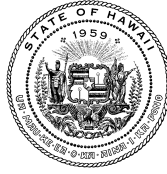


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OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

March 28, 2024

TO: The Honorable Warren Haruki
Chairperson, Board of Education

FROM: Keith T. Hayashi
Superintendent

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Keith T. Hayashi".

SUBJECT: Update on Department Actions in Response to the Recommendations from
the House of Representatives Lahaina Wildfire Schools Working Group

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) reviewed the House of Representatives (House) Lahaina Wildfire Interim Working Groups final report, published in December 2023. The House of Representative report covered the findings about six working groups including a Schools Working Group, and the report is available online at: <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/Committee/Files/Special/ENRWH/Document/2023-FinalReport-Lahaina-Wildfire-InterimWorking-Group.pdf>. This memorandum addresses the House of Representatives report recommendations related to schools.

The report had nine recommendations related to schools, primarily from the Schools Working Group. The Department remains committed to the safety and security of our staff and students and to learning from response and recovery to the Lahaina wildfires disaster. In some cases, the Department is already in the process of implementing recommendations or, the Department will need additional funds to implement recommendations and seek funds from the state, federal government and/or philanthropy. In other cases, the Department relies on the cooperation of other state or county agencies or private organizations to implement certain recommendations.

Schools Working Group Recommendation 1: Grant Public Access to Certain Evacuation Plans and Expand Campus Drill Plans

Recommends that the Department in collaboration with the Department of Transportation, assess all DOE school campuses. Also recommends that the Department have comprehensive evacuation plans and to grant public access to the evacuations plans.

Evacuation routes: The Department is in the process of assessing evacuation routes for all school campuses. The Department is completing an inventory of the number of routes out of each school campus and the number of routes out of the school's community. The Department's Safety, Security, and Emergency Preparedness Branch will coordinate with other agencies (e.g., Department of Transportation, Department of Land and Natural Resources, local police departments), as appropriate, to determine alternate evacuation routes and locations for schools with limited exit routes.

Emergency Action Plans: The Department has site specific Emergency Action Plans (EAP) for each school. However, disclosing details publicly could compromise the plans' effectiveness by potentially aiding individuals with malicious intent. Keeping this information confidential safeguards against potential exploitation of vulnerabilities and ensures a more secure and organized emergency response. This approach aligns with best practices in security management, emphasizing the delicate balance between transparency and the need to protect the integrity of emergency protocols. It also ensures that the reunification process protects both the safety of the student and provides for an accountable change of custody from the school to a recognized custodial parent or guardian. The Department can provide basic and general guidelines on non-site specific procedures for emergency action (e.g., off-campus evacuations, lockdowns, shelter-in-place, etc).

The school's EAP includes a communication plan and evacuation plan. The Department's intent is to be as culturally responsive as possible with these communication plans by providing information translated into languages most commonly spoken in family households. The Department will need resources to provide these translations. Approximately \$175 per document per language would be needed, according to the Office of Language Access.

During emergency events, personnel in the Department's Communication Branch are on standby to be activated as an emergency response team member at the state's Joint Information Center (JIC). The JIC provides the mechanism to organize, integrate, and coordinate information to ensure timely, accurate, accessible, and consistent messaging across multiple jurisdictions and/or disciplines.

Schools Working Group Recommendation 2: Ready Alternate Learning Options and Student Support for Displaced Students

Recommends that the Department create a process to hire or reposition personnel to accommodate alternative learning options as quickly as possible in the case of a disaster. Further requesting the Department to monitor student progress to see what kind of impact the disaster had on student achievement.

The Department has online learning options, including a state distance learning program. The Department's state distance learning team provides the capacity to quickly scale up its distance learning program to accommodate more students who may be facing an emergency situation where they are displaced from their physical school campus. Also, schools are required to maintain an up-to-date inventory of electronic devices and mobile

hotspots, the Department would be able to quickly pivot to accommodate an emergency situation such as a disaster.

