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TO: The Honorable Catherine Payne
                 Chairperson, Board of Education

FROM: Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto
                 Superintendent

SUBJECT: **Update on Acellus Learning Accelerator Distance Learning Program ("Acellus"): Board's October 15, 2020 Directives Regarding Communication with Families, Phase Out by the End of the 2020-2021 School Year, and Other Learning Options for Families; Status of Acellus Transition Plan After Second Quarter; School Plans for Third Quarter; and Curriculum Management System and Instructional Material Review and Selection Process**

BACKGROUND

At the September 17, 2020, Hawaii State Board of Education (BOE) General Business Meeting, the BOE placed on its agenda a discussion item regarding the continued use of the Acellus Accelerator program. Pursuant to my directive, Deputy Superintendent Phyllis Unebasami initiated a multidisciplinary cross-office review of the program and committed to report back to the BOE on findings, solutions and recommendations.

On October 15, 2020, the Hawaii Department of Education (HIDOE) made public its final summary report (summary report) of the review ahead of the BOE's General Business Meeting, where the BOE ultimately voted to direct the Department to phase the Acellus program out of all schools by the end of the 2020-21 school year. As noted in the summary report, an internal review team had also recommended the program be discontinued as a primary curriculum resource due to its inconsistency in quality and rigor.

On November 9, 2020, the HIDOE released a final report (http://bit.ly/HIDOE-final-acellus-report), a comprehensive 113-page version of the previously released summary report, on its instructional review of the Acellus online program.

AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

PRESENTATION

1. **Board's October 15, 2020 directives regarding communication with families, phase out by the end of the 2020-2021 school year, and other learning options for families**

   At its October 15, 2020 General Business Meeting, the BOE took action and directed the Superintendent to: (1) issue a letter to families using Acellus that acknowledges that the Department's selection of the program as a platform for distance learning was done in haste without appropriate vetting, (2) phase out Acellus in all schools by the end of the 2020-2021 school year, and (3) allow any family who wants to stop using Acellus to switch to another learning option at any time.

   In an October 2020 letter to families, the Superintendent of Education extended an apology and noted the HIDOE has completed a review of Acellus and is working to move forward in a manner that supports students in the least disruptive manner possible. The full text of the letter translated into fourteen (14) languages is available at:
   http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/ConnectWithUs/MediaRoom/PressReleases/Pages/Parent-message-from-Supt.-Kishimoto.aspx

   The HIDOE Leadership Team will ensure the phase out of Acellus by the end of the current school year and continue to support schools' in providing families with learning options.

2. **Status of Acellus transition plan after second quarter; school plans for third quarter**

   By mid-December 2020, the HIDOE had completed Phase 2 of its multidisciplinary curriculum review process to identify viable online curriculum replacements. This included an environmental scan of potential curriculum options for grades K-8. Other considerations expressed by school leaders included ease of use for families, training, and vendor support. Potential curriculum options had no civil rights violations identified, were approved by several other states and included all needed materials.

   Led by content area specialists using the North Carolina Quality Review Tools for Digital Learning Resources and guided by content-area standards and expertise, the following key assumptions were considered during this review:

   - The expedited review process was created specifically to address the replacement of Acellus Accelerator for the 2020-21 school year and the results do not signify that these reviewed programs should be adopted as permanent distance learning curriculum.
   - Alignment to Hawaii Core Standards: There are no "off the shelf" programs that will comprehensively align to the adopted Hawaii standards. Online programs do not offer any specific descriptive feedback for improvement and provide minimal supports and interventions for struggling learners.
   - It is important to note that the review panel, as well as each of the vendors, emphasized that there is no self-paced program that can be delivered effectively for student learning without the guidance of a teacher or a caring adult in the home environment.

   During the winter break, the HIDOE diligently exercised care in its review of technical and adaptive needs (e.g., training, student/family supports, etc.) and to legally document requirements (e.g., licensing, data sharing and security). Upon finalization of the legal

documents, the HIDOE will work closely with schools to move forward expeditiously to allow schools and families who want to discontinue using Acellus to transition to another program. The HIDOE is committed to minimizing disruption to students and families to the greatest extent possible.

Notably, the HIDOE believes due to the universal demand for distance learning nationally, digital materials will continue to improve. As such, any selected curricula at this juncture shall be considered as a temporary solution.

The current portfolio of work is designed to deliver a curriculum management system that establishes department-wide expectations and guidance through current and updated Board of Education policies and administrative procedures to support tri-level governance and systemic quality assurances of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment and other related areas for curricular leaders to confidently make sound choices to address their learner needs.

3. **Design of a Curriculum Management System**

   The Curriculum Management System (CMS), guided by Board policies, will provide clear guidelines and a tri-level governance model to establish responsibility and accountability for leadership, faculty, and staff toward achieving high level student outcomes for major areas related to curriculum and high-quality instructional materials in standards-based teaching and learning.

