Question:
Should we/can we promote our students to the next grade level in the fall?

Answer:
Expect to incorporate an unusual level of flexibility into this year’s grade promotion and graduation requirements. Also, prepare for the possibility that the state will ask individual districts to apply for waivers related to grade promotion and graduation requirements—these waivers may require districts to demonstrate that administrators and teachers made every effort to continue student learning during the extended school closure:

• **Colorado**: This guidance suggests that districts incorporate flexibility into graduation requirements—e.g., allow students to fulfil requirements remotely, retroactively assign credit for extra-curricular activities students may have completed, allow students to complete graduation requirements over the summer, and/or allow students to demonstrate graduation readiness through an alternative capstone project.

• **Michigan**: In the coming days, Michigan will likely announce the closure of public schools for the remainder of the school year and will likely mandate that all students move on to the next grade and/or graduate, “assuming their school district determines they were on pace to advance before the shutdown.” This includes students at the third-grade level who are more than a year behind in reading—in a typical year, Michigan retains all such students.

• **North Carolina**: The state mandated that all public schools grade high school seniors on a pass/fail basis for the spring semester according to their performance as of the last day of in-class instruction in the state (March 13th). This change will allow most seniors who were on-track to graduate (i.e., enrolled in a course load that would allow them to meet all graduation requirements) on March 13th to do so. For students at risk of failing, their performance on remote learning assignments can raise their grade and allow them to graduate.

• **Texas**: This article from mid-March, after Texas waived state assessments, notes that districts should consider teacher recommendations, students’ grades, and academic performance to decide grade promotion on a case-by-case basis in lieu of state assessment scores. For current high school seniors, districts should convene a committee of the student’s principal, teachers, and parents to determine graduation eligibility regardless of end-of-course assessments.

• **Washington**: On April 8, the state will release a new graduation policy. The policy is expected to allow—for those districts that have made a “good faith effort” to provide remote instruction—school officials to waive graduating seniors’ credit requirements on a case-by-case basis.

Finally, the research team shared that, should state guidance relax the typical requirements for grade promotion, districts should expect that students will require some amount of compensatory instruction at the beginning of their next grade level or via summer programming. EAB researchers intend to provide more insights and recommendations on this contingency in the coming weeks and months. Please continue to visit our [K-12 resource center](#) to see our latest research on remote learning and, eventually, on transitioning back to in-person instruction.