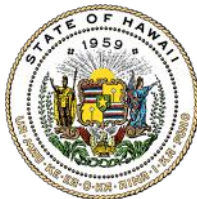


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



KEITH T. HAYASHI
SUPERINTENDENT

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

September 18, 2025

TO: The Honorable Wesley Lo
Chairperson, Human Resources Committee

FROM: Keith T. Hayashi
Superintendent 

SUBJECT: Superintendent's self-assessment of performance for 2024-2025 school year

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this report on progress made during the 2024-25 school year. In accordance with the Board's approved evaluation process, this document is organized in two parts:

- **Part I** summarizes progress on the Superintendent evaluation metrics set by the Board, with a detailed update for each; and
- **Part II** highlights broader leadership actions related to the fulfillment of duties and responsibilities under the Superintendent's contract.

The year was marked by meaningful academic gains across all student groups, expanded access to postsecondary opportunities, and stronger statewide systems to support student attendance and achievement.

In 2024-25 we continued to experience long-term effects of the pandemic on students, our workforce and the supply chain for goods and equipment. We also experienced operational challenges in 2024-25. Nevertheless, our students and employees are doing remarkable work. I am proud of their progress, which is evident in our school and student outcomes reported in the 2025 STRIVE HI report.

This review is intended to provide transparency, demonstrate accountability, and support continued alignment between the Superintendent and the Board of Education (Board) as we work to strengthen public education for all of Hawai'i's students. I appreciate the partnership with the Board to prepare our students to be globally competitive and globally competitive. I look forward to discussing progress in 2024-25 with the Board.

KTH:toc
Attachment

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Hawai'i State Department of Education Superintendent's Self-Assessment



PART I. Progress on evaluation metrics, approved by the Board on October 31, 2024¹

Superintendent Evaluation Metric #1A: Attendance

Improve student achievement, as represented by select Strategic Plan key performance indicators: Regular Attendance.

Evidence of Attainment: Improved student attendance as measured by "regular attendance" for Department of Education (Department) schools.

- *Meets: Attendance increased among the student group with the lowest rate of regular attendance (58.3% for Pacific Island students, 2023-24): More than 58.3% of Pacific Islander students attend regularly.*
- *Meets: Attendance increased statewide (74.8% statewide, 2023-24): More than 74.8% of all students attend regularly.*
- *Exceeds: Attendance increased among student groups with the lowest rates of regular attendance in 2023-24: More than 58.3% of Pacific Island students, 63.1% of Native Hawaiian students and/or 64.8% of students receiving special education services attend regularly.*
- *Exceeds: Attendance increased statewide beyond prior years' improvement rates: 76.2% or higher attend regularly.*

Outcomes

Student attendance improved during the 2024-25 school year, both statewide and among targeted student groups. While attendance remains below pre-pandemic levels, the Department met the target for improving regular attendance statewide and exceeded the targets for Pacific Islander, Native Hawaiian, and special education students—those with the lowest rates of regular attendance in the prior school year.

¹ <https://go.hidoe.us/3UM939H> - Oct. 31, 2024, Board of Education memo

Schools implemented attendance strategies tailored to student needs using the Department's Hawai'i Multi-Tiered System of Support (HMTSS) framework. System-level support included the "Attendance Matters" statewide campaign—featuring banners on campuses, social media posts, and messaging on city buses—and targeted professional development focused on supporting homeless students and Micronesian students. These efforts reflect a coordinated, equity-focused approach to improving attendance and ensuring students are connected to school while strengthening community awareness.



Percent of students regularly attending school

Defined as attending school 90% or more after the official enrollment count date; excludes charter schools.

Student Group	2023-24	2024-25
All students	74.8%	76.1% ★ Meets target
Pacific Islander	58.3%	60.1% ★★ Exceeds target
Native Hawaiian	63%	63.9% ★★ Exceeds target
Students receiving special education services	64.8%	67.4% ★★ Exceeds target

Superintendent Evaluation Metric #1B: Academic Achievement

Evidence of Attainment: Improved student achievement in language arts and mathematics as measured by proficiency and growth rates on statewide assessments for DOE schools among students who were enrolled for a full school year.

