

SENATE, No. 4185

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED NOVEMBER 22, 2021

Sponsored by:

Senator KRISTIN M. CORRADO

District 40 (Bergen, Essex, Morris and Passaic)

SYNOPSIS

Exempts certain students with disabilities from requirement to take college credits during Bridge Year Pilot Program; modifies age eligibility criteria under program.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 AN ACT concerning certain students participating in the Bridge
2 Year Pilot Program and amending P.L.2020, c.41.

3
4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
5 *of New Jersey:*

6
7 1. Section 2 of P.L.2020, c.41 is amended to read as follows:

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

19 A nonpublic school may elect to participate in the Bridge Year
20 Pilot Program.

21 Under the pilot program, each high school in a school district
22 shall designate a school staff member as a bridge year liaison to
23 serve as the school’s central point of contact for students interested
24 in pursuing a bridge year pursuant to this act and for students
25 participating in a bridge year. Nothing in this subsection shall be
26 construed to require a school district to hire an individual to serve
27 as a bridge year liaison.

28 b. (1) A student in the graduating class of 2021 or the
29 graduating class of 2022 who has met all applicable high school
30 graduation requirements by the end of the senior year of high school
31 may defer graduation from high school to pursue a bridge year. A
32 student who intends to pursue a bridge year shall notify his host
33 high school’s bridge year liaison of that intent no later than the first
34 day of the second semester of the student’s senior year of high
35 school. The host high school shall permit students participating in
36 the bridge year to participate in graduation ceremonies with the
37 graduating class of 2021 or class of 2022, as applicable, but shall
38 not issue diplomas to those students until the conclusion of the
39 bridge year. Nothing in this section shall be construed to require a
40 student to pursue a bridge year. To be eligible to participate in the
41 bridge year program, a student shall be 19 years of age or younger
42 and shall not turn 20 years of age at any time during the bridge
43 year, except that a classified student shall be eligible to participate
44 if the student will turn 20 years of age or 21 years of age during the

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.

1 bridge year due to services provided pursuant to the student's
2 individualized education program.

3 (2) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection c. of this
4 section to the contrary, a classified student shall not be required to
5 take college credits during the student's bridge year if the student's
6 parent or legal guardian and the individualized education program
7 team determine that taking college credits would not achieve the
8 goals set out in the student's individualized education program. As
9 deemed appropriate by the parent or guardian and the individualized
10 education program team and as provided in a student's
11 individualized education program, a classified student may
12 participate in school district-sponsored vocational and educational
13 programs and receive appropriate transition services in place of the
14 requirement to take college credits pursuant to subsection c. of this
15 section. A school district's bridge year liaison shall collaborate
16 with the student's individualized education program team to ensure
17 that a classified student's individual learning plan developed
18 pursuant to subsection c. of this section is consistent with the
19 student's individualized education program.

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

1 (2) The student shall maintain a grade point average of 2.0 in
2 order to remain in the Bridge Year Pilot Program. The county
3 college or other institution of higher education which a student
4 pursuing a bridge year is attending shall report at least quarterly to
5 the bridge year liaison at a student's host high school, in a manner
6 specified by the student's individual learning plan developed
7 pursuant to paragraph (1) of this subsection, concerning the
8 student's academic progress and performance.

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

14 (4) During a semester of the bridge year, a student may take
15 three credits offered by a four-year institution of higher education at
16 any high school in the State or at any other location to fulfill the
17 student's credit requirement. The four-year institution shall charge
18 the student no more than is permitted pursuant to paragraph (3) of
19 this subsection and shall report to the student's bridge year liaison
20 as required pursuant to paragraph (2) of this subsection.

21 d. Notwithstanding the requirement established under the
22 Community College Opportunity Grant Program to be enrolled in a
23 course of study or a curriculum leading to a degree or certificate
24 and subject to the availability of funds in the annual appropriations
25 act, a student pursuing a bridge year shall be eligible for a financial
26 aid grant under the Community College Opportunity Grant Program
27 if the student meets all other applicable eligibility requirements.

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

34 f. In the event that a student initially decides to pursue a bridge
35 year in the fall semester but does not continue the bridge year in the
36 spring semester, the student's host high school shall release all final
37 transcripts and other records as necessary and as may be requested.
38 A student who decides not to continue the bridge year in the spring
39 semester shall not be eligible to participate in a spring sports
40 program or extracurricular activities pursuant to this act.

41 (cf: P.L.2020, c.41, s.2)

42
43 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill exempts students with disabilities from the requirement to take college credits under the Bridge Year Pilot Program established pursuant to P.L.2020, c.41, if it is determined that taking college courses would not achieve the goals set out in the student's individualized education program (IEP). As deemed appropriate by the parent or guardian and the IEP team and as provided in a student's individualized education program, a classified student may participate in school district-sponsored vocational and educational programs and receive appropriate transition services in place of the requirement to take college credits. Under the bill, a school district's bridge year liaison is required to collaborate with the student's IEP team to ensure that a classified student's individual learning plan under the Bridge Year Pilot Program is consistent with the student's IEP.

The Bridge Year Pilot Program was established with the purpose of providing students in the graduating classes of 2021 and 2022 the opportunity to offset disruptions to learning opportunities and participation in extracurricular activities that might have resulted from the closure of schools to in-person instruction in the spring of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the fall semester of a student's bridge year, a participating student is generally required to take between nine and 12 credits at the student's host high school, the county college in the county in which the host high school is located, or at a combination of the two. During the spring semester, a student is required to take between nine and 12 credits at the county college in the county in which the host high school is located.

The bill also amends the law establishing the pilot program to specify that a classified student, who will turn 21 years of age during a bridge year due to services provided pursuant to an IEP, is eligible to participate in the pilot program. The law currently states that a classified student is eligible to participate in the program if the student will turn 20 years of age during the bridge year.