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TO: Board of Education

FROM: Catherine Payne
Chairperson, Board of Education

AGENDA ITEM: Presentation on request for feedback regarding reopening of schools for
2020-2021 school year

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Board should consider providing “big picture” guidance to the Department of its expectations for the reopening of schools in the 2020-2021 school year
- The Board needs to first understand the expectations, questions, and concerns that its members, education stakeholders, and the public have about reopening schools and providing a quality education for students while living with the threat of COVID-19.
- The intent of our discussion today is to gather Board member comments, discuss public comments received through testimony, and for Board members to provide input on what they consider to be priorities. This information will be used to draft the “big picture” guidance to the Department regarding the reopening of schools in the 2020-2021 school year.

II. BACKGROUND

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Education (“Department”) closed school facilities and stopped traditional, in-school instruction. Consequently, public school students did not receive traditional in-school instruction during the fourth quarter of the 2019-2020 school year and instead primarily had access to enrichment opportunities through various forms of distance learning. At its May 21, 2020 general business meeting, the Board of Education (“Board”) adopted a resolution to provide high-level guidance to the Department regarding summer school to address possible learning loss and better prepare students for the 2020-2021 school year.¹

¹ The Board’s May 21, 2020 resolution is available here:
[http://boe.hawaii.gov/Documents/2020%20Summer%20School%20Resolution%20\(executed\).pdf](http://boe.hawaii.gov/Documents/2020%20Summer%20School%20Resolution%20(executed).pdf).

On May 18, 2020, Governor David Ige signed his Eighth Supplementary Proclamation Related to the COVID-19 Emergency, which allows educational institutions, including public prekindergarten through Grade 12 schools, to restart onsite operations on June 1 with physical distancing and safe practices in place. The proclamation includes a roadmap that would eventually allow educational institutions to continue onsite operations with adjusted safe practices.²

III. **DISCUSSION**

At its last meeting, the Board adopted a resolution focusing on summer school because it was on the immediate horizon. We now need to turn our attention to what our school system will look like for the next school year and perhaps beyond. Similar to the summer school resolution, the Board should consider providing “big picture” guidance to the Department of its expectations for the reopening of schools in the 2020-2021 school year. Before we can issue guidance, however, the Board needs to first understand the expectations, questions, and concerns that its members, education stakeholders, and the public have about reopening schools and providing a quality education for students while living with the threat of COVID-19. To be clear, the Department has been and is working on plans to reopen schools; the work has not stopped since schools closed their physical spaces.

The intent of our discussion today is to gather Board member comments, discuss public comments received through testimony, and for Board members to provide input on what they consider to be priorities. Attached as Exhibit A to this memorandum is a framework to organize questions and concerns, help facilitate discussion, and make it easier to figure out answers later. The framework³ is divided by major areas of focus for reopening public schools:

People. The people and organizations that make up the public education system.

- **Students.** Students attending public schools operated by the Department.
- **Family & Community.** Businesses, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, families (including parents and guardians), and individuals involved with public schools or the Department.
- **Staff.** School personnel, including teachers, administrators, counselors, and administrative, custodial, and cafeteria staff.

Place. The places where students learn and staff work.

- **Physical Space.** Public school buildings, facilities, and land, including the equipment and materials within them.

² Governor Ige’s Eighth Supplementary Proclamation is available here: https://governor.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/2005088-ATG_Eighth-Supplementary-Proclamation-for-COVID-19-distribution-signed.pdf.

³ This framework is based on the framework that the Hawaii State Public Libraries uses to set goals and priorities and focus on what is important.

- **Virtual Space.** Online platforms, programs, and tools that assist with teaching and learning.
- **Where the People Are.** The places where students or staff engage in teaching or learning when they cannot physically be present on school campuses (e.g., living room).

School Design. How schools are designed to educate and prepare students.

- **Learning Design.** The educational program design for students, including instructional models, curricula, and assessments.
- **School Operations.** Operations that support the learning design and support services, including transportation and administrative and fiscal services.
- **Support Services.** Whole child supports, including social and emotional supports, health service, and meal service.