- **Meets: Student growth among students statewide is maintained or improved:**
 - Language Arts (58% statewide, 2023-24): 55.5-60.7% students make "typical" or better growth from prior year
 - Mathematics (59.4% statewide, 2023-24): 56.9-62.1% students make "typical" or better growth from prior year
- **Meets: Student proficiency rates are maintained or improved:**
 - Language Arts (52%, 2023-24): 50.5-53.7% proficient

- *Mathematics (40%, 2023-24): 38.4-41.6% proficient*
- *Exceeds: Student proficiency rates increased beyond prior years' improvement rates:*
 - *Language Arts: More than 53.7%*
 - *Mathematics: More than 41.6%*
- *Exceeds: Statewide proficiency rates return to pre-pandemic levels*
 - *Language Arts: 54.1%*
 - *Mathematics: 43%*

Outcomes

The Department continues to make steady progress toward raising student academic achievement across the system. In SY 2024-25, the Department met the targets for student growth in both Language Arts and mathematics, and exceeded the targets for proficiency. These outcomes reflect the impact of sustained investment in curriculum alignment, early intervention, and instructional improvement. The Department is reporting progress on strategic plan key performance indicators to the Board's Student Achievement Committee on September 18, 2025, in its annual STRIVE HI report.

Student growth improved over the prior year in both core subjects. The proportion of Hawai'i's students making typical or better growth in language arts and mathematics on the Smarter Balanced Assessment increased. The proportion of students demonstrating typical or better growth increased for all student groups in language arts and for most student groups in mathematics.

Statewide proficiency increased by 1.4 percentage points in Language Arts and 1.7 percentage points in math—both statistically significant gains. In Language Arts, 53.8% of students met or exceeded proficiency. In mathematics, 42.2% of students demonstrated proficiency. More students across all demographic groups—including economically disadvantaged students, English Learners, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students, and students receiving special education services—showed gains in proficiency across both subjects.

In SY 2024-25, Hawai'i's public schools are on-track to achieve academic recovery from the pandemic. The proportion of students demonstrating proficiency in language arts and mathematics is within one point of pre-pandemic levels.

These gains are validated by national data. Hawai'i was one of just 15 states to post statistically significant improvement in fourth-grade mathematics on the 2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). In addition, Hawai'i's year-over-year gains outpaced other states (as measured by the Smarter Balanced Assessment) further reinforcing the strength of Hawai'i's trajectory.

These results reflect the Department's strategic focus on high-quality instruction, universal screening, and timely support. Continued implementation of these core strategies will be critical for sustaining momentum.

Student Growth – % of students making typical or better growth

Subject	2023-24	2024-25
Language Arts	58.0%	60.9% ★ Meets target
Mathematics	59.7%	60.5% ★ Meets target

Proficiency on State Standards – % proficient among all students

Subject	2023-24	2024-25
Language Arts	52.4%	53.8% ★★ Exceeds target*
Mathematics	40.5%	42.2% ★★ Exceeds target*

*Statistically significant increase in proficiency rates.

Return to Pre-Pandemic Levels – % proficient among all students

Subject	2018-19 (Pre-COVID)	2024-25
Language Arts	54.1%	53.8%
Mathematics	43.1%	42.2%

Source: Office of Strategy, Innovation and Performance



Math class at Makakilo Elementary.



English Language Arts at Ka'imiloa Elementary.

Superintendent Evaluation Metric #2: Revise Graduation Requirements

Revise BOE's vision of a graduate to inform review/revision of high school graduation requirements and related policies for all public schools.

Evidence of Attainment:

- *Proposed revision to vision of a Hawai'i public school graduate (Board Policy 102-15, High School Graduation Requirements and Commencement; and Board Policy 500-17, High School Education).*
- *Plan to review/revise policies dependent on Vision of a Graduate (e.g., high school graduation requirements).*

Outcomes

The Department met this target by making significant progress toward modernizing graduation expectations to ensure students are globally competitive and locally committed. A revised Vision of a Hawai'i Public School Graduate will serve as the foundation for new graduation policies and redesigned student supports, including the Personal Transition Plan (PTP).

