

Proposed New Rules at N.J.A.C. 6A:8, Standards and Assessment

The following is the accessible version of the proposed new rules at N.J.A.C. 6A:8 to implement the Bridge Year Pilot Program. The adoption level document includes three sections – [a comment and response form](#), [a summary of the proposed rulemaking](#) and [the proposed rule text](#).

**State Board of Education
Administrative Code
Comment/Response Form**

This comment and response form contains comments from the April 6, 2022, meeting of the State Board of Education when the rulemaking was considered at Proposal Level.

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| Topic: | Standards and Assessment | Meeting Date: | October 12, 2022 |
| Code Citation: | N.J.A.C. 6A:8 | Level: | Adoption |
| Division: | Teaching and Learning Services | Completed by: | Office of Career Readiness |

Summary of Comments and Agency Responses:

The following is a summary of the comments received from members of the public and the Department of Education’s (Department) responses. Each commenter is identified at the end of the comment by a number that corresponds to the following list:

1. Elizabeth Fagan
2. Elisabeth Yucis, Associate Director of Professional Development and Instructional Issues, New Jersey Education Association (NJEA)
3. Thomas Baffuto, Executive Director, The Arc of New Jersey
4. Jonathan Pushman, Director, Government Relations, New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA)

1. Comment: The commenter stated that the Bridge Year Pilot Program regulations at N.J.A.C. 6A:8 provide eligible students in the classes of 2021 and 2022 the option to defer graduation for a year to mitigate disruptions to their learning as result of the COVID-19 pandemic and to participate in athletics and extracurriculars that were suspended in spring 2020. The commenter also stated that the structure and nature of the Bridge Year Pilot Program and its accompanying regulations at N.J.A.C. 6A:8 provide a valuable option for high school students in classes of 2021 and 2022. The commenter expressed support for the efforts of the Legislature and State Board of Education to establish a program that benefits eligible students whose learning was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The commenter expressed support for a strong public education system that prioritizes high school graduation and promotes a collaborative approach to assist students achieve graduation from high school. The commenter stated that the Bridge Year Pilot Program supports each student with academic assistance, post-secondary support, appropriate interventions if needed, and fosters collaboration and partnership between school districts and county colleges. **(2)**

Response: The Department thanks the commenter for the support.

2. Comment: The commenter expressed support for students with disabilities being offered equitable access to the same educational and social opportunities as their peers without disabilities. The commenter stated that the proposed rules will allow students in a bridge year to participate in graduation ceremonies with their original graduating class and that the individualized education program (IEP) team must be included in developing the student’s individual learning plan (ILP). The commenter also stated that the Bridge Year

Pilot Program provides a unique opportunity for students with disabilities who have met the requirements for high school graduation, but may have incurred learning loss and interrupted services due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The commenter acknowledged that the Bridge Year Pilot Program will be beneficial to a small percentage of students with disabilities in New Jersey and assurances are needed that participating students have a path to succeed with appropriate support. (3)

Response: The Department thanks the commenter for the support.

3. **Comment:** The commenter asked for clarification regarding the purpose of the bridge year and how it benefits students. (1)

Response: P.L. 2020, c. 41 established a three-year Bridge Year Pilot Program, under which each school district with a high school must 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. The Bridge Year Pilot Program provides participating students with an additional year to address learning loss and missed opportunities in extracurricular activities, including spring sports programs, due to the circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic. This additional year is referred to throughout the proposed new rules as “bridge year.”

4. **Comment:** The commenter stated that proposed N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.3(b) requires each host high school to designate a staff member as a bridge year liaison, but the definition of “host high school” includes the high school and the school district. The commenter asked whether the intent is to have one staff person per high school or one staff person per school district to be the liaison. (4)

Response: Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.3(b) will require each host high school to designate a staff member as a bridge year liaison to carry out the responsibilities set forth at proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.5. Each high school in a school district that has students participating in the Bridge Year Pilot Program must have a bridge year liaison from that high school. A high school that does not have students who expressed an intent to participate in the Bridge Year Pilot Program does not need to have a bridge year liaison.

