



The Senate

STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

Monday August 10, 2020

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senate President Ronald D. Kouchi
FROM: Senate Special Committee on COVID-19
RE: Senate Special Committee on COVID-19 Report

Dear Senate President,

Please see the attached report prepared following the July 16, 2020, Senate Special Committee on COVID-19 meeting with the following:

- Department of Education
- Department of Health

Sincerely,

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz
Senator Jarrett Keohokalole
Senator Michelle N. Kidani

Senator Donna Mercado Kim
Senator Sharon Moriwaki
Senator Kurt Fevella

Attachment

Cc: All Senators

Department of Education (DOE), Department of Health (DOH).

Dr. Christina Kishimoto, Superintendent; Dr. Bruce Anderson, Director; and Dr. Sarah Park, State Epidemiologist, provided the Committee with the following update.

DOE School Reopening Plan

- The DOE School Reopening Plan has been presented to the Board of Education and is available on the DOE website.
- The school reopening plan includes health and safety guidance documents, the principles handbooks for reopening, and the overall school reopening plans.
 - Per Superintendent Kishimoto, reopening plans include adjustments the DOE has made to emergency operations plans, which are required by HIEMA.
- Notices have gone out to families about reopening plans, including information about what model each school is using.
- Reopening models include a variation of either face to face, blended, or distance learning forms of class instruction.
 - The school's choice of model will depend on a variety of factors such as classroom space to accommodate distancing, the number of staff at the school, and the ability to provide flexible spaces to ensure guidelines can be met.
 - The DOE has posted each school's model selection and will make updates if schools change their choice.
 - School Principals are sending out information and coordinating with parents based on the school's selected model and on individual student needs.
- Per the Committee's inquiry, the DOE explained it does not want families to leave a school district due to discomfort with a school's chosen learning model and is making sure to provide adequate resources for families by making distance learning available to them.
- The DOE is prioritizing in-person instruction for the 'highest need' students.
 - 'Highest need' students include special ed, English language learners, high poverty, and homeless students, according to definitions provided by the DOE.
 - Most struggling students are recommended to have in-person education five days a week.
- Dr. Park suggests that schools should have some level of health screening.
 - Health screenings should involve parents and go beyond measures just taken at school campuses.
- Per the Committee's inquiry, Dr. Park stressed that schools are not medical providers and should not be treated as such during the reopening.
 - The DOH has recommended that schools maintain a close partnership with parents to build a system of learning and training for reopening.
- The Committee made specific inquiries regarding the Coronavirus Response Act: Employer Paid Leave Requirements, which currently authorizes 12 weeks of paid sick leave, as well as the potential for an extension up to an additional ten weeks.
 - In light of this, the Committee asked how the DOE would respond, given the current teacher shortage.

- Superintendent Kishimoto indicated that the Department has yet to see a shortage of teachers on staff, and is not reporting any mass exodus of teachers in relation to any COVID and education decisions.
- The Superintendent noted that the DOE does need to make accommodations for teachers taking sick leave under the Coronavirus Response Act.
- The DOE will review requests for accommodations requested by employees.
 - Each school is looking at the percentage of students that are going to be full distance learning versus blended to provide accommodation procedures.
- Per testimony, the first two weeks will be a time when parents will receive feedback about their actions in the new school processes.
 - This will be the time for schools to discuss how to properly sanitize school supplies, ensure healthy hygiene practices within the home, and learn how to better perform in the upcoming school year.

Social Distancing Guidelines

- There are exceptions for 3-6 foot social distancing, but state experts are heeding the general guidance of the Department of Health, World Health Organization, and the American Academy of Pediatrics.
 - The Superintendent noted that the HSTA had concerns on the definitions of circumstances that allow for 3-6 feet of social distancing during the previous BOE meeting.
- The DOE will be going through a review process of reopening measures with HSTA representation and DOE representation.
- 85% of parents who responded to the DOE learning model survey answered that they want to have their child receive face to face instruction.
 - This data was a significant factor in the DOE's decision to allow 3-6 feet of social distancing under certain circumstances.
 - 3-6 feet of social distancing maximizes face to face instruction within the safety guidelines.
 - The 3-6 foot distance will better utilize necessary space on campuses with limited capacity.
- Dr. Park recommended that facing forward to alleviate the need for 6 foot distancing only applies to classroom situations.
- Students should not break six feet when facing each other in the cafeteria, or other areas of the campus.
 - This applies to older kids and middle school-age kids, more leniency has to be given to children.