Any questions, concerns, or comments about reopening schools and how public education will work next school year likely fit in one of the above areas.

Some questions of which the Board is currently aware are included in the table attached as Exhibit B. The table organizes these questions in accordance with the aforementioned framework and areas of focus. Questions referencing “the Department” in the table mean that the issue falls somewhere in the tri-level system of school, complex area, and state, although which level is not specified at this point. After the table there are additional areas that the Board, Governor, and/or Legislature can consider because there are concerns that stretch beyond the jurisdiction of the Department.

The purpose of the framework, table, and our discussion is to identify various questions, concerns, and issues with reopening schools and ensuring our students receive a quality education through the entirety of next school year. Board members and the public can comment on the existing questions in the table or provide their own questions or concerns. The intent is to use the resulting information to prepare broad guidance for the entire public school system on the reopening of school. We must move quickly, and I anticipate having a proposal for the Board for discussion at our next general business meeting. As such, we will need to receive any public comments on the issue by Friday, June 5, 2020. The public should send any comments to testimony.boe@boe.hawaii.gov by this deadline.

Exhibit A

**Framework for Organizing Questions and Concerns Regarding the Reopening
of Department of Education Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year**

**FRAMEWORK FOR FEEDBACK REGARDING REOPENING DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SCHOOLS FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2020-2021**

PEOPLE

STUDENTS

**FAMILY &
COMMUNITY**

STAFF

PLACE

**PHYSICAL
SPACE**

**VIRTUAL
SPACE**

**WHERE THE
PEOPLE ARE**

**SCHOOL
DESIGN**

**LEARNING
DESIGN**

**SCHOOL
OPERATIONS**

**SUPPORT
PROGRAMS**

Exhibit B

**Current Questions Regarding the Reopening of Department of Education
Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year**

PEOPLE

STUDENTS

- How is the Department going to ensure the health and safety of students?
- Does the Department need to clarify any changes to its approach to providing services to students with special needs and English learners?
- Should the Department prioritize support for certain identified students? Which students should be prioritized - homeless students, students with disabilities, English language learners, students in families that were substantially financially impacted by COVID-19, students directly affected by COVID-19 through their own illness, family illness, family death or hospitalization?
- How is the Department going to ensure privacy of student and family medical information while assisting with contact tracing efforts and providing prioritized supports?
- Is the Department going to provide students with personal protective equipment public health officials recommend, including gloves and face masks?

FAMILY & COMMUNITY

- How is the Department going to coordinate and partner with philanthropic organizations and community partners, including community health providers, food banks, counseling, child care, and other resource providers, to meet the broader needs of students, families, and communities?
- Is the Department going to ask schools in a complex area to try to coordinate schedules so families with children in multiple grades have similar schedules?
- Is the Department going to develop plans that, even if schools remains open, allow parents and guardians to decide to keep their child at home and access virtual learning only?

STAFF

- How is the Department going to ensure the health and safety of staff?
- Is the Department going to provide staff with personal protective equipment public health officials recommend, including gloves and face masks?
- How is the Department planning on proactively addressing possible budget shortfalls to cover staffing costs?
- How is the Department going to support staff in the event schools and offices (physical spaces) need to close and everyone needs to shift to virtual spaces? This includes support for all staff who do not have digital devices or connectivity and are teaching their own children, caring for family members, or who are sick themselves.
- How is the Department going to gather data, track, and report on metrics important to the Board, Legislature, and public? What are the metrics most important to the Board, Legislature, and public?
- How is the Department going to work with labor unions to address staff health, personal, and professional needs, recognizing the fluidity and rapid pace of the situation and budget constraints?