5. **Comment:** The commenter expressed concern that proposed N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.4, which addresses student eligibility for the Bridge Year Pilot Program, does not explicitly require the student to remain a resident of the school district and/or same high school to participate in the Bridge Year Pilot Program. The commenter recommended that continued residency and attendance at the high school in which the student was enrolled prior to entering the Bridge Year Pilot Program be part of the eligibility requirements. (4)

Response: Proposed N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.4(d) requires a student pursuing a bridge year to remain enrolled in the host high school, which is defined in P.L. 2020, c. 41 as the high school in which the student was enrolled as a junior. Pursuant to proposed N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.4(d), a student in a bridge year is not permitted to transfer to a different high school, as the designation of the host high school cannot be changed.

6. **Comment:** The commenter requested amendments at N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.5 to require that the bridge year liaison position be held by an individual employed in the school district in a full-time capacity, working under an administrative, instructional, or educational services certificate. (2)

Response: Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.3(b) requires each host high school to designate a staff member as a bridge year liaison to carry out the responsibilities set forth at proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.5. As the point of contact in the host high school for

students in bridge year, the liaison facilitates the planning of education services, including access to academic records. N.J.A.C. 6A:32-7.5 allows access to student records to only authorized organizations, agencies, or persons. As set forth at N.J.A.C. 6A:32-7.5(e)4, certified school district personnel who are assigned educational responsibility for a student are permitted access to the student's general student record, including academic records. Therefore, the requested amendment at proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.5 is not necessary.

7. **Comment:** The commenter stated that the proposed regulations do not place any accountability on the student or their parents to ensure that a student is making adequate progress finishing their bridge year. The commenter also stated that students will be 18 or 19 years old during their bridge year and headed toward graduation; therefore, it is a reasonable developmental expectation that most students should have a partial duty to monitor their progress. The commenter acknowledged that there are instances in which a student may need additional support, such as a student who has significant cognitive or developmental disabilities. The commenter also stated the student should be held accountable for their own progress and success, whenever possible. The commenter requested amendments to N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.6 to clarify that the student shall be ultimately responsible for a successful completion of bridge year, whenever possible. (2)

Response: Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.6 will establish the criteria for the development of the ILP, which is created in consultation with the student. Therefore, students in a bridge year bear responsibility for their progress. The Department therefore determines that the requested amendment at proposed N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.6 is not necessary.

8. **Comment:** The commenter stated that the requirement at proposed N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.6(a)1 for the bridge year liaison to "consider conferring" with a multidisciplinary team lacks clarity. The commenter recommended that N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.6(a)1 be amended to state that the liaison "shall confer" or "may confer" with the multidisciplinary team. (4)

Response: The Department agrees that proposed N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.6(a)1 should be clarified. The Department proposes to replace "shall consider conferring" with "may confer" to clarify the role of the bridge year liaison and the development of the ILP, as follows:

- (a) **The host high school's bridge year liaison shall develop, in consultation with the student, an individual learning plan (ILP) for each student pursuing a**

bridge year.

1. **The bridge year liaison [[shall consider conferring]] may confer with a multidisciplinary team of professionals with knowledge of the student's educational, behavioral, emotional, social, and health needs. For students with a disability, the multi-disciplinary team shall include the student's IEP team.**

9. **Comment:** The commenter asked if proposed N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.7 obligates the host high school to provide transportation to a bridge year student attending a county college or other institution of higher education. The commenter also asked about the funding source regarding that transportation. (4)
Response: The provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:39-1 that require a school district to provide transportation services to high school students who attend a school more than 2.5 miles from home would apply to a student in a bridge year who attends a county college or four-year institution of higher education. In such a case, the school district would include the student in a bridge year in the District Report of Transported Resident Students and would receive State transportation aid on the same basis as any other student receiving mandated transportation.
10. **Comment:** The commenter expressed concern about proposed N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.7(c), which requires students to fulfill nine to 12 credits at their local community college during the spring semester of the bridge year. The commenter stated that many students with disabilities are entitled to additional services until the student graduates high school or turns 21 years old. The commenter stated that the requirement of fulfilling credits at a community college creates a barrier for students with disabilities because the student would likely be unable to access the supports included in the IEP. The commenter also stated that the new rules should include a solution for this problem to ensure that the Bridge Year Pilot Program provides an equal opportunity for students with disabilities to succeed. The commenter suggested that students with disabilities could be allowed to complete the spring semester in their host school or that the school district could provide the IEP-required supports for the student at the community college. (3)
Response: Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.6(a) will require the bridge year liaison to develop, in consultation with the student, an ILP for each student pursuing a bridge year. Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.6(a)1, as proposed for amendment at adoption, will allow the bridge year liaison to confer with a multidisciplinary team of professionals with knowledge of the student's educational, behavioral, emotional, social, and health needs. For students with disabilities, the multidisciplinary team must include the student's IEP team. The ILP will include accommodations recommended by the multidisciplinary team. The accommodations must be implemented to support a student with disabilities and alleviate barriers to learning. Support services are available to students with disabilities at community colleges through offices of disability services. The offices of disability services assist students with a learning, psychological, or physical disability that may require individualized accommodations to access programs and support academic goals. Students must contact the office of disability services at their community college for guidance on requesting accommodations; therefore, the requested amendment at proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.7(c) is not necessary.
11. **Comment:** The commenter asked whether proposed N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.7(d) allows a student in a bridge year to take up to three credits at an institution of higher education in both the spring and the fall semesters. (4)
Response: Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.7(d) will allow students to take, during the fall or spring semester of the bridge year, 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 requirements.
12. **Comment:** The commenter asked if proposed N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.8 allows students in a bridge year to participate in non-athletic extracurricular activities in only the spring, as

