Supporting High School Seniors' Postsecondary Pathways During COVID-19: Chat

Seniors who need to earn credits or complete requirements to graduate

What we know:

- Most states have waived or are allowing local districts to waive graduation requirements like state tests or college and career demonstrations of readiness.
- Some states are encouraging/requiring local districts to view all students who were on-track to graduate at the end of the 3rd quarter by being enrolled in (and passing) courses needed for graduation, as having met graduation requirements, e.g. AL, AK, NC, VA.
- Some states have suggested multiple ways students can earn credit for needed courses (local tests, projects, work experience etc.) and are leaving it up to districts or schools to decide whether students have done sufficient work to graduate, e.g. NM, TX.
- Not all states have issued graduation requirement guidance yet.
- Best source we have found is ExcelinEd, which has a data base of state graduation requirements under COVID-19 updated daily https://www.excelined.org/covid-19/

The Question: Even with graduation requirement flexibility. some seniors will need support to graduate. How can we provide that support under COVID-19?

What's Being Done

- Remote technologies to connect with students, district partnerships with community-based organizations, clear instructions for seniors. - *Liesl Santkuhl, College Success WA*
- Virtual office hours, Google classrooms. – *José Guardiola, Denver Public Schools*
- Paras and RTI/MTSS instructors connect with families over Zoom. – *Sarah Frazelle, Puget Sound ESD*
- Online tutoring and office hours via Zoom or Teams. – *Jazmin Vasquez-Bueno, MDC-Hope WA*
- Online tutoring to help students pass, especially for AP classes. – *Hannah Hibbs, MDC-Hope WA*
- Teachers contract with failing students for grades to earn credit based on remote participation. – *Dena Dossett, Jefferson Co. Schools, KY*
- Be sensitive to where students are, and their pressing family and personal concerns. Communicate with them via their preferred method to make sure they know what they need to do to graduate and matriculate. – *Sade Ortiz-Lucin, Young Women's Leadership School of Astoria NYC*
- Teachers using Teams for class meetings; administrators contacting individual students who are not communicating. – *Andrea Beckel, Osceola Schools*
- Support students with navigating the process as information becomes available. Make connections for them to the adults in the school that can help them and their parents determine next steps. – *Shanetta Martin, United Way of Central Maryland*
- Student support groups, connecting students in similar situations via virtual tools to build community and support outcomes. – *Ali Slack, National Education Equity Lab*
- Riverside County: working with districts to provide students technology access to distance learning (distribution of digital devices and hotspots); providing guidance on grading practices with "hold harmless" focus driving the conversation; discussing downstream issues for underclassmen; offering Guiding Document to frame issues of distance learning and grading practices.
  https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1_6dviH7pdq15ntyKZGtxBINArqPI5K448umyWSbDkvo
  – *Gil Compton, Riverside Co. CA*
- Deans have been reaching out to parents and students to see if they need additional support. – *Andrea Beckel*
- Smaller, more rural districts are having more success than larger ones in WA. – *Sarah Frazelle*

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What's Being Done (continued)

- The leadership team is reaching out to students that have not been heard from since the start of remote learning. This takes some stress off teachers so they can focus on instruction and providing feedback. – *Monica Shavers, Osceola Schools*
- Riverside County has also created 5 virtual professional development sessions for K-12 school counselors on best practices in a virtual environment. Over 500 have signed up for the series so far. – *Gil Compton*

Seniors who will graduate but did not secure a postsecondary placement before schooling became remote

What we know:
March, April, and May are typically months when some seniors apply to open-access four-year and community colleges.

- Many depend on application supports provided by their high school and/or affiliated non-profits
- Open-access four-year institutions and community colleges often send representatives to high schools to provide information help students apply.
- Almost all higher education institutions are closed with staff working remotely. They may re-open on different schedules and make different adjustments to application deadlines. This will make it harder for prospective students to get questions answered or receive accurate information.
- If students graduate without a post-secondary placement, it will be difficult for schools to track them down. If they leave the K-12 system and have not enrolled in higher education, it will be hard to provide information on rolling admissions, mid-year starts, etc.
- A few states have at least brought up this challenge in their COVID-19 Guidance to districts, e.g. Colorado.
- But, overall, this could be an out of sight, out of mind problem, with serious effects for students and communities.

The Question: How can we support seniors who currently lack a postsecondary placement? This spring? This summer? Next year?