PLACE

PHYSICAL SPACE

- How will the Department minimize the spread of COVID-19 in physical spaces, including classrooms, hallways, school buses, and other areas?
- How will the Department identify, procure, and distribute supplies (personal protective equipment, hand soap, hand sanitizer, and disinfectant)?
- How is the Department going to address additional costs relating to opening and maintaining school and office spaces and transporting students?
- Is the Department going to consider a variety of scenarios when opening physical spaces to students and staff while allowing for social distancing? For example, students attending school on alternate days or on staggered schedules.
- How is the Department going to work with its student transportation vendors to adjust to modified student schedules and institute additional requirements to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in vehicles.
- How will the Department communicate what students, staff, families, and communities must do if school and office physical spaces must be closed?

VIRTUAL SPACE

- Is the Department going to aim to ensure every student has a device and connectivity before the beginning of the school year?
- Is the Department looking at other methods of delivering instruction to students (other than digital devices) if the school has a blended school design model or in the event schools have to close their physical spaces?
- How is the Department going to provide technical support for students, families, and staff when learning is occurring in a blended or virtual space?
- How is the Department going to ensure that digital tools used for remote learning meet state and federal mandated privacy protection requirement?

WHERE THE PEOPLE ARE

- Is the Department planning to test remote learning systems and procedures before they are implemented?
- How is the Department going to determine what constitutes attendance and a statutory school day when students are only accessing virtual learning?
- How is the Department going to support staff in the event schools and offices (physical spaces) need to close and schools and offices need to shift to virtual spaces? This includes support for all staff who do not have digital devices or connectivity and are themselves caring for children, teaching their own children, caring for family members, or who are sick themselves.

SCHOOL DESIGN

LEARNING DESIGN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the Department going to provide accommodations and additional support for students with special needs and English learners to ensure schools can serve every student in the event that schools’ physical spaces close? • How is the Department going to ensure that daily personal interactions in schools and offices can be redesigned to meet health protocols? • Should the Department consider repurposing the standardized assessments that would have occurred in Spring into diagnostic assessments for back to school? • Should the Department consider opportunities to experiment with new assessment and accountability models such as competency-based learning or through course assessments instead of seat time? • Should the Department consider adjustments in attendance policies for accountability purposes (Strive HI)?
SCHOOL OPERATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should the Department consider adjustments in attendance policies that determine whether a child is attending school in accordance with the compulsory attendance law, Hawaii Revised Statutes, Section 302A-1132? • Should the Department develop comprehensive communication plans to reach students, parents, families, and staff that leverage local media outlets, text messaging, websites, and email? • What is the Department’s plan to promote the sharing of resources to help conserve limited budgets? • How will the Department encourage schools and staff to share best practices and lessons learned?
SUPPORT SERVICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the Department serve meals when school physical spaces are open? • How will the Department assess which students cannot take advantage of school meal distribution sites and identify ways to address these gaps? • How will the Department ensure students and staff have counseling support to address the numerous causes of trauma that result from the sickness and deaths of friends and family members, economic hardship from a parent losing his or her job, or abuse, violence, or neglect? • How is the Department planning to coordinate between public health officials and private organizations (athletic associations, debate and forensics leagues, and similar organizations) to promote an expedited restart of these extracurricular activities as crucial components of social and emotional learning for many students and also how or whether these extracurricular activities can continue if school physical spaces close.

Additional Areas for Board, Governor, and/or Legislature Consideration:

- Develop a process and criteria for quickly evaluating requests for regulatory flexibility.
- Consider ways to provide regulatory flexibility and policy accommodations for new models of learning, such as competency-based learning and hybrid learning.
- Scrutinize state privacy statutes to identify any potential barriers to coordination between schools and health officials.
- Consider providing the flexibility for schools to base student progression on demonstrated mastery of competencies, rather than on seat time.

Resources

- *A Blueprint for Back to School*. American Enterprise Institute. May 2020. Last accessed on May 27, 2020 at <https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/A-Blueprint-for-Back-to-School.pdf>. Cited as AEI.
- Hattie, John. “Visible Learning Effect Sizes When Schools Are Closed: What Matters and What Does Not.” *Corwin Connect*. April 14, 2020. Last accessed on May 28, 2020 at <https://corwin-connect.com/2020/04/visible-learning-effect-sizes-when-schools-are-closed-what-matters-and-what-does-not/>. Cited as Hattie.