with athletics, or if students can participate in non-athletic extracurriculars in both the fall and spring semesters. (4)

Response: Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.8(a) will allow a student in a bridge year to participate in a spring sport sanctioned by the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) and extracurricular activities at the host high school. Participation in a NJSIAA-sanctioned sport is allowed only in the spring; participation in extracurricular activities is allowed in both the fall and spring.

13. **Comment:** The commenter inquired about the obligation of the school district to provide transportation to students who participate in the Bridge Year Pilot Program. (4)

Response: The host high school is responsible for providing transportation in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:27, Student Transportation, and N.J.S.A. 18A:39-1 et seq.

14. **Comment:** The commenter inquired whether an approved private school for students with disabilities (APSSD) or out-of-district school in which the student is placed becomes the “host high school” for purposes of the proposed regulations. (4)

Response: Pursuant to P.L. 2020, c.41, the host high school is the high school the bridge year student attended as a junior. If a student attended an APSSD or other out-of-district placement in their junior year, that school would be the host high school.

15. **Comment:** The commenter asked if the host high school is obligated to transport a student in a bridge year to “any high school in the State or at any other location” to fulfill the credit requirements. The commenter also asked if there is a mileage limit if the host high school is obligated to provide transportation under this regulation. (4)

Response: Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:39-1, the host high school is responsible for providing transportation to the bridge year student for attendance at the county college or at an institution of higher education anywhere in the State with no mileage limit. The host high school is not obligated to provide transportation to any high school in the State other than an APSSD or out-of-district placement.



State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Adoption Level
October 12, 2022

PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

SHEILA Y. OLIVER
Lt. Governor

ANGELICA ALLEN-McMILLAN, Ed.D.
Acting Commissioner

To: Members, State Board of Education

From: Angelica Allen-McMillan, Ed.D., Acting Commissioner

Subject: N.J.A.C. 6A:8, Standards and Assessment

Reason for Action: New Rules

Authority: P.L. 2020, c. 41

Sunset Date: June 30, 2023

Summary

The Department of Education (Department) proposes a new subchapter at N.J.A.C. 6A:8, Standards and Assessment, to set forth the proposed new rules for the Bridge Year Pilot Program.

P.L. 2020, c. 41, established a three-year Bridge Year Pilot Program under which each school district with a high school must 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. The Bridge Year Pilot Program will provide participating students with an additional year to address learning loss and missed opportunities in extracurricular activities, including spring sports programs, due to the circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic. This additional year will be referred to throughout the proposed new rules as “bridge year.”

The following summarizes the proposed new rules.

Subchapter 6. Bridge Year Pilot Program

N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.1 Purpose

The Department proposes new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.1 to establish the subchapter’s purpose, which is to implement the Bridge Year Pilot Program authorized by P.L. 2020, c. 41. The rules specify procedures that all school districts, charter schools, and renaissance school projects with high schools and participating nonpublic high schools must follow, as well as the eligibility criteria for students.