Throughout SY 2024-25, the Department led a series of internal and external engagement efforts to gather feedback on the draft Vision, including sessions with students, staff, and community stakeholders. A draft version was presented to the Board's Student Achievement Committee on April 10, 2025², and the Department is currently expanding outreach—especially to students—to inform the final proposal.

In October 2025, the Department is scheduled to bring proposed revisions to Board Policies 102-15 (High School Graduation Requirements and Commencement) and 500-17 (High School Education) for Board consideration. Once the revised Vision is adopted, the Department will initiate revisions to all dependent policies and guidelines, including graduation requirements and the PTP.

Planning is already underway to review graduation requirements³ from August through November 2025, with input to be gathered through the statewide Board of Education community meetings this fall and other feedback channels.

In parallel, the Department has launched a multi-stakeholder effort to redesign the PTP, which remains a key graduation requirement.⁴ Since early 2025, students, staff, and advisory bodies such as the State Student Council have called for a more meaningful and equitable PTP experience. Key themes include:

² <https://go.hidoe.us/4lMpfmi> - April 10, 2025, memo to Student Achievement Committee

³ <https://go.hidoe.us/4mS8asu> - Graduation Requirements Project Charter

⁴ <https://go.hidoe.us/4goA7FY> - Personal Transition Plan Project Charter

- Standardization across schools
- Integration with curriculum and counseling
- Practical skills for postsecondary readiness
- Clear terminology and goals
- A statewide digital platform to track student work
- Updated guidelines with mandatory minimums

The refined PTP is slated for full rollout in SY 2026-27, beginning with the Class of 2030.

Together, these efforts reflect a bold shift toward a more future-ready graduate profile and a more coherent, aligned high school experience.



Kalani High



Leilehua High



Moanalua High

Superintendent Evaluation Metric #3: Human Resources Plan

Prepare a high level strategic and tactical human resources plan that is aligned with the Strategic Plan.

Evidence of Attainment:

- *Human resources plan that includes an analysis of staffing issues, implementation plan to address staffing, recruitment, and retention, and key performance indicators.*

Outcomes

The Department met this target by developing a comprehensive roadmap and framework to develop a Human Resources strategic implementation plan.⁵ This effort lays the foundation for a more responsive, aligned and equity-driven approach to staffing and talent development across the system.

In SY 2024-25, the Department engaged Forward Thinking Strategies to support development of the plan through stakeholder interviews, internal data reviews, and an inventory of current Office of Talent Management (OTM) initiatives. The resulting framework provides a blueprint for

⁵ <https://go.hidoe.us/4mwEb9e> - Human Resource Plan Project Charter

addressing critical workforce challenges, including recruitment and retention, and ensures the work is aligned with Strategic Plan Priority II: High-Quality Educator Workforce in All Schools.

OTM is in a planning process to identify key priorities and systemwide strategies that positions OTM as a key strategic HR partner to schools, complex areas, and state offices by:

- Improving service delivery to schools
- Promoting innovation and cross-functional alignment
- Leveraging data for continuous improvement
- Transforming HR processes to better support student learning

The HR plan is currently under development and will be presented to the Board's Human Resource Committee in late Fall 2025.

With over 20,000 full-time employees serving more than 150,000 students, this work is foundational to achieving systemwide excellence and long-term sustainability in talent management.



OTM Recruitment at hiring fairs.

Superintendent Evaluation Metric #4: Realignment of the Office of Facilities and Operations

Prepare plan for organizational realignment of Office of Facilities and Operations.

Evidence of Attainment:

- *Plan for organizational realignment of Office of Facilities and Operations (OFO), including reorganization and a plan for staffing that includes an analysis and methodology to evaluate vacant positions and use of contractors.*
- *Reduction in OFO vacancies.*

Outcomes

In SY 2024-25, the Department partially met this target. The Department undertook a major structural realignment to improve oversight and efficiency across critical operational areas, and the Department changed the salary structure for engineers and architects to be more competitive in the labor market for these critical positions. However, staffing in the OFO continues to be a challenge, and to have sufficient capacity to manage projects, the Department continues to use contractors (vendors) to fill gaps in staff capacity.