Close Contact Bubbles

- Per the Committee's inquiry, Dr. Park stressed that the recommendations of both national and local health institutions is to maintain the consistency of 'close contacts.'
 - Dr. Park expects more success in maintaining close contacts in the lower grade levels, as they typically have only one teacher and the same set of classmates every day.

- Older children are not able to maintain the same level of consistency of contacts because they have schedules with multiple classes, which include different teachers and different classmates.
- For younger grade levels with single teachers, each classroom will be its own bubble.
 - To ensure classroom bubbles are maintained, recesses and lunch breaks will be staggered between different classes.
 - By maintaining consistency of close contacts within bubbles, schools mitigate the risk of having to shut down if a student is infected.
 - A classroom bubble may be affected by an infection but not the entire school if class bubbles are maintained.
 - If bubbles are incomplete by sharing the same playground or other areas outside of the classroom, this defeats the purpose of the bubble.
- Spacing on elementary campuses will be determined by grade level cohorts.
 - K-2 children will be at school every day spread out throughout the campus by staggering class bubbles.
 - Principals are setting up their respective school's schedule for class bubble staggering purposes.
 - Principals are responsible for designing the schedule and communicating that schedule to families.
 - According to Superintendent Kishimoto, schedules should be going to families now.
 - Grades 3-6 will be coming to campus on various assigned days to avoid having a cluster of students in different cohorts and bubbles on the campus at the same time.
- Dr. Anderson spoke to the need to assess risk factors in different age groups.
 - According to Dr. Anderson, 1/1000 people under 18 who contract COVID-19 die, but in many cases, health experts see lasting side effects.

Distance Learning

- What the DOE currently has on its distance learning platforms is being expanded upon to serve secondary students primarily.
- The DOE Ohana surveys suggest that 15-16% of families are looking for full distance learning.
- If a family chooses to do distance learning, it must do so for the entire semester.
 - Per the Committee's inquiry, Superintendent Kishimoto mentioned K-2 students would have the option for distance learning, but it will still be up to the principals, staff, and families to come to a conclusion on what is the best for the student.
 - Distance learning must be maintained throughout the entire semester so a child can get a complete grade and so that the family and child can have a full understanding of what is needed for credit.
 - A family that chooses to do distance learning can come back after the semester is over to either a face to face or blended model.
- There are 13,000 public teachers in Hawaii, and 7,000 teachers are currently being trained in teaching distance learning.

- More teachers will be trained or finish distance learning training during the afternoons of the half days during the first two weeks of school.
- Depending on the chosen model of the school, 2-4 workdays worth of time will be dedicated to training on how to access curriculum online, understand platforms for student interaction, provide online assignments, and support student in how to download necessary materials.
- The HSTA met with the DOE a week before schools closed down in March to begin distance learning training.
 - The DOE also has a leadership institute designed to restructure training around distance learning and professional learning networks for teacher to teacher training teams.
 - The DOE has created a new training protocol specifically for the distance learning platform, which has been in place for three or four weeks.
- Per the Department of Education testimony, distance learning training is already in the budget, addressing previous concerns from members surrounding a possible financial impact reopening under the new normal would have.
 - Per the Department of Education testimony, there will also be training for substitute teachers in order to prepare for the event students' regular teacher is unable to provide distance or in-person learning.
 - Training will include practice on any learning devices, video conferences, and additional topics relevant to the style of learning agreed upon by the local schools, and families.
 - Per the Committee's request, Superintendent Kishimoto will follow up regarding the exact number of teachers who have been trained in the current online learning training program for teachers.
- Per the Committee's inquiry, the DOE does not know how it will respond if, as the school year gets closer, parents suddenly change their mind, and 20-30% of parents want full distance learning.
 - If 20-30% of families decide they want distance learning, the DOE will need to shuffle teachers and capacity and will also need to acquire the appropriate licenses for kids to be able to go online to get their curriculum in order to respond accordingly.