N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.2 Scope

The Department proposes new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.2 to establish the scope of the subchapter.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.2(a) states that the subchapter shall apply to all public high schools and their school districts and district boards of education or charter school or renaissance school project board of trustees. Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.2(a)1 will require a nonpublic high school that elects to participate in the Bridge Year Pilot Program to follow the rules, as applicable. Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.2(a)2 states that “host high school,” which is the high school that a student who pursues a bridge year attended as a junior, will be used throughout the subchapter to refer to a public high school and its school district and district board of education or charter school or renaissance school project board of trustees, as well as a participating nonpublic high school.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.2(b) states that this subchapter shall apply to students in the graduating classes of 2021 and 2022 who pursue a bridge year and meet the eligibility criteria at proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.4.

N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.3 Host high school responsibilities

The Department proposes new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.3 to establish the host high school’s responsibilities in implementing the Bridge Year Pilot Program.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.3(a) will require each host high school to provide students in the graduating classes of 2021 and 2022 who are eligible, pursuant to proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.4, the opportunity to pursue a bridge year during the year immediately following their senior year of high school.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.3(b) will require each host high school to designate a staff member as a bridge year liaison to carry out the responsibilities set forth at proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.5. Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.3(b)1 states that nothing at proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.3(b) or 6.5 shall be construed to require a host high school to hire an additional individual to serve as a bridge year liaison.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.3(c) will require each host high school to permit students pursuing a bridge year to participate in graduation ceremonies with the graduating classes of 2021 or 2022, as applicable, or at the conclusion of the student’s bridge year. The proposed subsection also states that the host high school shall not issue a diploma to the student until the conclusion of the bridge year. Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.3(c)1 will require that a host high school release the final transcripts and other records, as necessary and as may be requested, if a student initially decides to pursue a bridge year but does not complete the fall or spring semester.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.3(d) will require a host high school to indicate in the New Jersey Standards Measurement and Resource for Teaching (NJ SMART) data system, by June 30, whether students in the 12th grade are planning to participate in a bridge year during the following school year. The new subsection states that this reporting requirement does not apply to participating nonpublic schools.

N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.4 Student eligibility and participation

The Department proposes new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.4 to establish the criteria for student eligibility and participation in the Bridge Year Pilot Program.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.4(a) will allow a student in the graduating classes of 2021 or 2022, who has met all applicable State and local high school graduation requirements by the

end of the student's senior year of high school, to defer graduation from high school for one year to pursue a bridge year. Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.4(a)1 will require a student participating in a bridge year to meet the graduation requirements in place for the student's original senior year to receive a State-endorsed high school diploma and not any additional graduation requirements implemented for the student's bridge year. For example, a student in the graduating class of 2022 – whose bridge year would take place during the 2022-2023 school year – will be held only to the graduation requirements applicable to the class of 2022, and not to the graduation requirements for the class of 2023, if they are different.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.4(b) states that a student shall be 19 years of age or younger and shall not turn 20 years of age at any time during the bridge year. Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.4(b)1 states that a student with disabilities who has satisfied State and local graduation requirements, but may need an extra year of services, and will not turn 21 years old before June 30, may participate in the Bridge Year Pilot Program and receive services for another year, as determined by the student's individualized education program (IEP) team, which includes the student and the student's parent(s)/guardian(s). Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.4(c) will require a student who intends to pursue a bridge year to notify the host high school's bridge year liaison no later than February 15 of the student's senior year.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.4(d) will require a student pursuing a bridge year to remain enrolled in the host high school while participating in the Bridge Year Pilot Program. Under the proposed new subsection, the student will not be permitted to transfer to a different high school, as the designation of host high school is not transferable.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.4(e) will require a student to maintain a grade point average of 2.0 while fulfilling the credit requirements at proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.7.

N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.5 Bridge year liaison responsibilities

The Department proposes new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.5 to establish the responsibilities of the host high school's bridge year liaison.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.5(a) will require the school's bridge year liaison to do the following:

- Serve as the host high school's point of contact for students who are interested in pursuing, or are participating in, a bridge year;
- Facilitate planning of academic services for students participating in the bridge year;
- Communicate regularly with the host high school's respective county college or applicable four-year institution attended by a student participating in a bridge year regarding the academic progress of students;
- Develop individual learning plans (ILPs) in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.6;
- Collect and report attendance according to the host high school's policy for students participating in classes not at the host high school and in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.6;
- Receive, at least quarterly, reports from the respective county college and other institutions of higher education attended by a student participating in a bridge year, as specified in the student's ILP; and
- Ensure, at the conclusion of each semester of the bridge year, that the student's high school transcript reflects the high school and college credits earned during

the bridge year in accordance with the host high school's policy for students participating in classes not at the host high school.

