

P.L. 2020, CHAPTER 41, *approved June 26, 2020*
Senate Committee Substitute (*First Reprint*) for
Senate, No. 2383

1 **AN ACT** requiring the Commissioner of Education to establish the
2 Bridge Year Pilot Program.

3

4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
5 of New Jersey:

6

7 1. As used in this act, “host high school” means the high school
8 that a student, who pursues a bridge year pursuant to the provisions
9 of this act, attended as a junior in high school.

10

11 2. a. The Commissioner of Education shall establish a three-
12 year “Bridge Year Pilot Program,” under which each school district
13 with a high school shall offer students in the graduating class of
14 2021 and the graduating class of 2022 the opportunity to pursue a
15 bridge year during the year immediately following their senior year
16 of high school, in accordance with the provisions of this act. The
17 purpose of the pilot program shall be to provide participating
18 students an additional year to address learning loss and missed
19 opportunities in extracurricular activities, including spring sports
20 programs, as a result of the public health state of emergency caused
21 by the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic.

22 A nonpublic school may elect to participate in the Bridge Year
23 Pilot Program.

24 Under the pilot program, each high school in a school district
25 shall designate a school staff member as a bridge year liaison to
26 serve as the school’s central point of contact for students interested
27 in pursuing a bridge year pursuant to this act and for students
28 participating in a bridge year ¹【, as well as for county colleges and
29 four-year institutions of higher education in which students may be
30 enrolled in academic courses under the pilot program】¹. Nothing in
31 this subsection shall be construed to require a school district to hire
32 an individual to serve as a bridge year liaison.

33 b. A student in the graduating class of 2021 or the graduating
34 class of 2022 who has met all applicable high school graduation
35 requirements by the end of the senior year of high school may
36 ¹【elect】 defer graduation from high school¹ to pursue a bridge year.
37 A student who intends to pursue a bridge year shall notify his host
38 high school’s bridge year liaison of that intent no later than the first
39 day of the second semester of the student’s senior year of high

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **【thus】** in the above bill is
not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:

¹Senate floor amendments adopted May 14, 2020.

1 school. The host high school shall permit students participating in
2 the bridge year to participate in graduation ceremonies with the
3 graduating class of 2021 or class of 2022, as applicable, ~~'[and to~~
4 ~~receive their diplomas]~~ but shall not issue diplomas to those
5 students until the conclusion of the bridge year¹. Nothing in this
6 section shall be construed to require a student to pursue a bridge
7 year. To be eligible to participate in the bridge year program, a
8 student shall be 19 years of age or younger and shall not turn 20
9 years of age at any time during the bridge year, except that a
10 classified student shall be eligible to participate if the student will
11 turn 20 years of age during the bridge year due to services provided
12 pursuant to the student's individualized education program.

13 c. (1) A student pursuing a bridge year shall remain enrolled in
14 the host high school while participating in the Bridge Year Pilot
15 Program. A bridge year liaison shall develop, in consultation with a
16 student pursuing a bridge year, an individual learning plan for the
17 student. The individual learning plan shall define academic and co-
18 curricular goals for the bridge year and detail activities and
19 strategies for accomplishing those goals including, but not limited
20 to, counseling, academic support, coursework, and co-curricular or
21 athletic participation. During ~~'[each of]'~~ the fall ~~'[and spring~~
22 ~~semesters]~~ semester¹ of the student's bridge year, the student shall
23 take between nine and 12 credits at the host high school ~~'[if an~~
24 ~~institution of higher education offers courses at that location]'~~, the
25 county college that serves the county of the host high school, or a
26 combination thereof. 'During the spring semester of the student's
27 bridge year, the student shall take between nine and 12 credits at the
28 county college that serves the county of the host high school.¹ The
29 credits taken by a student pursuant to this paragraph shall together
30 form a coordinated sequence of academic content that prepares the
31 student for high-skill, high wage, or in-demand occupations. At the
32 conclusion of each semester of the bridge year, the host high school
33 shall update the student's high school transcript to reflect any high
34 school credits earned during the bridge year. For the purpose of
35 enrolling in college credits pursuant to this paragraph, the student
36 shall be considered a non-matriculated student of the county
37 college. A student who pursues a bridge year and participates in a
38 spring sport sanctioned by the New Jersey State Interscholastic
39 Athletic Association pursuant to section 3 of this act shall enroll in
40 ~~'[at least nine but]~~¹ less than 12 'college' credits ¹, or otherwise be
41 enrolled in a number of college credits as to not be considered a
42 full-time college student,¹ in each of the fall and spring semesters
43 during the student's bridge year.

44 (2) The student shall maintain a grade point average of 2.0 in
45 order to remain in the Bridge Year Pilot Program. The county
46 college or other institution of higher education which a student

1 pursuing a bridge year is attending shall report at least quarterly to
2 the bridge year liaison at a student's host high school, in a manner
3 specified by the student's **~~'[individualized]~~** individual¹ learning
4 plan developed pursuant to paragraph (1) of this subsection,
5 concerning the student's academic progress and performance.

6 (3) A county college shall charge students participating in a
7 bridge year pursuant to this act a maximum of \$145 per credit
8 inclusive of all fees, except that fees associated with specific
9 courses or with the use of on-campus science laboratories may be
10 charged at a maximum of \$45 per course.