Ohana Help Desk

- According to DOE reports, there will be a trained support staff designated to assist families, students, and teachers who have technical issues.
 - The Ohana help desk will have a phone number and email address sent to online students and families for immediate access.
 - The Ohana help desk staff will answer calls and emails into a certain part of the evening and on weekends.

Contact Tracing Protocols

- Per the Committee's inquiry, if a child is sick, according to Superintendent Kishimoto, the DOE follows a protocol set up by the DOH to respond to a child being sick that includes

immediately sending the child to the health room, calling the family of the child, and being in contact with DOH.

- The current notification protocols have been in place since March.
 - Hawaii Keiki Nurses are trained DOE staff who are designated to deal with this specific situation and are also trained in contact tracing.
- Per the Committee's inquiry, if a child exposes another child within a classroom bubble, the protocol is to go through contact tracing, and if the contact tracing finds it necessary, the DOE will shutdown a particular classroom or school and shift to distance learning.
 - For students coming from homes with a confirmed COVID case, the DOH would immediately contact the school and begin to contact trace within the respective child's class bubble.
 - If a student tests positive, the entire class will go home.
 - There is a protocol for cleaning the classroom after case confirmation while contact tracing is simultaneously taking place.
 - The DOE will work to identify a protocol for reopening a classroom after it has been shut down when if they find it to be safe to do so.
 - If the child was sick over the weekend, it might not be necessary to close the class the child was in.
 - According to the DOE, the time period between identifying a positive case in a class and closing the class is quick.
 - Immediate calls take place between DOH, DOE, and other involved parties for contact tracing and response purposes.
 - The DOE states that the above-mentioned scenario has already happened three times.
- Priority for contact tracing and testing if a positive test is found will be given to lower aged grades, especially children.
 - This preference is in place because children in a class bubble will be considered close contacts, according to Dr. Park, because they do not have the behavioral awareness that their older-aged student counterparts do about mask-wearing, maintaining social distance, and hygiene protocols.
- Per Dr. Park, there are no set criteria to shut down schools, as it would be a case-by-case determination of closure.
 - She expounded, saying it would depend if the student themselves were infected or if it was an immediate family member in addition to the aspect of when the last time the student attended school.
- Dr. Anderson stated that the Governor asked the DOH to convene a group of experts in related health areas to look at what the trigger points should be for opening and closing schools.
- Per the Committee's inquiry, DOH has multiple responses in how schools will be notified if a child is coming from a home where an adult is sick.

Report of the Senate Special Committee on COVID-19
Thursday, July 16, 2020

- The response time to notify a school in the aforementioned scenario is dependent on the time elapsed, such as a long weekend and if the child has been in school recently or not.
- If the child was not in the school, there should not be a rush to notify the school because there is no risk to the school, but there is a rush to notify the close contacts of the child and the family.
- Per the Committee's inquiry, Dr. Park reaffirmed that cases can always be reported through the DOH's disease reporting line.
 - The DOH has someone on shift for its disease reporting line 24/7.
 - Superintendent Kishimoto confirmed that the DOH disease reporting line has been in contact with the DOE regarding contact tracing since March.
- Per the Committee's inquiry, regarding releasing the name of an affected school if a child is sick or tests positive, specifically doing so and avoiding social media issues, Dr Park suggests that it is important to ignore social media rumors and that DOH focuses on not moving forward until they know the facts.
- Per the Committee's request, DOE should gather parent testimonials saying they feel comfortable with the DOEs contact tracing and response protocols if a child tests positive in order to lessen parent anxiety.
- The Committee highlighted its concerns with communication issues between the DOE and teachers.