N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.6 Individual learning plans

The Department proposes new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.6 to establish the requirements for ILPs.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.6(a) will require the bridge year liaison to develop, in consultation with the student, an ILP for each student pursuing a bridge year. Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.6(a)1 states that the bridge year liaison may confer with a multi-disciplinary team of professionals with knowledge of the student's educational, behavioral, emotional, social, and health needs. For students with a disability, the multidisciplinary team must include the student's IEP team. Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.6(a)2 states that the bridge year liaison may utilize the ILP template on the Department's .

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.6(b) will require an ILP for a student's bridge year to define academic and extracurricular goals and to detail activities and strategies that will support the student in accomplishing the goals. Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.6(b)1 will require all academic goals in the ILP to be in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.7 and to be based on specific instructional objectives and on student interest and career goals and to include demonstration of student competency. Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.6(b)2 states that the activities and strategies detailed in the ILP may include, but are not limited to, counseling, academic support, coursework, transition services, and extracurricular or athletic participation. Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.6(b)3 will require host high schools that do not operate on the basis of fall and spring semesters to ensure that students in a bridge year meet the total credit requirements at proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.7 over the course of the entirety of the bridge year.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.6(c) will require an ILP for a student's bridge year to specify the manner in which the institution of higher education must report quarterly to the host high school's bridge year liaison regarding the student's progress and performance related to the academic goals defined in the ILP.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.6(d) will require each student's ILP to be completed by June 1 of the student's senior year.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.6(e) will require the host high school's bridge year liaison to update and modify a student's ILP throughout the student's bridge year to ensure the student is meeting academic and performance goals. The proposed new subsection also will require the host high school's bridge year liaison to utilize the quarterly reports submitted to modify a student's ILP.

N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.7 Academic and course requirements

The Department proposes new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.7 to establish the academic and course requirements for students participating in the Bridge Year Pilot Program.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.7(a) will require the high school or college credits taken by a student to form a coordinated sequence of academic content that prepares the student for high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.7(b) will require students to take, during the fall semester of the bridge year, between nine and 12 credits at the host high school, the county college that serves the county of the host high school, or a combination thereof.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.7(c) will require students to take, during the spring semester of the bridge year, between nine and 12 credits at the county college that serves the county of the host high school.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.7(d) will allow students to take, during the fall or spring semester of the bridge year, 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 requirements at proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.7(b) or (c).

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.7(e) will allow students to participate in learning opportunities, including, but not limited to, independent study, online learning, and structured learning experiences, to meet the credit requirements at proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.7(b) and (c).

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.7(f) states that students in a bridge year do not need to participate in health, safety, and physical education required at N.J.S.A. 18A:35-5, 7, and 8 or at proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)1 vi.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.7(g) will require a student who participates in a spring sport sanctioned by the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) during a bridge year to enroll in less than 12 college credits, or otherwise be enrolled in a number of college credits as to not be considered a full-time college student during either semester of the student's bridge year.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.7(h) states that, for the purpose of taking college credits pursuant to this section, the student participating in a bridge year shall be considered a non-matriculated student of the county college.

N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.8 Athletics and extracurricular activity participation

The Department proposes new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.8 to establish the requirements for students participating in athletics and extracurricular activities during a bridge year.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.8(a) will allow a student in a bridge year to participate in a spring sport sanctioned by the NJSIAA and extracurricular activities at the host high school. Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.8(a)1 states that a student pursuing a bridge year shall not be eligible to participate in any fall or winter sport sanctioned by the NJSIAA. Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.8(a)2 states that 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 at the host high school.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.8(b) will require a student to meet all of the NJSIAA's eligibility requirements to participate in a spring sport during the bridge year. new Proposed N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.8(b)1 will require, for students participating in a spring sport during a bridge year, that the host high school request that the NJSIAA waive the rule under which a student is not eligible for high school athletics after the expiration of eight consecutive semesters following the student's entrance into the ninth grade. A student must turn 19 years of age on or after September 1 to participate in a spring sport during the bridge year.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.8(c) will require a student participating in spring sport or extracurricular activity during the bridge year to pay applicable student athletics and activities fees and be subject to the host high school's student code of conduct, athletic code of conduct, and any other applicable codes, rules, or policies that other students participating in the spring sport or extracurricular activity at the host high school are required to follow.