OFO's organizational alignment was informed in part by the Council of the Great City Schools' 2019 assessment and represents a strategic step in aligning the Department's facilities and operations infrastructure. The initial phase of reorganization resulted in the creation of the Office of Campus Operations and Support (OCOS), which now oversees the School Food Services Branch, Student Transportation Services Branch, and Safety, Security and Emergency Preparedness Branch. Separating these functions from the core facilities branches enables both OFO and OCOS to sharpen their operational focus and better support schools. Within OCOS, the School Food Services Branch was also restructured to address administrator span of control, resulting in two clearly defined sections: Administration and Operations.

As of July 1, 2025, the realigned OFO is now focused on core infrastructure, overseeing the Facilities Development Branch, Facilities Maintenance Branch, Auxiliary Services Branch, and Environmental Services Unit. Despite this progress, staffing remains a persistent challenge, with critical vacancies limiting in-house capacity and requiring continued contractor support.

To address this, OFO developed a plan⁶ for systematically reviewing vacancies and contractor usage in FY 2025-26, with the goal of better aligning internal staffing with project demands. The Department also secured Board approval in 2024-25 for salary repricing of licensed engineers, architects, and supervisors to strengthen competitiveness in hard-to-fill roles.⁷ Applicants have responded to the increased salaries, and OFO has recently seen an increased number of applicants.

While vacancy rates in both OFO and OCOS remain high, the reorganization provides a stronger foundation for long-term improvements in operational effectiveness and service delivery.

Position Counts for Office of Facilities and Operations, and Office of Campus Operations and Support

Office	July 1, 2024	June 30, 2025
OFO	261 filled / 316 total (83%)	251 filled / 320 total* (78%)
OCOS	49 filled / 66.5 total (74%)	49 filled / 66.5 total (74%)

⁶ <https://go.hidoe.us/3JMBaTI> - Facilities Development Branch Staff and Capacity Enhancement Project Charter

⁷ <https://go.hidoe.us/4ng1UL6> - Dec. 12, 2024, memo to BOE, <https://go.hidoe.us/4naMA22> - May 15, 2025, memo to Human Resources Committee

Total (OFO & OCOS)	310 filled / 382.5 total (81%)	300 filled / 386.5 total (78%)
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**Includes 4.0 new Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions*

Superintendent Evaluation Metric #5: Modernize delivery of services and resource allocation

Create a methodology for internal review of programs that identifies opportunities to more efficiently or effectively deliver services and informs prioritization of funds for reallocation and investment in new priorities.

Evidence of Attainment:

- *Plan for internal review of programs including criteria, schedule, and resources needed for reviews.*
- *Recommendations to BOE to evaluate and increase fee revenue, as appropriate, to support educational operations.*

Outcomes

This target was met. In SY 2024-25, the Department laid the groundwork for a more strategic and transparent approach to resource allocation. A newly formed cross-office workgroup led efforts to embed program evaluation and reallocation into the biennium budget process, marking a shift toward impact-driven financial planning aligned with Strategic Plan priorities.

For the FY 2025-27 biennium budget, assistant superintendents conducted structured reviews of existing state office program expenditures and identified areas where funds could be reallocated to support higher-priority or emerging needs. This resulted in:

- \$6.3 million in reallocated operating funds for FY 2026 and \$10 million for FY 2027
- 75.0 FTE positions in FY 2026 and 90.5 FTE in FY 2027 to support to new priorities

These recommendations were detailed in the Department's October 22, 2024, presentation⁸ to the Board's Finance and Infrastructure Committee and ultimately incorporated into the State Budget via Act 250 (SLH 2025), with support from the Governor and Legislature. This budget cycle marked the Department's first substantial internal reallocation of both funds and positions to support strategic initiatives.

Amid heightened uncertainty in federal education funding, the Department also initiated contingency planning in spring and summer 2025. A cross-office group is actively tracking federal

⁸ <https://go.hidoe.us/3JwKTxs> - Oct. 22, 2024, memo to Finance and Infrastructure Committee

developments, assessing potential fiscal risks, and preparing mitigation strategies to protect core instructional services in the event of reductions in federal support.

