time students can schedule an early testing appointment at the Bridge Academy or take the exam on the regular testing date. Only students who have completed all coursework are eligible for early testing.

### **Athletic and Extracurricular Programs**

At this time, the Bridge Academy does not have an athletic program available for full-time students. Full-time students are allowed to participate with their School of Origin if they meet all other Alabama High School Athletic Association requirements or other requirements set forth in the bylaws of each extracurricular group as agreed upon by the local school administration.

While the Bridge Academy may offer NCAA-approved courses, it is recommended that student-athletes seeking eligibility and/or scholarships for Division I and/or Division II athletics should consider completing all courses traditionally at their School of Origin.

Students who participate in athletics or band may take one class related to their activity at their School of Origin. These classes will be held on that campus, and students must adhere to Blount County School District policies regarding attendance and follow all sign-in and sign-out procedures at their School of Origin.

### **PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND TESTING PROTOCOL:**

The Bridge Academy is governed by the policies and procedures of Blount County Schools. All policies adopted by the Blount County Board of Education and all applicable administrative code and laws adopted by the State Board of Education and Alabama Legislature are applicable (to the extent that they are not otherwise waived pursuant to the Alabama Accountability Act of 2013). All policies and procedures adopted by the Blount County Board of Education apply to the Bridge Academy programs unless expressly stated within this policy.

All Bridge Academy students will be closely monitored to ensure that they are successfully completing coursework and remaining on their defined graduation pathway. Students who fall behind will be assigned additional time on campus until they are deemed “on-pace” or “ahead of pace” for course completion. Blount County Bridge Academy students must participate in state testing at their School of Origin for accountability purposes.

### **General**

The Superintendent of Schools shall implement this policy and develop administrative guidelines and forms necessary for the same.

Blount County Bridge Academy Blended and Virtual Program Options Authority/References

**Ala. Code § 16-11-9 (1975); Ala. Act No. 2015-89.**

***The Blount County Schools’ Bridge Academy will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or handicapping conditions, including limited English proficiency, in its decision, nor will it enforce this policy in such a manner that would otherwise violate state or federal law or court order.***