As the Department has provided a 60-day comment period on this notice of proposal, this notice is excepted from the rulemaking calendar requirement pursuant to N.J.A.C. 1:30-3.3(a)5.

Social Impact

The proposed new rules will have a positive social impact for students participating in the Bridge Year Pilot Program. Participating students will be provided an additional year to address gaps in learning through classes at the host high school, the local county college, or a four-year institution, as well as missed opportunities in extracurricular activities, including spring sports programs, as a result of the circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Economic Impact

The economic impact of the proposed new rules for students participating in the Bridge Year Pilot Program will vary based on the number of credit hours a student takes at an institution of higher education. P.L. 2020, c. 41, allows students in a bridge year to take classes at institutions of higher education, including county colleges and four-year institutions. Participating students will be able to take high school courses free of charge and college courses offered at the host high school, if applicable. The law sets forth a maximum of \$145.00 per credit that institutions of higher education can charge students participating in a bridge year. Students in a bridge year will have to pay any applicable student athletic or activities fees required by the host high school. Student participation in the Bridge Year Pilot Program is voluntary.

The economic impact of the proposed new rules for host high schools will vary depending on the number of students participating in the Bridge Year Pilot Program. Host high schools will continue to incur the costs associated with enrolled students in a bridge year, including students with disabilities who attend approved private schools for students with disabilities. The economic impact of the proposed new rules for county colleges and four-year institutions participating in the Bridge Year Pilot Program will vary based on the number of students and the number of credit hours taken at the institutions. The law limits the tuition for students at \$145.00 per credit, which is below the regular cost per credit hour at county colleges and four-year institutions in the State. Students participating in a bridge year are expected to cover this cost; expenses will not be the responsibility of the host high school. However, many of the institutions already have dual enrollment or other partnerships with local high schools and provide access to college courses at a discounted tuition rate.

Federal Standards Statement

There are no Federal requirements or laws that are impacted by the proposed new rules.

Jobs Impact

The proposed new rules will not result in the generation or loss of jobs.

Agriculture Industry Impact

The proposed new rules will have no impact on the agriculture industry.

Regulatory Flexibility Analysis

The proposed new rules may impact approved private schools for students with disabilities (APSSDs) that serve students with disabilities who participate in a bridge year. There are approximately 109 APSSDs that serve high school students with disabilities. Most APSSDs could be considered small businesses as that term is defined by the Regulatory Flexibility Act, N.J.S.A. 52:14B-16 et seq. The proposed new rules will require APSSD staff to collect and report attendance for any student participating in a bridge year. The proposed new rules also will require APSSD staff to adhere to the goals written in the student's ILP. The sending school district, and not the APSSD, will be responsible for the development of the ILP. The Department does not anticipate that APSSDs will be required to hire additional staff to comply with the requirements. The cost of compliance would be covered by the sending school district through its send/receive relationship with the APSSD. The Department is unable to change the requirements based on business size or make the requirements different because APSSDs serve students with disabilities from public schools with public money and must meet State standards that are similar to public school requirements.

Housing Affordability Impact Analysis

The proposed new rules will have an insignificant impact on the affordability of housing in New Jersey. There is an extreme unlikelihood the proposed new rules would evoke a change in the average costs associated with housing because the proposed new rules concern the eligibility to defer graduation from high school for one year 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.

Smart Growth Development Impact Analysis

The proposed new rules will have an insignificant impact on smart growth. There is an extreme unlikelihood the proposed new rules would evoke a change in housing production in Planning Areas 1 and 2, or within designated centers, under the State Development and Redevelopment Plan in New Jersey because the proposed new rules concern the Bridge Year Pilot Program, which allows eligible students to defer graduation from high school for one year 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.

Racial and Ethnic Community Criminal Justice and Public Safety Impact

There is an extreme unlikelihood that the proposed new rules would have an impact on pretrial detention, sentencing, probation, or parole policies concerning juveniles and adults in the State because the proposed new rules concern the Bridge Year Pilot Program, which allows eligible students to defer graduation from high school for one year 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.