In parallel, the Department advanced proposals to increase select fees to help offset operational costs. In January 2025, recommendations were presented⁹ to the Board's Finance and Infrastructure Committee to increase revenue in areas such as student and employee school meals and summer school. The Board approved some of these targeted fee adjustments. The Governor and Legislature further supported student affordability by including offset funding for meal costs in Act 130 (SLH 2025). Other proposed fee adjustments—such as changes to student activity fees and the broader fee schedule—were not approved by the Board at this time.

Together, these efforts represent a foundational shift toward long-term fiscal sustainability, resource alignment, and resilience.

Superintendent Evaluation Metric #6: Conditions assessment of facilities

Initiate an updated conditions assessment of Department facilities.

Evidence of Attainment:

- *Description and evaluation of current methodology for assessing conditions of school facilities.*
- *Plan to complete an updated conditions assessment for Department facilities.*

Outcomes

In SY 2024-25, this target was only partially met, as the Department's Board-approved proposal to fund an updated conditions assessment was not included in the final state budget. Despite this, the Department took important first steps toward modernizing how it evaluates and manages the condition of school facilities. While the current methodology remains largely reactive—focused on triaging projects based on incoming work orders—the Department is committed to shifting toward a more proactive, asset-based approach that enables long-term capital planning and more efficient use of limited resources.

The OFO currently relies on school-submitted work orders through the Maximo system to identify and prioritize facility needs. This triage model is necessary given the growing backlog of deferred maintenance and funding constraints, but it limits the Department's ability to comprehensively assess and plan for infrastructure upgrades.

Improving this process requires a statewide facility asset management update, including a comprehensive conditions assessment. Funding for this initiative—\$4 million in FY 2026 and \$1

⁹ <https://go.hidoe.us/3HMxRLP> - Jan. 16, 2025, memo to Finance and Infrastructure Committee

million in FY 2027—was included in the Department’s Capital Improvement Project (CIP) biennium budget request¹⁰, approved by the Board.

While the request was not included in the Executive Budget or Act 250 (SLH 2025), the proposal signals a strategic pivot toward data-driven facility management. The Department remains committed to pursuing resources and partnerships to move this work forward and will continue to elevate the need for systemic facilities planning to support safe, modern learning environments for students statewide.

Superintendent Evaluation Metric #7: Prioritize capital improvements and repair and maintenance projects

Prepare a methodology to prioritize capital improvement projects, repair and maintenance, and deferred maintenance for existing facilities.

Evidence of Attainment:

- *Methodology to prioritize capital improvement projects and repair and maintenance needs, and to ensure more accurate budgeting and timely completion of projects.*
- *Implementation plan for methodology (e.g., incorporate in budget requests, quarterly updates on progress).*

Outcomes

In SY 2024-25, the Department met this target by implementing a more strategic and transparent approach to prioritizing capital improvement and maintenance projects across the state. This approach, presented in January 2025¹¹ to the Board’s Finance and Infrastructure Committee, supports more equitable investment in school facilities and better ensures that limited resources are directed to the most critical infrastructure needs.

A matrix-based prioritization methodology was developed to guide both CIP requests and deferred maintenance planning. Key criteria include building age, health and safety, enrollment trends, and climate exposure. Projects are grouped into 11 thematic categories—or lump sum buckets—such as new capacity, compliance, and telecommunications infrastructure. Managing legislative funds at the category level rather than as individual school-specific line items enables greater flexibility, responsiveness, and efficiency in execution.

This approach was applied in the FY 2025-27 CIP budget request approved by the Board, and five of the 11 lump sum categories received partial funding through Act 250 (SLH 2025). The Governor and Legislature also approved additional funding to reduce the deferred maintenance backlog.

¹⁰ <https://go.hidoe.us/478nplV> - Oct. 22, 2024, memo to Finance and Infrastructure Committee

¹¹ <https://go.hidoe.us/3Hq04YQ> - Jan. 16, 2025, memo to Finance and Infrastructure Committee

These gains were made possible through early and intentional engagement with school leaders and legislators, fostering shared understanding and alignment around systemwide priorities.