Start Date

- Superintendent Kishimoto informed the Committee that it is the Board of Education who makes the decision when schools will open.
 - Per Superintendent Kishimoto, she can only make recommendations to the Board of Education, and the Board will have the final vote.
 - Additionally, she emphasized that her recommendations are made after much consideration of outside factors, in this case, CDC guidance, family input, and teacher surveying, all of which are submitted to the Board for the final decision.
- Per reports, summer school has shown positive momentum in returning to the in-person model of schooling since this time is being used to train teachers, students, and families on new blended learning techniques.
 - Summer school session was used to test protocols for the regular school year; however, Superintendent Kishimoto noted that many of the protocols have been in place since the beginning of Hawaii's outbreak in March.
 - The Committee is concerned with the DOE's summer school data because the classroom sizes are smaller compared to a regular school year class.
- Per the Committee's request, Superintendent Kishimoto informed members of the Committee that school opening information can be found on the Department of Education website but will provide Senators with a link in writing to share with their constituents.
- Concerned families can go to the website of the school in question where reopening information and relevant links will be provided for each school.

Report of the Senate Special Committee on COVID-19
Thursday, July 16, 2020

- Members of the Committee were also presented with an informational packet with school reopening guidelines published by the American Association of Pediatrics, from which the Department is deriving much of their guidance.
- Upon reopening, the first two weeks of the school year will be half days to provide maximum parent support.
 - DOE's goal is to open by August 4th.

Personal Protection Equipment

- School buses and school campuses will be outfitted with disposable masks and physical barriers like plexiglass.
- It is essential that Parents be involved in assisting younger aged students with mask-wearing protocols.
 - Schools will enforce and notify parents if their child is not following mask policies and other health & safety protocols.
- Students will not be turned away from schools and school buses if they do not have masks.
 - Teachers will have extra masks, and classrooms will be outfitted with hand sanitizer and disinfectants.
- Superintendent Kishimoto noted that for students in the previously mentioned categories, unable to participate in distance learning, the Department is prepared to distribute PPE for affected teachers based on the level of teacher/student interaction.
 - Furthermore, Superintendent Kishimoto noted that PPE, such as masks and/or face shields will be provided to students who are unable to provide their own, and reiterated that at no point should schools be turning away students for lack of PPE.
- Per the Department of Education, reports will be published every month informing those concerned about PPE availability, overall attendance, and attendance per type of instruction.
 - Superintendent Kishimoto agreed to send links to new reports to the Senators.

Quality of Education

- Committee members expressed their concerns about students' level of learning due to the possible side effects of an abbreviated schedule, as was reported at the end of last school year.
 - Per Superintendent Kishimoto, students will have three assessments during the school year to measure their progress and observe any potential detriments to a shorter schedule.
 - According to Superintendent Kishimoto, the first assessment will be given in the first month to see what they are missing from the end of last school year, and the second will be given mid-year with the third a year-end assessment.
- The Committee expressed its concern with high school juniors and seniors being ready for post-high school.
 - UH early college offerings will support high school students with online classes to ensure students are prepared.
 - There will be asynchronous classes set up for students to work at their own pace.
 - This will allow teachers to work closely with students who need additional assistance.
 - School principals will be looking at their schedule to implement these classes.

Funding

- According to the Department of Education's testimony, they are waiting on the Governor's signature for SB126, which distributes CARES Act funds.
- The DOE is asking for an additional \$51 million of CARES money for devices needed to meet the new distance and blended learning agreements for specific schools.
- Members of the Committee informed the Department that the Legislature provided the Governor the necessary power and flexibility to redirect funding as requested.
 - As the monies come in, new devices will be purchased.
 - Members of the Committee requested that Superintendent Kishimoto provide a detailed breakdown of spending areas needed for distance learning.
 - Superintendent Kishimoto agreed to supply the requested breakdown within 24 hours.

-end of report-