In addition, the Department has data-based tools for all schools to track status and progress of students including those who have been impacted by the wildfires. The Department can monitor students' progress and document interventions so that school personnel may track students' progress at their current school. School counselors can also leverage this tool when they conduct regular check-ins with the impacted students, particularly those who are participating in distance learning programs or other learning options.

Schools Working Group Recommendation 3: Monitor Potential Health Risks

Recommends that the Department work with the Department of Health (DOH) to: create a checklist for reopening schools following a disaster, make testing results related to health and safety available via the Department's website, and to minimize ash contamination resulting from clean-up efforts.

As part of the Department's commitment to ensuring the health, safety and well-being of students and staff, the Department conducted or coordinated on environmental testing to make a determination about reopening Lahaina schools following the wildfires disaster (see below for details). The Department reported on the testing process and results of the assessments to the Board of Education and made information available publicly on the Department's website. Additionally, the Department developed health and safety guidelines for reopening Lahaina schools, and the guidance is updated, as needed.

The Department relies on the Department of Health (DOH) for risk assessment guidance for situations that arise where analysis is required. The Department worked with DOH to determine that Lahaina schools could reopen safely. The following actions and assessments, in coordination with DOH were completed for the August 2023 disaster:

Air Quality Monitoring	<p>Criteria: Ensure safe air quality by installing sensors to meet DOH standards.</p> <p>DOH installed particulate matter (PM2.5 fine particulate) sensors throughout Lahaina town, including five at the Lahaina schools (4 Purple Air and 1 E-BAM, a higher grade instrument). Additional measures, such as indoor air filters and an Air Quality Action Plan are in place to mitigate exposure. The Department continues to monitor air quality through the Purple Air Sensors.</p> <p>Additionally, the DOH has an air monitoring station taking daily air samples at Lahaina Intermediate that are sent to labs for analysis. The results are posted on the following DOH website: https://health.hawaii.gov/mauiwildfires/environmental-hazard-concerns/</p>
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	<p>The Department’s Environmental Services Unit (ESU) developed a computer application to automatically monitor six (6) Purple Air Sensors (one each at Lahaina Intermediate, Princess Nahienaena Elementary, Lahainaluna High gym, Lahainaluna High dorm, as well as the sensors at Kanakea Loop and the Board of Water Supply station, just makai of the Lahaina bypass road).</p>
<p>Water Quality Testing</p>	<p>Criteria: Ensure water sources meet all DOH Safe Drinking Water Branch standards.</p> <p>The Department contracted an independent firm to conduct water sampling in addition to initial testing by Maui County Department of Water Supply. The testing data came back as “Non-Detect” for “All Volatile Compounds”. DOH evaluated the results and indicated that the school campuses were safe to reopen.</p> <p>Additionally, the Department flushed all water lines prior to school reopening, which is a standard procedure when campuses are closed for an extended period and water in the plumbing can become stagnant.</p>
<p>Soil Testing</p>	<p>Criteria: Ensure soil is safe when walking or playing on school grounds in accordance with DOH standards.</p> <p>The Department contracted an independent firm to conduct soil sampling to detect the presence of heavy metals and dioxins. Extensive soil testing was conducted using DOH mandated multi-incremental sampling techniques. The lab results from the soil testing were evaluated by DOH and the results indicated that the school campuses were safe to reopen.</p>

As an additional measure of assurance in relation to potential ash contamination resulting from cleanup efforts in Lahaina, the Department’s ESU is conducting biweekly wipe test sampling to identify any settled dust accumulating at the schools that may contain lead or arsenic. As of March 4, 2024, eleven cycles of testing have occurred with no detections of lead or arsenic exceeding the regulatory thresholds.

In the future, the Department would follow a similar process. Each disaster occurs in a different context so the process may be adapted to the unique situation. However, the Department will continue to coordinate with DOH regarding health risks.

Schools Working Group Recommendation 4: Increase Mental Health Care Access
Recommends that the Legislature needs to continue funding and ongoing efforts that would improve access to mental health care providers and support.