To support this shift, the Department:

- Updated its six-year deferred maintenance plan, identifying the need for \$250 million annually to address an estimated \$1.7 billion backlog
- Developed and began using new prioritization tools and metrics to guide FY 2026 project selection
- Embedded complex area and school-level input into capital planning, creating a more collaborative process for identifying facility priorities

The Department is still working through prior years' of CIP that were appropriated without the benefit of the Department's lists of priorities. The Department, along with school and community leaders as well as elected officials, continues to be concerned about lapsing CIP projects. In SY2024-25 the Department tightened project oversight and streamlined internal systems to address delays and processing bottlenecks. The Department is working to improve its timely communication of challenges with appropriated projects that are at risk of lapsing due to project scope, funding, and/or other challenges in design or permitting. The newly adopted prioritization framework, together with a more realistic alignment of project scope and funding, is already helping to improve execution and prevent large lapses.

The Department also acknowledges the recent concerns raised by the State Auditor regarding air conditioning (AC) installation projects and is taking steps to address both the specific issues identified and the broader need for climate-resilient learning environments. While the School Directed Air Conditioning Program was created to respond quickly to extreme heat conditions in schools, the audit highlighted critical gaps in planning, oversight and execution. In response, the Department has made improvements to the program and is developing a statewide plan for sustainable cooling solutions. Current and upcoming projects are now prioritized based on facility conditions, electrical capacity, and student need, and the Department remains committed to transparency, safety, and long-term solutions that provide our students and employees with positive and inviting learning environments.

Together, these efforts are aimed at improving how the Department plans, funds and manages school facilities, ensuring better alignment between infrastructure investments and student learning environments.

Superintendent Evaluation Metric #8: Information technology strategic plan

Develop a strategic plan for technology infrastructure.

Evidence of Attainment:

- *Strategic plan for technology infrastructure.*
- *Review of plan by a panel of chief information officers.*

Outcomes

In SY 2024-25, the Department met this target by developing the Department's Strategic Plan for Technology (2025-29), a comprehensive roadmap to modernize technology systems, support core operations, and enhance the digital foundation needed for high-quality teaching and learning. The plan aligns closely with the Strategic Plan and its focus on student learning, workforce quality, and operational effectiveness.

The plan was reviewed and vetted by state and education technology leaders, including the state's Office of Enterprise Technology Services director and CIO Christine Sakuda and University of Hawai'i CIO Garret Yoshimi, ensuring that it reflects national best practices and local context.

The current-state assessment surfaced longstanding challenges: aging infrastructure, fragmented systems, underdeveloped IT service management, cybersecurity vulnerabilities and IT staffing constraints. To address these issues, the plan outlines priorities and actions in seven strategic areas: Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Refresh, Cloud Adoption, Application Modernization, IT Service Management, IT Workforce Development and Partnerships. The Department will present the plan to the Board's Finance and Infrastructure Committee in November 2025.

Taken together, these efforts form a blueprint for building a resilient, responsive and future-ready IT ecosystem. The Department is scheduled to present the plan to the Board's Finance and Infrastructure Committee in November 2025 and has already begun work on several early-phase initiatives.

Superintendent Evaluation Metric #9: School consolidation plan

Develop a process and timeline for schools for potential consolidation to achieve significant reductions in operating or capital expenditures or to ensure equal educational opportunity for students, consistent with Hawai'i Administrative Rules 8-38.

Evidence of Attainment:

- *Plan to evaluate schools for a consolidation study, based on criteria identified in Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR).*
- *Written report to the Board that the Department will initiate a consolidation study and the*

reasons why a consolidation study is being conducted (HAR 8-38-4).

Outcomes

In SY 2024-25, the Department met this target by establishing a transparent, criteria-based process for evaluating schools for potential consolidation, marking an important shift toward more strategic use of school facilities and greater equity in student access to educational opportunities.

Following a review of Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR) 8-38, the Department developed a phased approach to identifying schools for a formal consolidation study. The proposed methodology was shared publicly at the Board's Finance and Infrastructure Committee in March 2025.¹² The proposed methodology incorporated both enrollment data (based on the 2025 official enrollment count) and the facility capacity of individual schools and their neighboring campuses. By analyzing enrollment and infrastructure at the cluster level, the Department is working to ensure that any future consolidation decisions are rooted in systemwide impact, not isolated metrics.