11 (4) **~~'[A student may take any portion of the credits required~~**
12 **~~pursuant to paragraph (1) of this subsection at the student's host~~**
13 **~~high school, in the event that the county college which the student~~**
14 **~~is attending offers courses at the host high school.]'~~** During a
15 semester of the bridge year, a student may take three credits offered
16 by a four-year institution of higher education at any high school in
17 the State or at any other location to fulfill the student's credit
18 requirement. The four-year institution shall charge the student no
19 more than is permitted pursuant to paragraph (3) of this subsection
20 and shall report to the student's bridge year liaison as required
21 pursuant to paragraph (2) of this subsection.

22 d. Notwithstanding the requirement established under the
23 **~~'[Tuition Aid Grant Program pursuant to N.J.S.18A:71B-20 and~~**
24 **~~under the New Jersey Student Tuition Assistance Reward~~**
25 **~~Scholarship (NJSTARS) Program pursuant to section 5 of P.L.2004,~~**
26 **~~c.59 (C.18A:71B-85),]~~** Community College Opportunity Grant
27 Program¹ to be enrolled **~~'[as a full-time student]'~~** in a course of
28 study or a curriculum leading to a degree or certificate ¹and subject
29 to the availability of funds in the annual appropriations act¹, a
30 student pursuing a bridge year **~~'[pursuant to this act]'~~** shall be
31 eligible for a **~~'[tuition]~~** financial¹ aid grant **~~'[or scholarship]'~~**
32 under the **~~'[Tuition Aid Grant Program or the NJSTARS Program]~~**
33 Community College Opportunity Grant Program¹ if the student
34 meets all other applicable eligibility requirements.

35 e. A public institution of higher education shall, pursuant to
36 P.L.2007, c.175 (C.18A:62-46 et seq.), accept all applicable credits
37 that a student, who completed a bridge year pursuant to this act,
38 earned during the bridge year. An independent institution of higher
39 education in the State may elect to accept the credits that a student
40 earned during the bridge year.

41 f. In the event that a student initially decides to pursue a bridge
42 year in the fall semester but does not continue the bridge year in the
43 spring semester, the student's host high school shall release all final
44 transcripts and other records as necessary and as may be requested.
45 A student who decides not to continue the bridge year in the spring

1 semester shall not be eligible to participate in a spring sports
2 program or extracurricular activities pursuant to this act.

3
4 3. a. A student who pursues a bridge year pursuant to this act
5 shall be permitted to participate in a spring sport sanctioned by the
6 New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association and
7 extracurricular activities at the student's host high school. A
8 student pursuing a bridge year shall not be eligible to participate in
9 any fall or winter sport sanctioned by the association. A student
10 participating in a spring sport or extracurricular activity during his
11 bridge year shall pay applicable student athletics and activities fees
12 and be subject to the host high school's student code of conduct,
13 athletic code of conduct, and any other applicable codes, rules or
14 policies that other students participating in the spring sport or
15 extracurricular activity at the host high school are required to
16 follow. Notwithstanding the provisions ¹of¹ any law, rule, or
17 regulation to the contrary, an insurer doing business in the State and
18 issuing liability insurance policies to school districts shall provide
19 coverage for students participating in a spring sport or
20 extracurricular activity pursuant to this act, as part of a school
21 district's liability insurance policy.

22 This section shall not be construed to supersede the governance
23 or eligibility rules applicable to a particular extracurricular activity,
24 except as otherwise provided in subsection c. of this section. This
25 section shall also not be construed to supersede the governance or
26 eligibility rules, which are established by a local, state, or national
27 organization with bona fide authority over a particular
28 extracurricular activity, that are applicable to that activity, except as
29 otherwise provided in subsection c. of this section.

30 b. In order to participate in a spring sport during the bridge
31 year, the student shall meet the current age participation
32 requirements of the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic
33 Association. The student shall participate in the spring sport at the
34 student's host high school and shall not be permitted to transfer to a
35 different high school, even in the event that the student experiences
36 a change in residence.

37 c. ¹~~【In the event that a student pursuing a bridge year elects to~~
38 ~~participate in a spring sport】~~ For students participating in a spring
39 sport pursuant to this act¹, the ¹~~【association】~~ New Jersey State
40 Interscholastic Athletic Association¹ shall be requested ¹~~【by the~~
41 ~~student】~~¹ to waive the eight semester rule under which a student is
42 not eligible for high school athletics after the expiration of eight
43 consecutive semesters following the student's entrance into the
44 ninth grade.

45 d. The association shall confer with the National Collegiate
46 Athletic Association or any other athletic association, conference,

1 or group or organization with authority over intercollegiate athletics
2 to ensure that any student participating in a spring sport during a
3 bridge year will be eligible to declare as a college recruit during the
4 bridge year and participate in intercollegiate athletics.

5

6 4. a. The State Board of Education shall promulgate
7 regulations pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,”
8 P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), necessary to effectuate the
9 provisions of this act.

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

14

15 5. This act shall take effect immediately.

16

17

18

19

20 Requires Commissioner of Education to establish three-year
21 “Bridge Year Pilot Program” for certain students who were
22 impacted by public health state of emergency caused by coronavirus
23 disease 2019.