What's Being Done, Concerns & Issues

- This seems easier for districts that were focusing on SEL and welcoming school climate. These districts still focus primarily on caring for students and relationships; academic support seems to be flowing from those connections. – *Sarah Frazelle*
- We're working on this, but it's super messy and not aligned across schools. – *Alexis Sullivan, Community Center for Education Results, WA*
- Our students apply to post-secondary options during October-December, so now we are assisting them with reading FA packages and deciding where to enroll. – *Magdelyn Gomez, Student Leadership Network/College Bound*
- In Hamilton County, TN, district-based, full-time college and career advisors continue reaching out to students via various tech solutions, as do College Advancement Mentors, to make sure the HS-postsecondary transition happens. They stay in touch, provide guidance, and bridge postsec/student/HS communication. – *Keith White, PEF Chattanooga*
- Meeting students where they are - using social media like Instagram to blast out information and respond to questions that students have. – *Jared Epler, Philadelphia Education Fund*   (cont. next page)

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The Question: How can we support seniors who currently lack a postsecondary placement? This spring? This summer? Next year?
What's Being Done, Concerns & Issues (continued)

- We are working with a person from school partner Denver Scholarship Foundation on reaching out to students to help with placement, opening school portals, FAFSA and scholarships. – *José Guardiola*
- Some Denver metro area colleges have provided remote meeting opportunities for prospective students. I'm then sharing that with students who may be interested in applying to those schools. – *Emily Webster, Denver Scholarship Foundation*
- Georgia collaborative partners (University System, Technical College System, Student Finance and K-12) are coordinating efforts in regard to HOPE scholarship eligibility and dual enrollment credits to help students identify higher ed options and finalize plans, and reignite those without firm plans. Technical colleges will be a great bridge; as many students are already dual enrolled and have a connection, they can continue there until policies are better aligned. – *Brad Bryant, REACH Georgia*
- Representatives from Tacoma CBOs, institutions, and the school district are meeting this week for collaborative action planning to help communicate systemically about resources re: college options, financial support, etc. – *Nalani Linder, Degrees of Change Tacoma*
- A Buffalo collaborative effort, including GEAR UP, has set a goal to email, text, or phone every HS senior (~2,500) to help them navigate their individual challenges; this is in addition to the work school district counselors are doing. – *Betsy Behrend, Say Yes Buffalo*
- Paid internships & apprenticeship programs; gap year programming. – *Magdelyn Gomez*
- Note: Undocumented students are not able to do AmeriCorps, so this is not an option for them. – *Alejandra Perez, Community Center for Education Results, WA*
- A group of Texas nonprofits and other stakeholders, including two-year and four-year institutions, are working to coordinate a common location for students to find information on enrollment process change. – *Claudette Jenks, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board*
- In San Antonio, we have a one-stop shop called cafecollege to help students of all ages and grades with completing college steps, financial aid assistance, and scholarship research. We are currently working on virtual advising and assisting students using Zoom and email/text/phone communication. https://cafecollege.org/ – *Rosemary Rodriquez, San Antonio Education Partnership*
- Though these students are at risk, district, PS, and community systems have joined forces to support current and upcoming PS students, addressing relocation and similar financial challenges and outreach using pre-existing relationships between HS-based college and career advisors and students. Advisors are staying in contact with students using text, Naviance, and similar tools along with virtual advising. They're doing their best to keep a game plan in play and the students engaged and focused on the end-goal. – *Keith White*

Supporting seniors have a postsecondary placement(s) but are rethinking options due to COVID-19
What we know:

Initial surveys and media reports suggest…
- Some students are looking for options closer to home.
- Students are concerned about costs and the impact of COVID-19 on family employment and income.

- As a result, some are considering delaying enrollment for a year.
- Finally, there is a substantial gap between acceptance and enrollment; students may struggle with the multiple steps and deadlines involved in enrollment, including financial aid forms (typically due in May).

The Question: How can we support seniors to move from postsecondary acceptance to enrollment during COVID-19?