   The CMS addresses:

   - Development and adoption of **statewide content standards** in all subject areas;
   - Guidelines and procedures for the design and review of **high quality instructional materials** and technological resources;
   - Design and implementation of **professional learning** for best practices in standards-aligned instruction;
   - Alignment of classroom and state summative **assessments to instructional materials**;
   - Consistent **communication for** decision-making authority features to enable the tri-level system to engage in discretionary decision-making to encourage productive, rigorous, dynamic and nurturing learning opportunities for students; and
   - Cross-content/cross-initiative **connections.**

   The CMS acts as an enduring framework that provides common guidance for the processes outlined herein, yet is flexible enough to allow for the shifting needs of our schools, complex areas, and state.

   All work aligned to this plan is driven by four core values:

   - Equity and excellence
   - Connections to culture and place
   - Focus on the whole child
   - College, career, and community readiness

Usage:
The CMS is to be used in the tri-level system to define the roles and responsibilities of each level. The CMS is aligned to BOE policies and other applicable regulations. It establishes timelines and tools for standards and curriculum review. The CMS defines key terms to ensure common language and understanding.

Components:
Curriculum and instructional materials (CIM) adoption and use does not happen in isolation. CIM should be aligned to current standards and other ongoing initiatives. Professional learning is critical to implementation of CIM specifically and standards-based teaching and learning more broadly. Quality CIM includes classroom assessments that are aligned to standards and provide formative and summative feedback; these should be part of a coherent system of assessments that includes state summative assessments where applicable. Communication is key to ensuring a cohesive tri-level approach to standards and curriculum.

The main components of the CMS are:

- Standards Adoption;
- High-Quality Instructional Materials;
- Professional Learning;
- Assessment; and
- Communication and Connections.

Below are suggested sub-components for each component, which will be refined during committee work.

Standards Adoption	High-Quality Instructional Materials
Key terms	Key terms
Review and Adoption Process	CIM Approval Process
Timeline	Timeline
Evaluation tools	Evaluation tools
Professional Learning	**Assessment**
Key terms	Key terms
Timeline relative to Standards Adoption	Timeline relative to Standards Adoption
Professional Learning Topics	Classroom Assessment (formative/summative)
Professional Learning Plan	Grading & Reporting
Instructional Practices	State Summative Assessment (where applicable)
Evaluation of Professional Learning	

Communication and Connections to Ongoing Initiatives
Key terms
Timeline relative to Standards Adoption
Feedback Loops – Quality Assurance, Refinement, Improved Effectiveness/Efficiency, Adaptation
Communication Plan

4. **Instructional Material Review and Selection Process**

Prior to the pandemic, the Office of Curriculum and Instructional Design had begun reviewing quality curriculum selection processes within the framework of our school design empowerment model. The pandemic impact on teaching approaches has provided another context by which we are revisiting quality curriculum selection processes. The HIDOE is developing a Curriculum Instructional Materials Approval Process (CIMAP) to support schools in the adoption of curricular materials. The process will take into account current pedagogy, equity and access, cultural relevance, and will ensure statewide consistency and understanding among state, complex areas and schools.

The CIMAP will provide clear tools and procedures for the review and approval of curriculum and instructional materials, including blended and online learning off-the-shelf courses and programs.

High-quality instructional materials should be:

- content-rich and rigorous;
- aligned to content-area standards, including the pedagogical vision of the standards;
- accessible to all students to promote equity;
- supportive of teacher professional learning, collaboration, and classroom instruction;
- flexible, to allow for customization for local context;
- designed to prepare students for college, career, and community; and
- grounded in research and best practices for the content area.

The range of instructional materials used in a classroom should:

- present content and skills through a variety of learning experiences;
- allow students to demonstrate proficiencies in different ways; and
- stimulate engagement by tapping into students' cultures, sense of place, and interests.

Review tools will capture the four core values:

- Equity and excellence
- Connections to culture and place
- Focus on the whole child
- College, career, and community readiness

Usage:
The CIMAP establishes tri-level roles and responsibilities for CIM review and approval. The CIMAP is aligned to BOE policies and other applicable regulations. It establishes timelines and tools for curriculum review. The CIMAP also defines key terms to ensure common language and understanding.

Communication:
A communication plan provides clear feedback loops and touchpoints to collect input throughout the process and determine venues for sharing. This plan will ensure a collaborative feedback process with stakeholders that results in refinements to the CIMAP design and implementation. To date, stakeholder role groups have included assistant superintendents, complex area superintendents, state program specialists, complex area teams, school principals, teachers, Teacher Education Coordinating Committee and State Teacher Fellows.

Next Steps:

- Finalize *Roles and Responsibilities* document. Develop a *Process and Tools* section. Continue to solicit feedback from various role groups.
- The CIMAP is on track to be completed by June 2021.

CMK:pu

c: Phyllis Unebasami, Deputy Superintendent
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