The Department is fully aligned with the ongoing efforts to expand the number of mental

health professionals within the State of Hawaii. Incentivizing local providers (prioritizing rural geographic locations), expanding training pipelines, and improving access are necessary steps to ensure that students have the support they need in times of crisis.

There has been and continues to be a proactive approach to providing in-person mental health services, tele-therapy sessions, and access to Hawaii CARES. The Department continues to collaborate with the DOH, including the Lahaina Comprehensive Health Center and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division, to identify long-term support for staff, students, and families. The expansion of services to community-based locations and the introduction of a 24/7 phone counseling service further demonstrates the Department's commitment to supporting mental well-being during challenging times

The Department has received additional federal funding through an Office of Elementary and Secondary Education School Emergency Response to Violence (Project SERV) grant. The start date for this grant was March 18, 2024. Funds from this grant will enable the Department to increase 1) the available school-based mental health workforce for the Lahaina community and 2) training and support for trauma response services.

The Department understands that the shortage of mental health providers in the State, particularly on the neighbor islands, presents challenges in accessing care and recognizes the importance of expanding access to mental health and trauma services, especially those that accommodate ethnic, cultural, and social considerations to promote successful healing. The planned addition of mental health staff is a positive step towards addressing these challenges.

Schools Working Group Recommendation 5: Traffic Mitigation for West Maui

Recommends that the Department should monitor traffic congestion in the vicinity of Lahaina schools and increase ingress and egress to the West Maui Lahainaluna Road. Staggered start times should also be considered to help with traffic congestion.

The recommendation to monitor traffic congestion in the immediate vicinity of the Lahaina schools area and to take mitigating actions is well-received. The Department acknowledges these concerns and the need to address potential traffic impacts. The safety and efficiency of transportation for students and staff is a priority, and we are committed to working with relevant agencies to mitigate any traffic-related challenges.

It is also important to note that with additional transportation options now available for students, lower enrollment counts that prior to the disaster, and opening of the temporary site for King Kamehameha III Elementary at Pulelehua, the Department anticipates that there will be less traffic in the area.

Schools Working Group Recommendation 6: Student Athletics Consideration

Recommends that the Hawaii High School Athletic Association craft guidelines to give student-athletes flexibility to move between schools in the case of a disaster.

The recommendation to craft guidelines for a blanket waiver of restrictions for student-athletes impacted by disasters is an important step to provide flexibility to these students as they navigate changes in their school options and living situations. The Department fully supports the creation of guidelines by the Hawaii High School Athletics Association to ensure that student-athletes have the opportunity to continue participating in sports as they move between schools in response to disasters. The suggestion to create a process for impacted member leagues to petition for adjustments as needed for specific situations is also endorsed.

Schools Working Group Recommendation 7: Building Resilient Schools

Recommends that the Department, along with the Department of Accounting and General Services, the School Facilities Authority, and the counties, develop and enforce regulations for fire-resistant landscaping around school buildings, retrofit older school buildings with fire suppression systems, and retrofit older school buildings to improve their fire resistance by upgrading materials and adding fire barriers. Also recommends that the counties and State Fire Council enforce building codes that require the use of fire-resistant materials in the construction and renovation of school buildings.

The Department agrees with the recommendations to enhance safety and modernize our public school facilities. We appreciate the emphasis on fire-resistant landscaping, retrofitting older school buildings with fire suppression systems, enforcing building codes for fire-resistant materials, and retrofitting older school buildings to improve their fire resistance. These measures align with the Department's commitment to creating safer school environments.

In collaboration with relevant agencies and authorities, the Department will work to assess at-risk landscaping around its campuses and develop and implement best practices and measures to mitigate the risks associated with wildfires. This includes evaluating and improving fire safety practices, enhancing emergency preparedness, and exploring opportunities for retrofits and infrastructure upgrades. Depending on the geographic features associated with each campus, this might involve re-vegetating school property lines with fire resistant ground covering and/or creating erosion-resistant fire breaks. The Department will require additional resources for implementation and on-going operations of these activities.

