March 4, 2021

TO: The Honorable Catherine Payne  
Chairperson, Board of Education

FROM: Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto  
Superintendent

SUBJECT: Presentation on Department of Education Strategies for Safe Reopening of Elementary and Secondary Schools to More In-Person Learning for Fourth Quarter of 2020-2021 School Year

BACKGROUND

Since the onset of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) has implemented strategies to mitigate the spread of the virus including the closure of school facilities. Department schools have not been fully reopened since March 13, 2020, the end of the third quarter of the 2019-2020 school year. Students have lost up to 174 in-person instructional days due to health and safety mitigation efforts.

During the current school year, schools have been gradually returning students to campus for in-person instruction. Schools have implemented instructional models that best meet the needs of their students and school community while adhering to the health and safety guidelines of state health leaders and addressing the concerns of employees. This has been a challenge for school leaders who have had to manage competing demands regarding student learning and the welfare of staff.

Recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) research has revealed that attending school where recommended mitigation strategies are implemented might not place students in a higher risk environment than exists in the community. Having students in a monitored school setting might increase adherence to mask compliance and cohorting can help minimize exposures for students and employees. In-person instruction for students has numerous health and societal benefits, especially for vulnerable students and families.¹

During the fourth quarter of the current school year, the Department plans to work towards maximizing the return of students to school campuses for in-person instruction.

¹ COVID-19 Cases and Transmission in 17 K–12 Schools — Wood County, Wisconsin, August 31–November 29, 2020 | MMWR (cdc.gov)
PRESENTATION

The attached presentation outlines the Department’s strategies to increase in-person instruction in elementary and secondary schools for the fourth quarter of the 2020-2021 school year. The strategies considered are aligned with CDC and Hawaii State Department of Health guidance for reopening schools.

CMK:cm
Attachment

c: Phyllis Unebasami, Deputy Superintendent
   Assistant Superintendents
   Complex Area Superintendents
   Principals
Agenda Item V. A. Presentation on Department of Education Strategies for Safe Reopening of Elementary and Secondary Schools to More In-Person Learning for Fourth Quarter of 2020-2021 School Year

General Business Meeting
March 4, 2021

Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto
Superintendent
Reopening of Schools

Where we are now

- **Quarter 1**
  - Aug. 17 - Oct. 2
  - Full distance learning, vulnerable learners on campus

- **Quarter 2**
  - Oct. 12 - Dec. 18
  - Transition to blended learning where possible, expand vulnerable learners

- **Quarter 3**
  - Jan. 5 - March 12
  - Continued transition to blended learning models

- **Quarter 4**
  - March 22 - May 28
  - Transition to in-person learning

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As reported for Quarter 2 of SY 2020-21

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Students in full in-person learning

- **Total**
  - 66.5%
  - 26%

- **Elementary**
  - 60%
  - 28%

- **Middle**
  - 69%
  - 26%

- **High**
  - 76%
  - 22%

Students only online by parent choice

- **Total**
  - 26%
  - 12%

- **Elementary**
  - 6%
  - 12%

- **Middle**
  - 5%
  - 26%

- **High**
  - 2%
  - 22%

Students in blended learning (some dedicated face-to-face instruction)

- **Total**
  - 7.5%
  - 28%

- **Elementary**
  - 1.5%
  - 5%

- **Middle**
  - 5%
  - 26%

- **High**
  - 2%
  - 22%
Reopening of Schools

Using data to drive decision-making

Board of Education Vital Sign Metrics are used to monitor progress as students return to campus

- **Health & Safety**: As of Q2, 93 schools had at least a 60-day supply of PPE and cleaning supplies in ALL six categories.

- **In-Person Instruction**: As of Q2, nearly 12,000 students statewide receiving full in-person learning.

- **Academic Performance**: As of Q2, 21% of elementary (8% of middle and 12% of high school students) received 1 or more failing marks in English Language Arts.

As of Q2, 15% of elementary (8% of middle and 12% of high school students) received 1 or more failing marks in mathematics.

Access the dashboard online at [bit.ly/RTLmetrics](http://bit.ly/RTLmetrics)
Guidance from CDC, U.S. DOE, DOH

Strategies for safely reopening K-12 schools

Several layers of safeguards should be implemented to reduce the spread of disease in the school setting. For optimal protection, a combination of the following mitigation strategies should be emphasized:

- Universal and correct wearing of masks
- Physical distancing (to the greatest extent possible)
- Hand-washing and respiratory etiquette
- Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including ventilation improvements
- Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with state Department of Health
- Staying home when not feeling well
Mitigating Community Spread
Monitoring our school communities for the spread of COVID-19

Assess level of risk in school communities

Risk of introduction of case to school is dependent on level of community transmission

Schools may provide in-person instruction (either full or hybrid) through strict adherence to mitigation strategies. Decisions should be guided by school-specific factors:

- Mitigation strategies implemented
- Local needs
- Stakeholder input
- No. cases among students and staff
- School experience with safely reopening

Source: Hawaii State Department of Health, Hawaii COVID-19 Data
Vaccination Planning
Reducing the impact of COVID-19 on school operations

Public school system prioritized as “frontline essential workers”

HIDOE facilitated collection and verification for individuals wanting access
19,000+ have expressed interest; names have been transmitted to DOH for scheduling

Prioritized:
- Employees age 75+
- Medical professionals
- School-based employees in daily contact with students and public
- Frontline essential worker at the complex and state level

DOH-sponsored Points of Dispensing (POD) allow for mass vaccination

School-based PODs bring vaccination to school communities (Waianae, Keaau HS)

Neighbor island DOE points of contact work closely with county DOH to increase access in their regions
Maintaining Healthy Operations
Managing school operations as students return to campus

- Keep abreast of federal, state, and county guidelines.
- Limit any nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations as possible.
- Establish a communication plan for individuals to report potential exposure to COVID-19 and notifying staff, families, and the public of COVID-19 cases.
- Train staff on all safety protocols.
- Ensure continuity of mental health services for students and employees, such as offering remote counseling.
Goals for Quarter 4
The safe return of students to school campuses

Facilitating the return of students to campus . . .

- Renews hope for community.
- Demonstrates responsiveness to the needs of our families as they return to work.
- Prioritizes elementary student learning and developmental needs.

• Elementary schools
  ○ The goal is for all elementary school students to return to campus daily.

• Secondary schools
  ○ All schools will work toward returning more students to campus daily.

• Schools will layer mitigation strategies to provide the greatest level of protection for students and school employees.

• Schools will monitor and prepare for periodic shifts to remote learning when needed.

• HIDOE and DOH will continue to meet to review data and evaluate strategies.
Engagement

Advocating for the safe return of students to in-person learning

HIDOE will continue to engage in conversations with stakeholders as we transition to more in-person learning.

- **HIDOE State and Complex Area Leadership**
  - Supporting schools as they increase in-person learning
- **Principals**
  - Planning to maximize the return of students to campus
- **School employees**
  - Identifying supports needed as students return to campus
- **Parents and families**
  - Communicating who will be returning to in-person learning and ensuring daily on-time attendance
- **Unions**
  - Collaborating with HGEA, HSTA, and UPW to facilitate the safe return of students to school campuses
MAHALO!