Full text of the proposed new rules follows (additions indicated in boldface **thus**):

Subchapter 6. Bridge Year Pilot Program

6A:8-6.1 Purpose

- (a) **This subchapter implements the Bridge Year Pilot Program authorized by P.L. 2020, c. 41. The law provides students in the graduating classes of 2021 and 2022 with the opportunity to defer graduation from high school for one year to offset disruptions to learning opportunities and participation in extracurricular activities that might have resulted from the closure of schools for in-person instruction in the spring of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The rules specify procedures that all school districts, charter schools, and renaissance school projects with high schools and participating nonpublic high schools must follow, as well as the eligibility criteria for students.**
- 1. This additional year will be referred to throughout the subchapter as “bridge year.”**

6A:8-6.2 Scope

- (a) **This subchapter shall apply to all public high schools and their school districts and district boards of education or charter school or renaissance school project board of trustees.**
- 1. A nonpublic high school that elects to participate in the Bridge Year Pilot Program shall follow the rules throughout this subchapter, as applicable.**
 - 2. “Host high school,” which is the high school that a student who pursues a bridge year attended as a junior, shall be used throughout the subchapter to refer to a public high school and its school district and district board of**

education or charter school or renaissance school project board of trustees, as well as a participating nonpublic high school.

- (b) This subchapter shall apply to students in the graduating classes of 2021 and 2022 who pursue a bridge year and meet the eligibility criteria at N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.4.**

6A:8-6.3 Host high school responsibilities

- (a) Each host high school shall provide students in the graduating classes of 2021 and 2022, who are eligible pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.4, with the opportunity to pursue a bridge year during the academic year immediately following their senior year of high school.**
- (b) Each host high school shall designate a staff member as a bridge year liaison to carry out the responsibilities set forth at N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.5.**
 - 1. Nothing at (b) above or at N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.5 shall be construed to require a host high school to hire an individual to serve as a bridge year liaison.**
- (c) The host high school shall permit a student pursuing a bridge year to participate in graduation ceremonies with the graduating class of 2021 or 2022, as applicable, or at the conclusion of the student's bridge year, but the host high school shall not issue a diploma to the student until the conclusion of the bridge year.**
 - 1. If a student initially decides to pursue a bridge year but does not complete the fall or spring semester, the student's host high school shall release all final transcripts and other records, as necessary, and as may be requested.**
- (d) A host high school shall indicate in NJ SMART, by June 30, whether students in the 12th grade are planning to participate in a bridge year during the following school year. This requirement does not apply to participating nonpublic schools.**

6A:8-6.4 Student eligibility and participation

- (a) A student in the graduating classes of 2021 or 2022 who has met all applicable State and local high school graduation requirements by the end of the student’s senior year of high school may defer graduation from high school for one year to pursue a bridge year.**
- 1. To receive a State-endorsed high school diploma, a student participating in a bridge year shall:**
- i. Meet the graduation requirements in place for the student’s original senior year; and**
- ii. Not be required to meet any additional graduation requirements implemented for the student’s bridge year.**
- (b) A student shall be 19 years of age or younger and shall not turn 20 years of age at any time during the bridge year, except as detailed at (b)1 below.**
- 1. A student with disabilities who has satisfied State and local graduation requirements but may need an extra year of services, and will not turn 21 years old before June 30, may participate in the Bridge Year Pilot Program and receive services for another year as determined by the student’s individualized education program (IEP) team, which includes the student and the student’s parent(s)/guardian(s).**
- (c) A student who intends to pursue a bridge year shall notify the host high school’s bridge year liaison no later than February 15 of the student’s senior year.**
- (d) A student pursuing a bridge year shall remain enrolled in the host high school while participating in the Bridge Year Pilot Program. The student shall not be permitted to transfer to a different high school, as the designation of host high school is not transferable.**
- (e) To remain in the Bridge Year Pilot Program, a student shall maintain a grade point average of 2.0 while fulfilling the credit requirements at N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.7.**

6A:8-6.5 Bridge year liaison responsibilities

(a) Each host high school's bridge year liaison shall do the following:

- 1. Serve as the host high school's point of contact for students who are interested in pursuing, or are participating in, a bridge year;**
- 2. Facilitate planning of academic services for students participating in a bridge year;**
- 3. Communicate regularly with the host high school's respective county college or applicable four-year institution attended by a student participating in a bridge year regarding the academic progress of students;**
- 4. Develop individual learning plans (ILPs) in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.6;**
- 5. Collect and report attendance according to the host high school's policy for students participating in classes not at the host high school and in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.6;**
- 6. Receive, at least quarterly, reports from the respective county college and other institutions of higher education attended by a student participating in a bridge year as specified in the student's ILP; and**
- 7. Ensure, at the conclusion of each semester of the bridge year, that the student's high school transcript reflects the high school and college credits earned during the bridge year in accordance with host high school's policy for students participating in classes not at the host high school.**

6A:8-6.6 Individual learning plans

(a) The host high school's bridge year liaison shall develop, in consultation with the student, an individual learning plan (ILP) for each student pursuing a bridge year.