What's Being Done, Concerns & Issues

- One-on-one outreach and engagement is key, especially in high poverty urban areas like Buffalo. – *Betsy Behrend*
- I've been working with students whose parents have lost jobs due to COVID-19 on financial aid appeal letters, to see if colleges can help cover the additional costs that families can no longer afford. – *Sade Ortiz-Lucin*
- We are trying to transition the services already woven together through Say Yes Buffalo (e.g. mentoring, peer mentoring, FinAid support, PLUS basic needs, housing etc.) to virtual and distance methods. – *Betsy Behrend*
- In Massachusetts, we're trying to figure out how to use MyCAP to keep virtual advising going. It is locally administered, so we are starting to survey districts on what the status is. – *Nyal Fuentes, MA DESE*
- Not sending a robotic-like response is key to engaging seniors in their transition from high school to higher ed. Personalizing messages and asking students how they're doing during this time goes a long way; I've had more responses this way than through any other method/format. I echo the emphasis on doing 1:1 contact – *Salvador Acosta, San Antonio Education Partnership*
- At Chattanooga PEF, we are making use of our SIS to make sure educators and advisors are aware of where students are in on the PS trajectory, and using match and fit tools to offer students PS options that would still be a good fit/match, even if they've had to change plans. – *Keith White*
- Our Trio Program in WA has been pushing 1:1 contacts with students as well as parents. We used a needs assessment to assess family needs and try to gather resources to address those needs. Some families need food, cleaning supplies, or school supplies. We want to make sure parents and students know we are here to serve them as we help students review financial aid award letters, apply to schools, etc. – *Jazmin Vasquez-Bueno*
- Students can pick up a smile in the voice! I feel it is very important that students hear a voice they are familiar with. – *Rachel Maldonado, San Antonio Education Partnership*
- In Puget Sound, we are encouraging focused data-sharing across colleges, districts and CBOs to support individualized, virtual advising. We're looking for data-sharing agreement templates to adapt that have worked across districts, colleges and CBOs. If you have one that may work for us, please send to psccn@psesd.org Thanks! – *Kyla Lackie, Puget Sound Educational Service District*
- We have some from our previous PAS work. – *Sarah Frazelle*
- Riverside County Office of Education has a data sharing MOU with our districts. We can create a "Boiler Plate" example to share. gcompton@rcoe.us – *Gil Compton*
- Big-picture reminder: many institutions--especially the smaller ones--are hit hard by COVID-19 in their own ways and may not have all of the student supports or financial aid packages available to students immediately when they reopen. While we hope they will emerge stronger and even more responsive to students post-COVID-19, as good partners we should talk with colleges and be aware of any modifications they've had to make, so we can communicate those to incoming or prospective students. – *Nalani Linder*
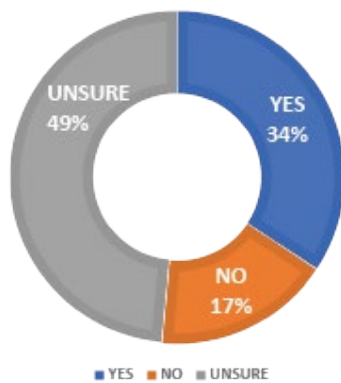
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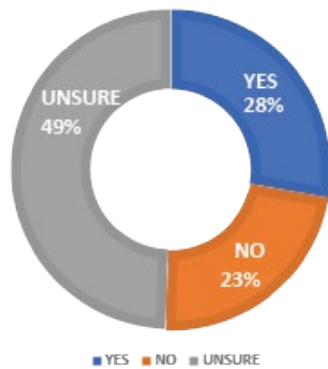
IN YOUR STATE, SCHOOL DISTRICT, OR COMMUNITY, HAS GUIDANCE BEEN PROVIDED ON HOW TO MODIFY GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS DURING COVID-19?
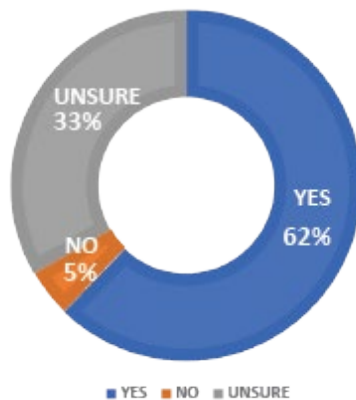
YES – 28%

NO – 23%

UNSURE – 49%

HAVE YOUR STATE, SCHOOL DISTRICT, HIGH SCHOOL(S) OR LOCAL HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS BEGUN TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS WITHOUT A POSTSECONDARY PLACEMENT?

YES – 34%

NO – 17%

UNSURE – 49%

IN YOUR DISTRICT, SCHOOL(S), AND COMMUNITY, ARE THE NORMAL SUPPORTS PROVIDED TO HELP STUDENTS GET FROM POSTSECONDARY ACCEPTANCE TO ENROLLMENT AT RISK BECAUSE OF COVID-19?

YES – 62%

NO – 5%

UNSURE – 33%