

April 2, 2020

Hawaii Board of Education
General Business Meeting
Catherine Payne, Chair
Brian De Lima, Vice Chair

Aloha Chair Payne, Vice Chair De Lima, and Members,

We would like to offer comments on Discussion Item A, Presentation on March 19, 2020 letter of commitment regarding COVID-19 preparation and response from Department Superintendent Christina Kishimoto to Hawaii State Teachers Association Executive Director Wilbert Holck.

We know these are challenging times for our broader community. We are incredibly grateful to Dr. Kishimoto and the hardworking staff across our public schools and the broader the Hawaii State Department of Education (DOE) system to react to the immense disruption of COVID-19, and putting the health and safety of students, families, and educators first and foremost. While we recognize this situation is rapidly evolving, we offer the following policy suggestions as a pathway to resilience in the short and long term, and the community stands by to offer our support.

1) Equity: “Equity” doesn’t mean we take learning to the lowest common denominator. While some students may lack access to quality virtual or home learning opportunities, the Hawaii State Department of Education (DOE) shouldn’t restrict learning opportunities for the rest of students who may have access. The DOE should serve the most students possible immediately and figure out creative hybrid solutions for the rest, including:

- Creative strategies to bridge the digital divide
 - Aid families to sign up for free 60-day connectivity (Hawaiian Telcom, Spectrum)
 - Convert school buses to mobile hotspots
 - Establish clear loan policy for district or school owned devices
 - Set up a donation fund through Public Schools of Hawaii Foundation
- Get books into every student’s hands
 - Ensure families have easy access to the Hawaii State Public Library System’s Books By Mail and Online Resources offerings
- Minimize learning loss for students with IEPs
 - Convene IEP teams for the most adversely affected students to determine appropriate technology, aids, at-home support services, and accommodations, including use of secure DOE WebEx and conference call platforms

2) Continue academic instruction: Students deserve more than enrichment but less than the normal academic pacing of in-person school, using a reformed/modified light schedule that includes certain elements:

- Clear and understandable schedule

- Be asynchronous so students can learn at their own pace
- Offer time for reflection and connection
- Build on what is already being taught by extending the curriculum as well as the academic content expectations for the semester
- Offer real world high quality projects of significance to their community
- Have some consequence or incentive to maintain motivation
- Be able to access accelerated learning, such as early college, Advanced Placement, or International Baccalaureate coursework
- Provide an office hours hotline for content coaching and support

3) Minimum standard for learning: The Hawaii State Board of Education (BOE) must provide a minimum hourly standard for student school work. This can be differentiated across grade levels and should establish a high bar of continued learning for all students.

4) Contact with families and students: Parents and guardians must be given a road map for their child’s success that includes daily and weekly assignments for their children. Every student and family should be in contact with a teacher, counselor or administrator at least 3-5 times per week.

5) Eliminate duplication: Where DOE schools are creating academic materials, the DOE should encourage system-wide “master teachers” to create a shared set of materials for use across DOE schools, with other teachers serving in a coaching/support role. This will help increase alignment and minimize duplication of efforts.

6) Support for English Language Learners: Establish communication plans for English Language Learners. All official DOE communications and materials for parents must be offered with multilingual translations. Community organizations and volunteers may assist in the creation of these materials.

7) Two-way communication: The DOE must establish a mechanism for real-time two-way communication with the public and families for the purpose of information clarification and transparency. The DOE should also work with community partners to meet families where they are in terms of access to food and academic materials, including bringing those items directly to homes.

8) Data collection: The DOE must collect and report data showing how many students are actually partaking in academic and comprehensive services and offerings. A critical component of effective distance learning is monitoring and tracking student progress. The DOE should adopt a policy of no student unaccounted for during these uncertain times.

9) Flexibility for seniors: High school seniors deserve special consideration. We need to do more than graduate ‘proficient’ seniors early and then help the rest to recover credits.

- Prepare themselves for life after high school

- Chance to learn AVID skills
- Summerbridge
- Personalized text message support to remind of critical timelines
- Access to accelerated learning opportunities
- Counseling support in their personal transition plan
- Receive credit for volunteer hours
- Consider how to recognize credit from Common Core-aligned platforms such as Khan Academy

As resources, we recommend reviewing the following plan examples from Illinois and New Mexico:

- Illinois State Board of Education - Remote learning recommendations during COVID-19 emergency: <https://tinyurl.com/ILremoteplan>
- New Mexico Public Education Department - Implementation Guide for Your Continuous Learning Plan: <https://tinyurl.com/NMremoteplan>

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

David Miyashiro, HawaiiKidsCAN

Cheri Nakamura

Lillian Coltin

Rae Shih, American Civil Liberties Union of Hawaii

Pila Wilson

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Makana and Kekoa McClellan, Palisades Elementary School Parents

Mary Ellen Silva, Hawaii public school grandparent

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Deborah Zysman, Hawaii Children's Action Network

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Leilani Kahoano, Caring for Hawaii Neonates

Lauren Ballesteros-Watanabe, Sierra Club O'ahu Group

Sherry Menor-McNamara, Chamber of Commerce Hawaii

Karen Worthington, parent of high school junior at King Kekaulike

Emi Eno Orikasa, Hui No Ke Ola Pono

Jenna Tuss, Teacher on Oahu

Brooke Holderbaum, Educator and resident of Maui