1. The bridge year liaison [[shall consider conferring]] **may confer** with a multidisciplinary team of professionals with knowledge of the student's educational, behavioral, emotional, social, and health needs. For students with a disability, the multi-disciplinary team shall include the student's IEP team.
 2. The bridge year liaison may utilize the ILP template on the Department's website at <https://www.nj.gov/education/covid19/boardops/bridge.shtml>.
- (b) An ILP for a student's bridge year shall define academic and extracurricular goals and shall detail activities and strategies that will support the student in accomplishing the goals.
1. All academic goals in the ILP shall be in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.7 and shall:
 - i. Be based on specific instructional objectives;
 - ii. Be based on student interest and career goals; and
 - iii. Include demonstration of student competency.
 2. The activities and strategies detailed in the ILP may include, but are not limited to, counseling, academic support, coursework, transition services, and extracurricular or athletic participation.
 3. Host high schools that do not operate on the basis of fall and spring semesters shall ensure that students in a bridge year meet the total credit requirements at N.J.A.C. 6A:8-6.7 over the course of the entirety of the bridge year.
- (c) An ILP for a student's bridge year shall specify the manner in which the institution of higher education must report quarterly to the host high school's bridge year liaison regarding the student's progress and performance related to the academic goal's defined in the ILP.

- (d) Each student’s ILP shall be completed by June 1 of the student’s senior year.**
- (e) The host high school’s bridge year liaison shall update and modify a student’s ILP throughout the student’s bridge year to ensure the student is meeting academic and performance goals. The host high school’s bridge year liaison shall utilize the quarterly reports submitted pursuant to (c) above to modify a student’s ILP.**

6A:8-6.7 Academic and course requirements

- (a) The high school or college credits taken by a student pursuant to this section shall together form a coordinated sequence of academic content that prepares the student for high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations.**
- (b) During the fall semester of the bridge year, students shall take between nine and 12 credits at the host high school, the county college that serves the county of the host high school, or a combination thereof.**
- (c) During the spring semester of the bridge year, students shall take between nine and 12 credits at the county college that serves the county of the host high school.**
- (d) During the fall or spring semester of the bridge year, students 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 credit requirements at (b) or (c) above.**
- (e) To meet the credit requirements at (b) and (c) above, students may participate in learning opportunities, including, but not limited to, independent study, online learning, and structured learning experiences.**
- (f) Students in a bridge year do not need to participate in health, safety, and physical education requirements at N.J.S.A. 18A:35-5, 7, and 8 or at N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)1vi.**
- (g) A student who participates in a spring sport sanctioned by the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) during the bridge year shall enroll in less than 12 college credits, or otherwise be enrolled in a number of college credits as**

to not be considered a full-time college student during either semester of the student's bridge year.

- (h) For the purpose of taking college credits pursuant to this section, the student participating in a bridge year shall be considered a non-matriculated student of the county college.

6A:8-6.8 Athletic and extracurricular activity participation

- (a) A student in a bridge year may participate in a spring sport sanctioned by the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) and extracurricular activities at the host high school.
 - 1. A student pursuing a bridge year shall not be eligible to participate in any fall or winter sport sanctioned by the NJSIAA.
 - 2. 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 at the host high school.
- (b) To participate in a spring sport during the bridge year, the student shall meet all of the NJSIAA's eligibility requirements except as detailed at (b)1 below.
 - 1. For students participating in a spring sport during a bridge year, the host high school shall request that the NJSIAA waive the rule under which a student is not eligible for high school athletics after the expiration of eight consecutive semesters following the student's entrance into the ninth grade.
- (c) A student participating in a spring sport or extracurricular activity during the bridge year shall pay applicable student athletics and activities fees and be subject to the host high school's student code of conduct, athletic code of conduct, and any other applicable codes, rules, or policies that other students participating in the spring sport or extracurricular activity at the host high school are required to follow.