The Department completed stakeholder engagement on the proposed approach and methodology in spring 2025, recognizing the importance of trust, transparency and community input in this complex work. A summary of that feedback and an updated proposal for a broader "district optimization" strategy will be presented to the Board Finance and Infrastructure Committee in September 2025.

This initiative reflects a long-term effort to ensure that public education resources are aligned with student needs, school capacity, and fiscal sustainability.

PART II. Fulfillment of Duties and Responsibilities as per contract dated July 26, 2022

In alignment with the duties outlined in my contract, I have continued to lead with a focus on statewide impact, student equity, and organizational stability during a year marked by both progress and complexity. Below are key areas of leadership action and system improvement.

1. Organizational Review and Realignment

Following the Council of the Great City Schools' (CGCS) in-depth review in June 2024, I led the Department's efforts to act on the findings through a phased, multi-year Organizational Alignment Initiative. This represents the most comprehensive structural review the

¹² <https://go.hidoe.us/3JwKVp4> - March 13, 2025, memo to Finance and Infrastructure Committee

Department has undertaken and reflects a shared commitment to continuous improvement and student-centered operations.

Guided by CGCS recommendations, we launched Phase I in SY 2024-25, resulting in 11 state office reorganizations to clarify leadership roles, reduce redundancies, and improve alignment with strategic priorities. Key changes included the creation of the OCOS to oversee transportation, food services, and campus safety; consolidation of career readiness functions into the Workforce Development Branch; and the repositioning of distance learning and student wellness programs.

This work engaged leaders across offices and unions and laid the foundation for continued reform. Planning for Phase II is underway, with a focus on aligning state office supports to be more coherent across offices, modernizing complex area structures and strengthening direct support to schools.

2. Stability and Responsiveness Amid Federal Uncertainty

In the face of significant federal developments—including an executive order to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education and deep staffing reductions at the federal level—I led a proactive, coordinated response to safeguard core programs and maintain stability across the system. Recognizing the potential impacts on funding, policy, and operations, we quickly established an internal “Fed Watch” team to monitor developments, assess risks, engage national peers, and coordinate with state and federal leaders. We also issued clear guidance to schools on law enforcement protocols and inclusive learning environments.

These efforts helped ensure clarity, steadiness, and continuity during a time of national disruption. We continue to work closely with the Governor’s Office, Attorney General, and legislative and congressional leaders to monitor federal actions and mitigate downstream effects.

3. Legislative leadership and strategic advocacy

This year, the Department played a lead role in shaping and advancing key legislative initiatives that support student well-being and future readiness. Nearly 1,000 education-related bills were introduced; in the end, 28 bills and three concurrent resolutions passed that directly affect the Department. We received support for many of our top priorities, particularly in the state budget.

[Act 250 \(SLH 2025\)](#), the state budget, included funding for core operations and key priorities such as summer learning, skilled nursing services, school security, deferred maintenance, and capital improvement projects. Senate Bill 1300, drafted in partnership with the Department and signed into law as Act 139, expands access to free school meals for more students—specifically those who currently qualify for reduced-price meals and, beginning next

year, students from ALICE (Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed) families with incomes up to 300% of the federal poverty level.

4. Expanding work readiness and career pathways

We have sharpened our focus on workforce development and post-secondary readiness. The Department is expanding work-based learning opportunities by partnering directly with local industries and businesses—both to support students and to equip educators with real-world context. We also secured \$1.8 million in legislative funding annually to grow student internships across public and private sectors and \$3.9 million in FY2026 and \$3.6 million in FY2027 to support workforce development initiatives.

To modernize Career and Technical Education, the Department upgraded equipment and learning environments at multiple high schools, backed by millions in legislative appropriations. These investments position our schools to deliver more relevant, high-quality programs that reflect evolving labor market demands and increase student access to high-wage, high-skill career pathways.

I remain deeply committed to leading with purpose, collaboration, and accountability. The strong academic progress made this year reflects the dedication of our educators, the resilience of our students, and the strength of ne‘epapa — our shared commitment to work together, united in purpose. While the work ahead remains significant, so does our collective capacity. I look forward to building on this momentum, in continued partnership with the Board, to ensure every student in Hawai‘i has access to a strong public education and graduates prepared to thrive — globally competitive and locally committed.

