



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

August 3, 2021

Aloha HIDOE parents and guardians and welcome to the 2021-22 school year!

Thank you for the critical role you continue to play in supporting your child's learning. I appreciate your dedication during these challenging pandemic-impacted school years.

As Interim Superintendent, my highest priority is ensuring every student has the opportunity to safely return to the classroom. Beyond instructional benefits, in-person learning contributes to the overall well-being of our keiki — from the availability of social and emotional support resources to food security provided through school meal programs.

Our schools have demonstrated that in-person learning is a safe mode of instruction. Nearly one third of public schools welcomed students back for full in-person learning during the final quarter of last school year, and more than 26,000 students enrolled in summer learning opportunities, with most students participating in face-to-face learning.

We are still in a pandemic and we continue to operate as such. Consistent adherence to safety protocols has resulted in extremely limited transmission of the virus at Department of Education facilities and we are committed to keeping it that way. Still, because schools are a reflection of their communities, we know an uptick in cases is expected as we bring more students back to campus.

Increasing Hawai'i's vaccination rate is one of the best ways we can protect against and reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19. To make access as convenient as possible for students and families, we've hosted over 100 school-based clinics statewide since early May. We are partnering with the state Department of Health (DOH) and health care providers to organize additional clinics once a vaccine is approved for younger children. We're also working to expand access to rapid testing through a federally supported program that offers weekly in-school testing or vouchers for testing.

Recently updated guidance from DOH continues to emphasize the importance of core essential strategies our schools have been implementing since last school year: Promoting vaccinations for staff and eligible students, staying home when ill, consistent masking (masks must be worn by all students and staff when indoors), and proper hand hygiene.

Reopening schools requires a shared commitment from all of us to prevent and mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Mahalo for doing your part.

Sincerely,

Keith T. Hayashi
Interim Superintendent

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