The Department will work with its county, state, and federal partners, about new and emerging technologies associated with fire suppression systems and how existing school facilities can be retrofitted to accommodate new technologies. As county building codes and fire councils are under different jurisdictions outside of the state building codes and commissions, close consultation with county fire departments will play a key role in the implementation of this plan and to ensure the Department is compliant with the county fire codes. Additionally, the Department will collaborate with the building materials industry to discuss solutions to retrofit existing school buildings with fire-resistant materials, as well as adding fire and heat barriers. Inspections and monitoring to ensure that these fire-resistant materials remain effective can be incorporated as part of the Department's Facilities Asset Management assessments. With over 4,000 buildings occupied by the Department,

additional resources are required for the implementation and ongoing operational maintenance in capital improvement and deferred maintenance programs.

The Department will also work closely with relevant agencies and authorities to ensure that these recommendations are included in any new buildings and construction projects, as well as ensuring that teaching and learning spaces meet the Department's classroom specifications and needs for effective learning and student support, in consultation with our curriculum and student support subject experts.

Schools Working Group Recommendation 8: Maximizing Use of Federal Funds

Recommends that the Department review the eligibility requirements of federal programs to determine which programs best fit the Department's needs. Also recommends that the Department consider applying for FEMA hazard mitigation funding and that the legislature consider appropriating state funds.

The Department acknowledges the importance of carefully reviewing the eligibility requirements of federal programs to determine the best fit for our needs. The recommendation to consider applying for Federal Emergency Management Agency hazard mitigation funding is recognized, and we will explore these funding opportunities to invest in projects that reduce the risk of natural disasters and protect the safety of our students and staff. The Department also appreciates the suggestion for the Legislature to consider appropriating additional funds to extend the aid once federal disaster assistance programs expire. Such appropriations would help ensure that the Department has the resources needed to carry out mitigation and resilience projects effectively.

The Department applied for and was awarded the United States Department of Education (USED) Project SERV grant. Project SERV is funded by the USED to provide short-term education-related services for local educational agencies to help with recovery from a violent or traumatic event in which the learning environment has been disrupted. The grant is intended to provide a limited amount of funds to meet acute needs and restore the learning environment. The Department requested \$2,199,146 to defray the costs associated with providing direct services to students and school staff impacted by the Lahaina wildfire. The start date for this grant is March 18, 2024.

The application outlines the following services for Maui students and school staff:

1. Direct mental health support, focused on the delivery of grief and trauma response services;
2. Training and support for trauma response and grief;
3. Respite support for teaching staff;
4. Summer expanded learning opportunities for 2025; and
5. Student transportation services.

Jobs and Business Working Group Recommendation 2D: Workforce Development Initiatives

The DOE is encouraged to promote trade career pathways in middle and high schools to assist with demands of the State's labor and construction workforce.

Currently, 37 of the Department's 47 high schools offer at least one trades program of study. In Maui Nui, Baldwin High, Hana High and Elementary, King Kekaulike High, Lahainaluna High, Lanai High and Elementary, Maui High, and Molokai High Schools offer a building and construction program. Of these seven schools, five are participating in the Hawaii Carpenters Apprenticeship and Training Fund program. The Department is currently in conversation with industry organizations to provide teachers and students with work-based learning opportunities in the trades fields to ensure that the Department's curriculum and instruction are aligned with current industry standards and practices and to enable our teachers and students to develop and apply the skills needed to succeed in the workforce.

Building and construction is offered as an exploratory elective course at the middle school level. Currently in Maui district, Lahaina and Kalama Intermediate Schools offer a building and construction course. The Department is partnering with the Hawaii Carpenters Apprenticeship and Training Fund to launch a pilot middle school construction program in School Year 2024-2025 with a plan for a gradual roll-out to additional schools in subsequent years.

The Department also has a Workforce Development Certificate program through McKinley and Waipahu Community Schools for Adults to meet the needs of adults entering the workforce without a high school diploma. The program was created in collaboration with the Workforce Development Council, the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, the Department of Human Services Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, employers, and the community colleges to prepare students with the necessary basic education and access to job training programs.

KTH:toc

c: Curt T. Otaguro, Deputy Superintendent of Operations
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